

## EDITORIAL

### **Challenges and opportunities in measuring knowledge management results and development impact. Part 2**

We are pleased to publish the second part of the *KM for Development Journal* Special Issue on ‘Challenges and opportunities in measuring KM results and development impact’. The first part of the issue was published in December 2019 and can be accessed [here](#). The papers in this two-part special issue examine from a range of perspectives the challenges and opportunities in tracking and demonstrating the impact of managing knowledge both inside the walls (in organizations) and outside the walls (in the broader development context). Due to the high number of papers selected, they were divided into two issues, based on their completion dates.

We would like to thank all Guest Editors who reviewed and provided feedback on the abstracts and papers, as well as other colleagues who kindly agreed to peer review papers and provide feedback to the authors. We would also like to thank the contributing authors for their papers and for their patience – it has taken considerably longer than we had anticipated to finalize this issue. Finally, we would like to recognize the dedication and hard work of the Editor-in-Chief, Sarah Cummings. It has been a pleasure to work with her on this issue and we look forward to contributing to and supporting the *Journal* well into the future as members of the team of Senior Editors.

#### **This issue**

As a discipline, knowledge management (KM) is subject to the immense pressures produced by radical developments in information technology and the whole social world of information and communication. The value of knowledge itself is being severely tested by such present-day phenomena as fake news and the rise of social media platforms. These factors make it all the more vital to develop a defensible and objective approach to KM.

In the private sector, KM and organizational learning are enjoying something of resurgence but the public sector may be lagging behind, partly because knowledge as a core asset is still not fully recognized. Without a clear and convincing way of assessing the impact of KM, it is difficult to justify the activity in the face of shifting organizational, societal and development priorities. Unless there are recognized methods and indicators for making such assessments, the value of KM can be easily challenged. It is also through assessing KM impact that KM principles and knowledge life cycles can be made visible.

In an organizational context, KM is a distributed activity and can affect diverse groups, programmes and initiatives. While some KM activities are obvious and easy to measure – typically process indicators such as the number of knowledge products or the number of downloads of a particular document – subtler KM activities often defy measurement, and it can be difficult to establish cause and effect. Activities that defy measurement include, for example, measuring the influence or impact of knowledge activities on policy makers, demonstrating the improved skills of employees, and assessing the successful retention of knowledge despite retirements and other staff departures. Also challenging is measuring links between KM activities and improved effectiveness and efficiency, and thus value for money. It is often important, but very difficult, to show that changes in any of these areas can be attributed to KM.

KM performance measurement is a challenge largely because most knowledge is tacit in nature. For example, how can you measure a person's expertise and experience when accumulated specialist knowledge is difficult to codify. While it is easy to argue that there is a link between knowledge, learning and organizational or development effectiveness, it is far more difficult to demonstrate it. This is just as relevant in the management of knowledge outside the walls of organizations. In society, knowledge and its application are catalysts for any development and progress (Brander and Cummings 2018). What are the theoretical and practical considerations and opportunities of taking a more systemic approach to KM, applying it to sectors and other broader concepts, such as 'knowledge cities', 'the information society' and 'the knowledge economy'?

The first paper in this second part of the issue, 'Measuring the intangible: Lessons from USAID partners on how to measure the impact of organizational learning and adaptive management', Ben Fowler, Katherine Haugh, Manmeet Mehta and Monalisa Salib explore lessons learned from a US Agency for International Development (USAID) funded learning network of implementing partners. The learning network developed innovative methods to measure the seemingly intangible contributions of collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) to organizational effectiveness and development outcomes. This paper complements one by Stacey Young published in the first part of the special issue, 'How USAID is building the evidence base for knowledge management and organizational learning.'

The second paper, 'Towards a framework for measuring the impact of knowledge management solutions applied to work processes' (Nicole Afable, Daan Boom and Serafin Talisayon) examines how models, frameworks and methodologies for measuring knowledge assets and intellectual capital (IC) in the private sector can be adapted to organizations in the development sector. In particular, the authors demonstrate that the Skandia model (Edvinsson and Malone, 1997) is a viable and applicable methodology for measuring the IC/knowledge management value proposition of an organization. For development institutions indirectly producing development results through their stakeholders, this can be expanded using a four-

stage modified Kirkpatrick model (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 1994). The paper explains with examples on how this model can be used in measuring benefits from knowledge products and services.

In the next paper, ‘Measuring knowledge management capacities to strengthen health systems: the development and application of the Knowledge Management Index for global health and development’ (Saori Ohkubo, Anne Ballard Sara, Rupali J. Limaye and Naheed Ahmed), the authors describe the process to develop the Index, and the results and lessons from its use by a regional health organization in East Africa, and by a global health project. They examine the flexibility and adaptability of the Index, and discuss implications for its future application.

In the final paper in the Special Issue, ‘Realisation of diffuse benefits using a relative return on investment paradigm’, Stephen Bounds explores the relative advantages and disadvantages of a number of ways to quantify the realisation of systemic and diffuse benefits in public and private settings. The paper discusses a number of modelling approaches, and looks at factors to weight when determining the most appropriate technique to use.

### **Other contributions**

In addition to the Special Issue, this issue also includes three other contributions. In the paper ‘Institutionalization of knowledge management strategies in agricultural research organizations: a systematic literature review’ (Boniface Akuku, Timothy Mwololo Waema and Robert Oboko), the authors provide a systematic literature analysis of institutionalization processes of KM strategies in agricultural research organizations (AROs). In the ‘Tools and methods’ section, ‘How to use critical discourse analysis for policy analysis: a guideline for policymakers and other professionals’ (Sarah Cummings, Leah de Haan and Anastasia-Alithia Seferiadis), the authors explain how critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be used to analyse policy texts, adapting the methodology developed by Fairclough, making it more accessible for a non-specialist audience by improving the clarity of the language and describing the four phases of the methodology in more detail. Finally, in ‘Reflections’, Stuart M. Belle reflects on his personal experience as a mentor, guiding KM and organizational learning internationally.

*Helen Gillman, Chris Zielinski, Charles Dhewa, Juergen Hagmann and Kim Martins*  
Guest Editors

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