

Chapter 8

Knowledge Conversion Processes in Thai Public Organisations Seen as an Innovation: The Re-Analysis of a TAM Study Using Innovation Translation

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ABSTRACT

This article uses data collected for a study undertaken in the mid-2000s using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to investigate knowledge conversion processes in a Thai Government Ministry. The authors re-analyse this study making use of the power of actor-network theory. The original TAM study, based on technological innovation, investigated the relationship between technology support and management of the knowledge conversion process in a government ministry in Thailand to increase knowledge sharing. The original study found that a number of external variables impacted on the knowledge conversion process, including personal details, training, tools of persuasion, national background and culture, management and policies, employee behaviour, management, and policies and computing support. This paper briefly outlines the findings of the original study and discusses how an ANT study would have approached this material. An analysis is then made of how an Innovation Translation approach differs fundamentally from one using the Technology Acceptance Model.

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INTRODUCTION: THAI PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

In 2003 in Thailand a Royal Decree on Principles and Procedures for Good Public Governance (B.E.2546, section 11) set the way for the development of a knowledge-based agency:

In order to enable the administration of the government agency to be in compliance with the public administration for the efficient result of the mission of the State, the government agency shall have the duty to develop knowledge base within its agency regularly so as to make itself as the knowledge base agency. In this regards, the government agency shall analyse all received information in order to produce analytical knowledge which is necessary to its practical use in its public administration correctly, rapidly and suitably for any circumstance. The government agency shall also promote and develop knowledge and capability of, and create vision and alter attitude of, its public servants so as to be efficient and co-learning personnel. (THAILAWS, 2003) (Translation)

The Government then promoted knowledge management (KM) as part of its development strategy (2003-2004) (OPDC, 2004), prompting the public sector in Thailand to transform itself into a learning organization and a knowledge-based agency. The main objective of this strategy was to modify processes and working procedures so as to raise the competency and working standards of Thai Government service units to an international level by using good governance practices. The objective of good governance is ensuring the Government's mission of efficiency. It also involves leveraging cost benefits by reducing redundant operational processes and offering end-to-end solutions. Thailand lags, however, in terms of KM execution compared with other developed countries as the processes for knowledge management are still currently being researched. The principal unit of the government sector in

Thailand responsible for identifying and evaluating the benefits of ICT and KM is the Ministry of Commerce (MOC). This Ministry has authority and responsibilities regarding trade in goods and services, intellectual property rights and other duties as assigned by laws. The MOC was the first government unit to initiate and execute this KM project and have since established an independent group to work exclusively on KM, called the 'KM Group', whose role is to analyse KM and communicate to other units in the organisation the importance of KM along with its benefits and uses. This unit works closely with the ICT unit of the Ministry of Commerce to develop efficient KM strategies that are in line with the Government's service development plan and the Government's goals (Charnkit, 2011).

KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

In a dynamic and complex global market, success in business necessitates co-operation among various players. Such co-operation can help businesses grow and sustain themselves (Charnkit, 2011). Relationships in a business network become more flexible if they are associated with trust and based on mutual benefits (Lipnack & Stamps, 2000). There are many factors that offer businesses a competitive edge the most critical being knowledge-sharing within the business organisation. Knowledge is an important asset of any global business and Amin and Thrift (1994) suggest that a characteristic factor of an extending and deepening global economy is the increasing importance assigned to knowledge. It can be argued that knowledge is the economic resource in a new economy (Carlsson, 2003). Knowledge is critical to every business and knowledge management is one domain that organisations are increasingly focusing on as the success of business organisations is dependent on creating knowledge and enhancing the ability to learn (Birchall & Tovstiga, 1999). In

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