Knowledge Management for Development Journal

Call for Papers

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Challenges and opportunities in measuring KM results and development impact

The Knowledge Management for Development Journal (KM4D Journal) is a peer-reviewed community-based journal on the applications of knowledge management (KM) in development situations – for and by development practitioners, researchers and policymakers. The journal is closely related to the KM4Dev community of practice: www.km4dev.org

The KM4D Journal is currently inviting papers for an upcoming special issue on Challenges and opportunities in measuring and evaluating KM results and impact to be published in September 2018. The Guest Editors for this issue are: Helen Gillman and Chris Zielinski (co-lead editors), Charles Dhewa, Juergen Hagmann and Kim Martins, with Sarah Cummings.

Rationale

As a discipline, KM is subject to the immense pressures produced by radical information technology developments. The value of knowledge itself is being severely tested by such present-day phenomena as fake news and the rise of social media platforms. These factors make it all the more vital to develop a defensible and objective approach to knowledge management (KM). In the private sector, KM and organizational learning are enjoying something of a resurgence but the public sector may be lagging behind, partly because knowledge as a core asset is still not fully recognized. Without a clear and convincing way of assessing the impact of KM, it is difficult to justify the activity in the face of shifting organizational, societal and development priorities. Unless there are recognized methods and indicators for making such assessments, the value of KM can be easily challenged. It is also through assessing KM impact that KM principles and knowledge life cycles can be made visible.

Why is it important to measure and evaluate the results and impact of KM? In organizations that invest in KM strategies and initiatives, the bottom line is that knowledge managers must be able to demonstrate the relevance and impact of their work – the return on investment. In an organizational context, KM is a distributed activity and can impact diverse groups, programmes and initiatives, making it difficult to establish cause and effect (Henley Business School, 2013). Some KM activities are obvious and easy to measure – typically process indicators such as the number of knowledge products or the number of downloads of a particular document – while subtler KM activities often defy measurement. This includes, for example, measuring the influence or impact of knowledge activities on policy makers, demonstrating the improved skills of employees, and assessing the successful retention of knowledge despite retirements and other staff departures. Also challenging is measuring links between KM activities and improved effectiveness, and efficiency and value for money. Moreover, how can it be shown that changes in any of these areas can be attributed to KM? KM performance measurement is a challenge largely because most knowledge is tacit in nature (i.e. a person’s expertise and experience; accumulated specialist knowledge that is difficult to codify and so on). While it is easy to argue that there is a link between knowledge, learning and organizational or development effectiveness, it is far more difficult to demonstrate it. This is just as relevant in the management of knowledge outside the walls of organizations. In society, knowledge and its
application are catalysts for any development and progress (Brander and Cummings 2017). What are the theoretical and practical considerations and opportunities of taking a more systemic approach to KM, applying it to sectors and other broader concepts, such as ‘knowledge cities’, ‘the information society’ and ‘the knowledge economy’?

This issue
In this Special Issue, we want to encompass the challenges and opportunities in tracking and demonstrating the impact of managing knowledge both inside the walls (in organizations) and outside the walls (in the broader development context). In particular, we welcome submissions on the following topics:

- **Indicators of knowledge and indicators of knowledge management.** The quest for indicators of knowledge has been pursued in commercial companies as well as in support of the development agenda. As demonstrated in a study led by the International Development Research Council (IDRC), Canada, some 30 years ago, ‘Information is the most critical resource and plays a fundamental role in development. Yet there is no systematic body of empirical evidence to support this assertion, especially quantitative evidence’ (McConnell 1995). This situation continues today. As most organizations have adopted strategies focusing on KM, the measurement of impact is a pressing commercial and organizational concern. The recent focus on multi-year, multi-target development agendas (Health for All by the Year 2000, the Millennium Development Goals, and now the Sustainable Development Goals) has given a new stimulus to the growing science of indicators. The pessimistic results of the IDRC’s 1995 work need to be revisited. What are the candidate indicators to measure knowledge and KM? What are the possible approaches?

- **Assessing and measuring knowledge in the SDGs.** It has been asserted that ‘knowledge is cross-cutting – it is everywhere in the SDGs’ while others have shown that knowledge, and particularly local knowledge, is lacking (Cummings et al 2017). What is the accurate reflection of reality? Are there any explicit targets or indicators in the SDGs that focus on knowledge and KM? Papers analysing any aspect of knowledge in the SDGs would be welcome.

- **Knowledge in sectors (health, agriculture, etc.) as opposed to knowledge in organizations. Is it the same thing?** KM has emerged as a part of organization theory. As such, it has focused on the role of knowledge within organizations. Its analysis in the framework of global public goods is influenced by this confinement within the walls of an organization. What are the theoretical and practical considerations of taking knowledge management ‘outside the walls’, applying it to sectors, and other broader concepts such as ‘Knowledge Cities’, the information society and the knowledge economy?

- **Analysing knowledge on the internet – analogue/digital expressions of knowledge.** How has the digitalization of everything changed the analysis of knowledge? Clearly such areas as intellectual property rights have experienced sharp impacts, requiring a revisiting of the legal basis of such areas as limitations and exceptions, country of origin, and intermediary liability among others. Measurement frameworks are also significant – are the commonly used analytical tools up to the task of measuring impact – of a website, of a network, of specific items of content? The legal framework lags behind technology, social media etc. What are the implications?
Quality control in knowledge management. In recent years, we have seen a proliferation of knowledge management techniques and practices. How can we ensure that the best knowledge management practices are applied in the best ways in specific circumstances? How can one measure and improve the quality of knowledge management? What is the role of the new KM Standard ISO/DIS 30401\(^1\) in this?

Building measurement of KM outcomes (and development impact) into an organization’s existing performance measurement frameworks. Some organisations are building measurement of KM outcomes into their performance measurement frameworks. How are organizations doing this? What are the best practices? How can other organizations learn from them?

KM and organizational effectiveness and efficiency. How does KM contribute to organisational effectiveness and efficiency? What is the cost-benefit of KM and how can it be demonstrated? Can this be related to value for money? What are best practices and experiences in this area?

Assessing communities of practice. Communities of practice and knowledge networks have a very important role in the development sector, bridging many different divides in terms of language, location and professional groups. They have been featured in previous issues of KM4D Journal. Here, we want to focus on any methodologies that have been developed to measure their impact. We are particularly interested in papers examining the factors that contribute to the successful impact of CoPs within organizations, especially where they have delivered real benefits in terms of both individual and organizational learning and performance.

Measuring of KM/organizational learning initiatives. Cost-effective methods for measuring outcomes of learning initiatives are of interest, especially when they involve behavioural and mindset changes.

Intellectual capital and intangible knowledge assets in the organization. Intellectual capital represents an intangible asset in any organization. At present, there is no common definition and no common framework to measure and report intellectual capital. A recent focus has been on examining the outputs of intellectual capital (e.g. patents), and network value analysis. One framework that has been important for measuring intellectual capital in organizations has been developed by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), although this is particularly relevant to developed countries. To what extent can the theoretical concept of social capital be applied to knowledge creation and exchange in developing countries, outside of organizations? Another is the Skandia Navigator developed by Edvinsson (1997). Have you applied these or other frameworks to measure the intellectual capital in your organization? Is the need for measurement in the development sector different than in other sectors. For example, is the social and economic impact more important in the development sector than in other sectors?

Knowledge management and sense-making. Although sense-making\(^2\) models focus on decision-making and leadership, effective and reasoned decisions are a part of any organization’s success and effectiveness. Better informed decisions rely on timely, accurate information and knowledge. Papers on sense-making in knowledge management are invited.
Types of contributions

*Articles* are refereed through a peer support process. Each submission is limited to a maximum of 6000 words (including notes and references), plus a summarizing abstract no longer than 200 words, a short biographical summary of the authors and contact details. Articles can include:

- Theory-focused articles which introduce, or advance or question scientific concepts, models and approaches in knowledge management for development.
- Review articles which review approaches and advance the field.
- Practice-based articles which are based on the application of knowledge management for development. Although they may be focused on practice, they need to have a theoretical basis in the literature of knowledge management and development, and take the theory a step further. Articles may use case examples to illustrate a point, but a theory or premise is at the forefront.

*Case studies* are generally slightly shorter than papers, with a case example at the forefront serving as a basis for the author’s theories. The case studies should not exceed 4000 words and are subject to peer review.

*Thought pieces* are an outlet for expressing opinions, sharing new ideas, or presenting philosophical discourses. They should comprise a maximum of 2000 words and are not subject to peer review, although they should be revised in line with the comments of the Editors.

*Publication reviews* which review approaches and advance the field. For example, reviews of publications that highlight what is interesting, innovative, relevant and also what weaknesses they may have.

*Short stories* are short contributions (maximum of 2000 words), with a more personal take than an article or a case study. A short story can address either personal experiences or a newsworthy topic. Non-fiction only, please.

*KM4Dev Community Notes* comprise summaries of discussions that have taken place in the KM4Dev community of practice online discussion forum, or a conference or workshop report which has taken place under the auspices of KM4Dev (www.km4dev.org/journal). The objective of Community Notes is to showcase the activities of the KM4Dev community. Community notes may be submitted by any member of the KM4Dev community.

*Life stories* are biographical portraits of figures from the field of knowledge management for development, tracing their crucial activities, lessons learned and trends/observations for the future. These articles should not exceed 4000 words.

*Debates* are exchanges between two persons about a specific topic in the field of knowledge management for development – a topic on which the two persons disagree. Debates consist of a series of answers by two persons to issues posed by a third, neutral voice. These articles should not exceed 3000 words. The summary and details of both authors should be shared. These articles often require more preparation time than technical or research papers.

*Letters* are open letters to the editors regarding any previously published discussion, document or other material. These should not exceed 1000 words.
Annotated bibliographies are collections of publications (books, papers, articles and other written items) that deal with one specific topic. These articles should not exceed 4000 words or 30 references. Each reference should contain full author, access, publisher and publication details, and provide a critical commentary on each item referenced.

Guidelines for authors are available on the KM4Dev wiki in English, French and Spanish: [http://wiki.km4dev.org/KM4D_Journal_-_Editors%27_Workspace#Author_Guidelines](http://wiki.km4dev.org/KM4D_Journal_-_Editors%27_Workspace#Author_Guidelines)

Please submit your abstract by 30 January 2018 to: KM4DJ-editors@dgroups.org

Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission deadline for the title and abstract</td>
<td>30 January 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance/rejection of proposal</td>
<td>15 February 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full contribution due</td>
<td>30 March 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer review completed</td>
<td>15 May 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final versions submitted</td>
<td>15 June 2018</td>
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<td>Publication of the issue</td>
<td>September 2018</td>
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References


1 [https://www.iso.org/standard/68683.html](https://www.iso.org/standard/68683.html)