

Economics and Business Review

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CONTENTS

Editorial introduction

Marian Gorynia

Acceptance Address on the Occasion of the Award of an Honorary Doctorate from the Poznań University of Economics and Business

Michael E. Porter

ARTICLES

Assessing the competitiveness of locations: A journey through the major theoretical insights

Philippe Gugler

Footnotes to organizational competitiveness

Krzysztof Obloj

Technological competitiveness of the EU member states in the era of the fourth industrial revolution

Marzenna Anna Weresa

Governance and competitiveness in global value chains: A comparative study in the automobile and textile industries

José Pla-Barber, Cristina Villar

The dimensions of national competitiveness: The empirical analysis based on The World Economic Forum's data

Hanna G. Adamkiewicz

Competition and globalisation in economic sciences. Selected aspects

Marian Gorynia

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Volume 5 (19) Number 3 2019

CONTENTS

Editorial introduction

Marian Gorynia 3

Acceptance Address on the Occasion of the Award of an Honorary Doctorate from the Poznań University of Economics and Business

Michael E. Porter 9

ARTICLES

Assessing the competitiveness of locations: A journey through the major theoretical insights

Philippe Gugler 16

Footnotes to organizational competitiveness

Krzysztof Obloj 35

Technological competitiveness of the EU member states in the era of the fourth industrial revolution

Marzenna Anna Weresa 50

Governance and competitiveness in global value chains: A comparative study in the automobile and textile industries

José Pla-Barber, Cristina Villar 72

The dimensions of national competitiveness: The empirical analysis based on The World Economic Forum's data

Hanna G. Adamkiewicz 92

Competition and globalisation in economic sciences. Selected aspects

Marian Gorynia 118

Editorial introduction

The central theme of this issue of *Economics and Business Review* is the contribution made by Prof. Michael Porter of Harvard University to the development of economic sciences and the honorary doctorate awarded to him by the Poznań University of Economics and Business.¹

Advancements in world research on strategy and competitiveness have been indelibly marked by the work of Prof. Michael Porter. It is based on several conceptual pillars which, over time, have become part of the canonical economic, managerial, business and administrative knowledge. The first of these pillars is competitive strategy theory, which consists of such concepts as the Five Forces model and the main types of competitive strategy (Porter, 1979, 1980). It seems that the creation of this theory was helped by Porter and Caves's joint work on entry, exit and mobility barriers (Caves & Porter, 1977). Another of Porter's significant accomplishments is competitive advantage theory, which covers, among other categories, the value-added chain and value system (1985). The third pillar of Porter's work is his analysis of the foundations of the competitive advantage of nations, formulated as Porter's diamond model (1990). In Porter's comprehensive competitiveness theory an extremely important part is played by the category of clusters, which is another key component of his contribution to economic knowledge (Porter, 1998). The final pillar is the idea of shared value, which, to put it simply, consists of conducting a business activity that simultaneously solves major social problems (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Subjective as this list may seem it is worth noting that Porter's contribution to world-wide research has been accumulated over several decades with its pillars forming a coherent system of interrelated categories and theorems. Subject to evolution the system is being systematically expanded. In fact it is Porter himself (2008) that proposed a comprehensive and updated approach to his work. Analysing the subsequent stages of Porter's work we can see that he started with economics and moved on to management, finally to bridge the gaps between them using building materials such as elements of economics, organisation and management, technology and ethics.

Prof. Porter's work is unique in that it consists of studies focusing on the company as a whole, on its particular components (e.g., its activities), on medium-range systems (industries, sectors, clusters, and networks) and on national economies or even groups of countries. As far as microeconomic issues

¹ The honorary doctorate was awarded to Prof. Michael E. Porter by the Senate of the Poznań University of Economics and Business in 2014. The award ceremony took place on 19 March 2019 at the Poznań University of Economics and Business.

are concerned it is Michael Porter that successfully combined the conceptual foundations of strategy and competitiveness studies that have their origins in economics and in management sciences. His research in the field resulted in the formulation of the thesis on the convergence of company research conducted as part of the disciplines of economics and management sciences, a convergence whose manifestations can be found in the subdiscipline of strategic management. Porter's other achievement is having identified the causes and systemic determinants of competitive advantages gained by the economies of particular countries. Especially important is his observation that the competitive advantage of nations is not universal but manifests itself within particular industries and sectors of the economy. What is also noteworthy is a new and original interpretation of the role of economic policy in building the competitive advantage of nations.

The conferring on Prof. Michael Porter of the highest academic distinction of *doctor honoris causa* from the Poznań University of Economics and Business is a natural consequence of both his outstanding research achievements and the Poznań University of Economics and Business long-standing research interest in international competitiveness.

What the articles in this issue have in common is that they are all related in some way or another to Michael Porter's ideas. Some of them are survey texts referring directly to the entirety or selected elements of Prof. Porter's work (Philippe Gugler, Krzysztof Obloj, Marian Gorynia). Other texts are more loosely related to his contribution to economic sciences but which still refer to his concepts (Marzenna Weresa, Jose Pla-Barber & Cristina Villar, Hanna Adamkiewicz). Another common feature of the texts is that Michael Porter's work does not just fit within the narrow confines of a single discipline such as economics. In particular we should note that Porter helped to add a more practical dimension to economic concepts thereby bridging the gap between economics and management sciences, a good example of which is strategic management.

Philippe Gugler's text deals with the problem of evaluating the competitiveness of a business activity's location. After Porter the author assumes that a location is competitive if firms operating there can achieve a "high level of productivity" (Porter, 2008, p. 176). The unit of his analysis is territory, which could be a city, region or country. The author's stated aim is to address major theoretical concepts that are useful in identifying the main drivers of a territory's competitiveness and therefore in assessing the competitiveness of a specific location according to strong criteria. The text is composed of two stages. In the first the major contributions found in classical and neo-classical theories are presented. In the second stage, the attention focuses on two major schools providing significant thoughts on the competitiveness of locations: the Economic Geography (EG) School and the International Business (IB) School. In the context of Michael Porter's work Philippe Gugler's article is related primarily to its third and fourth pillar.

Krzysztof Obłój's article is fundamentally different in this respect as it demonstrates how the understanding of the *competitive advantage* concept has evolved and thus it corresponds to the second pillar of Porter's work. The author's discussion, which focuses primarily on the company or organisation, is dominated by micro-level analysis. Such an approach is justified by the fact that the author is a representative of management and organisation sciences and his numerous achievements are primarily part of the subdiscipline of strategic management. Obłój's text is not intended to exhaustively review the evolution of the *competitive advantage* concept; instead it concerns three interestingly formulated and presented footnotes on organisational competitiveness mentioned in the title.

Still another research perspective is adopted in the article by Marzenna Weresa. In this case the author's focus of interest is the European Union as an integrated community which consists of 27 countries, or rather member countries making up a community. The units of analysis are the EU's national economies. The author's purpose is to investigate the implications of the fourth industrial revolution of technological competitiveness, its definition and measurement methods. It should be emphasised that her discussion only concerns technological competitiveness which forms a very specific and narrow aspect of competitiveness enjoyed by a group of countries. We should note the originality of this study which results primarily from the author's attempt to link the issue of competitiveness with technological factors and to measure technological competitiveness. The results of her empirical research are hardly surprising: they confirm the huge diversity within the EU in terms of digital technologies, their global impact and comparative advantages. We can see that although the article tackles the issue of countries' competitiveness directly its attribution to one of the aforementioned pillars is not quite so obvious. Nonetheless the text seems to correspond most closely with the third pillar of Porter's work.

The article written by Jose Pla-Barber & Cristina Villar is an example of analysis at the company level and it corresponds with the second pillar of Porter's contribution. As the authors wrote in their introduction: *In the last decades the world economy tends to be structured around global value chains, being responsible for a very high percentage of global trade, production and employment.* The issue raised is very current and hotly debated issue indeed. The text begins with a theoretical review of the value chain concept, its different typologies and governance models. In the empirical part of the article two value chains in the automobile sector and the textile sector are analysed with reference to the most relevant participating actors, their interrelations and their methods to upgrade their competitiveness.

Hanna Adamkiewicz's text is different in terms of approach. It also corresponds with Porter's third pillar as it concerns the evaluation of countries' competitiveness. However the discussion focuses on a comprehensive evaluation of competitiveness rather than on a selected factor or aspect of a specific

country's competitiveness. Both in its theoretical and empirical part the article deals with the indicators used by the World Economic Forum to construct the Global Competitiveness Index. Starting with a critical diagnosis of the content of the Global Competitiveness Index the author sets herself the very ambitious goal of determining the minimum number of uncorrelated dimensions which can describe the international competitiveness of a country. It seems that the proposals formulated by Adamkiewicz may prove worth considering by the creators of the Global Competitiveness Index.

The last text has been written by Marian Gorynia. Its aim is to present, discuss and evaluate the contribution that economic sciences have made to the description, understanding and explanation of two leading and closely related categories of today's market economy: competitiveness and globalisation. They are present in all discussions about the current and forward-looking situation of the world economy, national economies of individual countries, industries and sectors of particular national economies, as well as particular enterprises. For this reason the paper which contains a multi-level analysis corresponds most closely to the third pillar of Porter's work.

To conclude several features of today's competitiveness studies should be highlighted. First of all, they are extremely diverse. The research approaches adopted vary not only in terms of units of analysis (activity, company, sector, industry, territory, city, region, country, group of countries), but also in terms of planes or cross-sections of competitiveness (specialised single-factor analyses vs. comprehensive multiple-factor analyses). Secondly, the texts clearly show the role played by Prof. Michael Porter in setting new directions for today's studies on competitiveness. Thirdly, it can be expected, especially in the context of the turmoil accompanying the globalisation process, that these studies will constitute an important research agenda for the future.

Editor of this issue

Marian Gorynia, Poznań University of Economics and Business

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Aims and Scope

The Economics and Business Review is a quarterly journal focusing on theoretical and applied research in the fields of economics, management and finance. The Journal welcomes the submission of high quality articles dealing with micro, mezzo and macro issues well founded in modern theories and relevant to an international audience. The EBR's goal is to provide a platform for academicians all over the world to share, discuss and integrate state-of-the-art economics, finance and management thinking with special focus on new market economies.

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