

Chapter VI

Model on

Knowledge–Governance: Collaboration Focus and Communities of Practice

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to deepen the concept of ‘Communities of Practice’ (CoPs) from the understanding of a reference framework for knowledge governance, stressing the grey area which distinguishes such governance from the traditional term ‘Knowledge Management,’ since knowledge governance means not just the management of such assets but also their creation and development, which generates a richer and more appropriate meaning or sense. Without entering into exhaustive referential analyses, we attempt to offer the reader a practical approach which allows structuring an action plan that, in this case, will be explicated for the field of CoPs. Identification and measurement of assets based on information and knowledge and the processes carried out towards its improvement create the convergence of the dynamic of intellectual capital and the afore-mentioned knowledge governance as complementary subjects for an appropriate exploitation and monitoring of the impact which the organizational fostering of this strategic-reality has on business.

VALUATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL INTANGIBLE ASSETS

The strategic approach of businesses in the current economy has an important part related with certain support processes linked to analysis tasks corresponding to dynamic processes of decision making, as an attempt to diminish the risks inherent to such processes. In this sense, such argument on intelligent or learning-capable organizations (Senge, 1990) gains a high value for the extraction of information and the creation of both appropriate internal and external knowledge.

This approach insists on the importance of basic resources for strategic management focused on the couple information-knowledge (Itami, 1987; Vassiliadis *et al.*, 2000) and on derived individual and organizational learning. In this case, corporative philosophy should create the necessary atmosphere to recognize the value of intangible assets, very close to the understanding of the theory of resources and abilities, which does not only take into account those resources related with the tangible field but also those linked to non-physical elements located in the organizational 'roots' (1).

Obviously, it arises a requirement around a model or scheme of analysis; firstly, for the identification and measurement of such typology of assets, and also to facilitate a structured framework of reflection and analysis, an area covered by the intellectual-capital approach (Itami & Roehl, 1991; Grant, 1991; Bontis, 1999; Bueno & Salmador, 2000; Ordoñez, 2000).

This thematic area of intangible assets—which we could qualify as emerging if study cases are observed, although it has been historically tackled in organizational literature within the field of the theory of resources and abilities (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991; Peteraf, 1993)—had already collected, in different ways, contributions which helped to the valuation of non-tangible assets.

The basic models of intellectual capital (2) are generally structured by three basic components (IADE-CIC, 2003). Firstly, human capital—where attitudes, competency and abilities are analysed developing a profile to identify and measure knowledge from an individual viewpoint. On the other hand, structural capital (3)—responsible for knowledge diagnosis of organizational nature (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Brown & Duguid, 1991 and 1998; Teece, 1998 and 2000; Nonaka *et al.*, 2000; Tsoukas & Vladimirou, 2001)—considers aspects such as organizational design, reported culture and processes, and also a technology reality related with efforts in I+D such as tools and results which facilitate and make knowledge tangible (Brooking, 1996).

Finally, relational capital—which is explained by knowledge and information flows derived from the framework of alliances directly related with business processes (customers, suppliers, etc.) or involved with the social environment (4) (Nahapiet & Ghosal, 1996).

However, measurement only lacks of sense without a sustainable exertion allowing the analysis of different initiatives developed to improve the stock of intellectual capital. Such initiatives are processes related with the idea of 'knowledge in action' (Davenport & Prusak, 1998), creating a requirement of a holistic model integrating different alternatives and options, and also avoiding the common error linked to the consideration of strategic plans for knowledge governance or management just as a mere accumulations of initiatives. This accumulative approach creates difficulty and complexity in understanding certain dimensions and interactions among assets, generates chaos and includes contradictions among different programmes.

The result of such intellectual capital is centred on a 'photograph' (Bontis, 1999) as a traditional balance showing the status of the basic intangible assets identified by the organization; however, this approach may present a double objective—that

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