

Chapter 9

Knowledge Sharing in an Organisation: A Practitioner Approach

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ABSTRACT

This chapter employed the moments of translation of the actor-network theory (ANT) to understand and interpret the sociotechnical knowledge sharing dynamics in organisations. Given the contextual and sociotechnical nature of knowledge sharing, a model constructed on the concepts of the moments of translation of the actor network theory (ANT), developed from a case study of a higher education institution (HEI) in South Africa, is proposed to help to understand and interpret the knowledge sharing challenges in organisations. A conceptual framework was developed within the context of ANT by adopting its ideals and principles to understand how to introduce and develop knowledge sharing within an organisation, using the moments of translation. As such, it was possible to determine why there is no network of aligned interest for knowledge sharing, and how to create a network of aligned interest.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management was conceptualised in the 1980s, but still draws significant attention in various industries today (Baskerville & Dulipovici, 2006). The effective management of knowledge seems to be a primary concern for organisations due to the value that can be derived from knowledge (Tan & Wong, 2015; Sulisworo, 2012; Lubega, Omona & Van der Weide, 2010; Malik, 2005). Knowledge is considered to be a valuable asset as it can improve productivity, improve efficiency and effectiveness, solve problems, create core competencies, and achieve innovation, thus enabling an organisation to be more competitive (Phong, Hui & Son, 2018; Sheng, Chang, Teo, & Lin, 2013; Lubega et al., 2010; Liao, Fei, & Chen, 2007; Hewett & Watson, 2006; Durcikova & Gray, 2005; Bush & Tiwana, 2005; Liao, 2003; Holsapple, 2001). Knowledge is context-specific because it is derived from the accumulated individual experiences of employees within an organisation (Chen & Mohamed, 2010). Various methods, techniques and tools are employed to harness the knowledge of individuals through capturing, storing, sharing and using knowledge (Al Ahbabi, Singh, Balasubramanian & Gaur, 2019; Liao, 2003; Lee, 2001). However, these techniques do not guarantee the flow of knowledge and social structures make it difficult to manage these processes (Lauring & Selmer, 2012). The result is that organisations today are still struggling to share and manage knowledge.

This chapter articulates that individuals that create the accumulated knowledge of an organisation are actors in a network of aligned interest for knowledge sharing. In addition, it is demonstrated that knowledge sharing is influenced by facilitating factors of leadership, culture, policy, processes, technology and a strategy to create a network of aligned interest to share the accumulated knowledge of an organisation. Given the contextual and sociotechnical nature of knowledge sharing, a model constructed on the concepts of the moments of translation of the Actor Network Theory (ANT), developed from a case study of a higher education institution (HEI) in South Africa, is proposed to help to understand and interpret the knowledge sharing challenges in organisations.

CONCEPTUALISING THE PHENOMENON

The actor network theory (ANT) is a social theory which examines the interplay between human and non-human entities in an actor network, thereby allowing technical, organisational and social aspects of an actor-network to be considered and studied together (Diedrich & Guzman, 2015). It therefore examines the shifting relationships between heterogeneous actors of a network of aligned interest. The shifting relationships are examined through the lens of the four moments of translation:

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