Chapter 7.3
Global "Knowledge Management" in Humanist Perspective

Piotr Pawlak
Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan, Poland

ABSTRACT

The term "knowledge management" is widely circumscribed to organizations, being considered fundamental at an institutional level (frequently within a specific corporate level). Hence, it is the domain of organizational and management theories, rational selection theories or, of various concepts related to economic efficiency. Nonetheless, this chapter will attempt to consider this issue from a holistic perspective, considering as a starting point the global dimension of this quandary. This overview falls back on analyses conducted by widely understood social studies, which use economic tools and methodologies. The author's opinion is that today the Internet evidently is a specific global knowledge warehouse. To be more specific, he means the "ICT space" created by the Internet, which herein the author will refer to as the cyberspace entails a global knowledge flux. As a result, this chapter is an overview of humanist discussions on cyberspace exploration and (more importantly) management.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to present a non-standard, a slightly different approach to knowledge management as a result of the inspiring work of Godzic (2001). Taking into account this novel approach, that can be characterized as more academic than practical in its essence, it is time to outline its basic definitions, as well as the scale within which the problem is being discussed. These matters must be elaborated on prior to further reading about the underlying topic of this contribution.

Traditionally, knowledge management is perceived by contemporary companies as one of the key elements for competitive advantage. The ever-changing world economy makes companies and other organizations permanently enhance their operation methods. The abrupt transformations occurring in all areas of corporate operations are the "signs of our time", because these amendments frequently challenge current trends and principles. The problem that most companies face is how to manage its assets in this new era: it is the proper use of knowledge, information and data that assumes a key relevance. According to Peter Drucker (1999) traditional resources, such as work, land, and capital have become more an obstacle than a driving force for corporate growth. Furthermore, creativity in all fields of life is born out of knowledge.

Knowledge management is a relatively new concept, which particular authors date it back to 1987. In this year the first conference about *Managing the Knowledge Assets into 21ˢᵗ Century* was held in the United States. It was jointly organized by Purdue University and DEC. Additionally in the same year in Sweden, the so called Konrad Group was established and it commenced its work on intellectual capital management. Consultancies were the first to identify the need for new management area, because for them knowledge itself was a product. They quickly got down to establishing repositories with their consultants' knowledge and experience.

Knowledge management grew rapidly in the late 1990's and the idea was disseminated by Ikujiro Nonaka, a Japanese researcher. In 1995 together with Hirotaka Takeuchi he published *The Knowledge - Creating Company- How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*. To their minds knowledge is created to a smaller extent by collecting, processing and using the existing knowledge within a given organization. For them it is more about creating new knowledge. It is their belief that the overriding objective of knowledge management is about creation and not

about its effective circulation within an organization. Their ideas shed new light on both theories: knowledge management and innovation.

Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) emphasize the importance of using "tacit" knowledge (the idea of "tacit knowledge" was introduced by Michael Polanyi much earlier), embedded in the employees' heads, for a company's success. This led to another theory, which encompasses knowledge creation through contacts within teams and not in the heads of individual persons (Grudzewski & Hejduk, 2005; Rheingold, 1994).

Both in theory and in practice there are numerous definitions of knowledge management. This is the result of the popularity of the theory and a relatively short time of its use. Hence, knowledge management can be defined as a totality of formalized methods of collecting and using formal and tacit knowledge of the participants of an organization, as an attempt of its preeminent utilization and being available throughout the organization as new knowledge, and its increasing understanding.

Knowledge management is a multi-faceted process. It can be analysed from various points of view: particular entities (business ones- public and private- in particular), as well as particular states (knowledge management policy could even be elaborated on) and last but not least, in the context of international arena. From the following discussion it will be demonstrated that knowledge management is a specific element of international and supranational administration. At this point, the author constructs another singularity- on one hand exists knowledge management, which is understood as an element of a defined policy developed by particular international community (as for instance, the European Union); and, on the other hand, entails management of knowledge, which is understood as an element of wide-ranged global processes that are common for all international communities. This chapter investigates the issue from this global perspective.

The underlying topic is closely connected with various research fields: political science,

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