

## EDITORIAL

### RENEWAL IN CONTINUITY

*by Tonino Pencarelli, Francesca Maria Cesaroni, Paola Demartini*

After seventeen years (2001-2017) of managing the journal *Piccola Impresa/Small Business* wisely and efficiently, Professor Giancarlo Ferrero has left his position as director, notwithstanding encouragement from many colleagues to continue after retiring from the University. Following the decision of the management committee of the Association for the Study of Small Business (A.S.P.I.), owner of the journal, starting with issue 1/2018, the *Piccola Impresa/Small Business* will be jointly directed by Professors Tonino Pencarelli as editor-in-chief, Francesca Maria Cesaroni and Paola Demartini as co-editors. The A.S.P.I. management committee has also renewed the journal's structure and composition of the bodies, the details of which are reported on the back cover of issue 1/2018. The new bodies include colleagues from different disciplines and universities, both Italian and international.

The new editorial board is ready to undertake this challenging task entrusted by A.S.P.I.: a radical renewal of the journal as a response to the most recent scientific and editorial trends, yet remaining on the path of continuity and tradition. An important tradition, marked by the historical and cultural heritage, which has been accumulating throughout the years, thanks to the precious and unique contributions of Professor Isa Marchini and Professor Roberto Cafferata, founders and editors-in-chief of the journal, and has been enriched further by the work of Professor Giancarlo Ferrero as the last editor-in-chief of *Piccola Impresa/Small Business*.

Therefore, innovation is the keyword of the new editorial board about to take office. But what are they innovating?

Their first challenge is to increase the journal's potential to welcome valuable scientific contributions, capable of identifying and anticipating emerging themes in the national and international debate on small and medium-sized enterprises that involves scholars from different disciplines such as management, business administration, entrepreneurship, economics, sociology and law.

Their second challenge is to expand the diffusion of these studies to an even greater community of Italian and international scholars, in order to

increase the citation level of the published contributions and thus the bibliometric indexes of the journal and its authors (h index and the like).

Another innovation task is to make the journal a cultural reference platform for Italian and international scholars of small and medium businesses, welcoming thoughts and analyses on this important actor of the national and European economy. In this context, the Italian cultural and scientific tradition offers original interpretative models that can be exported to the international scientific community.

A broader scope is to ensure that *Piccola Impresa/Small Business* is perceived and recognised as a stage for the SMEs debate.

The new editorial board will undertake all these challenges with dedication and the knowledge that *Piccola Impresa/Small Business* has always followed binding objectives since its inception: interdisciplinary contributions; a high quality of publications; anonymous, meticulous and attentive peer reviews; a strong inclination to internationalisation.

Particular attention must be paid to this latter aspect, which has always characterised this journal, as confirmed by its double-language title—Italian and English—and the acceptance of contributions in foreign languages. The international character of this journal has increased over time, and, over the last 10 years, 32% of the articles have been in foreign languages. However, it is our ambition to increase the number of contributions in languages other than Italian, especially English, with the aim to increase the circulation of the journal to colleagues affiliated with foreign universities and consequently increase the citations of published papers. To this end, while maintaining the publication of articles in Italian and other languages, we will encourage publications in English, the standard language of the worldwide scientific community.

It is worth reminding readers and colleagues, in particular, the younger ones, who have only recently come to know this journal, that *Piccola Impresa/Small Business* was founded in 1987 on the initiative of Professor Marchini and Professor Cafferata, who were assisted by a group of academics and researchers of economics, business administration and management. It was then complemented by other scholars of law, industrial economics and management engineering, both Italian and foreigners. The choice to focus on small businesses arose from the awareness of their central role in economic systems, in particular, the Italian one, and the important aspects that differentiate them from large enterprises. The observation of these specific differences was the starting point of a scientific program with the apparent effort to avoid the loss of the identity of small businesses, which were indistinctly analysed in the context of business studies, traditionally oriented to large enterprises.

At the same time, the intent was to investigate the specific aspects of small businesses in order to build more suitable theoretical-interpretative

models and propose solutions and tools, with normative logic, to make them more effective.

With these intentions, the journal has played an essential role in promoting and fostering scientific contributions to increase knowledge about small businesses. At the same time, it has been proposed as the meeting ground between the academic world and the business world by encouraging a constructive debate on the different aspects of small businesses, such as management, finance, strategic management, leadership, human resources, organisation, women and minority entrepreneurs, quality management, accounting and financial reporting, innovation technology, industrial districts, marketing and management, etc. The journal's aim was also to contribute to the qualification of studies in the small business sector.

The interdisciplinary Approach, open and international, which today is considered a must for the development of research, had limited diffusion in Italy in many disciplines at the beginning of the XXI century. It is worth recalling, particularly for the younger scholars, that the journal was founded and developed when the Internet was not yet widespread. This underlines that publishing contributions in foreign languages was a precursory and highly distinctive choice in those times.

With Professor Giancarlo Ferrero as director, the journal's management committee, in addition to adopting and developing the goals mentioned above with renewed strength, extended the circulation of the journal to many local institutions, bodies and associations that operate in favour of small businesses. As an example, in this context, a section dedicated to case-studies, as well as a new section called Legal Focus, dedicated to legal news and detailed legal analyses related to small business, have been added. Moreover, several international conferences and workshops were organised: *Small Businesses and Globalization: a Comparison between Different Market Strategies* (2008); *SME Innovation Processes - Challenges Beyond the Crisis* (2011); *Re-positioning of SMEs in the Global Value System* (2015).

Finally, in the last ten years, the journal has started an additional editorial renewal process to offer more services to readers and authors and to face the advent of new information and communication technologies. This renewal resulted in the adoption of the Open Journal Source platform, managed above all by Dr Andrea Buratti, to whom a well-deserved thanks is owed for his valuable editorial work. Moreover, since 2014, all papers published from 2007 to 2016 are available on the website <http://rivistapiccolaimpresa.uniurb.it>, and since 2016 the journal has only been published online.

The new editorial board, still carrying on the traditions of the journal and continuing with the renewal process started by its predecessors, will strengthen and improve digitalisation. This process is required to adapt to the latest research and use of scientific papers, increase the dissemination

of the journal abroad and improve the availability of the published papers on generic and academic search engines, such as Google Scholar. All this will result in an improvement of the bibliometric indexes of *Piccola Impresa/Small Business*.

Another goal of the new editorial board is to continue—together with A.S.P.I.—organising conferences, workshops and seminars aimed both at scholars and professionals of small businesses. The aim is to foster scientific debate and develop support policies for SMEs, also drawing attention to new trends on the strategic and organisational behaviour of enterprises facing changes. These events are introduced as opportunities for reflection for all Italian and foreign scholars interested in SMEs and those willing to contribute to the development of knowledge in a sector that is very significant in the economy of many countries. After all, the SME world, notwithstanding the alternating economic conjunctures, continues to be considered by governments and supranational organisations (such as ONU and the European Union, to name a few) as a vital sector to invest in to promote a world model of sustainable economic growth.

In order to make the journal's contribution to small business and entrepreneurship studies even more effective and comprehensive, the new editorial board will publish special monographic issues, a common practice for many journals. Their aim is also to enhance the expertise of scholars whose research activity is only marginally oriented to small businesses. These scholars, in fact, could be encouraged to focus their scientific contribution on small and medium-sized firms, thus adding value to the entire scientific production.

We also hope that the Italian and foreign scholar's community can pay renewed attention to this editorial project that intends to innovate along the path of tradition and cultural heritage that the journal has accumulated over the past thirty years. This heritage has left us with a wealth of studies that, if reread carefully, express great vitality, modernity of thought and methods for the investigation of what, in Italy and most of the world, still represents the most widespread model in economics: the small business. This business model needs to be investigated with appropriate conceptual tools, analytic categories and research methods. The latter must be developed starting from the peculiarities that distinguish small businesses, avoiding the adoption, without a critical review, of theoretical frameworks developed in the context of management studies, as they were, and still are, predominately focused on large corporations.

The new editorial board and bodies of the journal wish to thank all those who are willing to share this project.

In the meantime, we will continue to work enthusiastically for *Piccola Impresa/Small Business*, with the aim to increase its scientific value and strengthen its international character, also targeting the improvement of its

ranking, both within the Italian Academy of Business Administration and Management (AIDEA) and internationally.

As a conclusion of this editorial, we would like to thank all the members of the management bodies and all the scholars who, with their work, their ideas and their studies, have allowed this journal to be a reference point for SMEs studies for the past last thirty years. A special thanks and an affectionate and grateful salute goes to the outgoing Director Giancarlo Ferrero, professor emeritus of the University of Urbino, for his valuable work, and we wish him further success and satisfaction in his next phase in life.

Finally, a heartfelt thanks to everyone who accepted the role of associate editors and who take part in the editorial board. We are sure that we will receive valuable contributions of ideas and support for the management of the journal. We would also like to send everyone best wish in their work, knowing for certain that together we will be able to make the most of the cultural heritage received.

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