

Chapter XV

A Manifesto for the Preservation of Organizational Memory Associated with the Emergence of Knowledge Management Educational Programs

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces the research domain of knowledge management educational programs and issues associated with the preservation of knowledge about these programs. The chapter comprises a preliminary literature review of the academic and research perspectives along with the broader educational perspectives associated with knowledge management educational programs in the academy and in the workplace. The manifesto concludes with an imperative suggesting the critical need to immediately collect and preserve all significant knowledge artifacts comprising curriculum, courses, and instruction associated with past, current, and future knowledge management educational programs. Since knowledge management is continuing to grow as an emerging field, future educators will need access to the preserved organizational memory associated with instructional successes and failures in this new field.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge Management (KM) has been widely accepted as an emergent phenomenon, although minorities of academics, pundits, and practitioners

have proposed that KM has already reached the status of a discipline. The following review of the literature demonstrates that research on the nature of the emerging field of KM education is plentiful, but still in its infancy. Research on KM

educational programs appears, at the most, to be conceptual, although concrete programs have been designed, developed, deployed, and occasionally decommissioned. Preserving the institutional memory surrounding the development of KM educational programs could prove useful for future research about KM and KM education. Eventually a need may arise to understand how KM education evolved and why certain perspectives of KM were taught while others have disappeared from the curriculum. In order to anticipate this educational imperative, care must be taken now to preserve the organizational memory associated with KM education. This chapter is an attempt to bring together disparate material about KM education in order to initiate an historical repository of the programs, curricula, and courses that purport to teach KM.

I sought material in my review of the literature that would help us to explore the phenomenon of KM, but more specifically KM within the context of an educational program of learning. This investigation was based upon earlier work in organizational memory management (Sutton, 1996) and my recently completed doctoral research where I studied two specific cases of KM educational program design and development in the academy (Sutton, 2007). The following preliminary review of the literature will be presented in three major categories that provide structure for this chapter:

1. Knowledge Management in the academy—the academic perspective.
2. Knowledge Management in educational programs—a research perspective.
3. Knowledge Management educational programs—the broader educational perspective.

BACKGROUND

Before I discuss the different perspectives of the literature encompassing the concepts of KM

and education I need to provide some context by means of a definition. My initial review of the literature turned up at least fifty definitions of KM, and it is not yet an exhaustive list. Dalkir (2005, p. 4) reported that she had discovered over 100 disparate definitions. Most academics as well as practitioners agree that the term was poorly defined and ambiguously described (Den Hertog & Huizenga, 2000; Dixon, 2000). This situation likely parallels the circumstances surrounding the emergence of other fields that have become prominent over the last two decades, for example, Astrobiology, Information Science, Information Systems, MIS, Space Science, and Women and Gender Studies.

The explosion of homegrown definitions along with the development of well-founded and well-formulated definitions suggests that the field of KM is still emerging (Despres & Chauvel, 2002). The multidisciplinary roots of KM (Dalkir, 2005, p. 6–7) constrain the capability of both practitioners and academics to agree on one definition for the emerging field. I synthesized three widely accepted definitions I discovered during my research (Dalkir, 2005, p. 3; Becerra-Fernandez, Gonzalez, & Sabherwal, 2004, p. 30; Bennet & Bennet, 2004, p. 227) into one definition for my research study:

- Knowledge Management is the deliberate and systematic framework encompassing communications, people, processes, structure, and technologies of an organization in order to produce sustainable competitive advantage or long-term high performance for the organization.
- The value and utility in the management of knowledge accrues to the organization through innovation, reuse, and organizational learning.
- The framework is operationalized through the convergence of personal, group, and enterprise action upon a knowledge life-cycle.

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