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# CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	<b>BASAVESHWARA AND MAHATMA GANDHI: THOUGHTS ON EQUALITY</b> <i>DR. KICHIDI CHANNAPPA</i>	1
2.	<b>ROLE OF IRDA IN INSURANCE SECTOR AN ANALYTICAL STUDY</b> <i>PREETI DIXIT &amp; DR. SANJEEV MAHROTRA</i>	5
3.	<b>EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT ON JOB PERFORMANCE IN BANKING SECTOR</b> <i>G. SREELAKSHMI &amp; DR. D. SURYACHANDRA RAO</i>	10
4.	<b>PERFORMANCE OF NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME IN INDIA</b> <i>ANANTH.S &amp; BALANAGA GURUNATHAN.K</i>	13
5.	<b>PROTECTION OF WOMEN AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2005: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS</b> <i>DR. ARCHANA BHATIA</i>	17
6.	<b>TACIT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: A REVIEW</b> <i>SUBASHINI R &amp; VELMURUGAN G</i>	20
7.	<b>A STUDY ON ICT INITIATIVES IN THE SALE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE AT APMC's IN KARNATAKA</b> <i>NAGARAJU.R &amp; DR. PRALHAD. P. RATHOD</i>	23
8.	<b>ETHICAL WORKPLACE CULTURE: A KEY TO EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION</b> <i>DR. SUPRIYA CHOUDHARY</i>	27
9.	<b>COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FAME AND SEQUENCE ANALYSIS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF BACTERIA FROM INDUSTRIAL WATER OF KRIBHCO</b> <i>N.J. NAIK</i>	31
10.	<b>GROWTH OF RETAIL INDUSTRY IN INDIA</b> <i>DR. PAWAN KUMAR SINGH &amp; DR. SHRIKRISHNA TRIPATHI</i>	36
11.	<b>SEGMENT REPORTING: AN ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR STAKEHOLDERS (A CASE STUDY OF SEGMENT REPORTING OF SAUDI ARABIA COMPANY)</b> <i>DR. ABHINNA BAXI BHATNAGAR</i>	40
12.	<b>IMPACT OF E-COMMERCE IN INDIAN MSMEs</b> <i>GURMEEN KAUR</i>	45
13.	<b>AN OVERVIEW OF MUTUAL FUND TOWARDS INVESTOR'S PERCEPTION</b> <i>N. SAKTHI SELVA ROHINI</i>	49
14.	<b>TALENT MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION SECTOR</b> <i>NAGESH C L</i>	52
15.	<b>CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF AIRTEL CELLULAR SERVICE IN CUMBUM TOWN, THENI DISTRICT, TAMILNADU</b> <i>DR. A. SULTHAN MOHIDEEN, M. MOHAMED ISHAQ &amp; M. MOHAMED ILYAS</i>	55
16.	<b>E-GOVERNANCE: A CHALLENGE FOR INDIA</b> <i>DR. MALIKA BHIYANA &amp; RAVI KUMAR BARWAL</i>	61
17.	<b>ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP STYLES AND ORGANISATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY OF FINANCIAL SECTOR IN CAMEROON</b> <i>NKAM MICHAEL CHO, MUSIBAU AKINTUNDE AJAGBE, LAWRENCE UCHENNA OKOYE &amp; EKANEM EDEM UDO UDO</i>	64
18.	<b>WOMEN's MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES</b> <i>DR. BASALINGAMMA S H &amp; DR. RASHMI RANI AGNIHOTRI H.R</i>	71
19.	<b>AAJEEVIKA: A MISSION TO ENHANCES LIVELIHOOD AND MAKES SELF EMPLOYMENT OF RURAL PEOPLE AND WOMEN</b> <i>RICHA VERMA &amp; AMBUJ SRIVASTAV</i>	75
20.	<b>CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR REGARDING INDIAN BRANDED GOODS: A STUDY OF APPAREL INDUSTRY OF LUDHIANA</b> <i>SUKHVINDER KAUR</i>	78
	<b>REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK &amp; DISCLAIMER</b>	83

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**TACIT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: A REVIEW****SUBASHINI R****ASST. PROFESSOR (SG)****DEPARTMENT OF TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT****VIT UNIVERSITY****VELLORE****VELMURUGAN G****PROFESSOR****SSL****VIT UNIVERSITY****VELLORE****ABSTRACT**

*Tacit knowledge has tremendous value when made available to the right people at the right time. A precondition to activate tacit knowledge is to make sure that the leader is able to identify the relevant tacit knowledge in the organization. The identification of tacit knowledge is often heavily hindered, but is made possible through the scope of personal contacts, Brainstorming sessions, social contacts, reservoirs of experiences and many more. This paper moves towards an understanding of the effective methods of tacit knowledge. We begin with the definition of knowledge and then discuss explicit, tacit knowledge. The leadership enriched culture and tacit knowledge is discussed as an integrated framework. Finally, we engage this model to begin the exploration of the role of leadership with respect to the utilization of tacit knowledge methods that result in high firm performance.*

**KEYWORDS**

leadership enriched culture, tacit knowledge, techniques, performance

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Knowledge management (KM) has become an important success factor for organizations. Knowledge which is new to an organization has to either be invented internally, or acquired from external sources. There are two types of knowledge: explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge (Nonaka et al.2000) and other authors such as Hall and Andriani (2002) describe explicit knowledge as what can be embodied in a code or a language and as a consequence it can be communicated, processed, transmitted and stored relatively easily. It can be shared in the form of data, scientific formulae, manuals and such like. In contrast, tacit knowledge is personal and hard to formalise – it is rooted in action, procedures, commitment, values and emotions etc. Tacit knowledge is not codified, it is not communicated in a ‘language’, and it is acquired by sharing experiences, by observation and imitation (Hall & Andriani 2002). Knowledge is created through interactions between tacit and explicit knowledge and not from either tacit or explicit knowledge alone (Nonaka et al. 2000). Compared to the work on explicit knowledge, the management of tacit knowledge is relatively unexplored. Knowledge sharing between employees requires communicating tacit knowledge. Unfortunately, it is difficult to be communicated in a formalized way like, for instance, through language. In well functioning teams sharing of tacit knowledge occurs through “the establishment of shared understanding” (Becerra-Fernandez & Sabherwal, 2001) and through practice itself (Brown & Duguid, 1999). Nonaka and Konno (1998) distinguish two dimensions of tacit knowledge: the technical dimension, i.e. the “know-how”, and the cognitive dimension, i.e. beliefs, ideals, values, mental models, schemata. “While difficult to articulate, this cognitive dimension of tacit knowledge shapes the way we perceive the world” (Nonaka & Konno, 1998). The cognitive dimension is termed mental models by Senge (1996). Knowledge creation and conversion lie between the tacit and explicit forms. Tacit knowledge is actionable, and therefore most valuable, and much recent attention has focused on the importance of tacit knowledge for sustaining competitiveness (Lam, 2000). It is also the most important basis for the generation of new knowledge. In their often-referenced work on innovation and knowledge creation, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) posit that organizational knowledge is created through a continuous and dynamic interpersonal interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge (Stenmark, 2000). They also emphasize in their work that there are four modes in which organizational knowledge is created through the interaction and conversion between tacit and explicit. These are socialization, externalization, combination, internalization (Weichoo, 1998).

**2. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT LITERATURE**

Increasing product / service complexity, rapidly decreasing product / service life cycle, globalization, increasing prominence of virtual organizations, and customer orientation are developments that require a thorough and systematic management of knowledge within an organization and among several cooperating organizations. Knowledge Hierarchy, Information Technology, Knowledge-Based Systems and Knowledge Management Life cycle are the four concepts in the KM literature.

**2.1. KNOWLEDGE HIERARCHY**

Data: Data may be viewed as some disconnected collection of facts about a domain.

Information: Data that are given meaning through relational connection.

Knowledge: This is a useful collection of appropriate information.

Wisdom: To judge and by so doing produce understanding where there was no previous understanding.

**2.2. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Database management systems (DBMS), data mining (DM), data warehouses (DW), group wares (GW), intranets, extranets are the most common information technologies (ITS) used in support of KM. Virtually all ITS currently applied in KM abstract at data level and not knowledge level. We catch data flow and not the flow of knowledge. Unfortunately, knowledge continues to be unevenly distributed in the organization. Instead, KM must be supported by ITS such as knowledge mining, knowledge capture and discovery, knowledge filtering, knowledge warehousing, ontology establishment and development and intelligent agents. Simply put, ITS in support of KM must abstract at knowledge level.

**2.3. KNOWLEDGE-BASED SYSTEMS**

The knowledge-based systems (KBS) such as expert systems and intelligent agents are fairing much better than extant ITS applied in KM. For instance, much of the KBS are predicated on the capture, formalization, and application of strong domain knowledge. There is optimism that future KBS will adequately cover the six stages of KM life cycle.

**2.4. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT LIFE CYCLE**

Nissen et al. (2000) observe a sense of process flow or a life cycle associated with knowledge management. Integrating their survey of the literature, (e.g., Gartner Group 1998, Davenport and Prusak 1998, Nissen 1999), they synthesize an amalgamated KM life cycle model.



TABLE 1: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT LIFE CYCLE MODELS

Model	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
Despres& Chauvel	Create	Map/bundle	Store	Share/Transfer	Reuse	Evolve
Gartner Group	Create	Organized	Capture	Access	Use	
Davenport& Prusak	Generate		Codify	Transfer		
Nissen	Capture	Organize	Formalize	Distribute	Apply	
Amalgamated	Create	Organize	Formalize	Distribute	Apply	Evolve

Source: Nissen, 2002

The Amalgamated Model integrates the key concepts and terms from the four life cycle models. The Amalgamated Model is more complete with its beginning at the creation step. Of the six phases in KM Life Cycle, only knowledge organization, formalization, and distribution seem to be effectively supported by current ITS (Nissen, 2002). Knowledge management (KM) is premised on the cyclic process of Tacit knowledge (TK) creation, conversion of TK to Explicit knowledge (EK) and the conversion of EK to TK.

**3. LEADERSHIP ENRICHED CULTURE FOR A PERFECT TODAY**

Organizational Culture or corporate culture comprises the attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values of an organization. It has been defined as "the specific collection of values and norms that are shared by people and groups in an organization and that control the way they interact with each other and with stakeholders outside the organization". To survive and succeed in exercising leadership, leaders must also work as closely with opponents as they do with supporters. In fact, opponents deserve more of attention not only as a tactic of strategy and survival but also sometimes as a matter of compassion. The leader needs to create a holding environment. The leadership pattern has a great influence on the organizational culture. It is the leader who frames the organizational culture. The leader should include the following elements to enhance the organizations reputation in the global arena.

1. The Paradigm: What the organization is about; what it does; its mission; its values.
2. Control Systems: The processes in place to monitor what is going on.
3. Organizational Structures: Reporting lines, hierarchies, and the way that work flows through the business.
4. Power Structures: Who makes the decisions, how widely spread is power, and on what is power based?
5. Rituals and Routines: Management meetings, board reports and so on may become more habitual than necessary.
6. Stories and Events: Convey a message about what is valued within the organization

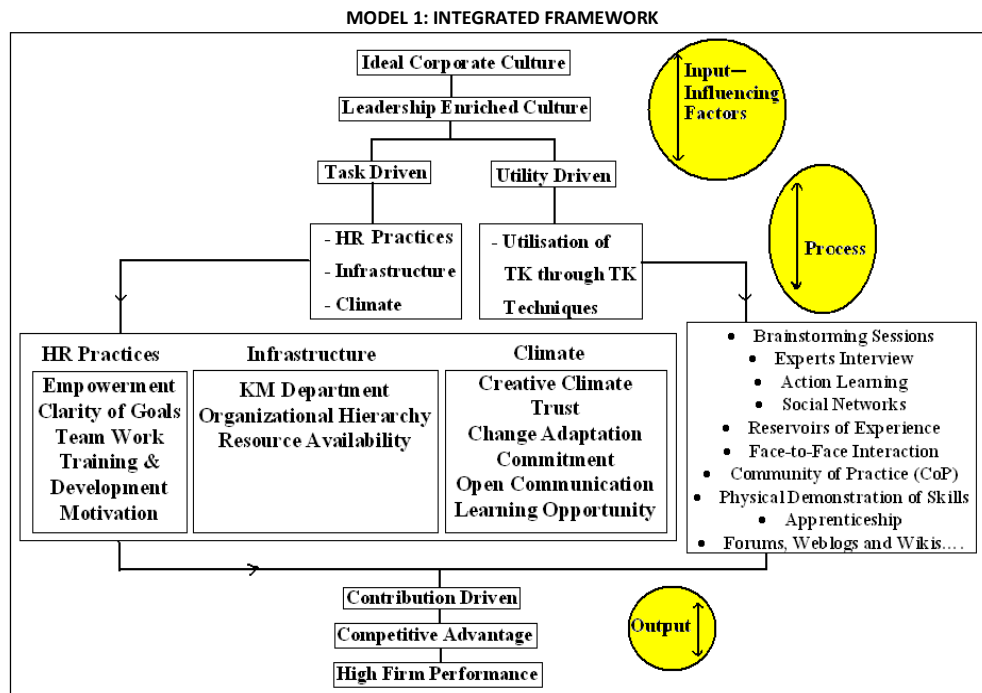
**4. LEADERSHIP ENRICHED CULTURE, TACIT KNOWLEDGE, FIRM PERFORMANCE: AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK**

Under Leadership Enriched Culture, the leader’s vital elements should be (i) Commitment (ii) Clarity of goals (iii) Utilisation of Tacit knowledge. The extent of effectiveness depends upon the extent of these three factors--Commitment being the more dominant factor between the three. The leader who is high on commitment and clarity could change from one style of leadership to another and anywhere in that continuum, depending upon the need of the task / mission and the goals and sub-goals she/he has to achieve. The effective leader is effective because he is committed to the task and is clear about how to achieve it. The same leader may not be effective in another task if he does not know how to utilise the intellectual assets and their tacit knowledge. Thus, leadership is task and utility based, having a relationship with the factors of Commitment, Clarity of goals and utilisation of tacit knowledge. Indian companies such as Tata’s, Infosys, Ranbaxy are wonderful examples for a dynamic leadership enriched culture. They have always set a standard for the other organizations.

Tacit knowledge has tremendous value when made available to the right people at the right time. A precondition to activate tacit knowledge in the innovation process is to make sure that one is able to identify the relevant tacit knowledge in the organisation.

Tacit knowledge enables an increased perception of ideas. Therefore, it stimulates creativity and has a positive effect on business activities. The identification of tacit knowledge is often heavily hindered, but is made possible through the scope of personal contacts (Rüdiger & Vanini 1998) where ideas are sharply critiqued but individuals are respected. Proper utilization of tacit knowledge leads to Innovative ideas. So, effective leadership should pave way for better HR practices, infrastructure, and climate in an organization to capitalize the various techniques of tacit knowledge.

The popular technique for capitalizing on the respective insights and intuitions (tacit knowledge) of a group of individuals is to conduct Brainstorming sessions. It paves ways to set directions and help everyone to understand the problem and clarify the objectives. It encourages cross-fertilization i.e. to combine, synergize and improve upon ideas. It also encourages outside-the-box thinking and active listening. It applies the 80/20 rule and thereby looks through the list of ideas and circles the 20% that will yield 80% of the results thereby leading to full-spectrum thinking.



Source: Compiled by authors

Tacit knowledge exists randomly in society and relates to the context of a specific problem and access is mainly through Social networks. The tacit dimensions of individual knowledge are not publicly available except as embodied in people to be hired, and the tacit dimensions of collective knowledge are woven into the very fabric of an organization. Tacit knowledge can be activated by generating new scientific knowledge, (learning-to-learn), by incorporating new knowledge in the design of a new product, when learning new production methods and improving existing technology through minor improvements based on Learning-by-doing, and based on learning by-using once the new product or process is being used internally in the organisation or by external consumers. Even Confucius has mentioned the importance of LBD by saying, "i hear and i forget; i see and i remember; i do and i understand". Tacit knowledge is a source of competitive advantage. The creativity necessary for innovation derives not only from obvious and visible expertise, but from invisible Reservoirs of experience which need to get vitalized first, before using these in the innovation process. Tacit knowledge can be gained both in and outside the organization. Inside the organisation, by deciding what existing tacit knowledge capabilities the members in the organisation carry themselves and what improvement could be made to build up the accumulated learning of the individuals and, therefore, enhance the tacit know-how competence. Outside the organisation, by trying to gain tacit knowledge and skills from other firms, through recruiting the right individuals with the requisite education or work experience, or by acquiring parts of or whole new companies, or by engaging appropriate consultants or by building networks with other companies. It is made clear that tacit knowledge is gained and vitalised throughout all functions and stages of a company's operations. The key degree of tacit knowledge transfer is Face-to-face interaction, close relationships formed to have informal interaction and physical demonstration of skills. Most of the Asian companies focus on face-to-face collaborative knowledge sharing, use telephone, voice-mail and real-time video conferencing to transfer tacit knowledge. As tacit knowledge is hard to communicate and express in words. So in order to disseminate it in an organization – common ground of communication between particular units, mutual trust, and analogical way of thinking is needed. "The contact zone" therefore is needed, where units can have a direct contact with one another. One of the few ways to make knowledge more accessible is to enable more conversations to take place in online environments such as forums, weblogs and wikis. In this way sharing is easier and more accessible than by more formalised processes and by making these conversations "linky" people can navigate them, point to the good stuff and build up a collective memory of what was useful.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

To conclude, tacit knowledge is highly personal (Polanyi 1966), context-specific (Sternberg 1994) knowledge. The various other forms of creation of Ideas are through Quick Think method, Meta-plan technique or card technique, Morphological analysis. Though tacit knowledge is elusive and difficult to tap as it is socially embedded in the individual, my views is that it can be shared through interaction and cooperation amongst individuals. For this to happen, trust, communication and interpersonal skills as well as mutual commitment are essential. Besides, a socially cohesive environment is necessary for the learning process to take place. Thus, effective utilisation of tacit knowledge techniques in the presence of an efficient leader paves way for competitive advantage and thereby enhances firm's performance. The various other forms of creation of ideas are through Quick Think method, Meta-plan technique or card technique, Morphological analysis, Metaphor-figurative language, analogy, model. To convert tacit knowledge in to explicit knowledge means finding a way to express the inexpressible. The authors recommend additional research to further explore in depth the various attributes that would pave way for Leadership enriched culture for effective utilisation of Tacit Knowledge which in turn leads to sustained organizational performance.

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