Guest editorial

Accounting future and deep transformations in organisations

The idea of this special issue is basically drawn from the LIGUE international conference theme: "Deep transformation and the future of Organizations", which has motivated researchers and given them the opportunity to present their research papers and receive constructive and relevant comments from internationally renowned scholars (6th and 7th December 2019, Tunisia).

Due to globalisation and financialisation, more attention has been paid to standardising financial and accounting systems. The main objective of this attention is to adapt governance practices to new environments. Indeed, rapidly evolving international trade, growing investment, changing financial business structure and cutting-edge information technologies have a deep and direct impact on cultures, the environment, economic development and regulatory systems. Consequently, this metamorphosis has remodelled the regulation of economy and the logic of accumulation, in the sense that these thorough transformations will have a considerable impact on different aspects such as human resources management, ethical conduct, accountability standards, security, financial and accounting reporting and auditing, etc. Accordingly, the standardisation of financial and accounting systems and governance practices has become compelling as it aims to protect entities' safety, human health and behaviour and the environment. Another objective of standardisation is to mediate international transactions by ensuring that everything works "properly, interactively and responsibly".

I have to note that standardisation is actually a fact that organisations have inexorably to embrace to ensure their survival. Nonetheless, they have to make considerable preparation since standardisation requires multi-disciplinary skills in commerce, technology, sustainability, security, regulations, ethics, risk management, among other fields.

I expect that research included in this special issue will have practical implications. Indeed, the issue's theme is of great interest to various organisations, regulatory authorities, scholars, experts and financial institutions.

As explained earlier, it is important to investigate the impact and the challenges of thorough transformations in the field and organisations' ability to adapt to this rapid pace of change. As a matter of fact, several organisations may agree that they must embrace these thorough transformations. Nevertheless, they will face barriers, some of which are the lack of required skills among employees or unaffordable costs. Therefore, to meet the various challenges, organisations have to be aware of the impact of such transformations, consequences, required skills and preparations. This is basically what this issue seeks particularly that, to the best of my knowledge, there are still research gaps in the field.

In the first paper, Varma and Malhotra examined the antecedents of accountant's job satisfaction in an emerging market. Their study aimed to ascertain the mediating effect of organisational commitment on the linkage between task performance and job satisfaction of accountants. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to accountants from India. The results of this study revealed that organisational commitment mediates the linkages between task performance and job satisfaction. It was also empirically confirmed that neither age nor gender of the accountant had any significant effect on the relationship between task performance and job satisfaction.

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Miledi's paper points out the complexity of auditor judgement. The study explores the social and collective foundations of the auditor's judgement and specifically highlights that the dialogical dimension of auditors' judgement is founded on both their interactions with their auditees and their interactions with their colleagues. This qualitative study is based on interviews with 22 audit partners, conducted between March 2013 and October 2016, in France. Confronted with issues such as equivocal and ambiguous circumstances, auditors must question the relevance of the meanings elaborated to act according to the situation (self-criticism or doubt) and must be wise and should not be overconfident towards the information provided by the manager (wisdom). The author concluded that contrary advice helps auditors to improve an alternative point of view and hence reach a consensus.

Abdennadher *et al.* examined the effects of blockchain technology on the accounting and assurance profession in the UAE. Their paper aims to analyse the perceptions of accountants and auditors towards the implementation of blockchain technology in the UAE after the government has decided to transform 50% of government transactions into the blockchain platform since 2021. A semi-structural interview has been conducted with 19 accountants, internal auditors, auditors and risk managers on the potential opportunities and challenges of blockchain technology on accounting and auditing practices in the UAE.

The findings show that the blockchain impacts on the accounting profession in terms of recording of transactions, storing evidence and providing a secured environment for conducting business transactions. For the auditors, the results indicate that the blockchain changes their audit process and strategy. The blockchain has great potential to supplement traditional auditing by providing a low-cost and decentralised audit process and automated audit evidence. The accounting of the companies will not be changed but it will be automated with the development of cryptocurrencies and blockchain activities. The blockchain will be developed in assurance services through the awareness and involvement of accounts and auditors.

The fourth paper treated with Tunisian context and is related to Higher accounting education curriculum development. Khemiri and Dammak intend to highlight specificities of the Tunisian context during this period 1956–1981 based on a historical approach. Two complementary methodologies were used, mainly, documentary study and semi-directive interviews with key actors heavily involved in higher education. The critical accounting framework and Foucault's power–knowledge relationship were mobilised to this end.

The paper provides a general overview of higher accounting education in the Tunisian context, focusing on three specific periods. First, in the post-independence period (1956–1960), the higher accounting education was a very underdeveloped French heritage. Second, during the 1960s, the Tunisian State focused on institutional and structural measures to set up the initial foundation. Those measures were impacted by the Tunisian socialist economic system, the development of capital human and the cultural French influence, at once. Third, the 1970s were essentially marked by the role of university-scholars and professional-accountants to set up a higher accounting curriculum. The market-oriented economy and the higher social equity are assumed to influence the above-mentioned setting-up. The culmination of this extending process was the unification and publication of a first official program of accounting studies, at the start of 1981.

In the same context, Mekaoui *et al.* investigate first the impact of the Tunisian Revolution on internal governance mechanisms especially, the ownership structure and the board of directors' structure on the extent of voluntary disclosure. Second, they study the moderating effect of the Tunisian Revolution on the relationship between the internal corporate governance mechanisms and the voluntary disclosure. They used a content analysis of 362 annual reports to measure the level of voluntary disclosure from 2007 to 2016.

Tunisian companies disclose less voluntary information after the Tunisian Revolution because of a decrease in the disclosure of information related to results, intangible assets, non-financial information and management's discussion and analysis. The authors' findings highlight the importance of the moderating effect of the revolution. After the Tunisian Revolution, a positive relationship was found, on the one hand, between institutional ownership, board size and board independence, and the voluntary disclosure on the other hand. Besides, companies with dual structures and with a high level of foreign ownership are less reluctant to voluntary disclosure. Moreover, different governance mechanisms are related to different types of disclosed information. These relationships were affected by the Tunisian Revolution.

In Saha and Kabra's study, the influence of corporate governance on voluntary disclosure is examined in the Indian context. Their study offers some important theoretical as well as practical connotations for regulators and practitioners operating in India as well as other emerging economies having similar institutional setting.

They focused on the influence of some prominent corporate governance mechanisms such as board size, board independence, role duality, board's gender diversity, ownership concentration, audit committee independence, nomination and remuneration committee and risk management committee. They select market capitalisation based on the top 100 non-financial and non-utility firms listed on Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) as on the 31st March, 2014. Data are drawn from Capitaline Plus database over the period of 2014–2018. Appropriate panel data regression model is applied to examine the influence of corporate governance on voluntary disclosure.

The study reveals significant negative influence of board independence on voluntary disclosure while gender diversity and risk management committee exhibit significant positive influence on the same. The remaining corporate governance mechanisms such as board size, duality, ownership concentration, audit committee independence and nomination and remuneration committee appear to have no significant influence on voluntary disclosure. Analysis into the relationship between corporate governance mechanisms and different types of voluntary disclosure reveals that board independence in particular has strong negative influence on corporate strategic disclosure and forward looking disclosure while gender diversity and risk management committee both exhibit significant positive influence on corporate strategic disclosure and forward looking disclosure, corporate governance disclosure and financial and capital market disclosure. Notably, none of the corporate governance mechanisms under consideration influence human and intellectual capital disclosure.

The last paper is related to familiness and R&D investments relationship. Damak *et al.* use the socio-emotional wealth perspective, considered as a dominant paradigm in the family business field, is the theoretical framework used to report different behaviours ascertained within family firms. This paper focuses on two dimensions of the socio-emotional wealth, namely, family control and influence and family identity. A suspected moderating role played by the firm's life cycle stage on the dimensions is also investigated using panel data. To analyse the results, this paper uses the Smart PLS software on secondary data collected for 76 German family firms.

The empirical results reveal a negative influence of socio-emotional wealth on R&D investments. The prominent effect of the family control and influence dimension on R&D is higher in the first part of a firm life cycle. This study could be considered as an important extension of prior research investigating R&D in family firms. The authors provide a valid empirical construct, the FIBER scale, to capture non-monotonic behaviours in family firms and an enlargement of the family firms and innovation management field of research.

To conclude, this issue will be an invaluable resource to both academics and practitioners. As a matter of fact, the issue will offer a twofold comprehensive view: the challenges that different organisations need to overcome in the light of deep transformations that may incur whatever is related to technology, environment, culture, etc.; as well as concrete implications both theoretical and practical, basically with regard to different organisations and stakeholders, governments, consumers, regulators and policymakers, academics, etc.

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About the Guest Editor

Salma Damak-Ayadi is full Professor of Accounting at IHEC Carthage (Carthage University, Tunisia). She has been the vice president of Carthage University since December 2020. She held the position of the Dean (2016–2017) and the Academic Dean (2012–2016) of IHEC Carthage, Tunisia. She was the coordinator of the national educational and scientific commission for Higher Education from 2016 to 2018. She completed her PhD at CREFIGE, Paris Dauphine University in France. Her research areas include accounting, audit, governance and corporate social responsibility. Her research papers have been published in several international journals (such as *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Corporate Governance*, *Journal of Applied Accounting Research* and *Comptabilité Contrôle Audit*). Besides, she has co-authored numerous books such as "IFRSs in a global world: International and critical perspectives on accounting", Springer Edition. She has a significant teaching experience at the University of Paris Dauphine (France), IHEC Carthage, EPT, UVT (Tunisia). She is a researcher affiliated to CREFIGE (University of Paris Dauphine, France) and a member of LIGUE (University of Manouba, Tunisia). Since 2015, she has been an expert evaluator for the Tunisian Evaluation and Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (IEAQA).