

## Chapter 3.22

# Mobilizing Knowledge in the UK Public Sector: Current Issues and Discourse

**David Pullinger**  
*London, UK*

### ABSTRACT

Knowledge management supports the key goals of an organization. For government this is creating public value, through trust, outcomes, service quality and cost effectiveness. These are vital matters for the UK government, and the need to mobilize knowledge is essential in delivering them. Knowledge management has tended to be about corporate knowledge inside an organization. This is important for government, not least in joining up its many parts to deliver more effective services and outcomes to citizens. However, citizens also have knowledge that can help deliver public value. How citizens and government share knowledge forms a second exploration. Citizens are also concerned about the use made by the state of personal data and knowledge about them; this

forms the third strand. The issues that arise are mapped as ethical tensions onto Nonaka's SECI model, providing both a framework for exploring ethics and for examining the space for organizational innovation.

### INTRODUCTION

A group of us were gathered to discuss aspects of delivering the UK government's new information and knowledge strategy (HM Government, 2008a). Who exactly is in this group, and for what is it responsible, I was asked by someone the group meeting. It's an informal group of people who meet occasionally to exchange information and build each other's knowledge, I replied, continuing that it had no formal authority, governance or reporting, although we did so through various routes. The initial reaction of

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-783-8.ch3.22

my colleague civil servant seemed to be one of unease. This encapsulates and illustrates a feeling in the government's administration about the need to follow processes that can be monitored and for which it should be accountable. There are very good reasons for state administration being consistent, process-driven and open to scrutiny but meetings are consequently often representative, hierarchic and proceduralised. Sharing knowledge is not like that. Access to, and engaging with, the knowledge that people have, whatever their role and seniority, requires a major cultural shift from a procedure-based approach. The first section of this chapter looks at some of the aspects that need to be addressed in mobilizing knowledge within government.

The work of government in setting strategy, policy and implementation extends widely. The knowledge that is required to do each well does not only reside in public service officials. This is one reason for the large number of independent advisory bodies set up by the government in the UK. Beyond this more formal means of sharing knowledge from expert to government, is a move towards citizens communicating what they experience and sharing their knowledge through feedback mechanisms (HM Government, 2009c). To deliver the maximum benefit for society, everyone needs to be involved. This may be done, perhaps, through social media tools. The public, however, cannot get fully involved if they do not know what is going on, so there is also a major move in the UK to release data about public services and more generally to allow others to analyze and communicate (Cabinet Office, 2009). In release of data and use of social media, there are issues about data control, rights to use and re-use and intellectual property. The second part of the chapter explores what knowledge mobilization looks like when including people external to an organization into the delivery of its goals.

Individuals, whatever their role, expect that increased transparency should not lead to personal information being shared. With the increasing abil-

ity to analyze information, security and protection of data is essential. What is considered personal is itself a social construction. In the UK, people are astonished that Norwegians can put a name into a government website and discover how much they declared in earnings to the tax authorities. Or, that in USA one can type the name of a realtor and see if there has ever been a court case associated with that person. What is personal and what is not is yet to be clearly defined in the UK. Moreover, we can be double-minded about the use of data in the delivery of public services. When we need to report the death of a family member to the authorities, there can be 44 contacts in the UK (Varney, 2006) and people would like to be able to do it just once, as in Sweden, and all the public bodies know about it. But there is a strong and consistent reaction against the idea that information might be shared between public bodies. The third section of the chapter examines this aspect of information and knowledge about an individual.

In summary, we look at mobilizing knowledge in government, mobilizing the knowledge in the citizenry and sharing it with government, and the knowledge that the state has about individuals and how that should be treated. We explore a number of issues and then consider the ethical aspects more specifically in the final fourth section. First, we begin with scoping the work of government that makes knowledge sharing critical and the ways in which knowledge management (KM) can contribute to its outcomes.

## **WHY LOOK AT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT?**

Why does an organization such as a government want to look at the mobilization and management of knowledge? KM is more usually associated with competitive business advantage (Liebowitz, 1999).

There are a number of drivers for UK government looking at how to mobilize and manage its

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/mobilizing-knowledge-public-sector/58148](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/mobilizing-knowledge-public-sector/58148)

## Related Content

---

### The Dynamics of Entrepreneurial Networks: A Qualitative Assessment of University Incubator's Role in the Early Stages of Hi-Tech Startups

Mehmet Erçekand Mesut Sartemur (2021). *Research Anthology on Small Business Strategies for Success and Survival* (pp. 377-396).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-dynamics-of-entrepreneurial-networks/286097](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-dynamics-of-entrepreneurial-networks/286097)

### Value Creation, Value Capturing, and Management Challenges in Innovation Ecosystems: A Qualitative Study of the Nano-Electronics Industry in Belgium and the Netherlands

Pegah Yaghmaie, Wim Vanhaverbekeand Nadine Roijackers (2020). *Journal of Business Ecosystems* (pp. 20-37).

[www.irma-international.org/article/value-creation-value-capturing-and-management-challenges-in-innovation-ecosystems/250362](http://www.irma-international.org/article/value-creation-value-capturing-and-management-challenges-in-innovation-ecosystems/250362)

### Could Cultural Sustainability Improve Organisational Sustainability in Cloud Environments?

Fawzy Soliman (2017). *Organizational Culture and Behavior: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1202-1217).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/could-cultural-sustainability-improve-organisational-sustainability-in-cloud-environments/177623](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/could-cultural-sustainability-improve-organisational-sustainability-in-cloud-environments/177623)

### Policy-Based Wide Area Network Management System

(2017). *Strategic Policy-Based Network Management in Contemporary Organizations* (pp. 203-212).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/policy-based-wide-area-network-management-system/168865](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/policy-based-wide-area-network-management-system/168865)

### The Roles of Customer Databases and Database Marketing in Marketing Intelligence: A Business Ecosystem Perspective

Pratap Chandra Mandal (2022). *Journal of Business Ecosystems* (pp. 1-18).

[www.irma-international.org/article/the-roles-of-customer-databases-and-database-marketing-in-marketing-intelligence/313044](http://www.irma-international.org/article/the-roles-of-customer-databases-and-database-marketing-in-marketing-intelligence/313044)