

A Critical Re-Evaluation of Knowledge Management Definitions and Terminologies

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Abstract : The last three decades have witnessed myriads of definitions of knowledge management proposed by researchers and industry practitioners. Despite the magnitude of research and available literature on knowledge management, there is yet to be a consensus on what constitutes a good definition. There exists an in-exhaustive list of definitions which can appear confusing, conflicting and overlapping. What is even more daunting is the lack of common terminology in describing knowledge management processes and the inconsistency in the sequence in which the processes take. Whilst newbies to knowledge management research would struggle to make sense of knowledge management definitions, industry practitioners would struggle with their applicability. Against this backdrop, this study aimed to re-evaluate knowledge management definitions and terminologies. The objectives were threefold: (1) to conduct a critical review of an existing body of work around knowledge management concepts and definitions (2) to analyse and synthesise findings (3) to present conclusions and recommendations. The methodology for this study centres around the review of the literature and secondary data sources. A total of 48 knowledge management processes were found and extracted from various definitions (e.g. 'identify', 'capture', 'codify', 'store'...). A taxonomy of the processes was created based on the commonality of the entities. The 48 processes were classified under 8 headings which were further converged into 3 main headings namely 'acquire', 'exploit' and 'evaluate', of which all definitions therefore hinge. The study concludes that in the multitude of knowledge management definitions, there is a consistent pattern to which the processes are organised and should be utilised. The contribution of this study is in the synthesis of previous work by various authors and the presentation of a more holistic approach to knowledge management definitions and terminologies.

Keywords : knowledge management definitions, knowledge management terminologies, knowledge management processes, literature review

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