Preface

In 1999, I assisted in convening Australia’s first conference on knowledge management. During the conference question time, I was asked by one of the attendees, “Do you think Knowledge Management is just another fad?” It is now more than 14 years since this question was asked, and based on the current evidence, the answer must be no. Indeed, the field of knowledge management has grown much larger than anticipated. A number of key research and teaching activities have sprung out in many academic institutions and knowledge organisations. In fact, the drive to excel in manufacturing and services industries propelled by fierce competition have led many firms to be innovative. That is why many organisations are now opting for innovation as means of gaining and/or sustaining competitive advantages. Furthermore, recent research indicates that innovation should be based on learning, which in turn should be driven by knowledge. This means good knowledge management should lead to learning suitable for innovation. In relation to knowledge, the identification of what makes knowledge suitable or appropriate for a particular task is yet to be fully researched or publicised. The literature is full of articles that argue that knowledge defects should be identified as candidates for termination in the knowledge transfer process. However, little attention has been given to determining which knowledge can be considered defective and on what basis. One of the most critical activities for the learning organisation concept is that knowledge transfer must take place. This in turn means that for satisfactory or appropriate learning, knowledge characteristics must be identified first and then assessed for the purpose of learning the application of the learning organisation concept. That is, learning must be based on good or appropriate knowledge. Similarly, the innovation needs to be based on good or appropriate learning in order to avoid risky outcomes. In other words, innovative firms should be made aware of the contents of this book to ensure that their learning and knowledge transferring activities are positioned to assist the innovation. Failing to do so could expose them to unnecessary risks that should have been addressed at earlier stages of the innovation process.

Accordingly, readers of this book could enhance their knowledge management and learning competencies relevant to a number of important organizational activities such as innovation. In addition, the role of Human Resources Management (HRM) in innovative organisations is highlighted in the book. This is because learning and creativity have become essential foundations for innovation and that the role of HRM is to ensure hiring, training, and supporting innovation leaders.

The book demonstrates that innovation is an evolutionary process, where critical activities are needed to identify and ensure that organisations proceed with innovation by avoiding or addressing two types of organisational defects, namely learning defects, Learning Gaps, and also innovation defects, Innovation Gaps.

This book provides relevant theoretical frameworks and the latest empirical research findings in the area and is for professionals who want to improve their understanding of the strategic role of learning organisations, concepts, and knowledge transfer in modern organisations.
Chapter 1, “Could Knowledge, Learning, and Innovation Gaps be Spiraling?” points to the role of HRM in creating a climate for innovation and learning. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of innovation chains with emphasis on the fact that innovation is an evolutionary process. Innovation chain activities include transformation into knowledge-based organisations, then into learning organisations, and finally into innovative enterprises.

Chapter 1 also demonstrates that during the innovation process, HRM has significant and critical roles in addressing two types of organisational defects, Learning Gaps and Innovation Gaps. It shows that the innovation chain may a spiral chain, suggesting that there could be a cumulative effect on the strength of the gaps due to the spiral nature of the innovation chain.

In chapter 2, “Innovation, Learning, Communities and Actor-Networks of Practice,” Stephen Fox and David Vickers provide analysis of actor-network, showing how the relations between people and people, things and things, people and things can benefit learning. Fox and Vickers’s work is a study of innovation, which pays close attention to details, such as how, through ethnographic work, the field jumped forward from Orr to Carlile and others. The Fox and Vickers study of innovation involves more analysis of different theoretical perspectives and is not simply an abstract overview but a view of perspectives through the prism of ethnographic materials in hand.

The perspective of ANT by Fox and Vickers generate considerable debate on socio-materiality for reinventing ANT, amongst other STS and SSK perspectives. Fox and Vickers suggest that comparative analysis of the studies through the lenses of these and other different traditions could be used, since this kind of comparative work can only be done because of the ethnographic thoroughness and detail of Carlile’s original study.

In chapter 3, “Mind Training for Innovation: Building Foundations for Creativity in the Workplace,” Julia Connell and Charlotte Thaarup address the gap in the innovation literature by exploring why creativity and innovation are important in the workplace and how the process of creativity can be supported through the practice of mindfulness. At the group and organisational levels, the chapter examines what is required of an organisation through a Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective in order to facilitate the optimum context for supporting creativity and innovation through knowledge sharing and transfer. Connell and Thaarup-Owen provide key emphasis on an organisation’s culture, structure, and ethos, utilising a knowledge-sharing framework, in addition to a focus on the physical workspaces that can support innovative and creative processes. Connell and Thaarup-Owen’s proposals for managers and human resource personnel interested in building foundations for creativity in the workplace include mindfulness training and support for mindfulness practice, the reduction of stress to allow creativity to emerge, and group/team support and training. Suggestions for future research are also offered at the end of the third chapter.

In chapter 4, Ronald Beckett establishes how learning places and knowledge flows stimulate innovation. The Beckett approach portrays knowledge as a source of competitive advantage. Beckett has shown how knowledge can be mobilized to realize this advantage. Beckett also shows that organization norms and routines could both reflect what an organization “knows” and may stimulate or inhibit knowledge flows. Therefore, tools may help store and share explicit knowledge, but it is only through personal interaction that the wealth of continuously expanding tacit knowledge potentially available to an enterprise can be accessed. This fourth chapter suggests that physical and virtual places for interaction combined with HRM practices can facilitate building and sharing stocks of knowledge to support the business of the enterprise. A case study example of interconnected learning spaces and strategically deployed people specifically established to support innovation is presented.
In chapter 5, “The Construction of Knowledge Management: The Foundation of Organizational Learning Based on Learning Organization,” Ben Tran gives an overview of work by a number of authors who have stressed that competitive advantage through knowledge management is realized through identifying the valuable representation, organization, acquisition, creation, usage, and evolution of knowledge in its many forms that the organization knows or could know now: skills and experience of people, archives, documents, relations with clients, suppliers, and other persons, and materials often contained in electronic databases. In so doing, Ben covers the various types of knowledge, the Learning Organization (LO), and Organizational Learning (OL). Chapter 5 also covers the history and meaning of knowledge (management), LO, and OL in terms of how all three elements are interrelated. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between LO and OL. Chapter 5 explains why the roles of knowledge transfer and human resources management are top down approaches and not a bottom up approaches.

In chapter 6, “Innovative Approaches to Improving the Transfer and Sustainability of Learning,” Michael Leimbach highlights how the importance of learning transfer in ensuring that learning contributes to an organization’s competitive advantage has been undermined in organizational practice. Leimbach provides two major reasons for this: 1) few studies directly explore the relationship between transfer and performance improvement, and 2) most existing transfer models are too complex for practitioners to implement. Chapter 6 explores the link between learning transfer activities and performance outcomes and creates a framework for implementing an effective learning transfer solution. A targeted literature review meta-analysis was used to explore the performance impact of training vs. training plus transfer activities. Leimbach computed “difference scores” representing the percentage of improvement from the transfer activities over training alone. Activities were categorized into a framework of 11 critical learning transfer actions. Leimbach implemented the elements of the Learning Transfer Framework in 3 demonstration projects. By incorporating findings from the literature review, meta-analysis, and the demonstration projects, the author proposes a new transfer framework that is effective and easy to implement. Implications and directions for future researchers are advanced.

Chapter 7, by Hesham Magd and Mark McCoy, gives an introduction to the core concepts behind knowledge management perspectives and practices from the Middle East as well as the reasons behind the increasing emphasis that has been placed on the knowledge management process as a source of competitive advantage, innovation, and organizational performance. Some of the key influences on knowledge management processes are also examined in chapter 7, including culture and the roles of management before being examined in the context of KM initiatives in the Middle East. The critical success factors relating to the implementation of knowledge management processes are then outlined before a framework for implementation that takes into account the unique features of organizations in the Middle East is then discussed.

In chapter 8, “Managing Knowledge through Dynamic Capabilities,” by Niksa Alfirevic and Anita Talaja an insight into the interaction of innovation and learning through integrative view of knowledge management and dynamic capabilities approach is provided. Alfirevic and Talaja introduce theoretical foundations of the dynamic capabilities perspective and knowledge management. Alfirevic and Talaja’s work further explores the existing theoretical linkages between knowledge management and the dynamic capabilities approach, as well as their potential impact on organizational performance, within the framework of human resource practices, relevant for achieving the successful knowledge transfer. The existing theoretical foundations are used to provide a generalization, leading to an integrative theoretical model, which should serve as a basis for further empirical verification among the constructs.
Chapter 9, “Can Human and Technical Resources be In Sync to Advance Resourceful Inclusive Enterprise?” by Mambo Mupepi is about understanding the synchronicity of worldwide literacies, human resources, and technology in building enterprises that can operate successfully in varied environments. A co-constructed competency model can be adapted to commendably contextualize knowledge and technology in relation to prevailing economic conditions to surge output. Specialized knowledge can be described as highly structured skill sets that allow a firm to respond positively to demand to intensify outputs. Expertise too can be asserted as the scientific knowledge that can be applied to make everything practical. Chapter 9 advances arguments that empathetic dominant world cultural settings and possessing explicit knowledge, useful skills, and appropriate technology can allow a firm to make better sense of markets and increase productivity.

Chapter 10, “Total Relationship Management of Knowledge and Information Technology for Innovation: A Total Knowledge Management (TKM) Perspective,” by Mosad Zineldin and Valentina Vasicheva acknowledge that knowledge management has changed our way of thinking, our behaviour, attitudes, life styles, and type of relations. Zineldin and Vasicheva conducted research to link KM, CRM, IT, and TRM. The purpose of Zineldin and Vasicheva study is to develop a better understanding of interrelationship between KM, CRM, IT, and TRM. This chapter presents a model of Knowledge-Oriented Total Relationship Management (KTRM) with some technological knowledge management directions. Zineldin and Vasicheva’s recommendations for the implementation of KTRM are provided.

Chapter 11 by Canan Katrin Akpolat, Fawzy Soliman and Jochen Schweitzer proposes that sustainable growth rely on learning and innovation as key vital processes necessary for survival of organisations. Akpolat, et al argue that unpredictable and dynamically changing business environments have forced most management to better assess and manage perceptions of uncertain environments in the context of an organisational system. In chapter 11 Akpolat et al have taken a view and researched role of perceived environmental uncertainty for learning and innovation.

Chapter 12 by Meryem El Alaoui Amine and Anass Mdaghri Alaoui is titled “Organizational Efficiency and X-Inefficiency: Which Role of Learning Organization, Knowledge Transfer, and Innovation?” Amine and Alaoui critique the works of Leibenstein with emphasis on the existence of x-inefficiency in organizations that explains why apparently identical firms, with the same composition of the workforce and the same technology, are able to realize very different performance. On the basis of Leibenstein and Maital’s work, Amine and Alaoui present the sources and reasons for the persistence of x-inefficiency by mobilizing the organizational learning theory and to determining the possible strategies for the correction or the elimination of x-inefficiency by using game theory. Moreover, the establishment of a favorable climate for learning can promote knowledge transfer, which in turn helps to improve innovation, and consequently, achieve organizational efficiency.

Chapter 13, “Evolutionary Learning Organization in a System Orientation of Ethico-Economics,” by Masudul Alam Choudhury explains the theory of evolutionary learning organization with a rationalist premise. Choudhury also explores the behavioural aspects of decision-making that are increasingly becoming the centrepiece of organizational decision-making, which has significant impact on social preference formation. Indeed, organizational behaviour in such ethico-economic sense is the carrier of conscious attributes and consequences in the social spectrum where markets, institutions, and behaviour interact. In chapter 13, a study of a special kind of a model of interaction that is different from many conventional ones is presented. The primary difference is caused by the endogenous nature of preferences, decision-making, policies, and programs in the ethico-economic frame of conscious decisions. Thus, while economic rationality is still the basis of formulating such organizational behaviour, ethics is
either considered exogenously or explained under the same postulates of economic rationality, bounded though by a certain slack in full-information. In chapter 13, evolutionary organizational decision-making is explained as the process of interaction leading to integration, and thereby into incessant processual reproduction of knowledge as consciousness to establish stronger ethico-economic organizational social systems. This involves serious theoretical formalism belonging to behavioural aspects of organizations, institutions, and moral social reconstruction. Thus, the goal of a technical meaning of wellbeing is studied. The structure and function of these entities in ethico-economic decision-making are explained.

Chapter 14, “Attributes of the Learning-Innovation Transformational Leader” by Fawzy Soliman, summarises the results of an extensive study on the role of innovative transformational leaders in developing an organization that can truly learn. The presented qualitative research study investigated the effect of Transformational Leadership components on the transformation into innovative organizations. Through its interpretive nature, this study developed an understanding of such effects and the relationship existing through the meanings that people assign to them within cases of five organizations. The findings suggest that three of the four components of transformational leadership have positive impact on three learning organization’s disciplines. Chapter 14 presents the findings in the light of other related international studies, which gives more depth to the findings of this research, and it identified research areas for future research.

Chapter 15, “The Green 5-S Model for Organisational Learning and Development,” by Samuel Ho presents the concept of Total Learning Organisation (TLO), which has been tested in a number of firms in Hong Kong, China, and Malaysia based on a proprietary 5-S Practice, which was developed in Malaysia/HK/UK/China in the 1990s. Supported by various government bodies, Ho has used a 50-point 5-S Checklist for training and consultancy in no less than 10 countries with over 50,000 persons from over 1,000 organisations worldwide. From the experience, a powerful learning model for innovation in organizations is developed through what he defined in 1999 as the “TLO.” One significant finding is that in order to ensure effective knowledge transfer and organizational development, organisations should consider using a simple and useful tool such as the 5-S Practice as a seed to encourage learning and innovation. The practical experience is also shared in chapter 15.

Chapter 16, by Ahmed Mehrez et al., “Could Knowledge Gaps Drive Quality Improvement?” points to quality problems as a major obstacle to improvement of products and/or services. The Mehrez et al. model for assessing the quality of quality management programs presented focuses on the role of Strategic Gaps and Knowledge Gaps in evaluating the quality of quality management programs. Furthermore, Strategic Gaps and Knowledge Gaps have been shown to exist in organisational quality management processes. Those gaps could adversely affect the expected outcome from the quality management programs. Chapter 16 also explores the relationship between the perception of the developers or implementers of quality management programs and other related organizational attributes in the software industry. The problem investigated may be centred about the burning question: Why does quality management not achieve its anticipated outcomes in the software industry? The chapter presents empirical results of identifying how the possible existence of knowledge management gaps can be a reason behind a possible existence of quality performance gaps. The main findings presented in chapter 16 include statistical correlation showing statistically significant relationships between those 2 gaps. Chapter 16 also seeks to identify other management characteristics associated with success or otherwise of quality management programs in HR departments. In so doing, the importance of addressing issues arising from Strategic Gaps and Knowledge Gaps is addressed.
It is hoped that the book will provide to management of innovative firms the tools and techniques to manage the potential managerial and administrative risks their organization could face during the innovation process. It is anticipated that the book will assist innovation firms to ensure that their learning and knowledge transferring activities are correctly positioned to strategic advantages using innovation.

Fawzy Soliman

UTS Business School, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia