THE GENERATION AND SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE WITHIN
ORGANISATIONS: MACRO LEVEL AND MICRO LEVEL INFLUENCES ON
INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING ORIENTATION AND BEHAVIOUR

Claire M. Gardiner
ATCL, B.A. (Comm), M.Ed. (AWE)
Candidate
6001 Doctor of Philosophy
School of Education and Professional Studies
Faculty of Education,
Griffith University,
Brisbane, Australia.

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ABSTRACT

The ability of an organisation to respond quickly to changing circumstances and marketplace demands has been identified as an important factor in organisational effectiveness, particularly where work innovation is involved. Hence, knowledge generation and sharing practices in an organisational setting are central to organisational effectiveness. This dissertation identifies the mediating influence of relations between organisations and their workers, and the relations among workers, on knowledge generation and sharing practices. The dissertation elaborates occurrences within a socially-constructed system, specifically, within a public sector organisational setting, that shape knowledge sharing. Through an analysis of both macro and micro level organisational practices and behaviour, it identifies factors shaping the relations between organisations and knowledge sharing. These comprise: (a) the generation of knowledge, (b) the contested nature of the process of knowledge construction, (c) the impact of the individual worker’s experience of the organisation’s internal environment on shaping their knowledge sharing orientation, (d) how the organisation is understood to value knowledge sharing, (e) the impact of relations with colleagues on knowledge sharing behaviours, and (f) the perceived outcomes of knowledge sharing behaviours.

The organisation’s external environment was found to create premises for its practices, bases for its workers’ beliefs, orientations and actions, and was an important factor influencing knowledge generation and sharing goals and activities. Factors in the internal macro-level environment (e.g. the organizing principles, control systems, networks and power relations), framed the structure, exercise, coordination and communication of individual expertise and patterns of cooperation. These are important because they constitute an introduction to the organisational dynamics that workers experience in the organisation on a
daily basis, thereby informing their perceptions, beliefs and decision-making about knowledge generation and sharing.

Salient micro-level factors that influence the development of the individual’s relationship with their organisation and their knowledge sharing orientation and are all held to act as important influences, are identified as: (a) the individual worker’s affective organisation commitment; (b) trust levels between individuals, groups and between an individual and their supervisor; (c) feelings of security (including feeling valued personally and for specific expertise); (d) role clarity and linkages; (e) rewards for job involvement and extra-role behaviour, (f) the experienced reciprocity of effort and reward, (g) experienced organisational justice, and (h) discretion to question, innovate and improve.

This dissertation makes clear connections between action and theory. Through adopting a case study approach, its contribution is uniquely integrative. It elaborates an understanding of knowledge generation and sharing practices and why these practices need to be accounted for in an organisation’s activities and social practices. Yet, because of both micro and macro level contributions these behaviours need to be understood in the specific contexts of organisation members’ activities and practices. Hence, the dissertation advances insights to inform future practice, arising from the centrality of knowledge sharing to organisations’ sustainability and the dependency on workers’ understanding of their relations with the organisation, its representatives and their co-workers.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed: __________________________________________________________________________
Claire M. Gardiner
Date: 18/03/2008
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................................................................................................................... 2
Statement of Originality ......................................................................................................................................... 4
Table of Contents .................................................................................................................................................... 5
List of Tables ........................................................................................................................................................... 8
List of Figures ....................................................................................................................................................... 10
List of Appendices ................................................................................................................................................ 11
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................................... 12
CHAPTER ONE ................................................................................................................................................... 13
Knowledge Generation and Sharing in an Organisational Setting ................................................................. 13
Background to the Dissertation ......................................................................................................................... 14
Research Issues and Questions .......................................................................................................................... 17
Methodology and Procedures ............................................................................................................................ 18
Dissertation Structure ........................................................................................................................................ 20
Contributions ..................................................................................................................................................... 24
CHAPTER TWO .................................................................................................................................................. 28
Macro Level Influences on Knowledge Generation and Sharing in Organisations ........................................ 28
Current Perspectives on Generating Organisational Knowledge ................................................................. 31
The Generation of Organisational Knowledge: Key resource for Sustainability ............................................. 35
The Contested Nature of the Process of Knowledge Construction ............................................................... 41
Understanding Knowledge Generation and Sharing through Social Learning Theory ................................ 42
Understanding Knowledge Generation and Sharing through Management Theory .................................. 52
Influence of the Organisation’s Structure and Control Mechanisms on Knowledge Generation and Sharing .. 59
Influence of Contested Workplace Relations on Knowledge Generation and Sharing ................................ 79
Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................................... 92
CHAPTER THREE .............................................................................................................................................. 95
The Mediational Role of Workers’ Relationships with the Organisation and Their Co-Workers on Knowledge Generation and Sharing ................................................................. 95
Influences Guiding Individual Knowledge Sharing Orientation and Behaviour .............................................. 97
Knowledge Sharing and Trust .......................................................................................................................... 104
Knowledge Sharing and Feelings of Security .................................................................................................. 110
Knowledge Sharing, Reciprocity and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour ...................................................... 120
Knowledge Sharing and Organisational Justice .................................................................................................. 128
Knowledge Sharing and Discretion to Question and Innovate ........................................................................ 133
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................................... 139

CHAPTER FOUR .............................................................................................................................................. 148

Investigating Knowledge Sharing Practices in a Public Sector Organisisation ................................................. 148
Orientation to Enquiry ..................................................................................................................................... 151
Research Method ............................................................................................................................................. 156
Investigation Techniques .................................................................................................................................. 161
Approach to Data Analysis ............................................................................................................................... 168
Research Design Quality Measures ................................................................................................................ 172
Practical Research Procedures .......................................................................................................................... 175
Data Collection Techniques ............................................................................................................................... 183
Data Analysis Procedures ................................................................................................................................. 191
Limitations of the Research Design .................................................................................................................. 198
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................................... 203

CHAPTER FIVE ................................................................................................................................................ 206

Macro-level Mediators: Environmental Complexity in Knowledge Generation and Sharing ......................... 206
Organisation’s Mission and Purpose .................................................................................................................... 208
Specialised Nature of the Industry ....................................................................................................................... 211
Drivers for Change ............................................................................................................................................. 218
Influence of Transport Services’ Public Sector Environment ............................................................................. 221
Contribution of the Engineering and Design Drafting Areas ............................................................................. 230
Outsourcing to External Consultants ................................................................................................................ 233
Influence of the Organisation’s Structure and Control Mechanisms ................................................................. 239
Impact of Work Demands .................................................................................................................................. 248
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................................... 251

CHAPTER SIX ................................................................................................................................................... 255

Socially Situated Practice: Knowledge Generation and Knowledge Sharing Practices .................................. 255
Construction of Knowledge and Development of Expertise ......................................................................... 256
Accessing and Gathering Information for Role and Task Execution ............................................................... 263
Knowledge Sharing Practices and Contested Workplace Relations ................................................................. 268
Value Attributed to Knowledge and Expertise ................................................................................................. 281
Knowledge Generation and Innovation ............................................................................................................. 286
CHAPTER SEVEN .............................................................................................................................................315

Micro-level Mediators on Individual Workers’ Knowledge Generation and Sharing ........................................315

Individual Workers’ Orientations and Characteristics .............................................................................317
Knowledge Sharing and the Individual’s Affective Organisation Commitment .........................................326
Knowledge Sharing and Trust ....................................................................................................................333
Knowledge Sharing and Feelings of Security ..............................................................................................337
Knowledge Sharing, Reciprocity and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour ............................................344
Knowledge Sharing and Organisational Justice ..........................................................................................349
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................357

CHAPTER EIGHT ...........................................................................................................................................362

Key Findings, Contributions and Conclusions ............................................................................................362

Key Findings ................................................................................................................................................363
Contributions ..............................................................................................................................................373
Implications for Practice ...............................................................................................................................378
Avenues for Future Research .........................................................................................................................382
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................383

Appendices ..................................................................................................................................................385

References ....................................................................................................................................................438
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 ................................................................................................................................................................ 159  
Research issues and links to supporting literature

Table 2 ................................................................................................................................................................ 173  
Evaluation of internal validity

Table 3 ................................................................................................................................................................ 181  
Occupational characteristics of participants

Table 4 ................................................................................................................................................................. 184  
Question focus and progression across interview sequence

Table 5 ................................................................................................................................................................ 186  
Relationship between macro-level research issues and interview questions

Table 6 ................................................................................................................................................................ 187  
Relationship between micro-level research issues and interview questions

Table 7 ................................................................................................................................................................ 197  
A priori constructs from the literature and categories established through data analyses

Table 8 ................................................................................................................................................................ 201  
Threats to validity and remedial actions

Table 9 ................................................................................................................................................................ 209  
Perceptions of the organisation’s mission and purpose by status and occupation

Table 10 .............................................................................................................................................................. 223  
Paradigms of public management
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  Outline of research design  ................................................................. 18

Figure 2  Factors comprising the macro-level environment for knowledge generation and sharing ............ 141

Figure 3  Locally constructed values and practices providing the framework for action on a day-to-day basis in 
the work setting .................................................................................................. 142

Figure 4  Micro-level factors mediating individual knowledge generation and sharing .......................... 144

Figure 5  Development of coding for category “Environmental Complexity” ........................................ 191

Figure 6  Macro-level factors influencing knowledge generation and sharing by individual workers in 
TransportServices ................................................................................................. 251

Figure 7  Socially constructed values and practices providing the framework for action on a day-to-day basis in 
the work setting .................................................................................................. 311

Figure 8  Micro-level factors mediating individual knowledge generation and sharing ........................ 357

Figure 9  The nested nature of the complex sets of mediational influences on knowledge generation and 
sharing .................................................................................................................. 363

Figure 10 The influence of macro-level environmental factors, socially situated practices and micro-level 
mediators on knowledge generation and sharing practice ........................................ 369
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Participants' attributes .............................................................................................................386
Appendix 2 Schedule of interview questions: first interview ........................................................................387
Appendix 3 Schedule of interview questions: second interview .................................................................393
Appendix 4 Schedule of interview questions: third interview ....................................................................400
Appendix 5 Schedule of interview questions: trainees ..............................................................................409
Appendix 6 Schedule of interview questions: final interview, senior manager ........................................415
Appendix 7 Level One data analysis codes ...............................................................................................426
Appendix 8 Examples of relationships between Level One data analysis codes and Level Two sub-categories ..........................................................................................................................430
Appendix 9 Participant briefing & informed consent form ........................................................................434
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