



Research Paper

## Spotlighting Intellectual Capital to Compete For the Future

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**ABSTRACT:- Purpose**– The aim of this paper is to reflect on the empowering elements of Intellectual Capital (IC) for strategic differentiation by leveraging the path-breaking works of IC thought leaders and scholars.

**Design/methodology/approach**–This article is based on the authors’ reflections of the past and vision for the future to identify possible research paths useful for theoretical and practical relevance in the domain of IC-driven business.

**Findings**– IC literature is rich in theory matured over the past two decades. The work of scholars, practitioners and thought leaders need to be integrated to pave the way for an empowered, maximization approach to reap the benefits of IC power by all stakeholders..

**Practical implications**–It is hoped that the implication of this paper for IC research and practice is to evolve a leading-edge approach bundling together the total resources of an organisation. This paper makes a case to deploy the total capitals of an organisation to achieve corporate performance. This would warrant an ‘interdependent and integrated monolithic-IC recipe’ which this paper seeks to map.

**Originality/value**– The paper is a first attempt to present “an optimization IC model providing a theoretical map culled from IC thought leadership detailing all resources. It provides a deeper understanding of how companies can create and realize value for impact by leveraging both financial (physical and financial) and non-financial (intellectual, social, environmental, governance) capitals and report them externally for decision-making by stakeholders.

**Keywords:-** Market Value, Intellectual Capital, IC reporting, Value Chain Blueprint, Sustainability, Governance.

### I. INTRODUCTION

There is a belief among financial accountants that market value and future profits (two contemporary grand theories of IC) have already been factored into the value of the firm, regardless of the drivers of value or future profits (Dumay, 2012, p.5). These grand theories represent barriers to the use of IC practices by many mainstream organisations (Dumay, 2012, p.6). To progress this agenda, practitioners and academics need to abandon grand theories and develop what Llewellyn refers to as differentiation theories of practice (Llewellyn, 2003, pp. 670-2). In support of this, Guthrie et al., (2012) in their study of ten years of published IC research (2000-2009) have identified an emerging “third stage” of IC research. This theory opines that the focus of past research into IC has in the past been to blame for some of the lack of adoption of IC because of “a concentration of top-down ostensive research instead of bottom-up performative research” (see also Dumay, 2009b, 2009c). As grand theories are “formulated at a high level of generality and reflect ideas that have been arrived at by thinking through the ideas and relationships in an abstract way – rather than being derived from empirical research”. (Llewellyn, 2003, p. 676), the researcher must develop the skills required for *critical* (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000, p. 20) and *performative research* (Mouritsen, 2006, pp. 829-32). Hence, this paper is an attempt to cause people to think more clearly about what IC is and how it can be better managed to create value in the “new economy” (Dumay, 2012, p.13)

### II. THE NEED FOR A BIG-PICTURE THINKING OF BUSINESS

The stock market has traditionally been viewed as an indicator or “predictor” of the economy. Many believe that large decreases in stock prices are reflective of a future recession, whereas bullish trend in stock prices suggest future economic growth. (Waliullah, 2010). Apart from being used as a measure of the wealth of

an organization in terms of its intangible assets, intellectual capital concepts can also be used for strategic analysis and to drive organizational strategy (Roos et al., 2001; Sveiby, 2001; chatzkel, 2002). Intellectual capital can be defined as intellectual resources that have been “formalized, captured and leveraged” to create assets of higher value (Prusak,1998). Also, IC is the “stuff that you cannot see but makes you rich” (Stewart, 1997), “weightless wealth” (Andriessen and Tissen, 2000) or “unseen wealth” (Blair and Wallman, 2000) and generally contributes to strategic debates in the board room and policy debates in government (Teece, 2000). To date, many business disciplines (such as marketing and human resource management) have recognised the importance of intangible resources (Marr and Mustaghfir, 2005) and researchers have developed models for their measurement and reporting (e.g. the Intangible Asset Monitor, Sveiby, 1997a). These have been well received by organisations and countries around the world, for example by the European Commission, Germany, Japan and China (Edvinsson, 2013).

### **III. MARKET VALUE AND INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL**

Concepts such as intellectual capital (Edvinsson and Malone, 1997; Roos et al., 1997),intangibles (Lev, 2001; Sveiby, 1997) or even digital capital (Tapscott et al., 2000) assume a complementary approach in the traditional view of knowledge, including the processes linked with its dynamic capture, transformation and dissemination (Nonaka and Takeuchi,1995). With those terms having become a part of the business lexicon, the increasingly competitive business environment makes continuous innovation of products, services and business processes (supply chains, for example) a matter of life and death for companies in practically every economic sector. Innovation, in turn, is achieved by massive investment in intangibles: R&D, acquired technology, information systems, brands and talented employees. Over the past two or three decades, intangible assets rose to become the major value drivers of businesses, high- as well as low-tech, manufacturing and services alike. Physical assets are now, by and large, commodities, available to all. All this is hardly controversial. The remarkable worldwide intangibles-knowledge revolution has gone unnoticed by accountants. Coca-Cola’s major asset, its unique brand, which surely accounts for most of its \$147 billion capitalization, in March 2011 is nowhere to be seen on its balance sheet (yet “vital” Coke assets such as the \$150 million short-term investments or its \$1.6 billion inventory are proudly exhibited on the assets list) (Lev, 2012, p. 156).

Most investments in growth – R&D, brand enhancement, software, employee training – are immediately expensed in the income statement, thereby understating corporate earnings and asset values. Not just growth investments are expensed; the value of stock options, a staple of growth companies, is expensed too. And the intangible assets built during the growth process – patents, trademarks, unique business processes – are absent from the balance sheet. Investors are, therefore, in the dark regarding much of the value creation of growth companies, until it is finally reflected in sales and earnings. This adversely affects the fund-raising required to finance the growth, as well as suppliers’ and customers’ confidence in the long-term viability of the company. It is, therefore, incumbent on managers to augment the largely deficient GAAP-based financial reported with targeted information (Lev, 2012, p. 308) with a path-to-growth template with value drivers (including intermediate and ultimate outputs) like innovation, customers, human capital, connectivity, internet activities, organisation capital and risk management (Lev, 2012, p. 165).

Market value is both known and unknown. Nevertheless, in general, financial market estimates use limited information-based primarily on financial performance and tangible assets – with information on intangible assets quite scarce even in the best of cases (Lev, 2001). Further, performances based on earnings and cash flow misses a major part of what IC is all about – creating future growth. With the economy shifting to an increased reliance on intangible/intellectual assets (Lev, 2001), the use and recognition of these resources is both important and topical. To galvanize this perspective, non-accounting researchers defined “intellectual capital” as the “difference between the firm’s market value and its book value” (e.g., Edvinsson and Malone, 1997; Stewart, 1997; Sveiby, 1997a; Mouritsen et al., 2001).The significant gap between corporate market value and accounting book value has invited wider research on the unexplained value or hidden reserve ignored by current financial reporting standards (FRS) and accounting professionals (Amir et al., 2003; Ballou et al., 2004; Daum, 2003; Edvinsson and Malone, 1997; Kane and Unal, 1990; Leadbetter, 1999; Lev, 2001; Sullivan and Sullivan, 2000). The readily available measure of enterprise value in a company’s accounts, the book value of tangible assets, is typically just a fraction of the company’s market value. For companies in the new economy, book value is an even smaller fraction of market value, because these companies rely more on intangible assets than old economy companies do. Hence, the rest of this enterprise value must come from adjusting for the replacement cost of tangible assets and including intangible assets. When price inflation, economic depreciation, and technical progress are modest, the difference between the replacement cost and the book value of tangible assets is relatively small. This means that intangibles account for the remaining difference (Bond and Cummins, 2000)

#### **IV. THE IRONY OF IC REPORTING**

Data from U.K. show that when R&D is capitalized, the company's market valuation fully reflects its expected outcomes, whereas lower market values are accorded to companies that expense R&D (Oswald and Zarowin, 2007). The problem is further brought to light by Lev (2012): "The absence of internally generated intangibles from corporate balance sheets and the consequent distorted earnings are bad enough; no less detrimental to transparency and the quality of investors' information is the inconsistent and logic-defying GAAP treatment of intangibles. While the cost of internally generated patents, brands, trade marks or the set-up of internet operations and business processes are immediately expensed, similar intangibles when acquired in M & A or other transactions are capitalized and considered as assets. This inconsistency impedes attempt to compare performance (earnings or ROE) of companies across time or within sectors. A company that switches, for example, from being primarily a developer of drugs to an acquirer, will boost significantly both its earnings and assets values, while performing essentially the same economic activity as before the switch. Furthermore, the absence of any systematic GAAP disclosure on the company's crucial value-creation chain – the progress of developing of new products, services, or processes (Value chain blueprint of Lev, 2001) – denies investors (and often managers) of vital information needed to assess investments and production decisions" (p.157). If such harmful consequences are documented for R&D, an activity whose total outlay is disclosed to investors, imagine the information asymmetries and related uncertainties created by other types of intangible investments that are totally obscured in financial reports. GAAP efficiencies are by no means restricted to intangibles. The ever-increasing impact on earnings and asset values of managerial estimates (fair value accounting, stock option expense, or pension liabilities) subject to considerable errors and frequent manipulations – diminished too the reliability of accounting data. One cannot rely on GAAP to provide all of investors' information needs. Management has to supplement accounting information. But what exactly are the information needs of investors and what is the best way of providing these needs while minimizing competitive harm and litigation exposure?(Lev,2012, p. 158).

#### **V. THE IC BUSINESS MODEL TO ACHIEVE VALUE IMPACT: A NEW OUTLOOK**

The IC field is awash with different terms, concepts and metaphors. Yet that can often be more confusing than enlightening (Marr, 2005). There are numerous intangibles asset models being developed to supplement traditional accounting methods (Shand, 1999; sveiby, 2001; Bontis, 2000; Hurwitz et al., 2002). However, these models service only one organization – usually the one that it was designed for or that designed it (Bontis, 2000). Current intangible asset models tend to focus on one or two classes of intangibles for specific firms (Hurwitz et al., 2002). There is a business need to view intangible assets within the context of the business enterprise and to value them on a common set of dimensions (stewart, 2001)

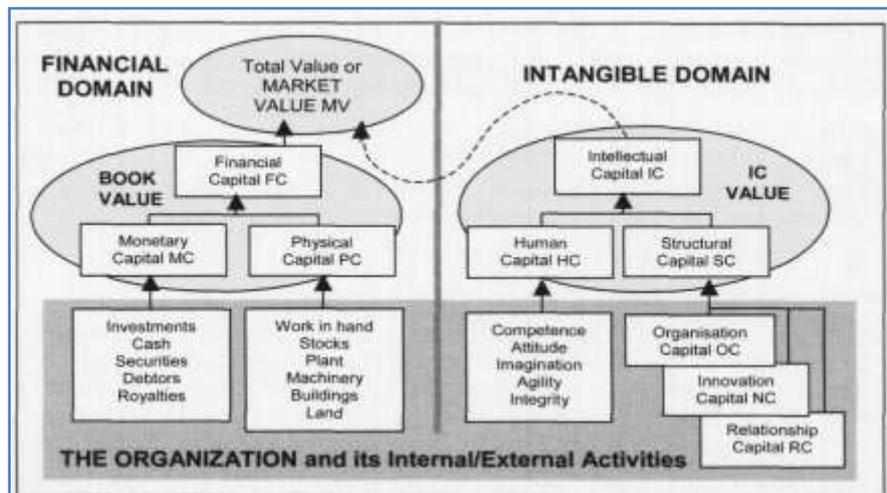
The key components of IC are poorly understood, inadequately identified, inefficiently managed and inconsistently reported(Sujan and Abeysekeara, 2007, p.72). But, according to stakeholder theory, the disclosure of financial, social and environmental information (i.e., corporate sustainability disclosure—CSD) is part of the dialogue between a company and its stakeholders and it provides information on a company's activities that legitimise its behaviour, educate and inform, and change perceptions and expectations (Gray et al. 1995; Adams and Larrinaga- Gonza'lez2007). While the effects of corporate governance on financial disclosure have received considerable attention (Klein 2002; Anderson et al. 2004; Beekes et al. 2004), we have much to learn about the impact of governance on voluntary disclosure and especially sustainability disclosure (Haniffa and Cooke 2005). Guthrie and Petty's (2000) analysis of IC disclosure practices suggests that disclosure has been expressed in discursive rather than numerical terms and that little attempt has been made to translate the rhetoric into measures that enable performance of various forms of IC to be evaluated (Bhasin, 2011). The idea of corporate purpose by the Nobel Laureate economist Milton Friedman that "the social responsibility of Business is to increase its profits" fell in the 1980s on the fertile ground of hostile takeovers. Under a raider's siege , managers and their boards quickly go the message that an effective defense against takeover and job loss is to maximize shareholder value.....Shareholder value enhancement regained its footing (Lev,2012, pp. 294-295).

Industry requires a method to develop tools that support the command of and access to effective utilization of business resources and knowledge, which support the capability of business for implementing cost and differentiation advantages. Is a validated framework the answer? Or should we take a few steps back to refine and establish the initial framework? (Green,2006, p.32). In conjunction with this proposition, we collate extant literature for researchers, practitioners and students to appreciate the power of IC in its totality to benefit all stakeholders.

##### **5.1. Inputs**

Inputs of capitals and resources as Figure 1 shows involve both financial and non financial (intangibles). Research suggests that investors' ability to use nonfinancial and financial information consistently

across companies and time is impaired by noncomparability in measures or formats. Such noncomparability likely reduces the value of nonfinancial performance measures and may lead investors to focus primarily on financial measures for assessing performance (Maines et al., 2002). How market value is created through the financial domain and intangible domain is given in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: A typical IC framework as given in the literature with financial and nonfinancial (Intangible) domains (M'Pherson, P.K., and Pike, S., (2001, p. 252)**

Yet, There is a need for a forward-looking IC Business model to navigate strategic inflection points (SIPs) in today's blue oceans to achieve business profitability(financial) and sustainability (non-financial) by doing the right things, doing things right, using the right things and guiding the right things. In this context, a total appreciation of IC is warranted so that intangible resources (like the tangible ones) could be well comprehended and industry/business could elevate IC to its rightful springboard of economic activity in the contemporary world.

#### **5.1.1. Intangible domain / Intellectual capital (Non-financial) :**

Intangible assets are non-financial and require both nonfinancial and financial measures (Sveiby, 1997a, p.162). There is a global trend and demand for more useful and comprehensive non-financial information about the operating activities of firms (Anderson and Epstein, 1996). Luft and Shields (2002) say that nonfinancial measures often create a focus on the future, as opposed to the historical focus of financial measures. Various individuals and groups have called for greater disclosure of nonfinancial information by corporations (AICPA 1994; Boutlon et al. 2000; Norton 2000; Eccles et al. 2001; Lev 2001). These individuals and groups argue that traditional financial measures have diminished relevance due to changes in business models said to reflect the "new economy". Critics raise concerns about the backward-looking nature of financial measures and suggest that financial measures provide little insight into a company's future performance. The demand for external reporting of nonfinancial performance measures also has been driven by companies' adoption of internal performance evaluation frameworks that incorporate nonfinancial measures, such as the Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan and Norton, 1992). Investors have asked that external reporting include performance evaluation metrics used internally and that these measures be integrated into a discussion of the company's strategy. Frameworks such as Pricewaterhousecoopers' ValueReporting™ model (Eccles et al. 2001) exemplify such an approach.

The IC framework is rooted in Sveiby's (1997a) original tripartite categorization of IC, a widely accepted classification and definition of IC categories (Boedker et al, 2005, p.522). Three IC categories: external capital, internal capital and human capital developed by Sveiby (1997a) became a common framework used by more recent research studies. A study of the top 20 firms (by market capitalization) listed on the Australian Stock exchange in 2004 (Sujan and Abeysekera 2007, pp.77-78) uses the tripartite framework. The attributes of the three IC categories are derived from previous research studies (Guthrie and Petty, 2000). Some studies such as Guthrie et al (2004), Whiting and Miller (2008), Whiting and Woodcock (2011) and (Liao, et al., 2013) modified the Sveiby framework by adding more IC attributes to meet the specific purpose of their research (Table I).

An Australian research showed that most of the IC information reported related to external capital (40%) Reporting of human capital and internal capital occurred equally at 30% (Sujan and Abeysekera, 2007,

p.72). Sveiby advocates that enterprises identify appropriate metrics in respect of growth and renewal, efficiency and stability. One of the attributes that distinguishes the Intangible Asset Monitor of Sveiby (1997) from other reporting frameworks is that it explicitly commends the use of a limited narrative to provide further information about the measures that it incorporates. Rather than restrict the account of intangibles (growth) to a range of well chosen metrics, the

**Table I; .Description of IC attributes (Liao, et al., 2013)**

Item	Description
<i>1</i>	<i>Internal capital</i>
1.1	IC property Comprises patents, copyrights, intangible assets, license, franchise and trademarks
1.2	Infrastructure Comprises management philosophy, leadership, internal communication, corporate strategy, and corporate culture
1.3	Information Technology Comprises network, computer software, electronic data interchange, information management and telecommunication
1.4	Research and development (R&D) Comprises innovation, trade secrets, methodologies and therapy
1.5	Subsidiaries Comprises contribution and effect from subsidiaries
<i>2</i>	<i>External capital</i>
2.1	Goodwill Comprises rewards, brand, brand recognition and brand development
2.2	Stakeholder Relationship Comprises social responsibility, government relationship, waste reduction and environment protection
2.3	Customer Comprises customer satisfaction, customer recognition, customer loyalty, customer retention, and customer support
2.4	Market Comprises distribution channel market share and market expansion
2.5	Partnership Comprises partnership and joint venture
<i>3</i>	<i>Human capital</i>
3.1	Employee capital Comprises intelligence, know-how, education/training, competence, expertise, brain power, specialist, human resource
3.2	Employee satisfaction Comprises employee support, employee safety, employee retention, work-family balance, employee motivation and employee satisfaction

Intangible Asset Monitor therefore commends a balance of numbers and narratives, an approach that was successfully embraced by Celemi, a Swedish educational consultancy, on its website (Roslender, 2009). Sveiby advises that the balance sheet produced by the Intangibles Assets Monitor should not exceed one page. Therefore it is recommended to use one or two indicators in each category (sanchez-Canizares, et al., 2007)

### 5.1.2. Process: IC for Operational Excellence of the Value Chain

Organizations need to be more internally focused on their core processes. They need to develop IC management practices that focus on how they can better reengineer their organisations towards bottom-up processes that make clear the possible causal relationships between their people, processes and stakeholders (human, structural and relational capital). A particular not ever reduce all of the ambiguity in relation to what creates value for their firm but making continued investments in what appears to work by developing internal knowledge is better than gambling on what works in someone else's business (Dumay, 2012, p.12)

The definition of IC by Lev (2001), Daum (2002), Rastogi (2003) and Mouritsenet al.(2004) appears to have two things in common:(1) intangible cannot stand by itself, and hence, it cannot be valued separately from other assets; and(2) IC is the result of the network effect of utilizing various intellectual, human capital and organizational resources. In this context, value chain creation starts with a review of the business enterprise vision, strategy and the roles for its intangible assets. The value chain bolsters the business by identifying all the ways its intangible could or should bring value to the business (Sullivan , 2000). The value chain:

- a) Is a unique combination of activities that together create competitive value-added products or services for a company (McNurlin and Sprague,1998; von krogh et al., 1998)
- b) Consists of tasks and activities that are organized into workflow applications that eliminate waste – unnecessary and redundant tasks and automation of routine tasks (Alter, 2002)
- c) Provides a framework to view how a company can build and sustain a competitive advantage over its competitors that ensures long-term profitability and survival (Morecroft and Sternman, 2000)

- d) Components are interdependent and represent business components that are interdependent (Von Krogh et al., 1998) . But because the true value of intangible assets becomes apparent only within a specific context, the entire enterprise value creation model (figure.2), in which corporate resources and tangible as well as

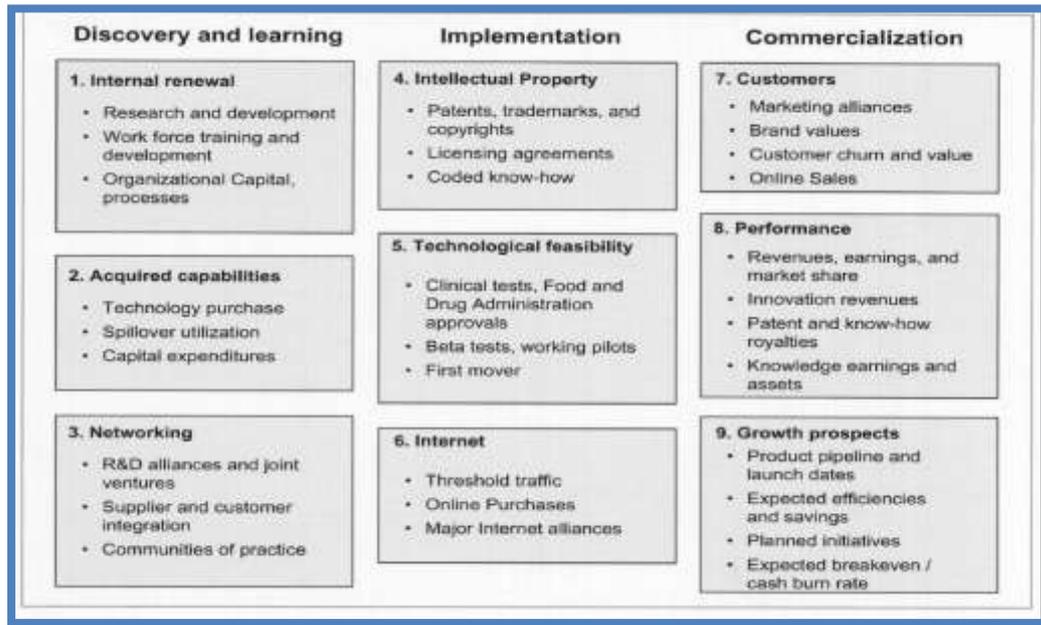


Figure2: Value Creation: Value Chain Scoreboard Model (Lev, 2001, p.111)

intangible assets are created and – in particular – utilized must be taken into account (Lev, 2001), the fundamental economic process of innovation that starts with the discovery of new products, services or processes, proceeds through the development and implementation phase to commercialization of the new produces and services. This innovation process is where much of the economic value is created in today’s knowledge based businesses. To measure the performance of this process would represent a step forward both for internal decisionmaking and external reporting. The important information for managers and investors concerns the enterprise’s value chain(Lev and Daum, 2004, p.10)

- e) Logic enables businesses to deploy their resources to capture potential value (McNair and Vangermeersch, 1998)
- f) Is dynamic – it is re-created daily by its components and their relationships (Alter, 2002; Porter, 1980)

Added to the value chain process, an important prerequisite for the ability of corporate management to manage for sustainable value creation is the availability of objective information on the status of all relevant value creating activities. Figure 3shows a general model of the systematic development of a holistic enterprise performance measurement system that describes a holistic view for enterprise control – the Tableau de Board (Epstein and Manzoni, 1997; Gray and Pesqueux, 1993; Daum, 2002). This business scorecard enables the systematic monitoring of performance as well as of emerging opportunities and risk in the company’s overall value creation system. It is a cornerstone of the new enterprise management system (Lev and Daum, 2004, p.10). This type of analysis might become an integral part of a company’s performance management process in the future to identify in a systematic way optimization opportunities from a total factor productivity perspective (Lev and Daum, 2004, p.16) resulting in enhanced productivity, profit and shareholder value (Lev and Daum, 2004, p.13). This approach could contribute to standardized measurement and reporting of how intangibles drive performance (Lev and Daum, 2004, p.17).

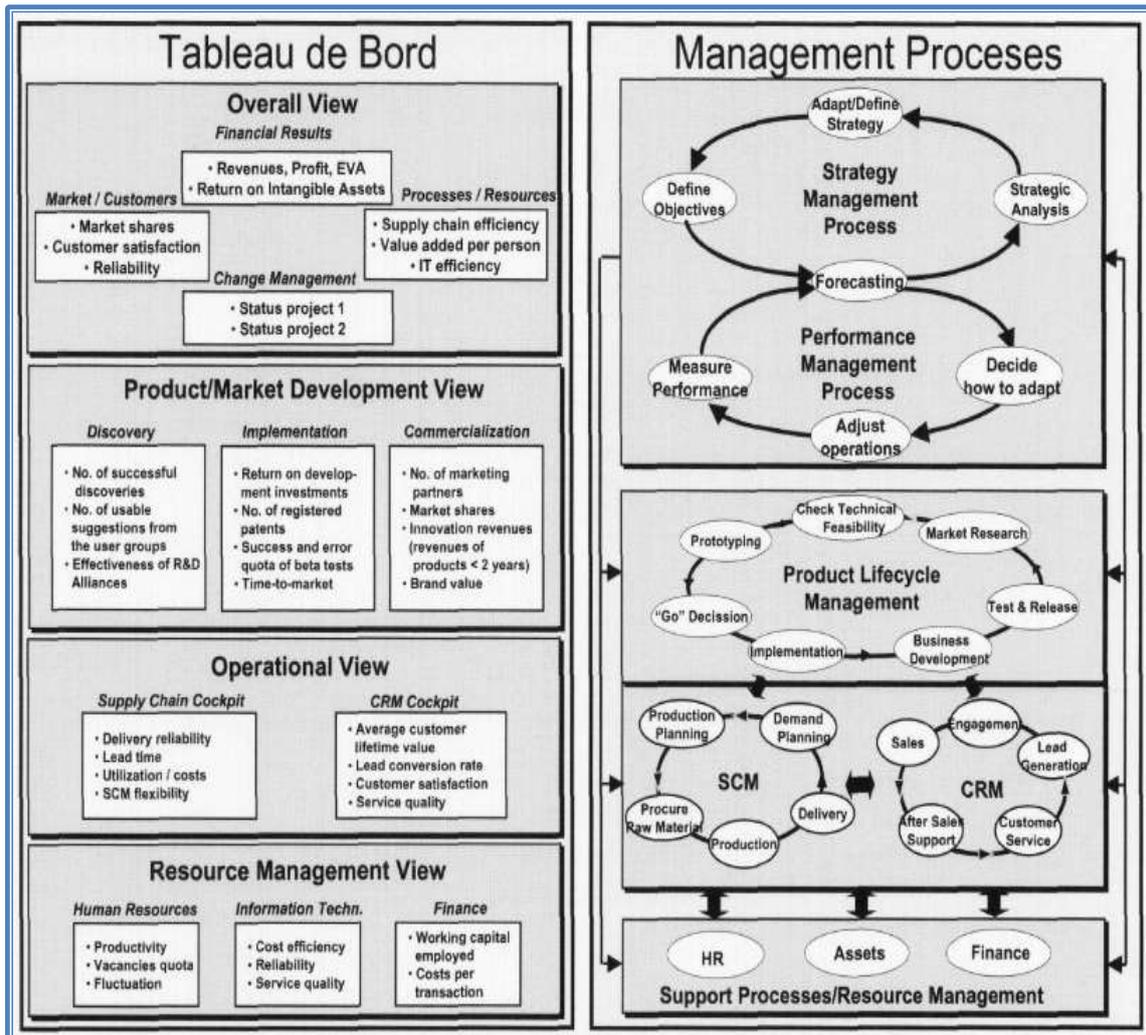
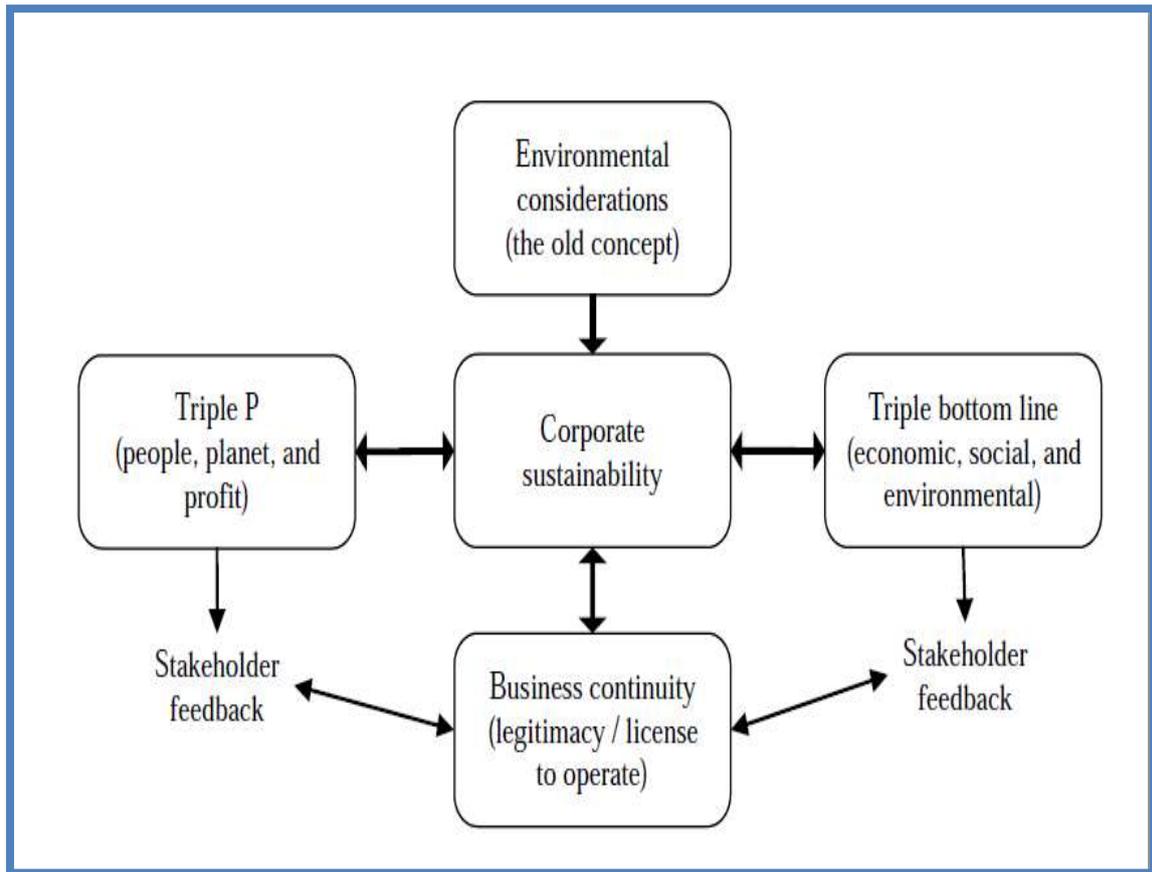


Figure 3: The Management systems (Daum, 2002)

Having said that operational excellence is at the heart of an organisation not by and large adduced by current IC research, we postulate that Sustainability (social and environmental and governance) reporting helps organizations to set goals, measure performance, and manage change in order to make their operations more sustainable. A sustainability report conveys disclosures on an organization's impacts – be they positive or negative – on the environment, society and the economy (Global Reporting Initiative, 2013, p.3). Such Voluntary disclosure of IC items will help firms enhance their legitimacy and survive (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Woodward et al., 2001). But remember, if you do not create economic value from your business, you will not be socially responsible for long (Lev, 2012, p. 215).

### 5.1.3. Sustainability: Environmental and Social

The concepts of sustainability in shown in Figure 4. Solomon (2010) emphasized the need for strong corporate governance and accountability infrastructure to institutionalize the concept. The figure illustrates three key concepts. First, it shows that earlier conceptualizations of sustainability had environmental connotations and thus presented a narrow view of the concept. Second, the figure highlights that sustainability is frequently discussed in the literature using the terms “triple P” and “TBL”. These are essentially two different perspectives on the same concept. Corporate sustainability heavily emphasizes the need to meet key stakeholder requirements in a systematic manner (Figure 4). This in turn provides the organization with legitimacy and a license to continue its business (Asif et al, 2011)



**Figure 4: The concept of sustainability (Asif et al, 2011, p. 355, )**

Stakeholder theory recognizes that organizations have obligations not only to shareholders, but also to other interest groups such as customers, suppliers, employees and the wider community, amongst many others (Freeman, 1984). Meeting the demands of these stakeholders is necessary for a variety of reasons, including sustaining a continued supply of resources and for legitimation reasons (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Suchman, 1995). Any approach to corporate sustainability must, therefore, have an explicit focus on stakeholder requirements. Corporate sustainability is now widely conceptualized in terms of the “triple bottom line” (TBL) (Elkington, 1999). In short, this means that organizations need to explicitly consider the environmental, economic and social impacts (positive and negative) of their activities (Edgeman, 1998; Edgeman and Hensler, 2001; Hediger, 1999). This concept is also symbolized in literature by “triple P (planet, people, and profit)” which implies that a company creates more value over the long run and encounters fewer risks if it takes into consideration the environmental (planet), social (people), and financial issues (profit) as compared to a company that focuses merely on the profit (Asif et al., 2008; Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002; Holliday, 2001; Salzmann et al., 2005; Shrivastava, 1995).

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI, 2013) also provides a recommended framework for organizations interested in reporting on their sustainability performance (Table III). Smith and Lenssen (2009) and Searcy et al. (2006) have suggested that the case for sustainability is strong when it is integrated with mainstream business processes. It is suggested that organizations need

**Table III. Categories and aspect in the G4 sustainability reporting guidelines of (GRI, 2013, p. 9)**

Category	Economic	Environmental			
Aspects <sup>II</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Performance</li> <li>• Market Presence</li> <li>• Indirect Economic Impacts</li> <li>• Procurement Practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials</li> <li>• Energy</li> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Biodiversity</li> <li>• Emissions</li> <li>• Effluents and Waste</li> <li>• Products and Services</li> <li>• Compliance</li> <li>• Transport</li> <li>• Overall</li> <li>• Supplier Environmental Assessment</li> <li>• Environmental Grievance Mechanisms</li> </ul>			
Category	Social				
Sub-Categories	Labor Practices and Decent Work	Human Rights	Society	Product Responsibility	
Aspects <sup>II</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Labor/Management Relations</li> <li>• Occupational Health and Safety</li> <li>• Training and Education</li> <li>• Diversity and Equal Opportunity</li> <li>• Equal Remuneration for Women and Men</li> <li>• Supplier Assessment for Labor Practices</li> <li>• Labor Practices Grievance Mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment</li> <li>• Non-discrimination</li> <li>• Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining</li> <li>• Child Labor</li> <li>• Forced or Compulsory Labor</li> <li>• Security Practices</li> <li>• Indigenous Rights</li> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Supplier Human Rights Assessment</li> <li>• Human Rights Grievance Mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Communities</li> <li>• Anti-corruption</li> <li>• Public Policy</li> <li>• Anti-competitive Behavior</li> <li>• Compliance</li> <li>• Supplier Assessment for Impacts on Society</li> <li>• Grievance Mechanisms for Impacts on Society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Health and Safety</li> <li>• Product and Service Labeling</li> <li>• Marketing Communications</li> <li>• Customer Privacy</li> <li>• Compliance</li> </ul>	

To develop a shared interpretation of knowledge to effectively deal with emerging problems and to understand their organization and their surroundings better (Daft and Weick, 1984; Weick, 1987). Rocha et al. (2007) opines that an integrated management system (IMS) facilitates the integration of sustainability into business processes and, thus, a separate ISO standard is not required for corporate sustainability.

#### 5.1.4. Governance

Corporate governance is a framework of legal, institutional, and cultural factors shaping the patterns of influence that stakeholders exert on managerial decision-making (Weimer and Pape, 1999). Holland (2006a: 147) found that boards of directors are at the heart of corporate financial communications, having active roles in the disclosure process related to: (1) the provision of primary information regarding the corporate value-creation process, and their contribution towards it; (2) the provision of information about themselves in terms of their skills in managing the business; (3) the manner in which they are organized to conduct financial communications; (4) their reputation for disclosure honesty; and (5) information about how their own pay and wealth is tied to company fortunes. Gibbins et al. (1990) suggest that the wider expertise and experience of non-executive directors on the board will encourage management to take a disclosure position beyond a ritualistic, uncritical adherence to prescribed norms, to a more proactive position reflecting the value relevance of intellectual capital

to stakeholders. Because, as Cotter and Silvester (2003) argue independent non-executive directors are in a better position to monitor executive management. Beasley (1996) argues that poorly governed firms with powerful insiders and CEOs, are more likely to be associated with higher levels of financial statement fraud. Corporate governance refers to the way in which companies are governed and managers are accountable to the stakeholders of the companies (Dahya et al. 1996, Selznick, 1992, p.290) suggests that “governance takes account of all the interests that affect the viability, competence and moral character of an enterprise”. Moreover, the corporate governance system is the result of a series of interrelated attributes (Zahra and Pearce 1989), all of which are relevant in order to ensure sound governance.

Does effective governance lead to superior company performance, fewer improprieties and scandals (earnings manipulations, restatements, lawsuits or SEC investigations), or perhaps enlightened and socially responsible corporate behavior? (Lev, 2012, p.263). Mainstream perspectives on corporate governance are typified by the OECD prescription. Viz., (1) Protect shareholders’ rights. (2) Ensure the equitable treatment of all shareholders, including minority and foreign shareholders. All shareholders should have the opportunity to obtain redress for violation of their rights. (3) Recognise the rights of stakeholders as established by law and encourage active co-operation between corporations and stakeholders in creating wealth, jobs, and the sustainability of financially sound enterprises. (4) Ensure that timely and accurate disclosure is made on all material matters regarding the corporation, including the financial situation, performance, ownership and governance of the company. (5) Ensure the strategic guidance of the company, the effective monitoring of management by the board, and the board’s accountability to the company and the shareholders. (Cartwright and Craig, 2006, pp.742-743). On flipside, perceived governance weaknesses invite distracting shareholder proposals and proxy contests to rectify the alleged weaknesses (Lev, 2012, p. 264).

A governance Model with six pathways (Figure 5) is adduced. First, strong and persuasive leadership may be forthcoming from governments. This effect is complementary rather than central. Second, “ethical” capital markets already exist. While the current specification of “ethical” does not necessarily extend as far as the threshold of sustainability, the group of investors participating in these markets is amenable to change of this kind, and so can be expected to yield opinion leaders as public concerns build. The third pathway – more general shareholder awareness and concern – is crucial to sustainability, because it is the mainstream influence. In practice, this pathway will be slow, with much reactionary behaviour, although assisted by some “ethical” investor role models. Several of the case studies of applications of The Natural Step (Nattrass and Altomare, 1999) indicate tolerance of shareholders for trade-off of marginal financial performance in favour of social and environmental outcomes that are more favourable. The key attribute of these businesses is that they have highly differentiated market positions that yield relatively high gross margins that serve as a “tolerance buffer” for shareholders. Shareholders in businesses operating in commodity markets offer slim gross margins that could be much less tolerant.

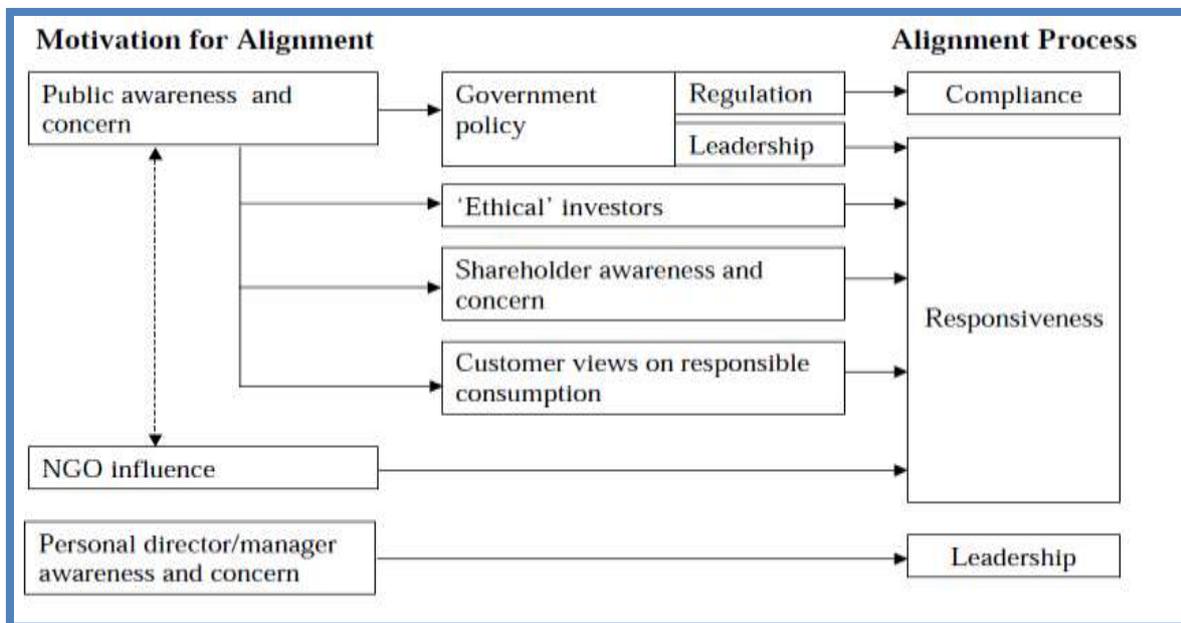


Figure 5: Pathways for aligning corporate governance with global sustainability (Source: Cartwright and Craig, 2006, p.747)

The fourth pathway arises from particular public groups acting in their roles as consumers, and evincing principles of responsible consumption. This places pressure on governance within the mainstream commercial tradition of meeting consumer needs, but also alerts directors and managers to the nature of environmental concerns. The sixth pathway recognises that NGOs tend to lead and inform public awareness and concern, and are also responsive to it. Some of the actions of organisations such as Greenpeace have had a substantial and direct impact on governance thinking, and this pathway appears likely to strengthen. Of course, other NGOs, such as business roundtables, tend to have the opposite influence. The last pathway shown in Figure 5 is the one that produces governance that is most committed to global sustainability. In this pathway, the viewpoints of directors and managers change in the direction of sustainability, but not because they are compliant or responsive. Rather, the changes arise from personal conviction that a change of stance is the “right thing to do”. (Cartwright and Craig, 2006, p.747). Interpreting nonfinancial measures has been a major stumbling block to their use (Sveiby, 1997a, p.162). Improving governance deficiencies and avoiding holding idle cash will make a company less attractive to activists (Lev, 2012, p. 258).

How can governance be improved? The thriving field of corporate governance consultancies and advisory services offers managers a plethora of products – governance scores, ratings, reports, and certifications (Lev, 2012, p. 269) because effective corporate governance does contribute to corporate performance (Lev, 2012, p. 270). Operational benefits of effective governance are already factored into the share price one pays (Lev, 2012, p. 271) enhancing shareholder value, lowering somewhat the cost of funds and improving transparency (Lev, 2012, p. 272). If a company does not score high on governance scale, it should definitely search for the reasons (Lev, 2012, p.275) as corporate governance mechanisms are about the fundamental fiduciary duties of managers to shareholders, whose hard-earned money they are entrusted with (Lev, 2012, p. 280).

## **6. Financial focus of IC Domain**

The IC literature in accounting is varied but mainly addresses external reporting (e.g. Bukhet et al., 2001; Guthrie, 2000 and Mouritsen et al., 2001a). External financial statements offer very limited information on intangibles (Financial Accounting Standards Board, 2001; Wallman, 1995). Traditional accounting performance measurement employs financial techniques such as Return on Assets (ROA) and Return on Capital Employed (ROCE). These have been criticised for being backward looking, unable to measure intangible resources and not suitable for assessing performance of investments in new technologies and markets which firms require to compete successfully in global markets (Bourne et al., 2000; Amir and Lev, 1996). Lev (2001) advocates the Value Chain Scoreboard, to be used by both management and investors, which seeks to report in a structured manner the impact of intangibles on corporate performance and valuation.

Performance measurement systems in knowledge-driven firms lay greater emphasis on value-based measurement approaches. There is also a growing emphasis on a combination of financial and non-financial measures that have yet to be established in scorecard type models that adequately measure the IC contribution. This seems to be a partial confirmation that those IC resources are seen as performance drivers of value creation and part of the causal link between skills and relationships, which deliver customer satisfaction, loyalty and ultimately customer value (Tayles et al, 2007).

Pike and Ross (2004) measured the strength of some of IC measurement methods with the associated theories and expressed their faith in reliability of these methods in measurement of IC. However, Andriessen (2004) found that some researchers failed to establish nexus between IC and financial performance in their studies. Chan (2009) identified 34 methods that were then categorised into five generic approaches: (1) market capitalisation approach; (2) direct IC measurement approach; (3) scoreboard approach; (4) economic value-added approach; and (5) VAIC™ methodology (the Austrian approach) (p. 7). The first four approaches are discussed in detail by Chan (2009) in his study. The final approach, i.e. VAIC™, which is also termed the “Austrian approach”, has been used by a number of studies (VAIC™) (Pulic, 2000a, 2000 b; 2002a; 2004; Chan, 2009). The VAIC™ approach provides a standard and consistent measure of IC that can be used to conduct comparative analysis at both the local and international levels. The economic performance, financial performance and stock market performance model of Zeghal and Maaloul (2010) is one of the financial performance models in IC literature leveraged by researchers.

Financial reports fail to reflect a wide range of value-creating intangible assets (Lev and Zarowin, 1999), giving rise to increasing information asymmetry between firms and users (Barth et al., 2001), and creating inefficiencies in the resource allocation process within capital markets (Li et al., 2008). Jensen and Meckling (1976) argue that greater disclosure reduces the uncertainty facing investors and thus reduces a firm's

cost of capital. Managers should therefore be willing to disclose intellectual capital information in order to enhance the firm's value by providing investors with a better assessment of the financial position of the firm and help reduce the volatility of stock returns. Barth et al. (2001) observe that analyst coverage is greater for firms investing more heavily in research and development and advertising, while empirical studies suggest a positive share price impact arises from specific intellectual capital indicators such as research and development (R&D) expenditure (Amir and Lev, 1996), capitalisation of software development expenditure (Aboody and Lev, 1998), and customer satisfaction (Ittner and Larker, 1998).

*IFRS and intangibles:* To help firms to account for the business combination, the appendix to IFRS 3 (IASB, 2008) incorporates a list of examples of intangible assets which meet the recognition criteria and that are possible to report as intangible assets apart from goodwill. IFRS introduced two great innovations, the impact on intangibles of which looks highly relevant. These innovations are: (1) The possibility to value selected strategic resources at fair value, thus taking into account their ability to create value. Presently, according to IFRSs the most relevant area of fair value application is the determination of values of assets acquired in business combinations; but its application to internally developed assets, although at the moment subject to severe restrictions, must not be ignored (Langendijk et al., 2003, Guatri and Bini, 2003b) (2) The regulation of impairment test, i.e. the procedure aimed at identifying eventual impairment losses of an asset's value. Such a regulation permits the utility of the test itself as a value control system, together or even as a substitute of amortisation, thus eliminating the concept of useful life and introducing the intangible asset with indefinite life (Harper, 2001; Guatri and Bini, 2003a). However, a simple analysis of accounting principles cannot prove IFRS' ability to improve the quality of accounting information. Such a result, indeed, can only be demonstrated by observing their practical application (Busacca and Maccarrone, 2007)

## **VII. TAKING STOCK OF FUTURE IC PRACTICE**

If accounting practices want to keep pace with the speed of changes and if they are to reflect truly and fairly the value and position of a company in the Knowledge Era and to communicate it in the proper way, accounting should be coherent, objective, and verifiable. Hence, firms should disclose their IC to the market in order to: a) reduce information asymmetry amongst market actors; and b) attain market valuations that better reflect the risk profile of the firm (Curado et al., 2011). Failure to report on IC can have negative consequences for organizations in terms of (a) small shareholders possibly having to have less access to information than larger shareholders (b) managers with inside knowledge of intangibles trying to exploit their positions and engage in insider trading; and financiers perceiving the incorrect valuation of firms as leading to higher risk profiles, which could in turn lead to an increased cost of capital. That is the reason why organisations measure and report IC to (a) help organizations with strategy formulation (b) help assess strategy execution (c) assist in strategic development, diversification and expansion decisions (d) communicate with external stakeholders and (e) as a basis for employee compensation. (Marr, 2003).

Literature on IC disclosure has focused on two specific areas: (a) The company annual report (Guthrie and Petty, 2000; Brennan, 2001; April and Bosma, 2003; Bontis, 2003; Bozzolan, 2003; Abeysekera and Guthrie, 2005); and (b) different IC reporting frameworks that have been proliferated over the last two decades (Sveiby, 2004). From the perspective of various IC report frameworks, these appear to suffer the problems of proliferation, the confusion as to which framework should be used to best communicate to stakeholders (Sveiby, 2004), and the lack of analytical tools which can be used by stakeholders to make comparisons between different firms' IC and how IC is developed over time (Mouritsen and Bukh, 2003).

Factors that may discourage management from reporting and disclosing IC information, such as, the need to sustain competitive position; preventing information manipulation; risk enlargement regarding the predictions accuracy and the possible increase in operational cost as the result of bureaucracy (Fijałkowska, 2008). Still, Lev (2001) defends that such distrust is exaggerated and that to repudiate the measurement of IC would be a substantially greater problem for the long-term success. Sveiby (1997b) outlines three reasons why companies do not want to measure intangible assets. They are (a) managers themselves do not understand the importance of it; (b) indicators can give too much information away to the competitors and (c) there is no rigorous theoretical model for such a type of reporting (Abeysekera, 2003). IC disclosure can and will help organizations to better manage, understand and communicate their knowledge resources and the value creation processes. *The indispensable and imperative need of the hour is a one-page (Sveiby, 1997a), simple, comprehensible, IC-driven business dashboard integrating the following frameworks:*

- (a) *Balanced scorecard (Kaplan and Norton, 1992) considered to be the advanced performance measurement system (Ittner and Larcker, 1998),*
- (b) *Intangible Assets Monitor (Sveiby, 1997a) and the*
- (c) *Integrated IC Reporting Model (Abeysekera, 2013)*

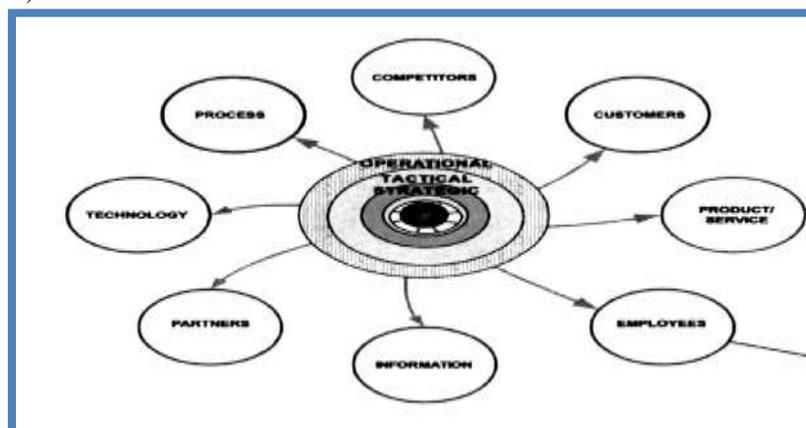
*These frameworks need to be anchored in a global regulatory, three-tier corporate transparency (DiPiazza and Eccles, 2002) reporting model to facilitate Value reporting (Eccles et al., 2001) and One Report (Eccles and Krzus, 2010). This could be bolstered by the International Integrated Reporting Council (2013), IFRS and country-specific GAAP from the governance, risk and compliance (GRC) process perspective for national governments to comply with.*

### VIII. CONCLUSION

There is ample anecdotal evidence that some firms disclose nonfinancial performance information on a voluntary basis (Eccles et al. 2001) and Upton (2001). Moreover, financial analysts refer to nonfinancial measures in their company reports (Previts et al, 1994) and maintain that they use these measures to evaluate the long-term performance of a firm (Dempsey et al, 1997). Nonetheless, these results do not provide evidence on the underlying linkages between nonfinancial data, future financial performance, and equity values. Studies takes two approaches to examine these linkages and document the relevance of nonfinancial information: (1) establish a direct link between nonfinancial measures and equity values and (2) demonstrate a link between current nonfinancial measures and future financial information, indicating that nonfinancial information should be useful to investors and creditors. The first category typically is referred to as value relevance tests, while the second category is termed predictive ability tests. By necessity, value relevance and predictive ability studies examine industries in which nonfinancial performance measures are publicly available, which can raise concerns over small sample or self-selection biases

Due to deficient accounting rules mandating the immediate expensing of most investments in growth (R&D, brand creation, employee training), the reported earnings of early-stage, high growth, intangible-intensive companies understate their true profitability and growth potential. Managers should not be penalized for deficient accounting rules. When earnings fail to properly reflect performance, they should be augmented or even replaced by indicators of the company’s fundamental value drivers (Lev, 2012, pp. 298-299). Amir and Lev (1996) and Lev and Zarowin (1999) suggest that firms with higher levels of R&D and advertising expenditures perceive GAAP-based accounting reports as being inadequate to present their financial performance and therefore employ alternative disclosure mechanisms.

Having documented the capital resources for business thus far, it must be said that aligning intangible assets with the value chain of a business enterprise provides a first and robust step to aligning knowledge to its strategy. A network and dynamic model to value and report intangible assets through a model called the framework of intangible valuation areas (FIVA) of Green (2004, p.47) is a case in point. This framework leverages the existing balanced scorecard valuation models and business value chain models by extracting their value components and aligning them with performance-based activities to define a common intangible asset taxonomy (IAT) of value drivers of intangible assets (Green, 2006, p.29). A validated framework supports the organizing and monitoring of intangible assets to organize intangible assets measurement and performance indicators (Figure 6)



**Figure 6 : Intangible Valuation Areas (Green, 2006, p.31)**

A validated framework reflects the realities of the business enterprise and is designed to accommodate the explicit functions of the business enterprise. It provides a gateway to construct and integrate enterprise

intangible asset valuation models to the routine and special statistical, financial, forecasting, management science and other quantitative models that provide analysis capabilities for decisionmaking. (Green, 2006, p.31). FIVA provides a view of intangible assets within the context of the business enterprise and supports the valuation of intangible assets based on a common set of business dimensions. This is done by incorporating intangible assets in the value chain a business enterprise providing the first step to align intangible assets to value creation with business strategy. Providing a systematic way to divide a business enterprise into discrete activities of business strategy, it examines the grouping of business activities and to establish boundaries that align with drivers of value both tangible and intangible.(Green, 2006, p.31).

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