Chapter III

Knowledge Space: Building Foundations for Advancing Knowledge

Abstract

This chapter presents a concept of knowledge space as a physical, virtual, or mental space that serves as a foundation for knowledge development in an organization. Based on the review of previous research, it identifies and describes several different types of knowledge spaces and their roles in supporting processes of knowledge creation, transfer, retention, and application. These are used to provide a practical, generalized approach to constructing organizational knowledge space for advancing individual and collective knowledge.
Introduction

In essence, the development of an organisation’s knowledge stock or capital is the result of the dynamic organisational knowledge processes. The effectiveness of these processes is impacted by a number of social and technological factors, as discussed in Chapter I.

Managers are responsible for developing and implementing an optimal mix of socio-technical knowledge management initiatives to support knowledge workers’ needs and processes of an organization, as discussed in Chapter II. Hence, it is important that they have a good understanding of the dynamism of knowledge processes and awareness of the different conditions that can facilitate successful support of these processes. To this end, in this chapter, we introduce the concept of “knowledge space” as a platform for advancing individual and/or collective knowledge.

According to Nonaka and Konno (1998), knowledge space can be thought of as a shared space for emerging relationships. It can be physical (e.g., office), virtual (e.g., e-mail), or mental (e.g., shared ideals), or any combinations of them. Different knowledge spaces support different knowledge processes and thereby impact knowledge development. Awareness of the different characteristics of knowledge spaces can facilitate successful support of knowledge development.

Researchers have, for some time, been investigating fundamental conditions for knowledge development from different perspectives (Becerra-Fernandez & Sabherwal, 2001; Nonaka & Konno, 1998; Snowden, 2002). The most recent knowledge-management literature suggests that we are entering the third generation of knowledge management. The new generation of thoughts is beginning to replace our current focus on Nonaka’s (1998) tacit explicit knowledge conversion (SECI model) and our earlier emphasis on Hammer and Stanton’s (1995) efficient provision of knowledge through business process reengineering (BPR initiatives). In particular, the third age of knowledge management recognises the need to manage the content, the narrative, and the context of knowledge (Snowden, 2002). Presented in the following section is an overview of major existing models and frameworks.

Review of Existing Models and Frameworks

The Concept of “ba”

Perhaps the most frequently quoted and used category in the knowledge-management literature is that which distinguishes tacit from explicit knowledge, based on
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