

IN SEARCH OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: AN AUTOPSY REPORT OF MANAGEMENT TEXT BOOKS

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Abstract: *This study is set to operate under the following research question: ‘How much Knowledge Management (KM) learning materials are incorporated in the academic text books of general management and strategic management?’ To investigate the issue this study applied Content Analysis (CA) technique. It carries out purposive sampling. 15-general management and 10 strategic management books (total 25 books) which are usually recommended by the teachers to the students of the universities and colleges are analysed. The content analysis technique is used to analyse the subject matters of the books. A coding sheet is prepared. It is divided into 325 boxes (25 books and 13 subjects of knowledge management, e.g. 25X13=325) to examine the KM learning materials if they are incorporated. The study finds, 17-books (68%) have addressed the issue of KM, while 8-books (32%) completely ignored the subject of KM. Further, the text books have covered the subjects like definition of knowledge/KM (25%), types of knowledge (15.63%), knowledge creation (10.94%), knowledge storage (9.38%), knowledge maintenance (7.81%), knowledge transfer (7.81%), use of knowledge (9.38%) and other KM subjects (14.06%). No book could address philosophical debates on the definition of knowledge, knowledge transfer mechanisms, barriers to knowledge transfer, duties and responsibilities of CKO and ethical issues in KM. It is recommended that more KM learning materials should be incorporated in the general management and strategic management text books. Further, the universities and colleges should incorporate KM as a separate module in their academic curriculum and syllabus. Future researchers may examine and analyse the contents of learning materials on KM incorporated in other management disciplines.*

Keywords: Knowledge Management, General Management, Strategic Management

INTRODUCTION

Due to the growing importance and significance of Knowledge Management (KM) many universities and business schools in the world have introduced knowledge management as a separate discipline. So students of those universities and institutions have the opportunity to gain specialised knowledge on KM. Accordingly they get enough time and study materials to consult books and journals on knowledge management. Unfortunately the students of the universities and institutions where KM yet to get a

momentum with separate entity and could not establish a foothold have to remain satisfied with the information on KM provided mainly in their general management and strategic management text books. Though nowadays, in the markets and the learning resource centres of the universities and the institutions, there are abundant books and journals on KM, but limited time and academic commitments towards other modules, especially for the taught course students hardly allow to devote extra time and efforts to gain knowledge beyond their prescribed academic curriculums and syllabus. This study has made an endeavour to examine some of the general management and strategic management text books if knowledge management materials are incorporated there. This study operates on the following research question: 'How much KM materials are incorporated in the academic text books of general management and strategic management?' For easy understanding and assimilation of the readers, this article is divided into the following parts: (i) part-1 describes the introductory issues (ii) part-2 reviews the relevant literature (iii) part-3 presents the methodology of the study (iv) part-4 presents the findings, discussion and shows the contributions of the study and (v) part-5 concludes, recommends and exhibits the ways for future research.

A BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

There is no commonly accepted definition of knowledge (Hofer-Alfeis and Spek, 2002). 'Justified true belief in a context may be knowledge is knowledge'- is identified by ancient philosopher Aristotle. This debate has occupied the minds of philosophers for many years (Hislop, 2005; Jashapara, 2004). However, Gettier (1963) finds justified true belief in a context is knowledge. Davenport and Prusak (1998) comprehensively define knowledge as,

"Fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, expert inside and grounded intuition that provides an environment and frame work for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the minds of the knowers. In organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in the documents or repositories but also organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms." (p. 5).

There are many classifications of knowledge. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) described tacit and explicit knowledge in their highly cited SECI (Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Externalization) model. Blackler (1995) finds five types of knowledge, embrained, embodied, encultured, embedded and encoded, while Jasimuddin (2005) informs about endogenous-tacit, endogenous-explicit, exogenous-tacit and exogenous-explicit knowledge. Spender (1996) classified knowledge according to its tacit or explicit features and individual and social character.

Taiwana (2002) defines tacit and explicit knowledge as:

"Tacit knowledge is personal, context-specific knowledge that is difficult to formalize, record, or articulate; it is stored in the heads of the people. Tacit knowledge consists of various components, such as intuition, experience, ground truth, judgement, values, assumptions beliefs and intelligence. The tacit component of is mainly developed through a process of trial and error encountered in practice. Explicit knowledge is that component of knowledge that can be codified and transmitted in a systematic and formal language: documents, databases, webs, e-mails, chart (p. 45)".

Researchers (Gamble and Blackwell, 2001; Zuckerman & Buell, 1998; Jasimuddin *et al.*, 2006) have identified the elements of the knowledge management process. Zuckerman and Buell (1998) find collection, storage, sharing, and linking as part of the process. Jasimuddin *et al.* (2006) describe identifying, capturing, storing, retrieving, and transferring as being important elements of knowledge management process. Capture, storage, dissemination, and creation are identified as essential elements of the knowledge transfer process by Heavin and Neville (2006). Gamble and Blackwell (2001) find identifying, organizing, transferring and using to be some of these elements. Among them, knowledge transfer has received significant attention. Knowledge transfer is one of the most important elements of knowledge management process (Jasimuddin, *et al.*, 2004).

Knowledge transfer process has also certain stages. In this regard, Szulanski's (2000) has articulated a model where the stages of the transfer process demonstrated the four stages of initiation, implementation, ramp-up and integration, of the transfer process. Initiation is the first step in the transfer process, which may be called the decision making stage. In this phase the decision of knowledge transfer is undertaken, and it may be called the planning stage. Implementation is the stage where the movement of resources and logistics are mobilized for the smooth transfer between the provider and the recipient. Ramp-up is the stage where the recipient starts using the transferred knowledge. Integration is the last phase, where knowledge is institutionalized after gaining satisfactory results.

There are numerous knowledge transfer mechanisms. Argote (1999) finds "the mechanisms include training members of the recipient, allowing them to observe the performance of experts at the donor organisation, and providing opportunities for communication between members of both organisations. Providing documents, blueprints, and descriptions of the organisational structure to the recipient as well as transferring experienced personnel, there are additional mechanisms. Since some of the donor's knowledge may be embedded in its hardware, software, and products, providing those to the recipient organization also facilitates knowledge transfer." (p. 145). In addition those, face-to-face conversation (Davenport and Prusak, 2000), books, leaflets and reading materials (Easterby-Smith, *et al.*, 2008), conferences (Appleyard, 1996), staging dramas (George, *et al.*, 1998), posters, signboards and banners (Rafi and Chowdhury, 2000), telephones (Hislop, 2005), e-mails, other electronic medias etc. are also the knowledge transfer mechanisms.

Again, knowledge transfer also encounters many barriers (Hasnain & Jasimuddin, 2012). Davenport and Prusak (2000) find number of barriers to knowledge transfer. They have also shown the side by side probable solutions to the respective barriers. These are shown in the following table:

Table-1: Barriers to knowledge transfer and possible solutions (Davenport and Prusak, 2000, p. 97)

Sl.	Friction	Possible Solutions
1.	Lack of trust	Build relationships and trust through face-to-face meeting
2.	Different cultures, vocabularies, frames of reference	Create common ground through education, discussion, publications, teaming, job rotation
3.	Lack of time and meeting places; narrow idea of productive work	Establish times and places for knowledge transfers: fairs, talk rooms, conference reports
4.	Status and rewards go to the knowledge owners	Evaluate performance and provide

		incentives based on sharing
5.	Lack of absorptive capacity in recipients	Educate employees for flexibility; provide time for learning; hire for openness to ideas
6.	Belief that knowledge is prerogative of particular groups, not-invented-here syndrome	Encourage non-hierarchical approach to knowledge; quality of ideas more important than status of source
7.	Intolerance for mistakes or need for help	Accept and reward creative errors and collaborations; no loss of status from not knowing everything

So the text books on general management and strategic management at least should have the following learning materials on KM so that the students and readers may gain a comprehensive knowledge on KM:

- i. The philosophical debate and the definition of knowledge
- ii. Organisational knowledge
- iii. Classifications of knowledge and related theories/models
- iv. Knowledge Management Process
 - a. Knowledge Creation
 - b. Knowledge storage
 - c. Knowledge maintenance
 - d. Knowledge transfer
 - e. Use of knowledge
- v. Knowledge transfer process and related theories/models
- vi. Knowledge transfer mechanisms
- vii. Barriers to knowledge transfer
- viii. Duties and responsibilities of Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) in the Organisations
- ix. Ethical issues in Knowledge Management

RESEARCH METHDOLOGY

This study applies Content Analysis (CA) technique. Jankowicz (2005) identifies Content Analysis (CA) as one of main qualitative data analysis techniques. Now-a-days Content Analysis technique is popular to academics, commercial researchers and communication practioners (Neuendorf, 2002). This study borrows the procedural guidelines of Content Analysis (CA) as described by Jankowicz (2005, p. 272-73). This study carries out purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling is done on a specific purpose instead of random selection (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). It (purposive sampling) is associated with units or cases (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). This study purposefully selected 15X General Management (mainly Introduction to Management/Principles of Management) and 10X Strategic Management books (total= 25X books) of various authors and publishers to find out the answers of the research question under investigation. It is noticed that these books are recommended by the tutors and lecturers to their business students of various universities and the institutions. The content pages and the alphabetical list of the various subjects/terminologies presented at the end of each book are carefully examined. A coding sheet with the 13 headings (e.g. definitions of knowledge/KM, philosophical debate on the definition of

knowledge, types of knowledge, knowledge creation, knowledge storage, knowledge maintenance, knowledge transfer, use of knowledge, knowledge transfer mechanisms, barriers to knowledge transfer, duties and responsibilities of CKO, ethical issues in KM and other) is prepared. These subjects are investigated over the following 25-text books authored by Cronje, Toit, Motlatla, & Marais (2003), Pettinger, (2002), Cole, (1990), Daft (2003), Morden (2004) , Morden, (1996), Smith (2011), Hannagan, (2002), Bateman, & Snell (2002), Weihrich, & Koontz, (1993), Naylor, (1999), Keuning (1998), Linstead, Fulop & Lilley (2004), Oldcorn (1996), Fulop .& Linstead (1999), Thompson (1993), Wheelen .& Hunger (2002), Johnson, Whittington, & Scholes, (2011), Lynch (2009), Grant (2010), Pettinger (2004), Finlay (2000), Wright, Pringle & Kroll, (1992), Fitzroy, Hulbert & Ghobadia (2012) and Kazmi (1992). The coding sheet is divided into 325 boxes (25 books and 13 subjects of knowledge management, e.g. $25 \times 13 = 325$). Each box of the coding sheet contains 'Yes' or 'No'. A 'Yes' is put in a box if a particular book/author has covered the subject. Otherwise, the box contains 'No'. In this way 325 boxes corresponding each book/author and subject is investigated. Now the 'No' and Yes' for each column and row are added separately.

FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This study examined 25 management and strategic management books. Out of which 17-books addressed the knowledge management subjects, while 8-books ignored the issue of knowledge management. So here 68% books have responded to the issue of KM, while 32% could not address. This result is not a satisfactory one at this golden era of knowledge management, while the value of knowledge management is acknowledged by the worldwide management communities (Scarborough, *et al.*, 2005). KM is a discipline which is multi-dimensional in nature (Chae and Bloodgood, 2006). Knowledge management is entering into a new age (Takeuchi, 2001). It is the basis of management philosophy and tools (Edvardsson, 2006).

Out of 25 books 16 books (e.g. 64%) while 25% space of the coding sheet has mentioned the definition of knowledge or Knowledge management. This subject (definition of knowledge/KM) has occupied the total highest space among all the 13 subjects of KM under this study. This subject of KM subject is the primary and basic foundation for any management student. There is no accepted definition of knowledge (Hofer-Alfeis and Spek, 2002) and there is huge philosophical debates on the definitions of knowledge. The ancient philosopher Aristotle identified knowledge as the 'Justified True Belief'. Later, Gettier (1963) nullified this thousand years old definition of Aristotle arguing justified true belief cannot be knowledge without a context. Unfortunately, this burning issue of KM is not acknowledged by any author/book.

10 books out of 25 books (40%) have classified knowledge. This occupies 15.63% space in the coding sheet. Some of the authors (Finlay, 2000; Lynch, 2009; Fulop and Linstead, 1999; Wheelen and Hunger, 2002; to note a few) in this study has classified knowledge into tacit and explicit. This classification is parallel to the classifications of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and Taiwana (2002). However, the the books under this study have not addressed the other classifications of knowledge as described by Blackler (1995), Jasimuddin (2005) and Spender (1996). 07 out of 25 books (28%) could identify knowledge creation as an element of knowledge management process. This corresponds with the views of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) identified socialization, externalization, combination and internalization as the sources and strategies for knowledge creation.

Table-2: Subjects Addressed and Space Dedicated in KM Sections/chapters of 25-Books (N=25)

Serial	Subjects	Number of Books Addressed. Or, 'Yes' boxes occupied in the coding sheet (a)	Subject wise percentages of space occupied in total knowledge management chapters of all 25 books (a÷64X100	Percentages Books addressed the subjects (out of 25 books) (e.g. a÷25X100
1.	Definition of knowledge/KM	16	25%	64%
2.	Philosophical debate on the definition of knowledge	0	0%	0%
3.	Types of knowledge	10	15.63%	40%
4.	Knowledge creation	07	10.94%	28%
5.	Knowledge storage	06	9.38%	24%
6.	Knowledge maintenance	05	7.81%	20%
7.	Knowledge transfer	05	7.81%	20%
8.	Use of knowledge	06	9.38%	24%
9.	Knowledge transfer mechanisms	0	0%	0%
10.	Barriers to knowledge transfer	0	0%	0%
11.	Duties and responsibilities of CKO	0	0%	0%
12.	Ethical issues in KM	0	0%	0%
13.	Others	09	14.06%	36%
	Total:	64	100%	

6 out of 25 (e.g. 24%) books described knowledge storage. Knowledge storage is like a warehouse where in and out of knowledge takes place. This is parallel to the opinions of Walsh and Ungson (1991) and Jasimuddin *et al.*, (2006). 20% of the books (e.g. 5-books) find knowledge maintenance is an element of knowledge management process.

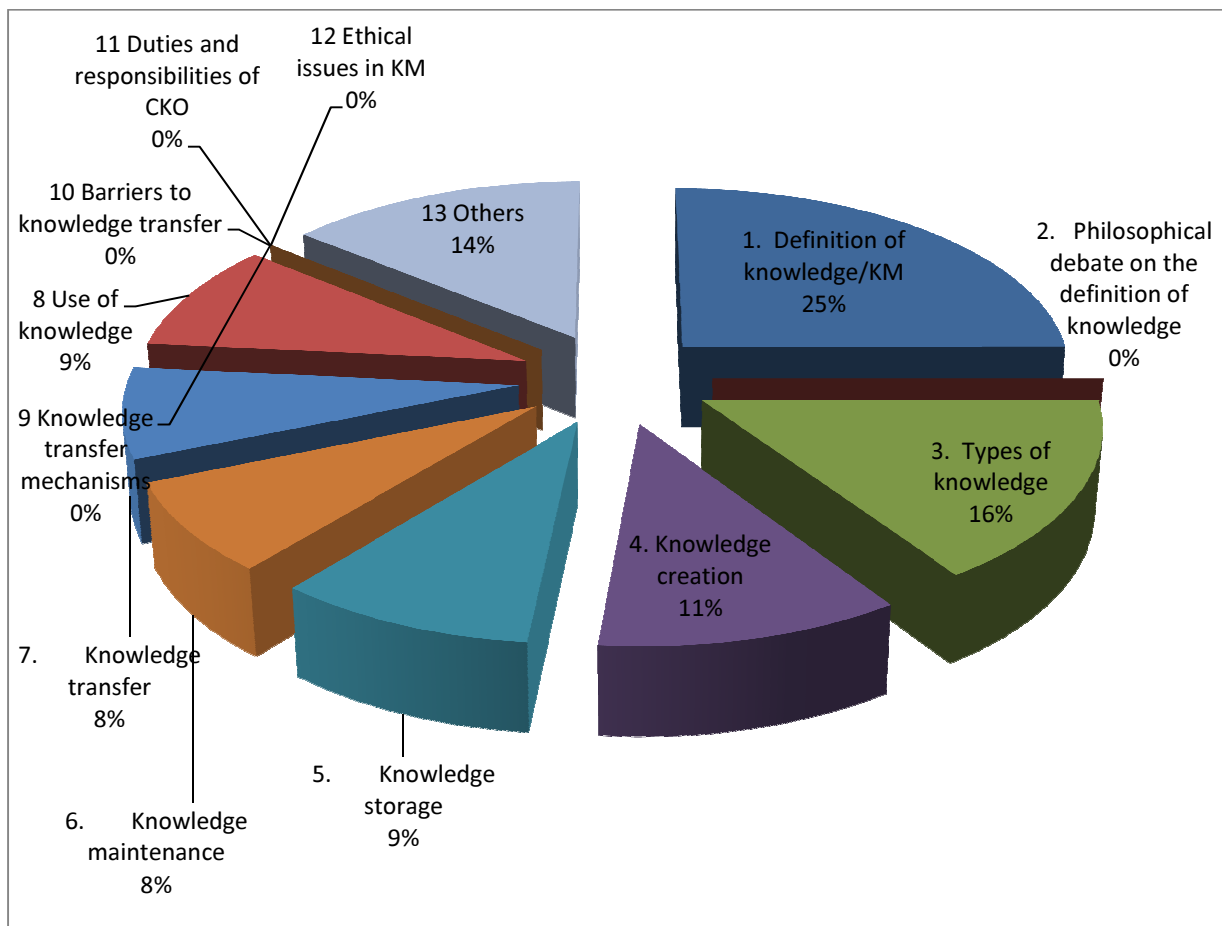
As one of the vital elements of knowledge management process knowledge transfer could receive huge attention. Knowledge transfer is a process, where knowledge acquired in one organization/individual affects positively or negatively another one (Argote, 1999; Chowdhury and Butel, 2007; Argote, McEvily and Reagans, 2003; Argote and Ingram, 2000; Argote *et al.*, 2000). 20% of the books (e.g. 5-books) also find that knowledge transfer is an element of knowledge management process. Some books (6 e.g. 24%) have mentioned about the use of knowledge. Davenport and Prusak (2000) have the similar opinions in this regard.

Unfortunately out of 25-books no book could address the vital issues like knowledge transfer mechanisms, barriers to knowledge transfer, duties and responsibilities of CKO and ethical issues in knowledge management. Appropriate mechanisms of knowledge transfer ensure smooth flow of knowledge between the actors. Knowledge transfer mechanisms are the vehicles through which knowledge is transferred from the knowledge contributors to the knowledge recipients. Many researchers (Davenport and Prusak, 2000; Easterby-Smith, *et al.*, 2008; Appleyard, 1996; Hislop, 2005; to note a few) highlighted the significance of knowledge transfer mechanisms.

It is also imperative to recognize the barriers to knowledge transfer. Hasnain & Jasimuddin (2012) and Davenport and Prusak (2000) exhibit the barriers to knowledge transfer and they also continue by recommending the techniques to eradicate the barriers for a smooth flow of knowledge. CKO oversees the knowledge management activities in any organisation. CKO tries to add value to the organisation. CKO converts knowledge into profit by utilising and managing knowledge in the organisation (Guns, 1997). Guns (1997) continues by identifying that interpersonal communication skills, passionate, visionary leadership skills, business acumen, strategic thinking skills, champion of change and collaborative skills as the main competencies of a CKO.

This study further finds that ethical issues of knowledge management is not addressed by any book, while Land, Amjad and Nolas (2007) inform about the importance of ethics in knowledge management. This study understands that some books have touched topics like, enterprise knowledge, knowledge worker, intellectual property, knowledge audit, organizational knowledge, knowledge management systems etc. However, these are not occupying significant position in the books (see table-2 and Figure-1).

Figure-1: Percentages of Space (within KM Chapters) Occupied in 25-Books (N=25)



This research has theoretical, methodological and practical contributions. Theoretically, the present analysis finds that the existing management books on theories/knowledge have ignored the KM issues. So this study points out and shows the gray areas of management discipline to the researchers and the academics. The study also exhibits the proposed subjects/topics for KM in the management books (see column 2, table-2). Methodologically this study shows how to analyse books through the application of Content Analysis (CA) formulated by Jankowicz (2005). Jankowicz (2005) and (Neuendorf, 2002) have proposed the use of Content Analysis (CA) for qualitative data analysis for semi-structured interviews (particularly for business studies) and media disciplines respectively. This study has used Content Analysis (CA) technique for the investigation of the chapters/areas of KM in the management books. Practically the students and academics can realise about the missing world of KM in their management disciplines. Further, realising the significance of KM, the management book publishers may impose obligatory conditions on their authors about the incorporation of sufficient and vital KM materials in their books.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Knowledge Management (KM) is receiving wide attention by the academics, students, corporate world and the consultants in present days. Realising the significance of KM, many universities, colleges and institutions have introduced KM as a separate module in their academic curriculum and syllabus. It is noticed that organisations are encouraging employees for KM activities. Many organisations have created the position of Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) to add value and to earn more revenue by converting knowledge into profit. At present huge number of books on General and Strategic Managements are available in the market. This study finds that many of these books do not have any element of KM. However, it could reveal even the text books on General and Strategic Managements-which are containing the KM learning materials, are providing very limited information and theories on KM to their readers. Critics may argue that this information is sufficient to gain a basic knowledge on KM. In this case we take the example of this study. This study examined total 25 management and strategic management books. Out of which 17-books addressed the knowledge management subjects, while 8-books completely ignored the issue of knowledge management. So here 68% books have acknowledged the issue of knowledge management, while 32% could not address. Unfortunately, out of these 17 books hardly any author (except Morden, 2004) has written a complete chapter on KM. Some books under this study have only presented the definition of knowledge, while many of them merely divided knowledge into tacit and explicit. So ocean of learning materials on KM is either underrepresented or missed out before the students and the general readers. The state of enclosed learning materials on KM with the books are not sufficient to receive a basic and comprehensive knowledge on KM for the learners. Accordingly, we argue the universities and institutions where KM is not a separate discipline, the students of those institutions need to depend on those limited learning materials to enhance their knowledge on KM, which is not at all sufficient to enrich their (students) knowledge on KM. Thus a huge number of students are being deprived from gaining an in depth and comprehensive knowledge on KM. There are two choices available to get rid of the problem. Firstly, the institutions may introduce KM as a separate discipline in their academic curriculum and syllabus. Secondly, more and enriched with KM chapters may be incorporated in the general management, strategic management and other management books. Future researchers may carry out similar studies in other management disciplines to investigate the issue of incorporating KM learning materials there.

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