

Preface

When the editor embarked on his long and ambitious study on *Cultural Implications of Knowledge Sharing, Management and Transfer: Identifying Competitive Advantage* he had no idea how such a complex but exciting debate would evolve and spread so fast across the world of scholars and knowledge management practitioners. Of course this was never going to be a road without an end - as many readers may have thought - however the editor had no idea of just how far one of the (arguably) newest and yet most controversial research topics – the implications of culture on knowledge management – would take us. Thanks to many high quality contributions from eleven countries including the USA, UK, Greece, Germany, Brazil, Mexico, Slovenia, Australia, New Zealand, Finland and Spain the book was able to fulfil its aims and objectives.

The problem of managing knowledge is, essentially, influenced by human behaviour and how humans interact with systems and tools. The challenge becomes clear from the outset. What happens with contextual factors that cannot be documented? How do we drive the process of managing and transferring tacit knowledge which is accepted to be context-dependent and is best transferred through experiential learning and personal involvement in the activity (Polanyi 1966)? To be managed, Garavelli et al. (2002) argues that knowledge needs to be retrieved from some source, processed, and then distributed to users who may need it.

As Bollisani (2008) argues, a rapid glance at the knowledge management literature is enough to highlight several problematic aspects that make the topic of knowledge sharing and transfer a challenging terrain for both the researcher and the practice. Bollisani (2008) found that an essential problem results from the extreme variety of situations to which the issue of knowledge sharing can be related. What we have is a myriad of knowledge sharing activities happening continuously but in disparate contexts. This is true even when these problems are not explicitly identified and recognised. For example, an inter-personal communication is an exchange of knowledge, but also economic transactions between two trading firms can be seen as (or involve) sharing of knowledge. Even two computers exchanging messages are, to some extent, part of a kind of knowledge sharing. What is more, one can speak of knowledge sharing even when there is someone that communicates a message to a broad audience: a television programme is a process of knowledge sharing, and so is the publication of a book or a Website.

The first challenge of defining knowledge management and its processes are highlighted within this preface stage – we lack a consensus on distinctive, familiar terms within knowledge management communities. For example we have researchers and practitioners who are referring to, in this book and elsewhere, knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer, and knowledge exchange when they all actually mean the same thing. In this preface, we will just speak of knowledge sharing, but we will more generally mean all the terms previously indicated.

In addition, knowledge sharing is a process that involves various elements (the knowledge objects exchanged, the sources and receivers, the carrier or medium, the mechanisms used, the transfer of prac-

tices, and so on). Thus, a researcher can decide to centre his or her analysis on one specific element, or to include different variables or factors, or to focus on the intertwined relationships among all these.

Due to these complications, the characterising aspects, implications and practical questions relating to knowledge sharing are many. Here, we explicitly focus on the perspectives adopted by researchers whose main field is that of KM. The contributors to this book were asked to explain their viewpoints, to elucidate their research methods and interpretative models, to debate the findings of their studies with the purpose of clarifying and contributing to the state of our knowledge on this issue, and to discuss the prospective fields of study. In particular, they were invited to provide insights into some open questions that we briefly recall below.

Cultural Implications for Knowledge Sharing Processes

The book invited contributors to consider two aspects, the first being how do people and organisations exchange knowledge? There was an open window of questioning based on the differences between interpersonal and organisational culture. Knowledge sharing between organisations is, or involves, knowledge sharing among individuals; hence, understanding interpersonal culture and the role it plays in knowledge sharing had to be addressed. The relationships among interpersonal and organisational cultures and how they impact knowledge sharing as a process require a conceptualisation that has not been achieved yet and the literature often focuses on specific aspects or specific practical cases. Here, contributors provide a well founded model of the mechanisms and rules that are employed for knowledge sharing through debate to demonstrate how culture (and context) influences the nature or type of knowledge sharing activities specified within the debates. It was therefore necessary for authors to demonstrate the competitive advantage – if any – of knowledge sharing practices.

Competitive Advantage

It is now recognised that knowledge has no value if it cannot be used for commercial ends (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). Where knowledge sharing takes place, there is an element of trust and mutual benefit that is attached to it (Pinch *et al*, 2003) but also in addition, organisational knowledge is valued for being the sole source of competitive advantage (Harorimana, 2007). The motivation of knowledge sharing, and the competitive advantage the players attach to this activity is another subject of debate within KM and a central theme of this book as well. The successful practice shows that KM initiatives that do not account for the motivations of participants, or their cultural background of understanding in knowledge sharing, are likely to fail (Cumming and Teng, 2003). There is thus the need to explain the factors that can facilitate and hinder the personal participation in a process of knowledge exchange. Motivation can be seen from different viewpoints and based on various conceptual references. Bollisani (2008) argues that motivation can be related to various but intertwined concepts, such as the personal utility (i.e., knowledge is exchanged to solve a problem or accomplish a task), the economic value (knowledge is considered as good source of income), or the social motivation (knowledge sharing because people belong to a particular culture, a particular context, or are co-located, to mention but a few). The difference between personal or organisational competitive advantage is clarified herein.

Systems Interaction

We are experiencing a series of debates in the role various cultures play in influencing KM outcomes. We are also observing an emergence of journals of cultural knowledge management. While this trend is a welcome development, we are left with lack of synthesis of current understanding around how culture

impacts on social relationships in the knowledge sharing arena. Hot issues in the KM literature are, for example, the cultural distance between players or the trustworthy climate that facilitates the sharing of knowledge. Another burning issue is the most appropriate organisational system that fosters a culture of knowledge creation and sharing. Not all organisational systems support a culture of engagement, people interaction and knowledge sharing. The structure and nature of the organisational system of interpersonal or inter-organisational relationships and the distinct roles performed by the various players are thus an essential focus of analysis. There is rich and significant literature on knowledge management systems and, more generally, on the use of ICT applications for supporting knowledge exchange between individuals and/or organisations. However, technology is not the universal remedy for any problem of knowledge exchange. Here, various models and references are often drawn from a multiplicity of disciplines and fields (see for example, Malhotra, 2000). In this climate, the KM community requires a concerted effort to provide the appropriate mechanism within which cultural influence is recognised without over-burdening businesses that are looking to maximise returns on their investment in knowledge sharing projects.

Organisational vs. Interpersonal Culture

A common element in many KM research frameworks and models (included in the models discussed above) is that of organisational culture. For the most part, it is assumed that technology plays a key role in the processes involved in KM. Contributors have demonstrated that KM is shaped by three important perspectives: namely (a) information-based, (b) technology-based, and (c) culture-based. The last of these perspectives highlights the importance of organisational culture in the KM process. Moreover, what is observed from several studies is that not all KM processes require high investment in technology. More importantly, successful use of the technology is often dependent on the incorporation of KM behaviour into the organisational culture. That is, the organisational culture as defined by Schein (1990:111) where culture is: "...a) a pattern of basic assumptions, (b) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, (c) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore e) is to be taught to new members as the f) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems," and where Wilkins and Dyer (1988) suggest that culture "is [composed] of the values, competencies, and beliefs of a group of people that strongly influence whether and how organizational strategies are implemented (p. 522)." In this book contributors focused on defining culture in the context of KM and theoretical frameworks are still required.

Aims of the Book

Cultural Implications of Knowledge Sharing, Management and Transfer: Identifying Competitive Advantage gathers contributions by scholars from different but related disciplines. It illustrates, compares, and discusses models, perspectives, and approaches that are helpful to understanding current research on this topic. Contributions came from different viewpoints and depict possible trajectories of future development.

This book has emerged to provide a "common interface" for the meeting of scholars and practitioners who are interested in how culture shapes knowledge creation, sharing, management and transfer activities. This was an important platform for the communication between different disciplines and areas, with the hope that this "cross-fertilisation" can help to overcome the limitations of the single viewpoint.

The assumption was that a systematic comparison and discussion of different but converging models and approaches was essential in creating the foundations of a common language and agreed conceptual framework allowing for the exchange of findings and ideas. The editor recognises that in such a multi-disciplinary project there will always be risks, since it involves different disciplines and academic approaches that can be too distant (and sometimes individualistic). However, the nature of current studies on *Cultural Implications of Knowledge Sharing, Management and Transfer* makes the effort valuable and necessary.

Target Audience

This book is the exciting result of the input of many experts from both academics and business practitioners. This book will help those readers who are interested in developing a broad picture of the current research on the topic seen from different viewpoints, and enable them to recognise the possible trajectories of future developments. It will provide for those seeking to build a common set of concepts, terms, references, and approaches in disciplinary areas that are sometimes too distant from one another.

In that regard, the principal target audience for this book consists of scholars and researchers in knowledge management and related fields. It is also a useful tool for those conducting research into cultural implications for human behaviour in the workplace. The book is also written to provide “food for thought” for future research; however, practitioners might identify foundations for new ideas in a dynamic environment such as how to manage culture complexities in their businesses and learning how to minimise the costs and risks associated with managing knowledge in a culturally rich (diverse) environment. Graduate and post-graduate students would also find this book to be a useful reference resource.

Structure of the Book and Contributions

This book is made up of 16 chapters which were divided into three sections. The first section focuses on a careful and purposeful survey of the topic under study. This section provides a foundation for further debate in the book. To set the scene of this debate, Stavros Ponis, George Vagena and Epaminondas Koroni conduct a long journey within KM through their “Critical Evaluation of Existing Knowledge Management Frameworks.” They review different frameworks that have been applied by and to the KM research and practitioner communities. To further feed the reader’s interest, the authors outline shortcomings and limitations that have been found so far in the literature. Their contribution however can never be underestimated; the authors have carefully evaluated and proposed the ways in which challenges they identified can be overcome. In their study, they help the reader to discover how literature on knowledge management at the service of contemporary organisations is characterised by a plethora of diverse frameworks and approaches. Within many of those frameworks not even a single one achieved such a wide acceptance so as to be conceived as a standard. That said, they argue that practice proves that each research or consultant group follows its own approach while many initiatives are based on custom approaches, developed each time from scratch; or even worse do not follow a structured method at all. In this chapter they dig deeper into proposing a complete checklist for evaluating existing frameworks against a set of predetermined elements that a KM approach should possess.

Peter Bond, in “Toward a living systems framework for unifying technology and knowledge management, organizational, cultural and economic change,” engages in much deeper analysis of the KM and the economic case for its existence. Bond proposes a theoretical framework for managing technology, innovation, knowledge, cultural and, ultimately, economic change. In the chapter, Bond suggests a framework with a possible new paradigm for cultural change that closes the gap between the social and

natural sciences, and he demonstrates the possibilities of developing new forms of explanation and new techniques for organisational and economic development from a synthesis of knowledge management. The new framework he proposes will, effectively, reconcile the practices of technology, knowledge and cultural change management.

As has been a familiar observation of those researching KM, It is rare to see literature on knowledge creation, sharing and transfer that ignores Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) model, widely known as the SECI model by the KM community. This model however was criticised for its lack of flexibility and lack of responsiveness to cultural changes (see Harorimana, 2008; Gourlay, 2006, 2007). The third chapter "The Impact of Culture on the application of the SECI Model," by **Markus Haag, Yanqing Duan and Brian Mathews**, takes a closer look into this model. Haag *et al* concluded that culture, in various forms, impacts on the SECI model and that the model itself was embedded in a certain context. This context determines the characteristics of the knowledge creation modes as described by the SECI model and therefore makes the model either more, or less, pertinent in a given context. They also add that this is regardless of whether that context is primarily determined by national culture, organisational culture or other factors. What they demonstrate here is that differences in emphasis in a given contextual environment on either tacit or explicit knowledge also impacts on knowledge creation as defined by the SECI model. They identify the competitive advantage by arguing that, being conscious of the cultural location of the SECI model can lead to a more adequate application of the model for organisational knowledge creation.

To extend on their debate **Deogratias Harorimana**, in "Knowledge, Culture, and Cultural Impact on Knowledge Management," provides useful hints and advice to those researching into how culture influences KM research activities and application. The author identified the nuts and bolts of the issue encountered by managers who find themselves faced by high costs of breaking cultural barriers, and offers advice on how those problems can be overcome. From an academic perspective, the author argues that successful knowledge creation and management comes from the combination of the two schools of thought, social and technological. He further shows that current organisational practices that place a strong emphasis on team work and ability to use technologies dominate business operations and, as a result, it is equally important to unblock human factors that are likely to hinder people's interaction as it is to keep to minimum physical barriers and systems that may impede human interaction.

The next chapter, by **Dr. Caroline Kamau**, builds on the previous one and complements probably the least explored element of human kind from a KM point of view. Through the chapter "Strategising Impression Management in Corporations: Cultural Knowledge as Capital" Kamau argues that impression management is a powerful psychological phenomenon with, as yet, much unexplored potential by KM and management researchers in general. However, there is a sticking point here in that employees or corporations can deploy impression management strategies in order to manipulate others' perceptions of them. Furthermore, Kamau's work shows that the issue of managing one's impressions has much to do with cultural knowledge. Cultural knowledge is powerful capital in impression management, yet this has not been sufficiently explored in previous literature. She argues that impression-motivated employees or corporations need to perform a three-step knowledge audit. Kamau argues that cultural knowledge can facilitate implementation of cross-cultural training and knowledge transfer by expatriates' nationals as well as be used to the benefits of multinational corporations that are seeking to move into new and emerging markets.

As KM becomes more complicated, academics continue to debate about the best mechanism to be used to enable fast transfer and sharing of knowledge while at the same time maintaining the aspect of "control" of their competitive advantage. In the next chapter of this section, **Christian-Andreas Schumann and Claudia Tittmann**, in their contribution "Potential for externalizing and measuring of

tacit knowledge within knowledge nodes in the context of knowledge networks,” continue the debate arguing that currently knowledge networks represent the best mechanism to widely transferring knowledge from the source. Their argument is that there are complexities attached to sharing and transferring knowledge as this is the intellectual capital of organisations which tends to influence more and more the market value of organisations and companies. Their investigations into how intellectual capital can be developed and measured identified the factors that influence effective knowledge transfer and sharing through networks. They argue that trust, risk, and compliance influence the value network as well as activities of knowledge transfer through networks.

The second section of this book provides a much more detailed discussion, together with examples of applied models and frameworks. It is a rich section for those who are interested in uncovering cultural implications sector by sector, region by region, or country by country, and more importantly, those examples which relate to specific industry practices such as higher education KM versus business KM cultures, or KM in hospitals and in multinational organisations.

José Louis Pineda, Laura Esther Zapata and Jacobo Ramírez, in their chapter “Strengthening knowledge transfer between the university and enterprise: A conceptual model for collaboration,” analysed the collaborative relationships existing between the university and the firm and explored the role of the university as a generator and disseminator of knowledge, as well as the difficulties it faces in making the results of its research available to the business world. Their study shows that the collaborative efforts between the academic and business worlds require an urgent review so that universities do not continue as they have always done, but that, rather, they should shift their cultural way of working to become knowledge dissemination channels. This chapter reports on a research project conducted in the context of a Mexican higher education system. Their findings represent the ongoing and widespread view within developed countries’ universities that there is a need to redefine the university and its role in society.

The above chapter is further added to by contributions from a Slovenian higher education perspective where **Roberto Biloslavo and Mojca Prevodnik** analysed the impact of organisational culture on knowledge management in higher education. This chapter discusses the fundamentals of organisational culture within knowledge management from a university’s perspective and demonstrates that different types of organisational culture, as defined by the competing values framework, might be related to the iterative processes of knowledge generation, storage, transfer, and application in higher education.

Considering KM and cultural implications in hospital organisation, **Cláudio Reis Gonçalves and Jacques Edison Jacques** present “Best practices of Knowledge Strategy in Hospitals: a contextual perspective based on the implementation of medical protocols.” They argue that knowledge strategy depends on a specific organisational context that can be expressed by its barriers and enablers. They reported findings from eight hospitals in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Their study involved multi-disciplinary teams. Gonçalves and Jacques recommend a formal structure for the promotion of the organisational context in relation to the protocol implementation. They identified as critical for the promotion of knowledge strategies’ best practices in hospitals a common language for sharing information among different professionals; the knowledge gap as a corporate vision, and particularly the gap of information technology.

From a hospitality industry perspective, **Kalotina Chalkiti and Dean Carson**, in their chapter “Knowledge Cultures, Competitive Advantage and Staff Turnover in Hospitality in Australia’s Northern Territory,” investigated the strategies used by hospitality businesses in the Northern Territories (NT) of Australia to remain competitive in the face of high rates of staff turnover. Chalkiti and Carson recommend that it is necessary and beneficial to foster a symbiotic relationship between staff and knowledge retention with an explicit focus on the social aspects of managing knowledge in a hospitality environment. They propose a knowledge mobilisation or flow strategy to complement staff and knowledge retention

strategies and identify the competitive advantage through knowledge management (KM) practices that recognise the industry's specific context and allow it to compete for customers and staff in the global marketplace within the NT hospitality sector.

A further contribution to understanding the implications of knowledge and its context within which it is shared/transferred was presented in **Claire Seaman and Stuart Graham's** chapter, "Creating Competitive Advantage in Scottish Family Businesses: Managing, Sharing and Transferring the Knowledge". This chapter considered both the role that knowledge transfer may have in family businesses and the different manners in which knowledge transfer may take place within this diverse environment. The economic, social and community importance of family businesses within Scotland was considered, alongside the different manner in which family businesses commonly operate and the implications for knowledge transfer. Seaman and Graham identified the importance of knowledge transfer in the creation of competitive advantage within a family business environment, and highlight the need for further research both to support the ongoing development of a strategy for family businesses in Scotland and to facilitate future development of high quality knowledge transfer. They conclude that there is a need to understand knowledge transfer, and the context within which it takes place, as well as its breadth.

Annette H. Dunham and Christopher Burt, in their chapter "Mentoring and the Transfer of Organizational Memory within the Context of an Aging Workforce: Cultural Implications for Competitive Advantage," found that the knowledge gained from organisational experience has significant potential for competitive advantage. The authors argue that due to individualistic cultural norms and some discriminatory practices towards older workers, along with the nature of a changing career contract that no longer guarantees employment in one organisation for life, these represent obstacles and discourage knowledge sharing in organisations. They discussed constraints and motivations that exist when employees are older, or when experienced workers consider mentoring others. This chapter considers relevant global and organisational cultural characteristics that may influence mentoring to transfer knowledge, and accordingly suggests strategies for those eager to capitalise on the knowledge that experienced employees possess.

The last section analyses theoretical and practical perspectives of, and provides some examples of, failed/successful projects where, essentially, culture was perceived as a central factor to knowledge creation, sharing and transfer. **Beate Klingenberg and Helen Rothberg**, in their chapter "Learning before Doing: Theoretical Perspective and Practical Lessons from a Failed Cross-Border Knowledge Transfer Initiative," explored a failed knowledge transfer project between two distinct cultures and, using literature on cross-cultural knowledge transfer and communication theory as well as anecdotes from the actual process, offer a process for creating and engaging in a more successful design. They found that there are challenges to transferring knowledge compounded by an international setting, and that the degree of difficulty in knowledge transfer increases for multinational managers and their counterparts because cultural differences influence information processing, management styles and sense making. Furthermore, they argued that multinational business relationships do not take the time to allow partners to develop the necessary rapport and trust pivotal for project commitment and successful learning to occur due to pressure to respond to increasingly competitive environments

Jianzhong Hong, Johanna Heikkinen, and Mia Salila, in "The Impact of Culture on University–Industry Knowledge Interaction in the Chinese MNC Context," built on the fact that recent studies on university–industry collaboration paid growing attention to complementary knowledge interaction - which is of importance for networking, learning and knowledge co-creation. Within this chapter, Hong, Heikkinen and Salila explore university–industry knowledge interaction in a broad sense, focusing on the development of a conceptual view on the understanding and analysis of the cultural impact in the Chinese Multi National Company context. The chapter clarifies and elaborates on key concepts and

perspectives, and suggests implications for future research and practice regarding effective knowledge co-creation involving dissimilar cultures.

In “Exploring the Links between Structural Capital, Knowledge Sharing, Innovation Capability and Business Competitiveness,” **Josune Sáenz, Nekane Aramburu and Olga Rivera** analysed the degree of influence of different organisational enablers (i.e., “structural capital”) on knowledge sharing, as well as the influence of the latter and other structural capital components on innovation capability, both from a theoretical and empirical perspective. They analysed a set of relationships between innovation capability dimensions (i.e., ideation, project management, and timeliness and cost efficiency) and business competitiveness. Their study was based on Spanish manufacturing firms with more than 50 employees and with R&D activities. The chapter provides conclusions on structural equation modelling (SEM) based on partial least squares (PLS)

Finally, this book concludes with an exciting work contributed by **Elly Philpott and John Beaumont-Kerridge**. In “Overcoming reticence to aid knowledge creation between universities and business-a case reviewed” the authors argue the case for a proactive process to facilitate knowledge creation between universities and small to medium size enterprises (SMEs). They identify and discusses cultural issues that lead to reticence of engagement, in addition to inhibitors that prevent the free interchange of knowledge. Philpott and Beaumont-Kerridge show how reticence can be overcome by serving the needs of both parties who are engaged in knowledge creating and sharing activities and how knowledge created through successful interaction can be measured. They conclude with recommendations for the reader on areas for public investment to enhance the knowledge transfer process and provide lessons learned for the measurement of knowledge transfer at these interfaces. The outcomes from the authors’ contributions are particularly useful to those interested in the continuing applicability of Nonaka and Takeuchi’s work outside of the heavy industrial context as well as those interested in the traditional problems associated with knowledge transfer between universities and SMEs.

CONCLUSION

The contributions gathered and presented in this book are a reflection of the ways culture has been considered - or at the very least - how it is perceived by knowledge management researchers and practitioners. This book was an exciting journey to follow the search for how mergers and new business ventures handle the trickiest questions when it comes to facing cultural diversity and its impact on business interactions.

There were also sticky questions to deal with given the new approach to knowledge management research and practice that is being discussed herein. Those were, what culture is and what is knowledge? And, how do these relate to one another? Considering debates held therein, I am inclined to believe that knowledge is about the process of gathering information, and placing it in the cultural context of a given situation at hand in order to acquire meaningful usage.

That leads me even into the more serious debate of what constitutes knowledge and how can it be created. Of course my answer is that it is the *context* that creates knowledge. Models that respond to culture and context at the same time are more likely to fit the purpose. The purpose was: How can I transfer or share knowledge I have for the benefit of myself, the company and/or my colleagues? Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) were good at linking together all these aspects – personal engagements (socialisation); contextualising personal level engagements by involving the expression of tacit knowledge and its conversion into comprehensible forms that are easier to understand (externalisation), the process of

taking ownership, and make knowledge part of one's daily life and activities (internalisation). Internalisation requires individuals to identify relevant knowledge within the organisation's explicit knowledge, embrace it as their own, and incorporate it into their own knowledge base through, for example, on-the-job training. Finally, the combination of the tacit knowledge, its context and how this is converted into visible outputs, in actions such as clear communication, diffusion, integration, and systemisation of one's knowledge to the rest of the peers to contribute to knowledge at the group level as well as at the organisational level.

In this book, however, we have seen many people following several models. The overwhelming message from the book is that there is no single definition of culture, knowledge and a suitable model. There are equally as many frameworks as there are models and definitions of cultures, as well as knowledge transfer and management methods.

The use of Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) model underestimates other research models in the literature. The purpose of this section however is not to discuss models (I will happily leave this to my experts' contributions). What is interesting to me here is the diversity of approaches and diversification of debates, and how all have pulled together to demonstrate that, in each of their contributions, there are significant implications for culture and how it influences knowledge transfer outcomes.

Essential Tools for Cultural Change, Knowledge Sharing for Greater Competitiveness

There are key elements that are generally accepted as key for gaining competitive advantage. These are:

- **Effective and ongoing trainings:** Employees need to stay responsive to modern practices and new tools.
- **Effective communication:** Employees as individuals need to be constantly informed of what is affecting them, their organisation and the entire community. While cultural practices in some countries may allow employees to challenge or question their managers about changes within a company, there are countries where questioning your superior is not acceptable. That however does not make employees happier - they like to be informed and/or consulted regardless of which culture they operate within. Managing impressions of employee over managing them is probably the most exciting way to get everyone's behaviours committed to their jobs and engaging one another in a way that stimulates mutual support, effective knowledge sharing and ownership of business goals.
- **Rewards to positive behaviours:** Without the benefit of a culture that recognises, encourages, and rewards KM activities, consistent performance of KM activities will not occur.

Interaction and collaboration among employees is important when attempting to transmit tacit knowledge between individuals or convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, thereby transforming it from the individual to the organisational level. Contributors in this book view culture as an important asset because it shapes assumptions and influences priorities about what knowledge is worth sharing and defines relationships between individual and organisational knowledge by creating the context. The context sets up a positive environment for social interaction. Culture all around determines how knowledge will be shared in particular situations and it shapes the processes by which new knowledge is created, legitimized, and distributed in organisations.

REAL GAPS POSING REAL CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE THOUGHTS

Systems and Technologies and Cultural Challenge

In this book, there is probably an astringent view that absence of technology does not prevent KM activity – it just means that KM activity must be accomplished in different ways. This is true in cross border communication where language may be a barrier to exchange within the context of the environment. Sophisticated software applications and other technology may help in knowledge management, but are certainly not a requirement. Highly organised and intellectually stimulating processes are more important. These processes require that the organisational culture values, encourages, and rewards KM behaviour.

Cultural Diversity of Organisations

It is also true in virtual interactions as well as within distant two-way relationships such as university/industry relationships – both of which are very different in culture. For example, commercial businesses have sufficient technology to assist them in creating, sharing and documenting knowledge which many universities may not have or they do not even need. This is because universities have been, traditionally, good generators of knowledge, but at a point the majority of them have not been commercially driven and they rarely justify economically their investment in research and teaching.

In our 21st century knowledge driven economies, Knowledge residing in universities has become economically important, the challenge which remains, is the alignment of university cultures to that of actively financially driven businesses.

Another rather surprising element of this book is the reflection on how cultural implications of knowledge sharing could be easily overlooked at the individual level. Like much research into KM, there is a general trend that suggests that once we mention culture in business, people only think about organisational culture and rarely come to realize how each of the units involved (one plus one) add up to a whole (the organisation). There are several studies that were conducted in the area of organisational culture (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Grover and Davenport, 2001; Gold, Malhotra and Segars, 2001; Karlsen and Gottschalk, 2004) but there are far fewer that studied the individual's culture. What is known is that amongst those factors that lead to successful knowledge creation and transfer appear culture, training, top-management support, technology infrastructure, knowledge infrastructure, knowledge sharing, and knowledge transfer. These studies underline the importance of culture (Davenport and Prusak, 1998).

The Changes in Human Behaviour

This work points out the view that changes can only happen by successfully changing the mind-sets and behaviours of individuals – indeed, organisational culture can provide a supportive environment for people's change, but people must be ready and able to change too. Organisations with highly flexible, adaptable workforces are best placed to successfully learn new things, share knowledge with far less worries and engage in open, frank communication. It is therefore now accepted that changing human behaviour will be the key to effecting organisational knowledge sharing, and adapting innovative ways of working.

Adaptability to the Organisational Environment of the Day

As we debate cultural implications on knowledge transfer, it is necessary to think about human nature and high levels of flexibility required in today's workforce. As I am writing this book, when the world economy is in meltdown, the unpredictable economic downturn is affecting everyone (including knowledge workers), and businesses are looking at every possible avenue to protect their investments, it is absolutely necessary that this book is not lost within the "nonsense" of knowledgeable technologies which are not able to save the planet from such economic catastrophes. It is necessary, however, to recognise that everything we are experiencing in managing these changes is posing difficult questions for managers, on how they can get people to do what they want them to do and how they can overcome resistance to change. These are very serious questions which hit right at the heart of all types of businesses - universities, private companies, public sector institutions to name but a few.

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