Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This concluding part points out some of the limitations of the study along with a few highlights based on certain important findings/inferences.

Knowledge management has emerged over the last few years as an important new approach to the problems of competitiveness and innovation confronting the organizations world over. From the overwhelming emphasis on tools and system-driven approaches to knowledge management in the initial phase of its genesis, the current thoughts in knowledge management are more holistic. This research work was conducted against the above mentioned landscape, in the developing context of Indian information technology, a highly knowledge intensive industry segment.

A comprehensive review of available literature on knowledge management helped in conceptualizing the topic and this formed the foundation for the research. The multifaceted dimensions of knowledge management, its complementary association with the field of information technology with the latter's role as an enabler and case studies in leading IT firms were used to identify the knowledge management determinants in general as a first level input. A knowledge management survey was then conducted among entrepreneurs, knowledge officers and knowledge workers in information technology companies in India. The survey among entrepreneurs provided data about the knowledge management philosophy, incentive mechanisms and the vision of the
organization. The survey conducted with knowledge officers collected all possible details of organization performance in knowledge management and also about the knowledge system processes in place. Knowledge workers were asked to provide details of their knowledge work, how they were creating, transferring, learning and utilizing knowledge. The data collected from the knowledge management survey was subjected to multiple regression analysis to discover the more significant determinants of the knowledge management system and to develop a knowledge management index to represent the stage of knowledge management activities of the firm. The pattern variations of knowledge management against the more significant determinants were found out using simulation runs. The research findings were corroborated with the expert opinion analysis carried out based on the Delphi study. The expert opinion study also addressed the macro level challenges facing knowledge management in information technology in India in the form of policy formulation directives.

7.2 Limitations of the study

The study however is not devoid of limitations. Knowledge engineering and use of knowledge bases in knowledge acquisition of experts and utilization by knowledge workers in select areas like problem solving, is coming up as a technology solution to capture and store knowledge in knowledge intensive organizations. The study was unable to collect data regarding these as we observed that these activities are right now less in practice, unlike in more advanced countries. Another limitation of the study was that the study could not collect information about intellectual capital reporting by information technology firms in general. This is because in our developing context, the knowledge management activities are in an evolutionary stage. In future more and more companies would come out with intellectual capital reports and balance sheets showing intangible
assets. It may be noted that the study was confined to the sector of information technology. There was no comparative study conducted with knowledge management in other segments. This is also a limitation of the study, because this would have provided additional dimensions to the research work.

7.3 Highlights of the study

The study provided some significant findings. The Indian information technology companies have started implementing knowledge management systems, in varying degrees. This marks an important beginning by our information technology firms in their endeavour to become global leaders and strategically a very significant initiative. Among the processes and subsystems analysed in knowledge management in information technology companies of our context, the most significant activity is eliciting knowledge. The other slightly lesser significant activities observed is development of knowledge management infrastructure and knowledge identification. Another point revealed is that the industry is facing some bottlenecks from a knowledge management perspective, like lack of urgency, absence of a favourable organization culture, absence of involvement of top management and shortage of dedicated team for knowledge management. It has been highlighted that for successful knowledge management the firm requires sufficient knowledge base (in the study, in terms of qualified knowledge workers) as well as a dynamically optimum advanced communication technology base. The study also gave idea about the importance of knowledge audit in directing the knowledge management initiative on the right lines and the criticality of involvement of middle management in implementing knowledge management systems. The prospects of knowledge growth through knowledge transfer as a result of close association with advanced companies
abroad and interactions with academicians were the other significant findings of the study.

Information technology is the fastest changing technology in the world and it essentially enjoys a cross-industry patronage. Every industry segment uses information technology products and their operations are enabled through information technology solutions. Market demands all these industries to come out with utility-rich and cost-effective solutions, which in turn drive the IT industry to become highly innovative. As a result, knowledge management in information technology is going to become all the more challenging. The need of the hour is a scientific knowledge management, which appreciates the human and organizational characteristics for learning and innovation, in a fast changing and complex world.