Chapter Four

Methodology
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METHODOLOGY OF THE WORK

"A wonderful harmony is created when we join together the seemingly unconnected."

4.1 Introduction

The core aspect of this research has been the tacit knowledge. Its availability encourages the researches to delve more into articulating this knowledge. Suggesting that tacit knowledge is below-view presupposes that this kind of knowledge evades the awareness of a conscious entity. We must deal with the criticism that it cannot, by this definition, be studied. This tries to deconstruct tacit knowledge as a phenomenon that can be modeled. It proposes that the definitional attributes of tacit knowledge do not preclude it from empirical study.

We proceed to find that the fundamental attribute typically ascribed to tacit knowledge has a questionable theoretical basis. This is the attribute of ineffability, the prerequisite that for knowledge to be tacit, it must be impossible to articulate. We investigate the kind of model of language that such a proposition assumes and assert that it inadequately represents the process of making-meaning with language. Arguments that apply this model of language as evidence for the inexpressibility of tacit knowledge are thus invalid.
4.2 An Etymology of Tacit Knowledge

Tacit is from the Latin tacitus meaning silent. In common usage, most of the words which are synonyms of tacit relate to ineffability, for example, these include unsaid, unspoken, unuttered, wordless, silent, undeclared, unexpressed and unvoiced. They are also related to indirectness, for example, implicit, implied, inferred, and understood [70].

Tacit typically have a strong tendency to occur side-by-side with agreement, approval and knowledge. As a qualifier of knowledge in the concept, tacit knowledge, the term carries these associations of the unspeakable and oblique. The occurrence involves ideas of both what it means for something to be silent in a linguistic sense, and what it means 'to know silently'. Studies typically focus solely on the latter component. This thesis attempts to address this bias by considering tacit knowledge in terms of what it means to the expert and provides a possible framework to address the question of whether tacit knowledge is ineffable.

4.3 What does it mean?

The researcher attributed with coining the term tacit knowledge in contemporary times is Michael Polanyi. His Theory of Tacit Knowing (TTK) introduces a post-critical perspective on what it means to know, using the domain of science as an example with which to critique the tenets of logical positivism. The theory is post-critical in the sense that Polanyi argues that belief precedes and characterizes knowledge. However, rather than a thesis on tacit knowledge, TTK introduces another term entirely: tacit knowing.
As such, it theorizes a process rather than an object. This conceptual position is in accord with the movement in disciplines that theorize meaning, such as semiotics and linguistics, way from a constituency-based view of knowledge as an object, towards a view of knowledge as dynamically constructed, as, in effect, 'in the making'. The present thesis adopts this kind of perspective but seeks to extend Polanyi's theory to incorporate the possibility that tacit knowing is not as silent as we have assumed.

While analysis of Polanyi's theory has focused on what a tacit form of knowing might constitute, it is also important to consider what it means 'to tell' in the context of such knowing. If telling means making explicit, codified artifacts that are directly 'transferred' to the mind of the listener, then this kind of telling is not a possible means of exposing tacit knowledge. This conceptualization would be following a constituency-based model of language, mentioned in the previous section, and neglecting, amongst other things, the interpersonal component of spoken discourse.

However, if we allow that articulating involves processes of which the expert is not necessarily aware and which are in turn subject to both unconscious and conscious interpretation by the consumer of the knowledge, proper articulation is reinstated as relevant to understanding tacit knowledge. This thesis derives from existing frameworks and models ideas that are available, to formulate a new common framework and to analyze, whether the captured knowledge is usable or not.
4.4 Research Approach

This research adopts a broad view of knowledge, extends existing knowledge conversion models, and proposes a theoretical research framework for facilitating a better understanding of the role of tacit knowledge in organizational knowledge management. The framework not only integrates knowledge objects and knowledge processes, but also takes the knowledge environment into consideration in the process of effective organizational knowledge management. As such, the framework provides a solid conceptual foundation for this research with a more comprehensive and balanced view on knowledge and knowledge management in organizations.

By exploring the use of tacit knowledge under the proposed framework, this research aims to gain a better understanding, theoretically, of the role of tacit knowledge in knowledge management and of the factors facilitating and hindering knowledge management. The research will have implications for the practical application of knowledge management in order to leverage the value of knowledge within organizations. The utilization of the tacit knowledge in knowledge management will provide support for organizations seeking to justify investments in ICT. The review of ICT used in the specific phases and processes of knowledge management will identify the applicability of the tools available, and suggest ways to integrate social systems and technical systems in a context of ongoing technological development.

Generally, this research examines the nature of knowledge and knowledge management, the relationship between knowledge, information and data, the conversion among these major constructs, and the role of ICT in knowledge management. More
specifically, it focuses on the factors and aspects affecting the utilization of tacit knowledge in knowledge management, in conjunction with the conversion process involving tacit knowledge and the implied knowledge therein.

4.5 Justification for the Methodology

The findings of this research will contribute to a better understanding of the role of tacit knowledge in knowledge management, and provide a useful guide to the effective use of tacit knowledge in enabling and supporting organizational knowledge management. It will also assist organizations in identifying those factors likely to be most critical to the success of knowledge management initiatives supported by ICT, and thus help to maximize their chances of success. Although having a direct focus on tacit knowledge and knowledge management, this study takes account of internal environment factors in providing both guidelines for the implementation for the conversion of tacit knowledge and mechanisms for its evaluation.

The knowledge elicitation framework developed in this study can serve as a base from which an organization can launch knowledge management initiatives. Under the guidelines of this framework, knowledge management practitioners can choose the appropriate technology for their knowledge management strategy and identify the strengths and weaknesses in their organizational knowledge management practices. The framework could provide practitioners in the field of knowledge management with a roadmap for planning and implementing knowledge management projects. The interactive and holistic approach developed in this study will be of value both to practitioners seeking to plan for and implement knowledge management in their
organizations and to researchers interested both in knowledge management technologies and in the wider aspects of knowledge management.

4.6 Research Procedures

The research carried out is known as theoretical research. The researcher extended his study in developing a framework regarding the conversion of tacit knowledge to known, workable explicit knowledge through the implied knowledge therein. The rest of the chapters provide an elaborative description of the aspects carried out in this research.

4.6.1 The framework

A solid theoretical framework was first developed for the process of knowledge elicitation and the type of knowledge taken into consideration was the tacit knowledge or the hidden knowledge. This framework did not consider any particular domain and therefore becomes a common or general framework. The intention of the researcher was to initially develop a global framework that can be used in any domain with implementational modifications as and when it is necessary. The framework consists of four major parts, namely:

1. The modes
2. The conversion
3. The storage
4. The retrieval
Since it is a framework, it covers all the aspects of knowledge management and therefore, the process starts from the elicitation and extends upto the retrieval part of it.

4.6.2 The Implication

The implication covers the various aspects of implication towards the implementation of the framework. The implication covers both the theoretical and practical facets of the framework.

4.6.3 The Model

The model deals with the practical implementation of a model that is derived out of the framework. The model has taken into consideration the educational domain for its implementation. A web portal was created with the model within an intranet and employees of that educational institution were allowed to work on the model to experimentally see and record the practical implications of the framework as well as the model.

Thus the recorded results were put into strenuous analysis and the results were inferred through the conclusion. There were many pros and cons within the implementation as well as the framework and the model.

4.7 Conclusion

How we talk about a concept informs how we study it. Our construal of tacit knowledge as a research construct embeds various ways of thinking about the world. It
also influences how we read about it, that is, how we understand tacit knowledge when we approach the interdisciplinary literature on the concept. This chapter has attempted to make explicit the kinds of techniques that are used to capture the hidden knowledge and of biases that are embedded in the term tacit knowledge in order to make the reader more critical on the subject. Looking at tacit knowledge in the way that we have done in this chapter offers a framework for identifying the modes through which way that tacit knowledge is described in the literature not only in terms of what authors write but how they write about it. This is akin to the research methods of fields such as literary theory and criticism. The researcher tries to explain how the work has been initiated and carried, presenting the possible ways.