

2019

From Knowledge to Action: Exploring the Interactions between Theory and Practice

Zeena Alsamarra'i
University of Canberra, Zeena.Alsamarrai@canberra.edu.au

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From Knowledge to Action: Exploring the Interactions between Theory and Practice

Full Paper

Zeena Alsamarra'i

School of Business
University of Canberra
ACT, Australia
Email: Zeena.Alsamarrai@canberra.edu.au

Abstract

The practice of Knowledge Management (KM) has been conceptualized as a set of organizational processes that facilitate knowledge availability to support decision making, inform actions, and enhance performance. An underlying assumption of the KM practice is that knowledge availability would lead to knowledgeable actions. However, the notion of a 'theory-practice' gap remains an issue in many fields. By adopting the phenomenon of *knowledge mobilization* to represent the interactions between the two domains, this research aims to answer the question of what affords for theory-practice gaps to emerge when knowledge is mobilized in action. The findings from a case study of ICT graduates who are required to engage with theory and use it in their practice indicates that professionals frame their situations by drawing mainly upon a practical rather than a theoretical knowledge base acquired through experience and socialization.

Keywords: knowledge mobilization, theory, practice, theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge.

1 INTRODUCTION & RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The notion of Knowledge Management (KM) came into the limelight over the last three decades alongside the emergence of the 'knowledge-based' economy and has become a topic of interest both for researchers and practitioners. In this economy, knowledge and intellectual capabilities held by knowledge workers and professionals have come to the forefront of organizational resources that are necessary for organizational survival and competitiveness (Cong & Pandya 2003; Dalkir 2011; Lottering & Dick 2012; Sallis & Jones 2002; Stankosky 2005).

Recognizing the need to manage knowledge like other resources and the environment where it is used, KM emerged as the field of study that is concerned with the concept of knowledge and its management. It is inclusive of both theoretical knowledge academically produced and practical knowledge held by practitioners (Mingers 2008). Amongst the earliest definitions of KM is that of Davenport and Prusak (1998) who defined it broadly as a set of activities and processes for capturing, distributing, and using knowledge.

The current KM thinking crystallizes around the social and non-social activities undertaken by organizations for the acquisition, assimilation, and integration of knowledge into organizational practices, as well as the development of spaces or 'bas' to support socialization and knowledge exchange (Davenport & Prusak 1998; Nonaka & Konno 1998). Therefore, from a theoretical stance, KM aims to leverage existing knowledge to serve organizational knowledge needs (Dalkir 2011) and potentially lead to informed actions and decisions. From a practical perspective, this is achieved through the implementation of initiatives that support the "design, development and deployment of methodologies, processes and infrastructure" to enable knowledge exchange amongst employees of an organization (Suresh & Mahesh 2006, p.7).

While the necessity for these efforts and processes is undebatable, this conventional view of the KM cycle ending with knowledge availability so that knowledge can inform action echoes some underlying assumptions that can be problematic. To begin with, amongst the meta narratives floating in the KM discussion is the assumption that when knowledge is available, it becomes visible to those who need it, it can be located, it will be engaged with and drawn upon, and its intended utility will be realized as it is applied in a practical situation. In other words, there is a general assumption that knowledge availability leads to engagement and knowledgeable actions. Yet, we know in fact that this is not always the case.

Another broader generalization also emerging from the KM discussion is that facilitating knowledge availability is the ends of the practice. While this may be where the KM discussion wishes to draw the boundary of the field, it is worth extending the dialogue to include an understanding of how knowledge is mobilized into action and the aspects of the operational environment that influence the outcomes of this process. Arguably, ensuring knowledge availability through KM processes is only one part of the success story of a KM initiative and these areas of the practice have been thoroughly researched. However, the second half of the story remains to be explored in order to understand how theory-practice gaps come to exist. In other words, an understanding of theory-practice gaps can be attained by shedding light on knowledge use which encompasses both the patterns of knowledge seeking behaviours and the organizational elements that afford for these patterns. Establishing this understanding can illuminate an explanation to theory-practice gaps.

To progress beyond this point, this research conceptualizes the interactions that turn knowledge into action as happening between two mediated worlds, a 'theoretical world' and a 'practical world'. The 'theoretical world' encompasses theoretical, conceptual, academic knowledge as well as the stock of explicit knowledge resources available to people in organizations. Attributes of knowledge in this world are well summarized by Yanow's (2004 S12) account who described knowledge to be "theory-based, abstracted, generalized, scientifically constructed, academy-based, technical-professional, explicit, scholarly". The 'practical world' on the other hand is where knowledge is tested in 'what we do'. Drawing upon another description for knowledge by Yanow (2004 S12), it can be said that knowledge in this domain is "practice-based, context-specific, interactively derived, lived experience-based, practical reasoning, tacit, everyday".

While the reality of the divide between the 'theoretical world' and 'practical world' is "fluid and permeable" (Graham et al. 2006, p. 18), an artificial divide has been adopted in this research to serve two purposes which are to conceptually separate the space where knowledge resides and where knowledge is applied and to highlight the differences in the nature of knowledge and its attributes in both domains. Establishing this understanding of how knowledge is characterized in both domains is essential for guiding the discussion around the sources of knowledge individuals use in their practice

and relate that back to the nature of knowledge being made available through KM processes and embodied in theory.

Interactions between these two worlds are mediated by people and take place when individuals draw upon available knowledge and use it to act in a work situation. This social phenomenon is being conceptualized here as a process of Knowledge Mobilization. Currently, we know little about how individuals subjectively experience these interactions in their workplace, what do they do when faced with a knowledge need, what knowledge do they draw upon, and what aspects of their environment are influencing the outcomes of this process. Understanding these dynamics of knowledge mobilization may serve as a starting point towards identifying how theory-practice gaps come to exist.

Therefore, this exploratory research turns attention towards these neglected aspects and aims to answer the question of what affords for theory-practice gaps to emerge when knowledge is mobilized in action. Exploring the phenomenon of knowledge mobilization to address this question will be achieved by looking into what characterizes the phenomenon of knowledge mobilization in organizations and influences its outcomes. Accordingly, the research objectives are threefold:

- Identify any patterns in relation to how individuals address a knowledge need.
- Identify the organizational factors influencing these patterns.
- Account for the knowledge base informing practice and its characteristics.

From a theoretical point of view, the research findings will extend the boundary of KM beyond knowledge availability to include an empirically derived understanding of what characterizes knowledge mobilization. While recognizing that there is no single correct conceptualization for knowledge mobilization and therefore reasoning for the existence of theory-practice gaps, the research findings provide an empirically supported theoretical conceptualization of what knowledge mobilization looks like in practice which can be used to frame the theory-practice gap.

Practically, the research findings may be of value to Australian Public Service organizations who design and annually run programs aimed at mobilizing knowledge such as cadetship and graduate development programs. An understanding of the organizational factors that can influence how cohorts of graduates engage with knowledge, the types of knowledge they use in practice, and the patterns of knowledge seeking behaviours they are likely to demonstrate can help refine the development and implementation of these programs to achieve better outcomes. This understanding can also be extended to other fields of practice where there is a need to narrow or bridge theory-practice gaps such as in the fields of education and health.

2 INITIAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Notable about the existing KM body of knowledge is the inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary nature of the field. As one begins to skim through the literature, it becomes evident that there is a lack of consensus on what defines KM as well as the absence of a unified or central theory that can be used to frame the implementation of this practice. There exists an 'isolated' rather than an 'integrated' collection of theoretical contributions in the form of frameworks that have different purposes and relate to specific knowledge manipulation activities (Burford & Ferguson 2011). Amongst these sub-theories, KM has been conceptualized by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) as a conversion process resulting in knowledge creation (the Dynamic Theory of the Knowledge Creating Firm); as a practice that is at the nexus of people, technology, process and content, illustrated in the Knowledge Ecosystem model (Australian Standard A.S. 2005); and as a practice-based initiative (Practice-based theory of knowledge) as elaborated by Wong and Aspinwall (2004) and Burford et al. (2011). To compensate for this fragmentation, numerous efforts have been made to capture the constructs and elements needed to put KM into practice, mainly using theoretical or conceptual frameworks. As such, there is a wealth of models and frameworks that attempt to provide guidance to the discipline.

In line with this practice, this research will utilize one the KM frameworks that relate to addressing a knowledge need in order to explore knowledge mobilization and consequently theory-practice gaps. Namely, the research draws upon the Knowledge Episode Model which was advanced by Holsapple and Joshi (2004). Briefly, the model identifies the configuration of knowledge activities that take place between "the time a knowledge need (or opportunity) is recognized and the time that it is satisfied (or abandoned)" (Holsapple & Joshi 2004, p. 92). The existing model has been devised to conceptualize a knowledge episode at the organizational level and the activities taken by organizations to address or abandon a knowledge need. Attention is given to the organization's knowledge resources and the knowledge manipulation (KM) activities that happen during the span of the episode.

Drawing upon some of these essential elements for understanding a knowledge related phenomenon, this research adopts the Knowledge Episode model to guide the conceptualization of a knowledge mobilization instance and serve as a sensitizing lens for data analysis. While reserving most of the elements of the initial framework due to their suitability, the model will be adopted and slightly modified to explore the 'individual' rather than the 'organizational' knowledge seeking behaviours since this research is focused on the 'individual'. Using this model, an initial conceptual framework was developed to illustrate the knowledge seeking activities individuals are likely to exhibit in a situation of a knowledge need as follow:

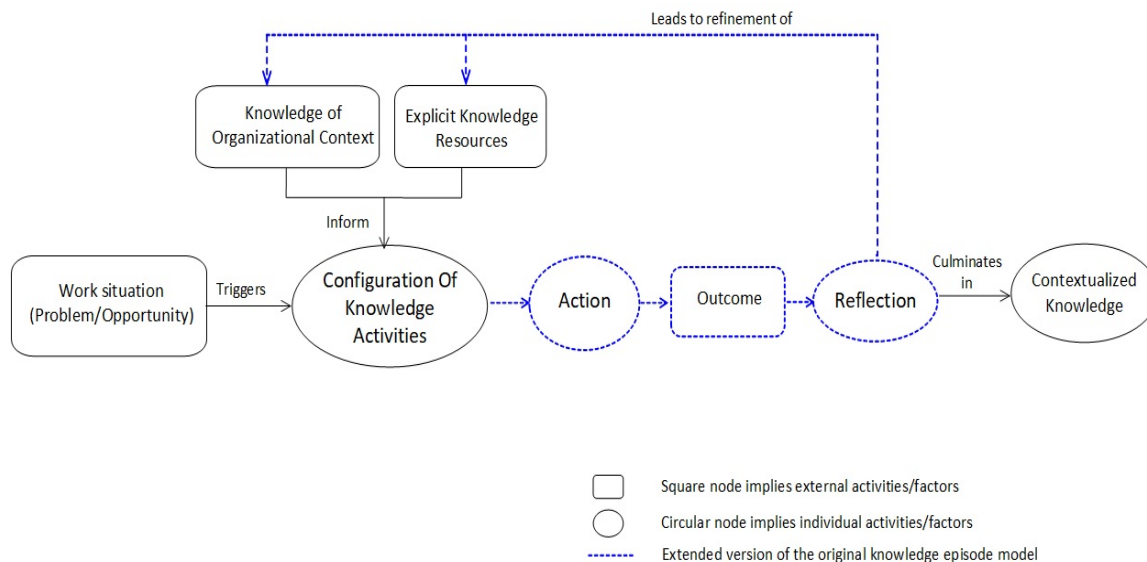


Figure 1: Initial Conceptualization of a Knowledge Mobilization Instance

The conceptual framework illustrates an instance of knowledge mobilization to be simplistically happening as follow:

- The episode begins when a work situation (new task, problem, opportunity, etc.) is presented, prompting the individual to engage in a configuration of knowledge seeking activities (e.g. asking help from peers and subject matter experts, looking up resources on the organization's intranet, looking up artefacts such as policies, procedure and standards, researching the Internet, consulting with dedicated organizational units, etc).
- The individual draws upon explicit knowledge resources including content-knowledge of theory and explicit knowledge represented in organizational artefacts.
- The individual also draws upon their knowledge of the organizational context and operating environment (culture, strategy, purpose, infrastructure, accepted practices, etc.).
- In evaluating and negotiating the content of the knowledge drawn upon and its relevance to the situation, the individual then engages in several cognitive processes such as thinking, reasoning, justifying, sense making, and other non-observable activities that give some rationalization to the planned action.
- The individual takes some action. This could either be a physical action such as writing a report or conceptual action like decision making.
- The individual then observes the outcomes of their action and thinks about what should have happened (if the outcome can be predicted). If the intended utility of the theory or explicit knowledge is realized, the knowledge is then contextualized, internalized, and ideally reused in similar future situations. However, if the outcome does not align with the intended purpose of the used knowledge, the individual may require further engagement with other knowledge resources, either internal, external, or both.
- Finally, the individual engages in active reflection in relation to the dynamics of the situation in general but also in relation to the knowledge that was used, its utility, its value and relevance to the task/situation. This involves thinking about 'what has happened', comparing the outcome to 'what should have happened' if the outcome is different, or 'what would have been a better

outcome'. It also entails thinking about alternative knowledge that would be useful in similar future situations. Outcomes of the reflection process can be used in the refinement of the existing knowledge base to more accurately capture the knowledge needs of the situation (based on experience) and incorporate some derived knowledge that results in better approaches to practice.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Given the exploratory nature of this research, a qualitative research approach has been adopted. A case study design has been implemented as it allows for a social phenomenon, in this case, knowledge mobilization, to be investigated through the experiences of the participants, in their natural setting, and in a given context (Creswell 2014; Gillham 2000; Grix 2004; Yin 2003).

In terms of the research context and the study background, the case study was based on the experiences of a group of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) graduates and members of their support group in a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program. The program is designed around the principals of WIL and requires engagement with the theoretical and practical domains of the ICT industry. In relation to the program, the Commonwealth of Australia runs a suit of programs every year including apprenticeships, graduate programs, and cadetship programs to train graduates and pass on organizational knowledge embodied in the organization's knowledge about "itself, its policies, citizens, states and allies, environment, governing processes and various technologies" (Asoh et al. 2002). The case study focused on one of these programs, the Graduate Development Program (GDP) which is administered by Australian Public Service (APS) agencies and departments every year. The program is structured around the principles of two modes of learning: Work-integrated-learning and project-based learning.

The target participant groups were selected purposefully. Invites were sent out to two groups: ICT graduates enrolled in the program from 10 APS organizations who are demonstrating the investigated phenomenon (G1), and members of the support group who were involved with the graduates in different capacities including agency/department supervisors, career development and support officers, academic course convenors, and academic mentors (G2). Given that this research aims to explore theory-practice gaps, the participants in G1 were purposefully selected as the nature of their involvement in the program requires them to engage with theory and other higher-level knowledge artefacts in their organization and to reflect on these concepts from their practice but to also use the knowledge derived from their research to guide their actions during their program. This core requirement of the program coupled with the highly practical nature of their field of practice which is based on skills and experience makes this group of interest to this study. The participants in G2 were also selected to provide their observations on the knowledge seeking behaviours of the graduates they supported and what they observed in relation to how the ICT professionals react to the use of theory as well as to reflect on their own knowledge needs to fulfil the roles that they occupied.

Data was collected through a combination of three approaches: Face-to-face interviews, document analysis, and observation at site visits when permitted. A semi-structured interviewing approach was adopted to allow for some degree of deviation from the interview questions and prompt participants (particularly G1 participants) to think about what they did to find out about a knowledge need, how they framed their situations, and other knowledge sources that influenced their actions. While a total of 78 invites were sent out to G1 participants, only 10 participants consented to interviewing and 2 participants have returned a written response to the interview questions and preferred not to be interviewed. Given the small size of the support group, 8 invites were also sent out to G2 participants. Only 4 responses were returned, and therefore, 4 interviews were conducted with this group.

The data collected from a total of 16 responses was further supported by a second method of primary data collection which was the document analysis. A group of 42 portfolio submissions were analysed with the same objectives in mind. All documents with an open access status were analysed regardless of their length or quality and no other document sampling criteria was defined. The portfolio documents captured the insights, reflections, experiences and examples from G1 participants' placements at various APS organizations. They provided a wider range of topics and reflections than can be derived from interviews only. As such, the portfolio submissions served as useful second source of primary data. Some data was also collected from 5 observation sessions including 3 site visits at the participants' organizations and attendance of 2 project presentation events. Attention was given to issues relating to knowledge use, issues that hindered project progression and whatever emerged as being relevant.

A summary of the data collected is provided in Table 1.

	Group 1	Group 2
Profile	ICT Graduates enrolled in Graduate Development Program	Support group including agency/department supervisors, support officers, academic mentors and course convenors
Invites	78	8
Interviews	10	4
Written responses	2	-
Documents analysed	42	-
Observations	5	-

Table 1: Summary of Data Sources

The data analysis phase included analysis of the interview transcripts as well as the open access portfolio documents and the researcher's hand-written notes from the observation sessions. The purpose of the analysis was to derive some key terms that summarizes the key concepts or issues and captured what MacQueen et al. (2008, p. 124) referred to as "linguistic cues". This was done at the word, sentence and paragraph level to identify anything that is relevant to patterns in knowledge seeking and use behaviours, elements of the operating environment that are playing up and what they are affording for in the participant's situation. The analysis also focused on the types of knowledge resources being used and the types of actions they are taking. A combination of manual and automated coding (facilitated by the NVivo data analysis software) was used. Descriptive coding was initially used whereby some key words were used to reduce the content of a sentence, paragraph, or groups of paragraphs to one or few descriptive words. This was then followed by a second cycle of group coding whereby descriptive codes were further narrowed down into smaller categories and were combined into sub-themes in leading up to the next stage of results presentation.

4 DISCUSSION OF EMERGING PATTERNS

We begin the discussion around the data emerging from the case study by noting that the key purpose of the case study was to identify any patterns in relation to how individuals address their knowledge needs and the organizational factors that afford for these patterns and influence the overall outcomes of knowledge mobilization. My analysis of the data suggests three key points: (1) knowledge mobilization is a social process and is facilitated by a social referral system, (2) elements of the knowledge ecosystem have an impact on knowledge mobilization outcomes, and finally, (3) in practice, theory is neglected and action is primarily informed by practical knowledge. These observations will be elaborated on next.

4.1 Knowledge Mobilization being a Social Process Facilitated by a Social Referral System

The data points to the existence of a pattern of activities demonstrated by the participants during the time a knowledge need (or opportunity) is recognized and the time that it is satisfied or abandoned. These actions have been classified as 'physical' actions and 'conceptual' actions. Conceptual actions of sensemaking, interpretation, making judgment, and other subjective exercises emerged as being part of this process. While these actions were recognized in the brief description of the initial conceptual framework, they however were not accounted for. And as these actions are internal to the individual and are not directly observable, the discussion and analysis of their impact will be outside the scope of this research. Nonetheless, these actions should be acknowledged and incorporated into the findings.

In relation to the 'physical' actions on the other hand, the data indicates that these took place through three types of interactions:

- i. Interactions with colleagues, members in the project team, section or organization: This was the most commonly reported approach to finding out about a knowledge need. Some of these interactions took place within the participants' immediate circle and are characterized as being ad-hoc, self-organized, and have little or no structure. They often involved having a casual conversation with colleagues within physical proximity, sending an email, or setting up an informal meeting. They were founded on trust and collegiality. This was the general approach when finding out about routine, commonly recurring, non-critical, day-to-day tasks. A second type of social interactions was also reported which is more formal and structured in nature. This was observed happening when participants operated in bigger teams and when there was a need

to extend knowledge seeking efforts to other teams and divisions in the organization. This pattern occurred when the tasks were less routine and an ad-hoc and routine approach cannot be adopted.

- ii. Interactions with internal knowledge sources: A another type of interactions was also reported which was demonstrated when participants engaged with resources on their organization's intranet, with blogs, policies, frameworks, manuals, acts, documented processes and procedures, past exemplars, documents written by other professionals, and other artefacts. While this approach has an archival nature since the knowledge engaged with is stored in technological and non-technological entities, these interactions also had a social element to them as participants often referred to other people to help them locate, explain, interpret, and translate how the knowledge is applied, both at the operational level and in relation to their immediate situation.
- iii. Interactions with external knowledge sources: References were also made to a third type of interactions which took place beyond the boundaries of the organization. While there were very few accounts relating to this type, nonetheless, these interactions need to be recognized as part of the pattern of activities and should be noted. These interactions were demonstrated through engagement with people outside the organization such as external stakeholders and other APS organizations to gather information or to gain knowledge from other organizations about best practices in relation to a task or practice. These interactions were more formal and structured, taking place through organized meetings and professional training events. These were reported happening when participants were performing new tasks that have not been done before or when engaging with external stakeholders for project requirements gathering.

Common to these three types of interactions is the notable role of the social system. Relying on colleagues, supervisors, mentors, subject matter experts, and other personnel in the organization has been demonstrated to be the 'go-to' approach. Within this system, people play key roles in directing the individual to the knowledge source, explaining and interpreting the knowledge content, and demonstrating the application of the knowledge. In that sense, socializing with others becomes an integral part of the pattern of knowledge seeking activities. While this approach can save time and provide some social validation to the relevance of the used knowledge, action however becomes grounded on knowledge of 'how things are done' at the agency/department and other people's subjective thinking of what makes the right action which can reinforces un-official, ad-hoc, and locked ways of doing things. Having said that, these patterns also point towards the type of knowledge that professionals require in practice which is partially acquired through experience and partially through socializing with others and that is knowledge of practice.

4.2 The Impact of Knowledge Ecosystem Elements on Knowledge Mobilization Outcomes

The knowledge management literature recognizes that the application of knowledge is a function of the attributes of the individual, the knowledge content, and the context of its application. While there is indication that 'individual' factors such motivation, learning and working styles, education, experience etc. does influence how individuals address a knowledge need, there is also evidence to suggest the domination of 'organizational' factors which are believed to be far more powerful determinants of outcomes than individual attributes (Levin 2011). Individuals' actions are believed to be shaped by their organizational context and there is evidence in the data to agree with this.

The data analysis suggests that aspects of the operational environment where participants operated had an impact on their approach to a task and their ability to mobilize the knowledge relating to that specific task. Elements of technology, organizational processes and procedures, knowledge content in artefacts (and emerging issues of knowledge relevance, abstraction, currency, complexity, ownership, visibility, etc.), events, project management practices and management styles, culture, accountability, and aspects of the ICT industry were amongst some of the aspects that emerged from the analysis as having an influence on the behaviours and outcomes of a knowledge mobilization instance. While these findings agree with the elements of the 'Knowledge Ecosystem' model (AS-5037 2005), using the data, these can be further unpacked to demonstrate how at times they can afford for knowledge being mobilized and at times they can hinder the process.

For instance, using 'management practices and management styles' as an example, participants have reported that operating under a management style that is focused on 'governance' of a deliverable and its quality meant that they followed a vigorous approach, adhered to all project management plans and guiding documents, and consulted with dedicated organizational units. While improving the chance of

project success and demonstrating how a proper project is run, participants felt that this style have introduced a lot of unnecessary work for the size and scope of their project and have caused delays from the introduced overhead. A 'delivery' focused project management style on the other hand have also been reported. This approach has been described to be less directive and attentive to ticking the boxes and managers viewed artefacts as guides rather than rules to be followed. Managers adopting this approach opted to defining key milestones and relying on peoples' knowledge repertoire and expertise to carry out the work with no formal instructions. While this approach have been perceived to be less time consuming, some participants felt that this style downplayed the importance of guiding documents and that they missed out on the opportunity to trial their knowledge of the project areas and experience what a properly run project looks like from beginning to end.

Another example of this dual role of the identified elements relates to accountability, defined as the "obligation to answer for one's actions and decisions" (Funnell & Cooper 1998, p. 81). Evidence in the data suggest that accountability impacted how individuals approached their tasks. In some instances, the pressure of accountability manifested through actions where participants carried out tasks that were perceived to be burdensome, time consuming, and with little value to their situation. However, while these tasks at times got in the way of progressing and individuals found themselves managing the outcomes rather than delivering on their projects, in this case, accountability also played a role in ensuring that individuals used all guiding documents and complied with organizational processes and their project plans. In other words, participants found themselves obliged to engage with all relevant knowledge sources related to their situation. The same pressure of accountability however has also been reported to invite an opposite and more relaxed approach. Because of accountability, some individuals were driven to take shortcuts, especially when time is an issue, showing less commitment to knowledge artefacts and following the accepted set of actions. In times of competing priorities and when there is pressure to deliver, individuals are left with little room to research, to explore, to think, and to trial.

4.3 The Primacy of Practical Knowledge and Neglect of Theory

One of the key points that also emerged from the analysis is the significant role 'practical knowledge' plays in informing and driving the actions of professionals. Related to the idea of practice, practical knowledge is a combination of 'procedural knowledge' or knowledge of how things are done, and 'practice' (Guzman 2009). This type of knowledge has not received obvious attention in the KM debate which focuses mainly on explicit and tacit knowledge types in a broad sense. The data shows that in their practice, individuals draw upon the knowledge base of their profession and their knowledge of the practice built through engagement in situations, but also derived from formal training, experience, and socially accepted and shared understanding of how things are done within their organization. Practical knowledge, skills, competence and experience are evidently used to frame experiences in real work situations and drive action.

This dependence on practical knowledge can be attributed to the nature of practice where having knowledge of how things work and operate in the context of the individual's environment is more relevant than knowledge of how a task should be approached in theory. Even when references were made to the use of theory, participants often explained that the theory they used had to be adapted to be in tune with what is happening. This was felt to be necessary in order to cope with dynamics of the situation/task such as the nature and size of activity, its scope, number of people involved, task priority, and if a routine ad-hoc approach can be used. Without such modifications, an overhead of work that uses time and resources is often created, and often perceived as having little relevance and benefit. Participants reported the struggle to draw the links between theoretical and higher-level knowledge documented in their organization and the lower-level specific processes they need to perform. Not being able to see the value of the knowledge, this impacted their motivation to research and experiment with objective knowledge and rather resort to their knowledge of the practice.

While recognizing the value of theoretical knowledge acquired through education in guiding the commencement of practicing, there was a general emphasis on the "knowing-is-in-the-doing" notion (Woods & Cortada 2013, p. 16). Individuals demonstrated that they are keener on 'skilling', building their experience, and relying on their on-the-job learning than engaging with academic knowledge and high-level explicit knowledge in artefacts. Drawing upon one's knowledge of the practice seemed more relevant than any other documented knowledge, especially with tasks that are very specialized and cannot be looked up (such as when building specialized in-house applications).

5 REVISED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In light of the above observations that emerged from the analysis, the initial conceptual framework has been revised to more realistically reflect a knowledge mobilization instance by incorporating the pattern of actions demonstrated by the participants and accounting for the individual as well as the organizational factors at play. While recognizing that not all these factors do play out in every single instance, it is nonetheless an attempt to give an empirically derived account of the reality of this phenomenon in the context of the investigated APS organizations. The revised conceptual framework is presented as follow:

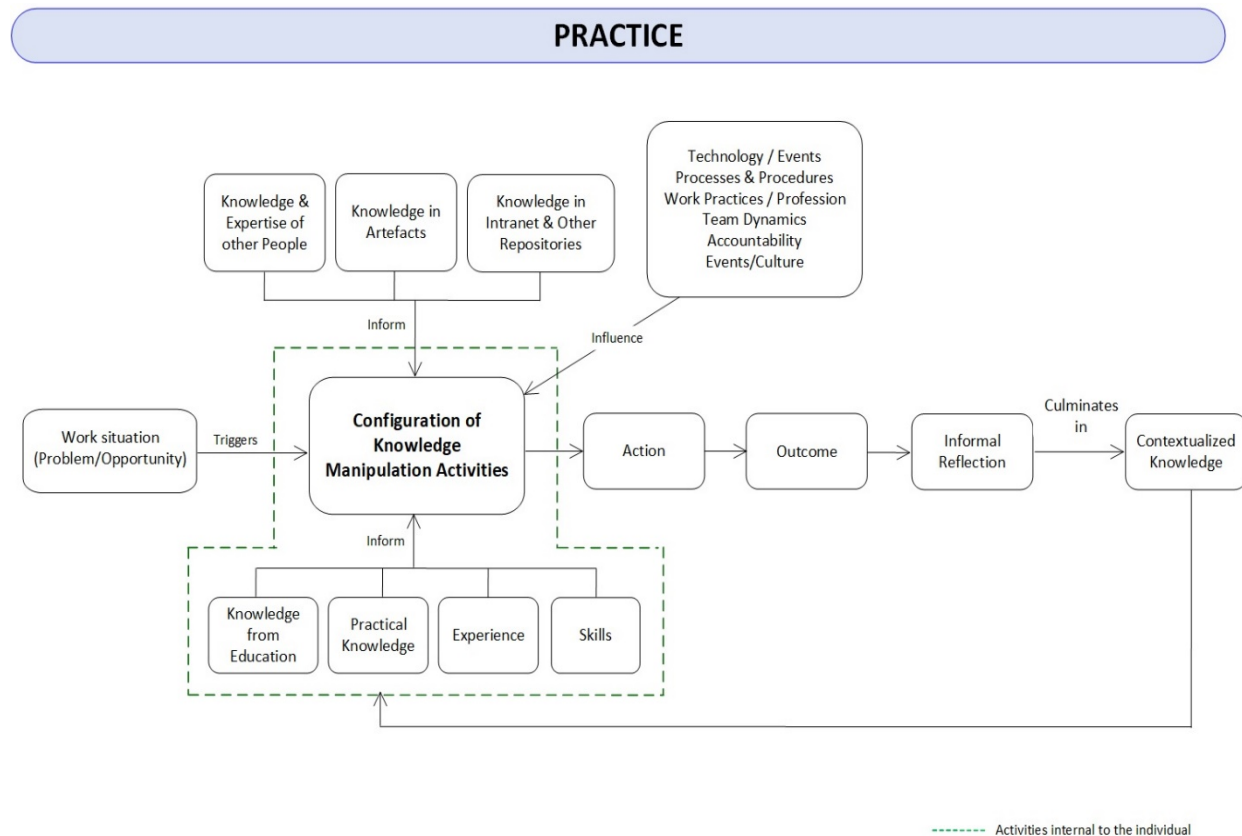


Figure 2: Revised Conceptualization of a Knowledge Mobilization Instance

As can be noted, some of the fundamental elements of the initial framework recur such the activity of drawing upon knowledge resources, engaging in a configuration of knowledge manipulation activities, acting, observing of outcomes, and the process of reflection. However, as our understanding of these aspects of the episode has evolved, they have been further unpacked to reveal some of the lower-level activities and constructs impacting knowledge being mobilized. For example, the initial framework shows that knowledge from explicit knowledge resources feeds into the configuration of manipulation activities. However, the data reveals that these resources can be further unpacked into subjective knowledge and expertise of other people (which is more implicit in nature), as well as objective knowledge in artefacts, and knowledge represented in technological entities like the organization's Intranet and other repositories.

Not only does the revised framework account for what can be observed, it also captures the 'human' elements that are internal to the individual (encompassed by the green dotted line). We see some unpacking of this world through the incorporation of education, practical knowledge, experience, skills, and learning styles as capabilities that afford for or against knowledge being mobilized.

While some of the incorporated observations may not come as a surprise, one significant remark can be noted in the revised model and that is the neglected role of 'theory' and lack of engagement with 'theoretical' or 'academic' knowledge despite the program requirements. The model shows that theoretical knowledge is substituted for through dependence on 'practical knowledge', 'experience', and 'skills' which are aspects of 'practicing'. Not only does this support the argument that knowledge

availability does not necessarily translate into knowledgeable actions, but it also points towards the disconnect between theoretical knowledge and the knowledge needed in practice.

These observations indicate that while professionals/practitioners recognize the importance of having an academic knowledge base, they also echo the struggle to draw the links between the abstract, decontextualized nature of theoretical knowledge and the reality of their practice. This disconnect was also illustrated in relation to high-level explicit knowledge documented in artefacts such as standards, policies, manuals, frameworks etc. Resorting to the knowledge of their profession, knowledge of 'how things are done' and accepted practice has proved to be more meaningful, relevant, and operational than high-level knowledge that is perceived to be disconnected from the reality of situations in practice.

6 CONCLUSION

The research results helped formulate an understanding of what knowledge mobilizations looks like in the studied APS organizations. These results suggest that in practice, professionals feel a sense of disconnect from codified or explicit knowledge (including theoretical knowledge) and feel that the level of abstraction characterizing this knowledge domain invites a behaviour of deviation away from using this knowledge base. To attribute meaning to their actions and experiences, professionals resort to relying on their knowledge of the practice, their skills, education, and experience. They also extend their knowledge seeking activities out to their colleagues and larger social network and draw upon the know-what, know-how, and know-why knowledge of other people. Arguably, these practices can be said to reinforce organizational practices and the practical knowledge held by the members of the organization, driving practice even further away from the world of theory.

In light of these observations, our understanding that theory and practice are informed by the same knowledge base can be challenged and the conceptualization of practicing as putting theory into action is also debatable. The nature of knowledge in these two worlds varies. The theory-practice gap may not be caused by the failure of professionals to mobilize the knowledge (as per the conceptualization of practice being putting theory into practice). Rather, it could be the case that we are talking about two bodies of knowledge with varying characteristics and purposes. We can begin to draw the connection between these two interrelated bodies of knowledge through the process of reflection and reflective practice which is currently missing. Establishing a bi-directional relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge may be the way forward, such that we can draw upon knowledge of practice to further inform theory and explicit knowledge, challenge and refine it so it is more relatable and relevant to situations in practice. By critically examining if the knowledge being invested in through KM processes is in fact relevant, accessible, visible, usable, valuable, contextualized, and up-to date, organizations can make a starting effort to bridge the theory-practice gap.

In conclusion, the observations that have emerged from the case study indicate that knowledge mobilization as it is being conceptualized can enlighten some explanation for why theory-practice gaps emerge. This is partially due to the knowledge seeking behaviours that reinforce the use of practical rather than theoretical knowledge, the organizational elements that support the application of practical knowledge and deviation from adopting good principals of practice, and the difference in the attributes of knowledge in both domains that invites a sense of disconnect and an approach to practicing that shies away from the use of higher-level knowledge sources like theory.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my supervisory panel; Emeritus Professor Craig McDonald and Dr Dale MacKrell for their ongoing support, encouragement and guidance. I would also like to acknowledge the participants of the case study and thank them for their time and stories. A final acknowledgment goes to my beautiful family for their love, patience, and support.

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