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# Organisational energy and other meta-learning: case studies of knowledge management implementation in nine Asian countries

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The paper makes two cross-case comparisons: (a) learning and knowledge sharing processes across 22 cases of KM practice, mostly from the corporate and public sectors in 9 Asian countries; and (b) initiation, implementation and initial outcomes of 21 cases of KM in the development sector in the Philippines. The aim is to glean what worked in KM and how it was made to work, so that lessons may be applied to KM in the development sector. Several cross-case observations were made. A salient observation that emerges across all cases is the importance of managing motivational factors for success of the KM initiatives. The paper proposes a new construct, organisational energy, to describe the broad span of motivational and similar factors found to be essential for success of KM in the private, public and development sectors.

## Introduction

The objective of this paper is to glean what worked and why across 41 case studies of knowledge management (KM) implemented in 9 Asian countries so that corresponding recommendations may be formulated for KM in the development sector. This study looks at two sets of cases. The first set (Part A) seeks to study organisational learning (OL) and knowledge management processes from 22 case studies of good KM practices drawn from 9 Asian countries in 2006–2007. The case studies consisted of 13 from the private sector, 6 from the government sector and 3 from the non-government organisation (NGO) sector. Cross-case analyses are both descriptive (what worked) and explanatory (why it worked). The second set (Part B) seeks to glean learning from 21 cases of KM in the development sector in the Philippines in 2001–2007. Similarly, answers to the same two questions – what worked and why it worked – will be gleaned from the KM/OL initiatives during initiation, implementation and outcomes, including sharing of knowledge and learning processes both internally and with donor institutions.

## Case studies

Set A case studies were written by nine KM practitioners selected by the Asian Productivity Organisation (APO) from nine Asian countries, which funded the research and resulting publication (Talisayon 2008a). The author was designated by APO as chief expert to head this research team, and to organise and edit the resulting publication. The studies were undertaken from September 2006 to September 2007, largely in the corporate and public sectors.

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The second or Part B cases consisted of 21 KM initiatives in the Philippine development sector. Information for Part B did not come from case studies, except for two that overlapped with Part A, but from the author's personal and professional experiences as project leader and/or lead KM resource person or mentor. Part B cases were mostly KM projects where the Centre for Conscious Living Foundation (CCLFI), the NGO where the author is based, was engaged. The development funding institutions involved in Part B were multilateral and bilateral: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organisation (WHO), World Bank and International Labour Organisation (ILO); and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and AusAID.

## Part A: case studies from corporate and public sectors in nine Asian countries

### Analytical framework

KM and OL are overlapping management practices, focusing on content and process respectively (Krohwinkel-Karlsson 2007). The term organisational learning or OL is used here from a management perspective.[1] Based on usage by leading KM practitioners, the term 'knowledge' means capacity for effective action, which includes information useful for effective action.[2] This definition implies (a) that effective action is the operational or behavioural indicator of good KM, and (b) that knowledge, including actionable information, is regarded as an organisational resource or asset, a view that is consistent with the intellectual capital school of KM.[3]

Studies show that effective action at the level of the knowledge worker indeed requires three categories of inputs that coincide with the three components of intellectual capital plus two additional categories of inputs: tangible assets and motivational factors (Talisayon 2008b). The asset perspective easily leads to a causal model that links KM to performance and value creation (see Talisayon in press), but it tends to hide the richness and nuances in tacit knowledge processes and the inter-convertibility of tacit and explicit forms of knowledge.

The overlap between KM and OL can be visualised by combining content and process as well as tacit and explicit forms in a schema (Figure 1) that was applied to the 22 Asian KM case studies (Talisayon 2008a, pp. 11–12). This framework will be employed in the subsequent cross-project comparisons.
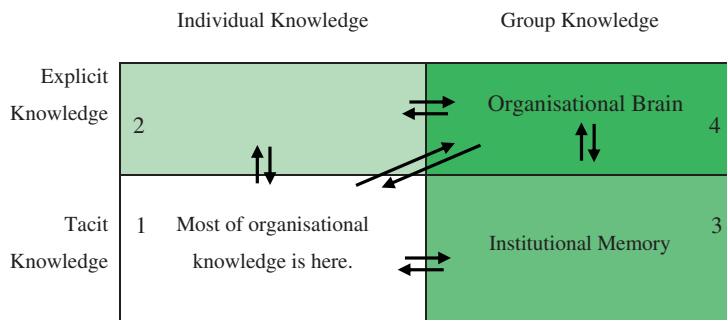


Figure 1.   Knowledge inter-conversions in a learning organisation.

***Technology-mediated KM tools for learning and sharing of knowledge***

Most organisations relied much on their intranet or KM portal in their intranet. The following are examples of many intranet applications, functionalities and features, knowledge content, software tools and other improvisations reported in the case studies.

*Portals*

Many specialised KM portals, a common form of explicit group knowledge (Form 4 in Figure 1), are described in the case studies. They are employed for specific KM purposes, such as Infosys' K-Shop for sharing innovative ideas, KM-on-Line of WIKA, Planet Learning which is Unilever Indonesia's portal for all learning and knowledge sharing activities, Bank Indonesia's Knowledge LYNX for reports from employees who were sent for conferences, seminars or trainings, and Cyber Research Centre of Samsung Advanced Institute of Technology which serves as a research and development (R&D) knowledge base (Sohn, 2008). The key idea is to convert tacit knowledge of employees (Form 1) into explicit forms (Form 2) which can be contributed to the portal. The value of a portal lies in the ease of distributing explicit knowledge to many potential users.

*Dashboards*

At Airtel, dashboards allow executives to quickly track and compare performance of units and identify which are the best practitioner or top performer units. A dashboard is a web-based tool to display summaries of pertinent performance indicators (a Form 4 to Form 2 knowledge conversion process). The summaries are automatically generated from continuously updated databases within the organisation.

*Best practice packages*

Best practice (BP) packages such as Solution Packs at SK Energy in Korea, simple BP sharing and BP replication templates at Airtel in India, and K-assets of Infosys in India facilitate replication (conversion from Form 4 to Form 1). E-Learning and e-forums are similar conversions. However, it must be pointed out that reading best practice documentations or e-learning modules must be followed by practice before the conversion to individual tacit knowledge (Form 1) fully takes place.

*Knowledge taxonomies*

Knowledge taxonomies are employed to classify and organise content of knowledge repositories (Form 4) at Airtel and Infosys.

*Wikis*

Wiki for collaborative authoring at Bank Indonesia and Department of Health in the Philippines is an example of converting Forms 1 and 3 to Form 4. Automation of a hitherto partly informal business process is another example of this conversion, such as the Knowledge Share in Bank Indonesia which contains e-documents and e-processes to support process transactions and process management.

Software companies are in the best position to innovate IT-based KM tools. Infosys in India is a software company which has consistently won in the annual MAKE (Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise) Award, an internationally known KM award run by Teleos in the UK. Infosys has developed intelligent IT tools to support knowledge workers.

### Face-to-face processes for learning and sharing of knowledge

Various tools are employed by the 22 organisations for face-to-face processes or tacit-to-tacit (Form 1), tacit-to-explicit (Form 1 or 3 to Form 2 or 4) and individual tacit to/from group tacit (Form 1 to/from 3) knowledge conversion processes.

#### Matching knowledge demand with knowledge supply (tacit to tacit knowledge sharing process in Form 1)

Various mechanisms are in use to connect knowledge seekers to the right knowledge suppliers from the straightforward helpdesk model to mentoring programmes. Airtel has 'Ask an Expert' and knowledge sharing sessions (KSS) where a knowledge worker with a question can pose it to the right expert. At Infosys, a knowledge worker can volunteer to 'go public' or declare he or she is willing to answer questions on a particular area of expertise. WIKA and Bank Indonesia appoint senior experts with the honorific title of *begawan* or 'wise mentor' whose role is to coach or answer questions from junior staff. Other KM roles are defined and assigned at Airtel, namely, K champions, subject matter experts (SMEs), KM heads and KM coordinators. Unilever Indonesia has adopted a coaching programme where senior managers are first taught to become coaches; the company adopted Neeco the dolphin (representing a wise creature with willingness to help, guide and share) as the mascot or symbol for this programme. WIKA's 'coaching, mentoring, counselling' (cMc) is a similar programme.

#### Harvesting of tacit knowledge from ending projects (Forms 1 and 3 to 4)

Unilever Indonesia adopted a standard procedure called Retrospect for face-to-face elicitation and documentation of learning, tacit and other re-usable knowledge from ending projects. This process generates knowledge that can be beneficially re-used in future similar projects. Post-project knowledge capture also includes what did not work in addition to what worked well, such as 'mistake sharing' at Unilever Indonesia and sharing of mistakes and failures at SK Energy in Korea. WIKA's LPS (learning from past experience) programme for sharing or learning from past experiences and their Engineering Forum for learning from best practices are similar KM tools.

#### An evolving manual (Forms 1 and 3 to 4)

A post-activity knowledge capture process called Lessons-Learned Meeting (LLM) and other team learning tools have been developed at Malampaya Multipartite Monitoring Team in the Philippines. The compositions of monitoring teams in this organisation change frequently and LLM was devised to capture learning and knowledge generated by teams to continuously update their systems manual, which they thereby called a Learning-Oriented Management Systems Manual that evolves as team members' knowledge expands. This tool is consistent with the Team's vision of becoming a 'living learning organisation'.

*Leveraging tacit knowledge of internal experts (Form 1)*

Capturing tacit knowledge of senior experienced staff before they leave or retire from the organisation is a classic KM issue. With this intent in mind, WIKA launched a book-writing project called *Menuju Bintang* or 'Toward the Stars' where senior, and even already retired, managers are interviewed to explore strategies to expand the market of WIKA. Under the buddy system of Unilever Indonesia, mentors are assigned to mid-career level recruits for tacit-to-tacit knowledge sharing and to shorten the learning curves of the latter. A trainee journal (explicit knowledge) complements the tacit processes.

Communities of practice (CoPs) are employed by Siriraj Hospital and SCG Paper, both in Thailand, SK Energy and Samsung Advanced Institute of Technology both in Korea, Bank Indonesia and Unilever Indonesia, Department of Health in the Philippines, and Qian Hu in Singapore. In many cases, the CoPs are organised along thematic areas. Knowledge generated from face-to-face meetings is stored in knowledge repositories established by these organisations for this purpose. SK Energy in Korea organised cross-functional study groups and Closed User Groups (CUGs) supported by groupware. CoPs facilitate tacit-to-tacit or Forms 1 to 3 exchanges. If a CoP is supported by information and communication technologies (ICTs) then inter-conversions to/from Form 2 and 4 are added.

*Corporate university*

Unilever Indonesia created a Learning Department distinct from the Human Resources (HR) department which continues to perform traditional personnel functions. They have set up a learning facility for employees, namely the Mega Mendung Learning Centre where, among others, employees can access Harvard Business School e-learning courses. CAPCO in Taiwan has set up their own Cyber Media College that offers employees many opportunities: self-paced online learning packages, certification exams, operational information and manufacturing knowledge, etc. CAPCO has developed over a hundred multi-media courses suited to the needs of their factory workers.

*Knowledge fairs*

Samsung Advanced Institute of Technology, the R&D arm of the Samsung Group, has its Patent Expo which is a kind of face-to-face (Form 1 to/from 3) knowledge fair where researchers present, discuss, explore and synergise their ideas for new products or solutions.

*Collaborative learning (another Form1 to Form 3 inter-conversion)*

The wide variety of face-to-face knowledge sharing and collaborative learning processes adopted by Unilever Indonesia is noteworthy (see Talisayon in press). They use Knowl-edge Club talk shows, group learning sessions, Book Club sharing, video cafe sessions, and even a Cinemania.

*Listening to customers*

Unilever Indonesia devised 3Cs for listening to consumers, customers and community for product improvement insights. Airtel in India structures KM initiatives around customer-impacting business practices. The KM initiatives make use of the collective knowledge of

all employees, especially those interfacing with customers, for enhancing customer value. Samsung Advanced Institute of Technology has set up a variety of CoPs with its internal customers. Customer relations management (CRM) is a well-developed discipline in the corporate sector for sensing and serving customers.

### Meta-learning from the case studies

#### Main conclusions

Firstly, there seems to be lack of attention devoted to practice, namely the step that converts explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge of the individual. We do not know whether the case study writers failed to see it or the organisations studied in fact did not pay attention to it. Perhaps part of the difficulty lies in the fact that Forms 1 and 3 do not involve visible artefacts and involve changes in behaviour not captured explicitly unless intentionally observed for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) purposes. Secondly, Form 4 which can be called the explicit 'organisational brain' is undoubtedly essential for wider dissemination of knowledge but by itself knowledge in Form 4 does not create value. It is the knowledge workers who individually and in a team (Form 1 and 3), and supported by Forms 2 and 4, who perform the value-creating actions. This fact seems to be lost or unexpressed in the case studies.

Thirdly, Nonaka's SECI model (Takeuchi and Nonaka 2004) is a pathway for creating and spreading new organisational knowledge where the steps are socialisation (1 to 1), externalisation (1 to 2 and 4), combination (4 to/from 3) and internalisation (4 to 1). From the case studies in A and B it is clear that in actual practice there are many knowledge pathways that are in use. What must be underlined here is that whatever the pathway, it must end in Form 1 for it to create value.

Finally, external KM in the corporate sector is driven by the premise that their survival and growth as an organisation hinges on how well they can sense, listen, anticipate and quickly respond to the needs of stakeholders such as customers, suppliers and business partners. Sensing customer needs is an important do-or-die corporate practice that is worth emulating in the development sector.

#### Motivating knowledge workers

It is interesting to note that the case study writers noticed that the organisations selected as good KM practitioners in their respective Asian countries addressed the challenge of motivating knowledge workers. Corporate KM objectives have to be translated to the level of the knowledge worker in terms of improved work performance. The examples below show that the organisations selected were good in KM not only because they know what works but they also took steps to make it work.

Incentives and reward schemes are often used. Airtel in India instituted the Knowledge Dollar (K$) as the unit of performance credit and the Joint President's and CEO's Knowledge Management Award. WIKA in Indonesia instituted 10 different awards. Some of the material rewards at SCG Paper in Thailand are gift vouchers, attendance in technical symposia and study missions, free luncheons, etc. At Infosys in India, knowledge workers can earn knowledge currency units (KCUs) for desired KM behaviours such as contributing knowledge assets, and composite KCUs depending on the quality of their contributions. KCUs can be used, for example, to obtain gifts from an on-line store.

Unilever Indonesia set up a Learning Award for knowledge transfer directly connected with business results and an Enterprise Award for intrapreneurship. According to Purnomo (2008, p. 98), the Learning Award resulted in

new enthusiasm for learning, confidence in trainers to conduct sessions, new standards of module development . . . and preservation of knowledge not captured previously.

Goldsun in Vietnam gives an award to individuals and units which excelled in their 'I have a new idea' movement.

Rewards can be non-material, such as awarding honorific titles. Bank Indonesia awards titles such as 'Dr. Know' and *Begawan* (a word in Bahasa Indonesia which connotes a wise mentor). WIKA also awards *begawan* titles. At SCG Paper, the honour of being a mentor or coach is seen as a motivating element in tacit knowledge transfer processes such as the buddy system, job rotation and cross-functional group activities. Designating functional heads as the 'knowledge champions' and setting up a community of experts were instrumental in gaining buy-in for KM at Airtel. WIKA also has an Innovation Award, Knowledge Award for knowledge sharing, Inspirator Award for making a breakthrough and inspiring others to excellence, and Engineering Award for contributions that increase value added in products. Infosys calls their knowledge workers 'infoscions'. JTC in Singapore awards titles such as Knowledge Activist, Commendable Knowledge Activist and Outstanding Knowledge Activist to promote and reward knowledge sharing behaviours, and eventually build a knowledge-sharing culture in their organisation. At Samsung Advanced Institute of Technology, proponents of new ideas or suggestions are registered as the 'idea owner' so that credit as 'co-inventor' can be duly awarded in case the idea matures to, or contributes to the development of a new patent. The Great Contributor is the title awarded by SCG Paper to the employee who shared most knowledge; The Great Content is the title given to one whose contribution enjoyed the most number of website hits.

It is not clear from the case studies which form of reward – material or non-material – is found to be the more effective motivator. Many organisations use both forms, or switch from one form to another. For example, Infosys started with monetary rewards and later they shifted towards recognition and non-monetary awards. They also converted some KM activities from voluntary to mandatory by formally incorporating them into their standard business project processes.

*Top-down versus bottom-up approaches*

Many of the case study organisations (Qian Hu, PTQM Foundation, Siriraj, SCG Paper, Airtel, Infosys, Unilever Indonesia and WIKA) employ a mix of top–down (e.g. through management directives and instructions) and a variety of motivational and bottom–up participatory approaches. The mixed approach is common among the 22 good KM practice organisations, despite the observation from Western KM practitioners that KM or organisational learning is better suited to egalitarian or non-hierarchical organisational cultures. This may be related to the Asian trait of respect for authority, in contrast to the Western trait of respect for the individual. Yet, many Western KM and change management practitioners also observe that executive sponsorship and quality of leadership is important for the success of a KM initiative.

The importance of senior management commitment or executive sponsorship was mentioned in many case studies. In a survey of more than 200 organisations in Thailand,

this factor was ranked highest among critical success factors for KM. At Siriraj Hospital in Thailand, the Chief Knowledge Officer was selected on the basis of commitment, leadership ability and recognition from other staff. Leadership and policy was ranked second in a study in Malaysia of success factors in KM. According to Menkhoff (2008:202), JTC Corporation's managers created

> a motivational organisational culture characterized by caring leadership that supports active questioning and allows for mistakes. Employees are thus able to trust each other and to share their opinions about work-related issues more freely.

Management of Qian Hu in Singapore designed a mix of informal and formal communication modes to strengthen buy-in from employees and customers. This includes 'floor walks', tea sessions and informal gatherings besides more formal modes such as seminars and focus group discussions.

### Part B: learning from development practice

*Analytical framework*

Better work performance of knowledge workers is a KM objective common among many organisations. In the corporate sector, the ultimate goal of KM is to contribute to creation of corporate value measured precisely in terms of market value. The goals in the development sector are more diverse and less precise, but it can be stated in general terms as creation of socially-valuable outcomes. The mainstream development paradigm is sustainable development, which can be stated as optimisation of a triple bottom line. Thus, sustainable development can be stated as development along the three value domains of economic-physical, social-human and natural-environmental capital in ways that are not at the expense of each other. In short, value creation is also the goal in the development sector where 'value' is viewed from a broader perspective. This is the underlying assumption of CCLFI when it accepted the KM engagements in Set B cases. Our KM model is shown Figure 2 (Talisayon in press).

The model is an abbreviated way of saying that KM is 'good KM' if it contributes to more effective action, where effectiveness is assessed against the valuable results the organisation is pursuing. It is a causal model that links KM to organisational value creation, where 'value' embraces market value and/or social value.
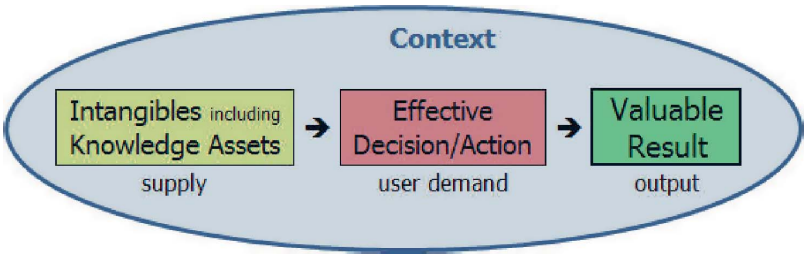


Figure 2.    Knowledge management (KM) model.

### Initiation of KM

As a civil society organisation (CSO), CCLFI promotes KM/OL and knowledge-based development including KM for anti-poverty projects. We wait for potential KM clients to approach us and seek our KM assistance. Thus, KM in the 21 organisations were mostly self-initiated (16 cases in column 3 of Table 1), or else driven by the donor institution (three cases) or by headquarters (two cases). We observe that the motivation for seeking KM stems from the initial belief on the part of executives of the organisations that KM will somehow assist them achieve organisational objectives. CCLFI believes that KM should be demand-driven. Accordingly, the KM model guides CCLFI in negotiating project design in such a way that the KM initiative (a) explicitly responds to a need or problem felt by the executives; or (b) processes are in place to align KM to enhancement of performance and other organisational goals.

Part of the CCLFI engagement procedure is to look for executive sponsorship and/or presence of an internal KM champion at the upper management level in a potential client organisation. These are indicators of what CCLFI principals call 'organisational energy' for KM. During project design negotiations, CCLFI recommends organising and training an internal KM team to enable it to formulate the KM/OL strategy and programme for their organisation. In-house formulation of the KM/OL programme provides better assurance of contextualisation, acceptability and shared ownership than a consultant-driven formulation. Interventions are based on the principle of mentoring the internal KM team as its members *learn KM by doing KM.* This engagement style stems from our belief that sustainability is more likely if in-house champions are nurtured and they develop a sense of ownership over the initiative thereby widening and enhancing this organisational energy. KM alone is about how to do a job well, but our KM experiences keep confirming the distinction between 'knowing-how' and 'willing-to' or 'wanting-to'.

According to the author's knowledge, these 21 case studies constitute approximately 75% of KM projects in the Philippine development community since 2001. The fact that only 3 out of 21 KM cases were initiated by the donor institution suggests that KM in the Philippine development sector cannot be claimed to be donor driven. In 10 of 16 cases where there is an internal KM champion, there is also accompanying internal funding but there is no case where there was internal funding but no internal KM champion. It seems that having an internal KM champion leads to an organisation's decision to commit funds for KM in its budget, instead of the other way around.

### Characteristics of KM initiatives

From Table 2, the scopes of KM/OL cases are evenly mixed between organisation-wide (or network-wide) KM, and KM over a limited scope of one or a few selected business or work processes. The most common aims of the KM initiative are productivity (or efficiency) and knowledge sharing (internal). A few initiatives aim to better provide information to their partners or network members, as well as facilitate sharing of knowledge among them (external). Project-based organisations are interested in cross-project learning and knowledge transfer. Two organisations aimed to become a learning organisation as part of their organisational vision.

CCLFI learned the following lessons and insights from the scoping, design and implementation of these cases:

Table 1. Initiation of KM in 21 organizations.

| Code | Organization implementing KM | KM initiator | Executive sponsorship | KM champion | Fund sources | KM unit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Government agency | internal | formal | middle-level | multilateral+internal | cross-functional team |
| B | Mixed | internal | weak | none | international NGO | none |
| C | Multilateral devt institution | internal + consultant | weak | none | multilateral | none |
| D | International NGO | internal | formal | none | international NGO | managers form team |
| E | Government agency | internal | strong | executive | bilateral+internal | none |
| F | Multilateral devt institution | headquarters | formal | middle-level | internal | none |
| G | Government agency | internal | weak | upper-level | multilateral+internal | present |
| H | NGO | internal | post was vacant | middle-level | bilateral | none |
| I | Mixed | internal + consultant | strong | executive | corporate | none |
| J | Multilateral devt institution | headquarters | weak | upper-level | internal | informal KM team |
| K | Government agency | internal | formal | middle-level | bilateral + internal | cross-functional team |
| L | International NGO | internal | formal | executive | government aid | none |
| M | Government agency | donor agency | formal | none | bilateral | cross-functional team |
| N | NGO network | donor agency | formal | none | bilateral | none |
| O | Bilateral devt institution | internal | weak | middle-level | internal | informal KM team |
| P | Government agency | internal | formal | middle-level | bilateral+internal | cross-functional team |
| Q | NGO network | donor agency | strong | upper-level | multilateral | several KM officers |
| R | Multilateral devt institution | internal | weak | upper-level | internal | none |
| S | Government agency | internal | strong | upper-level | bilateral | upper management |
| T | NGO | internal | weak | middle-level | internal | none |
| U | NGO | internal | weak | middle-level | corporate | none |

Table 2. Characteristics of KM initiatives in 21 organizations.

| Code | Year KM was initiated | Scope of KM | Basic aim of KM | KM initiatives | Location | Formal KM unit/officer | ...under what division |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 2001 | organization-wide | Better work performance | KM strategy and action plan; design web-based KM toolkits; upgrade intranet-extranet | Manila | yes | Information management |
| B | 2001 | one work process | Provide information to network members | Portal | Manila | none | |
| C | 2002 | network-wide | Knowledge sharing; cross-project learning | KM manual; document best practices and lessons learned; annual knowledge fair | Nationwide; focus on 10 rural areas | none | |
| D | 2002 | local branch | Learning at work | Team learning among executives | Manila | none | |
| E | 2003 | few selected processes | Productivity; knowledge sharing | Knowledge portal; formalize CKO and KM units; computerize processes | Manila | yes | Information management |
| F | 2003 | local branch | Productivity; knowledge sharing | KM action planning and implementation | Manila | yes | Communications |
| G | 2004 | few selected processes | Productivity | KM unit; KM strategy and action plan; portal to assist citizens; internal tracking of process | Manila | yes | Merger of IT and planning |
| H | 2004 | few selected processes | Knowledge sharing; cross-project learning | Best practice sharing community, database and portal; best practice template | Manila | yes | New position created |
| I | 2004 | organization-wide | Become a learning organization | Learning-oriented manual, training in team learning, lessons-learned meetings | Three rural provinces | none | |
| J | 2005 | organization-wide | Knowledge sharing | KM strategy and action plan | Several Asian countries | yes | Library and publication |
| K | 2005 | one work process | Productivity; effectiveness | KM audit | Manila and two rural areas | yes | Information management |

*(Continued)*

Table 2.    (Continued).

| Code | Year KM was initiated | Scope of KM | Basic aim of KM | KM initiatives | Location | Formal KM unit/officer | . . . under what division |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| L | 2005 | network-wide | Knowledge sharing; cross-project learning | knowledge portal; collection of knowledge objects; post-project knowledge capture | Manila and six locations abroad | none | |
| M | 2006 | one work process | Productivity; effectiveness | Install intranet; formalize and computerize a business process | Manila | none | |
| N | 2006 | few selected processes | Knowledge sharing; providing information to partners | KM training; plan/implement a KM project; scholarship for KM officer | Another Philippine city | yes | New position created |
| O | 2006 | organization-wide | Knowledge sharing; cross-project learning | KM strategy and action plan; knowledge portal for partners; thematic CoPs | Manila and Mindano Island | none | |
| P | 2006 | one work process | Productivity; effectiveness | Process and KM audit of a process | Manila | yes | Information management |
| Q | 2006 | network-wide | Knowledge sharing | Knowledge portal; best practice sharing; formal KM officers; online KM training | More than 20 locations | yes | Information management |
| R | 2007 | organization-wide | Knowledge sharing; providing information to partners | KM strategy and action plan; knowledge portal for partners; designate CKO | Several Asian countries | yes | New position created |
| S | 2007 | organization-wide | Become a learning organization | KM strategy and action plan; projects along KM competency targets; mentoring of KM team | Manila | none | |
| T | 2007 | organization-wide | Productivity; effectiveness | KM training of top executives; documentation and analysis of best practices | Nationwide | none | |
| U | 2007 | organization-wide | Productivity; effectiveness | KM training of executives; KM audit of core business processes | Nationwide | none | |

- Most clients start having an initial idea of what they want in terms of scope and objectives of KM/OL. They rely on the consultant to advise them on the best way (methodologies, approaches and tools) to get there. They have a fair understanding of KM/OL concepts, and a belief that KM/OL is beneficial. This belief needs to be reinforced by concrete examples and metrics showing how KM is linked to individual employee performance and to value creation by the organisation.
- A good way to select the KM approach or tools appropriate to an organisation is a KM assessment ('KM audit' can sound threatening to some). Many managers prefer simple and short assessment tools.
- Among the first tasks is developing a common KM/OL language among employees. This is not always easy, because KM is still a growing discipline and full consensus on meanings of KM/OL terms does not exist among the global community of KM practitioners. Part of this task is clarifying the relationship between KM and the related disciplines of human resource management, information management and quality management. Among the concepts that usually need to be clearly distinguished for new KM/OL practitioners are: knowledge versus information; KM versus information management; tacit versus explicit knowledge; tangible versus intangible assets; human versus structural versus relationship capital; single-loop learning versus double-loop learning; and KM versus organisational learning. Most KM officers/units are under the information management department or organised from its staff. The distinction between KM and information management must therefore be clearly pointed out in these cases.
- Commitment of internal funds and designation of a KM officer or KM focal point appear to be good indicators that the organisation intends to sustain their KM initiative.
- The common tendency is to view KM as 'extra work' or to believe that 'the choice is between KM and their regular duties'. The challenge is how to seamlessly integrate KM into the staff's daily activities and to demonstrate to employees that good KM would sooner or later help them do their job better. Performance metrics help demonstrate this linkage.

### *Outcomes*

Various behavioural changes from the KM initiatives are clearly observable but they seem to happen more slowly than had originally been planned or anticipated (Table 3). Unexpected developments during KM implementation are related to changes in factors that affect motivation or incentives for KM:

- Change in top leadership: replacement, death
- Internal KM champion resigned or re-assigned elsewhere
- Technical and legal problems
- Increase, decrease or unavailability of next funding
- New support or withdrawal of support from headquarters or external stakeholder.

Consequently the lesson learned here is that KM must be accompanied by risk management to anticipate, assess, minimise or prepare for risks and moderate their impacts in case they occur.

Donor–partner (or donor–grantee) cultural gaps were found to be minimal. In many instances (10 of 21 cases), staff of the donor institution are all or predominantly Filipino. In 9 of 21 cases, the head or the programme officer of the Philippine office of the donor institution is a Filipina. Only in four of the cases were the staff members of the donor institution multicultural.

Table 3.    Outcomes of KM initiatives in 21 organizations.

| Code | Changes in behaviors and practices observed or not observed | Unexpected developments | Donor-partner cultural gaps | Internal and external knowledge transfer and learning |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | High value on interpersonal relationships reflected in high energy of KM Team | Exceptional support from new executive of a donor agency | Programme Officer in donor agency is a Filipina | Ample documents sharing and personal ties between government agency and donor |
| B | Nil; community-building should have preceded portal set up | Phase 2 funding for nurturing CoP did not materialize; no ownership of portal | Head of international donor agency is a NY-based Filipina | Knowledge transfer to/from external donor was nil (donor agency has no Manila office); internal transfer via portal |
| C | It was not verified if hard copies or CDs of best practices benefited other farmers | Top managers ignored recommendations of some partners; director resigned/ replaced | Head of donor agency is a Filipina | Face-to-face meetings/interactions in yearly knowledge fairs among partners; hierarchical donor-partner relationship |
| D | Better understanding of "bigger picture" led to more innovative management options | Headquarters did not approve some initiatives from local branch | Head of donor agency is a Filipina; all staff are Filipinos | Top-down relationship with headquarters seems to be a hindrance; underdeveloped LAN |
| E | Top-down KM takes time; middle-level managers slowly grasping KM | Executive KM champion was re-assigned to another government agency | Head of donor agency is a Filipina; all staff are Filipinos | KM buy-in and savvy are strong in both donor and partner; coordination is good; good in-house ICT system facilitated internal and external knowledge transfers |
| F | KM is headquarters-driven; KM strategies and tools provided by headquarters | After many months, no replacement for CKO whose term ended. | Donor agency staff is multi-cultural; CKO is a Filipino | Well-funded ICT-based mechanisms in place for internal and external knowledge transfers; knowledge centers instituted |
| G | KM practice has not reached the entire organization; KM growth is ICT-driven | Funding shortfalls | Donor agency staff is mostly Filipino | Weak mechanisms for internal knowledge transfers; gaps in ICT infrastructure and capabilities |
| H | No access to knowledgebase in remote municipalities without Internet access | Knowledge Sharing Officer is designated | Head of donor agency is Asian | Annual competition provides good incentive for copying and innovating good practices; good website development |
| I | Feedback, reflection and learning processes are seeping slowly in daily office practices | Executive KM champion died; successor was not yet "on board" | Donor agency staff is predominantly Filipino | Internal knowledge transfer and learning are slow; not yet web-based and sharing to other organizations is nil |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| J | KM slowly being adopted but continue to be headquarters-driven | Funding shortfalls | Agency is multi-cultural | Good extranet and document sharing/ publication practices help KM goals |
| K | Managers started a business process audit/improvement to go with KM | Managers saw that a process audit should precede KM audit | Programme Officer in donor agency is a Filipina | Delay in implementing the nation-wide M&E system plan due to nationwide scope and big funding needed |
| L | More attention being paid to harvesting knowledge generated by projects | None observed so far | Donor agency is an EU govt; partner is multi-cultural | Knowledge sharing continues to be a strong commitment among network members |
| M | In-house skills and ownership over new intranet and process management | Technical problems in telecommunication services | Head of donor agency is a Filipina; all staff are Filipinos | Document sharing is easier with new intranet and among staff performing the selected business process |
| N | Internal champions and advocates among network members are KM drivers | Legal problems in changing the website maintenance provider to another one | Head of donor agency is a Filipina; all staff are Filipinos | ICT-savvy partners helping in enhancing website for serving existing and prospective network members |
| O | KM champion was reassigned to another station; an alternate champion is emerging | Change in leadership; new leader is not yet fully "on board" | Donor agency staff is mostly Filipino | Knowledge sharing among executing agencies (who are competitors) was made a contractual obligation |
| P | Managers planning broader KM initiative | Substantial internal budget commitments | Programme Officer in donor agency is a Filipina | Management commitment to knowledge sharing is strong; plans for sourcing more funds for next implementation stages |
| Q | KM officers in network members maintain their networking after the project ended | KM was donor-initiated; unsure of sustainability after donor funds ran out | Donor agency staff is multi-cultural | Horizontal knowledge sharing is continuing; transfer of lessons to donor is deliberate and systematic |
| R | Partner consultation on knowledge portal; new CKO is hired | Change in leadership; new leader is not yet fully "on board" | Agency is multi-cultural | Knowledge sharing for the benefit of partners is central to organizational vision/mission; first steps towards a portal |
| S | Formalization of a process and collection of work templates; planning for new intranet | Heavy workloads and greater priority to urgent duties | Donor agency staff is mostly Filipino | Organization is taking steps towards a world-class portal in its thematic area; upgrading of internal knowledge transfer |
| T | Analysis of best practice-projects published; planning with partners in applications | Heavy workloads: KM must be embedded in existing work practice | Agency staff are all Filipino | Knowledge transfer has always been strong; KM awareness among managers now adds extra dimension |
| U | None observed as yet | KM champion resigned; top managements' interest in KM seem to have waned | Agency staff are all Filipino | Not much data to make any observation or conclusion |

The 1987 Philippine Constitution recognises NGO/CSOs as partners of government in development, and mandates their participation in local governance and in local development. The growth of NGO/CSOs and the development sector accelerated after 1987. At present, Philippine partners are practically at par with foreign donors in their level of development expertise. Local branches of donor institutions are staffed by highly trained, English-speaking Filipino development workers. Although foreign development institutions' branches in the Philippines are often headed by expatriates, there are many cases where they are headed by local (mostly Filipina) executives. Local branches of foreign donor institutions often hire staff from local partner institutions and CSOs. Many development experts from the Philippines – women as well as men – are hired from the UN and multilateral development institutions abroad. Women managers are common in the Philippine development sector.[4]

Internal and external knowledge sharing of project-generated knowledge is generally observed to be good (see last column in Table 3). Perhaps the small donor–partner cultural gaps contributed to good external knowledge sharing. More interesting are the reasons behind the fewer cases where external knowledge sharing was poor: one case with infrequent donor–partner communications, hierarchical donor–partner relationship in two cases, death of the KM champion in one case, and gaps in the donor–executor contractual arrangements. In the latter case, the bilateral funding agency had difficulties in encouraging cross-project sharing because the projects were handled by executing agencies who were basically competitors (they bid against each other for the projects). After we pointed out this gap, the funding agency decided to change subsequent contracts by inserting provisions to make knowledge sharing a contractual obligation of executing agencies.

**Concluding observations: the importance of organisational energy**

A common thread that emerges from both Parts A and B is the importance of motivation or willingness. Action will either not happen or remain ineffective if knowledge or 'know-how' is not accompanied by 'willing-to' or 'wanting-to'. This observation is corroborated by many KM practitioners' attention to 'buy-in' from both managers and knowledge workers of an organisation, and their common experience that success of organisation-wide KM is enhanced if KM is accompanied by motivational interventions. Of the 14 studies of KM success factors reviewed by Jennex and Olfman (2004), 9 studies included motivational interventions similar to those observed above as contributory to KM success, and they concluded that user satisfaction is a necessary parameter in any KM success model. A study to delineate factors that contribute to good performance of knowledge workers found that motivational factors span a wider range than workplace performance incentives that the word 'motivation' connotes (Talisayon 2008b). For example, good performance is also facilitated by support of peers, a physically pleasant workplace, policies that empower employees, trust and caring leadership style of management, self-confidence and supportive relationships at home. The broad span suggests the use of a broader term than 'motivation' or 'motivational factors.'

Accordingly, a simple model for effective action is that it is the product of knowledge and organisational energy:

$$\text{knowledge} \times \text{energy} = \text{effective action}$$
$$(\text{tangible assets} + \text{knowledge assets}) \times \text{organisational energy} = \text{effective action}$$
$$\text{know-how} \times \text{willing-to (or wanting-to)} = \text{effective action}$$

Based on the concrete examples shown in this paper, I propose that the following behavioural indicators of organisational energy also serve as the operational definition of the new construct of 'organisational energy':

(1) Initiative by the organisation, which is accompanied by sponsorship or support ('buy-in') by the top executive and/or advocacy by an internal champion;

(2) During implementation, the presence of an internal core group of trained advocates at the middle or upper-middle managerial levels which facilitate

- Interest, support and participation from the managerial levels and the knowledge workers; and
- Presence of a shared vision or goal, and a formal programme or project with corresponding:
  (a) budget commitment and disbursements; and
  (b) institutionalisation of corresponding role or function, e.g. KM officer and/or a KM unit.

The principal meta-learning from these 41 cases can be stated simply thus: for actions or work processes to be more effective, managing knowledge must be accompanied by managing organisational energy.

## Acknowledgements

## Notes

1. Roper and Pettit (2006) reviewed the distinctions between the two terms 'learning organisation' and 'organisational learning'.
2. Below are definitions by leading knowledge management practitioners: 'Justified belief that increases an entity's capacity for effective action' (Nanoka 1994). 'I define knowledge as a capacity to act' (Sveiby 1997). 'Knowledge is information that changes something or somebody – either by becoming grounds for action, or by making an individual (or an institution) capable of different or more effective action' (Drucker 1989). 'Knowledge is information in action' (O'Dell and Jackson Grayson Jr 1998).
3. The leading proponents of this school of KM include the earliest KM practitioners from Scandinavian countries such as Karl Erik Sveiby and Leif Edvinsson, and later proponents such as Thomas Stewart and Patrick Sullivan. Human capital and structural capital roughly correspond to tacit and explicit knowledge, respectively. The best known widely-accepted international KM award, the Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise or MAKE Award, adopts eight criteria based on the intellectual capital framework.
4. Gender gaps in Philippine society rank sixth smallest in the world and are smallest compared to other Asian countries. The Philippines ranked sixth in the world and first in Asia in the Global Gender Gap Index, see Hausmann *et al.* (2008).

## Notes on contributor

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