Chapter 5.17
Organizational Learning Facilitation with Intranet (2.0):
A Socio–Cultural Approach

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INTRODUCTION

In this article, we will, after reviewing the literature, analyze the cultural dimension of Intranets as knowledge management tools within organizations. Intranet is an Information Communication Technology (ICT) based upon the Internet (http://www, TCP/IP) technology. The Intranet phenomenon has been introduced in the early 1990s by the idea that it can integrate all the computers, software and databases within a particular organization into a single system that enables employees to find and share all the information they need for their work (Bernard, 1997, Cortese, 1996). Intranets function as a Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) tool and are used as computing networks used for sharing organizational information. While Internet technology is leading, access is restricted exclusively to organizational members (by means of electronic firewalls). In a study to the role of Intranets in strategic management decisions, Curry and Stancich (2000) define Intranets as '…private computing networks, internal to an organization, allowing access only to authorized users' (p. 250). The term private indicates that Intranet is a network that can be accessed only by members of a particular organization. The term network emphasizes the connection between computers that enables corporate communication. Intranets run on open but controlled networks that enable organization members to employ the same www servers and browsers, which are distributed over the local area network (LAN).

The latest developments in Intranet and the implementation in organizations is the introduction of social networking software like the Wiki-technology (Manchester, 2007; Tapscott & Williams, 2007; Shirky, 2008). The idea is to use

Wikis – collaborative written online documents (the encyclopedias Wikipedia is the best-know example) to make it easier for groups to write, edit in a collaborative working environment. Wikis and other Web 2.0 social software (such as RSS (Really Simple Syndication) used for blogs and YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook) in combination with more 'traditional' Intranets can be used to build companies websites, data-sets and project management plans in a more informal and collaborative online environment. Using Wikis will eventually transform Intranets into Intranet 2.0 (Sumner, 2006 (Sumner is editor of a book on Intranets published for free on the Web) and Boué, 2008). Although Web 2.0 is not without its critics (e.g. Van Dijck & Nieborg, 2009; Fuchs, 2009 state that the content of Web 2.0 is used mainly for commercial and surveillance purposes), it is seen as a promising new way to make the Internet more interactive and thus more suitable for organizational learning.

In recent debates on strategic management and learning, an organizational learning *culture* has been introduced as one of the main 'critical success factors' underlying the effective use of Intranets (Carayannis, 1998) and Intranet 2.0 (Sumner, 2006). The aim of this article is to analyze the cultural aspects of Intranets as tools in organizational learning processes. It is not so much a presentation of the instrumental effects of Intranets for the learning organization culture – the way Intranet influences organizational learning processes is not taken for granted, but studied by the way it is used in different settings. We will present a framework for analyzing the cultural dimension of intranet within specific organizational contexts.

Many studies of Intranets dealing with the effectiveness and efficiency of knowledge sharing and Knowledge Management take a static and deterministic point of view. That means that the focus is on structural constrains without paying attention to the actual use of Intranets. In contrast with this, we plea for a approach focusing

upon communicative actions and stress the communication between people on the Intranet on the basis of normative agreement and feelings of mutual understanding and belonging. In this article, we highlight three dimensions from which this cultural context of Intranet can be defined, studied and analyzed. These dimensions, which indeed apply to any Enterprise System (ES) and which in a way also represent historical phases in the development of technology (Silverstone and Haddon, 1996; Boersma & Kingma, 2005), will in our contextual analysis be specified as the 'constitution' of Intranet, Intranet as a 'condition' of the learning organization, and the (unintended) 'consequences' of Intranet use. Intranet-in-use. An analysis on these levels is crucial for those scholars who want to grasp the cultural dimension in the actual use of Intranets as a knowledge management tool.

INTRANET AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Often, the objective for the implementation of an Intranet is that it will facilitate knowledge sharing among members within a single organization. There is a growing body of publications that sees Intranet as a tool for organizational learning (e.g. Carayannis, 1998; Curry & Stancich, 2000; Scott, 1998; Ottosson, 2003; Braganza, Hackney & Tanudjojo, 2007). With regard to Knowledge Management, it has been analyzed in terms of knowledge banks, e-learning platforms, expert networks, online information sharing tools and the like. Recently, Intranets are identified as an infrastructure supporting knowledge management (Harvey, Palmer & Speier, 1998, Damsgaard & Scheepers, 2001; Lehmuskallio, 2006). In this body of literature, Intranets are presented as promising knowledge management ICT tools in the sense that Intranets will be complementary to or even replace existing information and communication carriers within and among

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