Chapter V

A Review of Knowledge Management Frameworks

5.1 Introduction

This research is concerned with developing a framework for the evaluation of an organisation's potential to engage in knowledge management (an organisation's 'KM-readiness', or KMR). To recap, Chapter 3 offered background information and empirical evidence of issues that need to be considered in organisations, Chapter 4 provided an overview of knowledge management, and Chapter 5 explored organisational structure, strategy, and culture in the context of knowledge management. Discussion thus far would not be sufficient to provide a robust and reasoned framework. This chapter is intended to accumulate some further and more focussed ideas as to what should be in a KMR framework, and to assist in the understanding of the material

presented here and further on in this thesis. This chapter, therefore, provides a comprehensive review of published knowledge management frameworks that purport to address evaluation, implementation, and other connected areas.

Before continuing, it is important to set this exercise in context. The review of frameworks is distinct from a review of literature in which the frameworks are presented. The latter is not intended here. For example, a review of a paper may involve a comprehensive critique, which includes exploration into the general area of research, clarification of the hypothesis, detailed examination of research methods and methodology, literature review, and comprehensive examination of data representation and quality. Such a review would consider the presentation of the paper, and it would critically reflect on the overall purpose of the paper and contribution made to new knowledge, either conceptual or practical. This review focuses solely on the frameworks presented in a paper and in particular those that may address evaluation of knowledge management in an organisation.

This review is important in two major ways, both of which form the key objectives:

- First, by showing that there is no single existing framework that addresses KMR, gaps in concepts and practice are highlighted. This helps to demonstrate that a new framework for the evaluation of an organisation's potential to engage in knowledge management will contribute to knowledge; the shortfall is clearly demonstrated in this chapter.

- Second, the review highlights useful elements and concepts that ought to be in the framework being developed; this is also achieved.

More than 3,000 papers were found by means of the usual search methods. From these, based on titles, abstracts, and keywords, a total of 267 articles were identified as having potential relevance to this research. However, 107 of these focus solely on technology and technical aspects of information, and these were not considered suitable for the purposes of this research. The remainder of the papers were considered in more detail, and eventually 40 papers were considered to have frameworks of kinds that were worth serious evaluation.

The approach taken to this review is a qualitative interpretivist approach and as such specific issues require attention, such as reliability and validity. For example, Decrop (1999, p. 158) states that methodological introductions are "mostly limited to describing the research design or mentioning reliability and

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