

SIGNIFICANCE OF ENTERPRISE RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: The purpose of the presented paper is report on a research of enterprise strengths' and weaknesses' impact on the enterprise development, as a selected viewpoint of basic information for enterprise governance and management innovation toward more responsible enterprise policy, management, and business. As results of the paper show, the enterprises should be aware of their own impact on their performance. Among surveyed enterprise information especially important role is played by the prevailing (more or less) (socially) responsible governance and management development information that should impact enterprise policy innovation.

Keywords: enterprise, enterprise policy innovation, leadership, competitive strengths, competitive weaknesses, social responsibility.

POMEN PROUČEVANJA PODJETJA ZA RAZVOJ PODJETJA

Povzetek: V članku poročamo o raziskavi vpliva prednosti in slabosti podjetja na razvoj podjetja; izbrani vidik je vpliv osnovnih informacij na inoviranje upravljanja in vodenja podjetja v smeri k bolj družbeno odgovorni politiki podjetja, vodenju in poslovanju podjetja. Kot prikazujejo rezultati v tem članku, se podjetja morajo zavedati pomena lastnega vpliva na uspešnost svojega poslovanja. Med proučevanimi informacijami o podjetju so še posebej pomembne informacije o razvoju (bolj ali manj) (družbeno) odgovornega upravljanja in vodenja podjetja, ki jih moramo upoštevati pri inoviranju politike podjetja.

Ključne besede: podjetje, inoviranje politike podjetja, vodenje, konkurenčne prednosti, konkurenčne slabosti, družbena odgovornost.

1 Introduction

The competition nowadays is increasing toward "hyper-competition" and is greater than ever (Demirdjian, 2008). Enterprises need to develop new resources, that, we believe, are gained through products/services, processes, and social innovations. To make this possible, enterprises must innovate their corporate governance – enterprise policy (toward more social responsibility; EU 2011); thus they must be aware of their current enterprise policy, "soft" determinants (like values, culture, and ethics), strengths, weaknesses, and increasingly changing environmental opportunities and threats (Belak, Ja., Duh, 2012; Ećimović, Haw et al., 2012; Štrukelj, Mulej, 2011b; Štrukelj et al., 2012a, b).

In this study, we focus on getting the information about the enterprise for determining enterprise's strengths and weaknesses; when we talk about the enterprise examination, we mean the analysis of the "internal environment" (internal enterprise analysis). We investigate the hypothesis that enterprises for their development need real information about themselves, to identify their strengths and weaknesses and take proper actions concerning them. We assume that the importance of research information about the enterprise from our (Slovenian) point of view can be generalized to most of the transition countries (for which has this research been designed). We limited our analysing on the MER Model of Integral Management (Belak, Ja., Duh, 2012). Thus we will first present some theoretical backgrounds research, continue with research needed for strengths and weaknesses determination and finish with some conclusions.

2 Theoretical backgrounds

Modern enterprise governance and management need the shift toward advanced, integral management models (see Belak, Ja., Duh, 2012; Duh, Štrukelj, 2011) and should include social responsibility (SR) (EU, 2011). To reach business excellence and enterprise's long-term survival, socially responsible enterprise policy, strategic management, and basic-realization processes should be regularly innovated (Štrukelj, Mulej, 2011c).

To enable good enterprise policy, proper strategic opportunities exploitation, and right strategies determination, and/or their innovation, enterprise owners and top managers need, among other, requisitely holistic prepared and selected information about their enterprise. They have to innovate this information regularly, in order to develop a successful habit that can lead to successful performance of their enterprise (about successful habits of visionary companies see for example Collins, Porras, 1997; about enterprise governance and management innovations Štrukelj, 2010, Štrukelj et al., 2010, 2012c, d; Štrukelj, Mulej, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2010a, 2011a, b, c).

Nevertheless, corporate governance influences enterprise market-value (see for example Ammann et al., 2011; Balasubramanian et al., 2010; Black et al., 2006).

We believe that when planning / innovating enterprise policy, information about the enterprise and determining from them the resulting strengths and weaknesses belong to the essential information, as they direct the enterprise's development. Which research is needed and what kind of analysis can make the enterprise to determine its' strengths and weaknesses, we present in Chapter 3.

3 Enterprise's development based on enterprise's examination

When researching enterprise information one must take into the consideration at least all spheres of enterprise activities (in form of strategic business areas and business functions), enterprise managers, and management/leadership, comparing this information to the past period, planned activities, and competing enterprises (compare Ulrich 1990: 55–64, in Belak, Ja. 2002: 117–118). Authors refer this also as the enterprise architecture: a comprehensive description of all of the key elements and relationships that make up an organization (Harmon, 2003). Most strengths and weaknesses result from the comparison with a competing enterprise. However, we take into account that enterprises and competing enterprises not only creatively compete, but also creatively cooperate (Parmigiani, Rivera-Santos, 2011). On this subject see also Kang et al., 2010; Šaša, Krisper, 2011.

We continue with the analysis of competitive strengths and weaknesses, as their familiarity is essential for long-term development of the enterprise, since this is the starting point for the planning of enterprise policy, as well as for identifying of possible enterprise strategies. In accordance with the MER model of integral management, study of enterprise outcomes becomes the starting point for the determination of rules concerning the future of enterprise (Ulrich 1990: 88 in Belak, Ja. 2002: 125). Enterprises are required to obtain good information about themselves, analyzing information by their strategic business areas and analyzing their leadership / management, which can be done as presented below. In our work we proceed from the MER model, which we supplemented with our own cognitions.

In the MER model, the analysis of areas of enterprise activity includes analysis of strategic business areas and business functions (functional areas of business) in terms of (1) the scope and quality of outcomes, (2) used enterprises financial, technical and personnel resources, and (3) used business strategies (Ulrich 1990: 59, in Belak, Ja. 2002: 117).

We will slightly update this and call your attention to the fact that the analysis of strategic business areas should cover their examination in the light of (1) factual, quantity, and quality outcomes, and financial outcomes (most important: profit or loss), (2) financial resources (for example, self-potential, the number of bidders and access to them), property / technical-technological potential (in terms of (tangible) assets, including all necessary equipment), and enterprises personnel resources (including their values, culture and ethics), and (3) used business strategies (general, fundamental and business). In a similar way it is necessary to examine the functional areas of business, analysis should include examination of (1) research and development area, (2) the area of sales marketing, (3) area of production and services, (4) human resource area (for the enterprise as a whole), (5) purchase area (for example, number of providers, access to them), (6) funding area (for the enterprise as a whole) (for example, self-potential, the number of providers and access to them), (7) organizing area, and (8) field of informatics.

In the MER model, the analysis of managers and enterprise management/leadership should include (1) system/order and methods of enterprise management, (2) key personnel potential of the enterprise and (3) enterprise organizational design (Ulrich 1990: 61 in Belak, Ja. 2002: 117). All of this in terms of volume and quality of the (a) concepts, (b) instruments of performance and (c) the practical application (Belak, Ja. 2002: 117).

Generally we can conclude that it is necessary to examine the analysis of the enterprise's management, educational level, skills, and knowledge of managers (key personnel resources), experiences of managers (key personnel resources) and enterprise's organizational structure.

Hiller, DeChurch, and Murase (2011) systematically summarize various ways the field of leadership has (and has not) sought to answer questions about whether, when, and how leadership affects outcomes. That depends also on leader's wisdom (Yang, 2011), and their constructive/destructive inclination (Shaw et al., 2011); and it is the best to analyse leadership over longer time period (Bluedorn, Jaussi, 2008; Shamir, 2011). At management and managing analysis we have to take into consideration that one can reach holistic enterprise management only with total responsibility management (Gorenak, Mulej, 2010).

For high quality determination of their strengths and weaknesses, enterprises must on the basis of information collected about them make also a comparative analysis (cf. Ulrich 1990: 62 in Belak, Ja. 2002: 117): previous / current period, plan / realization, comparison with competing enterprises. This is easier to attain with use of the Dialectical Systems Theory than with one-sided mono-disciplinary approaches and methods.

4 Dialectical Systems Theory (DST) and holistic thinking

The current socio-economic crisis has its roots in ethics of independence and dependence, and related one-sided and short-term criteria of socio-economic efficiency and effectiveness practices, under the label of neo-liberal economics rather than in ethics of interdependence and related (requisitely) holistic and long-term criteria (Mulej and Dyck, editors, forthcoming). This reflects in, and results from, the information about the strengths and weaknesses on the enterprise policy, as stated above.

Adam Smith spoke for interdependence and holistic approach, labeled ‘the invisible hand’ (Toth, 2008). Bertalanffy (1968: VII, Foreword) tried to cover this human lack of holism by his General Systems Theory fighting over-specialization, i.e. one-sidedness, causing crucial oversights. His critical concept remained short of methodological support. DST provided the latter.

DST is a peculiar version of systems theory (François 2004: 169). It reaches beyond providing tools for humans to use on whatever basis, but tries to *impact human thinking and feeling*, too. Namely, the level of human holism in observation, perception, thinking, communication, decision-making, and action depends on the humans’ subjective starting points (K&V). DST *fight the fictitious holism*, which some other versions of systems theory may support. DST has enabled several thousand successful applications both in research and “the real world” practice, especially in (non-technological) innovation, management, and organization. The ‘dialectical systems (DS)’ create synergies of all, and only, essential viewpoints/perspectives and related insights in the topic under consideration.

DST’s point is the *inter-disciplinary approach as a precondition of (the requisite) holism* of humans at work etc.; the lack of inter-disciplinary approach may namely make the presupposed holism – a central concern of cybernetics and systems theory – rather fictitious. This lack is found in practice (Mulej et al., same references) and it opposes the Bertalanffy’s and Wiener’s teams. The original authors of both Systems Theory and Cybernetics were interdisciplinary and aiming at synthesis (Hammond, 2003).

This means: to make the concept of DS workable, Mulej created his DST as a methodological theory of human behavior (i.e. observing, reflecting, communicating, decision-making, and impacting) based on the following findings about reality:

- Humans behave on the basis of their *subjective starting points*, i.e. knowledge and values (K&V), which are in turn subject to *influence of other humans, experiences, insights and feelings*.
- The starting points, especially the subjective ones – K&V (which select, by observation and decision, the attributes of the objective, i.e. outer reality to be taken in account), *influence further processes* of definition of objectives and their attainment, in which many features and attributes are interdependent, rather than simply linearly dependent.
- The starting points can be influenced, especially ones’ K&V, by education and other information processes. But the receivers of those influences tend to *react* to them *differently*, if their role is either to define objectives, or to attain these objectives by accomplishing their partial tasks.
- In acting according to their roles, humans try to be holistic, in order to avoid failures and resulting difficulties. But people tend to define *holism* rather *differently*.
- It is impossible for people to be *totally holistic*, at the level of Bertalanffy’s requirements (Bertalanffy 1968: VII, Foreword). But if one defines one’s own holism *very narrowly*, e.g. inside one single specialization, a *fictitious* holism is produced rather than a *realistic* one. Even worse, one can *imagine* that a realistic holism has been attained, despite its unreality.

DST reflects these findings (in English see Mulej and Zenko, 2004; Mulej et al., 2012 for some details and scientific backgrounds):

1. *The law of entropy*: One must consider the permanent natural tendency of everything to change into something else, i.e. to be destroyed, and to help create something else, simultaneously. Entropy requires people to be requisitely holistic and creative in order to succeed, rather than one-sided and routine-loving/addicted. Hence:

2. *The law of requisite holism*: A DS is necessary when a one-sided system is not a holistic-enough picture of reality and a total (Bertalanffian) one cannot be attained. Decision-makers must take responsibility for their selection of what enters the DS, and what is omitted, but their decision does not prevent the influences of the not-considered attributes/realities (Mulej and Kajzer, 1998). Hence:

3. *The law of hierarchy of succession and interdependence*: It is not the structure of subordination, but processes that cause results. It is cooperation that makes processes happen. Therefore, one must start with the definition of salient objectives. This process depends on subjective (K&V) and objective starting points (outer needs and possibilities). These are interdependent; so are the phases following later on in the process and their content, including the perceived needs and possibilities, preferential needs and related possibilities, objectives, tasks to meet objectives, and processes to execute tasks. Consequently:

4. *The ten guidelines on how to form the subjective starting points of persons defining the objectives:* These guidelines are used before the definition of objectives, in order to support requisite holism and creativity in this crucial phase of the work process. The decision-makers must be rather broad and synthesis-oriented. But they are not alone in the entire work process. Hence:

5. *The ten guidelines on how to form the subjective starting points of persons realizing the objectives:* These guidelines are used after the definition of objectives, in order to support requisite holism and creativity in this phase of the work process. These co-workers must be narrowly specialized and analysis-oriented, take responsibility for single details, while understanding and supporting a broader definition/practice of requisite holism, with creative co-operation with specialists of other skills.

6. Both guidelines (in points 4 and 5) need tools to implicitly behave systemically. Therefore: *USOMID* (DTS-based applied methodology of interdisciplinary creative cooperation) is used to enable participants of the work process to consider and use the three laws and both dialectical systems of guidelines, even without knowledge of their theoretical background. Our experience with employment of DST in non-academic settings soon demonstrated the need to express DST's rather philosophical concepts in methodology. Therefore *USOMID* came about; its Slovenian acronym reads: Creative Co-operation of Many for an Innovating Work (Mulej et al. 1982 and later). It helps people face complexity by using DST implicitly with no word of theory. Now, *USOMID* is combined with '6 Thinking Hats', which enables implicit systemic behavior, too (Mulej and Mulej, 2006; Mulej et al., 2012).

5 Conclusions

Enterprise vision and policy innovations toward social responsibility (SR) are key starting points for enterprise's long-term survival (EU, 2011; Štrukelj et al., 2012; Štrukelj, Mulej, 2011c). SR includes human responsibility for the consequences of human action to society, which is to people and nature (EU, 2011). SR matters for society as a whole, for humans and for the organizations, because it avoids the problems, which result from irresponsible, dishonest, unreliable, and un-holistic actions. EU no longer exposes organizations' free will to embrace SR, but recommends EU Member States and enterprises to promote SR. To do so, enterprises must (among other things) have a good knowledge about (and build on) their strengths and they should avoid their weaknesses; both we discussed in this contribution. They are according to MER Model of integral management (Ulrich 1990: 90 in Belak, Ja., 2002: 126) together with enterprise (stakeholders) values, environmental opportunities and threats, and current enterprise policy, important starting point for enterprise policy innovation (it is important that toward SR). Nevertheless responsible enterprise policy is necessary also for better stakeholder quality of life (Štrukelj et al., 2012d, e).

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