

Editorial for EJKM Volume 15 Issue 1

Learning and Unlearning for Sustainability

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As an academic, my core function is learning. Not only engaging in personal lifelong learning but by being a central part in the learning of my family, friends, students, colleagues, business partners, and co-authors. Sustaining learning is essential in a world where 'more of the same' dilutes its impact. We are constantly dealing with change, as individuals, as part of organizations and as consumers and contributors to society. The challenge we face in learning is quicker application, faster recovery from failure and unlearning, so we do not repeat previous errors.

For organizations to survive and thrive, we must create new or modified knowledge practices, strengthen customer relationships and satisfy customers, provide 'fit for purpose' products and services, and deliver value. Whilst 'getting the right information to the right people at the right time' (Davenport & Prusak, 1998) is still at the heart of Knowledge Management, theory and practice needs to push the boundaries of what is known to reveal the unknown. The only limitations is those that we place on ourselves.

The aim of this issue is to challenge our current understanding of learning and unlearning to encourage knowledge management. While a common thread is evident in the papers, KM as a tool for learning, the papers provide a rich and diverse view on applying KM and its impact.

The first paper in this issue by Harlow considers learning (unlearning) and the impact of such on the productivity and impact of researchers in third level institutions. Commencing with the view that much of the research and knowledge at public universities was not finding its way to industry use either through licensing or other means and that various methods (i.e., research papers) of transferring this knowledge were ineffective in making this transfer. Despite strong funding provision, researchers tended to concentrate on research that enhanced their academic publications' reputations; this is resulting in fewer academic papers.

Slettl and Singhal demonstrate how tacit indigenous knowledge can be identified and amplified through a problem-solving approach known as Positive Deviance (Singhal et al., 2014). Contributing to the understanding of the knowledge externalization process (Nonaka, 1994) the Positive Deviance (PD) approach is premised on the belief that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviours and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources.

In-line with the argument for best-fit approaches within human resources the paper by Hermanrud focuses on how the KM practice of communities of practice can contribute to an innovation strategy in a multinational company. This article is founded on practice based theorising (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Wenger, 1998), which is used to theorise on what people do when they try to develop a community among themselves. The paper considers the implication of outsourcing and offshoring in terms of its contribution to learning among colleagues and community development. The main concerns discussed in this article are the spatial, cultural and cognitive reach across colleagues working from and to different locations on the globe from the perspective of community of practice.

McEvoy considers how KM contributes to learning (unlearning) and working practices within the public sector. By conducting an inclusive, systematic literature review of the current state of KM research in the public sector, a total of 3000 articles published in peer reviewed journals over selected time periods have been analysed for content pertaining to public sector knowledge management. From this analysis a total of 150

papers have been selected for their direct relevance to public sector knowledge management. Initial findings of this research indicate that KM in the public sector is relatively under-researched compared with its private sector counterpart. Despite the existing research that has been undertaken, more efforts are required towards the development of applied frameworks to support public KM initiatives.

The final paper by Moffett and Reid considers KM within the private sector. A case study, focusing on customer relationship management (CRM) is presented outlining how the company considers the strategic significance of each customer and focuses on knowledge about, for and from customers. The results from this research inform current thinking and add to knowledge in the strategic areas of KM and CRM.

I hope you find reading this issue thought-provoking. From the encouragement of KM in young learners to established researchers, from theory to practice, these papers encourage further research and application in the field of Knowledge Management. I would like to express my gratitude to the EJKM editorial team for their support in bringing these papers to a wider audience. As we strive to generate rich, contemporary KM research I would encourage you all to consider EJKM as a useful outlet for your work, together we can build sustainability in learning.

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