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Knowledge Management in International Development Charities

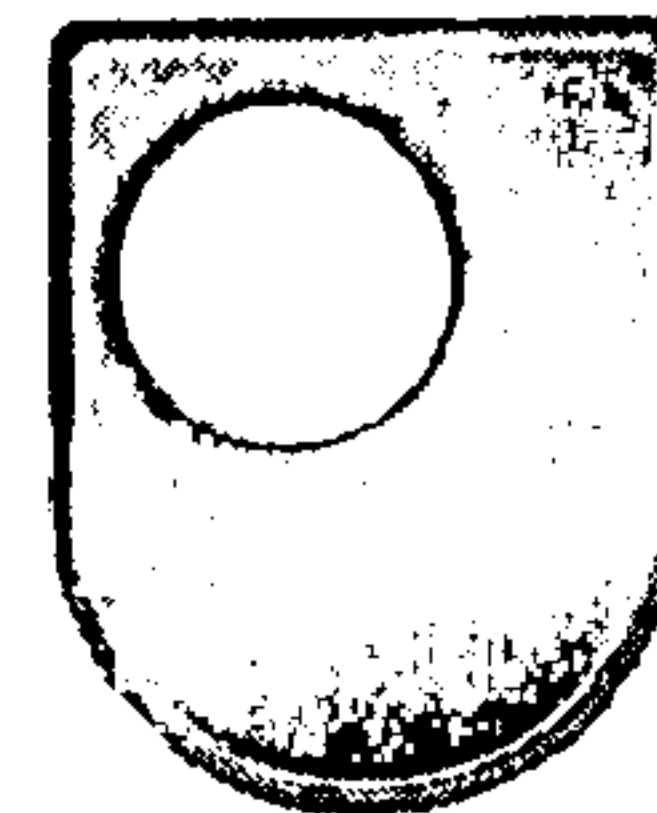
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Abstract

This thesis investigates the effectiveness and potential longevity of Knowledge Management in three international development charities, in order to compare their experiences with the commercial context in which Knowledge Management originated. By this means, the research explores how well, or otherwise, Knowledge Management can be fitted into a different setting. It also throws significant light on the transfer of business practices more generally.

Chapter one assesses the evolution of the discipline Knowledge Management. It also provides key information about International Development Charities. Chapter two identifies the theoretical foundations of Knowledge Management as a prescription for organisational effectiveness, together with recommended best practices. Two environmental factors are emphasised: the role of information technology and, given the historic link to Japanese work-styles, ideas about organisational 'culture'. In chapter three, the methodology for practical enquiry, derived from organisational system theory, is presented, and the problems in assessing effectiveness are discussed. Chapters four and five provide the substantive outcome of the fieldwork. Patterns that emerge from the data are drawn together in chapter six, highlighting the selective nature of Knowledge Management in application and demonstrating both similarities to and divergences from the original concept. In particular, there are specific challenges posed by the international reach of development charities.

The overall conclusions in chapter seven confirm that Knowledge Management undoubtedly chimes with the broad aims of international charities. At the same time, the transferability of Knowledge Management depends crucially upon its adaptability to the organisations' aims, resources, and 'culture'. Where it is accepted that knowledge handling is needed to build organisational capacity, then Knowledge Management can provide a framework which, when combined with technological advances, is a tool, rather than the answer, for international charities engaged in the continuing struggle to abolish poverty.

Preface

I would like to express my thanks to my supervisor Dr Stephen Little, who has guided me through the study and presentation of this work with patience and good humour. I appreciate his support for my work and suggestions over the years. I would also like to thank Professor Rob Paton for his incisive critical judgement as my second tutor. Jill Mordaunt has also been a valued support and guide.

I have greatly benefited from the use of resources at the Open University Library and from other sources that the Open University provided, particularly access to the British Library in London. I have also been able to access support groups and seminars that have helped me focus and understand my role as a PhD student and allow me to enjoy discussions and friendship from fellow students and staff.

As a part-time student, working on research of this kind can be a lonely process, but membership of the Voluntary Sector Network (VSSN) has provided stimulus, ideas and opportunity to present to conferences. I would also like to thank colleagues at my place of work for their support.

I have been given great personal encouragement by Professor Penelope Corfield, who has been an unfailing source of help and advice as well as a robust and valuable critic. Sunil Chhatralia has supported design aspects for the figures included. I am also grateful to all my family and friends for standing at my side, through the arduous ups and downs of this piece of creative work.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

‘Knowledge is Power’ in the view of Francis Bacon (Bacon, 1597, p. 27). Today, most of the expanding empires of successful commercial companies are based on the exploitation of new technology that allows huge quantities of information and ideas to move nearly instantaneously around the world.

This thesis seeks to investigate if, by harnessing the power of this new information paradigm, there are ways to deliver to the international development sector a potent resource to work against poverty and disadvantage. The study has been initiated with the dual intention of providing a contribution to academic understanding of knowledge management, as well as giving value to practitioners through the provision of data and analysis relating to current practice that will encourage learning from the experience of others. The first chapter presents background material on the subject matter in focus: knowledge management. It also introduces the relevant organisational group: international development charities. The main research questions for the study are identified with an explanation as to why they are considered worthy of study. It concludes with an outline of the research that follows. It should be noted that definitions of key vocabulary such as ‘knowledge’ and ‘knowledge management’ are introduced in chapter two, where these concepts are considered in more detail.

The chapter is in four parts:

- 1.1 Knowledge Management;
- 1.2 International Development Charities;
- 1.3 The Research Questions;
- 1.4 Outline of the Study.

1.1 Introduction to Knowledge Management

This section reviews the context of the growth of knowledge management as a tool for producing organisational success.

To understand why knowledge management has become important today, it is necessary to see how people have viewed the role of knowledge in the past. One publication that triggered the surge of interest in knowledge management in the 1990s is Nonaka and Takeuchi's book *The Knowledge Creating Company*.

'The study of human knowledge is as old as human history itself. It has been a central subject matter of philosophy and epistemology since the Greek period. Knowledge has also begun to gain a new wave of attention in recent years. Not only socio-economic theorists such as Peter Drucker and Alvin Toffler call for our attention to the importance of knowledge as management resource and power but also an increasing number of scholars in the fields of industrial organisation, technology management, management strategy and organisational theory have begun to theorise about the management of knowledge' (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, p. viii).

The authors look back to the work of Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, written in the eighteenth century, where economic power was related to money and key resources, in particular, land. Economic power lay in controlling these tangible resources and Smith's market theory was based on the reasonable assumption that information would, in the long run, be generally freely available, as was the case until Intellectual Property Rights law, developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, safeguarded replicable data and information as tradable assets.

Adam Smith recognized the limitations of the assumption that information is freely available in his writing.

'When by an increase in the effectual demand, the market price of some particular commodity happens to rise a good deal above the natural price, those who employ their stocks in supplying that market are generally careful to conceal this change. If it was commonly known, their great profit would tempt so many new rivals to employ their stocks in the same way that ... the market price would soon be reduced' (Smith, 1970, p. 53).

In this way, knowledge was indeed, temporarily, market power. However Adam Smith believed that this control of information could only be short-lived, so that over time all business information would be held in common. Although he recognized that information was an important factor in business success, Adam Smith did not give much attention to the role of knowledge nor did he identify it as a sustainable resource for industry. More recent economic theorists have emphasised that the role of information in business has become more complex and is therefore a potential candidate for good management as a business asset.

One of the first authors to focus on the knowledge capability of organisations was Edith Penrose. In the book, *The Theory of the Growth of the Firm*, first published in 1959, she argued that the continual change in knowledge within a firm, along with the continual change in external circumstances, presented the firm with a productive opportunity because: ‘This increase in knowledge not only causes the productive opportunity of a firm to change in ways unrelated to changes in the environment but also contributes to the “uniqueness” of the opportunity of each individual firm’ (Penrose, 1995, p. 52).

In 1969, Peter Drucker, the highly influential business management thinker, expressed the view that ‘knowledge, during the last few decades, has become the central capital, the cost centre and the crucial resource of the economy’ (Drucker, 1969, p. ix). He made clear that this development would alter the way that organisations managed their assets. The recognition that knowledge is not just important but has become a major source of value has been followed by many other business writers and become an accepted standard by the end of the twentieth century.

For example, Thomas Stewart, editor of *Fortune Magazine*, strongly reinforces the message that knowledge is not just one resource among many equals: 'Knowledge has become the pre-eminent economic resource – more important than raw material; more important, often, than money. Considered as an economic output, information and knowledge are more important than automobiles, oil, steel or any of the products of the Industrial Age' (Stewart, 1997, p. 6). Further information on sources for knowledge management is introduced later in the study (section 2.2).

The changing view of information and knowledge is largely due to the growth of information resources engendered by information and communication technology (ICT), using low cost microprocessors and Internet connectivity. The ability to turn raw information into knowledge as the basis of economic or organisational power may be the most essential capability for a successful organisation. As a result, knowledge is a vital resource. With such quantities of information available, managing knowledge is viewed as a key business capability that has costs as well as benefits.

1.1.1 Impact of Technology

The impact of information technology advance is central to understanding why the role of knowledge has changed. 'This new knowledge revolution has been primarily driven by advances in Information Technology and Global Telephony' (Ganguly, 1999, p. 27). Another description of this change uses lively mixed metaphors: 'the Internet touched down like a tornado, tearing up the old game book, disrupting every aspect of business' (Brown and Duguid, 2006, p. 173).

The result of such major innovation in information and communication technology opens a wide field of debate that will be discussed throughout this study. However, the idea that technology is a major force for change in the role of information and knowledge, whether good or bad, is not controversial where: 'the ever declining cost of processing information has made it ubiquitous' (Bassi and Van Buren, 2000, p. 355).

Over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, the rapid development of technology emerged as what may be termed 'the third industrial revolution'. The first industrial revolution where mechanical power was applied to production, as seen in Britain, has been described as a time of 'endogenous growth, in which three components came together: sufficient human capital; a market large enough to stimulate invention; and a patent system allowing the rewards of invention to be captured'. This change was established over a long period of time but it is seen as a revolution because 'without it Britain would have been very different' (More, 2000, p. 171). It resulted in an economy where land, labour and capital were the keys to material wealth that provided the fuel for innovation and growth.

In the years before 1914, innovation, originating largely in Germany, saw the growth of heavy electrical and chemical engineering, characterized by formal rather than craft knowledge and theory, leading eventually to further diversification and the growth of new light industries. This compound transformation has been described as the second industrial revolution. As this change was diffused into the mainstream economy by the mid-twentieth century, lives of people in Europe and other industrialized locations have been transformed.

With the development of information technology, a third transformation can be seen. There is now the opportunity for a way of working that uses knowledge to replace physical work.

Commenting on the results of technological change, one author simply states: 'New technology changes jobs...' (Wilkins, 1992, p. 1), and this is corroborated by: 'Another key factor in pressure for greater employee involvement has been the increasing technological complexity of work... Skills needed are of a higher order and change faster than ever before' (Fenton-O'Creevy, 1995, p. 11).

Instead of armies of manual labourers working the land, or industrial workers engaged together in mass production factories, the fastest growing areas of the economy now are focused on skilled and educated people involved in work where access to knowledge is paramount. This development moved the British economy from its solid manufacturing base to become an economy that is much more dependent on service industries. The change has been characterized as the 'knowledge economy', where intangible assets, including information and knowledge, dominate wealth creation.

This economic development has been summarized:

'Over the last three centuries, the main source of wealth in market economies has switched from natural assets, (notably land and relatively unskilled labour) through tangible created assets (notably building, machines and equipment and finance) to intangible created assets (notably knowledge and information of all kinds) which may be embodied in human beings, in organisations or in physical assets' (Dunning, 2000, p. 8).

Information Technology is now the fourth largest industry in the world in terms of capital spend. The transformation of the workplace took place in the last third of the twentieth century. World Bank figures show that during this period, 'Capital spending on Information Technology, which in 1965 was only one third of production technology, now exceeds it' (World Bank, 1997).

By 2010, despite an economic recession, Euromonitor International, a website that monitors international economic status, provides the information that ‘technology continues its appeal and appears to be a relatively strong sector’ (Euromonitor International, 2010).

While this trend is most pronounced in the richer parts of the world, the globalisation made possible by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has meant that there is also powerful change in all countries worldwide. ‘All this evidence proves intangibles are of growing importance for wealth creation ... Not only do products get more knowledge intensive, knowledge itself has become an important product as shown by the rise of the services industry’ (Andriessen, 2004, p. 5). The economic rise of the BRICS countries, (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) demonstrates that this power shift is changing political realities, as well as the everyday life for people within work organisations. An illustration of this relevance is shown because: ‘Economic growth in China and India has attracted many headlines recently’ (Wu, 2008, p. 14).

1.1.2 A New Management Discipline

The increased availability of knowledge and the importance of its role in human organisation, has led to a considerable body of academic literature that aims to develop the foundations for managing this knowledge. The result is the emergence of a distinct discipline: Knowledge Management. The growth of knowledge management resources includes influential on-line developments such as the major knowledge initiatives of the World Bank. ‘At the World Bank, President James Wolfensohn established the goal of making his organisation a “knowledge bank” – a global source for high-quality information on economic development – so that it could better fulfil its mission of eradicating poverty’ (Wenger and Snyder, 2000, p. 145).

The Bank has an on-line Knowledge Gateway, intended to promote and facilitate knowledge sharing within the international development constituency. This high profile advocate for knowledge management is not without its critics (section 1.1.3, p. 20) but the World Bank's wholehearted embrace of knowledge management demonstrates the importance that this discipline has been awarded in the official economic development field.

As well as government sponsored knowledge management, there are many commercial knowledge management sites and a proliferation of practitioner groups, from a variety of national backgrounds. Currently active practitioner groups include Knowledge Board, 'a self-moderated global community for knowledge management', with an international remit, and KM4DEV, 'a community of international development practitioners who are interested in knowledge management and knowledge sharing issues and approaches.'

There are also many professional journals and articles, with examples ranging from the *Harvard Business School Journal*, where the 1998 issue focused on knowledge management, to the more specialist *International Journal of Technology Management*, with a focused issue of knowledge management in 2010. There are also single-topic journals, with examples in the UK ranging from the formal *Journal of Knowledge Management* to the practitioner-focused *Inside Knowledge*.

There are now many guides for practitioners that aim to translate the academic abstractions of knowledge management into simple and accessible advice for readers with very little interest in theory but a requirement to use the latest tools that are available to deliver value. These books can be found in the *For Idiots* (Rumizen, 2002) or *In a Week* (MacDonald, 2005) range of business manuals, as well as in more serious series such as the *BSI Guide*, British Standards Institute (Kelleher and Levene, 2001).

There are courses available, from MBA-level down to activity-based courses, and knowledge management is also a feature of many consultants' offerings for business improvement. These are collectively testament to the fact that knowledge management is seen as worthy of investment.

Currently, literature on knowledge management continues to grow but there have been no major insights that alter the boundaries of knowledge management to compare with Nonaka and Takeuchi's *Knowledge Creation* (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, section 2.2.3). The continuing flow of books and articles now frequently focuses on increasing the depth and range of the discipline as it stands. There is more information available on specific techniques, and on knowledge management's application to specific fields or locations. Articles on defined geographic locations include Silicon Valley (Benbya, 2008), or Malaysia (Hegde and Shapira, 2007).

The latter in particular demonstrates that beliefs about the new economic reality are not restricted to the richest western countries: 'In Malaysia, through the development of strategies and plans to promote a knowledge economy, there has been widespread media publicity about the importance of knowledge' (Hegde and Shapira, 2007, p. 356). Some texts link knowledge management to wider locations, for example to developing countries as a group (Hutchings and Mohannak, 2007). There are also many books that consider specific knowledge management tools, with examples including a focus on intellectual capital (Mouritsen, 2007), organisational learning (Wellman, 2009), and innovation and networks (de Man, 2008). In the context of field research, examples include articles and books on knowledge management in the health sector (Riano, 2009; Liebowitz et al, 2010).

Furthermore, the UK Government and donors in the voluntary sector expect to see active knowledge management programmes. In sum: 'knowledge management has become important, not least of all, because important people have taken it seriously and allocated big budgets to projects that attempt to 'manage' knowledge' (Ray, 2005, p. 1). Taking this range of activity together, it can confidently be asserted that knowledge management does indeed hold a place in the contemporary management toolkit. However this development confirms only that Knowledge Management is now a popular recipe for gaining economic power, but not that applying it will necessarily produce real organisational benefit.

This study is intended to complement the current understanding of knowledge management research in specific groups of organisations. It looks at knowledge management in the setting of a specific group within the UK voluntary sector, namely international development charities. However, it is worthwhile at this point to place knowledge management in the wider context of business management ideas.

1.1.3 Management Trends

The Principles of Scientific Management (Taylor, 1911) provided one of the first formal studies into task design and management in methods of production, and it initiated the development of theories which argued that controlling work patterns can optimise output and worker efficiency. 'The central tenet of the approach is that if material rewards are closely related to work efforts, the worker will respond with the maximum performance he is physically capable of' (Etzioni, 1964, p. 21).

These ideas were developed and expanded over the twentieth century as the impact of ICT changed attitudes to managing economic work.

One example is the work of the UK Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in the 1950s:

‘Social-technical systems theory has emerged as a significant approach for designing organisations, especially at the people and technology interface. This body of theoretical and empirical work seeks to improve productivity and human enrichment through a design process that focuses on the interdependencies between and among people, technology, and environment’ (Cummings, 1978, p. 625)

Ideas relating to systems theory will be discussed in chapter two (section 2.4).

One marked trend in management thinking over the last twenty-five years has been the proliferation of new practices and techniques. Examples include: Total Quality Management (TQM) (Hackman and Wageman, 1995), Just In Time (JIT) (Hutchins, 1999), Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan and Norton, 1996), and Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) (Hall et al, 1993). These management tools have found favour at different times and many have provided real insights into working practice. However, this evidence alone does not show that the techniques will always add value. Their success or otherwise remains controversial, as this comment on BPR, a practice still in common use today, shows: ‘we can see why most process reengineering efforts have in fact had little measurable impact on the overall business unit (Hall et al, 1993, on-line).

The rapid and extensive spread of these practices is not universally acclaimed. Their spread can be sometimes explained by reference to managers’ status and the appearance of positive change rather than purely by their efficacy. These processes have been characterised as fashions: ‘a relatively transitory collective belief, disseminated by management fashion setters’. As a result: ‘Norms of rationality and progress create a continuing demand for management fashions to sustain the impression of management progress’ (Abrahamson, 1996, pp. 257, 271). This factor does not mean these practices are not effective in the contexts where they are developed, but it does imply their effectiveness requires critical consideration.

It also reinforces a view that new management techniques may not work, or may not be without significant costs and pitfalls, when they transfer from their original setting. Thus, one attack on knowledge management looks critically at the World Bank's programmes:

'However, when we examine the World Bank's 'knowledge management' strategy, the reality (as with the technology track) bears little relation to the rhetoric... The focus continues to be heavily technology-oriented and one might be forgiven for imagining that the real aim of the World Bank is to help US-based global industries to sell more hardware and software to the developing world' (Wilson, 2002, on-line).

Nevertheless, these attempts at bringing knowledge management resources to support development through technology change can be seen as matching the vision of user-controlled innovation. This view has been well expressed in *Design and Determination*: 'a notion of windows of opportunity through which access to the key technologies of the socio-economic paradigm might be gained on terms that can be determined by the adopters, rather than the originators of these technologies' (Little, 2004, p. 6).

These critical debates do raise important questions about how innovative techniques are marketed, but, as in the case of BPR, it does not mean they have no role as appropriate tools for managers. The challenge is to decide if knowledge management is more than just a short-lived fashion. Writing about knowledge management, the warning was given that it could 'be overtaken by a new hyped movement in five years' (Liebowitz, 2001, p. 16). Clearly this had not happened by 2010, but how sustainable knowledge management will prove to be remains an open question. 'Some consider this body of literature to be the latest hype in the progression from MBO to OD to TQM to BPR. Others view it as the harbinger of a new age in management and economics' (Despres and Chauvel, 2000, p. 55). In this way, knowledge management applications form part of a series of changing management prescriptions over the last third of the twentieth century, but there are signs that knowledge management may be more than a passing fad.

1.2 International Development Charities

It is now relevant to define the international development charities as a collective group of organisations. Organisational populations are defined as: ‘aggregates of organisations that are alike in some respect’ (Scott, 1998, p. 125). Bacon’s view that ‘knowledge is power’ is echoed in the world of international development charities themselves: ‘the more socialised information is, the better. Information means power. The more informed Non Government Organisations (NGOs) are, the stronger and more secure we will be to participate in negotiations’ (Durao, 1992, p. 246).

International development charities are classified as within a wider ‘Voluntary Sector’. There are many names for this group of organisations, which pick out different characteristics. They are called ‘Not-for-Profits’ to distinguish them from organisations in the commercial sector. The term ‘Non Government Organisation’ (NGO) is also used, as this clarifies the distinction between this sector and organisations within the direct control of central or local governments, such as institutional agencies, including the World Bank, the UK Department of International Development (DIFD), the European Union development agencies, or any other government agencies in donor or recipient countries.

International development charities are a subset of the voluntary sector that raise money in order to help disadvantaged people and communities across the globe to develop in ways that will reduce their poverty and disadvantage. They are contrasted to charities that concentrate on a local hinterland. All operate as not-for-profits and as NGOs, but the key feature of international development charities is the international reach of their intended beneficiaries.

There are many international development charities. A few are major bodies, with international organisation; and many are national organisations, that work in many of the same countries, but keep a close link to their country of origin. An idea of their number can be identified: 'there are an estimated 2500 NGOs in the humanitarian business but only about 260 are serious players' – based on a 2003 UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) roster (Barnett and Weiss, 2008, p. 31).

Nevertheless, recently there has been pressure to reduce this number: 'against the background of a recent MORI poll suggesting that the majority of people (58%) think that there are too many charities (MORI / Charity Commission, 1999). As a result, charities have to look far more seriously across their own organisational boundaries' (Morris, 2001, p. iii). This requirement to work together to reduce costs, cut risks, and to provide a better service is one environmental pressure that is changing the way charities organise.

To give some idea of the evolution of this organisational population, some background information is now provided to place international development charities within a historical context. One hundred years ago, there were no such organisations. They grew from religious or political movements as missionary activity, or political internationalism. 'The first Northern NGOs to enter the stage did so just after World War 1 – such as the Catholic Church based CARITAS and Save the Children Fund. They gained strength towards the end of and immediately after World War 2' (Clark, 1991, p. 34).

At first, the emphasis within the sector was on emergency relief and disaster mitigation. 'Initially these NGOs were engaged in relief work, primarily in war-torn Europe. They gradually shifted their attention to the Third World and also broadened it to include welfare activities – a natural extension of relief' (Clark, 1991, p. 34).

Over time, this adaptation has continued, so that now there is more emphasis on capacity building for local organisations that can represent the poor or disadvantaged, as the role that ordinary people have to play in their own development has been prioritized.

The growth in charities in the second half of the twentieth century matched a more humanitarian strand of poverty support, with or without religious or post-colonial ties. It was not unusual for a charity to have a ‘charismatic leader’ at the time of its origin, who defines the goal of the organisation and the means to achieve it. Looking at this type of voluntary organisation, Charles Handy, one of the few modern ‘business gurus’ to relate his ideas to the voluntary sector, has identified: ‘the organisation is there to extend the person of the head, or often, of the founder’ (Handy, 1990, p. 86). However, this model is less applicable to more mature charities.

During the last half-century, organisational structures have steadily evolved with the result that, in recent years, there has been a considerable blurring of the lines between voluntary humanitarian organisations and other sectors. ‘In other words, humanitarian NGOs began to resemble firms. If their end product remained a mission, not profit, their need for efficiency created organisations that looked increasingly “corporate”’ (Hopgood, 2008, p. 106).

‘The concept that best captures the process of homogenization is “isomorphism”’ (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991, p. 66). Mimetic isomorphism implies that all organisations will tend to become more alike as they adopt similar information technology and respond to the same management prescriptions and tools. Across organisational sectors, similar forms and structures will be found.

There is an alternative explanation that suggests that the similarities reflect a shared environment. This theory is not used as the basis for researching organisations in this study but their emphasis on environment is noted and discussed later (section 3.1.6). The authors note: 'We have tentatively labelled [this theory] "contingency organisation theory".' They add that: 'this starts with an examination of the interplay between any major part of an organisation and its relevant external environment' (Lawrence and Jorsch, 1969, p. 209).

Mimetic isomorphism does not necessarily mean that all new techniques can be adapted between different sectors or organisational groups. A contrary view is that in fact 'in the wider voluntary sector, it can be seen that organisational populations will never become the same. That will never be the case simply because they undertake very different tasks requiring very different organisational settings' (Paton, 2003, p. 34).

A new question is raised by this observation. If knowledge management originates within the commercial sector, is there any reason to believe it will transfer successfully to the rather different voluntary sector?

The origins of knowledge management are unquestionably based in the world of traditional commercial firms. The knowledge management literature, including academic and more practical texts, takes its examples mainly from large commercial organisations with a basis in either western or Japanese environment. For example, in the 'Knowledge Creating Company', Nonaka and Takeuchi discuss cases from Honda Motors and Matsuchita Electrical Company to demonstrate knowledge creation in practice (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

The majority of practical manuals and guidebooks inevitably target the commercial sector, as this is where most sales are to be found, with major multinational companies, such as Xerox (Brooking, 1999, p. 18) or British Petroleum, (BP) (Collison and Parcel, 2004) as examples.

This study investigates knowledge management in international development charities in order to determine what programmes they have initiated and the results of this work. The research focus stems from the fact that this group of charitable organisations differ in some ways to other international organisations, such as commercial multinationals or other international agencies.

Therefore, to investigate practice in this specific organisational population requires that the characteristics of the particular group be identified. Are there specific distinguishing features of international development charities that may affect the transfer of knowledge management? By definition, these charities are all international in scope, even though they may have their headquarters in their country of origin, and they are not-for-profits. It is now relevant to clarify some other features of international development charities.

These include:

- stakeholders;
- goals;
- size and resources.

1.2.1 Stakeholders

‘Not only are stakeholders in voluntary organisations different from stakeholders in business but they are often very different from each other’ (Paton and Cornforth, 1992, p. 39). This factor makes clear that it may be unwise to generalise even about specific organisational populations. Indeed, an international development charity has a particularly wide range of stakeholders.

They include donors, most often based in richer locations, and the partners and recipients in poor countries. 'Here the trade-offs among accountability to different stakeholders are real and visible: accountability constructed as outcome competes with accountability understood as process. These trade-offs are present in any architecture of accountability and cannot be designed away' (Gross Stein, 2008, p. 141). This point needs to be borne in mind, particularly when assessing the efficacy of particular management techniques.

1.2.2 Complex Goals

The evolution of a charity's purposes means that there are different ways to interpret the central goal of the charity. A common example is the need for rapid distribution of relief in a crisis. That requirement will have the potential to conflict with the intention to involve and empower the recipients. As a result: 'non-market organisations are particularly likely to lack clear output measures. When the goals are... to fight poverty, it is difficult to determine how effective performances are' (Scott, 1998, p. 353).

Mistaking good intentions for good results is not an option. In a strong critique of Western Aid, it is asserted: 'What is it about Africa that holds it back, that seems to render it incapable of joining the rest of the globe in the twenty-first century? The answer has its roots in aid' (Moyo, 2009, p. 6). There are other critiques suggesting that humanitarian aid may be counter-productive. For example, one challenge is that it may prolong civil war in strife-torn countries. This argument is partially refuted: 'From one point of view, the critics are right. Relief aid cannot be isolated from its environment. But is their mantra just as simplistic as the image that aid agencies have put forward? There is very little doubt that aid can contribute to a war economy. But its significance is generally overstated' (Shearer, 2000, p. 190).

However, one general point is inescapable. Assessment of effectiveness will be inextricably linked to political or ethical considerations that can be at odds with simple maximisation of a targeted output.

1.2.3 Size and Resources

In contrast to major multinational players, such as BP, Xerox and other multinational businesses, international development charities do not have access to the level of resources that can make investment in knowledge management practical.

Apart from some US-based charities, like World Vision or Care International, most international development charities are medium or small players. Pressure to spend all resources on the poor, rather than on internal processes will also limit their capacity for inward investment. Spending on internal infrastructure, even when justifiable in terms of future benefit, may reduce the charities' appeal to donors. As a result, not only do these organisations have a small resource base, but also limited freedom to make decisions on how to deploy it. These characteristics of international development charities make the management tasks and context very different from the commercial sector where knowledge management originated. Again, this point is a crucial one to bear in mind in the close study of international development charities in action.

1.3 Research Questions

Knowledge management has been introduced to the sector and many international development charities with head offices in the UK, are interested in its potential, as shown by the popularity of knowledge management sharing seminars run by BOND (British Overseas Non-Governmental Organisations for Development), a group of over 280 international development charities.

BOND's 'Organisational Learning Network' exists as 'an informal forum where learning and development practitioners from the voluntary sector can meet to exchange ideas, share good practice in developing organisational learning cultures and explore innovative ways to encourage information sharing and knowledge management within and across organisations' (BOND website, 2011). The group has been running for over six years. It demonstrates that knowledge management is espoused in the organisational population of international development charities. However, within this group of charities, there is no cross-organisational collaborative working, and so it is not possible, within this informal exchange of ideas, to be sure what each charity means by the term nor how it is applied in practice. More information on the term 'knowledge management' is detailed later (section 2.2).

As has already been indicated (section 1.1.2), knowledge management after 2000 has become a more mature discipline, with many books focusing on knowledge management in smaller organisational groups or specialized fields. This study sits within this academic trajectory and will research the practices of knowledge management in international development charities to identify if there are indications of its potential to deliver more to their partners in their mission to reduce poverty.

The central research question is therefore: How do knowledge management practices impact on the effectiveness of international development charities?

It is first necessary to be clear what knowledge management means for these charities. Based on the ideas presented above, and discussed further in chapter two, (section 2.2) the first sub-question is as follows: **How is knowledge management practised in this sector and how far does it reflect mainstream theory?**

In order to get a confident answer to the main research question, it is also necessary to consider the two issues discussed above (section 1.1.3). Is knowledge management simply a transitory fashion? Is it an appropriate tool, given its origins within the commercial sector? This leads to a second sub-question: **How was the transfer to the new context effected and does it look as if it will embed there?**

1.4 Outline of the Study

In chapter one, the antecedents and trajectory of knowledge management theory have been discussed, together with an introduction to the evolving role of international development charities. The research topic is thus introduced: to investigate knowledge management within this particular organisational population.

In chapter two, the background concept of knowledge and the application of the associated discipline, knowledge management, are reviewed, together with perspectives on the role of information technology and organisational culture. Indications of what are the anticipated benefits and the evidence available to support claims for the value of knowledge management is followed by an introduction to organisational theory. In chapter three, the central role of 'context' in definitions of knowledge and knowledge management leads to a more detailed look at some key elements within organisation theory, together with consideration of the difficulty of evaluating 'success' in the short and longer term.

The elements of the selected methodology are introduced in chapter four, where the unit of measure is discussed, together with data collection methods. These include the use of semi-structured interviews, observation and collection of documents. Follow-up work over a period of five years is outlined, together with information on non-UK research.

Chapter five presents the practical research with information about schedules, the study process and outputs. The problems and successes of the study are detailed and learning from this research methodology analysed. The detailed data is presented in six appendices.

In chapter six, the data is analysed against the three research questions that were set out in the first chapter. The chapter is divided into three parts, each looking at one of the three research questions. The first part identifies how the charities carry out knowledge management in practice and the theories and models that they follow. The second part considers evidence to show how these practices have transferred to this specific charitable setting from the commercial sector and whether such transfers have the power to last within this specific group of organisations. The final part considers the complex question of the contribution of knowledge management to their effectiveness.

These findings contribute to chapter seven, where the research conclusions demonstrate the implications of this research for established theory and practice. The new data provides insight into the implementation of knowledge management within international development charities and the implications of this for management theory.

Accordingly, fresh light is thrown on both its relevance as it transfers from the commercial sector and on whether it may be more than a short-lived management fashion. This research provides new knowledge on the implementation of knowledge management from organisations within an under-researched organisational population and so contributes to building the wider picture of knowledge management's impact across organisational sectors. It also provides insights from the research for designing a knowledge management framework.

Chapter 2. Knowledge Management Theory

This chapter continues the study of knowledge management in international development charities by interrogating the academic literature and research, to give more substance to the meaning of the term ‘knowledge’ and what is understood to be the theoretical basis for the management discipline ‘knowledge management’. It also looks at the benefits claimed for knowledge management in practice. The final section considers international development charities as a particular group of organisations and outlines some models from organisational theory to provide a focus on the context in which knowledge management is practised.

The chapter is in four parts:

2.1 Can Knowledge be Defined?

2.2 Knowledge Management;

2.3 Benefits of Knowledge Management;

2.4 Ideas from Organisational Theory.

2.1 Can ‘Knowledge’ be Defined?

In this thesis so far, the terms ‘knowledge’ and ‘information’ have been used as if the relationship between them was clear and the word knowledge indicated a straightforward concept. This section investigates ideas about human knowledge in more depth.

The meaning of the word knowledge has changed over the course of history. In classical times, mathematical truths would have been the epitome of knowledge, while in later ages religious texts were seen as the only true source of knowledge. This belief may still hold good as the definition of knowledge for some religious groups.

In more secular societies, however, Bacon's focus upon scientific knowledge, developed from empirical study, is now more relevant (Bacon, 1597). This variety of meaning through history for the one term 'knowledge' demonstrates that it is not a simple concept to clarify.

2.1.1 The Hierarchy of Data-Information-Knowledge

Any study of knowledge will face the challenge of identifying the relationship between information and knowledge. There is a generally accepted hierarchy that links data, information and knowledge where each step provides more structure and meaning than the previous one. This knowledge hierarchy is described thus:

'Data was perhaps seen as events or entities represented in some symbolic form and capable of being processed. Information was the output of data that was manipulated, re-presented and interpreted to reduce uncertainty or ignorance, give surprises or insights and allow or improve decision-making. However it was perhaps for many, but not all, safer to leave conceptualisation and definition of knowledge to philosophers and to recognise that knowledge was potentially an even more complex phenomenon than information' (Earl, 1997, p. 3).

Some authors add 'wisdom', 'deep smarts' or other terms at the apex of the hierarchy to indicate the range of understanding from simple observation to groundbreaking insights. 'When a person sizes up a complex situation and comes to a rapid decision that proves to be not just good, but brilliant... this is a form of knowledge that does not fit into the rational model where 'Deep Smarts' are needed rather than regular computing skills' (Leonard and Swap, 2002, p. 157). There are numerous more examples, where knowledge is defined as a complex form of information. Taken from a popular practitioners' manual, one definition states that: 'knowledge is information that is organised, synthesized or summarized to enhance comprehension, awareness or understanding' (Bergeron, 2003, p. 10).

Another example states: 'knowledge might best be defined as "useful information". Screening of information, discarding what is irrelevant or outdated, brings you closer to genuine knowledge' (Forrest 1999, p. 44). A definition from a more theoretical text takes a similar approach: 'Data, information and knowledge aren't easy to separate in practice; at best you can construct a continuum of the three... Knowledge is information with the most value and is consequently the hardest form to manage' (Davenport and Prusak, 1997, p. 9).

An alternative example, taken from a published case study from the commercial sector proposes that: 'knowledge is information laden with experience, truth, judgment, intuition and values; a unique combination that allows individuals and organisations to assess new situations and manage change' (Huseman and Goodman, 1999, p. 107). If nothing else, these statements demonstrate that the distinction between information and knowledge cannot be explained precisely or succinctly.

The use of a hierarchy does help to indicate that some information is more complex and valuable than others. But it remains problematic to define knowledge in a way that distinguishes it from information. An alternate approach is to break knowledge down into its constituent parts. Two examples of this are now presented.

2.1.2 Explicit and Tacit Knowledge

Polanyi, in a powerful analysis, makes a clear distinction between two types of knowledge. He highlights the division between explicit knowledge that can be codified and communicated between people, and tacit knowledge. It is explained that: 'tacit knowing may contain also an actual knowledge that is indeterminate, in the sense that its content cannot be explicitly stated. We can see this best in the way we possess a skill' (Polanyi, 1984, p. 141). He gives the examples of riding a bike, swimming or an orchestra playing a concerto.

Such activities deploy skills that cannot be learned by following manuals or by listening to instructions, but can only be acquired by experience. This insight has led many writers to consider knowledge to include both the tacit knowledge, evolved from experience, and also the codified knowledge that is made explicit through writing, audiovisual materials or computer programmes.

There are two areas of controversy that lead from the explicit/tacit perspective. The first returns to the difficulties of the hierarchy given above, as there is no way to explain the distinction of explicit knowledge from information itself. The debate questions whether ‘explicit knowledge’ can be distinguished from information. If not, then tacit knowledge must be the only true form of knowledge:

‘Knowledge is the organised results of experience, which we use to guide our actions and our interactions with the outside world. We all store our knowledge in our minds in a highly structured form, which is directly accessible only to us. When we want to communicate what we know to others who need to use it for their own purposes, we have to transform it and make it visible or audible to the outside world. The result of the transformation is Information: knowledge, which has been put into the outside world and made visible and accessible through a series of transformations’ (Orna, 2005, p. 11).

However, the majority of authors and practitioners act as if knowledge includes explicit knowledge, as is demonstrated by the quotations already provided above (section 2.1.1, pp. 32-3), and by the practical activities recommended, such as setting up knowledge repositories, full of ‘explicit’ knowledge. Nevertheless, simply to imply that explicit knowledge differs from information due to its level of complexity or its use in a specific context is hardly a satisfactory definition.

The second area for debate is the relationship between explicit and tacit knowledge. The authors Nonaka and Takeuchi, whose influential work drew on Polanyi's explicit/tacit distinction, suggested that one could be 'converted' into the other. 'Externalisation is a process of articulating tacit knowledge into explicit concepts. It is a quintessential knowledge-creation process in that tacit knowledge becomes explicit, taking the shapes of metaphors, analogies, concepts, hypotheses, or models' (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, p. 64). Other authors insist that these forms of knowledge are inherently different and irreconcilable. For example: 'Polanyi himself believed this. Ironically, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) have propelled Polanyi's concept of tacit knowledge into the knowledge management limelight by opposing the thrust of his message.' While refuting the idea that tacit knowledge can be converted into an explicit form, the authors convincingly argue that understanding the idea of tacit knowledge gives 'a shrewder idea of how to manage the people who know things' (Ray and Clegg, 2005, p. 323).

Nonaka has responded to this critique by reasserting his confidence in the original knowledge creation model. He writes: 'Two premises have influenced more than fifteen years of theory building and research on organisational knowledge creation: tacit and explicit knowledge... and knowledge conversion' (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2010, p. 279). A fuller picture of Nonaka's two premises, knowledge conversion and tacit/explicit knowledge is explored below (section 2.2.3).

One interpretation of Polanyi's views that reaches across this divide is: 'whether tacit or explicit knowledge is the more valuable may indeed miss the point. The two are not dichotomous states of knowledge, but mutually dependent and reinforcing qualities of knowledge' (Alavi and Leidner, 2001, p. 112).

Donald Schon also goes some way to bring these two strands together in his work on the *Reflective Practitioner* (Schon, 1983, p. 78). He sees knowledge as the result of reflective ‘conversation with the materials of the situation’, in this way suggesting that knowledge cannot be separated into tacit and explicit in practice, even if it can appear to be a useful categorization in knowledge management theory.

2.1.3 Mode One and Mode Two Knowledge

A different way to divide knowledge into constituent parts is to consider where knowledge comes from. An idea that is central to understanding knowledge in organisations is to make clear that it derives from the knowledge of individuals. ‘Let us start with the ontological dimension. In a strict sense, knowledge is created only by individuals. An organisation cannot create knowledge without individuals’ (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, p. 59).

However it is also true that ‘A firm’s competence is more than the sum of the professional competence of its workforce. It also includes the more focused knowledge that bears upon the transformational process that the organisation is exploiting’ (Gibbons et al, 1994, p. 25). Gibbons and his co-authors call this ‘Mode Two’ knowledge, in contrast to the traditional view of knowledge as the output of academic institutions, which is specifically knowledge bound by traditional disciplines, and is termed: ‘Mode One’ knowledge.

The label, Mode Two knowledge, is given to improved work performance that can be built up by practice where a cross-disciplinary approach is used to generate knowledge of processes through experience. ‘The socially distributed nature of Mode Two knowledge production is above all embodied in people and the ways they are interacting in socially organised forms. Hence the emphasis on the tacit components of knowledge, which we see as taking precedence over the codified components’ (Gibbons et al, 1994, p. 17).

These ideas are close to the tacit – explicit divide, but introduce the idea of knowledge as held by groups of people working together. This perspective is another map that tries to identify the hazy territory of ‘knowledge’ and brings the concept of group knowledge into play as a vital component of knowledge management.

One common theme among all contemporary organisational knowledge theorists stresses that knowledge and information are distinct not in their content but in the uses that are made of them. What is mere information in one place can be knowledge in the hands of someone with the expertise to use it, in a context where it can give value. This reinforces the idea of Mode Two knowledge, where the focus should not only be on knowledge that is acquired, stored and transferred, but also on the ways that organisations produce knowledge in the practices of daily work.

2.1.4 ‘Knowing in Action’ Model

The idea of knowledge as something useful for commerce may perhaps be in itself a metaphor for the modern view of individualistic capitalism, with the immense growth in human understanding and knowledge as convertible into a business resource to be managed. Nevertheless, as organisations have a duty to manage resources well, managers do need some clarity about the idea of ‘knowledge’, so that they can have a firm starting point for a knowledge management discipline.

A model that brings together the theoretical ideas identified so far has been produced (Cook and Brown, 2002, p. 71). Their model accepts the explicit/tacit divide as inherently different forms of knowledge. In addition, it is essential to recognise the range of knowledge that is held in common by groups of people as well as by individuals.

The model asserts that, if knowledge is defined as information that gives value within a context, identifying ‘knowing as action’, which establishes that the knowledge has to be usable to give value, is also a vital part of understanding knowledge. The management of knowledge can be seen in the complex interactions of these five components within the context of the modern organisation (as shown in figure 2.1).

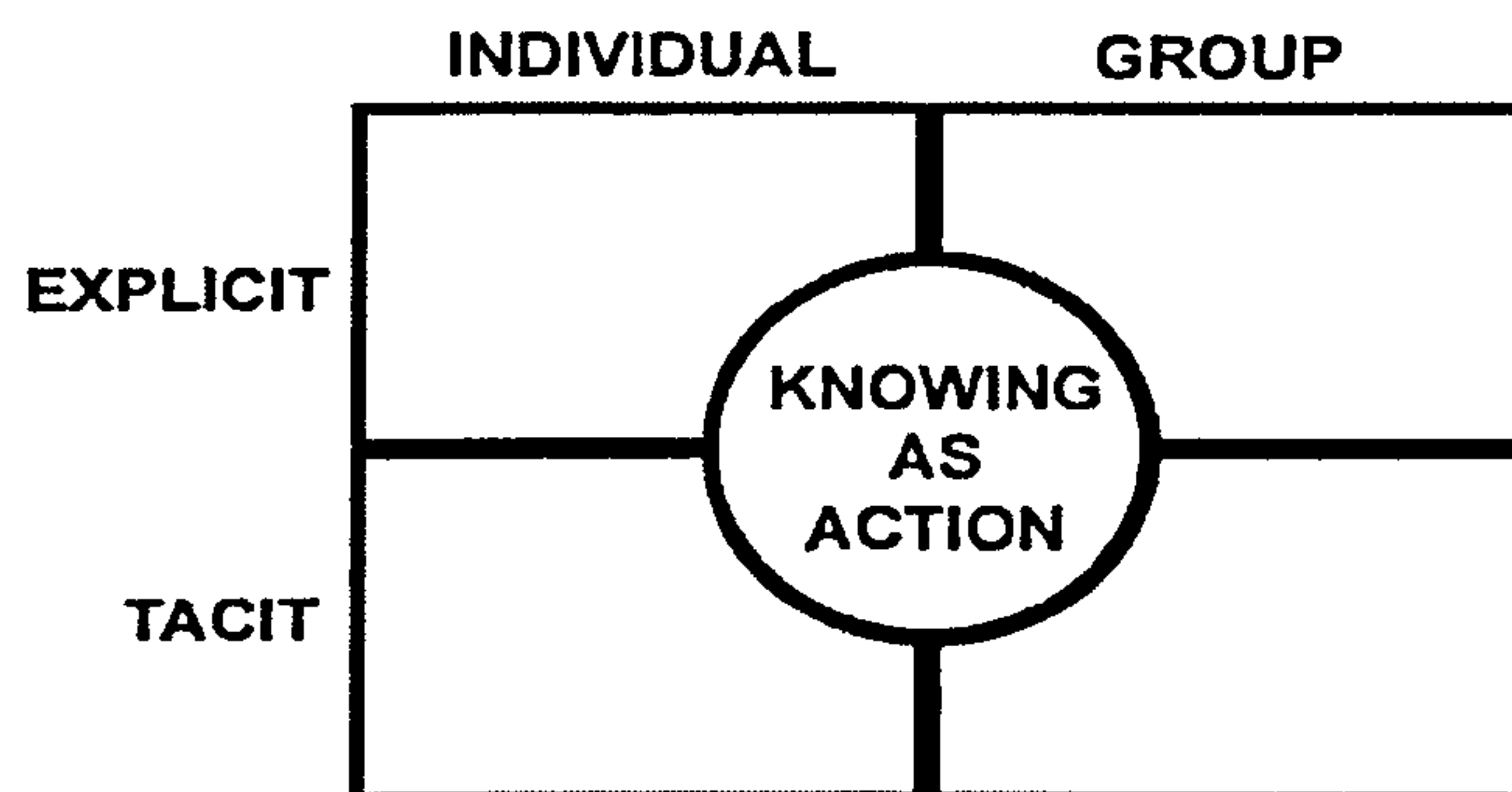


Figure 2.1: Cook and Brown's Model of Knowing in Action

The model adds complexity to the simple-sounding idea of ‘knowledge’. Furthermore, other authors endorse these complexities. For example: ‘While many people believe that organisational knowing is particularly valuable, analysts are left with the difficulties of identifying these more obscure knowledge assets, and strategists are further encumbered by significant problems managing them’ (Huff and Jenkins, 2002, p. 1).

2.1.5 Summary

No single agreed and all-encompassing definition of knowledge is available. Different writers focus on different perspectives of what the term means. Is a cohesive picture of ‘knowledge’ a prerequisite for effective knowledge management? Some authors see this as vital. ‘Managing knowledge means nothing if we do not know what knowledge is’ (Hutchings and Mohannak, 2007, p. 17).

Most practitioners, however, are content to work with only an everyday view of what knowledge is, storing valued information as explicit knowledge and accepting that some knowledge is only accessible via a human source. This fact implies an acceptance that there is some ambiguity that has to be handled by knowledge management practitioners.

This conclusion has moved far from the religious truths or mathematical perfections that may have been ‘knowledge’ for earlier generations. But it is a more useful starting point for knowledge management in a modern organisational setting. This debate is unlikely to reach a conclusion, but it can be agreed that lack of a firm consensus on the subject to be managed, makes knowledge management more complex than many other management tasks. Adding complexity is more realistic, but also more problematic. Viewing knowledge as one single ‘thing’ that can be applied easily and in a standard manner is no longer appropriate. On a practical basis, the distinction between knowledge and information returns the discussion to the key element of context.

For the purpose of this study, the following working definition of knowledge is adopted: **‘knowledge is information in context, together with an understanding of how to use it’** (Brooking, 1999, p. 5). In this way, knowledge is viewed as a resource that adds value to an organisation that is capable of making use of it.

2.2 What is Knowledge Management?

This review of some key perspectives and practices of knowledge management is based on what is understood by this term in the international development charity community (section 1.2).

It is not a comprehensive review of all knowledge management practices. Indeed, the author of a survey among commercial companies states that: 'One of the observations is the sheer variety of knowledge management practices (KMPs) across a number of dimensions... We identified over 130 KMPs which could be aggregated into over 80 different practices, with consequently very little duplication' (Hull, 2000, p. 60). Bearing this point in mind, this section concentrates specifically upon perspectives and practices as known and used within the relevant organisational population, and relates them to sources that have originated from the commercial sector.

2.2.1 Identifying Productive Opportunities

'The organisation is, above all, social. It is people. Its purpose must therefore be to make the strengths of people effective and their weaknesses irrelevant' (Drucker, 1997, p. 5). Although organisational knowledge derives from the knowledge of individuals, it is not true to suggest that knowledge in an organisation will be the sum of the knowledge of individuals. The relationship of the individual to organisational knowledge is more complex. In a traditional Fordist/Taylorist factory environment, for example – signifying an impersonal mass production system with tasks broken down into small components - the knowledge of factory hands would have little to contribute to organisational knowledge, apart from specific ideas relevant to their part of the manufacturing process. Even then, they would be unlikely to get much opportunity to contribute.

Equally, although an organisation may consider it 'owns' the knowledge of a highly trained specialist through an employment contract, the specialist may prefer to share it with other professionals rather than with colleagues within the organisation.

Rational management theory has traditionally analysed organisations in terms of their size, markets and environment, structure and resources. Penrose (1995) draws attention to the role of an increase in knowledge in not only giving a firm a new productive opportunity but also providing its uniqueness (section 1.1, p. 11). It can be seen that, in more modern terms, human knowledge and learning can provide a 'unique selling point' as a key to increasing effectiveness.

2.2.2 Learning

Building on Penrose's analysis of the productive opportunity for firms, 'learning' has become one focus for knowledge management. Organisational Learning or 'the Learning Organisation' is a practical application that has been taken up by many voluntary organisations, and the terms are widely used synonymously with knowledge management.

These ideas are based on the influential work of authors such as Argyris and Schon (1978). Learning is made a central goal for employees so that the organisation will always be ready to adapt to the changing environment around it. Learning Organisation theory emphasises double-loop learning developing from individual insights within an organisational context. 'Double loop learning occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organisation's underlying norms, policies and objectives' (Argyris and Schon, 1978, p. 3). Encouraging learning can be seen as a formal way to increase the knowledge of individuals, working alone or in teams, as an important part of a knowledge management programme.

2.2.3 Knowledge Creation

However, 'Learning Organisation' theory has been challenged from a knowledge management perspective. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge raises the problem of defining timeframes: 'Herein lies the core learning dilemma that confronts organisations: we learn best from experience but we never directly experience the consequences of many of our most important decisions' (Senge, 1990, p. 23). This perspective leads Nonaka and Takeuchi to argue against associating knowledge creation with Learning Organisation theory, as the latter involves learning the lessons of the past rather than creating new knowledge. 'There is widespread agreement that organisational learning is an adaptive change process that is influenced by past experience, focused on developing or modifying routines, and supported by organisational memory. As a result the theories fail to conceive an idea of knowledge creation' (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, p. 45).

Instead they state that: 'organisational knowledge creation is a spiral process, starting at the individual level and moving up through expanding communities of interaction that crosses sectional, departmental, divisional and organisational boundaries' (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, p. 72). This process requires a range of activities to take place, with much more emphasis on the human activities of socialization (sharing experience with others), externalisation (putting tacit knowledge into words), combination (systematising concepts into a knowledge system), and internalisation (learning by doing). These processes are summarised as SECI, offering a schematic model that permits the spiral process to take place. Ideas, skills and experience, shared via cross-disciplinary teams, are then able to produce 'knowledge conversion'. As that happens, tacit knowledge in individual heads is converted to corporate knowledge that can give benefit to the organisation.

This ‘spiral’ concept is closely linked to that of Mode 2 knowledge discussed above (section 2.1.3). It can be illustrated in the following matrix.

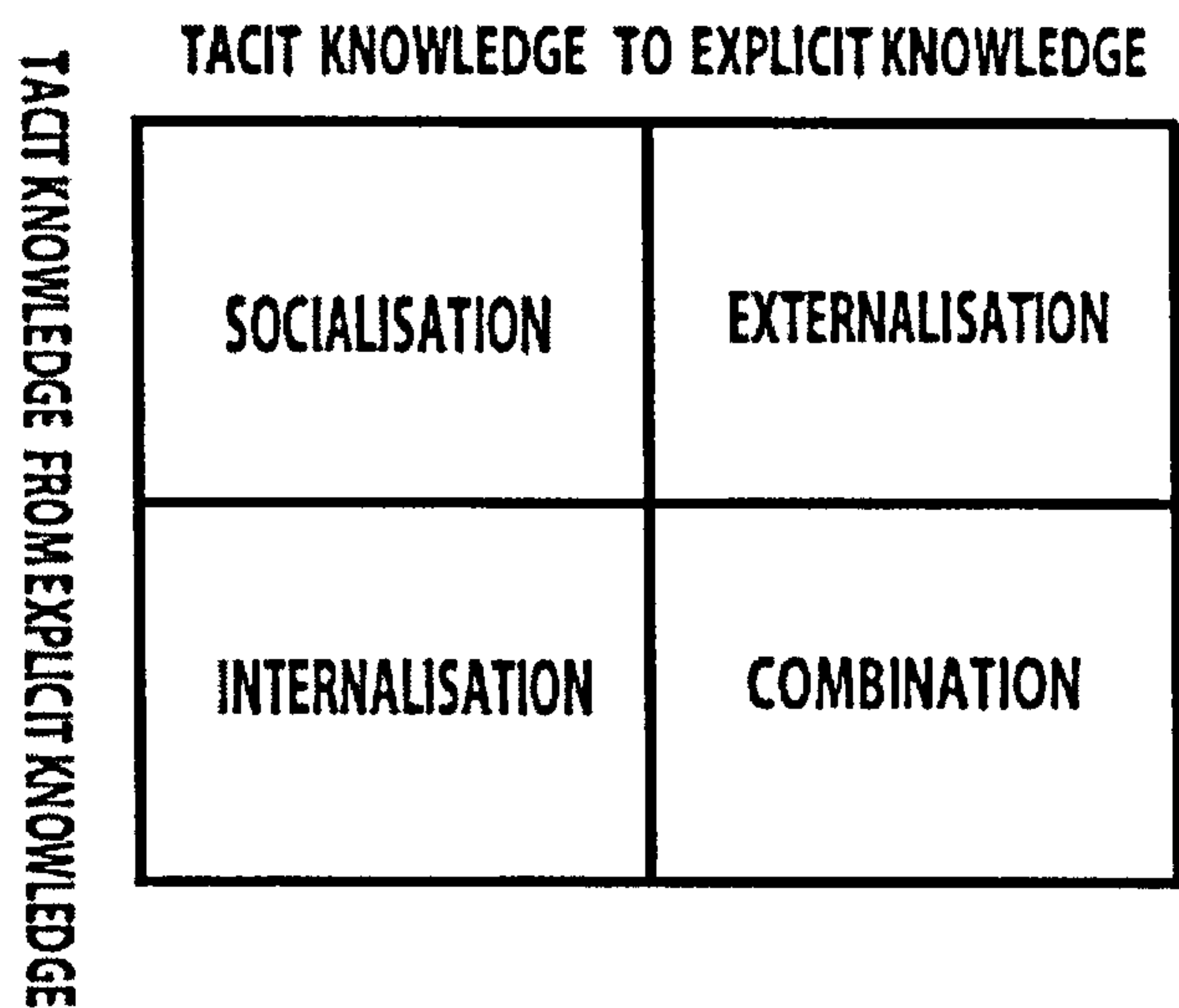


Figure 2.2 Nonaka and Takeuchi’s SECI knowledge creation matrix

The authors identify the importance of a space for sharing which is, in their Japanese context, termed: ‘ba’. This shared space constitutes a meeting place that could be literally a physical location and/or an intellectual/cultural exchange. In this supportive milieu, teams can work together with common understanding and assumptions. Although this concept relates to the specifics of one organisational culture and form, it can also be viewed as a powerful metaphor for the necessity of a safe space within which people feel confident and able to share knowledge. Hence the authors explain that: ‘Ba can be built intentionally or created spontaneously. Leaders can facilitate ba by providing physical space such as meeting rooms, cyberspace such as a computer network, or mental space such as common goals and promote interactions among participants’ (Nonaka and Toyama, 2007, p. 28).

The knowledge creation spiral suggests that individual learning and group dynamics will play a part in knowledge creation as experts with different specialisations learn from each other and share and absorb ideas in order to create new insights.

In this context, the authors stress that middle managers are vital, as they will have the ‘middle-up-down’ approach, which can turn the organisation’s official purpose into dynamic visions and so enable employees to grasp the essential knowledge required to complete the job in hand. Nonaka and Takeuchi consequently link business success to a climate that supports continuous innovation and specifically they suggest that the enabling conditions for this knowledge creation include: management intention; team autonomy; fluctuation and creative chaos; redundancy and requisite variety.

They identify these conditions in Japanese companies that display a particular flair for innovation. Success can be demonstrated by these companies’ continuing ability to innovate, leading to rapid growth in market share and other indicators of commercial success. ‘We make the claim that Japanese companies have been successful because of their skills and expertise at organisational knowledge creation’ (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, p. 3). The enabling conditions that they identify are closely related to Japanese commercial ‘culture’, whereas typically in a British charity some of these ideas would be considered inappropriate. ‘Creative chaos’ and ‘positive redundancy’ are not part of the vocabulary of international development charities.

However, these ideas have been highly influential in cultures beyond the Japanese context. As a result, knowledge management in practice includes a focus on the creation of knowledge and innovation, as well as the shared learning associated with the ‘Learning Organisation’.

2.2.4 Communities of Practice

One strong theme that has emerged within knowledge management, linked to the ‘socialisation’ stage of the knowledge creation cycle, is that of building and nurturing ‘communities of practice’, so that ideas can be shared between groups of people with a common interest. These have been described in *Cultivating Communities of Practice*: ‘Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis’ (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002, p. 4).

These processes involve the informal exchange of ideas and expertise among workers engaged on similar tasks. ‘A community of practice is a unique combination of three fundamental elements: a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain; and the shared practice that they are developing to be effective in their domain’ (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002, p. 27). Communities of practice can be seen as one practical way for tacit knowledge sharing and group knowledge creation. This mechanism is a powerful technique for developing the ‘knowing in action’ component of knowledge management.

These communities can grow spontaneously without management, where the members of the community themselves initiate the contacts. The role of a knowledge management team is therefore open to serious debate around the issues of directly organising and influencing communities to form part of an ordered knowledge management programme, or indirectly supporting and identifying value from self-organising groups. ‘We realized as have others ... that the active engagement of individual members plays a much more important part in successful communities than do organisational interventions’ (Van Winkelen and Ramsell, 2004, p. 55).

Wenger's comment sums up the most common knowledge management perspective:

'Many communities of practice will exist whether or not the organisation recognises them. Some are best left alone and might actually wither under the institutional spotlight. But a good number will benefit from some attention, as long as this attention does not smother their self-organising drive. Just because communities of practice arise naturally does not mean that organisation can't do anything to influence their development' (Wenger, 2000, p. 221).

2.2.5 Technology Applications

Knowledge management is about people using knowledge in action, as is demonstrated in the learning, knowledge creation, and communities of practice models, discussed above. But it is also about the business processes in which people are involved and the technology that is available to them. Knowledge management projects therefore have to focus 'on both design (process and technology) and change (people and organisation) capabilities simultaneously. This adds to the complexity of the project' (Bellaver and Lusa, 2002, p. 117). As a result of this dual focus, another possible approach to knowledge management is through the application of recent developments in information and communication technology (ICT). This line was promoted strongly in the late 1990s and early 2000, on the back of the earlier AI/Expert Systems boom.

This approach saw technology advocated as able to replace or to encode human knowledge in specific contexts. Recent research shows that this procedure can be powerful in complex situations such as medical diagnosis. Machines can, in some circumstances, replicate human knowledge. For example, it was reported that: 'we found that the system and the expert make a similar number of mistakes' (Tyler, 2007, p viii). However, reliance on expert systems is now rarely seen as central to knowledge management, which looks beyond repetitive tasks to adapting to continuously uncertain changes. Despite this, knowledge management programmes are still frequently associated with technology change.

While it is possible to identify knowledge management too closely with technology solutions, this study accepts that changing technology is one important driver behind knowledge management. Therefore technology forms a theme in this study, with its own section in many chapters. Picking up the theme from chapter one (section 1.1.1), it can be seen that recent technology innovation has not only made information in huge quantities available, but also made it widely accessible at the press of a button.

Technology has also provided tools that have changed the options for human communication. Sharing tacit knowledge has been transformed from something based on co-location to global knowledge-sharing via the Internet. Commenting on the importance of the emerging global technology system for changing resources for the poor, it can be said: 'it has already had a profound impact on the social and working life in the regions included within and excluded from it' (Little, 2004, p. 80).

Many ICT vendors provide 'knowledge management' solutions, although these cover a variety of purposes from collaborative working to information capture and retrieval systems. However, there is a danger that this interpretation of knowledge management starts with a solution without due attention to the requirements it is expected to meet. It has been noted: 'knowledge *can* be embedded in machines, but it's tough to categorise and retrieve effectively' (Davenport and Prusak 1997, p. 10).

'It can be argued that the technology industry's marketing may include selling old systems with a knowledge re-branding. One warning states: 'Today, the availability of shared file servers encourages users to maintain multiple copies or near copies on their personal computers, in various shared spaces and as attachments to emails. The servers become the electronic equivalent of the communal refrigerator, complete with unidentifiable fossils lurking in the corners' (Megill, 2005, p. 12).

Despite these caveats, technology can be a way to capture good practice learnt through experience, as developers of ICT solutions incorporate the learning of previous users into their design. Databases, the Internet, intranets, portals and collaborative working tools can provide resources that can give support to knowledge management initiatives. In practice, technology solutions are closely linked to knowledge management and frequently dominate it. Technology's role in knowledge management cannot be ignored in a study of knowledge management because of this tendency to rely on technology:

'the results of our study show that many companies are progressing along similar lines when rolling out knowledge management. They generally start with the implementation of a technological capability, which allows them (at least in principle) to capture and share corporate know-how. This may be a necessary early step in organisations where a basic capability to access, embed, and transfer knowledge does not exist' (Ruggles, 1999, p. 303).

There is another concept, 'culture' that is also closely linked to knowledge management, which returns the focus to people and their inter-relationships. One knowledge management handbook explains this in a simple format: 'Support for the process of knowledge management has *hard* and *soft* elements. ... The purpose of the soft systems is to modify the traditional culture systems so that all in the organisation learn to learn and want to share knowledge for the benefit of all' (MacDonald, 2005, p. 64).

However, it can be disputed that technology and culture are intrinsically different. Instead their close relationship can be affirmed:

'The cultural dimension encompasses technology and implicitly rejects the dualism of much current knowledge management... The distinction was useful for a period to drag people away from thinking that knowledge management could be achieved solely through the procurement of technology. However, it now disguises a vital aspect of any human culture; we are first and foremost a tool-making and tool-using animal. Our culture makes little sense without taking information technology, the latest manifestation of our tool-making ability into account' (Snowdon, 2000, p. 240).

This point serves as a reminder that technology and culture cannot in practice be treated as separate elements of knowledge management, and so this discipline has to operate with a social-technical perspective. This can be explained 'Managing knowledge, therefore, with a socio-technical perspective, has a wide ranging necessity to manage the organisation through continuous change and a process of continuous learning supported, where appropriate, by technology' (Coakes, 2002, p. 10). The next section takes a closer look at ideas relating to organisational culture.

2.2.6 Organisational Culture

'We believe knowledge management takes us into the realm of corporate culture, reputation, value systems and those other evidences of the social nature of man' (Spender, 2000, p. 158). Knowledge management is more than a collection of separate practices, but is a 'way of working', where all activities link together to influence an organisation's culture. But defining 'culture' is itself highly complex. It is associated with long standing traditional ways of life, often linked to national or tribal contexts. 'Culture is learned responses of a stable group that have become unconscious assumptions' (Schein, 1985, p. 53).

Some authors suggest that there can be a 'global work culture'. Quoting the work of a group of colleagues (Erez et al, 2001), Earley has noted that: 'They define a global work culture as the shared understanding of the visible rules, regulations and behaviours, as well as the deeper values and ethics of the global work context' (Earley 2009, p. 34). However, using the word 'culture' in this context can be confusing. Indeed, Hofstede has stated 'In my terminology, organisational cultures are entirely distinct from national cultures; the two concepts are complementary' (Hofstede et al, 2001, p. 391).

In the context of an organisation, it can be suggested that national culture directly affects organisational culture. An example is the concept of 'ba' in the knowledge creation model introduced above, which is closely identified with the Japanese workplace, but does not feature in UK organisational culture (section 2.2.3, p. 43)

However, this generalisation contrasts with the view above, that an organisation can have a distinctive work culture and it is possible that an organisation's global work culture can outweigh the differentiating effects of national or local divergence. These authors conclude their article on knowledge acquisition: 'firm culture is the primary influence on inter-firm transfer in alliances' (Almeida, Grant and Phene, 2002, p. 71). However this does not imply that this will be the case in all organisations and in all circumstances. There is no definitive evidence as to how culture in the geographic or national environment will impact on an individual organisation.

One way to reconcile national and organisational cultures suggests simply that: 'Culture is varieties of common knowledge' (Holden, 2002, p. 99). This author argues, that if culture is not seen as something static and narrow, then understanding culture in organisations can be less problematic. The interplay of organisational culture with that of local communities will be an evolving element that will impact on and change with knowledge management practice. 'The synergy between levels is a potential resource, but the tendency towards a convergence determined by the primary culture is seen as an obstacle to cross-cultural working' (Little, 2004, p. 82).

Knowledge management suggests the need for a culture that supports sharing knowledge rather than hoarding it. However: 'the reality is that cultural research in this area is limited and has not begun to address the complexity of managing aspirational values of knowledge sharing and their likely impact on the organisation' (Jashapara, 2002, p. 200).

2.2.7 Integrated knowledge management systems

The above list of knowledge management practices demonstrates that knowledge management contains many varied activities. There is no example of an influential integrated model of knowledge management, despite the attempts of writers such the McKinsey team, (Kluge, Stein and Licht, 2001), or Wang and Plaskoff, (2002), and Handzic and Zhou, (2005) among others.

2.2.8 Summary of Relevant Knowledge Management Programmes

There is an extensive literature about a closely associated subject: 'social capital'. This concept can be seen to reflect ideas that are involved in the practices that have been discussed above. However, building social capital, and the associated ideas of generating intellectual capital, exploiting patents, and knowledge audits, are not included in this study under those headings. That exclusion is based upon the fact that these terms do not appear in the discourse of the international development charities themselves. The charities focus on building social capital in order to help 'capacity building' rather than to demonstrate increased shareholder value in the formal audit of their organisations' assets.

For this study it is important to align with the charities' own intentions, although it can be suggested that the knowledge management work of international development charities does aim to increase organisational social and intellectual capital. The practices established as relevant in this study are those known and applied within this organisational population.

They include:

- setting up and nurturing learning activities;
- knowledge creation;
- communities of practice;
- technology knowledge stores;
- ‘changing culture’.

It is possible to adopt these practices in isolation or to serve other or more limited goals. For example, many organisations have an intranet or other technology information repositories, without them being part of a wider knowledge management programme.

For the purposes of this study, knowledge management requires two elements. These are first, a clear intention and rationale that draws explicitly on the concepts of knowledge and knowledge management as provided in the academic literature; and second, a programme of activity that includes some subset of the practices advocated by knowledge management texts. There is no expectation that international development charities will include everything from the knowledge management toolkit. Knowledge management is not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ prescription. Equally there must be more than rhetoric, where a management fashion is presented to represent progress and status, but includes no substance in the daily working of the charity.

2.3 Benefits of Knowledge Management

Organisations use knowledge management in the expectation that it will provide cost-effective benefit. The next section looks at the benefits that have been identified in knowledge management literature.

A major source for presenting knowledge management as of positive value for organisations is the survey by the consultancy firm McKinsey that looked at 40 well-established companies in Europe, USA and Japan. They claim that: 'we can demonstrate that more successful firms generally have a firmer understanding of knowledge management.' They provide measures of success for their survey, such as reduced development or 'throughput' time, improved financial performance, growth in sales or increased return on investment (ROI) (Kluge, Stein and Licht, 2001, pp. 5, 16).

The links between benefits and knowledge management are also provided in detailed case studies. Well-documented leaders in the field include PricewaterhouseCoopers, ICL and Clifford Chance (quoted in Webb, 1998, pp. 40-63), or a longer study on Siemens (Davenport and Probst, 2002).

One case study that provides evidence of knowledge management benefits is widely known in the voluntary sector. The programme from British Petroleum (BP) has been presented as a model for many workshops and conferences, for example those set up by BOND (the British Overseas Non-Governmental Organisations for Development). In the second edition of their book, the authors acknowledge this: 'the development sector – NGOs and UN agencies particularly – appreciate and are using the techniques', and they provide some data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). BP's own experience suggests that: 'knowledge capture in any form takes time and effort, but the potential yield to BP has been high – millions of dollars in some cases, so the time and effort is well spent' (Collison and Parcell, 2004, pp. 286, 223, 257). The great majority of case studies originate from commercial companies and so the benefits given are related to their interests in sales, profits or market share. As yet, there is very little empirical research relating to activity in international development charities.

It has been demonstrated that knowledge management is a subject of interest in international development charities (section 1.1.2, p. 18). Many knowledge management initiatives are taking place, as documented in an ODI (Overseas Development Institute) survey that included examples of organisations building their business strategy around knowledge management (Ramalingam, 2004). There is also a summary of much of what is available for the UK NGO development sector: *Knowledge Management and Organisational Learning: An International Development Perspective* (Hovland, 2003).

A review of recent knowledge management case study references showed up one study of international charities and their relationship to ICT use. The summary states that: ‘Evidence from this study of two UK voluntary organisations demonstrates that they are using CICTs to reconfigure key information flows in support of enhanced campaigning and more effective user services’. The authors also claim that underlying these transformations is the full use of the reflexive quality inherent within the technologies themselves and, with it, the emergence of ‘intelligent organisations’. But it is important to bear in mind that more can always be done. So Burt and Taylor warn: ‘we found the networked technologies employed could have supported more far-reaching strategic transformations in institutional arrangements than occurred in practice’ (Burt and Taylor, 2003, pp. 115, 125).

There are also some smaller case studies relating to aspects of knowledge management in related organisational populations. One example is a short case study on Communities of Practice from the ‘not-for-profit’ organisation, the British Council (Cheuk, 2004, p. 55). Writers in contemporary journals also include staff from international development charities, (for example: Andreoni, 2008). They confirm the existence of active knowledge management practice in this organisational population. But taken together, there is very little evidence to throw light on the long-term quality and impact of what is currently enacted.

The fact that knowledge management is positively presented in the experience of large commercial organisations does not prove that it will bring cost-effective benefits to other organisations. Nor does the survey information prove beyond doubt that it is knowledge management that leads to these companies' success. The research in this thesis will look more closely at the practical application of knowledge management when it is transferred to international development charities.

If the working description of knowledge, suggested earlier is accepted: 'knowledge is information in context, together with an understanding of how to use it' (Brooking, 1999, section 2.1.5, p. 39), then it becomes essential to have more understanding of the specific organisational context in which knowledge management activity takes place.

The final part of chapter two therefore introduces ideas from organisational theory to illuminate how knowledge management can impact in an organisational context.

2.4 Organisational Theory.

'It would, however, be folly to think that much useful work can be done without an organisation. Goodwill is not enough, democratic ideas are not enough, hard work is not enough. Without the right organisation, great ideals breed only great frustration' (Handy, 1990, p. 19). This section now looks at some theoretical models that provide a robust perspective for considering how knowledge management can impact within an organisation. Organisations are complex human constructions and therefore: 'It must be remembered that all such polarized concepts are never to be regarded as accurate descriptions. They are "ideal types" by use of which we can better understand some of the real-world complexity' (Checkland and Howell, 1998, p. 41).

The ideas that follow are presented as appropriate models of the context for knowledge management practice which provide an analytical framework for the research.

2.4.1 Systems Theory Applied to Organisations

A definition of ‘organisations’ states that: ‘it is the combination of relatively high goal specificity and relatively high formalization that distinguishes organisations from other types of collectivities’ (Scott, 1998, p. 25). In its basic form, system theory presents an organisation as an established system, whereby a goal is met by turning inputs into the appropriate outputs. Thus a charity is an organisation that uses inputs such as donations of money and other resources, plus human labour, to produce outputs in the form of benefit as set out by the official goal or goals, often in the form of a ‘Mission Statement’ or ‘Vision’. The complexity of international development charity goals has been raised in chapter 1 (section 1.2.2) and the discussion about goals continues in chapter three (section 3.1.1).

This leads to a brief consideration of three different perspectives of systems theory. The simple (rational) systems theory of a collective of people working to turn inputs into outputs in accordance with a clearly stated goal, or goals, is based on a mechanical model. The system includes controls, which ensure that resources are used efficiently to produce the required outputs. These controls will be formed by the organisation’s leadership and they will take decisions to maximize output on the basis of cost/benefit calculations.

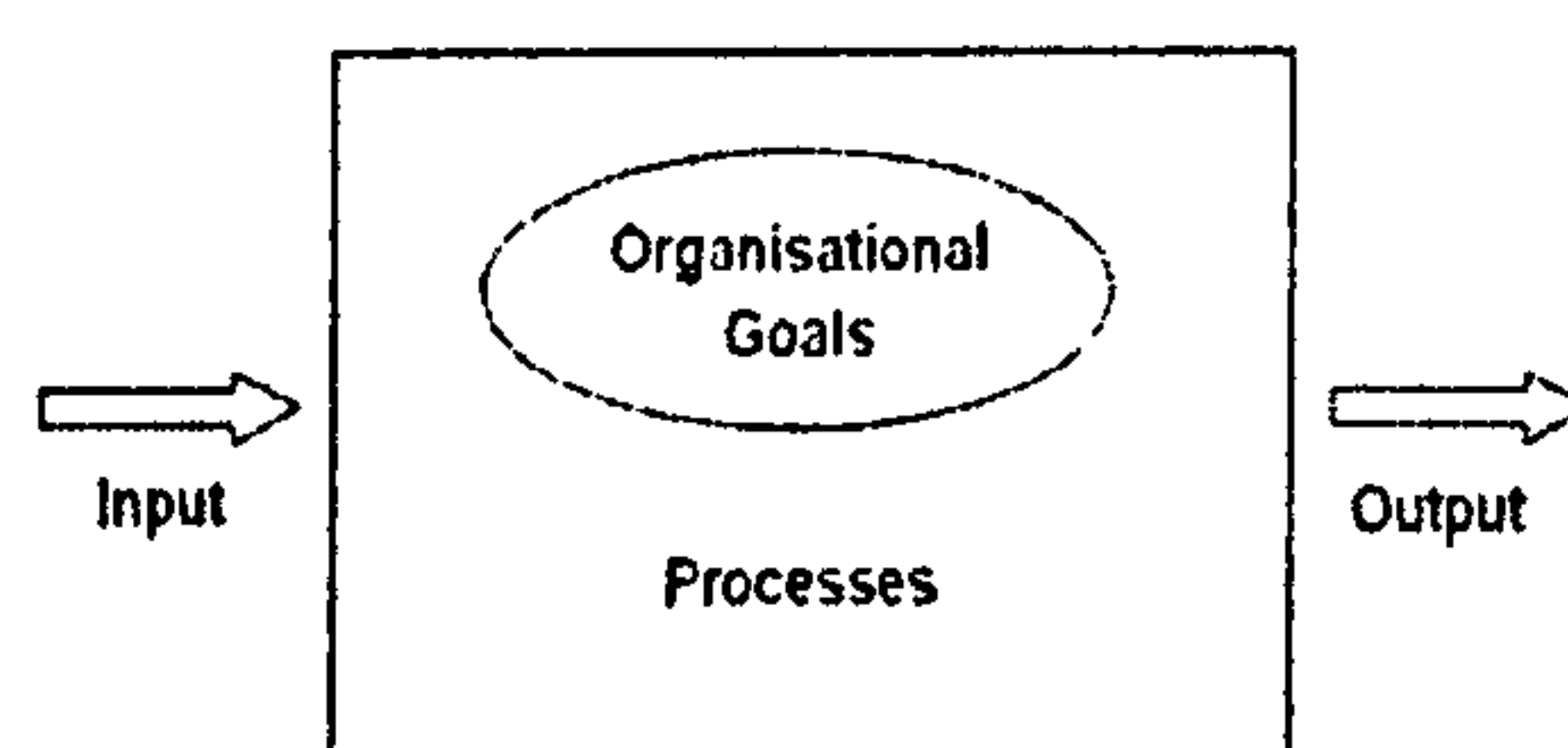


Figure 2.3. System Diagram A: Rational system model

However, natural system theory, based on an organic analogy, acknowledges more complexity by recognising the importance of the human dimension. The human workforce will bring with them knowledge and the ability to access, or even to create, more knowledge and all the participants in the organisation have the potential to exert some influence over decision-making. This multiplicity of roles for the people within the organisation strongly suggests that deciding resource allocation will be more complex than the system model so far described implies.

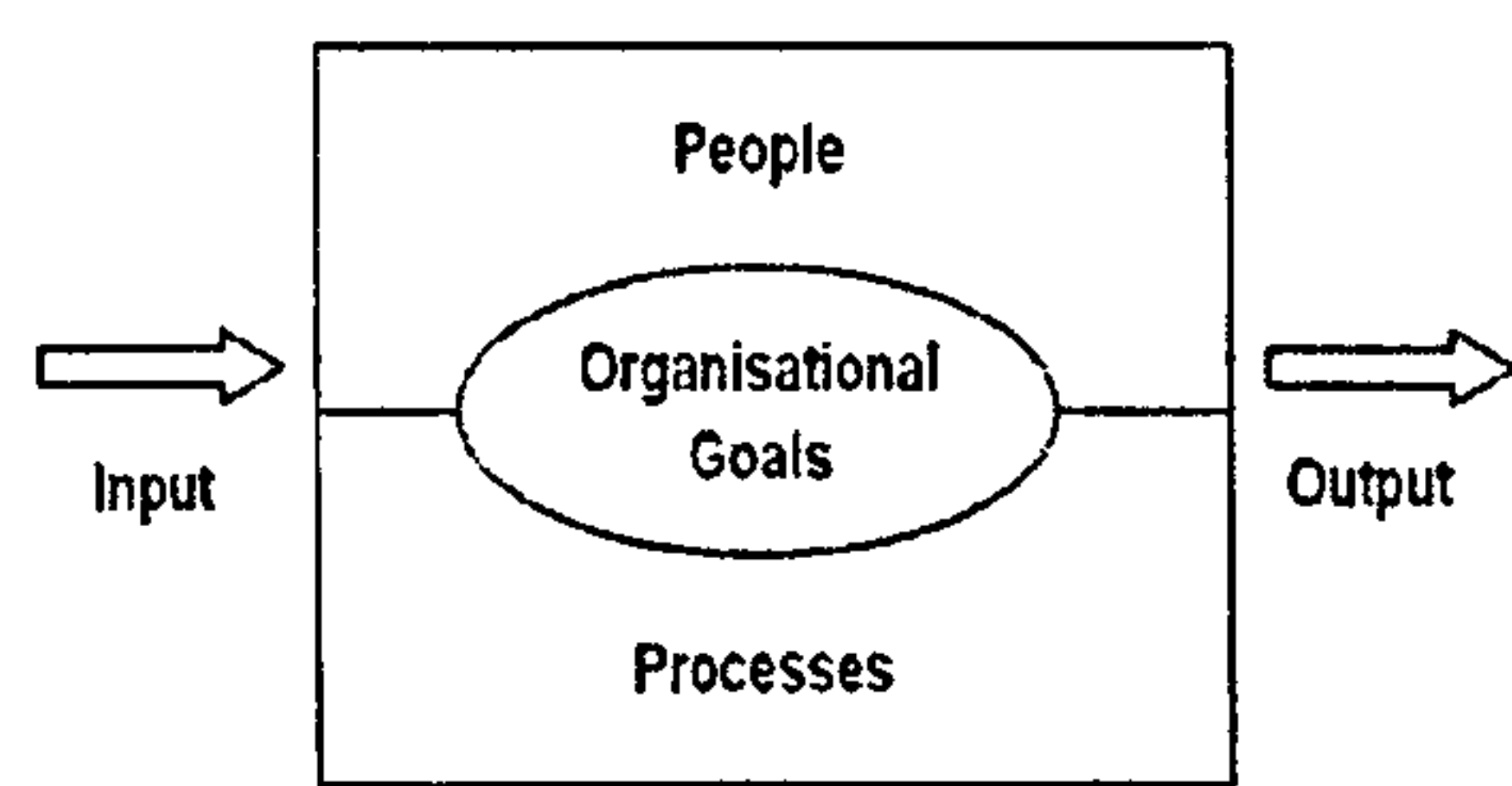


Figure 2.4. System Diagram B: Natural system model

A third perspective, open system theory, goes beyond the two system models discussed above to recognize that the environment in which the organisation is based will be constantly influencing, and potentially altering, the work of the organisation. ‘These models incorporate the insights of earlier approaches and tend to place primary emphasis upon the relationship between organisation and environment’ (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 125). The boundaries of an organization can be quite porous as people move in and out of the organization and influences from outside the organization may powerfully affect both the vision and the day-to-day decisions about resource allocation.

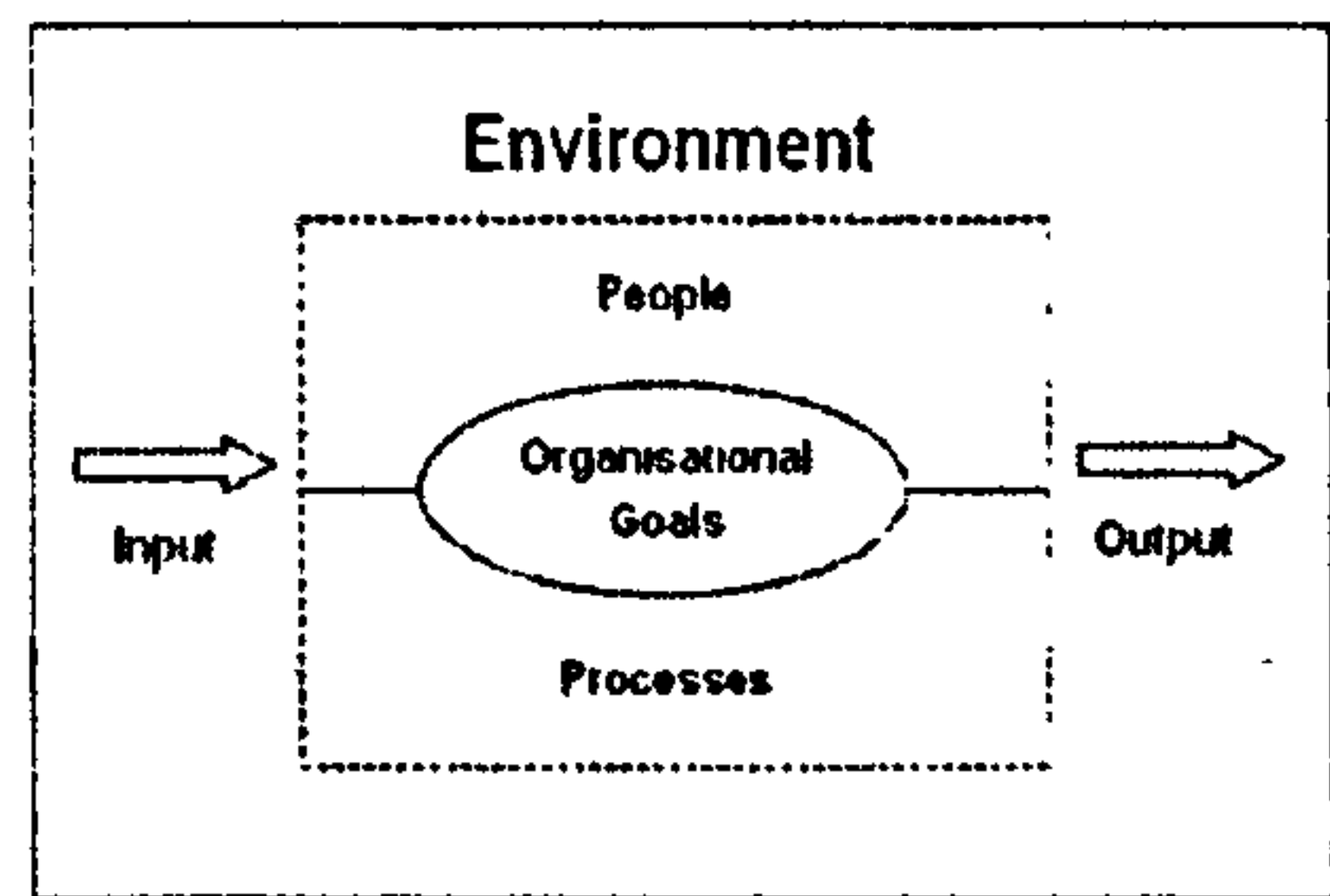


Figure 2.5. System Diagram C: Open system model

2.4.2 Soft Systems

By 2000, another perspective on organizational theory was taking hold. Suggesting that the system theory of organisations was too closely based in a positivist perspective and so unduly simplified the complexity of real organisations, Checkland and associates at the University of Lancaster, advanced the 'soft system' approach, which builds on a more constructivist view that humans make sense of their world through the media of conversations. Their model of an organization is therefore explained: 'Real world experience and discussion of it lead to intentions being formed and action taken' (Checkland and Holwell, 1998, p. 30). They add that 'roles, norms and values would not be fixed but would be continually redefined in the organisational discourse about its experience' (Checkland and Holwell, 1998, p. 80).

This model has been widely used by writers focusing on technology development, as it moves away from an overly mechanistic model, to recognize that office politics is an essential element of an organisation, rather than a malign addition. Based on this view, the IS (Information Systems) Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) has been developed, built on the premise that new technology systems have to work in organisations that are neither mechanistic nor organic, but uniquely human, and therefore work within a setting that has an expectation of internal variety and perennial change.

2.4.3 Can these models be reconciled?

Checkland and Howell suggest that their model subsumes the system theory models. It can also be considered that their ideas extend natural theory by stressing the complex role of individuals, although moving it a considerable distance from its origins. Together the models provide a set of elements that appear within these 'ideal organisations' and which can therefore provide a foundation from which to study activity within real organizations.

It is not necessary to attempt to place any actual organization within one particular model or to discard ideas from one model because another model is also appropriate in some aspects. They work together to establish a set of appropriate elements, which can be used to consider the special case involved here - organisations within the group international development charities. These ideas are taken forward in the first part of chapter three so that using the system models of organisations provides more understanding of the context within which knowledge management is applied.

With the context of knowledge management activity more clearly established, it is now appropriate to construct a working definition of knowledge management for the purposes of this study.

The literature has as wide range of definitions for knowledge management as it has for the term 'knowledge' and there is no agreed formulation. One useful example is: 'The emphasis is on identifying and capturing the "knowledge assets" of the firm so that they can be both fully exploited and fully protected' (Swan et al, 2002, p. 188).

This usefully establishes knowledge as a resource within an organisation. However, it does not include the idea of knowledge creation, and only looks at internal assets rather than the availability of knowledge across organisational boundaries. For this study, a working definition of knowledge management is: **the management perspective, and associated practical activity, intended to make the best use of the knowledge resources available to an organization to meet its own productive opportunities.** It should be noted that these resources can be in the form of inputs, processes or outputs and the simplicity of the wording still encompasses the complexity of knowledge in all the forms discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3. Framing the Research

If knowledge management is the management perspective, and associated practical activity, intended to make the best use of the knowledge resources available to an organization to meet its own productive opportunities, how can its results be assessed? The quest to understand the impact of applying knowledge management in international development charities now turns to the question of what is a positive impact in this context and how it can be identified.

Given the characteristics of this organisational population (section 1.2, p. 25), with complex and ‘political’ goals, many stakeholders and limited resources, a study that intends to evaluate impact on effective performance must give serious consideration to how this can be assessed. Knowledge management will be applied according to each charity’s individual productive opportunity. So the study needs to find a way to recognise where knowledge management is being applied and how it is adapted to the routines and practices of the particular organisations in this population. Once this is done, tracing the benefits and costs will be possible.

The chapter is in two sections:

3.1 Application of Organisational System Theory Concepts

3.2 Assessing effectiveness.

The first part of this chapter uses basic concepts from the discussion in chapter two on organisational system models (section 2.4) to structure a discussion of those aspects of organisational functioning that may, according to the literature be relevant to, or impacted by, the introduction of knowledge management ideas and practice in international development charities.

Thus, it offers a set of concepts to guide the practical enquiry and suggests where to look in judging the value obtained by the use of the practices in this particular organisational context. The second part of the chapter then identifies specific measurement systems for assessing knowledge management in this context.

3.1 Application of Organisational Theory Concepts

The next section discusses six elements that are featured in the organisational system models outlined in chapter two, using the following headings:

- Goals, Inputs and Outputs
- Decision-Makers, People and Power
- Structure
- Technology
- Organisational Culture
- The External Environment

3.1.1 Goals, Inputs and Outputs

Consideration of the underlying ideas from basic system theory helps to provide a core definition. Thus a charity is an organisation that uses inputs such as donations of money and other resources, to produce outputs in the form of benefit as set out by the official mission statement or vision.

For international development charities, the two essential inputs are human workers and some form of finance. For small charities, these inputs may be volunteers and donations of goods in kind, but, for an international development charity, the complexity of the work means that paid employees, and therefore a regular flow of financial inputs, will be essential.

Outputs will also fall into two main categories:

- direct help to build better conditions for groups which the charity has identified as candidates for ‘development’; and
- increasingly, to produce ‘advocacy’ in the form of campaigns to raise development awareness, or other ways to challenge society to ameliorate the conditions that cause poverty and disadvantage.

In this way, international development charities fit two of Charles Handy’s five types of voluntary organisation; they are ‘service providers’ but also ‘research and advocacy’ organisations (Handy, 1990, p. 10). This latter output is also seen as a powerful method to reduce poverty in its own right, via debt relief or changes to the terms of trade, although it is a long-term investment that may also strengthen the charity by building a climate where its work is taken seriously. This point means that all charities will today see knowledge as part of their output. It may be specific ‘know-how’ for development goals such as better agriculture methods or healthcare, or it may be information with insight, for use in advocacy campaigns.

Rational system theory suggests that organisations will have an established goal or goals and this is particularly essential in the charity field where: ‘non-profit institutions exist for the sake of their mission. They exist to make a difference in society and in the life of the individual’ (Drucker, 1990, p. 33). This extended outcome highlights the importance of goal complexity (section 1.2.2). The goal of organisations fighting poverty, in an international context, is very simple to state but proves to be complex to deliver as the changes which they seek are closely linked to some of the greatest human challenges: ethics, politics, religion, tradition, culture and beliefs about the future. Consequently: ‘the objectives of an enterprise are seldom as clear-cut as they seem’ (Zand, 1981, p. 194).

Despite this caveat: 'while it is not vital that the mission statement be a formal document, it is important that everyone in the NGO is aware broadly of what the mission is and their individual role in achieving it. An organisation that runs as much on idealism as on financial resources (and whose staff may accept low wages in return for a high sense of purpose in what they do) risks great tensions if it makes little attempt to define clearly what that idealism is and to achieve broad support among its staff and supporters for that idealism' (Clark, 1991, p. 42).

One goal that will evolve as the charity continues is that of the organisation's own survival. 'Survival ... is the ultimate constraint for every system. Failure to satisfy it results in the incapacity to pursue any other goal' (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 265). As a result, the 'goals' of a charity to do direct good, to change underlying conditions, and to survive will all exist side-by-side and so require complex decision-making in order to allocate resources to achieve the maximum good. This array of aims can lead to goal conflict. For example, a focus on getting donations has to be balanced with a desire to empower the recipients of aid. 'Conflicts between the operational and fundraising arms are the most frequent manifestations of the tension' (Clark 1991, p. 42).

This requirement for clarity about the organisational goal and resulting objectives, in order to establish a knowledge management programme, has been demonstrated in one survey, that comes to the conclusion: 'It is important to achieve a strategic fit between the KM systems and practices and the organisational objectives they serve. This is a vital element in terms of obtaining better value from investment in these areas' (Truch and Bridger, 2004, p. 20).

These reflections indicate a key question for studying knowledge management: is the practice in alignment with the agreed and acknowledged directions of the organisation? This consideration will be significant to ensure that activities are given a high profile and access to appropriate resources, and that successful outcomes can be assessed against the organisational mission. Such exercises can be problematic in rapidly changing organisations where strategies and priorities are constantly reviewed. The need to align with organisational strategy and goals requires stability as well as clarity. Determining the right balance between different goals will depend on some combination of internal and external power-holders and decision-makers

The natural system model acknowledges a multiplicity of roles for the workforce, which strongly suggests that deciding resource allocation will be more complex than the basic system model so far described implies. For charities it can be said that: 'Humanitarian action is thus grounded simultaneously in an individual ethical imperative to save life or alleviate suffering and a social organisation designed to improve collective conditions of life. The specificity of the "field" of humanitarian action – its internal hierarchies and struggles as well as its always-contested external boundaries – derives from the interface of these two dimensions and not from one alone' (Calhoun, 2008, p. 90).

The complexity introduced clearly points to the importance of the influence of a variety of people on the actual decisions made within an organisation. This is also reflected in the soft systems model: 'If human beings were automata, then the conventional rational model would be adequate but we need a model which incorporates the sheer cussedness and irrationality of human beings as well as their readiness to conform' (Checkland and Howell, 1998, p. 79).

3.1.2 Decision-makers, People and Power

This section considers the people who make, or influence, decisions within the organisation. In a complex organisation, decision-makers will be influenced by too many factors to allow formal rational choices. 'It should be perfectly apparent that almost no decision made by an organisation is the task of a single individual' (Simon, 1976, p. 221). As charities mature, they depend less on a charismatic leader and move into a more 'corporate mode'. This dominance by a range of managers at different levels and with different perspectives indicates that, while the hierarchical management structure sets out the formal rules, decisions on resource allocation is more complex. (The formal management structures of the organisation will be considered later in this chapter.) For the study of knowledge management it will be essential to understand the roles and influences of the people with authority and influence within the organisational context. This section considers some of the features that can be expected to be important in introducing and maintaining knowledge management programmes.

3.1.2.1 The Role of Senior Managers

Senior managers are the official leaders of the organisation where: 'Leading means achieving results by working through other people' (Friedman, 2003, p. 24). For knowledge management to succeed, the most important resource is peoples' time. It is essential that knowledge management practice is aligned to achieving the organisation's goals and that staff are given 'permission' to take time for knowledge or learning activity. If knowledge management is going to bring a changed way of working, support from among the ranks of senior managers is potentially important to provide a power base that can help establish new practices throughout the organisation.

The theme of the necessity for strong leadership support for innovative ways of working has been frequently documented: 'Leadership must provide unequivocal support so as clearly to demonstrate knowledge sharing as a desired and rewarded behaviour' (Harryson, 2000, p. 237). This requirement for 'support from the top' is a commonplace assumption for organisational change. Taking an example from the professional literature on practical advice for knowledge management implementation, leaders must: 'Walk the talk. They have an important role to play, therefore, in developing a culture that supports knowledge management and sharing' (Rumizen, 2002, p. 177).

A powerful indicator of positive leadership for knowledge management is for personal performance measures and reward systems to include knowledge or learning as an explicitly stated work objective. In that way, pressure to deliver knowledge management programmes is driven from the top of the hierarchy. At the highest level this may include the use of 'Corporate Indicators', or similar publicly advertised measures of goal achievement.

Management author, Peter Drucker, identifies that the knowledge economy requires: 'a rethinking of authority and decision structures. It also requires a change in the role of top management' (Drucker, 1994, p. 361). This comment provides an interesting perspective for assessing whether knowledge management is having a sustained impact on the host organisation. To be effective, knowledge management must not only involve people at all levels, but it may also alter leadership and current power alignments. Ideas that can lead to innovation and creativity are not easily commanded and require the voluntary enthusiasm of willing participants. Hence, Drucker indicates, traditional command and control will be less appropriate to making best use of the knowledge assets of all staff and so the support for knowledge management may also require some surrendering or limiting its own power.

3.1.2.2 Middle Management and Other Staff Roles

Middle managers also play a role in implementing knowledge management activities, as has been already indicated (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, section 2.2.3, p. 44). These managers are key players in enabling staff across the organisation to translate operational goals into activity that is clearly aligned with the organisational mission. Therefore the core role of all middle managers, including knowledge management team leaders, who can control or exercise influence, must also be taken into account.

There is also a role for middle managers and other staff to become champions for knowledge management, where the new ways of working might otherwise be resisted. ‘Such champions are important, not just in terms of what they actually do, but also in terms of how they are seen by others – they act as symbols for celebrating successes’ (Newell et al, 2002, p. 179).

This value is corroborated by authors specifically looking at voluntary organisations: ‘In addition, there is a need for high performing “knowledge management champions” at every level and/or functional area to motivate, reaffirm and most importantly, model desired behaviours when the knowledge management programme implementation gets either tough or confused’ (Hume and Hume, 2007, p. 132). Champions can even reverse the effects of a lack of leadership from the top: ‘While managers mulled over how to put this genie back in the bottle, champions for change were stepping forward from all over the organisation’ (Willett, 2000, p. 254).

Knowledge management will itself have a leader, or leadership team, and the status of this person or group and their access to influence staff across the organisation will be an element of their power to create change. Their success may depend on their role within the organisation and the position in the hierarchy.

As knowledge is a key resource for making decisions confidently, how much knowledge management is altering power relationships may be indicative of its impact on the organisation. 'The widespread focus on knowledge has brought with it some interesting questions about sources of value and power in organisational life' (Mutch, 2008, p. 3).

The most negative indicator for the effectiveness of knowledge management can therefore be demonstrated by lack of interest, debate or mention of knowledge in the discourse within the organisation. In an international development charity, knowledge work can be expected to affect all staff. 'With information increasingly accessible thanks to the development of networked computing, digital storage mechanisms and, of course, the Internet, knowledge work now defines the job descriptions of enterprise employees at nearly all levels' (Chadran, 2007, p. 5).

Workers have become more mobile as the charity field has grown more mature. Rather than a life-long loyalty to one organisation, there is a constant movement both between different charities and between charities and other sectors. These workers may not be motivated solely by financial rewards, but the picture is complex: 'The professionalization of the sector and the attempt to retain highly valued staff and attract employees from the private sector has introduced familiar rewards into the contemporary humanitarian sector. Salaries, benefit packages, and pensions have become competitive. Humanitarianism might not be a career like any other, but for many it is increasingly a profession as well as an avocation' (Barnett and Weiss, 2008, p. 12). A study of knowledge management needs therefore not only to consider the role of senior leaders and managers but also investigate how employees themselves view the practices and how well they consider them to be supportive of their work.

3.1.3 Structure

This section considers how knowledge management may affect and be affected by formal structures, described as: ‘this internal differentiation and patterning of relationships’ (Thompson, 1967, p. 51).

In order to operate with wide international reach, every international organisation will have a complex formal structure. The purpose is to allow job specialisation with appropriate coordination across national boundaries. Traditionally this workload was enacted through a hierarchy, with a pinnacle where a chief executive, supported by a leadership team of senior managers, has formal responsibility to lead and control the organisation. This general pattern holds true for almost all organisations in the voluntary sector even where they have different religious, political, or other inspirations. To allow international reach, there will be some parts of the organisation located geographically apart and command structures will be set up to manage these long-distance relationships.

With its focus on knowledge-sharing, knowledge management implementation can be presented as a method to reduce the negative impact of tightly controlled organisational sub-empires, or ‘silos’, and instead to introduce a much more cross-organisational and outward-looking focus. ‘New technologies undo rigid hierarchical corporate structures; and facilitate more direct and democratic modes of reporting, information-sharing and problem-solving’ (Chadran, 2007, p. 4). However, this change may run counter to power lines in the organisation. The benefit of increasing knowledge sharing and networking may have costs in terms of losing the simplicity and clear lines of accountability that form the rationale for hierarchical structures.

One interesting issue is the question of where the knowledge manager, or the knowledge management team, fits within an organisational structure. It is not widely discussed in the literature, which tends to focus on what programmes of activity will take place, rather than the structures that will enable the programmes to be effective. The structure may or may not include a knowledge management unit, which can be placed somewhere from among a variety of possible options; for example as part of a policy unit; the personnel function; or linked to the support services for the central core of operations. The purpose of a dedicated unit is to foster the knowledge management climate but its success will depend on how well it is itself supported and provided with access across the formal structure.

‘There is a danger in the practice of knowledge management: that managing knowledge will be perceived as an end in itself, creating an internal bureaucracy focused on knowledge creation, acquisition, storage and retrieval – a set of activities often grouped under the heading “the knowledge management process”’ (Ruggles and Little, 2000, p. 239). A relevant factor for a study of knowledge management is therefore to identify how well the responsible team fits within the organisational structure.

One of the key features of modern international development charities is that they currently tend to be involved in cycles of restructuring activity. The high incidence of structural changes among members’ organisations has been observed anecdotally at the Organisational Learning Network meetings, in BOND (the British Overseas Non-Governmental Organisations for Development) (section 1.2 p. 27), when delegates discuss current changes in their organisations.

It should be noted however, that this pattern is not confined to this organisational population and reflects the wider sectoral and economic context, as shown in this comment on a case study from the commercial sector: 'Their organisational structure changed so often (an average of one major restructuring every 18 months)' (Lambe, 2007, p. 172).

Restructuring may be carried out for a variety of motives; some of which will be formally stated and some that may be less obvious. Altering structure to allow more openness to learning from partners and for better communication would appear to be supportive of knowledge management implementation. In other cases, a restructuring process can be negative as it may reflect internal politics and 'empire building' or even act as a way to avoid genuine adaptation to new challenges. Even a well-intentioned restructure has high costs in terms of time and potential staff losses and can be problematic for a team attempting to enable innovation. Good 'organisational fit' may be more difficult to sustain without a permanent place in the hierarchical structure.

3.1.4 Technology

Chapter two has already identified technology-led processes as relevant to knowledge management (section 2.2.5). They are shared by all modern organisations and have a major role in shaping how people work together and how productive they are. The majority of organisations that implement knowledge management do look for reliable and appropriate technology systems as part of the drive to manage knowledge more effectively.

Looking at the role of technology as part of the organisational system in the international development sector is not a straightforward success story. The following quotation draws attention to some of the factors associated with this.

‘This has particularly been the case for outputs from some - not all - international development agencies. A number of factors among agency staff may explain the emergence of this viewpoint. They include naivety about ICTs, desire for career advancement, pressure from ICT vendors, a lack of alternatives to the trends/fads of the Northern private sector, and pressure from political masters for quick solutions to development problems. The viewpoint also emanates from those seeking funds or guidance from the development agencies. They tend to mimic the views and messages of those agencies’ (Heeks, 2002, p. 4).

In the context of a study of international development charities, there is also an added complication. These charities work in areas where communications technology is severely hampered by lack of local infrastructure. Access to the web can be expensive in much of Africa, for example, while unreliable power supplies and phone services put ICT services at risk in many locations. Technology as a tool for knowledge management may demand creative solutions to allow IT benefits that do not marginalize those with less access to sophisticated technology.

International development charities may try to avoid this challenge, but a knowledge management focus can encourage more emphasis on building technology capacity to reach people in remote areas. The Internet can be a medium for ensuring that information is not withheld from any group of people due to poverty, geographical location or, to some extent, education, although language remains one hindrance to open access. It has been said that:

‘On the one hand, the Internet is simply a tool: it happens to be a very fast means of distributing information – from one desk to the next, or across town or around the world. On the other hand, the Internet ruthlessly squeezes out inefficiency. Indeed the Internet is shaking up entire business categories, forcing companies to reinvent themselves and enabling the ordinary individual to accomplish extraordinary tasks’ (Pieterse, 2002, p. 13).

There are many examples of new technology opening up knowledge sources to people in different geographic locations, with the economic growth of countries such as China, Brazil and India dominating discourse on power relations on the world stage and the ability of technology to allow countries to make huge changes to their economies (section 1.1.1, p. 15).

It would seem appropriate for international development charities to ensure, as part of their remit, that these knowledge opportunities are seized and the best possible use made of them. Therefore the contribution of technology to a knowledge management programme will be an important focus for study.

3.1.5 Organisational Culture

Chapter two also introduced the relevance of ‘culture’ to knowledge management and looked at the relationship of organisation and national cultures (section 2.2.6, p. 49). This section extends the discussion to investigate ‘culture’ as the informal working of the organisational system that contrasts with the formal decision-making processes of the rational system model. It raises two pertinent issues for a study of knowledge management in international development charities.

Formal systems are: ‘the lines of organisation, the governing policies, the rules and regulations, the patterns of behaviour, of a specific organisation. Though much of this is recorded in writing in any organisation and can be studied, much is “unwritten law” and can chiefly be learned by intimate observation and experience’ (Barnard, 1976, p. xliv). These informal communications require an understanding beyond that of the hierarchical structures and official communication channels. How knowledge management will interact with the informal assumptions, relationships and communications that form the organisational culture within the system poses extra issues for international development charities:

- Is the purpose of knowledge management to change culture and, if so, how does it do this?
- Does the idea of imposing a new culture violate the charitable ethos of treating others’ culture with respect?

In practitioner texts, it is made explicit that knowledge management will impact on organisational culture. For example, 'successful knowledge management is therefore often highly dependent on cultural change' (Kelleher and Levene, 2001, p. 38). Indeed this change is frequently named as the purpose of their programmes.

The issue of changing culture implies the intentional movement towards cultural forms that are better than those in place before. Changing culture can be acceptable: 'In this regard, culture is not an exogenous monolithic force imprinting itself on society, but is constructed on a continuous basis as individuals navigate, understand and act in organisations' (Nakata, 2009, p. 13). This view chimes with the views of culture presented above, namely that culture can change and evolve with the world around it (section 2.2.6, p. 50). However, in this specific organisational population, the suggestion that knowledge management will change cultures to something 'better' raises ethical questions about the dominance of aid agencies and their lack of adaptation to local cultures. Changing cultures may run counter to the need to respect local cultures that is embodied in the charity's values.

This tension is well demonstrated by one specific aspect of culture, language differences. The difference may prove an important inhibitor, building divisions between people and adding to the complexity of sharing knowledge across geographic boundaries. It is unlikely that 'changing culture' is ever interpreted as including getting everyone to use the same language, as this is clearly hostile to local cultures. So how knowledge management programmes deal with different languages may epitomise how they handle the difficult issues associated with improving local organisational cultures to something more favourable for knowledge management.

‘The critical caveat is that the most valuable knowledge is complex, tacit and deeply embedded in each other’s cultural context’ (Brannen, 2009, p. 96). If knowledge management needs cultural ‘improvements’ in order to flourish, is there any reason to think international development charities will provide this? It has been suggested:

‘According to the case study, NPOs (Non Profit Organisations) seem to be influenced by the ethical or cultural way of thinking of the particular historical - social context in which they were created and operate. These roots influence the KM process, creating a culture more or less favourable to the introduction of ad-hoc knowledge management solutions’ (Lettieri et al, 2004, p.29)

The operation of a common technological culture chimes with the view that one global organisational culture will dominate over local cultures. This view may be the case for large multinationals that can impose some variant of an international, predominantly English-speaking, business culture. International development charities are more culturally differentiated. They will have many functional teams and geographic locations, and will be committed to respecting local ways of working. A study of knowledge management must consider the quality of culture, or cultures, as programmes are designed, implemented and evaluated. The study will not be complete without investigating the relationship of practice to organisational cultures and the cultures of the external environment.

3.1.6 The External Environment

This section looks at the external environment, as indicated in the open system model, to see how it will condition knowledge management practice. The most powerful external forces that may affect charities’ knowledge management programmes are considered:

- institutional donors and governments;
- public opinion as represented by the media;
- partners and poor or disadvantaged people;
- employee boundary issues;
- relationships with other charities.

3.1.6.1 Institutional Donors and Governments

A charity's resources are dependent on donors, some of which can be very large and powerful. Decisions made have to reflect the external goals and requirements of donors as well as internally generated ones. Governments and powerful multilateral agencies do more than simply provide funds. They frequently set conditions. They also require feedback on the results of their donations, and such feedback frequently entails a heavy information-processing workload. Donors may also endorse an ideology that will be difficult for a recipient charity to ignore. These practical realities undoubtedly also impact upon knowledge management.

Linking to the issues of assessing value for international development charities, the donors' influence is noted, and not always positively: 'One large aid project is much easier and cheaper for the donors to monitor than a large number of more productive small projects' (Snowdon, 2007, p. 127). Governments also provide legal frameworks within which charities have to fit their work, for example charities working in the UK have to be registered with the Charity Commission and abide by its requirements.

3.1.6.2 Public Opinion and Media Concerns

Fundraising organisations need many donors and this requirement means that they have to monitor how they are viewed within the media relevant to the locations where they raise funds. The powerful influence of large political donors and scrutiny by the international media will influence the whole sector through patterns of regulation and reporting requirements.

As an example:

‘Elsewhere, where funding is not tied, the constant pressure to demonstrate low overheads may also dissuade aid agencies from investing other resources necessary for effective organisational learning. Elsewhere still, competition for funding may induce fabrication of success stories and detract from constructive self-criticism and analysis, when it does not exacerbate the trend to “go cheap” and claim unrealistically low operating overheads’ (Serrat, 2009, p. 4).

This useful reminder emphasises that the goal of survival may not always work seamlessly with other explicit organisational goals.

3.1.6.3 Partners and Poor or Disadvantaged People

The partner organisations that receive or co-produce the outputs of international development charities frequently include governments or other major charities that exert powerful pressure to deliver their preferred outputs. Another environmental force comes from the increasing development consensus that charities must empower recipients, rather than just hand them assistance (section 1.2, p. 23).

This aim requires considerable resources as genuine partnership means adapting to external needs at the point of delivery. To do so provides a tough challenge for knowledge managers, who then have to understand culture in a context far more complex than working with internal culture and sub-cultures, although, as one author comments, from a critical Marxist perspective: ‘The knowledge wants and needs of those in the developed world are always likely to dominate’ (Rikowski, 2007, p. 159). Balancing the pressures from external stakeholders can be expected to form a serious ongoing challenge for international development charities.

3.1.6.4 Employee Boundary Issues

The labour force of a charity poses complex issues about what is within the charity and what its external environment. People can be internal for very temporary stays, with high turnover or with the use of contractors and consultants who belong to external bodies and who work with a range of other organisations. Professional organisations exist to link specialist staff such as fundraisers, or charity IT professionals. Examples include the Institute of Fundraising, UK or the Charities Consortium of IT Directors Group (CCITDG). Inter-charity advocacy groups and alliances also exist.

It is important that knowledge management is not only focused on internal communities, but includes reference to the constant exchanges of ideas and knowledge with regular contacts across boundaries.

3.1.6.5 Relations with Other Charities

One important external relationship for any individual charity is with other charities in this sector.

‘Institutional theory emphasises that organisations are open systems - strongly influenced by their environments - but that it is not only rational or efficiency-based forces that are at work. Socially constructed belief systems and normative rules exercise enormous control over organisations - both how they are structured and how they carry out their work’ (Scott, 1998, p. 117).

Institutional theory suggests that organisations working in the same area will tend, over time, to develop similar ways of working. Such copying comes about as institutions learn from each other, often acquiring similar structures and cultural norms. Indeed, such similar norms and structures may be quickly reproduced across an entire sector. ‘Institutional isomorphism is a useful tool for understanding the politics and ceremony that pervade much modern organisational life’ (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991, p. 66).

This mimetic isomorphism will tend to lead to common human resources policies and pay levels, and similar working conditions, as organisations compete to recruit and retain the best staff. The result will be that the sector tends to move in a body with what is seen and accepted as good practice influencing all the individual entities towards a more standardised bureaucratic 'charity' norm.

Not only are charities moving closer to shared standards between themselves, but they are also deliberately moving closer to the commercial sector. As an example; 'many charity organisations are now turning to charity brand status, not only in terms of a name and logo but also in terms of communicating value and meaning...' (Hankinson, 2001, p. 231).

With management training easily available, management disciplines are also shared widely across sectors as is shown by the increasing take up of knowledge management by the voluntary sector.

As a result of environmental pressures international development charities 'work in cooperative networks with each other, with local NGOs and with international organisations. They consult and lobby governments and international organisations sometimes participating in high level negotiations and diplomacy for global policy development' (Bell and Coicaud, 2006, p. 1). External relationships are therefore an essential part of organisational life and constant boundary scanning is required. A strong incentive to pursue knowledge management exists where an organisation recognises boundary-spanning activity as vital for its own survival.

3.1.7 Summary of Systems Elements

‘How we think about our organisations affects how we treat them: cognitive models have behavioural consequences’ (Scott, 1998, p. 275). This section has used concepts from system models as applied to organisations, to give a grounding in the elements that will affect and in turn be affected by the new ways of working that knowledge management is designed to establish. The elements that have been identified here are instrumental in focusing analysis in chapter six. They include:

- goals plus inputs and outputs;
- decision-making, people and power;
- structure;
- technology;
- culture;
- external environment.

The use of organisational system theory has provided a set of organisational elements as a framework for considering the research question identified in chapter one:

- **How do knowledge management practices impact on the effectiveness of international development charities?**

3.2 Assessing Effectiveness

The first part of this chapter has used organisational system theory to provide a robust framework for identifying how and where knowledge management can impact within organisations. The second part now considers how this impact, once identified, can be assessed for its effectiveness. This will be a central issue as the methods of appraising benefit will determine how to assess what knowledge management brings to the international development charities' task of reducing poverty.

3.2.1 Assessing Development

'For the poor always ye have with you' (The Bible, John, XII 8: 46). This dictum sums up the real difficulty of measuring benefits against the elusive long-term objective of international development charities. The idea of assessing the effectiveness of any single activity against the implausibly huge task facing them is daunting. But even to test against short-term objectives is difficult, when changes for disadvantaged people are frequently closely linked to other variables, such as war or natural disasters, whose results may record more convincingly on the measures (section 1.2.2, p. 26).

Much knowledge management literature depends on examples that demonstrate the value of knowledge management practices. However, there is little data on voluntary organisations. Although management issues in different sectors are likely to be similar, evidence suggests that there is 'a convincing case for the distinctiveness of the management task and context presented by voluntary and non-profit organisations' (Paton and Cornforth, 1992, p. 36).

This reservation makes the published case studies to date less representative of organisational life as a whole and encourages a focus on ‘bottom line’ commercial considerations rather than on a wider view of effectiveness. It is useful to revisit the particular characteristics of international development charities (section 1.2), to see where they can increase the complexity of assessing effectiveness in this organisational population.

3.2.1.1 Complex Goals

Commercial companies have an explicit aim, which is, put simply, to make money for the owners. Money is straightforward to assess and accounting systems have been developed to ensure cross-organisational comparisons can be made with a certain amount of confidence. This approach does not pertain to charities, because financial measures, such as how much funding they receive, though useful, only give a partial indication of the charities’ effectiveness. The level of complexity of organisational goals makes it difficult to find simple measures of the value of work in the voluntary sector. There are ethical issues at stake (what is a good society?) on which people do not invariably agree.

These problems are particularly pertinent when assessing international development charities. To some extent: ‘Until the 1990s aid agencies rarely contemplated whether their actions did more good than harm – they presumed that good intentions were evidence of good outcomes’ (Barnett and Weiss, 2008, p. 13). In the twenty-first century, there has been a strong focus on attempting to measure charity (and public sector) outputs.

3.2.1.2 Multiple Stakeholders and International Reach

The variety of stakeholders for this organisational population adds to the difficulty of assessing value across the organisation rather than simply focusing on one location or group of stakeholders, as the benefits to some may not be seen as benefits to all. There is now far more debate about what are the benefits of the work of these organisations, leading to a focus on 'monitoring and evaluation' to assess the impact of development programmes for reassuring donors that their money is well spent. Given the stringent financial constraints on the not-for-profit sector, this form of audit provides a particular challenge. It is necessary to ensure that there is evidence on which to base practice and prove the organisation's worth without spending too many resources on the measurement itself.

This difficulty is compounded by the fact that the 'customer' or 'client base' for this organisational field does not lend itself to finding simple and controversy-free measures of effectiveness. If the customer base cannot walk away from the organisation serving it, the market-size success indicators often used by commercial sectors will not be relevant.

3.2.1.3 Size and Resources

As a result of these factors, a simple target for charity output may not reflect the complexity of the task and can lead to distorted understanding of what is to be achieved. 'What is needed is a comprehensive set of measures that take into account long-term and short-term objectives, financial and non-financial measures, lagging and leading indicators, and internal and external perspectives' (Tiwana, 2001, p. 67). This ideal measurement system to assess change within a modern organisation may be beyond the range of what is possible for a medium or small charity with limited resources.

Among the most critical decisions to be made when assessing organisational effectiveness is the choice of the measure or indicators to be employed. Without a simple set of measures available, and with a difficult assessment task in hand, it is prudent to consider a variety of different measures, and so some practical options are considered in the next section.

3.2.2 Assessment Methods

Monitoring and evaluation is an important area for charities in the current development climate, where donors look for evidence that their money is being used effectively.

‘Criteria for evaluating organisational effectiveness cannot be produced by some objective apolitical processes. They are always normative and often controversial and they are as varied as the theoretical models used to describe organisations and the constituencies that have some interest in their functioning. Similarly the indicators to be used in assessing organisation effectiveness must be chosen from among several possible types and data gathered from several possible sampling frames’ (Scott, 1998 p. 363).

3.2.2.1 Use of Log-frames

One method of monitoring and control used in this organisational population is included in the ‘log-frame’ project methodology. This is a tool for managing and monitoring development projects, designed to include participation from local partners. There is an intense literature on this subject that has been growing since its development for the US Agency of International Development (UAAID) in 1970. By the 1990s log-frames were widely in use by international aid agencies and NGOs. This could be considered a starting point for assessing organisational effectiveness for change programmes in this sector. However, knowledge management does not mirror the delivery of a development project to beneficiaries and within the group of charities studied in this research, there was no tradition of applying log-frame techniques to their own internal change programmes. As a result, knowledge management programmes are rarely developed using log-frame techniques. The researcher has to look for other assessment methods that reflect the specific situation of these organisations.

Four possible options are now outlined:

- using organisational results;
- proxy measures;
- expert opinion;
- stories.

3.2.3 Using Organisational Results

Commercially focused assessments use financial measures or, where these are not appropriate, 'most companies tend to use non-financial indicators that are already present in the existing measurement system: customer satisfaction, market share, defect rate and so on. This is absolutely normal and indeed commendable' (Roos et al, 1997, p. 75). However this makes it highly complex, if not impossible, to identify the contribution of knowledge management activity. Changes in other variables such as market conditions, the impact of new technology, and contingent political developments may also have contributed to changes in the measurements. Moreover, the longer the timeframe analysed, the less easy it is to attribute success to any one precise activity.

Assessing the benefits to non-commercial organisations immediately runs into a further area of uncertainty. There are no simple measures that match profit or market share for international development charities. Even customer satisfaction can be far more difficult to measure when the client group is disparate and, in crisis situations, probably desperate. They are a group of customers most unlikely to be confident in answering questionnaires or voicing their complaints. 'Management's role is to develop methods to monitor and measure the content of the social processes in such spaces. Analysis would not be about outputs but the quality of the exchanges in terms of the demographics of participants, linguistic analysis and the scope of the conversation' (McKinlay, 2000, p. 120).

For this organisational field, as with the public sector, there is a temptation to identify performance measures that are tangible and easily comparable across organisations, which can be used as a partial way to measure organisational value. This danger can be readily summarized: 'Knowledge has fallen prey to the vocabulary and practices of accounting' (Yakhlef and Salzer-Morling, 2000, p. 21).

Measuring against set output targets is widely used in organisations that are supported or monitored by the UK Government. Opponents of this type of target-setting hold that simplified targets distort the work of the organisation, leading to short-sighted efforts to boost target results. 'Managers and staff have an incentive (indeed they may have come under pressure) to improve performance-as-measured at the expense of intended overall performance' (Paton, 2003, p. 42). The debate this generates can be found in recent UK newspapers and health journals. For example, debate has recently centred on the value of a target for maximum hospital waiting-list times that may displace more appropriate local decisions on the priority for resources (Appleby et al, 2005, p. 167).

For organisations with the complex goal of 'reducing poverty', there is no practical way to bring all the valid requirements into separate targets. The more targets that are set, the higher the cost of monitoring processes, to keep records for each target. While the controversy continues, there is now more recognition of the danger of linking success to simple output target indicators without respecting the complex context of an organisation. 'Typically performance metrics are anecdotal, quantitative or qualitative, but how can you measure such intangibles as communication, collaboration and trust?' (Groff and Jones, 2003, p. 155). For sustainable change in communities far from the organisational headquarters, trust may be a key component of organisational effectiveness that knowledge management aims to deliver.

This study will look at the impact of knowledge management activity on outputs, but with awareness that there are limitations with relying on this method of assessment alone. It is an assessment measure that is appropriate for the simple rational system model where the organisation exists solely to optimise outputs from the inputs available, but one that fails to recognise the complexity that more realistic models, and in particular the soft systems model, acknowledge.

3.2.4 Proxy Measures

The use of appropriate proxy measures can be valuable and very simple to measure. The question then turns to the assumptions on which the choice of proxy measures is based. Examples of proxies could include: the frequency of learning sessions; the longevity of communities of practice; and the participation rates in use of knowledge databases or networks. A more suitable proxy measure for a knowledge management programme could be the extent to which all staff are involved in and take responsibility for the quality of knowledge and information available in the organisation. However, the same problem arises as for performance targets: they may focus on tangible outputs rather than the more subtle changes that lead to long-term capacity building.

It is necessary to test the underlying assumptions. As an example, in the international development charity world, and indeed, in most societies, it is accepted that 'education' is a good thing. As a result, evidence of more education is widely accepted as a benefit. This is despite the fact that there is always a counter-attack from a minority who question the benefits of formal education itself or of any given example of formal education in practice. However, there is still a strong majority consensus that more education can be presented as evidence of increased benefit and this is regularly used as an acceptable measure of success for international development charities.

Using proxies enables the measurement of tangibles such as: ‘the possession of the knowledge, applied experience, organisational technology, customer relationships and professional skills that provide ... a competitive edge in the market’ (Edvinsson and Malone, 1997, p. 44). Recognising the importance of tacit knowledge means that assessing the extent of knowledge may involve measuring intangibles: ‘How can we measure the potential for ideas and products hidden in the brains of individuals?’ (Bertels and Savage, 1998, p. 21). This question acknowledges the tacit nature of knowledge and the importance of ‘knowing in action’, so that measuring them through a proxy may distort focus from the required intangible asset.

For example, measuring the numbers of new users of an application or the amount of data entered into a database is not always reliable as a proxy for real organisational benefit. A common pitfall would be where, for example: ‘organisations fill their databases with useful tips and data and nobody uses them’ (Brown and Duguid, 2006. p. 179). Where there are strong incentives for user participation, a proxy measure can give a positive result where this is not, in fact, the optimal participation level.

Used appropriately, looking at proxy values as suggested by Edvinsson and Malone above, among many, can give a suggestion of the underlying intangibles such as ‘trust’ or ‘ideas hidden in brains’ that could never be assessed using simple output measures, and can therefore be used as a second assessment method, albeit one that has to be used with caution.

3.2.5 Expert Assessment

The essence of knowledge is that it lies in communities and has a value that varies enormously according to context, both at the individual and the organisational level. 'One approach might be therefore to leave the problem of developing metrics to the relevant communities themselves. As long as some sort of agreed measures are developed and used consistently, the organisation will be able to assess whether its store of knowledge is being nurtured and exploited effectively' (Gamble and Blackwell, 2001, p. 204).

This advice is much more in tune with the soft systems model, which recognises goal complexity and the relevance of different perspectives among the people involved in an organisation. It is also very practical and has an added incentive for charities in that it will reduce the costs of measurement. However, it does not lend itself to benchmarking against other organisations, to test if the activity is using resources and time well for the investment involved.

Internal assessment may also be considered open to bias, if those involved in the activity are relied upon to provide the appropriate metrics. In the study *Managing and Measuring Social Enterprises*, Paton points to the difficulty involved in relying on the claims of those whose roles involve responsibility for promoting and maintaining the systems. 'Successes tend to be reported in glowing terms, usually by the 'product champions' while failures and difficulties are almost certainly underreported' (Paton, 2003, p. 10).

The range of perspectives of internal experts is crucial provided that they are able to assess benefits against the wider opportunity-cost of any given activity. In the case of international development charities, experts may not be able to provide an objective set of agreed metrics, but their subjective views can also be considered to build a picture of the value of knowledge management. This is therefore a third method to give a multi-dimensional assessment of effectiveness.

3.2.6 Stories

The recognition of the value of personal perspectives is particularly appropriate to knowledge management, which accepts that some knowledge can be tacit and so not amenable to quantitative measurement techniques. Value may be given to the use of ‘stories’ that provide a personal assessment of what has happened. The criticism that ‘there is only anecdotal evidence’ can be challenged to allow the value of the personal and subjective to be given their place.

An authoritative voice supporting storytelling states that: ‘The idea that storytelling might be important for leadership has been gaining recognition in recent years’ (Denning 2009, p. 15). This technique is not always appropriate in all circumstances. But it may help to humanize big complex arguments and thus help to bridge potential cultural misunderstandings. ‘Storytelling can translate those dry and abstract numbers into compelling pictures of a leader’s goals. I saw this happen at the World Bank – by 2000 we were increasingly recognised as leaders in the area of knowledge management’ (Denning, 2004, p. 123).

In a case study of the multinational firm, Siemens, it is claimed that writing up knowledge management stories has provided 'a learning tool, a way of creating transparency and interpreting, creating, acquiring, developing, transferring and retaining knowledge'. Furthermore, it has demanded that 'due to the narrative style of case studies, case writing is sensitive not only to codified and explicit knowledge but also to the rich experiences and tacit knowledge acquired in the past' (Davenport and Probst, 2002, pp. 312, 315).

Currently, however, the literature, both academic and more practitioner-oriented, lacks stories from international development charities. Exploration of knowledge management in a different organisational population can give value by providing stories to widen the range available, and as a way to identify where organisational effectiveness has been changed.

This review has provided four potential methods for assessing the effectiveness of international development charities. But one further issue has to be tackled. Is knowledge management intended to produce short-term benefits or does its value lie in building organisational capacity that results in longer-term benefits, which may easily be missed by only looking at the immediate impact of the practices?

3.2.7 Choosing Timeframes

Knowledge management is presented as having two, not always compatible, functions. In the academic literature, it is mainly viewed as a response to major changes in the environment, and, in this role, it must be assessed in the context of its effectiveness as a long-term investment. However, practitioners of knowledge management are encouraged to see it as a source of short-term benefits.

There are many examples of evidence produced for cost savings or innovations resulting from knowledge management programmes that relate to ‘quick wins’, where knowledge management is not yet mature enough for it to be possible to establish beyond doubt, its long-term validity. An example of the short-term claims for knowledge management has already been noted (Collison and Parcell, 2004, section 2.3, p. 53).

Looking at the organisational field of international development: ‘The lack of longer-term and independent M and E [monitoring and evaluation] of such programmes hides the true impact of many interventions ... accountability both to sponsoring organisations and to affected populations is poorly served by ignoring the longer-term aspect’ (Pratt, 2003, p. 105). Assessing results before the work is mature may fail to identify benefits unique to innovations like knowledge management initiatives. It is a failing noted in simple systems models when applied to organisations, that timeframes are not explicitly recognised and this may increase the tendency to focus on short-term output measures. Using the insights of soft system thinking restores an emphasis on the complexity of organisational goals, including the need to sustain the organisation in the longer term.

This issue of choosing appropriate timeframes for assessing the results of knowledge management therefore becomes an important theme of this study. Achieving rapid results in reducing poverty is not simply difficult; it may suggest that something problematic is taking place, as development by definition, must be grounded in the local situation.

An interesting illustration of unsustainable poverty reduction, which does not involve significant controversy as it happened without 'development' intervention, is seen in the story of the Pacific island of Nauru, which became sensationally prosperous selling phosphate-rich topsoil in the last years of the twentieth century. Islanders lived in consumer luxury until resources were depleted. 'It's a sorry fall from the 1960s and 70s when phosphate exports brought the 21 sq km republic wild riches. Now the wealth and most of the phosphate is gone' (Clausen, 2004, p. 34). As the economy had no provision to manage its resources, the island has consequently returned to poverty, but with its traditions and culture severely disrupted, and with the additional health and waste problems as the legacy of previous high consumption. As a result of stories such as these, assessing success in this field has been the subject of continuing and voluminous academic debate. A reporting method to monitor benefits over a longer period of time is needed to complement a snapshot perspective. Development is by definition about long-term, sustainable change and may need to be given five or more years to embed, rather than be subjected to an immediate assessment.

3.2.8 Summary

The McKinsey survey discussed earlier (section 2.3, p. 53), suggested that it would become possible to link commercial success to a firm's competence in knowledge management. However demonstrating a causal relationship is still elusive. Organisations that survive and thrive can be recognised, and value then ascribed to their ways of working. But the survey also recognizes that more is needed to establish real links to any one variable as is shown by the comment: 'rather than counting clicks, we looked in more depth at the techniques that managers had put in place to help knowledge management' (Kluge, Stein and Licht, 2001, pp. 19, 20).

This in-depth view claims to provide more information that can help identify what will work in the future, rather than simply what has worked in the past. The premise is also the intention of this study, albeit working within a different organisational population.

This section has discussed four different ways of appraising the impact of knowledge management that look promising for a study of this discipline within international development charities and also identified that, where possible, a timeframe that allows some assessment of sustainability will be most appropriate. This study runs for over five years, thus avoiding instant judgements, but development impact may need longer to embed in ways that can be confidently agreed to be resulting in fundamental positive change, where, indeed, such agreement can be found.

Chapter three has therefore established the framework for interpreting the specific organisational context for knowledge management, together with assessment methods to provide answers to the research questions as established in chapter one:

- **How do knowledge management practices impact on the effectiveness of international development charities?**
- **How is knowledge management practised in this sector and how does it reflect mainstream theory?**
- **How was the transfer to the new context affected and does it look as if it will embed there?**

The study is now ready to identify an appropriate methodology for gathering data to give practical evidence of knowledge management in action, as explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. The Research Methodology

‘Researchers should design the study according to the research question they seek to answer’ (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 42). The research question explores ‘how do knowledge management practices impact on the effectiveness of international development charities?’ The first two chapters provided relevant information on knowledge management and international development charities. Chapter three set out a framework that would support an investigation into the organisational impact of knowledge management activity and discussed approaches to establishing ‘effectiveness’ in this sector. From these foundations, chapter four develops the appropriate research methodology.

It is presented in six parts:

4.1 Unit of Analysis;

4.2 The Research Method;

4.3 Data Collection Methods;

4.4 Pilot Study;

4.5 Criteria for Judging the Quality of Research Design;

4.6 Interim Conclusion.

4.1 The Unit of Analysis

In order to collect appropriate information on the three research questions that have been set out earlier (section 1.3), it is necessary to define a unit of analysis where ‘the definition of the unit of analysis (and therefore the case) is related to the way the initial research questions have been defined’ (Yin, 1994, p. 22).

Given the focus of research on practical knowledge management, the unit of analysis that can be derived is a 'programme of knowledge management activities' as found within international development charities. This choice matches the view that 'events and activities can also be viewed as the units of analysis in case studies' (Bryman, 1989, p. 171).

In chapter two, the criteria to identify the characteristics of a knowledge management programme were established (section 2.2.8, p. 52) The programme will include both the perspective on knowledge as a key organisational resource as well as a set of practices that enable the organisation to use its resources to enhance its own productive opportunity. The set of practices can involve learning; knowledge creation; or communities of practice; as well as technology solutions; and 'cultural interventions'.

Knowledge management should not be confused with information management in the traditional sense of establishing information libraries, with classification and access systems. Similarly, use of an information technology tool, such as an intranet or document management system, cannot be taken in itself as an instance of knowledge management. Knowledge management has been characterised by its complexity, frequently linked to the 'people, process, and technology approach'.

'In short what makes managing knowledge a challenge is that it is not an object that can be stored, owned and moved around like a piece of equipment or a document. It resides in the skills, understanding and relationships of its members as well as the tools, documents and processes that embody aspects of this knowledge. Companies must manage the knowledge in ways that do not merely reduce it to an object' (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002, p. 11).

Another key requirement of a knowledge management programme has been identified using the 'Knowing in Action' model (Cook and Brown, 2002, section 2.1.4 and figure 2.1). Knowledge management has to address both explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge, group and individual knowledge and also the act of knowing or 'knowing in action'. To identify knowledge management activity, therefore, it must be possible to see people as the centre of the activity rather than focusing on the production and circulation of written documents or records. There must be evidence of human knowledge, learning and the application of this learning at the core of knowledge management. Any claims to be 'doing knowledge management' must be tested against the commitment as to how knowledge assets are used, rather than simply how they are stored.

There must be evidence that the knowledge management activities are part of an attempt to introduce a 'new way of working', commonly identified as 'changing culture' and not simply isolated information tasks or communication projects. The research methodology therefore has to allow sufficient data collection to demonstrate this condition adequately.

'To capitalise on knowledge, an organisation must be swift in balancing its knowledge management activities. In general, such a balancing act requires changes in organisational culture, technologies and techniques... It is, rather, the interaction between technology, techniques and people that allow an organisation to manage its knowledge effectively' (Bhatt, 2001, p. 68).

Once knowledge management activity is identified, the challenge is to assess whether it impacts on the effectiveness of the organisation. The method chosen, given the difficulties of locating success criteria for the sector, must involve adequate data collection for demonstrating changes to effectiveness, while also showing that this usage is an appropriate way to achieve the results, rather than more effective alternative ways to use resources.

The survey quoted in chapter two (section 2.3, p. 53), used the following criteria for measuring effectiveness: development and throughput time reduced; innovation rate; financial performance; and growth in sales and the return on sales ratio. The research methodology has to look more deeply to assess effectiveness in a sector where these process and output figures do not exist and where long-term trends are much less easy to establish.

One of the ways to pinpoint success in not-for-profit organisations with wide ‘community benefit’ goals, is to take the judgements of interested parties where a range of views can be accessed (section 3.2.5). The views of project champions on their own are insufficient. The need for such a range of opinions points to a methodology that gives sufficient room for collecting differing perspectives on the activity and its outcomes. In order to achieve appropriate breadth and depth, the research will have to investigate the phenomena at length, and where possible follow-up these findings so that potentially valuable patterns in the data can be traced over an extended time period, in this case, of over five years. For international development charities, data also has to reflect perspectives from more locations than simply the home base.

4.2 The Research Method

‘The method chosen to collect evidence in a research study represents a major influence on the *kind* of result which may be obtained’ (Griseri, 2002, p. 8). With this point in mind, and referring to research texts, it is possible to eliminate some of the most common techniques.

Table of techniques based on that created by Galliers (Galliers, 1992, p. 146)

Research approaches	
Field or Lab Experiments	See below
Surveys	See below
Case Studies	See below
Action Research	See below
Longitudinal	See below – section 4.3.5
<i>Descriptive / interpretive</i>	<i>(only elements appropriate)</i>
<i>Subjective /argumentative</i>	<i>(only elements appropriate)</i>
<i>Empirical</i>	<i>(only elements appropriate)</i>
<i>Reviews</i>	<i>(only elements appropriate)</i>
Theorem proof	N/A
Engineering	N/A
Forecasting / futures research	N/A
Simulation	N/A

Controlled experimentation is not possible as it is not practical to attempt to get international development charities to try out a ‘new way of working’, unless they are convinced it will give valuable benefits to their funders. ‘Field experiments are aimed at understanding how intervention of some type influences behaviour in a natural setting’ (Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1985, p. 127). However, it is not feasible to intervene in this way, holding stable the necessary variables within the resources of this research project, if indeed, it could be possible at all in this field. Knowledge management activity is enacted within a wider, ever-changing environment where there are too many variables to control.

Looking at the complexity of knowledge and ‘knowing in action’, where complex interactions are predicted between tacit and explicit knowledge in the minds of individuals and in collective group knowledge, the survey method can also be eliminated as providing insufficient depth. ‘The purpose of the survey is to produce statistics - that is quantitative or numerical descriptions of some aspect of the study population’ (Fowler, 1984, p. 9). However, knowledge management activity in different organisations is very diverse. Using this method would not produce data to answer the research question for this study, which intends to assess the quality of knowledge management activity.

Given the difficulty of defining knowledge management and then identifying its impact on organisational effectiveness, for a study to give confidence requires more detailed investigation into the activity and the context in which it is being enacted. Although this study builds from surveys run in the international development charity sector (Ramalingam, 2004), it aims to get a much richer picture of actual practice to answer the research questions.

Indeed this is one of the suggestions in the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) paper on Knowledge Strategies in this sector. 'The current analysis may be deepened by setting up and undertaking interviews to flesh out the non-interview based case studies. There is also much potential for broadening of the analysis already undertaken, by following up organisations that have not been included but who were nevertheless interested in participating' (Ramalingam, 2004, p. 2).

Hence to gain a rounded view of a knowledge management programme, it is necessary to increase the scope beyond the activity, to let the research include the wide range of possible influences that can play their part in any change process.

One option would be action research, where the researcher becomes deeply involved in working with and monitoring an example of knowledge management practice. This can be a powerful way of getting 'under the skin' of how organisations change. However, this research is not appropriately resourced for this type of intense direct involvement, and instead offers an opportunity for involvement over a longer period of time.

Other techniques identified by Galliers, such as theorem proof, engineering, forecasting / futures research, and simulation, are not applicable to the questions identified here.

4.2.1 Case Study Approach

The selected methodology for research into knowledge management in this organisational population is the case study approach. Much of the rationale for choosing this methodology is based on the classic work on case studies by Robert Yin. He advocates the use of case studies in the following terms. ‘The case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context’ (Yin, 1993, p. 3). The study of knowledge management activity includes phenomena that are multi-faceted and complex. The impossibility of looking at knowledge management activity, set apart from its context, suggests that the case study is a method that provides a suitable approach for capturing significant research evidence. Where evaluation of activities will depend on the judgement of a variety of ‘expert’ witnesses, the survey will not be an appropriate instrument.

In order to use the case study approach, certain decisions have to be taken. These include whether to research one or many cases and how the most appropriate case, or cases, can be identified. For the current purpose, the nature of the study does provide some positive indications: researching knowledge management in international development charities requires the identification of those organisations within the sector that claim to undertake knowledge management activity. One of the possible selection choices suggested in the literature is to look for an exemplary case or cases (Yin, 1993, p. 12). The study therefore takes as its focus, charities that claim, or are claimed to be, exemplary in this field. A single case can provide data to identify information relevant to the research questions. However, it is problematic to derive general conclusions from only one case. There is always the fear that the chosen unit for study was an exception to any general pattern. By replicating the case study, conditions are identified in different circumstances so that any conclusions can be re-tested.

The organisations chosen for this study all have some track record (that is, acknowledged achievement in implementing knowledge management), so that the research has been undertaken with reasonable expectation of some substantive knowledge management activity to investigate. The first case study is used as a model for the subsequent two case studies, so that findings from that study are re-tested to see if consistent patterns are observed. Where information from the first cases indicates that associations can be made with positive organisational impacts, this does not necessarily imply causality, as there can be other explanations for such links. To attribute the benefits to knowledge management, the research data has sought to explore linkages from the knowledge management initiatives through the key aspects of organisational functioning to the achievement of positive results (sections 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2).

4.3 Data Collection Methods

The research is based around three data collection instruments. These are: interviews; collection of documents and artefacts; and observations. It is recognised that each of these is imperfect in some ways. Taken together, however, they add up to a more complete view of the programme of knowledge management activities that are the focus of investigation.

4.3.1 Interviews

The core research method is the use of interviews. Ten people with a range of links to knowledge management activity were identified for each case study. The purpose of the interview is to learn facts about the activity but also to gain understanding of the interaction of the interviewee with these facts. Using the approach advocated in the concept of an 'Active Interview', the interviewer's role is to help to develop the ideas that the interviewee wants to communicate, rather than taking a passive role.

‘Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge – treasuries of information awaiting excavation – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p. 4). In this way the interviewer is expected to take a more active role in developing the ‘sense-making’ of the conversation. The interview questions were carefully tailored to elicit the interest of the respondent and to avoid asking only questions that focused on the more abstract idea of ‘knowledge management’. However, they were based around the set of system characteristics already detailed (section 3.1). These issues were easily understood by all interviewees as part of their regular working lives, so that they would engage with the questions.

‘A question can be hard to answer, even though the meaning is entirely clear if the respondent has not previously packaged the information in the way the question demands ... It continues to be easy, nevertheless, to ask people questions we want to know, rather than ones they are able to answer’ (Converse and Presser, 1994, p. 139). Details of the interview questions are available in Appendix 1. The interview was presented as an opportunity to share experience with other charities, in order to help establish the interview as a valuable use of work time.

The research includes interviews with the knowledge management project leader, or leaders, to get detailed and personal views of the purpose and scope of the knowledge management activity. By also posing questions to a range of other people who are less involved in the activity, or perhaps sceptical about it, the views of the project team can be weighed against other perspectives. The range of interviewees includes at least one senior manager, so that knowledge management activities are also assessed by someone with an organisational perspective, to test if the activity is believed to relate closely to organisational purpose and goals (section 3.1.1), and to be worthwhile from the perspective of the organisation’s strategic direction.

The range of roles include:

- knowledge management team member or project participant;
- staff with an operations role;
- functional role such as Head of Technology, Finance or Human Resources;
- staff with an external communication role;
- senior manager with an organisational leadership role;
- interviewees who represent an international perspective.

The researcher asks questions from a pre-organised question list, in a structured interview format. This structuring of the questions ensures that the interaction is a ‘focused interview’ where the conversation keeps within the intended subject area. ‘A distinctive prerequisite of the focused interview is a prior analysis of a situation in which subjects have been involved’ (Merton et al, 1990, p. 4). (For further details, see Appendix 1).

The interview format does, however, allow follow-up questions in areas of particular expertise or interest shown by the interviewee so that the person is able to talk freely about their perspectives on the knowledge management activity, without losing focus on the information requirements of the study. The technique follows the idea that ‘probably the central value of the interview as a research procedure is that it allows both parties to explore the meaning of the questions and answers involved. There is an implicit or explicit sharing and/or negotiation of understanding in the interview situation, which is not so central, and often not present, in other research procedures’ (Brenner et al, 1985, p. 3). This two-way interaction is the key to the value of the case study approach, where the complexity of the unit of analysis can render a more superficial data collection tool inadequate.

Interviewers are advised to tape all interviews at the time to avoid mishearing or accidental changing of the substance of the interview. The interviewer 'records for future analysis not only what is said but the related interactional details of how the interview was accomplished' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p. 78). In most of the interviews tape recordings are used, but this was not always possible. As a result, the interviews include those with verbatim accounts and those based on notes handwritten at the time. (See Appendix 2 for details of the original schedule of interviews).

The interviews are particularly important for engaging with 'expert opinion', to get a sense of the evaluation of the programmes as they are being enacted, from the people most affected by the knowledge management programme. 'Stories' may also exist that demonstrate the value delivered, or perhaps the failure to deliver.

4.3.2 Documentation and Records

Although interviews provide the main data for analysis, documents and records are also valuable for a knowledge management case study in order to avoid reliance on only one source. 'While most studies... seem to use interviews, other researchers have collected public written statements in order to uncover managerial belief systems' (Porac et al, 2002, p. 117). Documents can provide evidence of formal intentions and 'official beliefs' and so are a resource for identifying key concepts for the study such as the coherence of the knowledge management programme, essential for confirming that knowledge management techniques are not being used in isolation (section 2.2.8). Formal records can also demonstrate alignment of knowledge management with the organisational goals, the impact of the leadership, the intentions behind technology innovation, and aspects of organisational culture (sections 3.1.4 and 3.1.5). A database of documents provided by the organisations is included in the data set. Where a document is confidential and not available for general viewing, this is noted.

Documents collected in the database include:

- vision and mission statements;
- knowledge management strategy or planning documents;
- meeting notes, agendas and associated routine documents;
- other project documentation such as updates and progress reports;
- related information such as linked strategies.

4.3.3 Observation

The research includes notes from direct observation of knowledge management activity where it was possible to attend simply as an observer. This procedure was arranged so that data was included from the opportunity to experience at first-hand some of the tasks performed. Evidence of actual practice throws light on the interview reports, as the same people are observed when they are actively involved in knowledge management as well as when they are reflecting on it. Observation is not used directly to assess the knowledge management programme, nor its impact. It is valuable to give a more rounded picture of the organisational culture and to confirm or question the ideas presented about other ‘people-related’ aspects of the organisation such as leadership, management and the role of champions (section 3.1.2).

Observation notes include:

- communication meetings;
- project meetings and training sessions;
- relevant activities including an intranet launch, demonstration and a celebration.

The researcher has produced notes where there is evidence relevant to the research questions and these are included in the database. It is important to be aware that human fallibility means that observation has to be treated with great caution. Where possible, observation notes have been tested against the views of participants or other observers, so that bias or human error has been reduced. Another possible problem is the danger that the subject of observation may be influenced by the process itself. 'A major difficulty in data collection pertains to the individuals' awareness of being studied' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p. 97). As a result of these limitations, observational data is only used as back-up information for evidence taken from other sources.

4.3.4 Organising the Data

The results of the three case studies are organised into tables containing the record of interview conversations, documents and observations. Information on all the data collection and tables of results can be found in the Appendices at the end of the study.

Good practice in data analysis recommends the use of tabular forms: 'in the course of our work we have become convinced that better displays are a major avenue to valid qualitative analysis. The displays discussed... include many types of matrices, graphs, networks and charts. All are designed to assemble organised information in an immediately accessible, compact form so that the analyst can see what is happening' (Miles and Huberman 1984, p. 21). Following this advice, the interview notes are re-assembled into tables of relevant quotations and stories to facilitate relating the data to the three research questions. (These are shown in Appendix 4).

4.3.5 The Longitudinal Dimension

Each case study included several follow-up visits, and information about these can be found in Appendix 3. These visits did not replicate the original case study and were not intended to do so. Their aim was rather to confirm the continuing existence of the programmes, to gain additional information about their ramifications, and to observe them in a longitudinal context. It should be stressed that gaining more than a single ‘snapshot’ view of any programme is vital.

At this point, it should be noted that some authorities have expressed doubts. ‘It seems fairly clear that to use the term longitudinal for research projects is to exclude case studies’ (Schulsinger et al, 1981, p. 21). Changes over time may alter some of the context; and simple replication of data collection may become difficult. However, these criticisms are not relevant for this study – and appear to throw doubt on the value of long-term observations. For this study, the continuation in post of each of the main contacts at the three charities meant that regular visits were possible to find out, through a formal update, that the activity identified in the original case studies was still operational. This long-term perspective was highly important in assessing the worth or otherwise of these programmes.

4.4 Pilot Study

The research was based on a small pilot activity, where the data collection instruments were tested. The data from this test is not included in the study results as the only output was assessment of skills and learning from practice in case study methods. Knowledge gained in this pilot was then carried over into the three case studies, which are all based in different organisations. This pilot was carried out in the researcher’s own place of work, itself an international development charity.

4.4.1 Pilot Interviews

Five interviews were carried out to test interviewing strategies and skills, using appropriate colleagues, with status, interest and outlook similar to potential interviewees for the case studies. The purpose of these brief and mainly informal interviews was to practise skills in setting up the interview, using pre-planned set questions, and the use of notes and tape recordings to keep a record of the results of the interview. This prior practice provided the opportunity to assess skills and new techniques in an arena where it was possible to get immediate and frank but constructive feedback, based on the understanding that: 'Interviewing is one of the most complex measuring techniques' (Dooley, 1990. p. 107).

The pilot also enabled the assessment of the types of responses that were likely to follow from interview questions and styles, when conducted with a suitable group of interviewees. The result was that, in this highly artificial setting, colleagues were unembarrassed and talked lengthily and with animation about the potentially abstract topics raised. The main difficulty was shaping the interview, especially as interviewees were liable to interpret questions in ways that suited their interests, rather than the purpose of the interview. This element of improvisation led to the abandonment of the original plan to have set wording for questions. Instead, there was an opportunity to test a wider range of questions, used in a more conversational style, that picked up language and meaning from previous responses.

In conclusion, the pilot interviews were useful in building confidence for the three case studies that followed. The results indicated that interviews could be a powerful method of eliciting data but they need flexible handling.

4.4.2 Pilot Documentation

Collection of relevant documentation was expected to be a straightforward matter. The organisation used for the pilot study has an internal 'Learning Organisation Group'. It was therefore possible to identify a range of documentation relevant to the formal case study method. However, documentation was more difficult to establish than expected. Although the main information - including strategy statements and formal objectives - was available, many decisions are made in meetings without any formal methods for capturing or saving the results. This challenged the simple assumption that documentation would be available for reference.

4.4.3 Pilot Observation

Within routine work, it was possible to practise an observer's role. The main observations for the pilot were therefore made at the Learning Organisation Group 'shared lunch'. Notes were collated from the discussion that took place. The limited amount of observation that took place was satisfactory. Nevertheless, the researcher was able to identify some of the difficulties of classifying and organising evidence associated with this process, in a situation where the researcher was not able to control the elements of the activity observed.

The pilot provided a useful practical experience of techniques for the case study approach on which to base actual practice in the three case studies that followed.

4.5 Criteria for Judging the Quality of Research Design

In order to ensure case studies meet acceptable standards, certain criteria have to be met. To establish credibility, researchers have to show that their work is both reliable and valid.

‘Reliability can be judged by the consistency of scores. Is there agreement between parallel forms of a measure or between different parts of the same measure or between different raters using a measure?’ It is therefore necessary to test for validity: ‘Validity means that the measure taps the characteristic it is supposed to tap.’ ... ‘An unreliable measure may be highly reliable.’ ... ‘Unfortunately it is measuring the wrong construct’ (Dooley, 1990, pp. 82, 87). Yin also takes a view on establishing agreed standards for data collection quality and sets out four tests. These ‘have been commonly used to establish the quality of any empirical social research’ (Yin, 1994, p. 32).

The tests are:

- construct validity;
- internal validity;
- external validity;
- reliability.

The research is therefore based on the following requirements to ensure that this study meets these conditions.

4.5.1 Construct Validity

There are three conditions for establishing construct validity. One is the use of multiple sources of evidence as outlined above. The use of the three data collection instruments, used in three separate case studies with ten interviews each, is intended to provide confidence that conclusions are not based on a single source that may be open to bias or error. ‘A sufficient number of accounts around one theme or sets of related themes from a number of informants from the same organisation can help the researcher glimpse a picture of the organisation as experienced and perceived by those informants’ (Holden, 2002, p. 91).

It is still necessary to treat all information from interviews with caution, as there can be a danger that interviewees prefer to give the answer that suits them at the time, or that they think will please the interviewer, rather than their view of a constant version of the truth. The length of the interviews, taking about one hour, was, however, extensive so that there was increased opportunity for inconsistencies to become apparent.

Secondly, the analysis of data must establish chains of evidence. This requires important data to be linked appropriately to other evidence so that it is clearly related to the full range of data.

The third condition is to 'have the draft case study report reviewed by key informants' (Yin, 1994, p. 34). The research was conducted in close cooperation with the relevant knowledge management teams, in order to ensure that review was part of the case study process. For each case study, a report has been submitted that allows the local knowledge management team, and their line managers, the opportunity to review and comment on the case study findings for their international development charity.

4.5.2 Internal Validity

Internal validity is demonstrated through pattern matching, explanation building, and time-series analysis to ensure that spurious relationships are avoided. The use of databases to collate evidence has been organised to allow pattern matching and explanation building to be related back to the original data, so that it can be checked for factual accuracy and relevance. Some elements of longitudinal research are included. For example, return visits to each case study, where informal discussions regularly took place.

‘Seeing things from a different perspective and the opportunity to corroborate findings can enhance the validity of the data. They do not prove that the researcher has “got it right”, but they do give some confidence that the meaning of the data has some consistency across methods and that the findings are not too closely tied up with a particular method used to collect the data’ (Denscombe, 1998, p. 85). The study ended with two visits to overseas regional offices so that evidence of sustainability could be monitored from a different perspective. This lateral extension was intended to add confidence to the original data collection by testing for consistency over time.

4.5.3 External Validity

The decision to use multiple case studies allows for two cases to replicate the methods of the initial case study, in order to re-test tentative results in a different environment. This process provides more evidence to confirm the domain for which the findings can be generalised. Although Bryman challenges Yin on the relevance of replication in multiple case studies: ‘Multiple case studies go some of the way towards removing these worries’ (Bryman, 1989, p. 178), he accepts that where the same researcher is involved, there can be a reasonable opportunity to establish external validity.

4.5.4 Reliability

The case study approach was based on clear protocols that ensured consistent standards and methods between the individual case studies. This consistency allowed data collection procedures to be repeated precisely. As a result, evidence taken from any of the three cases can be compared with confidence in the data collection methods. There was one deviation from the planned method for selecting interview candidates, as will be noted later, but this change did not affect the range of candidates and so was not a disabling condition for the reliability of the research (section 5.3.2.1, p. 135 -6).

4.5.5 Analysing the Data

With the case studies complete, the data is analysed to see the patterns that emerged to provide possible answers to the research questions. Appropriate stories given by interview subjects are presented as part of the data, where appropriate, as evidence of programme outcomes.

The first step was to assemble evidence that knowledge management activity had taken place and that the organisational view of 'knowledge' and 'knowledge management' can be identified. Then the organisational context is considered to assess the relevance of knowledge management for this organisational population and to identify indications of the sustainability of knowledge management as a tool for international development charities. Thirdly, where knowledge management is established as existing and visible, as well as appropriately transferred and sustainable, the evidence about the impact of knowledge management activity is assessed. These are each discussed in a section of chapter six.

The next chapter gives all the necessary background information relating to setting up and establishing the three case studies. This forms a bridge between the methodology chosen and the subsequent analysis.

The discussion throughout this study is based upon an epistemological stance, which can be summarised as a dynamic version of humanist sociology, incorporating the insights of soft systems theory with dynamic human interactions at the heart of all human organisations, and with recognition that personnel, policies, and technologies are all liable to constant change over time.

Chapter 5. The Case Studies

The previous chapter has established a research methodology to investigate programmes of knowledge management activity in the international development sector. Multiple case studies are used to research the potential of knowledge management to impact on effectiveness, by seeking answers to the more specific questions that have been formulated. This chapter describes how the case studies were carried out and presents an overview of the knowledge management activities implemented in each charity as well as the issues that arose in the data collection period. This overview provides clarity about the context in which the data has been collected to ensure understanding of the analysis that follows in chapter six.

This chapter is in five parts:

5.1 Case Study Background Information;

5.2 The First Case Study: Charity L;

5.3 The Second Case Study: Charity P;

5.4 The Third Case Study: Charity T;

5.5 Case Study Learning and Issues.

Naming Convention

In order to distinguish the three charities, they will be identified by a word that links to their main knowledge management focus. The first study was with a charity (L) that put Learning at the centre of its knowledge management activity. The second charity (P) had as a central organisational aim the creation of knowledge Products. The third charity (T) characterised its knowledge management programme as Technology-driven change. They will therefore be listed in this study as Charity L, Charity P, and Charity T, so that it is easy for the reader to identify the case that is being referenced.

5.1 Case Study Background Information

Three organisations in the international development sector were chosen for the full case study research. The following headings provide the framework for the descriptive detail about each study:

- Choosing and Initiating the Study;
- Brief Description of the Charity;
- The Study Process;
- Description of Knowledge Management Activity;
- Follow-up Visits;
- Completing the Study.

5.1.1 Information about the Chosen Charities

All three charities are well-established organisations in the international development sector. They are based in the UK and have central offices there, while they all work in at least five overseas countries. They are all dedicated to the aims of this sector: providing resources to people in need; support for sustainable development; and also advocacy for the poor. Two of the charities (Charity L and Charity T) are also involved with emergency relief while the third (Charity P) only works in the field of longer-term development. Their overseas work is carried out in different ways and therefore there will be some further information on the structures of the individual charities later in this chapter. There are also differences in cultural reference points, for two organisations have a Christian focus (Charity L and Charity T), while Charity P is secular and owes its existence to the influence of a charismatic thinker.

All three charities have existed for over 40 years, so that their work on knowledge management is set in the framework of relative stability and confidence in the sustainability of the organisation. Within this stability, however, all three charities were facing distinctive challenges. As has been detailed in the previous chapter, they were chosen as 'exemplary cases', based on their knowledge management reputations. The result is that they are all medium-sized, generalist, development charities, with lively knowledge management functions that are intended to deliver benefit for organisational development in UK and in their overseas work.

While it would have been interesting to take a wider range of charities in size and focus, the main selection criteria was that they all had well-reputed knowledge management activity. In the language of innovation diffusion literature, these could be termed 'early adopters'. 'In one sense, early adopters put their stamp of approval on a new idea by adopting it' (Rogers, 2003, p. 283). This feature is true of all three charities as they provided speakers and case studies for other charities in the UK that showed an interest in knowledge management.

The three charities reflected the variety of knowledge management activities discussed above, (section 2.2). 'While the various knowledge management tools and techniques certainly have their usefulness, there is no such thing as a blanket solution' (Ruggles and Little, 2000, p. 246). Although each charity had a different focus, a common set of headings can be used to describe them. These are closely linked to the knowledge management concepts already discussed but these are not exact matches as each charity has its own interpretation of the underlying ideas.

The headings are listed here.

- General Information – detailed information on the knowledge management programmes and what they are intended to achieve;
- Learning – any activities specifically related to theories of Learning Organisation or learning as part of a knowledge management programme;
- Knowledge Products – knowledge outputs that can be shared with beneficiaries or intermediaries who work with beneficiaries;
- Communities of Practice (COPs) and Cross-Organisational Teams – this includes both COPs established as knowledge management activity and also unofficial groups of staff working together internally or externally;
- Technology – change to technology specifically related to the knowledge management programme;
- Culture Change – new or different assumptions and patterns of working and relating that link to knowledge management activities;
- Other Activities – knowledge management activity not included above;
- International Dimension – knowledge management activity that crosses national boundaries, including the role of non-UK offices working in this field.

5.1.2 A Note about Appendices:

Data from the case studies has been collated into a database. Interview information is found in Appendix 1. An index of interviews, documents and observations is found in Appendix 2, which also includes the coding system that allows simple references to items in the database. Appendix 3 presents information about follow-up visits to each charity. Appendix 4 contains the table of quotations used in the study, with Appendix 5 including two sample reports written at the time of the study. Appendix 6 has a sample interview transcript.

5.2 The First Case Study – Charity L

In order to choose an external organisation for the first study, there were a wide variety of factors to consider. Some factors were practical: for example, accessibility; a suitable contact; willingness on the part of staff and leadership in the organisation; and confidence that communication would be possible and fruitful. These factors combined with the requirements of the research to choose an exemplary example from the available sample group. A site was easily chosen for the first study because the two sets of factors aligned in one particular choice. The organisation had a well-established knowledge management programme and was formally committed to using knowledge management as a vehicle for increasing organisational productivity and excellence.

A knowledge management network among staff from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) had been set up by a staff member from Charity L, joining with participants from about 30 charities with active interest in this area. The same staff member gave talks and led workshops for practitioners including a formal presentation on the value of knowledge management at the researcher's own workplace. This external work had established the reputation of Charity L as a leading organisation for knowledge management. When the originator of the network left, his colleague took over facilitation of the network, assisted by the researcher. This experience of co-working was a positive foundation for contacts that could be used in the research arena. This same staff member was now working as the knowledge manager for Charity L and was able to confirm that there was indeed knowledge management activity taking place that would be appropriate for study. This assurance provided the basis for mutually helpful interaction, as the leadership team of Charity L was eager to get external feedback on their progress. One senior manager in particular, was positive about the possible benefits of a research study for the organisation's own learning.

The choice of a case where the researcher worked closely with a key participant in knowledge management work is balanced by the other two charities, where there was no such close connection. For the first study, it was helpful to have a relationship already established, to ensure that it would be possible to launch the research in a hospitable environment. This choice was also enhanced by the fact that the organisation was so widely recognised as a leader in the knowledge management field in the sector at that time.

Some preliminary visits were made to Charity L to ensure that the research intentions were aligned sufficiently with its own needs. This investigation proved satisfactory and it was agreed that the research would be pursued as planned. In return, a brief and informal report on their progress would be submitted to the senior manager leading on knowledge management. The research was carried out over the period September to December 2004. Subsequently there were several follow-up visits to help with assessment of the knowledge management activity and to review how the work was progressing. A final follow-up visit took place in 2010.

5.2.1 Description of Charity L

Charity L is an organisation that works in 15 countries overseas. At the time the study was initiated, 240 staff worked in the central UK office, with another 50 people based overseas. Staff working overseas were not organised into local offices, but were placed as individual field staff and development specialists working directly with local partners. Staff working overseas usually spent several years on a variety of assignments.

Charity L is structured into Organisational Groups working under a leadership team. There is a central hub structure with staff overseas managed and directed from the UK office. The organisation's headquarters building is spread over four floors with mainly open-plan offices, based on this Group structure. There were only a couple of small outreach offices in the UK. It was therefore a charity with power mainly centralised in the UK headquarters and, although there was talk of de-centralising in the future, it had no immediate plans to change the current structure. People working in the field were coordinated centrally and this feature influenced the way the charity used knowledge at the time of the study. Staff working overseas were held in high esteem as experts working on the front line, but they did not have immediate impact back on the central office, due to their disparate working patterns. At times of crisis, the organisation would bring in staff with experience of working in disasters to provide an increased workforce, when it was needed.

The central office was also important as a focus for advocacy work and for relationships with the religious groups that support and fund the charity. Also based at head office were the functions to maintain the organisation, such as HR, Finance and IT. The IT team managed the technology for all staff worldwide, as well as for the UK office and, by the time of this study, had developed a close working relationship with the knowledge management team.

The charity is strongly linked to its religious foundations and this historic legacy forms the basis of its culture and traditions. However, in common with other charities, there are now much more fluid boundaries, with staff moving between charities and therefore with less life-long loyalty to one particular charity (section 3.1.6.5, p. 78).

5.2.2 The Study Process

Between September and December 2004, eight visits were made to Charity L, collecting six key documents, completing eleven interviews and observing two events.

5.2.2.1 Interviews

The first interview was with the knowledge management coordinator to cover background information, giving an explanation of the knowledge management project history and the internal consensus, framing what the knowledge management team believed were their main successes. This inaugural meeting was followed by ten interviews, covering the following roles, based closely on the planned list of staff roles as earlier outlined (section 4.3.1). The schedule of interviews is found in Appendix 2.

- one person involved directly in knowledge management;
- four people from the operations function;
- three people from service functions;
- one person from the communication function;
- one senior manager.

Some interviewees were selected by the Charity L knowledge management contact. Others were invited as representatives of the work areas that had been pre-defined as relevant to the study. These were to include representatives from operations, services and communications and therefore included a sample of managers who had not been directly involved with the formal knowledge management project. The range of staff included some people that could be expected to champion the knowledge management activities but also others who were chosen simply to represent their own disciplines. The ten staff ranged across a representative variety of teams and locations within the UK central office.

All the interviews took approximately one hour. The set list of questions was covered (see Appendix 1), although they were worded informally, to match the interview conversation and to build on previous answers, using the approach identified after the pilot study (section 4.4.1). The questions looked at what respondents considered to be successful activity and how this activity has been established. The outcome gave ample opportunity for the staff to talk about all aspects of current knowledge management practice. Before each interview, the purpose of the study was explained: as research intended to help future knowledge management activity by reflecting on current practice across a small sample of relevant organisations. This guidance was designed to encourage interview subjects to talk about both positive and negative aspects of their experience, without holding back due to misplaced loyalty to their colleagues in the knowledge management team.

The fact that the researcher also worked at another international development charity was stressed to reassure the respondents that the research would not take an uninvolved and critical viewpoint, but would be sensitive to the constraints and difficulties of their work. It was also established that there was no sense of competition between charities, by making clear that knowledge management was not a priority work area in the researcher's own place of work. There was no general difficulty in getting confident and enthusiastic talking from interviewees and it was possible to ensure that all the relevant ground was covered, using follow-up queries where necessary. All interviews could be considered successful in terms of ready responses, with only one interviewee expressing little interest in the organisation's knowledge management activity.

Appendix 5 includes data from the report written for Charity L.

5.2.2.2 Documentation

This consisted of six items, which covered the required range of formal organisational statements and information about knowledge management activity plans and guidelines. The intention to get informal documentation did not prove possible, as this request was considered likely to breach confidentiality and data protection guidelines by the local contact. The documents collected included:

- Organisational Mission Statement;
- Strategy;
- Corporate Objectives and Indicators;
- Knowledge Management Project Plan;
- Learning Review Guidelines;
- Schedule of Project Delivery.

5.2.2.3 Observation - The Intranet Launch

One of the main aims of the original knowledge manager when initiating the knowledge management programme was to share information more efficiently using the internal technology network. Network Shared Drives had been set up for this purpose. The second knowledge manager took this forward by working with IT staff to develop an organisation-wide intranet. The intranet launch took place on 20th November 2004 and included a presentation at a central meeting for all UK staff at work that day, followed by a series of informal introductions to the site using projected images of the new intranet. The formal presentation was hindered by problems, in the way that introductions to new technology traditionally are, as the key person was sick and the technology at first did not work. These problems were overcome and the new system was presented to the audience as planned.

The formal presentation was followed by more informal sessions for small groups of Charity L staff. For these sessions, there were no technology or personnel problems. A large part of each demonstration was led by users' questions, so the sessions were participatory rather than passive. In the group work, there was evidence that there had been good preparation preceding the launch. Participants' questions related to the use that could be made from the new system and there were no indications of reluctance or resistance to making use of its facilities. However, it should be noted that the groups were chosen by function and so it was possible that there was variation between different groups. For this reason, the observation was seen as useful for general understanding of the way the knowledge management team worked, rather than as direct evidence of the success, or lack of this, in their approach.

5.2.3 Description of Knowledge Management in Charity L

Information for this section was provided from an interview with the knowledge manager in Charity L and also based on documents about the formal intentions of the knowledge management programme. Information from these sources has also been backed up by the subsequent interviews and the observations sessions. In this case, it was also information widely available in the charity sector, where the previous knowledge manager had proselytised about the charity's work in speeches and presentations to other charities.

The theoretical underpinning for this charity's knowledge management was simple to identify. Knowledge management in Charity L had been initiated by a staff member who had direct prior experience of working with a commercial organisation in the knowledge management field. He introduced ideas directly from his previous organisation to provide both a practical framework and a set of associated activities.

At first this message was done in a 'stealth' approach, until the ideas were taken up by leadership members and finally espoused by the Chief Executive. From this start, the ideas then moved from being the preserve of a single-minded individual to becoming a central theme of Charity L's strategy. The first initiatives focused on International Disaster Response and this process was most often quoted as the defining activity up to that date. Perceived success in this limited area led to a major knowledge management programme, implemented across the organisation.

Organising this programme had passed to a new knowledge manager, with a small team, while leadership also came from a senior manager (included in the study as one of the ten interview subjects). The implementation of the current knowledge management programme had commenced with a series of meetings and discussions with individual teams across the organisation, intended to ensure that the new system met their work needs, and avoided the pitfall of a 'one size fits all' programme. As a result, the actual knowledge management offering was uniform across the UK office, but tailored to the relevant team requirements.

The team that led knowledge management had been developed from an Information and Library team and the individual now reported directly to the relevant senior manager. However, this pattern was changed soon after the study period, and reporting lines were moved across to a middle manager from a different discipline. This restructure suggests a downgrade to the importance of the knowledge management work. Since then the knowledge manager post has been moved again, this time with the active involvement of the new Chief Executive. There is still the expectation that the role will continue to play a major role in Charity L. However, these changes do imply that the structure and role of knowledge management has not yet been established in a stable form.

5.2.3.1 Learning

The main knowledge management technique used in Charity L was ‘Learning Reviews’ and all interview subjects identified this as the main activity. These reviews were formal meetings, led by a trained facilitator, chosen from a group of internal staff that had volunteered for this role and were trained in facilitation skills. The knowledge management team administered the central list of facilitators. In a Learning Review meeting, all relevant staff would gather to discuss a recently completed activity, in order to draw out the learning from that activity. This learning would be written up and, if appropriate, action points identified. The resulting document would be saved, to ensure that relevant learning could be applied for future activity of the same or similar nature. It was intended that this procedure was the way for knowledge be taken ‘out of peoples’ heads’ and saved as a document in an appropriate learning store.

5.2.3.2 Knowledge Products

Charity L did not have any requirement to share knowledge externally, so this element was not a major aspect of the knowledge management programme. Learning Reviews were intended to produce bite-sized specific learning points, which were gleaned from the lessons learned in the Learning Review meeting. Once documented, they were meant to be stored so that they could be accessed by staff facing similar projects in the future. In this way, they represented new knowledge developed through socialisation in the Learning Review process (section 2.2.3, p. 43). Charity L’s knowledge management team had spent considerable time and focus designing the technology platforms that would allow these knowledge products to be accessible to a wide range of interested staff.

5.2.3.3 Communities of Practice and Cross-Organisational Teams

One area of the programme of knowledge management that was discussed was the establishment of international communities, called in Charity L, ‘Communities of Good Practice’. Although the ideas were firmly endorsed, the logistics to deliver these networks had not been successfully implemented at the time of the original study (nor indeed at subsequent visits in 2007 and 2010). However, some ways of sharing knowledge between groups of similarly focused staff members had been developed by the visit in 2007. The charity was able to provide collections of relevant materials from staff working in the same area of work, stored and shared via Compact Discs (CD), which were sent around the world. However, this process was very much a central office initiated development and did not involve interaction by experts coming together to directly share knowledge. There was no formal structural change to encourage cross-organisational sharing.

5.2.3.4 Technology

Charity L had used a change in technology to facilitate its knowledge management programme. Where once all staff saved electronic documents individually or in their local team’s shared network space, a formal organisational shared drive was set up on the IT network, specifically intended to allow different parts of the organisation, in the UK office, to share their common information resources. Technology was expected to enable knowledge sharing, through the simple knowledge management-led shared drive initiative, or later through much closer cooperation with ICT specialists, who worked with the knowledge management team to implement a central intranet. The intranet was being rolled out at the time of the study, and it was known that the technology had some areas still to improve. But there was considerable expectation that this would be a tool that could facilitate more internal sharing of their learning and knowledge management.

5.2.3.5 Culture Change

The changes in process and technology were not intended to operate on their own, but the net effect was expected to be a change in the culture of the organisation so that there could be more appropriate understanding of the nature of data, information and knowledge and also better recognition of the value of knowledge assets. In this way the different elements of the knowledge management programme were intended to promote a new way of working that would lead to a culture shift. Maximising the value of learning and knowledge would be given much higher prominence in the formal and 'lived' values of the organisation. Emphasis on the need to share across organisational boundaries and to use learning in decision-making was part of the intention of the knowledge management programme.

5.2.3.6 Other Activities

The programme also included a range of other activities: such as sharing information through post-travel interviews; improvements to new staff inductions; and formal external evaluations. These techniques were identified as knowledge management by the knowledge management team leader or by individual staff members in their interviews. However, they were only spoken about by one or two individuals rather than from a significant group of interviewees. Therefore there is no evidence that these were examples of knowledge management activity impacting on the organisation in any significant way. It can be concluded that they were less central to the agreed view of knowledge management in Charity L.

5.2.4 International Knowledge Management

There was very little reference to international participation in the knowledge management work at Charity L and this element was still an aspiration rather than current activity. The focus was on capacity building for staff in the UK headquarters. As yet, Charity L had not been able to share knowledge across international borders, except where people took information from the UK, as in the case with the disaster response example given above. The shared drive initiative and even the new intranet were only used by UK staff, at the time of the study. The practice of using Learning Reviews had not been taken overseas as this technique required training for participants and particularly a trained facilitator to run the review sessions. As a result, to use these reviews in the complex situations of overseas Charity L workers, without any form of regional office to support them, was too ambitious at this time.

5.2.5 Follow-up Visits

Since the original study in 2004, the researcher has returned to Charity L regularly to view progress and talk to staff, both formally in interviews, or informally where they were involved in knowledge management work. It is therefore possible to provide some additional information, of a more longitudinal form. The main observation from these visits is that over the period 2004 to 2010, the activity has been maintained in much the same form. The Chief Executive has taken a personal interest in the programme and has fine-tuned the post of knowledge manager and the intentions of the team. Learning Reviews were specifically included in the development of a new strategy and the senior leadership team encouraged to role-model appropriate behaviours.

The intranet has been widely used, in particular for maintaining a set of learning outcome documentation, and has become available internationally. However, there had not been major progress in establishing the knowledge management programme as an international programme. Almost all activity was still initiated and implemented in UK. As Charity L did not have major activity in its local offices, it was not possible to make an international visit in this case.

See Appendix 3 for schedule of follow-up visits.

5.2.5.1 Questionnaire and Survey

In 2007, a questionnaire and survey was run for staff in Charity L who had involvement with knowledge management activity. The researcher was invited to run some interviews, to analyse the resulting data and the questionnaire results and to provide a report on the findings. This survey and questionnaire were not part of the formal case study research and so were not primarily directed at providing further case study material. However the questions do have relevance for the study and so are included in the study database as a source of useful data, with the limitation that the sampling method was not established by the researcher and therefore the data must be treated with appropriate caution.

The general conclusions from the survey pointed to this group of UK staff remaining positive about knowledge management. For the future, there was considerable interest in continuing with the activity outlined above, with emphasis on making more use of saving and reusing documented learning outcomes. The researcher also met a team of facilitators who were attending a refresher course for their Learning Review duties.

See Appendix 5 for a sample of the report written about the 2007 survey.

5.2.6 Completing the Study

The original research interviews cover the full range of opinions from highly involved and positive to the much less committed and sceptical. This gives some confidence that the study achieved a balanced picture of staff perspectives on knowledge management activity at the charity. The follow-up visits demonstrate that the knowledge management programme at Charity L was sufficiently robust to have been sustained for several years. The data collected is therefore felt to be appropriate for the search to identify answers to the research questions. Small modifications to the interview plan have been made, based on learning from experience of the interviews at Charity L, such as a more direct question about the impact of organisational structure. The case study approach had proved an acceptable method for discovering the answers that this research is seeking, and a second case study was therefore initiated.

5.3 The Second Case Study - Charity P

For the second case study, a major criterion was to find a charity, where the international development aspect of knowledge management was central to the organisation, in contrast to a UK focus. Through contacts with the NGO sector network through BOND - the British Overseas Non-Governmental Organisations for Development, a charity was identified where knowledge management was an explicit part of the organisational strategy. The knowledge manager spoke about the challenges of integrating knowledge management throughout the organisation's international offices. Further investigation took place to ensure that knowledge management was formally stated to be taking a strategic role within the organisation's formal documentation. This prior research resulted in an agreement that the second study would be carried out in Charity P.

There was again full cooperation and interest in the chosen organisation and the researcher was invited to start the study in January 2005. However, Charity P then began a major restructuring exercise and the study was delayed while this took place. The knowledge manager post was restructured out of existence and this change could have been a fatal blow to the planned case study. Fortunately, the ex-knowledge manager handed on the research request to another staff member, who held the role of Librarian for Charity P, also based in the UK office. As a result, the study was able to continue, as this staff member agreed to coordinate the research requirements. The re-scheduled study was planned in May 2005 and went ahead in June and July of the same year, with follow-up visits in November 2005 and January 2010.

5.3.1 Description of Charity P

Charity P is an organisation that works in seven regional centres around the world, with central headquarters in the UK. At the time of the study there were approximately 200 staff in the UK office but with the majority of staff based in local offices around the world. The organisation, in contrast to Charity L's central hub model, was based on a semi-federal model, with overseas regional offices having much more autonomy to set up their own systems, run projects and organise local communications.

There were some tensions between the central office and local offices in Charity P. The structure was not unified, nor did local offices have complete autonomy. The federal structure of the organisation made for complex relationships between local offices and the central organisation. People working in local offices were usually recruited in-country and had little direct contact with the central office.

The local offices were central hubs for their region's work and had considerable independence from the UK, in many ways functioning as separate organisations. In recent years, this separation was felt to have reduced the value that a worldwide organisation could deliver and so there were plans to return to a more centralised structure. At the time of the study, things were in a transitional stage, where for example, tighter links were being established for ICT delivery, quality controls and team building. The internal technology team was still based in the UK but included a team of staff worldwide who worked to deliver ICT solutions under direction from the UK. While this change had the potential for producing many benefits, there were also disadvantages for local offices that had become used to working independently.

Another aspect that was important in Charity P was the choice of language for its work. The central office encouraged each office to develop expertise in sharing knowledge using appropriate local languages. However, this pluralism also resulted in reducing the sharing of knowledge between different local offices in different parts of the world, with the potential for significant costs if translations were required. Where Spanish was the official locally spoken language, in the South American office, there were particular difficulties in sharing written resources.

Charity P had two areas of focus. It aimed to enhance the lives of people in poorer countries by delivering projects based on relevant knowledge. At the same time, it aimed to disseminate this knowledge to all who need or are interested in it, in order to increase the skill level of development workers and local partners. The projects were conducted and managed exclusively in local offices, while they also produced knowledge products. The UK office managed central fundraising, organisation-wide administration and, in particular, the sharing of knowledge products worldwide.

The UK headquarters was based in one building and had no outreach offices in the UK. Staff worked on several floors of the building organised by their function. There was a leadership team of senior managers, who each headed a conventional hierarchy of staff. Motivation from staff was secular, based on the original focus given by a charismatic leader and there was considerable pride in the traditions and reputation built up by the charity.

5.3.2 The Study Process

The study was planned in May 2005 and went ahead in June and July of the same year, with a follow-up visit in November 2005. Between June and November 2005, there were six visits, which included participation in two events, collection of nine documents, and ten interviews with a self-selected set of staff.

5.3.2.1 Interviews

There were ten interviews carried out. These included:

- two people working with the knowledge management project;
- three people from the operations function;
- one head of systems: Head of IT;
- two people from the communications function;
- two senior managers.

Due to the unexpected change of the research contact, the researcher had to use a different process for selecting interview subjects. In order to make things more straightforward, the people interviewed were staff that responded positively to a request for staff to come forward and participate in the study.

As a result, there was no control element of staff that had been picked by the researcher simply on the basis of their job roles. This posed the danger that all the interviewed staff would be 'knowledge insiders', with a particular agenda to push. However, the list of staff invited did include many people not directly involved in knowledge management. Therefore, the resulting interviews included all the roles that were required to balance the study. One important aspect was that visits to the UK office allowed the opportunity to gain an international perspective, due to the number of visitors from other geographically located offices available at that time. As a result, the interviews included people from a range of disciplines, teams, and locations.

In the event, the interviews demonstrated a very wide range of views and there was no evidence of collusion to present a particular perspective. The level of knowledge and enthusiasm about knowledge management was relatively low compared to the previous study. The researcher therefore did not need to use the option of asking for further interviews with other staff to ensure balance. The interviews were conducted in the same pattern as for the previous study, with an extra 'prompted factor' relating knowledge management to organisational structure, which was included after the first case study experience. As with the first study, there were no problems getting rapport with the interviewees and information was readily made available.

See Appendix 4 for data from the interviews.

See Appendix 5 for a sample of the report written for Charity P at the time.

5.3.2.2 Documentation

The available documentation consisted of a range of published and internal material, including documents that set out Charity P's mission and achievements, publicity material, and information with relevance to knowledge management. The internal documents included background material for knowledge projects, measurement information on knowledge-based services for the public, planning for IT changes, as well as personnel information. The main omission was information on a knowledge management policy or programme. Such material was not easily to locate. Indeed, there appeared to have been little documentation on the planning or implementation of knowledge management initiatives. This case study demonstrated some of the problems of document collection in other ways too. A couple of documents were considered confidential, and the author of one paper also commented that she had not given permission for the release of her paper, although she was happy to do so in retrospect.

The documents include:

- Organisational Group Strategy 2003 – 2007;
- Annual Report 2002 – 2003;
- Enterprise Architecture Overview;
- Best Practice for Information Sharing for Development (internal);
- Recommendation for Internal Communication Strategy;
- Information Enquiries Report;
- Two Publicity Booklets on Knowledge Products;
- Publication about Knowledge Capabilities.

5.3.2.3 Observation - Celebration Lunch and IT Conference

In the six days of visits, it was possible to observe the organisation at work. This experience included taking part in a celebration lunch and observing participants in an organisational development exercise. The time of the study coincided with preparation for the G8 Conference, where staff worked together to produce their contributions to the activity around the conference in Gleneagles in July 2005. This observation enabled the researcher to see both formal and informal staff interactions. The observations revealed a strong sense of an organisation going through change, with staff ready to challenge and debate current issues, within a broad commitment to the charity's overall purpose.

On 22 June 2005, the international staff that worked with the IT team centrally gathered together in UK to hold a conference about the development of improved technology systems. The researcher was invited to attend on the day of the conference and to take part in a session to talk about knowledge management. This meeting provided a useful chance to hear the views of staff outside the UK and also to talk to a group of staff that were not directly selected as research subjects. This breadth of views in this group gave a more clear indication of the positive interest in knowledge management but also the lack of an organisational consensus on what was appropriate at that time. The follow-up visit to Kenya, also included observation of their knowledge management office.

5.3.3 Description of Knowledge Management in Charity P

The introduction of knowledge management in Charity P had been led from the top with a commitment, evident in the central role of knowledge in their mission statement.

The aim of sharing knowledge products relevant to economic development is a purpose that strikes resonance with the idea of sharing and managing knowledge. Therefore a unit for knowledge and information management had been set up, with the intended scope of working with the whole organisation to build good knowledge management practice. This intention was strengthened in 2003, with the development of a 'Group Strategy (2003 to 2007)' that made explicit the central role of knowledge in delivering the organisation's mission.

However, unlike Charity L, there was much less clarity about what knowledge management involved. There was no reference available that explained how Charity P defined knowledge management. The activities discussed in the interviews included some that were not led by the small knowledge management team. There was some discussion about the requirements of different functional teams, but this awareness did not result in any coherent overall scheme understood by all staff.

5.3.3.1 Learning

The Learning Review was not a technique in use at Charity P. Only one person mentioned the concept of the Learning Organisation and there was no evidence of learning featuring explicitly in any organised activity at the time of the study.

5.3.3.2 Knowledge Products

Charity P sees knowledge management as having different potential as well as the internal capacity building function on the lines adopted by Charity L. It is stated in Charity P's Group Strategy that knowledge is an important output of the organisation, providing products that give value to the charity's partners.

Independently from the knowledge management team, Charity P has external-facing knowledge-sharing facilities, including a website and a public enquiries service. This service dealt with activists in a wide range of roles and locations, as well as responding to academics and experts engaged in development work. The enquiries system is directly supported by external funding and is therefore required to keep full records of activities to report back to the donor. The sustained funding for this unit from the UK Government is considered by the charity staff to be an indication of its success.

As part of Charity P's remit is to service its external audiences, there is a requirement to support activists in poor communities who need practical knowledge directly. There is therefore a practice of working with partners, who act as knowledge information intermediaries, to access knowledge from Charity P, and then to convey it to people who otherwise could have no access. These 'knowledge brokers' are people and organisations with the capability and contacts to make standard knowledge applicable for potential local users. Charity P's Chief Executive believed that the organisation's considerable expertise working with knowledge brokers, supporting their role in channelling information, was another important organisational asset.

With this range of audiences in mind, knowledge sharing was expected to be demand-led, providing the ideas and expertise, which others identified as valuable. The impact that the organisation made depended on the quality of the 'knowledge products' that it made available to external demand. The intention was to support partners by good knowledge sharing internally and externally, to increase the ability to make a real impact on the problems faced by the poor, and also to enhance the charity's reputation with academics and other professional development workers. This beneficial cycle was then expected to increase funding potential.

Charity P has as its rationale its knowledge of products and techniques, and so prides itself on these knowledge assets. An intranet had been set up as the main method for storing documents, but because it is based at central office, local offices keep their own network drives with essential local information. There is also a large archive of paper documents kept in the UK office basement. Staff referred to this as 'grey literature', which remained out of the central system, in paper format or electronically on varied team and individual drives, but it is material that has never been formally published. Because it would need quality assessment before it can be re-used, it forms a mass of potentially valuable assets that are not available to use. Although these other knowledge resources are known about, the central knowledge management team did not have any way to manage them.

5.3.3.3 Communities of Practice (COPs) and Cross-Organisational Teams

Some organisation of communities of practice had been attempted in the central office, with staff in similar roles across the organisation invited to meet in order to share ideas. These meetings were no longer in place and the knowledge management team believed that people involved had not been fully engaged, because they did not understand the purpose and so felt unable or unwilling to give sufficient time to this activity. In contrast, there was a well-established use of external networks of professional contacts and practitioners, based on the recognition of the value of networking and face-to-face meeting with like-minded people outside the organisation. This feature, however, was not actively integrated with the official knowledge management programme.

The recent introduction of cross-organisational international teams, working on specific development themes, was intended to directly support knowledge management. The teams were led by individuals from the senior management team and met once a year for face-to-face meetings.

This procedure was designed to increase international understanding and trust, and therefore to facilitate much more active knowledge-sharing. Although the teams were organised to support knowledge management, they were not explicitly linked to the work of the knowledge management team.

5.3.3.4 Technology

The key deliverable for the knowledge management team was an intranet that would include a 'knowledge base' for all staff to use as a central repository for organisational information. This knowledge base was intended to capture documents from all staff in the UK office, although it was not international in scope. As a result, information from other offices was entered in the UK and there was no mechanism to cater for local languages. The knowledge base did have considerable documents in place and some positive features like a 'most popular' hit counter, but the search function was not sophisticated. Hence there was little confidence in using it. The knowledge manager commented that there was a lack of staff commitment to put on useful documents, partly because there were no clear processes to establish how staff should reliably input new documents. This intranet was internally built and its development had seen some differences of opinion between the knowledge management team and the internal technology developers.

The successful introduction of an Image Library to store all the publicity photographs for the organisation was seen as one of the main achievements of the knowledge management team. One person had led this project, with help from an ICT staff member, and continued to act as the person authorised to collect and collate the photos. This system was popular because processes were simple and the photos were widely in use, with even international links functioning successfully.

5.3.3.5 Culture Change

Although it was evident that Charity P's Chief Executive required the knowledge management programme to change attitudes, there was no explicit process for achieving this. The cultural diversity of the worldwide organisation, the problem of local languages, and the change of personnel in the knowledge management team, made this an aspiration not a current focus. The Chief Executive also intended culture change to develop from the new Aims Teams, where face-to-face meetings would encourage building trust and shared initiatives. However, these processes were too recent to evaluate as a method for changing attitudes.

5.3.3.6 Other Activities

In the UK, other ideas were also under consideration, such as using new communication and exchange models based on Internet firms such as Amazon or eBay. These were not, however, being put into current practice. Within the UK office, there were also a variety of internal communications activities to promote knowledge management in the form of seminars, public talks and informal lunch groups.

5.3.4 International Knowledge Management

To conclude this summary of the knowledge management activities in Charity P, it is necessary to consider local activity that was organised independently of the central office. Below is a list of ideas from the observed conference meeting of overseas staff. There was no evidence of a knowledge management identity shaped by being part of their organisation, so that, although staff accepted the idea of knowledge management as an important part of working life, this list suggests that in practice it is interpreted very widely.

The ideas proposed were:

- allowing permission for time to capture and produce knowledge, categorise and organise it, to provide a system for sharing;
- learning from experience, around the world;
- making knowledge accessible to people, for example in a local language;
- knowledge made available, not just through the Internet but also through the spoken word;
- culture change: moving from information as power to information as something the charity wishes to give away to others;
- linking needs to knowledge resources and turning information into action;
- using knowledge for external collaboration and influencing.

5.3.5 Follow-up Visits, Including a Visit to South America

The researcher was able to arrange to interview, in January 2006, the Director of the local South America office, and to also meet the knowledge management team there. This local office was the one most frequently mentioned by staff in the UK and held up as a model for others. As the interviews were only with involved staff, this visit cannot be considered a full extension of the case study at Charity P, but it did provide some relevant information that confirmed the views of central office staff that this office had a lively programme, with the potential to provide more direction than that available from the few staff remaining in the central knowledge management team. The methods of motivating staff to share documents and ideas were more creative and focused than those used in the UK, with various forms of stimulus, including competitions with cash prizes and positive publicity for the winners. Their aim, to exert a strong influence over local governments and powerful regional organisations, demonstrated the ambition to use knowledge across the organisational boundaries and to feed into their environment.

There were also follow-up visits to Charity P in 2008 and 2010. In the first, it was confirmed that the report had been of value to the new Knowledge Manager now in place. In the second it was confirmed that knowledge management was still active in the charity and a new intranet had been introduced, using the expertise of an employee from South America. In 2010, a visit to the Kenya office confirmed that the intranet was still in use and also that there was still a focus on cross-organisational knowledge-sharing. The problem of lack of adequate resources for this was also raised as remaining a limiting factor.

See Appendix 3 for the schedule of follow-up visits.

5.3.6 Completing the Study

This case study allowed access to the appropriate range of staff within the charity, including staff from overseas offices. It was found that Charity P's knowledge management programme is far less focused than in the previous study, but its aims are more fundamental to their charity work. There is little evidence of an international programme that would allow study of the impact of knowledge on partners and the poor. However, despite the initial setbacks encountered in setting up the study, the data collection did include a wide range of views and so the information collated could be used with confidence to compare with Charity L.

It was appropriate for the third case study to follow the same pattern and the intention was to identify a charity with a programme built round a cohesive international framework.

5.4 The Third Case Study - Charity T

Choosing the third study was not as straightforward as the two previous cases. Several appropriate charities with moderately high-profile knowledge management programmes were investigated but proved to be unsuitable. One was going through a major restructuring which meant that the knowledge programme was expected to change greatly, with its location moving across national boundaries. Another was the subject of considerable investigation from other organisational disciplines and did not want further research to take place. In the end, a charity emerged that had not featured in the original NGO network, which was where the previous two charities had been located.

This charity met the criteria for international reach and was engaged in a high-profile campaign to inform other charities about its current knowledge management work. There was a belief, echoed in several independent forums, including an unsolicited positive recommendation from contacts in Charity P, that Charity T's knowledge management programme would have an international impact. The knowledge manager was at the time holding workshops for other charities to learn from Charity T's experience. Coincidentally, temporary staff working in the researcher's workplace as well as others in the sector, made very positive comments about the impact of the knowledge management programme on the work environment for staff. The researcher therefore attended one of the publicity workshops at Charity T and subsequently contacted the knowledge manager. The third case study was agreed in November 2006.

The first interview took place in January 2007. Subsequently ten further interviews and observation sessions were planned for February 2007. Documents on the project were also collected at that time.

The interviews covered a wide range of staff members with a similar range as Charity L. In this case, there was no specific observation session, as the planned observations had to be cancelled due to the problems explained below.

During the course of the first interview in January 2006, the researcher discovered an impediment to the study. Charity T had launched a review of its structure and there was an implication that the knowledge management function might be changed, or possibly disbanded. This discovery was surprising, given that the work had such a high profile. However, key knowledge management staff remained eager that the study should go on, so that they would be able to get an impartial evaluation of what they had done so far and its impact. If the programme was to be abandoned, they wanted to have a record of their work. Therefore the study continued, although the circumstances were difficult, as the contacts were under considerable pressure caused by the uncertainty for their future jobs. As a result organising the study was less straightforward than anticipated.

The changes planned, while the case study was active, did not in fact lead to the elimination of the knowledge management team. Instead it was merged and re-branded as part of the wider communications team. But the fact of uncertainty while the study took place was a constant reminder that knowledge management was still not fully embedded in the organisation and had to fight for recognition of its role and its location within the traditional workplace.

5.4.1 Description of Charity T

At present, most of Charity T's administration is carried out in the UK, which is also the base for the majority of its fundraising and publicity activity. The organisation has a central office for 300 staff and its overseas work is based in four regions. There were offices in most of its partner countries, but it also sent specialists to work in other projects as development experts.

The leadership team of senior managers is at the apex of a hierarchical structure based on the UK office. At the time of the restructure, there was pressure to increase sharing and collaboration across organisational boundaries. As a result, Charity T planned to move away from its current centralised structure, in order to strengthen the contribution of offices overseas. These were managed from country teams in the UK, but with the changes planned, decision-making was increasingly expected to move to local offices. The charity also had many small out-lying offices in the UK, as well as links to local partner organisations, such as church groups. Charity T is another Christian organisation with a historic commitment, founded on the motivation to help the poor and disadvantaged of the world, as an expression of religious belief.

For knowledge management in Charity T, the relationship with the UK technology department was fundamental to the process. Despite some teething problems, the two teams worked effectively together, with an IT staff member taking an important role in the main knowledge management project. The IT team was responsible for Charity T's international infrastructure but Internet connectivity, vital for the smooth working of the programme, remained a problem for staff working overseas where Internet access was unreliable or very expensive.

5.4.2 The Study Process

Between November 2006 and March 2007, seven visits were made to Charity T, completing ten interviews, collecting five documents, and attending one presentation. The knowledge management programme contrasted with those already investigated as it was focused explicitly on using common technology as a change agent and was built very clearly as an international programme, with all plans seen as appropriate for implementation in all offices around the world.

5.4.2.1 Interviews

There were ten interviews carried out in early 2007, working with the pre-selected list of staff.

This process therefore matched that used in the first case study. The staff members included:

- two people working with the knowledge management project;
- three people from the operations function;
- three heads of systems: Heads of Finance, Human Resources and IT;
- one person from the communications function;
- one senior manager.

The first interview was with a member of the knowledge management team so that basic background information could be collected as well as an insider's view of the activities at Charity T. This inaugural session was followed by nine further interviews with the agreed list of staff. As before, the range covered staff across the hierarchy from the UK office and from a range of operations and support functions. One interviewee was unable to attend at the arranged time, due to family sickness requiring compassionate leave, and so this interview was then carried out by phone. The questions followed the same format as for Charity P.

There was enthusiasm for the task shown in all interviews and most lasted the full hour, with participants apparently willing to go on talking about their work and its relation to the knowledge management programme as long as the questions were asked. There was a very high degree of consensus on the nature of their knowledge management and all participants spoke of the relevance of the programmes.

See Appendix 4 for data from the interviews.

5.4.2.2 Documentation

Collection of documents was particularly difficult in Charity T, as the reorganisation meant that there were heavy demands on staff time, so locating documents was not their priority. However, the database includes information on their official mission and strategy and transcripts from publicity relating to knowledge management.

- Organisational Mission Statement;
- Organisational Strategy;
- Knowledge Management Project Plan;
- Papers from a Public Talk on the Knowledge Management Programme.

5.4.2.3 Observations

The main opportunity for observation was the preliminary meeting where the knowledge management team presented information about its work to an audience of staff from other charities. This provision included many insights into the ‘sales talk’ that they had devised to help to motivate staff. The knowledge management team’s interactions between themselves and their technology suppliers were included in this observation. Although the researcher subsequently visited Charity T on several occasions, this time was the only opportunity for formal observation, as restructure pressures made further opportunities impossible to arrange.

5.4.3 Description of Knowledge Management in Charity T

The work at Charity T was highly structured and run by a small team that intentionally avoided linking too closely with any part of the organisational structure; usually hot-desking in order to work within different teams on a close basis. There was strong support for the programme from senior management, including the Chief Executive, in the form of endorsement of the aims of their work and budget allocation. There was no active involvement from anyone at a senior level in the project work or acting as advocate for it.

The programme consisted of a series of discrete projects that were accompanied by high-profile marketing to staff and also to interested external audiences, including forging links to national media. A knowledge manager led the programme, who had moved into Charity T from a commercial environment, and had been recruited specifically to deliver the knowledge management programme. This plan included an organisational requirement to provide an intranet, based on the outcome of a long review of organisational needs. As a result there was considerable internal pressure for the programme to succeed, based on a perception that the organisation could be at risk if it did not improve its internal knowledge processes.

Like Charity L, implementation was based on wide ranging discussion of business needs with different teams and aimed to be very ‘user-friendly’, with training offered to all staff involved and with processes set up to ensure that staff knew what was required of them. The programme was careful to use straightforward language to help involve staff and was tailored to the varied needs of teams in the organisation.

5.4.3.1 Learning

As was the case at Charity P, there was no explicit programme for Learning in Charity T.

5.4.3.2 Knowledge Products

Charity L did not see knowledge products as an intended outcome of its knowledge management activity. However, there were uses of technology that produced material to share externally to increase international awareness and to raise donations. Examples include podcasts being used to bring home specific fundraising or supporter information directly to staff or to an external audience. These resources had been created by local offices and made available to staff and supporters over established social networking sites.

Although there were concerns about bandwidth use for countries with poor infrastructure, as well as potential costs of equipment for video clips or pod-casts, these innovations were considered positive as they demonstrated that the organisation was able to combine ideas from different disciplines and to act as early adopters (Rogers, 2003, section 5.5.1, p. 117).

5.4.3.3 Communities of Practice and Cross-Organisational Teams

Communities of practice were one desired outcome of the collaborative nature of the technology behind the new intranet. The idea was to nurture these communities by starting with natural affinity groups, which would learn how to work together in a virtual team on non-work areas, with the idea then expected to take root and spread to more mission-critical groups. At the time of the study, this process was still in its infancy.

The knowledge management team also changed some internal procedures to increase the power of cross-organisational staff communication. They introduced a 'daily news email', with one version for UK and another for all the other offices around the world, in order to introduce more discipline to a previously disorganised set of staff memos. This procedure was designed to reduce 'noise' and to improve the flow of current information so that it was easily available to everyone. Humour was a key ingredient used to improve involvement.

5.4.3.4 Technology

The main activity in the knowledge management programme at Charity T was to deliver technology-led systems to share knowledge. The aim was based upon the rationale for the knowledge manager's recruitment, which was to deliver an appropriate intranet for the organisation. The knowledge manager was therefore chosen as someone with technology interface skills and interest in the value of ICT to change an organisation's ways of working.

This was not a project led by the ICT staff, but one that recognised the cultural impact technology could have within an organisation. In this way the knowledge management programme at Charity T reflected the concept of socio-technical system change as discussed in chapter one (section 2.2.5, p. 49).

The first project delivered was an Image Library, available over the Internet, which provided access to a wide range of internally recognised quality photos with linked information, to be used for publicity, fundraising and campaign materials. This innovation was seen as a quiet success. The second project focused on the introduction of new intranet technology. This development was intended to do more than simply provide a vehicle for knowledge to be shared between individuals and groups, as it also included a document-handling system to replace the previous department-based systems as well as collaborative tools and shared spaces for team working.

Although the knowledge management team described the work as 'Information Handling', this name was adopted to avoid the danger of people feeling that they were being asked to do new work. The radical change of having team document stores open to all staff was introduced on the back of technology, based on the 'Office' software already in use and therefore familiar to Charity T staff. People were expected to adapt to the potential of the system in a way that best suited their needs. By using document storage as a basic process that all staff needed to perform, the new knowledge-focused parts of the intranet were made more easily accessible. Other new technology was also encouraged. The use of 'Skype', a freeware available through the Internet for telephony and messaging, blogs and pod-casts were initiated, in order to provide technology appropriate to different staff work requirements.

5.4.3.5 Culture Change

Technology was specifically intended as the driver of culture change. It was seen as a device that included good practice in sharing and therefore was the chosen means of altering people's behaviour and attitudes. By getting into the habit of seeing their documents as organisational assets, and because there was a very clear and simple way to share, it was expected that collaboration tools would also lead to more collaborative working across organisational barriers. It was therefore a symbol of change to the organisation culture, leading to knowledge becoming used in a more methodical and inclusive way. Knowledge of what was going on in offices worldwide was intended to complement the personal contact made possible by the intranet staff directory. This enhanced collaboration was expected to lead to more sharing of expertise and understanding across the whole organisation, thus reducing the limiting aspects of the hierarchical structure and facilitating a move to less centralised decision-making.

5.4.3.6 Other Activity

Although knowledge management in Charity T was mainly focused on technology-led change, it also included some complementary work. People were invited to volunteer to be trained in good communication practice. These volunteers took on extra work for no reward except the opportunity to learn a new skill, and to contribute more to the organisation. Once trained, they championed key messages about communication and sharing knowledge across different media, focusing on the use of email, face-to-face meetings, and other techniques for effective communication. This programme was financed for one year and no more, but some of these volunteer workers were still in place at the time of the case study, even though staff turnover had reduced the number.

5.4.4 International Knowledge Management

The new intranet was for all staff worldwide to use, although it was implemented first in the UK, with a lengthy process of training and customisation as individual teams were introduced to its use and as previous document stores migrated into the new system. As a result, international roll-out had only just begun at the time of the study and so usage was mainly confined to the UK staff. Charity T had put its first investment into the UK office. This was despite the fact that much of the business case rested on the demands that would flow from the move to decentralise the structure of Charity T and so future phases of the implementation were likely to be more difficult and costly. For example, staff were concerned that it would not be possible to deliver the same level of customised training to non-UK offices, compared to that offered to teams located in the central office or even to those in other UK locations.

5.4.5 Follow-up Visits

Change of personnel during the restructure made plans for further visits more difficult to organise. However, the researcher remained in close touch with staff at Charity T, holding phone conversations in 2007, when a further structural re-organisation was in process. There was a visit to the Head of IT in 2009 to confirm the technology change was still in place. A final visit was made in 2010 as well as a visit to the Kenya office where continued use of the intranet in this 'bandwidth-rich' environment was confirmed. The schedule of follow-up visits can be found in Appendix 3.

5.4.6 Completing the Study

The third case study completed the research trio. Although Charity T had a variety of different aspects to the knowledge management programme, the strong emphasis on selling the programme to staff and outsiders meant that it was conveyed as a very cohesive set of activities that worked to reinforce the central theme of professional information handling.

This emphasis provided a useful contrast with the disparate activities of Charity P. It also demonstrated a different approach to knowledge management as, although both Charity L and Charity P had intranets as part of their work, neither had presented the programme as technology-driven.

Charity T had made more attempts to implement a programme across international barriers, although the results at the time of the study were disappointing because so little had actually been implemented. Nevertheless, this case did provide a new perspective on the difficulties of knowledge management across multi-site organisations as well as the potential opportunities of a knowledge management programme. This programme combined new technology with more people-focused work that was intended to complement the impact on their culture.

5.5 Case Study Learning and Issues

This completes the presentation of information from the three case studies. Data from the three case studies is saved in the Appendices at the end of the study. There was also some useful learning from the data collection process, which feeds into the subsequent analysis.

5.5.1 Learning from the Use of Interviews

The three case studies showed that the format for the research was appropriate for gaining rich information about knowledge management in international development charities. The most productive area was the use of semi-structured interviews. They produced insights into the value and problems of interviews as a technique for gaining information.

5.5.1.1 Positive Points

It was easy to establish rapport. Once the interview was underway, staff appeared enthusiastic to be talking about their own jobs. There were no indications that they were self-conscious or that they had a 'line' to sell. In fact, they often appeared to forget that they were participating in a formal interview, as many people ended up quite relaxed and 'chatty'. The following learning points for the researcher were also noted:

- the questions, used in the flexible conversational way identified as appropriate from the pilot study, produced plenty of information;
- informing staff that the study was to investigate impact on effectiveness did not show any indications that this restrained staff from providing a balanced picture of their activities;
- although the researcher was known to be working in a similar charity, there were no interviewees who demonstrated any form of competitive approach.

The studies were intended to have a common method for choosing the interview subjects. As has been stated, the middle study instead had self-chosen staff, albeit from the agreed list of possible roles. This factor could have been expected to allow bias into the sample that would have made Charity P staff more involved and positive than for the other studies. Evidence from the interviews, on the contrary, shows a similar range of perspectives to the other two charities, but with fewer, rather than more, positive responses.

Overall, the fear that allowing the knowledge managers to organise the list of interview subjects, and provide administration support would lead to positive bias in interviews was not in fact observed. Subjects were generally eager to express their own perspectives, including where they had significant individual criticisms.

5.5.1.2 Disadvantages

Comparing across the three charities, the only area where some reticence could be detected, was with reference to the knowledge management leadership of Charity P, where the person had recently left the organisation. There was less information available about leadership than in the other charities. This feature could have been either because there had been less leadership in Charity P, or from a lack of openness where staff did not wish to talk about a recent painful change. This area was one where the use of individual interviews was perhaps not the most suitable for gaining unbiased information.

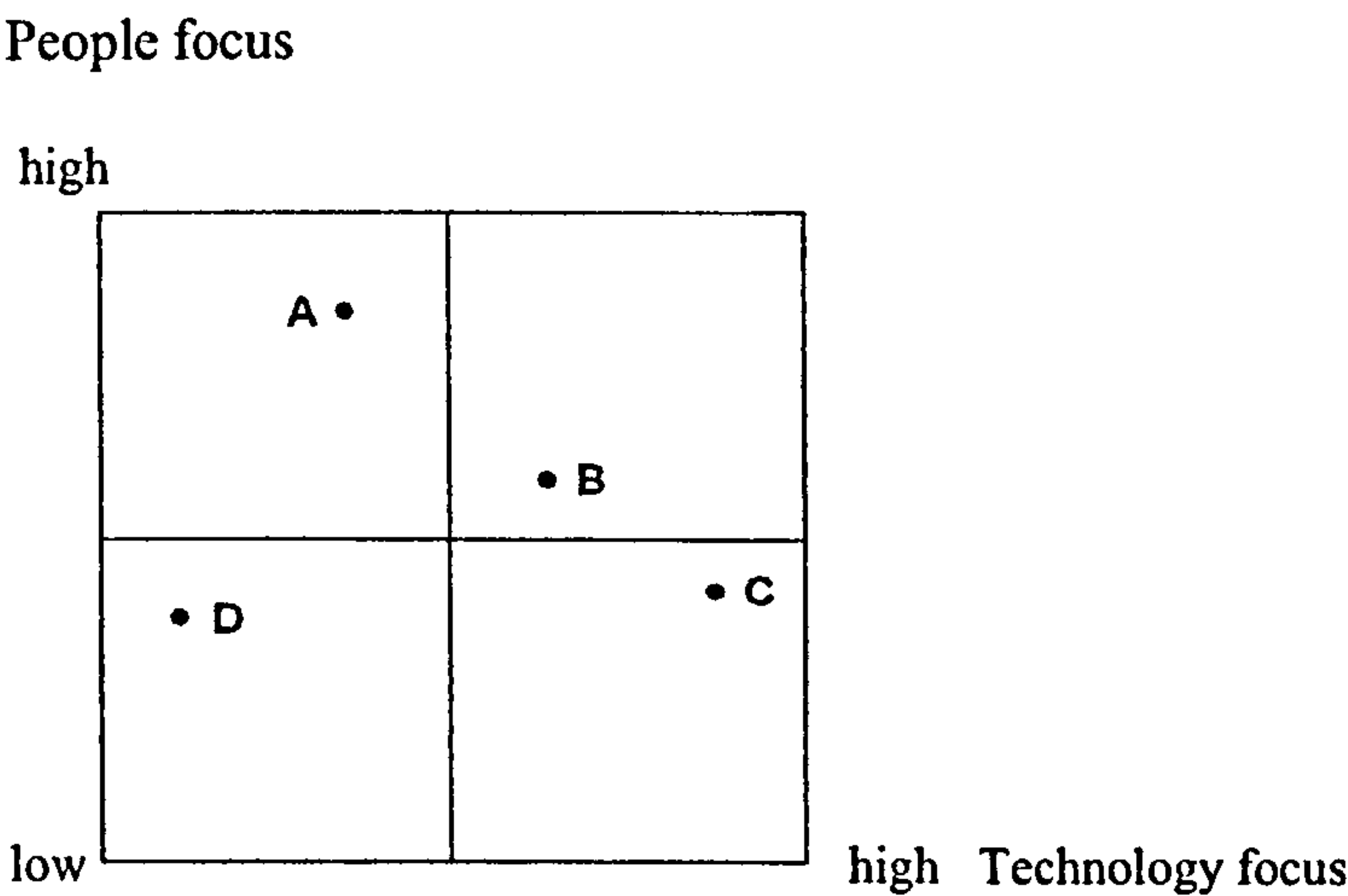
One problem with interviews is that the questions can influence the thinking of interview subjects. This phenomenon was clearly demonstrated by one interview subject, who did not mention technology during the majority of responses. However, when prompted to consider this subject, it then appeared as a major topic in all the subsequent answers, including stating that IT was the major challenge for the future. The problem does not affect a comparison between the three case studies, because a common set of questions was used. The presentation of the data analysis will include information about answers that were delivered unprompted and those where previous questions could have affected the interviewee's train of thought.

5.5.2 Use of Observations and Documentation

The use of observation was important for providing background information and allowing the researcher to feel confident and comfortable in the research setting. Due to the different experiences in the three charities, the data collected is less relevant to the research questions and does not frequently contribute directly to the subsequent analysis. In the same way, the documents inspected provide corroborative evidence rather than direct data for the study. It was only in the interviews, where the researcher was able to ensure that data was collected in a consistent manner, that valuable evidence for the study was confidently produced.

5.5.3 Knowledge Management Data

There was a wide range of knowledge management activity across the three cases, with considerable differences in the way activities were implemented. The knowledge management programmes can be characterised by their links to ‘socio-technical’ change (sections 2.2.5, p. 49 and 5.4.3.4, p. 153). The idea of a dual focus on people and technology can be illustrated to clarify the relative emphasis of each knowledge management programme. In the figure below, the relative strengths of the ‘people focus’ are plotted against the strength of the ‘technology focus’. It can be seen that each charity, at the time of the original study, is placed in a different segment of the matrix. (Charity P has two entries, for its UK and South American office.) Although this simplifies the complexity of each case, the matrix demonstrates the different balance of the two main programme strands:



Key: A = Charity L. B = Charity P in South America. C = Charity T. D = Charity P in UK

Figure 5.1: Matrix of Technology / People Focus in Case Study Charities

From this diverse body of data on current practice in three organisations, the research now moves to analysing the data. The central issues, about the power of knowledge and the effectiveness of knowledge management to international development charities can be analysed.

Chapter 6. Investigating Practice

Chapter one set out three research questions. They will be considered in the following order:

- **How is knowledge management practised in this sector and how does it reflect mainstream theory?**
- **How was the transfer to the new context affected and does it look as if it will embed there?**
- **How do knowledge management practices impact on the effectiveness of international development charities?**

In order to answer these questions, data from the case studies will be analysed in the light of the perspectives and models introduced in chapters two and three. The data analysis is presented mainly in the form of the ‘expert witnesses’ own statements. In addition, evidence from observation and relevant documentation is deployed, when appropriate.

6.1 Knowledge and Knowledge Management in Context

Research question 1: How is knowledge management practised in this sector and how does it reflect mainstream theory?

This discussion is in three sections:

6.1.1 How is the Term ‘Knowledge’ Used in the Chosen Context?

6.1.2 How is Knowledge Management Practised in this Context?

6.1.3 Main Findings.

6.1.1 How is the Term 'Knowledge' Used in the Chosen Context?

This section of the report looks at the data from the knowledge management case studies to determine what 'knowledge' means in practice for these international development charities.

A working definition has been provided for this study: **'knowledge is information in context, together with an understanding of how to use it'** (Brooking, 1999, section 2.1.5, p. 39).

How well does this definition match the actual knowledge management practice observed?

The perspectives presented in chapter two are used as headings:

- The Hierarchy of Data – Information – Knowledge;
- Explicit and Tacit Knowledge;
- Mode One and Mode Two Knowledge;
- The 'Knowing in Action' Model.

6.1.1.1 The Hierarchy of Data - Information – Knowledge

The case study data reveals what was meant by the term knowledge in the working context of these international development charities. Here are some quotations from the interviews from a senior manager in each charity which makes clear that knowledge was considered important to the charities concerned: **'we are saying that knowledge is a very precious organisational resource'** (L3). Charity P made knowledge central to their strategy, as the Chief Executive explained: **'so the first challenge was to put knowledge at the heart of strategy. Our business case is predicated on our rich knowledge'** (P3). Talking about the importance of using knowledge effectively for advocacy, a Senior Manager in Charity T states: **'this is a massive achievement to get thousands of ordinary people to be enthusiastic. It is the effective use of knowledge'** (T3).

What did this knowledge include? One pattern that emerges from the data is that documents stored in databases were referred to as knowledge assets by interviewees in each charity. Examples include: **'we have to store all our documents. Before they were all over the place. Centralising them is a good thing' (T5).** And **'Loads of information products are produced around different projects and an awful lot of them stay in country so the knowledge is not shared with all of our offices and the UK' (P9).** This emphasis is strongly shown in a comment from Charity L: **'much of knowledge management is common sense. If staff leave, you want to have procedures written up before they go' (L8).**

These remarks indicate that information stores are considered to be part of the knowledge that the charities' knowledge management programmes are to handle. However such statements blur the boundary between information and knowledge. This blurring is also shown in Charity P, where the store of paper records in the basement was referred to in one interview: **'otherwise things end up as "grey literature", which is output that is never published' (P4),** in other words, as unused knowledge, which could be mined for its potential. However, it is not clear if the current piles of documents are seen as old information waiting to be turned into knowledge, or knowledge that has just not yet been accessed.

How do these statements relate to the perspective of the data – information – knowledge hierarchy identified earlier? (section 2.1.1). In Charity L's documented statement on knowledge management, there was a specific reference to the data-information-knowledge hierarchy. As a result, it was clear that this was a concept that was intended to underpin the charity's activity (LD1) although no other direct reference was made to this perspective in interviews or other documentation.

In practice, the vague ‘value-added’ statements given to clarify the distinction between information and knowledge, as noted earlier (section 2.1.1, p. 32-3), were matched by the lack of definition in each charity about how and why simple information was to be ‘re-branded’ as knowledge. Evidence collected in the case studies therefore did offer a practical illustration of the hierarchy perspective but only in a way that highlights its limitations, without providing any new insights into how it can usefully inform practical knowledge work.

This lack of clarity in basic definitions is crystallised in the comment from a member of the knowledge management team in Charity T: **‘Knowledge is a difficult word and we struggle with it. So I prefer to call it Information Management. Knowledge is basically information with context, rather than plain facts’ (T1)**. A pragmatic response is one way to deal with the problems of defining the difference between information and knowledge.

6.1.1.2 Tacit Knowledge

The knowledge managers in each charity made clear in their own responses to questions that this document storage was considered to be knowledge management because it was in the context of other knowledge management activity that was also enacted. This link suggests that they were also aware of the tacit – explicit perspective explained earlier (section 2.1.2). In all three cases, the programmes included much more people-centred work, and this feature was understood to complement document storage by making knowledge available to be shared.

In Charity L, the Learning Reviews were focused on bringing out the knowledge ‘in people’s heads’, and developing and sharing this knowledge through face-to-face interactions. A typical comment on why knowledge management was needed states that: **‘there was a lot of knowledge, skills, experience and learning from the past which was retained with various degrees of effectiveness in people’s heads’ (L7)**. Similarly in Charity P: **‘Meeting people face to face is one of the building blocks of managing information and sharing knowledge because it’s easy to say this. But you feel it more when it’s real people meeting each other’ (P5)**. For Charity T: **‘Staff have tacit knowledge about their own work. The problem is when they leave and out goes the knowledge with them. Some of this is ballast and not as useful. But if the knowledge can be made available in digestible chunks, this could be accessed’ (T3)**. As a result, many people interviewed believed that knowledge management includes building technology platforms in order to enable organisational access to these digestible chunks.

This view is supported by the IT project manager in Charity T, who explained the aim of knowledge management was to: **‘take it out of people’s heads and into a variety of ways to capture it, not into masses of documents. You will then not lose it when people leave and you can share it between teams and departments’ (T2)**.

Given that the respondents believed in this potential value, both the original human relationship activity and the written documents were defined as knowledge. This emphasis provides evidence that supports the view that, in all three charities, tacit knowledge is not treated as the only ‘true’ knowledge nor is ‘explicit’ knowledge rejected as mere information. They were all, with more or less success, attempting to manage the two in tandem as important resources for their organisations.

6.1.1.3 Individual and Group Knowledge

Another perspective on knowledge management can also be identified in the thinking of those interviewed. They saw knowledge as tacit, owned by one individual, but also as a group phenomenon, using terms resonant with the Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge model. Charity P tried to combine its academic work in UK with the practical efforts of development practitioners in the field. The academic side of its work was seen as insufficient, without access to programmes of work that demonstrated value in the field. To quote their Chief Executive: **'you can see it that fieldwork is a working hypothesis, so that if you can prove it and then argue from the lessons you have learnt. Well, that is how to get influence' (P3).**

Similarly, the cross-team Learning Reviews of Charity L were specifically aimed at identifying the learning of completed practical activities from group experience. One such expression of belief is: **'It is the interaction between the people that draws out the learning that would be hidden otherwise' (L1).** This view was fundamental to the Learning Review process set up by Charity L. The work teams established in Charity P and the meetings in Charity T also establish that learning from groups was seen as valuable knowledge. **'The best events are the international meetings because they are face to face. That is a good way to share and build trust' (P2).**

The acquisition of knowledge that was new to an individual through the sharing process is specifically mentioned in interview responses. **'Evidence! And I know people are using it. One of our regional advisers from Central Asia who I met when they were over here in August, who was talking to me about how she'd been pulling documents down and using it' (L5).** Interview subjects also explained particular insights, which they took away and re-used in other situations, which increased their personal understanding.

This cross-fertilisation makes clear that individual knowledge and learning is also represented within the case study charities.

The data from the three case studies can therefore be seen to illustrate some theoretical perspectives on knowledge, including the four quadrants of the knowing in action matrix (figure 2.1, p. 38), although this type of connection was not made by any interview respondents directly. In general, staff had a pragmatic response to the term ‘knowledge’ and few appeared at all interested in precise definitions. The evidence suggests that people did not believe it was essential to have a clear and fixed understanding of the term knowledge in order to manage it, in contrast to some of the views of academic experts (Hutchings and Mohannak, 2007, section 2.1.5, p. 38). The working definition of knowledge: **‘knowledge is information in context, together with an understanding of how to use it’** (Brooking, 1999, sections 2.1.5, p. 39 and 6.1, p. 161) is proved adequate for the purpose of the study.

6.1.2 How is Knowledge Management Implemented?

In the light of the generally relaxed attitude to definitions of knowledge, this section considers how well the range of knowledge management activity, described in chapter five, relates to the six major knowledge management ideas discussed earlier.

- productive opportunity;
- learning;
- knowledge creation;
- communities of practice;
- role of technology;
- changing culture.

This study uses the working definition of knowledge management: the management perspective, and associated practical activity, intended to make the best use of the knowledge resources available to an organization to meet its own productive opportunities (section 2.4.3, p. 59).

6.1.2.1 Productive Opportunity

The three charities have been labelled Charities L, P, and T, because of the very different activities that formed the focus of their knowledge management programmes, featuring learning, knowledge products, and the application of new technology respectively. The difference between the emphases of each programme, poses a serious question. Is it appropriate to talk of knowledge management as a fully functioning management discipline, if each different organisation's practice appears so different?

Penrose has emphasised a perspective that each organisation, although it may work in the same sector, will have a unique productive opportunity (Penrose, 1959, section 2.2.1). The way each organisation manages knowledge must therefore be fitted to its own distinctive design, which will require a different set of knowledge assets and capabilities. For example, Charity P includes its focus on knowledge products as part of the knowledge management programme, because this function is relevant to their niche specialisation. **'We are putting all the knowledge that has been produced. And we are putting a list in there, in the CD-rom, of the types of things that we mean by knowledge products, anything from writing a report to doing a slot on a radio programme, doing a presentation' (P9).** Both other charities, with wider charitable goals, used knowledge management in ways that match their particular organisational challenges as will be discussed below.

6.1.2.2 Learning

The term ‘Learning Organisation’ as a theoretical framework for knowledge management was not explicitly used or referenced by the knowledge management leaders in any of the three charities (section 2.2.2). However, learning held a central place in the concept of Charity L’s knowledge management programme through the use of the Learning Review. The idea of learning as an agent for change was explicitly mentioned by the knowledge manager: **‘We need to learn and we need to inform and we need to change things as a result’ (L1)**. This strong focus on learning reflects its intention to become more responsive to the changing external environment.

While another two staff in Charity L did mention the concept of the Learning Organisation, they did not do so in a positive way. **‘The problem with Charity L is that we like to think we are a Learning Organisation, but you can’t make mistakes’ (L5)**, although this was tempered by a slightly more positive comparison with a previous ‘Learning Organisation’ where the speaker had been employed: **‘Whereas here you can have those conversations legitimately and however flawed or faltering we may be, we are at least having those conversations and trying to find our way through’ (L5)**.

Learning Organisation was only mentioned once in Charity P: **‘we aim to be a Learning Organisation’ (P4)**. However there was certainly no consensus that learning was a strong feature of the knowledge management programme: **‘it’s much easier to do the reading than to sit back and say, “what have I learnt from that”’ (P6)**.

A lone reference in Charity T suggests the same lack of emphasis on learning. Learning is also equated with knowledge management, for example: **'this is linked to learning. Charity T wants to adjust what we do to the evidence but for that you need good information flows' (T3)**. As a result it can be said that knowledge management, in all three charities, is not linked explicitly to the idea of the 'Learning Organisation' as such, but knowledge management does embrace the theme of learning as a change agent to ensure the flexibility and agility required of a charity in a fast moving and uncertain environment, although the emphasis on this interpretation is much stronger in Charity L.

6.1.2.3 Knowledge Creation

Knowledge creation perspectives stress the value of putting professional people from different disciplines into a special place to allow the mingling of different expertises, so facilitating creative outcomes, in an unfolding spiral (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, section 2.2.3). Clearly, a Learning Review in Charity L, a cross-organisational team meeting in Charity P, or an interactive virtual team conference in Charity T, are far removed from the knowledge work of teams in Honda, enjoying the special 'ba' of a Japanese company. Currently, however, belief that Japan has a unique insight into business renewal has waned.

Nonetheless, the activities discussed in the three case study charities can be linked to the basic concepts behind the knowledge creation spiral. With this cross-cultural freedom, the development of an organisational intranet itself can be seen as an attempt to provide something equivalent to the shared space of 'ba'. It is enacted in whatever physical or virtual space brings people and knowledge together in a form culturally understood by the charity's staff (section 2.2.3, p. 43).

There are examples of such expectations to be seen in each charity. The Learning Reviews of Charity L gives an interaction that can then be captured: **'that type of thing in the past, we would not have had that understanding to take stock and then influence. I think it would have been left to ourselves. I don't think we would even have documented it' (L4).**

For Charity P this need for interactive knowledge creation is also suggested:

'I have a role, encouraging people to share knowledge and information across our team. It more often boils down to trying to make connections between ideas, people and projects, to make connections when someone is doing something and another country needs to know that and playing a role in the middle of putting people together and getting a conversation going and sharing bits of documentation or whatever' (P5).

In Charity T: **'they are committed to workshops for staff and partners. There is a lot of shared knowledge by email and best practice seminars' (T4).**

Without accepting the view that all tacit knowledge can be put into an explicit form, as implied in Nonaka and Takeuchi's work, it is nevertheless possible to recognise how much this process has in common with the charities' attempts to link face-to-face work with document storage. These examples of cross-organisational interaction, intended to produce a new or improved knowledge, was also based on a concern for the future: **'So a big challenge for the future, if we are going to go into our Hub Offices around the world, which is a possibility, is how do you do that? How do you maintain learning between regions and programme levels within that completely different organisational context?' (L4).**

6.1.2.4 Communities of Practice

This recognition of the need to link across disciplines and locations also highlights another knowledge management prescription: communities of practice. Although communities of practice were discussed favourably by individuals in all three charities, there was little evidence of successful building of these much-desired internal groups (section 2.2.4).

Charity L had the stated intention to build communities across geographic locations, but there was no evidence of success during the period of the case study. It remained an aspiration: **'Knowledge management provides foundations for other things to build on top and I think the whole concept of developing Communities of Best Practice can be based on that' (L7)**. The intention floundered, when faced with the problems of sustaining group momentum, particularly where technology support was limited to email, accompanied by collated information distributed by Compact Disc. Similarly staff in Charity P, encouraged by the Chief Executive, had attempted some UK internal networks but they had not become established and were abandoned by the time of the case study. As the knowledge management team member commented: **'If no one stayed behind them to drive it on, then they just let it fail' (P1)**.

In Charity T, the technology change was intended to provide an infrastructure that would support the growth of lively communities. **'There are notice boards for accommodation or prayer requests. You can get alerts on things that are important to you. Groups can be linked and there is space for social things too' (T6)**. The approach of starting with 'natural affinity groups', such as cyclists or pub-goers, was an interesting way to develop the idea of building communities within the charity and establishing the potential of the software in an engaging form.

One serious limitation, which many staff recognised, was the fear that international cost-effective technology solutions were unlikely to be implemented soon. Without these, results would be influenced by the quality of technology links across the worldwide organisation. As one staff member commented: **'I was in Rwanda in December. This was an eye-opener as things happen so slowly. You have to understand this. All the different technology is difficult'** (T5).

Knowledge management in the three case study charities included people-centred activity and this activity was then linked to their efforts to store and maintain documents based on the learning and other 'knowledge assets' held by the charity. While Charity L was the most focused on this aspect, all three charities included learning as a valued aspect of knowledge management, while some ideas linked to knowledge creation and communities of practice were in evidence in all three. Another featured theme was that their knowledge management included technology change.

6.1.2.5 The Role of Technology

So far, this analysis of interview results demonstrates that, in none of the three case study charities, was knowledge management identified simply as using a new ICT system. However, nor did any interview subject see it as independent of ICT, although there was recognition of the complexity of the contribution: **'this is where technology is both a help and a hindrance'** (L2).

The importance of ICT in knowledge management in the case organisations can be confirmed through analysis of interview responses. Each interviewee was asked to identify what was meant by the term 'knowledge management' and what the organisation did successfully. 80% of respondents included a reference to ICT in the answer. However, ICT is viewed as the main focus of knowledge management only when people work directly in a related capacity, or where the individual's main role involves using a specific technology system, such as a Web Editor or Image Librarian (16%). In 52% of answers, ICT is clearly identified as an enabler for knowledge management and in 12% as a barrier. This response suggests that the two areas of work of knowledge management and ICT are indeed closely coupled.

The final question in the interview looked to the future, where 60% of staff chose developing better technology systems as a key challenge for knowledge management in their charity and of the remainder, another 9% picked out ICT skills development and control of technology.

The impact of new technology for one user in Charity P is illustrated by the following assessment: **'completely indispensable! For example: I am writing a paper and I know some of the things I want to say. I'm thinking: where is the evidence for this? So I am using the Internet endlessly to find evidence and finding papers and quickly looking through them' (P6)**. The change of technology potential embodied in the Internet and the international networks that could be established using this media, meant that technology was seen as a change agent to support knowledge management. Getting control of this was seen as a priority, for the Internet enthusiast quoted above, who also commented: **'It is the abundance, which is also totally overwhelming' (P6)**. The central stores of information were meant to ensure that all vital documents had one accessible repository. Once it was accepted that document handling was an area of knowledge management, the next challenge was to find ways to organise and filter the abundance of information.

Although all three charities were investing in intranets, as a vehicle for this central document storage, the use of technology as a change agent was most marked in Charity T. One of the knowledge management team defined the knowledge management programme as: **'this whole thing is a technology-led change programme' (T1).**

The senior management team had identified the requirement for an intranet earlier according to the Head of IT: **'they were asking for an intranet since 1999' (T10)**, which suggested an awareness that the charity had identified information-sharing needs as a requirement for new technology, even if at the time, the staff were not clear how best to use it. The productive opportunity for Charity T was seen as increasing use of technology to move the organisation to a more technology-enabled organisation, which could face the challenges of its international reach and its intention to share more across its worldwide offices.

The success in using technology to support knowledge management was variable. The best achievements were seen at Charity T, where there was a consensus that the implementation of an intranet was meeting their needs. As one interviewee said: **'it is a real testimony that it is what we do, business as usual. Like mobile phones, you wonder how we managed without them... It is what we have now and is as integral as the phone or email' (T8).**

The other charities also reported some success with their intranet implementations. There were positive responses: **'This is a way of "connecting us" because everyone will look at the same place' (L9)**, but also concerns: **'So the systems are there but when it comes to knowledge management, it is really a sideline service to record everything on a computer' (L7).**

In Charity P, the concerns were much more prevalent: **'staff hide behind connectivity, for example the login and load process is lengthy. It takes about 20 minutes and then often times out' (P1)**, although these problems could be temporary. The same member of staff revisited the issue of helping staff to use technology well: **'so some systems are fine but people need more time to learn how to use them. We need to take this into account if we want them to be used effectively' (P1)**.

For the future, as the use of collaboration packages and low cost technologies - such as £100 laptops and easily available mobile phones - becomes more prevalent, ICT has the potential to become a more valuable tool to enlarge the scope for creating and sharing tacit knowledge across an international organisation that also reaches out to stakeholders and partners.

Charity T was already moving in this direction. To quote a senior manager in Charity T, who was not directly involved in a knowledge management role: **'blogs have been introduced to get instant audiences and converts ... so that is a good use of technology' (T3)**.

It may eventually provide ways to replicate a knowledge management tool, frequently praised by interviewees: face-to-face meetings.

6.1.2.6 Changing Culture

One requirement of technology implementation as claimed at Charity T, was to promote 'culture change'. **'The technical platform leads the cultural change' (T1)**. Similarly in Charity P, the role of the knowledge manager is described as: **'my job description says I am meant to help culture change' (P1)**. In Charity L, the idea that knowledge management had already impacted on culture was suggested: **'So I think there has been a culture change and I suspect throughout the organisation that change has had variable effects' (L7)**.

The intention was that knowledge management would change the organisation away from a culture that allowed isolation between different groups of workers. Such a situation can be described as a 'silo' focus, where staff understood their own specific functions but failed to recognise how these fitted in within the wider organisation. Interviewees believed that knowledge management requires staff to move towards a more open and proactive sharing attitude across organisational divisions. The remedy was suggested in Charity T: **'there has been training as there is a culture issue. People have to understand, believe, and bother. If you are part of a small group and you all know one another, why would you want to share? You need a culture across the organisation that sees, understands and benefits from it'** (T2).

Knowledge management, in the form of different activities such as Learning Reviews, technology change, encouraging the sharing of documents, and cross-organisational interactions, is intended to evolve organisational culture. One person in Charity L gives a positive assessment: **'So the fact that it's now pretty much in the culture of the organisation has got to be a good thing'** (L2). From the same charity, there is an interesting insight into the idea of changing culture. The interview subject was initially negative about the knowledge management programme, but changed this view during the interview: **'firstly, getting people to stop before they do the next activity because we are so activity-focused, which I think is the nature of the organisation. We are activists, we do like people to do things, and so getting people to stop is a success in itself'** (L5). The interviewee then spoke of the value of new terminology that enables staff to discuss knowledge management and learning issues in a way that had not been possible before, and which contrasted with their previous workplaces.

There were positive comments also from Charity T: **'I can see specific areas where the project has contributed if you are thinking about our silo mentality. If you work in the Marketing Team, that is where you work and there are still not really any linkages. The knowledge management project has behaviour and tools to encourage people to stop these limitations. I think this is good'** (T9). But this development was not considered to have impacted upon the general culture: **'I am not sure there is any impact on culture. They still talk about the need for culture change in Charity T. In some respects they don't know corporately what this should look like. We all have individual views'** (T9).

The same sense of confusion is found in this description of an interchange within an external 'Action Learning Set' attended by Charity P's interim knowledge manager, when told that her job was to change culture: **'[They] asked how this was meant to be done!'** (P1). She reported this in a tone of heavy irony that implied that the answer had not been revealed to her.

Apart from the conceptual confusions about how to change an organisational culture, there were also practical constraints. There was concern about how much the changes would impact on staff in Africa where enthusiasm for new technology providing new ways of working would be challenged by unreliable connectivity.

'There are problems to do with connectivity. These are issues outside Charity T's control. Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo have huge issues. You can throw more money at it but there is still no regular power so this does not apply. Most cannot access the intranet and if they do it is very slow' (T5).

In this way, a poor technology infrastructure could pose limitations on international sharing and impact on the growth of a new global work culture. This example provides a useful reminder that culture change will be tightly linked to other factors. In this case, technology was a cultural artefact that itself had the potential to hinder the desired culture change overall.

This constraint complemented the other evidence from the three case studies that culture change is indeed a component of knowledge management but that the impact on the ‘global work culture’ is as yet very limited.

6.1.3 Main Findings

From the foregoing analysis, it is reasonable to conclude that the programmes in the three international development charities are extensive enough to justify their claims to be classed as knowledge management programmes, rather than to be seen as merely the eclectic use of some available tools. Each charity has the intention to use knowledge management as a programme that will improve its organisation. The charities have then selected the tools that they believe will deliver such transformations in the context of their particular organisation. Similar practices can be identified, but the emphasis with each charity is different, reflecting their different productive opportunities. Patterns and divergence across the three cases can be traced.

‘Knowledge’ is a term that is used freely in all three cases, and can frequently mean something very little different from information - for example, the content of documents or other media. The opinions provided by the case study data match most closely with the ‘knowing in action’ model. Examples of knowledge are found relating to its tacit or explicit nature, and to knowledge originating in group- or individual-knowledge. There is also a clear understanding that knowledge is only an appropriate term when someone is using it purposefully.

The case organisations have been seen to embrace some of the central prescriptions of knowledge management, such as the importance of learning, knowledge creation and communities of practice, which are included in the programmes of all three charities.

Likewise, culture change is central to these charities' ideas about knowledge management. It is assumed that some cultures are better than others for managing knowledge and that a programme of activity can move people towards improved ways of working together.

Two findings emerge most clearly and can be delivered with confidence. First, it can be confirmed that there is no simple blueprint that is followed by people 'doing' knowledge management (section 2.2.8). The three programmes include a wide variety of different activities, and their interpretations of knowledge management priorities are diverse in line with the working definition given in chapter two, that knowledge management is the management perspective, and associated practical activity, intended to make the best use of the knowledge resources available to an organization to meet its own productive opportunities (section 2.4.3, p.59). A more precise definition would be difficult to fit with this variety of interpretations and wide range of different activities. The following diagram shows which knowledge management activities are used in the three charities.

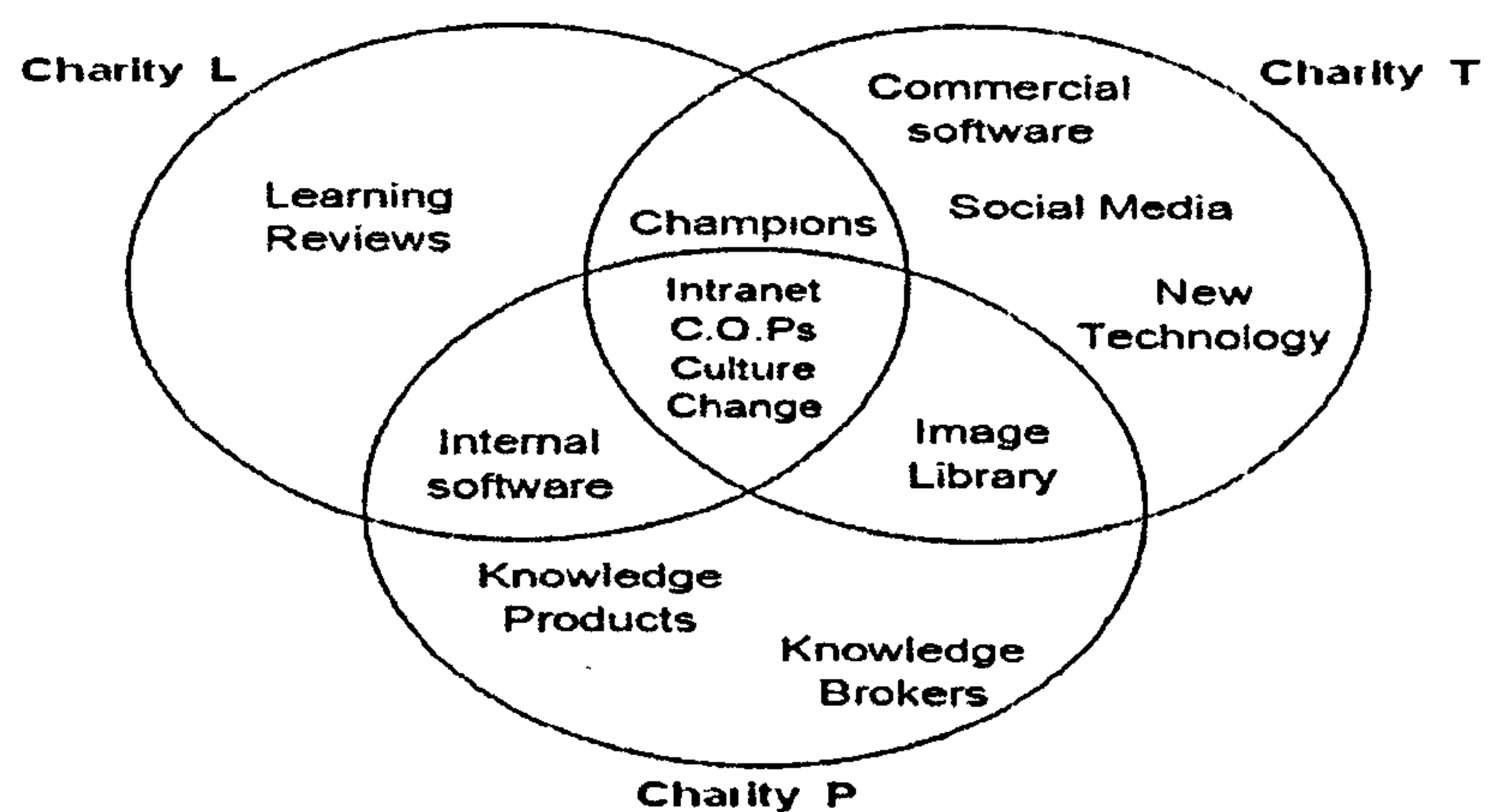


Figure 6.1. Venn diagram showing knowledge management activities

The data as illustrated in this diagram, leads to the first main finding:

- **Knowledge management is interpreted and enacted in a wide range of ways in the sector.**

One other pattern does emerge clearly. A practical focus on knowledge management in all three cases has been linked to the development of an organisational intranet. It seems that in practice, international development charities balance both the human resources and cultural aspects of knowledge management with technology solutions, which allow both explicit and tacit knowledge to give value to the organisation. This finding matches the view expressed in the literature that technical solutions are a regular feature of knowledge management programmes (section 2.2.5). The charities all endeavour, with varying success, to deliver their interpretations of knowledge management through technology solutions that encourage personal interactions as well as providing appropriate document stores. As time advances it will be possible to compare their relative strengths on the matrix introduced in figure 5.1 (section 5.5.3, p.159)

- **Information technology plays a significant role in these diverse knowledge management programmes.**

Having identified what knowledge and knowledge management are, from the perspective of the participants in the three international development charities, it is now relevant to look at the organisational context of their programmes in order to explore the appropriateness and sustainability of their efforts.

6.2 Transfer and Sustainability

Research question 2: How was the transfer to the new context effected and does it look as if it will embed there?

In this section, data from the snapshot of the case studies plus the evidence of follow-up visits is used to investigate whether, and in what ways, knowledge management is becoming established as a long-term component in the charities' management toolkit.

This part is in four sections:

- How was the Transfer from the Commercial Sector Effected;
- Evidence of Embedding and Likely Longevity;
- Choosing Timeframes;
- Main Findings.

6.2.1 How was the Transfer from the Commercial Sector Effected?

In chapter two, organisational theory was introduced to provide appropriate models to build understanding of the nature of organisations (section 2.4). In this section, the transfer of knowledge management between different organisational populations is discussed to see if this demonstrates ways that sectoral difference has affected this transfer.

The importation of knowledge management experience from the private sector was an important way in which knowledge management was introduced. A surprising amount of crossover was revealed in the case study interviews, between staff in knowledge management roles from the commercial sector to the case study charities.

Both the leaders of the knowledge management activities in Charity L and Charity T had been recruited after leaving careers in the commercial sector. They worked to transfer ideas that they had used before to their new posts. In both charities, it was noted in interviews that they could ruffle feathers by the single-minded way that they worked but this feature was not unusual given that they were innovators who were changing established routines. However, they were able to introduce their new activities and win organisational support for them. One interview subject indicated this: **'the organisation has moved towards him. He has moved too and, most of all, he has delivered'** (T10).

In Charity P, the knowledge management activity was not linked to a single person from the commercial sector and so the interviewer asked each interview subject whether they had worked outside the voluntary sector. A high number of people had worked in other sectors. Whether the interviewee saw similarity or difference between the commercial and voluntary sectors seemed to depend on the aspect upon which they were focused. For example, one saw similarity only with the parts of the charity that worked in a demand-led and directly financed way. **'I come from a commercial world myself. Being a commercial organisation focuses their minds and they take on commissions for books and pamphlets that there is a demand for, so their minds are focused'** (P10). In contrast, another person, who had changed sector, said: **'Yes, I used to work in various commercial organisations. I was going to say that working here wasn't so different as I had expected. As an employee it's not that different'** (P7). In this context, it appears that movement between sectors was not problematic. Staff and ideas from the commercial sector were accepted without major reservation.

From the data collected, it was also apparent that Charity T was the only one to have introduced commercial technology to support the knowledge management change that had been planned. However, knowledge management staff worked hard to identify how the programme would 'fit' with their particular teams and individuals. There were plenty of comments that suggested success for this empirical approach: **'given the right training to know its full capacity, it is a powerful tool. It brings people together, such as the grass roots in churches in the UK with other countries'** (T7). This example demonstrates the different organisational context of one particular charity.

In contrast, both Charity L and Charity P developed their intranet technology in-house, so that these systems were designed to reflect their own way of working. Their technology systems had grown from the internal plans of the knowledge management team. Charity L also worked to help different teams to adapt to the new technology and there was no evidence that it was not used appropriately. In Charity P, however, the difficulty of introducing new technology that had no track record and was not used in the context of agreed procedures with relevant training, was apparent. The Head of IT put this positively: **'to some extent we needed to go through all we have gone through to know where we need to be. It's a difficult area to define what facilities you need and what is going to work when you are starting from scratch. To some extent you can start with a package and implement that'** (P10).

As a result, it appears from the evidence of these three charities that the crucial factor was not the use of commercial or non-commercial technology. Either could provide benefit if there was clarity of purpose and sufficient emphasis given to helping staff align the changes with their own work requirements. The methods of implementation appeared to be a more critical determinant of success or failure.

Follow-up visits to Charity P revealed that they have viewed Charity T's solution and implemented a similar commercial package, using a staff member from the South American office to take a leading role. This person was moved to UK and so it was experience of working in a non-UK office that was sought, rather than allowing the staff in South America to be instrumental in the implementation of the new intranet. Their system, and that of Charity T are both still in use today but there were indications that the result is not well liked within Charity P. Again this suggests that it is the way the package is implemented that is the crucial factor rather than the software itself, or its origins. At this point, there is no evidence that commercial origins were a factor in take-up of knowledge management practices.

It has already been established that culture impacts on knowledge management. Is there some way that the organisational culture in international development charities is less welcoming to that in a commercial setting? One indication of cultural hostility to commercial norms can be quoted: **'we have business now in job titles. It jars and feels uncomfortable in this set up. It has helped a bit though in having a corporate brand of Charity T and the intranet has helped to sell it. They made efforts to get the thinking along the right lines. I am ambivalent about this. It is the part I am not so happy about'** (T5).

However, such sentiments were very rare. There were others who directly rejected a view of hostility to commercial practice: **'it is better than five years ago. People then were reluctant to use technology, as it was "too corporate". They didn't want to embrace the corporate world even if there are good ways to do things'** (T6). Lack of any consistent comments on barriers to knowledge management in the international development charities means there is no reason to consider the culture as being intrinsically inimical to commercial practices.

The charities exist to promote sharing and equity across populations in order to remove poverty. Sharing knowledge in the knowledge management context is therefore something that links well to their central mission as shown by this quotation: **'One of our core values is in terms of the whole issue of relationships; how we work together; how we learn from each other. We want to work in partnership, with mutual respect on both sides' (L7).**

Values such as these make a connection to the idea that knowledge is for sharing rather than for personal power. This assumption gives consistent evidence that knowledge management practices were a good 'fit' with the underlying organisational culture. Although it was recognised that different parts of the organisation might have different sub-cultures, this diversity was not raised as contradicting the overall emphasis on sharing knowledge.

Hindrances to knowledge management were therefore not identified as stemming from its commercial origins. However, lack of resources was seen as a problem, and this constraint may link to one of the characteristics of this organisational population already identified (section 1.2). The size and resource base of this group of charities reduced the scope of knowledge management. **'But there are now cost cuts, so you have a fantastic site with not enough resources' (T7),** is one example of this. This lack of resources may influence the organisational culture:

'the residual culture is antithetical to knowledge-sharing, because of the problem of finances. Money is the driver in offices with wholly nationally staffed officers who have to raise funds themselves. They do get some core funding, but also they need the balance from local fundraising. This does not help knowledge-sharing' (P3).

The models of knowledge management presented in practical texts often gloss over the financial requirements to provide an international knowledge management programme. It could be argued that the resources available, rather than cultural considerations, make knowledge management difficult to transfer from the larger, better resourced organisations of the commercial sector and that constraint is the only major barrier. However, the problem of limited financial resources is not unique to this organisational population, as smaller commercial companies also face limited resources that can be overstretched when they attempt to develop international reach.

6.2.2 Evidence of Embedding and Likely Longevity

If its commercial origins do not make the practices recommended within knowledge management inappropriate for the charity sector, then the next question to consider is how well the specific knowledge management systems and processes matched the requirements of these charitable organisations. Has the knowledge management practice moved beyond the original set-up to become securely established within organisational routines? Elements from organisational theory are taken in turn to investigate the case study data (sections 2.4 and 3.1). By looking at how well the knowledge management programmes fitted with these aspects of the case organisations, it is possible to make judgments about the prospects for continuity on the one hand, or rejection on the other.

There are five sections:

- Goals;
- Decision-makers, people and power;
- Structure;
- Technology;
- Culture.

6.2.2.1 Goals

Basic rational systems theory as applied to organisations suggests that there will be a clear goal or goals that organisations pursue. Although the simplicity of this idea is challenged in other system theories, it is useful in this context where in all three organisations, the leadership had provided clarity about the central mission and goals of the charity. There was no evidence that the stated goals were not acceptable to the interview subjects. Goal conflict was evident as will be detailed later, but there was no fundamental challenge to the formal charitable aims.

All three sets of interviewees, when asked what knowledge management meant in their organisations as a first interview question, gave clear opinions that showed that by far the majority acknowledged that knowledge management was appropriate for their charities' goals. Alignment with organisational goals was therefore well established in the minds of the interviewees. The success of this approach can be shown in Charity T, where it was stated that: **'from a project management point of view, there was clarity on the business benefit and this focused on that. There was good communication with the rest of the organisation' (T10).**

However for staff, organisational goals are remote on a daily basis. Their work is set on objectives that aim to deliver the overarching goal, and it is the need to embed knowledge management into their own objectives, and so into their daily routines, that caused frequent comments and unprompted references from interview subjects. A very frequent comment in interviews in all three charities related to the extent to which the knowledge management activities initiated by the central project team meshed with other regular work requirements for delivering the organisation's purpose.

A sample quotation from each of the three charities makes this important point:

- **'The knowledge management challenge is not to see it as separate from what we do. It is a homogeneous method because you do this as part of your job' (T3).**
- **'It is a plus that it is needed to do the job effectively and there is a big demand for that' (P2).**
- **'Learning Reviews are successful because they seamlessly fit into work and are frequently talked about' (L9).**

In Charity L and Charity T, one aspect that shows real success in embedding knowledge management was staff referring to knowledge management in terms of their own work. Human Resource professionals thought that it enabled better use of exit interviews, and streamlined training processes. **'Yes, I can see the link. I can forge a link, particularly in making better, more effective use of resources. This makes sense, thinking of our mission and values' (T9).**

In the same way, finance staff considered knowledge management to improve record-keeping, enabling a better response to legal controls, while campaigners related knowledge management to more successful campaigning. A staff member working with overseas operations expressed this: **'so we would have learnt from partners or listened to partners, certainly and their views, and we have a strong relationship with the majority of our partners' (L2).** Another expression of knowledge management's integration and enhancement with what was already in place can be seen in the following statement: **'So in that sense it was quite close to what we were already doing but it's bringing in a slightly different viewpoint on it, incorporating the right language and methodology' (L1).**

In Charity T, this view was backed by training, which was very deliberately worked out with individual teams, to ensure that their precise team requirements were known to the organisers. That process was sustained even when it meant several visits to keep in contact with them.

A knowledge management team member told the story:

'There was one team based in three offices. I went through the normal process but when I needed information from the team it was awful. There was no way this would be a success. So I spoke to X [the knowledge management leader] and he suggested that I spent a day with the team. There was lots of resistance and arguments and it was clear they did not want to do it. But at the end they understood the point of what they were doing. I knew my work would be cut out but there was no pre-set rules about "this is how it will be approached". So I worked for three or so weeks before, with one person remotely who was supposed to pass on the information. I had not met this person before. This did not work. But then I spent a day with the whole team. Then I spent two weeks getting the information and went back again. This was to Bangor! It started with them not liking the change, but afterwards I got emails saying it was great and not scary because they could see the benefits. It is worth taking time to make sure you can handle people as they all have their own needs and so you cannot just apply the same format...' (T1).

Charity L also worked to identify local applications of the knowledge management activity as it was implemented. This care was demonstrated at the observation session, where the intranet implementation was launched with focused sessions for teams to talk about how the intranet could be used for their specific work purposes (section 5.2.2.3). This meeting is one of the occasions when observation was valuable in confirming the validity of interview responses (LO1).

Only in the UK office of Charity P was there a sense that knowledge management was not embedded into their daily work, which can be attributed partly to the technology interface problems. This was compounded by the failure to identify suitable processes and training for staff so that the knowledge work would complement their other workloads and therefore relate to their perception of the organisation's core aims.

Their IT specialist reported this difficulty: **'I don't think that people were trained too well and there wasn't the sort of implementation plan that said what documents do you produce and these should go in and these shouldn't and that sort of analysis for people' (P10).**

Charity P did have formal performance indicators to help alignment of knowledge management with the organisation's aims, but these indicators were only mentioned by two interviewees and by one in a negative way: **'again it is one of the targets on my performance management on which I am rated, but there is no reward for whether I do well. The opposite goes on my list. The opposite if I haven't' (P6).**

When a positive mention of the intranet was made, it was not fulsome: **'we were still talking about same things for three or four years, so it felt as if there was not much progress. But some things have moved on. For example we have some form of intranet' (P4).** Despite the fact that the closest alignment of the official organisational goals with knowledge management was seen in Charity P, this synergy on its own did not result in staff making the links to everyday work themselves.

From this data, it can be concluded that the knowledge management programmes have not only to be linked to organisational goals, but also to be adapted to ensure that the staff recognise benefits for their own specific work, in order to embed knowledge management into the fabric of the organisation. This outcome took considerable work from a focused knowledge management team.

6.2.2.2 *Decision-Makers, People and Power*

This section looks at the data to see if knowledge management had an appropriate power base so that people would support it and ensure that it received the necessary share of resources. This section takes the perspective of organisations introduced in natural systems models, that decisions will be complex and involve many people within the organisation (section 2.4.1, p. 57). It also links to soft system thinking, in accepting that how an organisation survives or thrives is through the complex interplay of conversations and commitments from the players who are involved within the organisation (section 2.4.2). This complexity can be recognised by looking at the influence of various stakeholder groups.

In order to investigate the power and influence of different groups that could support knowledge management, four groups of potential support or influence will be considered:

- A. Chief Executive and senior managers;
- B. middle managers;
- C. knowledge management team leaders;
- D. champions.

6.2.2.2 (A) *Chief Executive and Senior Managers*

The hierarchical structure of all the three charities suggests that the Chief Executive with the team of senior managers will act as the main decision-making power and so can be expected to have a strong influence over the power base of knowledge management (section 3.1.2). Although there is one higher decision-making body, the Board of Trustees, it did not appear to play a role in any of the knowledge management programmes investigated.

The evidence for senior level support came from interviews in all three charities. **'The General Director quickly spotted the value or importance of this' (L3); and 'It is a concept that has come from the top of the organisation... it has been modelled by our leadership, so it all makes sense' (L7),** from Charity L, while for Charity T it was believed that: **'The drive is at senior management level and directorate level' (T7).** In Charity P, where the chief executive was an active advocate for the knowledge management programme, it was recognised that the senior managers' role was relevant to goal-setting: **'And also perhaps a clearer organisational direction on what knowledge we are trying to manage and what we should do with it and the priority for it, so that it feeds down – that everybody is clear in their job, the level of importance that knowledge management should have. It is important' (P6).**

There was active support from the Chief Executive in Charity L, which was believed to help the knowledge management activity to flourish and survive. One senior manager was particularly closely involved in leading knowledge management activity. **'He is credible and with integrity, and he sees other people's contexts' (L6),** was one description given, suggesting that personal power was also a factor in embedding knowledge management.

In Charity L, in contrast to Charity P, there was a clear indication from interviews that a significant group of staff in Charity L were confident that they had permission from above to prioritise knowledge management. The same interview subject emphasised that: **'there was leadership from the Board and buy-in lower down so that people do prioritise learning. They can be told about the long-term value' (L6).** These reflections link closely with ideas about the role of senior managers discussed earlier (section 3.1.2.1).

In Charity P, the Chief Executive was a prime mover of the knowledge focus within the organisation and was therefore able to work at the structural level to push through changes. However, because middle managers felt there was more pressure to deliver other priorities, such as keeping down costs or following up fundraising opportunities, most staff saw little incentive to take part. As a result, participation was patchy. The Chief Executive recognised this problem: **'although we have senior management buy-in, but the people chosen were low down the pecking order and these people did not feel empowered to change the culture and our way of working' (P3).**

However, the impact of the support of the Chief Executive in Charity P has to be assessed in the longer-term, as the reorganisation of functional divisions into thematic teams was intended to bring about the appropriate inter-team sharing of knowledge, in order to create the climate for more successful knowledge management in the future. A cross-organisational structural change had the potential to impact beyond the scope of some of the other knowledge management activities taking place. A follow-up visit in 2010 did identify that knowledge management remained a high profile activity.

Senior managers in Charity T were reported as being supportive but not very involved. Their analysis of the organisation's future direction had identified the need for better handling of knowledge and information to support a strategy that aimed to reduce the concentration of power in the UK headquarters. A relevant quotation emphasises: **'There was no clear lead until the Corporate Strategy of 2005 to 2010, which has this as one element: "Strengthening the Organisation". That has focused us more on internally how we do things. So now maybe it has found its place' (T2).** This comment provided a clear perspective that gave managing knowledge a recognised status as a requirement for all staff.

It also meant that a budget for technology change was available. Identified as ‘passive support’, this feature drew a mixed assessment from the staff interviewed. The person quoted above also added:

‘there is no real leadership above X [knowledge management team leader], not from the Senior Management Team. There is no lead from there. They are sure to be in the background but there are no real champions. No one director is seen as a key person, or even at a level below. This is maybe not a bad thing, as people don’t feel it is being pushed on them’ (T2).

For Charity T, this passive support was nevertheless summarised as: **‘The corporate directors have kept faith’ (T8).**

As well as being important for linking the rationale for knowledge management to the organisational goal and for the level of prioritisation these activities were allowed, another role for senior management was in making decisions about organisational structures and structural changes. In this, there was no ambiguity about their position. A discussion on how structure issues related to the power base of knowledge management teams follows later (section 6.2.2.3).

6.2.2.2 (B) Middle Managers

Nonaka and Takeuchi have argued that middle managers are central to successful knowledge creation as there can be ‘middle-up-down’ management that provides the impetus to challenge and change (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, section 2.2.3. p. 44). While senior management will set the organisational goals, it is only through the role of dynamic middle managers taking the lead on actual transformation that knowledge management can take root. In the cases studied, there was some evidence of middle managers taking up the knowledge management leadership for a sub-set of staff.

This role was picked out from interviews from staff not within this sub-set, but aware of the influence, which these exemplary managers wielded. **'Leadership can have lots of wonderful ideas but unless you really persuaded the middle managers and won them over and helped them to see that this was not only valuable for the organisation but could also help their team' (L3)**, was the view of the senior manager in Charity L, while the web manager in Charity P explained: **'I will be the main manager for the whole site. It's just that each country office will be responsible for uploading its own material. And I will be much more of an executive editor keeping an eye on it, making sure they are sharing things' (P8)**.

In Charity T, this view was expressed: **'Clear leadership and a consistent message can lead to greater changes. This depends on one or two committed people down the food chain' (T3)**. In a follow-up visit to Charity P, to its office in Latin America, it was confirmed that this region had considerable autonomy from the central UK office. It is therefore not surprising that one local office director was able to take an independently active role. Here, the director had appointed a very focused team to push forward knowledge management and was widely acknowledged to be providing examples of success.

These examples of prominent leaders were held up for their work in supporting enduring knowledge management in their charities, even by people who were not in their teams. This function was also, of course, the role of the leaders of knowledge management teams themselves.

6.2.2.2 (C) Knowledge Management Team Leaders

For each charity, there was an official knowledge management team with one manager in charge. It was expected that the leaders of these teams would have a major influence over the resulting knowledge management activity. **'X [knowledge management leader] was crucial and is a team worker. He is dynamic and driven to move things forward. He has the enthusiasm to sell things. He sticks out as the person who is driving the process. He can convince the directors that this is the way forward' (T5).** Another relevant comment clarified: **'but we had a person and that was important. If someone was not as charismatic, then it could have fallen flat on its face' (T8).** To quote a knowledge management team member on being questioned on the importance of leadership: **'totally! This is the leadership of the project, rather than the organisation' (T1).** This view was confirmed in the observation visit to intra-charity presentation at Charity T (Section 5.3.2.3 (TO1)).

In Charity L in contrast, the key player proved more controversial but interview subjects also commented on the single-minded conviction that was required to introduce and win backing for the knowledge management initiatives. As this person had already left Charity L at the time of the study, the survival of the knowledge management programme fell to a new team leader. This new team leadership was felt to be positive: **'I think the appointment of X [the original knowledge manager] two or three years ago, was a key focus in bringing on that awareness and it has now been mainstreamed' (L4).** Similarly: **'but it was very much that they involved the organisation. I don't know what the project plan was but certainly we felt enthused and encouraged to do it rather than ordered to do it' (L2).**

In both Charities T and L, the use of small-scale implementation to begin the project was identified as a helpful way for the knowledge management leadership to reduce resistance to more fundamental changes. In Charity L, this approach was characterised as introduction by stealth, to get ideas recognised and supported, before any large-scale project was attempted.

The success of this approach was suggested by the following comments from these two charities. **‘Essentially X [the original knowledge manager] floated a few ideas with a few people who he thought would be sympathetic and got one or two people to try things, which was very informal’ (L3)** and **‘he saw that this is a change programme at a high level to be broken down into projects. It was well led so this builds confidence. People see that things happen when it is said they will happen’ (T2).**

It is of interest to note that this was a similar route taken by Charity P, which also began their work with a successful Image Library project that enabled staff to share photos and images (section 5.3.3.4). However, this development did not lay the foundations for the larger programme that followed. For Charity P, the removal of the previous knowledge management team leader had a detrimental effect: **‘she was very clear about it and very purposeful and since then there isn’t anybody really who is doing that’ (P6).**

Charity T had the only popular knowledge management project, as opposed to popular outcomes from the project. There was a determined effort to bring knowledge management alive through very simple wording and catchy ideas. As one staff member added: **‘There is also a touch of humour’ (T10).**

6.2.2.2 (D) Champions

Leadership from the knowledge management team, even with some level of senior management support, had necessarily a limited impact where the team was only a small group within a much larger organisation. In order to sustain knowledge management as an integral part of an organisation, knowledge managers tried to enmesh their programmes into the lives of many more staff across the organisation (section 3.1.2.2, p. 67).

Charity T had a clear strategy based on training ‘knowledge champions’, who worked within the organisation, to raise awareness of internal communications and to help staff improve their own systems already in place. Although the champions’ programme did not last long in functioning form, they were noted as influential by several interviewees even after the initial programme had been closed. One said: **‘it was very popular, with two hundred applications for the fifteen places. I heard it was heavily oversubscribed, even though it was not part of people’s own role. They had to do this work on top of their own work; so it was not an easy life’ (T2).** The chance to be trained to do extra work and to provide positive influence was enough to draw a larger than required response to the call for volunteers.

Charity L also used involvement from other staff across the organisation in a voluntary capacity. In this case, staff were trained when they volunteered to become facilitators. Just as in Charity T, the reward was increased personal skills and the ability to impact on the organisation, not extra salary. In their role as facilitators, these volunteers explained the purpose of the Learning Review, ensured the meetings were handled well and talked about the wider benefit to the organisation.

This approach was more successful than that at Charity T, as the use of these voluntary facilitators has continued for over five years and was still working in 2010. Interview subjects, who talked about the value of facilitators, and the enthusiasm within the organisation for volunteers to take this role, were validated by the observation. This took place in 2005, where a workshop for the facilitators at that time demonstrated that this feature was still a strongly supported aspect of the knowledge management programme (section 5.4.2.3 (LO1)).

In contrast, Charity P, in the UK, did not appear to have any mechanism for engaging staff directly in championing knowledge management. There were no formal roles for UK staff designed to support the central initiatives. The lack of champions across the organisation led to the following comment: **'you need Champions who are intuitively able to understand the value of knowledge sharing. They will act as catalysts'** (P3).

This absence was contrasted by one interviewee with another initiative also taking place at the time of the case study, which did work with a network of people across the organisation with responsibility for supporting that project: **'We have a great strong network with all our people in the regional offices, so we deal with them all the time'** (P9). It also contrasted with the efforts of the South American office to provide powerful motivation for participation for all staff in all knowledge management activity. A follow-up visit revealed that the knowledge management programme in South America included a network of linked people in different local offices.

This section has demonstrated that decision-making within the case study organisations was indeed complex and that top-down power was not the only source of support needed by a knowledge management team. The actual combination of support resources differed considerably between the three cases.

6.2.2.3 Structure

There are two main issues relating to structure. The first relates knowledge management to the hierarchical nature of these charities. The second considers the impact of structural change.

6.2.2.3 (A) Structural Forms

Organisational theory recognises that structures exist within organisations to provide the formal channels for command or support. In the most simple organisational model, a hierarchy is assumed. All the study charities made use of this traditional form in their central offices, with staff organised into functional teams at their UK headquarters. These offices were central to the control and support of their dependent offices or individuals working overseas.

This arrangement was more complex for Charity P, as its local offices were less dependent on the central charity headquarters and had considerable independence in their operations (section 5.3.1). This factor caused some problems for implementation of unified systems: **‘well, probably again the organisational structure, which in terms of countries, which is fairly evolved and federated in style, does hinder the implementation of things from the centre out’ (P10).**

The Chief Executive, acting explicitly to support knowledge management (although not working directly with the knowledge management team), stated that: **‘the first thing is the reorganisation of programmes... Before this there was lots of reinventing wheels and all offices had their own structures and there was no talking together’ (P3).**

Meanwhile Charity T, and Charity L to a lesser extent, were considering moving to less centralised models and saw knowledge management as a way to avoid becoming wheel re-inventors.

The hierarchical structure provided a powerful positive motivation for knowledge management. The usual expression, very common in Charity T, and echoed in both other charities, was that this led to an unproductive 'silo' mentality, with the implication that staff were too focused on their own immediate work and did not understand or support the work of staff in different divisions or locations of the charity. **'Silo mentality still exists. There is a "this is mine" mindset that does not want to share' (T10).** This 'silo' working can also be a problem even if attitudes to sharing were excellent but where artificial barriers within the structure obstructed horizontal internal sharing across the hierarchical teams. Knowledge management was seen as an agent of change to work against the run of the organisations' structural hierarchies. This emphasis was a common theme for all the three charities:

- **'There is a tendency not to work outside your own space. You work with close colleagues and cross communication doesn't seem to happen. I think it is more a physical thing than organisational structure' (P2).**
- **'Not just how we become more effective managers of an organisation, but how do we learn between programmes, between teams, between partners.' (L4).**
- **'They have set up the site to mirror the structure of the organisation, with parts to be cross-organisational. This will change when there's a new version' (T10).**

These perceived difficulties provide a plausible explanation for the consistent leadership support for knowledge management. 'Silo' working could be identified as a problem for an organisation with complex goals and significant international reach. Knowledge management activities such as organisational learning (Senge, 1990, section 2.2.2), knowledge creation (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, section 2.2.3), and communities of practice (Wenger, 2000, section 2.2.4), all tend to work to break the barriers of hierarchical structures.

6.2.2.3 (B) *Structure Change*

One interesting aspect of organisational theory models is that they rarely include references to the continual change that is an aspect of modern organisations in the UK and similar ‘Western’ economies. The model that appears to represent change is the soft system approach, but even here there is little acknowledgement that, while people’s variety of conversations and commitment make up the working of the organisation, who those people are and their roles are not necessarily stable. Radical changes within and beyond the organisation will make the static ‘ideal’ models less relevant to looking at real organisations. Change in personnel and structural changes that alter relationships and roles are a regular feature of these charities.

Chapter five has already alluded to structural changes that impacted on the knowledge management programmes in each organisation (section 5.2.3, 5.3.3 and 5.4.3). The analysis now turns to consider what these structural changes indicate about the potential longevity of knowledge management programmes in practice.

The structural form of each organisation established the internal context for the knowledge management work, but in all three charities, this context was not stable. Structures were adapted to deliver organisational change that impacted on knowledge management but were not controlled by it. Such adaptation was frequently seen as a problem: **‘there is progress to reduce re-inventing wheels but this is slow because there is so much change across the Charity T world’ (T10).**

Not all change was negative. Structural change, as in a decentralisation project to move roles from the UK to overseas offices, strengthens the positive value of knowledge management, where working in 'silos' is even more an organisational hazard when the 'silos' themselves are liable to disruptive changes. **'Charity T began to feel the pain of being a disjointed organisation and we saw the need to work more as one' (T9)** and **'this structural change, on the face of it, strengthens the need for our work, while the other change process destabilises it' (T1).**

These words stress the instability that restructures caused to knowledge management programmes. In all three charities, structural changes affected the teams and their direct reporting lines. In Charity L, reporting lines changed during the time of the study but were then followed by a series of changes to the team during the period of the follow-up visits. This instability was not surprising, as a senior manager stated: **'change is happening all the time at Charity L' (L3).** For Charity P, change was implemented just before the case study started, resulting in the merger of the knowledge management unit into the communications team. A senior manager who was interviewed said: **'since then there have been lots of structural change so these things have got a bit lost' (P4).**

For Charity T, there was evidence that knowledge management was not securely established in the organisational structure. The following comment is relevant here: **'Four years ago it was shifted around from Human Resources to IT and it was not clear where it belonged. It is a function that does not belong' (T8).** A further change was threatened just as the case study was underway, causing some lack of confidence in the continuity of the project.

This evidence of structural change linked very closely with anecdotal views from the whole sector, where similar disruption is seen as an almost constant source of limitation for staff working in knowledge management. A member of the knowledge management team commented: **‘Charity T is undergoing structural change. One frustration is how much change is going on. There are so many things happening at once’ (T1)**. Visits to all three organisations allowed the researcher to see first-hand evidence of the stress that accompanied restructuring activity and the amount of time that knowledge management staff spent working to ensure their own roles did not disappear. In Charity L, the knowledge management programme continued to flourish, despite the changes that altered its reporting structure. There was some demonstration of their success in the fact that the re-structure was explicitly linked to the knowledge management programme, as Learning Review lessons were formally used to inform the structural change.

The evidence suggests that organisational structure proved both a potential opportunity but also a threat for knowledge managers in international development charities. In the three cases studied here, it is clear that the knowledge management teams had not yet become a stable part of organisational life.

6.2.2.4 Technology

Systems thinking assumes that an organisation will have processes to enable inputs to be turned into outputs as set out by the goal or mission. Technology, as has been detailed above (section 6.1.2.5, p. 172), is a process enabler that is used in common by organisations within all sectors of developed economies. It is found in similar forms in commercial, public and voluntary organisations and so tends to work to reduce process differences between them. It is an important element of the knowledge management programmes found in the case study charities.

As has been seen, the focus on new ICT products and services led to a requirement that knowledge managers established a good 'fit' with their internal ICT providers. In practice, all three had problems along the way. Charity T's knowledge managers began their relationship with ICT staff with some conflict. As a member of the ICT team explained: **'there were bits of that. For example, the knowledge management team went off and bought their own servers at first and then expected the infrastructure team to support them'** (T2). However, the approach of starting with small projects meant that when these were successfully implemented, trust was built up before the more major technology project was even agreed.

In Charity T, this process involved developing an Image Library, as a system to share useful photos (section 5.4.3.4). In this way, the risks of large-scale technology change were reduced. As a result, despite the fact that the relationships began with some lack of harmony, this tension was soon changed to close partnership as the benefits of knowledge management were carefully marketed and the approach modified to meet the ICT staff project needs. As a staff member from the technology team said: **'It was one of the best collaborations because it was not seen as a business project, nor was it seen as an IT project but seen as an organisational priority'** (T2).

In Charity P, the history was mixed, ranging from a successful partnership similar to that in Charity T, where a staff member from each unit cooperated on designing Image Library software, to the conflict reported on the later intranet project. However, subsequent visits to Charity P established that this conflict had been reduced and the new intranet project was bringing the teams together.

From the evidence available, inter-team conflict could derail knowledge management programmes. Ultimately, therefore, good relations were a requirement for the knowledge management programmes, given their emphasis on intranets and other technology support, to keep close and effective working relationships. For Charity L, there was close working between ICT and the knowledge management teams as shown in the launch observation and the statement from the Head of ICT: **'So we are sharing fifty percent for the official launch' (L10).**

It is interesting that there was very little evidence of the value of good links with other parts of the organisation. Charity P worked closely with the Web team as the web editor explained: **'I am in the Knowledge and Communications Unit' (P8).** Apart from this link, the implication was that knowledge management was not given a special relationship with other teams, such as Human Resources or Advocacy teams, although it might have been expected that they would build strong relationships here too. The evidence available is that ICT departments were specifically recognised as the main support team, which reinforces the suggestion that technology was central to knowledge management in practice in a way that other resources were not.

6.2.2.5 Culture

As the organisational system includes people working together over a sustained period of time, a culture, or cultures, will grow around them. Certainly respondents in the case study charities believed that organisational culture would be a factor in the establishment of knowledge management. It has been argued that some cultures will be favourable to knowledge management. Was embedding knowledge management made more difficult in international development charities due to their organisational culture?

Each charity had a culture, or perhaps a variety of cultures, which relate to their assumptions, attitudes and working styles. This section looks at how well knowledge management fitted within these cultures, where a close match could be expected to assist its sustainability. It is based on the issues raised earlier when organisational culture was first discussed in this study (section 3.1.5). Analysis of the data also provides insights into what international development charity workers understand by organisational culture.

Some people, particularly if they were newly employed by the charity, spoke of the culture as if it was something that applied to the organisation but not to them. For example: **'there is a calm and peaceful feel to Charity L but actually it is a very intense place to work. People don't really want to take time to review' (L9)**. Similarly there is this generalisation from Charity T: **'People are well meaning but they find loads of reasons for not doing things' (T4)**. From these examples, it can be concluded that culture can be experienced as independent of the people working in the organisation. In general, most staff saw the concept of culture as having an observable meaning to them in their workplace, but which is 'outside' them personally.

All three charities believed that a 'sharing' culture was a vital aspect of knowledge management. For Charity P, the view was expressed by the Chief Executive: **'so getting peanut processors to share together, with focus on the people. That is where the value will be brought in for facilitating this' (P3)**. This view was echoed more widely by other staff, for example: **'that is the sort of knowledge management really. The intention is that this would be a database accessible via all the Charity P offices to improve the knowledge-sharing between the different offices' (P7)**.

Charity L produced this negative view of a sharing culture: **‘Charity L is very consultative and can share thinking too early’ (L8)**, while in Charity T it was claimed that: **‘people think if they share, everyone will inspect their work. They don’t see how it can be useful. Cultural change still needs to happen. However this answer is a “yes and no” because there is lots of resistance but when they do engage there is no stopping them’ (T1)**.

The interview responses were studied to see if they produced a picture of the dominant culture in each charity in the view of participants. The mix of responses, however, did not provide a clear consensus. Staff in each charity believed that their organisation had many cultures, including some who asserted that national location would be an important factor in this diversity (section 2.2.6).

- **‘There are problems of different cultures in different localities’ (T10).**
- **‘Because internationally each office has its own culture and they do things differently’ (P4).**
- **‘I think that culture is there but whether it is in all teams, I think varies’ (L5).**

From the data collected in this study, it cannot be concluded that there is a simple definition of the ‘organisational culture’ for any of the charities. They all appear to have significant sub-cultures, which affect the way people work together. This gives some cause to question the vision of ‘global work culture’ (Earley, 2009, and Hofstede, 2001, section 2.2.6, p. 49), although the data from interviews is not robust enough to provide serious evidence on such a complex subject. The religious belief underlying two charities was one factor that might have held together a global culture, but was rarely mentioned by interview subjects. Their view of cultural difference appeared stronger than their sense of a unifying global organisational culture.

The difficulties caused by the variety of cultures can be illustrated by the practical example of language. This issue was widely discussed in Charity P, as one of the many difficulties for inter-organisational sharing. **'How do you share across language, culture and technology? (T6)** (section 3.1.5, p. 74). Financial constraints made significant translation work impossible and so local language products, suitable for a local community, were rarely available to other offices. Information that was shared from their official UK enquiry office was generally available in English, as only a few documents were translated to other languages.

If knowledge management was going to push out beyond the head office and even beyond the English speaking employees in local offices to the partners and recipients, language issues could be expected to become much more central. Charity P produced many references to local languages and problems of sharing. For example: **'it's not standardised. It could probably do with a bit more standardisation. The other thing is that they do their work in their own language, so there is a limit to how much you can cross over' (P7).**

The fact that language did not surface significantly in the other charities was partly due to the fact that they did not work to produce knowledge products and also partially explained by the lack of knowledge management activity internationally and across organisational boundaries. The few references to local language serves to demonstrate how UK-focused these knowledge management programmes are. One example came from Charity T: **'This is a training issue, as the language is French so they are not using it' (T5).** No one in Charity L mentioned language as a problem meriting attention.

In all three charities, it can be concluded that in their response to language differences, they did not demonstrate a very flexible or proactive approach, which questions their commitment to working with different cultures. There was certainly no mention of a variety of cultures forming a positive aspect of their knowledge management programmes (Holden, 2002, section 2.2.6, p. 50).

This finding raises some difficult issues. Knowledge management talks of culture change to a visionary ideal, but how you assess which, among a variety of cultures, are better than others, is not simple. The suspicion is that the dominant culture, and by default, the dominant language, will be found in the UK headquarters and then assumed to be the 'best' or at least the most practical. It was an indication of the difficulty that faced the knowledge management teams that none of the charities demonstrated any serious focus on the challenge of working with populations using other languages.

Can this argument be extended to other cultural aspects? Despite the protestations that knowledge management would change culture to reduce 'silo' working, in practice there may have been stronger pressures to maintain the current hierarchical power bases. The fact that knowledge management change was not well resourced suggests that the stated enthusiasm for sharing may not have been matched by the will to change in practice. As one person stated: **'They just expect it to happen' (P2)**. Or similarly, **'they say it is important and worth investing in but it's at Programme Management level where you find the people to make it happen, and to get people to think about it' (P4)**. The structural upheavals, that seriously hindered the knowledge management teams in all three charities from having a consistent impact, may well have reduced confidence in the commitment to sharing and breaking-down barriers. The rhetoric is stronger than the practical support for the knowledge management teams, when structural change was required.

What cannot be questioned is that the emphasis on sharing as a positive cultural phenomenon does demonstrate a close fit between the ideal offered by knowledge management and the underlying values of the three charities. This synergy is most clearly expressed in Charity T:

'Charity T's values of participation and recognition of everyone's commitment and values is important because these individual motivations combine to make a powerful organisation. This draws on the idea of you having the ability to share and learn. You always want to improve and there is a culture of reflection, challenging ideas and willingness to change' (T4).

Similarly it was stated: **'because we work in development and work with partners and value learning and development, that knowledge management is an important part of that' (T8).** Or again: **'you see it as part of your values and use tools so that knowledge flows and is shared in wider circles' (T3).** In Charity L the comment was made that: **'within the organisation, there is a real sense and spirit of the great value of it' (L1).** Staff in Charity P, as seen from the opinions given above, also believed that the work aligned with the charity's values and with its stated strategy but were far less confident that this alignment was resulting in appropriate action. This match with deeply held values at the centre of a charity's organisational purpose is significant. It suggests that knowledge management has a stronger base for survival in organisational culture, despite the constraints to its use within everyday ways of working as considered above.

6.2.3 Long- Term Sustainability

This section considers the evidence from the original studies and the follow-up visits for the sustainability of the three knowledge management programmes. The discussion of issues relating to goals, leadership, people, power, and structure have presented a picture of some strength, balanced by structural fragility. Staff also directly commented on knowledge management's chances of survival. This theme is now explored, in combination with the evidence from follow-up visits.

Some knowledge management activities have faded out. Communities of practice have not flourished and champions in Charity T have been short-lived. But the focus of the work, on facilitating knowledge exchange and capturing knowledge assets was not questioned as an appropriate focus. Even where knowledge management was not considered successful, staff complained, not because they believed that the underlying ideas were misguided, but because they saw the implementation as flawed.

Here are two responses from Charity T, where at the time of the study there were fears that the knowledge management team might be abandoned. These views suggest that the ideas behind knowledge management will continue in some form or other:

'it is critical to its success that they don't just tick the box and move on. They have just gone through the process to say "lets absorb Knowledge Management into the business as usual". It is a challenge, as it won't just happen on its own. We all have to contribute to its success but we will need someone to crack the whip' (T8).

Another staff member stated that: **'some aspects have to be taken on by people themselves. So, I will be one cog in the wheel' (T9).**

The idea that knowledge management was simple good sense was one that was frequently voiced. For example: **'before this, I saw knowledge management as useful and worthy but mainly a lot of hard work. Now we know that the process is helpful. It is not rocket science, but we can all apply it' (L9).** But there is no evidence that these programmes will flourish without some focused effort to develop a coherent strategy to have influence across the organisation, and the will to prioritise the necessary work. This point is summed up by this comment from Charity T: **'But it does need a spark to make things happen, so this is a lively area of debate' (T4).**

Some activities have been sustained. Intranets in all organisations are still in use and by 2010 there are more signs that these are being used internationally. A visit to Kenya, where new cable links were hugely increasing their Internet bandwidth, showed that offices in this African country were able to use their intranets comfortably. However, this facility would not be the case for all African countries, many of which remain cut off from this potential benefit.

Knowledge management teams, although buffeted by structural change and now working with different parts of the hierarchical structure, are all in place in some form or other. The follow-up visits to all three charities found that the aims of the programmes and efforts to implement appropriate change continued, despite the changing internal structures and more recently, the very challenging external climate. This sustained role provides evidence that if knowledge management is not for the long-term, the charities do not believe that to be the case. It can be said that the teams have all survived for many years, and so cannot simply be dismissed as ephemeral.

Elements taken from organisational theory, as applied to organisations, were used to identify different aspects of knowledge management impact and acceptance. The insights of system thinking help with the 'sense-making' process by making visible the common features of organisations so they can be compared together. It shows how there is a complex interplay of supporting and/or challenging factors. However, knowledge management can be observed to have survived within the study period within each case study charity.

6.2.4 Findings

The findings of this section of the analysis can be summarised in the following terms:

- in all three cases, considerable effort was made to align knowledge management activity both with the organisational mission, and with everyday work objectives;
- support from senior managers but also from middle managers and champions was apparent in all three cases;
- the involvement of large numbers of volunteer supporters for specific tasks, like facilitation or spreading good practice, had the effect of increasing participation in the knowledge management programmes and spreading ‘ownership’;
- knowledge management programmes are expected to counter the negative affects of hierarchical structures;
- despite the theoretical expectation that knowledge management will alter power relationships, such an impact does not seem to have occurred in any of these cases;
- knowledge management is subject to structural change, as it did not yet have a stable home within the organisational hierarchy of any of the three cases.

Two findings are selected as the most pertinent for this research. The analysis of the material collected has produced a confident conclusion that the origin of knowledge management in organisations in the commercial sector does not appear to impact negatively on its translation to the three international development charities. The impediments to knowledge management in this organisational population appear to be based more on the programmes’ lack of sufficient resources rather than any specific sector-related problems.

The values of international development charities do appear compatible with the sharing aspects of knowledge management.

- **These ideas and practices, originating in the commercial sector, can be adapted and used selectively in this sector**

A second conclusion, about the sustainability of the work, is more tentative. There are some indications that the intentions behind knowledge management are unlikely to disappear as they have been sustained for a considerable length of time in each charity. There is far less certainty about the particular delivery mechanisms or structures that exist now.

- **Knowledge management was sustained over the period studied, (2004 to 2010), but its place in the organisational structure is subject to change.**

Based on the fact that knowledge management in international development charities has not been shown to be a temporary ‘fad’ over the period of the research, the third section of this chapter moves on to consider the main research question.

6.3 Assessing Effectiveness

Research question 3: How do knowledge management practices impact on the effectiveness of international development charities?

The analysis presented so far has considered the two sub-questions, and the indications are that active knowledge management programmes can be demonstrated within the three case study charities. A selection of activities from the knowledge management toolbox have been transferred from the commercial sector and, though vulnerable to structural change, appear likely to continue into the future. This section moves to consider what can be found from the case study material to deliver evidence about the impact of knowledge management programmes on organisational effectiveness.

The results are presented in four parts:

- Methods and Challenges of Assessment;
- Case by Case Summary;
- International Issues;
- Main Findings.

6.3.1 Methods and Challenges of Assessment

The problems of assessing value for voluntary organisations and particularly for international development charities have been discussed. Four possible ways to evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge management programmes in international development charities were identified (section 3.2.2, p. 85). One is to see if knowledge management programmes can be shown to have had a positive impact on the outputs of the charity, where this data is possible to establish.

The second relevant method is to accept the underlying assumptions of the programme and therefore to find a proxy measure, such as activity levels or numbers of people involved, to indicate effectiveness. Proxy measures can be easier to identify but their validity depends on the strength of the assumptions on which they are based. The third option is to accept the assessment of authoritative individuals within the organisation themselves, to offer their own metrics, or perspectives. Finally it may be possible to identify suitably compelling stories about the process or impact of knowledge management activity.

6.3.1.1 Organisational Outputs

Relating knowledge management to organisational outputs will provide one way of assessing its effectiveness. For example, can new or improved outputs be identified? In terms of Nonaka and Takeuchi's knowledge creation model (section 2.2.3), there is some evidence that knowledge management provided a source of new or improved products and service for the three charities. In Charity L, there was an 'organisational success story' that had been shared widely. This story told of a disaster response Learning Review in 1999 and several staff spoke of the more nimble response to disasters that was the outcome of a specific Learning Review. The result not only created influential converts to the methodology, such as the Chief Executive, but had become a piece of organisational history to hand down to other staff.

This outcome was an altered, if not new, service, which provided benefit to disaster victims and also to charitable donors and the home-based public, who would now be able to access better information. Such improvements were expected to generate more funds for those suffering the effects of subsequent disasters in different locations.

When this learning was applied on a later occasion, it gave staff in Charity L confidence that this learning was now delivering an improved service that could be repeated into the future.

'We had learning on the Orissa evaluation: things on impact, HIV aids, water and sanitation, all these kinds of things, and what came out of those key points' (L4).

The senior manager involved described the benefits: **'What that meant was that having recently done the Learning Review, we were able to pull out the document and instantly there was important learning that informed the response to Bangladesh and we could see a visible improvement...'** (L3). Other interview subjects independently repeated this claim: **'another success was the Disaster Response Learning Review. In this case, failed work could give lessons and lead to the best work'** (L6). And, from the least enthusiastic person in this charity: **'the one for Disaster Recovery was helpful. When we go into somewhere, it is brilliant to do those kinds of things. This is where it has been very useful'** (L10).

This result appears to be a well-evidenced story of improvements to the organisation's output, although it does not come with a helpful metric of how much more benefit to suffering people was now available, or how many donations were generated through specific links to this change of practice.

In Charity T, use of Web 2 technology was considered to offer a new way to provide satisfaction to donors in the form of more timely, accessible, and lively information as a return on their donations. International development charities also have, as one of their goals, an intention to support the poor and disadvantaged by 'giving them a voice'. They used blogs and pod-casts to give immediate access to people in distant locations.

This intention to let the poor speak for themselves and be heard more widely is one that knowledge management is intended to support. The new technologies allowed partners in recipient countries the opportunity to speak directly to donor audiences: **'they used Videos in Haiti which are now on U-Tube, a website with lots of exposure to bring voices of the partners from the field to the ears of supporters. It gives them a voice, which is the whole aim, to give them resources to do that; although they could still be used better'** (T1). Again, there are no figures to match this claim, as increased listening to the voices of poor people can only be expected to generate measurable results in the very long-term.

A second area of effectiveness would be that better processes are in place to provide a source of cost reduction, by cutting back on the inputs needed to provide a given output. The examples of such outcomes were recorded. One team in Charity L commented on the value of reducing wasted time in dealing with partners because: **'we came out with a lot of learning experiences in our interaction with that partner and also in the implications that would have on Charity L's systems'** (L4). Also in Charity L, staff talked of how re-using learning by sharing information would save them time and resources: **'we can learn from each other. We don't need to go through the process again. You might need to make some adjustment to the local context but it is effective and very much justifiable cost-wise'** (L1). This point was also mentioned by Charity T, where a member of staff gave evidence of more timely processes, using stored document templates: **'this cuts out all the non-productive use of manpower. This leaves reserves of extra time for more useful things'** (T9).

These cost savings were not quantifiable, even in the case of Charity T, but it is worth noting that these slicker processes were intended to result in less staff effort to do the same work, and were cited by staff in interviews as providing tangible evidence of better use of resources. The problem with these benefits is that they were specific to individual members of staff or small teams and so did not provide a robust case that the whole programme was delivering benefit (section 2.3, p. 55). Without full cost information there is no way to be sure if the output results suggested above are cost effective. Nor could they be claimed as unique to a knowledge management programme.

In the world of international development charities, it is not possible to measure any of these variables accurately. There are currently no ways to be certain, as was noted for Charity P: **‘we have not got there yet and so there are no measures yet. So there are no targets’ (P3).**

There is also evidence that this form of measurement is not as straightforward as it might appear. Some interviewees questioned whether Charity T’s productivity gains would be sustainable without continual investment in training, without which they could simply be producing yet another failed system to be replaced at great cost in a few years’ time. It was said that: **‘you want to see that this is taken over and does not become a white elephant’ (T9).** On balance, there is no evidence that significant cost savings have already been achieved, although there is evidence that knowledge management, in the eyes of many participating staff, is believed to be a source of some cost reduction, in terms of the constructive use of people’s time.

It is noticeable, for example that, although both Charity L and Charity P talked of organisational measures in place to monitor knowledge management success or improved staff behaviour on an annual basis, neither knowledge management team was able to provide the researcher with information on the results of the measures. This suggests that it is easier to write Key Performance Indicators or staff performance measures than to produce clear and usable results. It can be assumed that such indicators were used more to steer staff behaviour rather than to act as measurement mechanisms.

In Charity L, this specific point was discussed: **'And corporate accountability, namely that at the highest level we have a corporate indicator and this cascades all the way down, whether we like it or not, we have to respond to it' (L4)**. Similarly, in Charity P, it was stated: **'We have a performance management, which includes a set of competencies some of which are round things like that – whether it works as a system or not, it does at least say that part of how you perform is the way that you treat other people... Also the system is used internationally not just here' (P5)** (section 3.1.2.1, p. 66).

In a study of this nature, the available data does not allow hard and fast judgements of the success of long-term change programmes. Although there are interesting pointers to where potential benefit of using a knowledge management approach can be found, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate a clear case that it has delivered. An alternative way of assessing effectiveness will now be considered.

6.3.1.2 Proxy Measures

Another assessment method is to look at measuring worthwhile activity as a proxy for value to the organisation (section 3.2.4). Can measuring the quantity of knowledge management activity provide a reasonable proxy for measuring an increase in effectiveness?

It is certainly true that in all three organisations, activity itself was taken as evidence of success. The sustained use of Learning Reviews in Charity L was considered as good evidence that these procedures were giving value to the organisation. In Charity P, the continued existence of external donors willing to sponsor the provision of knowledge for external enquirers was considered a major element of their organisational profile: **‘They are quite pleased with it – they have supported quite a lot of reference centres on different subjects and ours worked better than some other ones’ (P7)**. The high take-up of new technology in Charity T was seen as evidence of success, within the assumptions of the benefits that this activity would provide. As an example of a view frequently expressed: **‘People seem to be on it [the intranet] quite a lot and it is used by all staff, so that shows it is quite successful’ (T5)**.

This idea of assessing value through this type of proxy met one high profile note of dissent in Charity P. **‘The aim was to get one million items on our knowledge base’.** **[expression of horror] ‘But we want to prioritise and get good quality up there’ (P3)**. And a further negative assessment in the same charity was the complaint that people did not use the knowledge stores: **‘For the G8 summit, we produced two reports but no hard copy was given to the library yet. Has an electronic version been sent to the intranet? I would hazard a guess it has not!’ (P1)**.

The use of proxy value indicates areas where activity is taking place, and so can be seen as an indication of value, where the assumptions behind the activity are accepted as valid. This outcome therefore depends on the verdict of suitably expert judges, and so moves this discussion towards this third assessment method.

6.3.1.3 'Expert' Assessment and 'Success Stories'

Using the method of expert assessment, and listening to the stories that they provide, is it possible to find consistent and authoritative assertions that the knowledge management activity is going to deliver appropriate improvements to effectiveness? Once the objectives from the start of the knowledge management activity are clearly defined, the results can be assessed by a representative range of people within the organisation (section 3.2.5). The study selected a wide range of people within each charity, covering both staff involved in the knowledge management work, and those who could be expected to report as 'outsiders'. Using the case interviews for evidence of success relies on the assumption that people are committed to the health and success of their organisations and are positioned to understand how these features can be nurtured.

For all the cases where there were positive responses they included sufficiently detailed evidence of good practice to suggest that the experts invited to take part in this study, who were also the end-users of the knowledge management, were able to provide relevant judgements to assess the activity so far. Here are three comments from 'coalface workers'. **'To me it's a big success that Charity L has it on the agenda, its serious and we can move on it' (L5).** An enthusiast in Charity P stated: **'you might begin to talk about things that have not gone so well. So that's one thing that's successful' (P5).** From Charity T: **'There are good systems to handle things and they have done a lot of work' (T7).**

Reassuringly, to show that people were not simply repeating mantras, there were less positive comments too. For example, in Charity L some respondents questioned whether the knowledge management programmes were having the impact they should have: **'let's now think about what we have learnt. That doesn't seem to be happening'** (L5). In Charity T, where most people were clearly positive about the direction of change, some concerns were raised: **'one problem is that people think that the Intranet Project is done but it is not. They are still at square one'** (T4). Charity P had several staff that were concerned about the quality of the work done: **'what we also have, that I regrettably don't think works nearly so well, is an intranet'** (P6).

On balance, there is some confidence that useful activity is taking place, but it cannot be claimed that such views provide conclusive evidence of increased effectiveness. However, in the view of the 'experts' consulted in the three case studies, examples can be found where knowledge management activity is judged to be central to the organisations' long-term health.

A senior manager in Charity T claimed: **'then we will be able to spend time on knowledge rather than on mining for information. Now it is like pulling teeth. There is no time for the positive work'** (T3). In Charity L, it was claimed that the charity needed better systems, for international work in the future although this was not yet in place: **'But we don't have a system whereby the partner organisation has processes of learning. We will move into that at some point'** (L4).

In Charity P, the essential nature of the activity for public relations was emphasised by a senior manager, discussing the view of powerful institutional donors: **'so the sector is into it. That is threatening because if you are serious you have to do it' (P4)**. These people were not involved directly with the knowledge management programme and so their words can be taken as confirmation that the direction of the programmes was accepted.

To conclude this overview of expert assessment, it must be noted that there was only one example of a negative interviewee, who considered knowledge management to be unsuited or irrelevant to the organisation. This interviewee in Charity L asserted: **'some people are quite enthusiastic about what has happened but I am less so' (L10)**. Where there were criticisms, they tended to call for better knowledge management, rather than none. In other words, the focus was on failure to deliver the full benefits, which they believed the organisation needed, rather than an outright rejection of knowledge management programmes themselves.

6.3.2 Case by Case Summary

Can it be shown that, by the take-up of knowledge management programmes, the three charities are making better use of their knowledge resources as a result of their programmes? The discussion above has shown that the value of knowledge management is accepted by the majority of staff, interviewed across the range of functions and seniority and so the potential value was accepted in all three organisations. The next part of the analysis looks at each charity in turn, to see if, using the chosen methods of evaluation together, knowledge management can be said to be delivering a sustainable increase in effectiveness.

For Charity T, there is no doubt that the technology-based change had been implemented and that staff are using the new system in the central UK office. This programme was perhaps the easiest to evaluate as it is so centrally based around technology change. A straightforward proxy measure, therefore, is that the system was in place and being used. The organisation is moving to decentralise structures so that staff based overseas did not have to defer to the UK headquarters, and this change is going to require new decision-making processes. The assumption that knowledge management would play a role in making this successful in the long-term can be related to the successful cases presented in the literature for global commercial companies.

Without knowledge management, technology advances will allow information to move freely around the organisation but there would be little confidence that the organisation would be able to leverage this process to get the required benefits. Instead, the result could be merely severe 'information overload'. A staff member in Charity T believes: **'the first one is how to manage knowledge in the new devolved way of working. This involves a move from a hub to a network structure, where the UK will no longer be the centre. Significant decisions will now be made in different places' (T10).**

Without communication technology and the insights of knowledge management to make use of them, holding the newly de-centralised offices together will be far more difficult. The interim conclusion for Charity T is that expert opinion, the people affected by their technology-led capacity building approach, believe firmly that the knowledge management programme is well conceived and, by the time of the case study, has begun to deliver appropriate results which they believed matched the organisations long-term plans. A follow-up visit in 2010 demonstrated that the intranet and newsletters characteristic of their programme are still in active use for sharing knowledge.

For Charity L, knowledge management is positioned as an essential part of their future planning. There is evidence that a wide range of staff, consistently over time, are prepared to state that the work done is appropriate and valuable to the charity's work. The key activity, the Learning Review, has been sustained over several years and is still being refined as a tool for giving the organisation the positive attribute of flexibility in the face of environmental change. However as the aim of the activity is for a qualitative change to take place, the proxy measure – that a large number of Learning Reviews took place over several years – is not a particularly useful indicator.

Nonetheless, the combination of positive assessments together with evidence of sustained activity and the belief that this programme would continue in a robust form into the future, is sufficient to conclude that the programmes at Charity L was, in 2010, proving successful within the aims, which they had set themselves. The key senior manager believed this: **'I genuinely believe we have taken some significant steps forward' (L3)**. This programme is still flourishing at the present time.

In Charity P, knowledge took a different place. They were producing knowledge products and wanted to use knowledge directly in their overseas programmes: **'We want to be an external knowledge broker who can help people to get access to real knowledge and this means setting up appropriate networks' (P3)**. Charity P has for a long time been less centralised on the UK headquarters, when contrasted with the other two case study charities, and there was recognition that the organisation was facing a challenge as vital knowledge was less well-used due to the lack of effective cross-organisational knowledge-sharing. However there was no consensus among the staff interviewed that the knowledge management was effectively meeting the challenge.

A typical comment is: **'I don't think what people put to it, is matched by their commitment and resources' (P2)**. While staff valued their knowledge products and wanted a programme to support these internationally, the knowledge management programme was not considered to be active in supporting the work already established. The very mixed responses and the high level of negative assessment gives evidence that knowledge management in that organisation is not seen as providing benefits at the level expected. Indeed, there were few perceived benefits for the level of investment made. The problems of assessment, even for internal judges, remain relevant and confirm the view that voluntary sector goals can be more difficult to assess: **'for us it is rather difficult to identify what knowledge is going to be used for. It is easier if you are with an organisation that is focused on making sales, and making profits from those sales' (P10)**.

The charities were chosen for their status as leaders in this field, so the lack of a clear verdict on knowledge management's impact on effectiveness confirms the view that knowledge management is a long, slow process and not a way of delivering short-term impact, although some small-scale quick wins were claimed in Charity L and Charity T.

The case for successful knowledge management in any of the three charities is not overwhelming and there are no 'killer facts' or audited figures that point to unquestioned benefit. However, based on the facts and opinions revealed by the research, it is possible to provide a tentative view of success in using knowledge management as an investment for the long-term ability to share good ideas, to innovate and to establish professional practices that can evolve with the charity. The judgement of staff and the evidence of sustained activity are pointers to increased effectiveness within their own parameters.

6.3.3 International Issues

The discussion so far has focused mainly on the UK offices of the three charities. The case studies were chosen because their knowledge management programmes were intended to be international in their scope, with each charity having many of their staff and partners based overseas. Furthermore, these organisations are not wholly owned and controlled by one central organisation but often work in partnership relationships. Indeed, the ethos in the world of charitable development today seeks to devolve further.

All the case studies show that they suffered the major stumbling block for ICT in international development charities: extremely poor infrastructures and lack of relevant skills in some far-flung locations, as this opinion from Charity P suggests: **'a lot of our programmes cannot get web-based. We can't start chat rooms or anything like that, as it's not technically viable' (P8).**

The people interviewed for Charity T believed that their technology-led programme would be worldwide in reach and had ideas about how this would work. But in the mainly positive interviews, there was a consensus among those who reported on the international impact that this dimension was the least successful element. **'I think that most people still have not got the tools yet, as they have not rolled it out fully internationally' (T2).** In particular, staff with direct involvement with offices in Africa were aware that they faced a failure to offer anything approaching a comparable service to that in the UK: **'Africa has two hundred Charity T people but they seem to be invisible. This goes back to the fact that if you use technology, you can have a common platform but this is only the minimum' (T4).**

This limitation had severe repercussions for the success of the work.

'We have to share the professional expertise of our Country Managers, as we have devolved responsibility. As a peer group, they are the beating heart of the Africa Division and sharing knowledge is what gives this dynamism. We have tried to set up an Extranet but the connectivity was not fast enough. So these tools have potential but they are not yet firing on all cylinders' (T4).

Most tellingly, there was no evidence of staff based overseas being involved in the development or dispersal of the key concepts behind the changes. They were very much the final recipients of plans conceived and initially implemented in the UK. Referring to Charity T's intranet, the Charity P Chief Executive stated: **'it is good and cheap. But I think they worked the wrong way round. They began with the UK and are now trying to latch on international offices. But the problem is how? The intranet should be the glue to international organisation, using your multicultural nature as a starting point. This is the challenge' (P3).** By 2010, Charity T's intranet was in use in Kenya where good quality Internet bandwidth had recently become more widely available but, until facilities worldwide improve, technological constraints remain a problem for a technology-led programme.

This difficulty also pertains to Charity L, where the aim of the formal knowledge management project was to cover all staff internationally. Although the central team talked about initiatives to build knowledge stores on Compact Disc for overseas workers and there were some attempts to involve overseas staff in Learning Reviews when they returned to the UK, this procedure was certainly not central to the work.

The intranet development was intended to be the vehicle for extending knowledge management to overseas staff but, as this comment shows, it was not fully operational: **'we had plans for him [the knowledge manager] to go to visit some partners in Bangladesh and really communicate with them about learning issues but it hasn't happened' (L4)**. As the questionnaire results show, by 2007 there was still no evidence of overseas staff taking a significant role. A visit in 2010 to the UK office did not provide evidence of any change here, although there was talk of re-launching the intranet with updated software.

One significant difference between the three charities was that Charity P looked at knowledge management worldwide as its starting-point and was very aware of the need to bring any advances straight to its partners in the field. This case was, however, the only one where there was a genuine sense that changes were envisaged appropriately for a programme that was international from the start. The charity's lack of success in producing a consistent knowledge management programme may be one reason why some of Charity P's local offices could claim to be at the same level or ahead of the central office. Staff in the UK could see the problems raised: **'I think the situation is very different in Sri Lanka and Peru, for example, more sophisticated. But in Africa it is much more spotty' (P6)**. One reason for this diversity was certainly lack of resources: **'Overseas offices have not had their feedback into the process so they don't have resources' (P1)**.

Local initiatives were taking place that were drawing on local skills and interests. The focus on knowledge products, rather than capacity building also favoured the local offices, as employees there have the skills and experience for creating and testing knowledge products.

This decentralisation meant that initiatives were much less focused on a central team in UK headquarters. The potential was explained in one interview:

'The briefs have come traditionally from the UK office where technical specialists have written them, but more so now, it is coming from the other offices. They are writing them and supplying us with that information. Most recently, we have these and also some from Peru translated from Spanish, on disaster mitigation, so there is information coming through from the different offices, which is relatively new. ... For example, Bangladesh has done lots of little books in Bangla. They've done loads of them, printed them off on lots of subjects and they've been selling them for quite a time now. They are not expensive but they still have a charge. They've been very successful. It's the similar concept to the technical brief and the website, but in printed form in a local language. So it's been going on, and similar activities but they have not been shared quite so much as we are now' (P7).

A visit to the South American office of Charity P, in Peru, revealed some possibilities for the future. Here a very focused programme was in place, making use of the simple technology that was available, which demonstrated that the latest technology was not a requirement for successful use of ICT in knowledge management initiatives. The staff had organised a way to share common documents, using their own Shared Drives, made available over the web to staff and partners in all locations that have Internet access. Where the Internet was only patchily available, they used people that they termed 'knowledge brokers', who acted as intermediaries, passing out the knowledge that was relevant to those who could use it.

The Charity P knowledge manager stated: **'The Peru office has always recognised the importance of knowledge management from the Director down. They have a strong and well-led programme - with an IT background. They have one key person plus a communication team and they developed into a good team' (P1).**

This verdict was confirmed by the researcher's visit to the South American office, where issues were discussed with the team directly. This team also intended to use knowledge management in an important part of their work to influence local partners and governments in an ambitious programme of external sharing.

An interesting observation, from a visit to Charity P's Kenya office was of a Bangladesh knowledge management poster on the wall. This sighting was a pleasant reminder that international sharing of knowledge is still firmly on this charity's agenda. By 2010, the emphasis had moved to the use of a network of knowledge management officers in each office sharing expertise directly, and the intranet appeared to be less central to their plans for knowledge sharing.

International communication challenges means that success from the UK is far more difficult to replicate around the world and represents one of the differences between charities and large multinational global companies, or organisations like the World Bank, which have the budgets to provide high-speed links worldwide. The big picture is that knowledge management is seen positively as a discipline, but results so far demonstrate that international activity is as yet disappointingly rare.

6.3.4 Main Findings

This chapter has analysed the evidence for benefit achieved by knowledge management activity and there are two main findings presented here.

Demonstrating results in terms of impact on delivery of organisational programmes for these cases is tentative at best and measures of proxy values, though much easier to identify, do not provide conclusive data about the value of programmes. Expert opinion, in the form of end-users of knowledge management within the charity, has provided evidence and stories of commitment to sustaining the programmes currently in place into the future. This evidence suggests confidence that the programmes will prove worthwhile in the longer term, focusing on building organisational capacity for the goal of survival, as well as increased effectiveness.

- **In each case, short-term success is not proven, but the focus of the programmes is long-term improvement in working practice**

Difficult ICT infrastructure problems, taken with the problems posed by the variety of different languages and cultures, has restricted success in these charities' internationalising of knowledge management programmes. As a result, international reach remains a barrier to effective knowledge management in this organisational population.

- **Internationalising the programmes presents the greatest challenges, with limited progress to date.**

This overview completes the analysis of the material collected from the three case studies, and the follow-up visits. The final chapter of this study rounds up the research by identifying the overall conclusions from the analysis presented here and the six main findings.

Chapter 7. Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter summarises the research and subsequent findings in order to discuss their implications for theory and practice. On that basis, it draws out conclusions, while also identifying the limitations of assessment in the case of charities with the extensive and challenging remit to alleviate world poverty.

The chapter is divided into six sections:

7.1 Context;

7.2 Confident Conclusions;

7.3 Speculative Conclusions;

7.4 Implications for Theory;

7.5 Limitations of the Study;

7.6 Recommendations.

7.1 Context

This thesis has as its purpose to increase understanding of knowledge management as it is practised in a specific organisational population: international development charities. As its foundation, it takes the proposition that knowledge is a prime resource for modern organisations. This view is based on perspectives from influential management thinkers in the second half of the twentieth century, such as Penrose (1959), Drucker (1969) and Stewart (1997), among others. By the start of the twenty-first century, knowledge management, as developed from this proposition, is an established academic discipline with its own literature, journals, and university courses, as a subject of study in its own right.

A selection of defining concepts of this discipline have been analysed, including Learning Organisation Theory (Argyris, 1978) and (Senge, 1990); Knowledge Creation (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995); and Communities of Practice (Wenger, 2000). The ascendancy of knowledge management is closely linked to changes in information technology, and the impact which this has made on the way people work together in pursuit of the organisational goal or goals, frequently called the 'culture' of an organisation.

Enthusiasm for knowledge management has led to a proliferation of practical manuals, which tap into the market for management guidebooks. Designed to help practitioners in developing programmes that can deliver the benefits from knowledge management, these manuals have been produced to bridge the wide gap between the academic literature and everyday work. The rationale is that analytical frameworks 'were either too abstract or too limiting. In particular they did not help the firm decide "what to do next Monday"' (Earl, 2001, p. 216). While this study does not answer this very pressing question, it aims to provide more understanding about the work of practitioners who are finding their own answers on a weekly basis.

The study has identified that there are a variety of definitions relevant to the term 'knowledge' in a contemporary management context. The discipline of knowledge management can also be interpreted as including a variety of different perspectives and practices. These are promoted both as a path to short-term advantage and, simultaneously, as a way to develop long-term improvements to organisational capacity. The study therefore was based on working definitions of knowledge and knowledge management that proved appropriate to this organisational group. Perspectives from organisational theory models were applied to support the understanding of how knowledge management impacted within this specific context, bearing in mind the importance of longitudinal continuities and changes over time.

Given the focus on commercial companies in the literature about knowledge management, this research continues the trend to provide more specific studies of knowledge management in different contexts. In the field of international development charities, major participants in this field have taken knowledge management very seriously indeed - in particular the World Bank. As a result, there is pressure on international development charities to respond, as is confirmed by the case study data where those senior managers that were interviewed, in all the charities, believe that knowledge management is important for its own benefit. They are also aware that such applications demonstrate good practice in the eyes of powerful institutional donors, upon which all major international charities rely for funding (section 1.2.1, p. 26).

Three distinguishing characteristics of international development charities were identified: the nature and complexity of their goals; the wide variety of stakeholders, which reflect their international reach; and their limited size and resource base in comparison with the unlimited scope of their ambitions to reduce poverty and to increase global justice (section 1.2.3, p. 27). These characteristics, together with the crucial issue of choosing the right timeframe to assess the value of knowledge management, have to be considered throughout the research.

The research questions were designed to illuminate the relationship between the theoretical perspectives of knowledge management and the programmes and practices enacted by international development charities. They are restated here.

- How is knowledge management implemented in this sector and how does it reflect mainstream theory?
- How has knowledge management transferred from the commercial sector and are there indications that this discipline will be capable of longevity in this new sector?
- How do knowledge management practices impact on the effectiveness of international development charities?

The case studies were based on three UK charities, considered to be exemplary in the sector. The studies included aspects of longitudinal research from within the period 2004 to 2010 and data from three different international locations. The information collected over this period has been analysed using ideas from the literature on organisations and knowledge management, to produce ‘thick descriptions’ of the implementation of knowledge management in international development charities.

From these, the main findings can be summarised in terms of six propositions:

- Knowledge management is interpreted and enacted in quite different ways in the sector.
- Information technology plays a significant role in these diverse knowledge management programmes.
- These ideas and practices originating in the commercial sector can be adapted and used selectively in this sector.
- Knowledge management programmes were sustained over the period studied but their place in the organisational structure is subject to change.
- In each case, short-term success is not proven, but the focus of the programmes is long-term improvement in working practice.
- Internationalising the programmes presents the greatest challenges, with limited progress to date.

This evidence of practice in an under-researched sector contributes to the body of case study information, essential for consolidating understanding of the scope of knowledge management as a discipline. These ‘thick descriptions’ of what happens in practice complement the survey study of knowledge management in international development charities already collected (Ramalingam, 2004).

By using organisational system models to support understanding of the impact of knowledge management in this organisational population, the research also identifies some important ways to strengthen the application of knowledge management. In this way, the research addresses an obvious need.

7.2 Confident Conclusions

Based on the findings above, there are three significant conclusions that can be confidently drawn. There are also two further conclusions of a more speculative nature that are put forward for consideration.

7.2.1 Knowledge Framework

The first conclusion recognises the variety of practical work shown between the three charities (Finding 1). This diversity demonstrates that the implementation of a knowledge management programme in this context did not involve following a 'knowledge management blueprint'. The instigators of the programmes did not relate their practical plans to academic theory, nor base their work on any stated adherence to the conceptual models discussed in chapter two (section 2.2).

Their ideas were based on those taken directly from the commercial sector or from the pragmatic use of commercial practitioner manuals (Finding 3). As a result, it can be argued that knowledge management, as it exists today for the three charities, provides a menu of activities from which items are selected to meet identified organisational requirements based on their unique productive opportunity (section 6.1.2.1).

The role of the knowledge manager, or a knowledge management team, is to provide the specific framework for the organisation in which the chosen menu items are confidently linked together to make sense to staff in that particular organisation and to match their unique productive opportunity (Penrose, 1959, section 2.2.1, p. 41). This was expressed in a comment from Charity P, describing knowledge management: as **'about practical things that I think of, as well as bigger things that hold them together' (P5).**

This Knowledge Framework did not need to be given the name 'knowledge management' at all, as those words may have abstract and 'difficult' connotations as these comments show: **'It seemed "Utopian" at first and lots of theory, so people were not clear why it was relevant' (L6),** or **'at first it was too abstract, whereas accountants are practical and I didn't like the airy-fairy "big sell"' (L8).** In a similar vein: **'I think knowledge management used to lack credibility and was seen as remote and ethereal' (P8).**

The common element between the three charities was the focus on information technology to deliver their knowledge management activities (Finding 2). This fact raises the risk of knowledge management becoming too closely identified with technology, despite the intention to balance this with the human element. **'Dare I say it, it was a typical IT project. We think about technology but forget the soft issues and cultural changes. All that stuff gets swept aside' (L5).** In this context a knowledge framework such as that developed at Charity T held together the 'people, process and technology' elements and helped embed them in practical activity, in contrast to the less coherent programme in Charity P.

From these positive study findings, it seems that a knowledge framework has the potential to help to shape or 'tame' technology into a mechanism for altering an organisational 'way of working', to deliver knowledge benefits as a result. For international development charities more generally, the same may apply. A knowledge management framework can help to identify value from the confusing change options, which are pushed by technology innovators. The research has helped to identify the areas relevant to this knowledge management framework. The elements of the system models used by this study can be reorganised into five areas that can inform the design of a new framework or to test the validity of an established programme.

These elements are:

1. The type of organisation: knowledge management must be closely aligned with organisational goals, structures, size etc.
2. The people who will influence decision making: support will be needed from some combination of people with the potential to have influence over decision making, such as senior and middle management personnel and appropriate champions, as well as the people involved directly in knowledge management delivery.
3. The technology available: the systems and skilled technology personnel available to provide support for knowledge management processes and initiatives.
4. The organisational culture: the assumptions, values and norms that prevail within the organisation, including the sub-cultures, languages, and attitudes to change, to sharing and to innovation, will condition the context in which knowledge management is enacted.
5. The environment: this will include a wide range of aspects such as major external stakeholders, technology infrastructure, local and national cultures as well as a competitive or niche market.

These five cornerstones for a knowledge management framework must be assumed to be constantly adapting and changing, rather than static factors. The knowledge management framework will need to be regularly reviewed for relevance and stability to ensure a clear and readily explicable socio-technical mix of activities that resonates with the productive opportunity of the host organisation.

In summary, this section has used those system elements required to assess the establishment and staying power of knowledge management programmes and related them to the requirements for a clear and coherent knowledge framework. Using the research learning, it is possible to support the building of a knowledge framework that is based on identifying the factors that can lead to more or less successful outcomes.

7.2.2 Building Organisational Capacity

The second conclusion considers the issue of timeframes, a theme that has been important in this study. In the short-term, the charities reported examples of improved practice, slicker ways of working, and some documented reduction in the time spent on bureaucracy. But these gains were never measured against the investment in knowledge management teams and the time spent implementing the changes. It is therefore impossible to make a case that knowledge management delivers short-term results that give acceptable return on investment.

The case for knowledge management was instead based on the conviction in all three charities that their programmes will deliver long-term gain, in terms of the different ways of working, as the different activities which they sponsor become embedded in everyday working practice.

(Finding 5)

This focus is closely linked to the concept of a resource-based view of the firm: 'The emphasis is on identifying and capturing the "knowledge assets" of the firm so that they can be both fully exploited and fully protected' (Swan et al, 2002, p. 188). Such programmes can be presented as a way to use scarce resources to best long-term advantage. But knowledge management is also about learning to be able to adapt flexibly to environmental change. In the current highly dangerous climate of economic crisis and uncertainty, where the goal of survival will be high on the agenda of all international development charities, knowledge management can be presented as one way to meet these threats.

'It has been suggested that sufficient skills for effective use of the Internet in support of advocacy and communication can be acquired relatively simply and collectively' (Little, 2004, p. 239). International development charities work to deliver 'capacity building' for their partners in the development context, yet the charities do not engage them in their own knowledge management programmes. Lacking any way to measure the capacity gains, which the programmes achieve, the knowledge management teams in each charity were very vulnerable to structural change. It is likely that the difficulty of demonstrating value was one reason for their limited standing and 'nomadic' existence within the organisations (Finding 4). There is no question that knowledge management is not easily assimilated into organisational life, without clear pegs upon which to hang it. It needs, accordingly, to be aligned with the organisational goals of each charity and embedded into everyday life, with a clear narrative about its benefits.

However, over the period of the study all three programmes survived, without much change of direction; and the basic case for continuing the work was never convincingly questioned. As one interview subject commented: **'I would say we are starting to set some processes up, within the organisation, which could lead to success' (L5).**

The preponderance of stories of short-term gain in much of the available practitioner literature may be a prime reason why knowledge management is often judged against immediate results, rather than being seen as constituting a fundamental investment in organisational capacity. 'Over-hyping' knowledge management can lead to it being dismissed as simply another management fashion. Expectations can be raised which cannot be sustained. However, one senior manager said in support of knowledge management in his organisation: **'It is a quantum leap and very exciting' (T4).**

As a result, the coherent knowledge framework needs to be tailored in an appropriate fashion to the goals of each organisation. For the chosen group of charities, the rationale for such programmes is readily understood if communicated in terms of organisational capacity building - a theme close to the hearts of international development workers.

7.2.3 Looking Beyond the Confines of the Organisation

The study has noted that the necessity for working in a variety of locations, with very different economic realities and infrastructure, gives rise to concerns that might not be relevant to charities based only in richer countries, or to multi-national corporations that work in the same locations, but which have greater access to resources.

The importance of technology to deliver international aspirations for knowledge management in the context of cultural and language differences, as well as isolation and different employment conditions, all combine to make these elements into the most challenging aspect of knowledge management. While single location work is progressing with various degrees of success in each charity, within the UK or in other discrete locations, all three are struggling to make real progress on international knowledge programmes that impact across the whole organisation (Finding 6).

Each charity faced these problems in isolation and, despite their awareness of activity in other parts of the sector, there is no evidence of cross-charity sharing, or partnerships with organisations from other sectors, although Charity P does have a vision of working in knowledge partnerships in the localities. Talking of the ideas that had been researched, the Chief Executive stated that these: **‘included ideas about the use of “info-mediaries”, or knowledge brokers in the field’ (P3)**. By 2010, international development charities are still not providing significant indications that knowledge partnerships are happening in more than small pockets of activity.

International penetration of knowledge management poses severe challenges. The scope for collaboration, sharing knowledge, and partnerships with other agents has as yet to be seriously explored. Pooling resources across isolated groups is even more vital where charities are building alliances with local partners in order to help them reap the benefits available from new technology. Their low resource base can be emphasised: ‘without this the limited resources at the margins may be channelled into models that have been created in development settings and which deliver comparatively little local benefit’ (Little, 2004, p. 229).

Charities have much more to gain by sharing investment and risk in the field of knowledge management but currently rarely do so. This was acknowledged by some of those interviewed, for example from Charity L: **‘We are definitely not at that stage of sharing knowledge management and Learning Organisation with partners’ (L4)**. In all three charities, this approach to leveraging their knowledge is yet to be explored. So one potential avenue for the future becomes apparent, in the form of collaborative work between charities using knowledge management techniques, together or with other appropriate partners and sponsors.

This idea is not only an excellent match for the values of these charities, but also meets the expectations of public sentiment in the UK, as explained above (Morris, 2001, section 1.2, p. 22). A pessimist might argue that sharing knowledge will be very expensive. On the other hand, technological changes are always working in surprising ways; and therefore the potential is always worthy of consideration.

7.3 Speculative Conclusions

The study has presented three conclusions based securely on the evidence provided by case study data. There follows two comments on this data, which cannot be tested within the confines of this study. However, they are of interest to knowledge management theorists and may have implications for knowledge management practitioners.

7.3.1 The Politics of Knowledge Management

The study looked at the important question of sustainability for knowledge management initiatives. The answer was very mixed. These programmes seemed to have political support from the top of the organisation, which was sustained over many years. But none of the three had the security of a fixed place in the hierarchical structure and were regularly subject to reorganisations that were not supportive of their work.

Knowledge management is about change and the literature makes it quite clear that such transformations will impact on power and the way that organisations work (Drucker, 1994, section 3.1.2.1 p. 66). Knowledge management is a discipline that includes a sense of the growing power of knowledge workers. Labour is no longer a passive interchangeable resource but has become an active participant in the life of the organisation. Hence this resource has interest and power to be involved in decisions about how it is used. This factor profoundly changes relationships within organisations.

One of the strongest reasons for support of knowledge management in the three case study charities was to combat 'silo' working. The power of knowledge-sharing would help people move away from their traditional loyalties to a subsection of the organisation. Instead, they will begin to operate across internal and external boundaries, where these linkages support more effective delivery of the whole organisation's goals.

These two factors suggest that knowledge management does not only have the bland intention of 'changing culture' but to be successful will fundamentally change power relationships. The much-disliked 'silos' are the domains of senior managers, who have built up their power and expect the loyalty of their subordinates. The empowerment of knowledge workers is not necessarily going to meet the preferences of these senior managers or those of middle managers, who can no longer command and control their own hierarchical empires. Changing culture may actually mean reducing the power of certain people and dispersing that power to others.

The role of technology may also impact here. Knowledge management is closely linked to information technology in much of the relevant literature and on the evidence of this study (Finding 2). When these elements are taken together - empowered workers, cutting across traditional power lines, and new and 'dangerous' information and communication technology - the reasons that knowledge management does not lead to more radical change may be visible. Behind the bland ideas that formed the central focus of its predecessor, information management, is a more dramatic change that contains potential threats to established regimes.

Modern international development charities have every reason to support knowledge management based on their stated commitment to cooperative and sharing values, but there may be equally significant reasons why individual managers may not want to see its power unleashed and find their own power base challenged by new management agendas. So knowledge management in charities exists and is given loud verbal support, but not a strong place in the hierarchy or the provision of significant stable resources.

Charities have their own cultures. Innovation in technology and recognition and command of how such changes impact on internal politics are not likely to be their strong suits. Charity P may long to emulate eBay and Amazon, but the staff employed may be less able to deliver this inspiration. Charity T may find new ways to bring the voices of the poor directly to influential western audiences, but some caution may exist at this loss of their own power to mediate these voices. Charity L may be enthusiastic about learning that is intended to challenge any blocks in its path, but sometimes blocks exist to keep people within safe comfort zones or for other more valid practical reasons.

These issues return the discussion to the question of the significance of timeframes, which is very topical in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The major banks and BP - both at times held up as models of knowledge management excellence - are currently demonstrating the dangers of an economy too focused on short-term results at the expense of the legitimate goal of long-term sustainability and survival.

For the personnel involved in leadership roles in these organisations, their choices may make sense where short-term results lead to major financial success from performance related-pay and bonuses, to a sufficient extent that subsequent failure and disgrace will not endanger their personal benefit. Where some organisations are seen as 'too big to fail', other organisations in the modern economy will tend to emulate their cultural norms. Therefore, the predominant work ethic focuses on personal gain as a natural partner to doing the right thing for the employing organisation. This attitude will tend to emphasise short-term, measurable 'success' above concern for long-term organisational health.

A charity is established with very different values. Its leaders espouse altruistic motivations and, while hoping to help poor people in the short-term, must be aware of long-term consequences for the recipients and the rest of the world. But individuals will also be concerned about their own careers and relative remuneration. Charities based in the UK will by default carry with them many of the trappings of the contemporary culture of the rich western world. Charities are not isolated from their own economic and cultural realities.

This pressure then adds to the problems of knowledge management. It may be a management fashion but, within the charities studied, it is also unfashionably focused on the long-term ideal of capacity development, without the rapid results, which delight important and potentially fickle donors. It will not add to bonus packages, which have recently become a feature of managers' incentive packages. It is perhaps not surprising that knowledge management teams have not built a secure power base in a world that identifies success with immediate results.

The aims of knowledge management – sharing, innovating, and making the most of limited resources – match well with the values which charities espouse. Therefore people within this organisational population can be expected to line up in support. The study data however, shows that knowledge management has the potential to challenge leaders' power without delivering immediate returns. The results may be intellectually satisfying and also pose a serious organisational challenge. Knowledge management remains partially a pious hope, rather than an aspect of organisational life that is strongly nurtured to deliver new ways of working. This conclusion is based on circumstantial evidence. Nonetheless, the pattern is repeated in all three charities: that is vocal support for knowledge management matched with failure to find it a secure place in the organisational structure. The ideas put forward here do dovetail with the data.

Other perspectives could be postulated. For example, it is possible that this pattern is simply a coincidence, or due to economic or sectoral trends that impact on knowledge management in these three charities. Today there are also environmental pressures to devolve power away from headquarters to people working in the field. This change has the potential to alter power relationships fundamentally. Knowledge management in a future era of increasing devolution will then face new and very different challenges.

This area of concern links very closely to soft systems theory and the complexity of goals and objectives. Although none of the three charities' knowledge management programmes were derailed by the complexity of the organisational context, it is clearly one challenge that may push or pull a new knowledge management programme in unexpected directions.

7.3.2 Knowledge Management Supporting Technology Change

In this study, there is evidence of the contribution that technology provides for knowledge-sharing in all three charities. This finding confirms one frequently heard practical characteristic of knowledge management: that it involves ‘people, process and technology’. This result contrasts with the particular theoretical perspective that classifies explicit knowledge as mere ‘information’ and presents tacit knowledge as the primary focus for knowledge managers. Instead the two strands of knowledge invariably go together (Polanyi, 1984, section 2.1.2).

Neither is there evidence that would return to the position that technology is the sole delivery mechanism for knowledge management, as has been over-sold by technology vendors (section 2.2.5, p. 47). In this context, it has been reported that: ‘Against the background of dramatic advances in Information and Communication Technologies, it seemed as if KM was offering Anglophone managers *knowledge* served up in words or numbers “that anybody could understand” and the capacity to control with the click of a mouse’ (Ray and Clegg, 2005, p. 320). The view that knowledge management programmes would find a conflict between remaining closely tied to technology change or becoming solely linked to human resource management is far from the experience of practitioners evidenced in this study. It is the interaction of people with technology that offers much of the benefit knowledge management is seeking to capture. Indeed, this link is the unique economic condition that moved knowledge to central stage in the first place (section 1.1.1).

In the evidence from the data collected, knowledge management can be positioned as the acceptable face of technology change, in a world where organisations have no choice but to keep trading up technology - or lose status. This idea turns around the equation that suggests that technology is simply a way to deliver knowledge management. Instead, a strong knowledge framework can potentially provide the rationale for investing in appropriate enhanced information technology, which would otherwise be poorly used. This reverse sequence is neatly shown in Charity T: **‘people used to say, “why is there no intranet?” No one knew what they needed it for, but there was a sense of frustration’ (T2)**. In this case, the leadership believed that the charity needed an intranet because this device was something used by most other organisations, but were not clear what problems it would be intended to resolve or what new benefit it could supply (section 6.1.2.5).

Knowledge management in fact provides a way to adopt technology change for organisational benefit. In this way, knowledge management within international development charities can join the wider movement to use technology to offer development and educational opportunities for poorer people around the world. One example can stand for many: ‘The Open University currently has projects in thirteen African countries, from Morocco and Egypt in the north, to South Africa’ (Open University Website, 2010)

7.4 Implications for Theory

The academic foundations for knowledge management have been tested against practical examples within one specific sector, the international development sector. This section reflects these research findings back to the analytic framework of knowledge management. It is followed by one further comment on current perspectives on transfer of management techniques across sector boundaries.

7.4.1 Knowledge Management Conceptual Models

The detailed case study data confirms and extends our understanding of specific conceptual models.

Learning Reviews give some evidence of innovation, similar to the outputs of the knowledge creation perspective, where staff are brought together from different disciplines: **'then they see how those lessons will benefit them next time round. So they see the value'** (L5). The knowledge management ideal of communities of practice is also demonstrated in action, although not within knowledge management programmes, but as networks of professionals sharing their expertise together, based on the recognised need: **'for being active in networks and spotting opportunities for our work'** (P6). Learning Organisation theory could be expected to have a role in the charities' programmes as learning is valued and seen as a useful characteristic to foster. But serious discussion of the ideas of the Learning Organisation does not feature in any of the interview records nor in the documentation. Although a prime example of knowledge management success features learning from Charity L: **'We have learnt the lessons about the importance of getting someone out to the field, getting valuable information'** (L3), this was never related to any formal Learning Organisation perspective.

However, this lack of interest in theoretical underpinning was not seen as a difficulty in practice. Charities are not given to prolonged concern with abstract analysis, as opposed to immediate problem-solving. This eclectic use of knowledge management ideas demonstrates that knowledge management is not put into practice in an integrated way. The attempts to form a single integrated theory of knowledge management have clearly not been influential here. (section 2.2.7).

On the basis of the case study material, it appears more relevant as a set of tools that can be selected to match a specific productive opportunity, rather than a unitary blueprint for application in all circumstances. It has to be accepted that knowledge management is a collection of concepts and techniques, which can be pragmatically selected and adapted to an organisation's requirements.

7.4.2 A Comment on the Cross-Sectoral Transfer of Management Tools

The data presented here indicates that, although knowledge management has been developed with a perspective from commercial sector models, the same practices were transferred to the charitable sector. This evidence provides a contribution to established research, which shows that, although the management task will be different in different sectors (Paton and Cornforth, 1992, section 3.2.1, p. 81), the everyday practices are becoming aligned. The high incidence of staff moving from the commercial sector into a charity, in the case study sample, suggests that regular transfers of personnel constitute a trend that will continue to reduce differences between management practices in different sectors. The changes are likely to continue, being substantive, technology-supported, and humanly required, rather than merely superficial.

Although the commercial company's profit motive is more complex than often presented, with short-term profit and long-term survival sometimes in conflict, their central goal is still amenable to measurement by relatively simple metrics. In contrast, the complexity and inscrutability of the output of a development charity, where the focus is on empowering diverse groups of people within very poor and unstable environments, does make the assessment of the benefits of any conceptual model quite different from the classic formula of measuring profit, return on investment, or market share. This feature is perhaps not sufficiently recognised in the literature. In practice, the danger of a preference for finding simple metrics may well obscure the need to focus on what is actually important.

International development charities have to work with this difficulty as they try to meet their donors' needs for measures of effective ways of working. There is growing emphasis on trying to develop more sophisticated measures for charities and the public sector, but as yet this problem remains very real. Therefore the focus in the literature on simple success measures, in particular in the more 'fashion-focused' practitioners' manuals, can be seen as the place where transfer is least appropriate, and the emphasis on instant and demonstrable results may be deeply unhelpful for this sector.

7.5 Limitations of the Study

This study has used the resources available to learn more about an important aspect of knowledge management: its implementation within a sample of international development charities. However, it is limited by the practical scope of the study.

7.5.1 Using Case Study Methodology

The case study methodology itself is not without pitfalls. It was chosen in order to gain rich contextual evidence to supplement the existing work in the field, which consisted of survey data (Hovland, 2003, Ramalingam, 2004). The research was based on principles developed by research specialists using concepts of construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Yin, 1994, section 4.5).

The concept of triangulation was central to this approach, with three data sources: interviews; documentation; and observation. Nevertheless the interviews provided by far the most valuable information and the study is therefore heavily reliant on the words of individuals.

Including ten interviews for each case study, and with three case studies replicating the same research method, the research attempted to reduce reliance on too narrow a source. The problems and limitations encountered with the interview method have been discussed above (section 5.5.1). The research did include safeguards to reduce these risks. Over 30 interviews were conducted, and the selection of subjects always included a sample with no direct involvement in the work to be researched. By presenting a separate report to each charity after the original case study data collection, confidence was established that the research was accepted as valid by the staff of the charity. The standard format of the interviews means that the study can be replicated. As all the collected data is contained in the appendices, the logic behind the findings can be checked at any time.

There were, however, some practical problems with the case study approach, caused by structural changes affecting the knowledge management personnel involved in coordinating the research visits. Detail of these changes has been explained in detail in chapter five (section 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4).

The study is based on a sample of three international development charities that were chosen for their reputations for exemplary knowledge management. Thus, although each case was expected to yield data on active knowledge management programmes and so met the research requirement, the range of charities did not extend to either very large, or to very small charities. Nor did it include specialist charities in the field of health, education, livelihoods or governance.

There are over 15,000 registered charities in the UK (figures from Charity Commission website, 2009) and 333 of these are registered with BOND, British Overseas Non-Governmental Organisations for Development, the coordinating body for UK-based international development charities (figures from BOND website, 2009). Even within the organisational population of international development charities, three charities is a small sample of their wide variety of size and specialist focus. This research is therefore suggestive but far from exhaustive.

7.5.2 Longitudinal Element of the Study

The study was carried out between 2004 and 2010. This time-span enabled the researcher to look beyond a simple 'snapshot' case study. However, the bulk of the research was carried out in one short period within each charity, with follow-up visits as and when circumstances allowed.

This factor meant that the longitudinal element of the study is less complete than the snapshot research. Given that the focus of later visits was to test whether the programme was still continuing or if it had been closed or significantly amended, this is not a serious limitation. It does not affect the conclusions of the study as in all cases there was demonstrable evidence that the work was continuing. Although more systematic longitudinal data collection would have been desirable, there is still value in this simple element of long-term data collection to reduce the risk that snap-shot data captures an exceptional moment in time, rather than a sustained programme. In the three charities studied in this research, the progress over several years, with positive and negative changes, has been traced.

7.5.3 Geographic Locations

In a similar vein, the study includes research from three different countries, but the bulk of the data was collected in the UK. This feature can pose a problem, where offices in different locations have different experiences. Lack of access to a wider variety of offices is a limitation on the amount that can be attributed to an international view. However, as each charity had its headquarters in UK and this location was also the base for the knowledge management team, this domestic focus is not out of balance with the actual activity that was taking place. This comment was one of many that expressed a hope for the future: **‘this will focus on how we use the web and digital technology and use of the “Nets”’ (L6)**. Further input from staff in other locations would clearly have increased the value of the study, but resources to do this were not available.

Despite these limitations, the research data provides a rich picture of knowledge management activity within a clearly defined organisational population, and as such contributes alongside other investigations of knowledge management in different contexts (section 1.1.2, p. 18).

7.6 Recommendations

Research into the mainstream commercial organisations, for which the theoretical models were developed, is complemented by this study focusing on the world of the international development charity. It has looked at knowledge management in a sector that is always under huge pressure to deliver value for donated money and in which there is a requirement to demonstrate evidence that investment of time or money is unquestionably worthwhile. The results have delivered three conclusions of relevance to practitioners and considerations that also contribute to the consolidation of the wider picture of knowledge management in theory and practice in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

7.6.1 Extending the Study

With the case study method and tools set out here, it is possible to get comparative data that can widen the scope of this picture. The results of this research show the variety of knowledge management practice within three international development charities, which were picked as exemplary examples, but which were all mid-sized organisations. Further investigations of organisations within the same sector but of different sizes - from the large to the tiny, from Oxfam for example (income in its last official accounts over £142m), to Health Unlimited (income in its last accounts £6m) - would be appropriate, to see how knowledge management practice differs here. It would also be useful to compare the findings with those from other charity groups such as a dispersed charity in the UK or a range of charities with a similar focus, such as health or education, to see if research using the same methodology would produce similar or contrasting results. This breadth of research would add to more securely-based judgement on knowledge management activity, given the large and growing importance of the wider voluntary sector in the current economic climate.

Moreover, the external environment for all international organisations is changing rapidly. In particular, the new access to Internet bandwidth that featured in Africa in 2009, which has been widely reported, will have an important impact. (Guardian website, 23 July 2009).

The role of information technology in international knowledge management programmes has already been identified. There is scope for further investigation of how knowledge management can be supported without a high level of IT investment. For example, the work in Charity P in South America, using low-tech solutions, could be researched in more depth to indicate options for knowledge management appropriate for international development charities, where resources are very limited.

Alternatively, a follow-up project covering the same ground as this study, but after some years of technology change, would provide a very useful indication of how much the current limited access to high-speed web-based systems does hold back international penetration of knowledge management; and once extended, can throw light on the value or otherwise of such knowledge management programmes.

7.6.2 Making Knowledge-Sharing Collaboration a Reality

On a final note, the case study material given here focused on work internal to each charity. The research has suggested that a more external focus, involving partnerships between charities, or between charities and their recipient partners, could offer further advantages. The discipline argues for greater sharing of knowledge for the greater good, so a possible area for action research would be to investigate the potential for cross-organisational initiatives.

This study has contributed to a world where knowledge management remains an actively promoted management tool and therefore continues to have an important role in many organisations. Knowledge management theory provides a set of concepts that have the potential to increase the effectiveness of organisations. If ‘managing intellectual capital should be business’s first priority’ (Stewart, 1997, section 1.1, p. 12), then research can contribute to increased understanding of how it impacts on organisational effectiveness. In this way, the study contributes new insights into knowledge management within the academic discipline, but also provides supporting concepts for building stronger and more stable initiatives within this field. This outcome acknowledges the value of evidence from research prompted by a humanist sociology, which incorporates the soft systems approach in a dynamic management context.

The knowledge framework set out earlier in this chapter (section 7.2.1) includes:

1. The type of organisation;
2. The people who will influence decision making;
3. The technology available;
4. The organisational culture;
5. The environment.

These elements form the context of knowledge management programmes and activities.

Together all these factors are themselves subject to constant change. As a result, it is vital that knowledge management processes are steadily organised, updated and reviewed not in response to short-term fads but within the context of long-term development plans.

By using evidence from current practice, charities can deliver more powerful programmes that can assist in the momentous challenge of reducing global poverty and disadvantage.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

Question	
1	What do you think is Knowledge Management in your organisation?
2	Where do you think this has been successful?
3	What do you think were factors in making this successful?
4	Do you think leadership was a factor?
5	Do you think the way the project was managed was a factor?
6	Do you think technology was a factor?
7	Do you think culture was a factor?
8	Do you think alignment with organisational strategy and goals was a factor?
9	Do you think communication or resources were factors?
10	What do you think will be the challenge for the future for knowledge management?
11	Do you think structure was a factor? <i>(Introduced for charities P and T. Not used with L)</i>
12	Have you worked in the commercial sector, or in the public sector <i>(Used when appropriate)</i>

NOTE:

The questions included in the formal list were planned to focus on positive aspects of knowledge management and why it is successful. These questions were motivating for staff, as they offered the opportunity to provide information that could help other charities develop good knowledge management programmes on based learning from their experience. This was designed to give them a practical and appropriate purpose for the time spent reflecting on their knowledge management programmes. The format avoided asking questions that emphasise the abstract nature of knowledge management, which is a characteristic of the topic that people can find 'difficult'.

In practice, the interviewer used the questions as a framework for developing rapport with the interviewees so that they would be willing to speak openly about their opinions of the programmes, and so provide information on both aspects they considered positive and those that they deemed neutral or negative. The questions were adapted and added to, in order to work with the flow of conversation rather than following the list exactly as presented above.

Appendix 2 Interviews, Documents and Observations

Interview Subjects plus codes:

Charity L Section 5.2.2.1	Reference	Role
	L1	Knowledge Manager
	L2	Learning Officer
	L3	Senior Manager
	L4	Head of Overseas Operations Team
	L5	Evaluations Officer
	L6	Support Enquiries Manager
	L7	Communications and Volunteer Manager
	L8	Head of Finance
	L9	Head of Human Resources
	L10	Head of IT

Charity P Section 5.3.2.1	Reference	Role
	P1	Knowledge Manager / Librarian
	P2	Image Librarian
	P3	Chief Executive
	P4	Senior Manager
	P5	Research /Operations Officer (1)
	P6	Research /Operations Officer (2)
	P7	Communications and Enquiries Manager
	P8	Web Manager
	P9	Quality Assurance Administrator
	P10	Head of IT

Charity T	Reference	Role
Section 5.4.2.1		
	T1	Knowledge Management Officer
	T2	Knowledge Management IT Liaison
	T3	Senior Manager
	T4	Overseas Manager
	T5	Overseas Administrator
	T6	Operations Manager / Knowledge Champion
	T7	Communications Officer
	T8	Head of Finance
	T9	Head of Human Resources
	T10	Head of IT Systems

Documents plus Codes:

Charity L		
Section 5.2.2.2		
	Code	Detail
	LD1	Organisational mission statement
	LD2	Strategy
	LD3	Corporate objectives and indicators
	LD4	Knowledge management project plans
	LD5	Learning review guidelines
	LD6	Schedule of project delivery
	LD7	Report from survey
		Report for Charity L

Charity P		
Section 5.3.2.2		
	Code	Detail
	PD1	Organisational Group Strategy 2003 – 7
	PD2	Annual Report 2003
	PD3	Enterprise architecture overview
	PD4	Best Practice for information sharing
	PD5	Recommendation for communication strategy
	PD6	Information enquiries report
	PD7	2 publicity booklets on knowledge products
	PD8	Publication on knowledge capabilities
	PD9	Report for Charity P

Documents (cont)

Charity T	Code	Detail
Section 5.4.2.2		
	TD1	Organisational mission statement
	TD2	Strategy
	TD3	Knowledge Management project plan
	TD4	Paper for public on knowledge management
	TD5	Report from Knowledge Management survey

Observation Visits plus Codes:

Charity L	Code	Detail
Section 5.2.2.3		
P. 86, 202	LO1	Intranet launch
P. 195	LO2	Facilitators workshop

Charity P	Code	Detail
Section 5.3.2.3		
	PO1	Celebration lunch
	PO2	IT staff conference
P. 229	P03	Kenya knowledge management office

Charity T	Code	Detail
Section 5.4.2.3		
P. 192	TO1	Public meeting about the Intranet

Appendix 3: Schedule of Follow-Up Visits

Charity L	Date	Notes
Original case study	12 / 2004	
Follow up visit	11 / 2006	Discussion with knowledge manager
Survey and visit	04 / 2007	Facilitators observation, five interviews and staff survey
Follow up discussions	07 / 2007	Discussion with knowledge manager and facilitator trainer
Follow up visit	03 / 2009	Discussion with knowledge manager
Follow up visit	03 / 2010	Discussion with knowledge manager

Charity P	Date	Notes
Original case study	07 / 2005	
Follow up visit	08 / 2005	Presented report
Visit to Peru office	01 / 2006	Interviewed Director and three staff at their office
Follow-up discussion	06 / 2006	Discussion with new knowledge manager and head of IT
Follow-up visit	11 / 2008	Discussion with original knowledge manager / librarian
Follow up visit	02 / 2010	Discussion with original knowledge manager / librarian
Visit to Nairobi	03 / 2010	Interviewed one staff member at the local office

Charity T	Date	Notes
Original case study	11 / 2006 - 03 / 2007	
Follow up call	06 / 2007	Phone discussion with knowledge management staff member
Follow up visit	07 / 2009	Discussion with Head of IT
Follow up visit	02 / 2009	Knowledge / communication managers
Visit to Nairobi	03 / 2010	Interview with one staff member at the local office

Appendix 4: Table of Quotations

Key			
Code	Topic	Code	Topic
A	Alignment to goals, or daily work	KM	Knowledge management
C	Culture	L	Learning
CS	Commercial sector	M	Measurement
D	Donors	P	People, leaders, managers, champions
E	Effective	PR	PR and communication
EE	External environment	R	Resources
F	Future	S	Structure
I	International	T	Technology
K	Knowledge		

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.1.1.1	161	L3 Director	We are saying that knowledge is a very precious organisational resource	K, R
6.1.1.1	161	P3 Chief Executive	So the first challenge was to put knowledge at the heart of strategy. Our business case is predicated on our rich knowledge	K
6.1.1.1	161	T3 Director	This is a massive achievement to get thousands of ordinary people to be enthusiastic. It is the effective use of knowledge	K, E
6.1.1.1	162	T5 Overseas administrator	We have to store all our documents. Before they were all over the place. Centralising them is a good thing	K, E
6.1.1.1	162	P9 QA administrator	Loads of information products are produced around different projects and an awful lot of them stay in country so the knowledge is not shared with all of our offices and the UK.	KM
6.1.1.1	162	L8 Head of Finance	Much of knowledge management is common sense. If staff leave, you want to have procedures written up before they go	KM
6.1.1.1	162	P4 Director	Otherwise things end up as "grey literature", which is output that is never published	K
6.1.1.1	163	T1 Knowledge officer	Knowledge is a difficult word and we struggle with it. So I prefer to call it Information Management. Knowledge is basically information with context, rather than plain facts	K
6.1.1.2	164	L7 Comms manager	There was a lot of knowledge, skills, experience and learning from the past which was retained with various degrees of effectiveness in peoples' heads	K, P
6.1.1.2	164	P5 Operations officer	Meeting people face to face is one of the building blocks of managing information and sharing knowledge because it's easy to say this. But you feel it more when it's real people meeting each other	P, KM

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.1.1.2	164	T3 Director	Staff have tacit knowledge about their own work. The problem is when they leave and out goes the knowledge with them. Some of this is ballast and not as useful. But if the knowledge can be made available in digestible chunks, this could be accessed	K, KM
6.1.1.2	164	T2 IT liaison officer	Take it out of people's heads and into a variety of ways to capture it, not into masses of documents. You will then not lose it when people leave and you can share it between teams and departments	K KM
6.1.1.3	165	P3 Chief Executive	You can see it that fieldwork is a working hypothesis, so that if you can prove it and then argue from the lessons you have learnt. Well, that is how to get influence	I, L, KM
6.1.1.3	165	L1 Knowledge manager	It is the interaction between the people that draws out the learning that would be hidden otherwise	L, P
6.1.1.3	165	P2 Image librarian	The best events are the international meetings because they are face to face. That is a good way to share and build trust	P
6.1.1.3	165	L5 Evaluation officer	Evidence! And I know people are using it. One of our regional advisers from Central Asia who I met when they were over here in August, who was talking to me about how she'd been pulling documents down and using it	P, I,
6.1.2.1	167	P9 QA administrator	We are putting all the knowledge that has been produced. And we are putting a list in there, in the CD-rom, of the types of things that we mean by knowledge products, anything from writing a report to doing a slot on a radio programme, doing a presentation	IT, K
6.1.2.2	168	L1 Knowledge manager	We need to learn and we need to inform and we need to change things as a result	L
6.1.2.2	168	L5 Evaluation officer	The problem with Charity L is that we like to think we are a Learning Organisation, but you can't make mistakes	L
6.1.2.2.	168	L5 Evaluation officer	Whereas here you can have those conversations legitimately and however flawed or faltering we may be, we are at least having those conversations and trying to find our way through	L
6.1.2.2	168	P4 Director	We aim to be a Learning Organisation	L
6.1.2.2	168	P6 Operations officer	It's much easier to do the reading than to sit back and say "what have I learnt from that"	L
6.1.2.2	169	T3 Director	This is linked to learning. Charity T wants to adjust what we do to the evidence but for that you need good information flows	L

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.1.2.3	170	L4 Overseas manager	That type of thing in the past, we would not have had that understanding to take stock and then influence. I think it would have been left to ourselves. I don't think we would even have documented it	KM
6.1.2.3	170	P5 Operations officer	I have a role, encouraging people to share knowledge and information across our team. It more often boils down to trying to make connections between ideas, people and projects, to make connections when someone is doing something and another country needs to know that and playing a role in the middle of putting people together and getting a conversation going and sharing bits of documentation or whatever	P, KM
6.1.2.3	170	T4 Overseas manager	They are committed to workshops for staff and partners. There is a lot of shared knowledge by email and best practice seminars	P, KM
6.1.2.3	170	L4 Overseas manager	So a big challenge for the future, if we are going to go into our Hub Offices around the world, which is a possibility, is how do you do that? How do you maintain learning between regions and programme levels within that completely different organisational context?	S, L
6.1.2.4	171	L7 Comms manager	Knowledge management provides foundations for other things to build on top and I think the whole concept of developing Communities of Best Practice can be based on that	KM, P
6.1.2.4	171	P1 Knowledge manager	If no one stayed behind them to drive it on, then they just let it fail	P
6.1.2.4	171	T6 Operations manager	There are notice boards for accommodation or prayer requests. You can get alerts on things that are important to you. Groups can be linked and there is space for social things too	P, KM
6.1.2.4	172	T5 Overseas administrator	I was in Rwanda in December. This was an eye opener as things happen so slowly. You have to understand this. All the different technology is difficult	I, T
6.1.2.5	172	L2 Learning officer	This is where technology is both a help and a hindrance	T
6.1.2.5	173	P6 Operations manager	Completely indispensable! The example: I am writing a paper and I know some of the things I want to say. I'm thinking: where is the evidence for this? So I am using the Internet endlessly to find evidence and finding papers and quickly looking through them	T, R

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.1.2.5	173	P6 Operations officer	It is the abundance, which is also totally overwhelming	T, R
6.1.2.5	174	T1 Knowledge officer	This whole thing is a technology-led change programme	T, KM
6.1.2.5	174	T10 Head of IT	They were asking for an intranet since 1999	T
6.1.2.5	174	T8 Head of Finance	It is a real testimony that it is what we do, business as usual. Like mobile phones, you wonder how we managed without them. It is what we have now and is as integral as the phone or email	T
6.1.2.5	174	L9 Head of HR	This is a way of "connecting us" because everyone will look at the same place	P, T
6.1.2.5	174	L7 Comms manager	So the systems are there but when it comes to knowledge management, it is really a sideline service to record everything on a computer	T, P
6.1.2.5	175	P1 Knowledge manager	Staff hide behind connectivity, for example the login and load process is lengthy. It takes about 20 minutes and then often times out	KM, T
6.1.2.5	175	P1 Knowledge manager	So some systems are fine but people need more time to learn how to use them. We need to take this into account if we want them to be used effectively	T, I
6.1.2.5	175	T3 Director	Blogs have been introduced to get instant audiences and converts... So that is a good use of technology	T
6.1.2.6	175	T1 Knowledge officer	The technical platform leads the cultural change	T, E
6.1.2.6	175	P1 Knowledge manager	My job description says I am meant to help culture change	T, C
6.1.2.6	175	L7 Comms manager	So I think there has been a culture change and I suspect throughout the organisation that change has had variable effects	C
6.1.2.6	176	T2 IT liaison officer	There has been training as there is a culture issue. People have to understand, believe, and bother. If you are part of a small group and you all know one another, why would you want to share? You need a culture across the organisation that sees, understands and benefits from it	C, P, KM
6.1.2.6	176	L2 Learning officer	So the fact that it's now pretty much in the culture of the organisation has got to be a good thing.	C, K, L, E
6.1.2.6	176	L5 Evaluation officer	Firstly, getting people to stop before they do the next activity because we are so activity-focused, which I think is the nature of the organisation. We are activists, we do like people to do things, and so getting people to stop is a success in itself	P

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.1.2.6	177	T9 Head of HR	I can see specific areas where the project has contributed if you are thinking about our silo mentality. If you work in the Marketing Team, that is where you work and there are still not really any linkages. The [knowledge management] project has behaviour and tools to encourage people to stop these limitations. I think this is good	S, KM, P
6.1.2.6	177	T9 Head of HR	I am not sure there is any impact on culture. They still talk about the need for culture change in Charity T. In some respects they don't know corporately what this should look like. We all have individual views	C, KM
6.1.2.6	177	P1 Knowledge manager	They asked how this was meant to be done	C
6.1.2.6	177	T5 Overseas administrator	There are problems to do with connectivity. These are issues outside Charity T's control. Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo have huge issues. You can throw more money at it but there is still no regular power so this does not apply. Most cannot access the intranet and if they do it is very slow	T, I
6.2.1	182	T10 Head of IT	The organisation has moved towards him. He has moved too and, most of all, he has delivered	P
6.2.1	182	P10 Head of IT	I come from a commercial world myself. Being a commercial organisation focuses their minds and they take on commissions for books and pamphlets that there is a demand for, so their minds are focused	CS
6.2.1	182	P6 Comms manager	Yes, I used to work in various commercial organisations. I was going to say that working here wasn't so different as I had expected. As an employee it's not that different	CS
6.2.1	183	T7 Comms officer	Given the right training to know its full capacity, it is a powerful tool. It brings people together, such as the grass roots in churches in the UK with other countries	T, P
6.2.1	183	P10 Head of IT	To some extent we needed to go through all we have gone through to know where we need to be. It's a difficult area to define what facilities you need and what is going to work when you are starting from scratch. To some extent you can start with a package and implement that	T, CS, KM
6.2.1	184	T5 Overseas administrator	We have business now in job titles. It jars and feels uncomfortable in this set up. It has helped a bit though in having a corporate brand of Charity T and the intranet has helped to sell it. They made efforts to get the thinking along the right lines. I am ambivalent about this. It is the part I am not so happy about	CS, T, KM

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.2.1	184	T6 Operations manager	It is better than five years ago. People then were reluctant to use technology, as it was “too corporate”. They didn’t want to embrace the corporate world even if there are good ways to do things	T, CS
6.2.1	185	L7 Comms manager	One of our core values is in terms of the whole issue of relationships; how we work together; how we learn from each other. We want to work in partnership, with mutual respect on both sides	A, P, L
6.2.1	185	T7 Comms officer	But there are now cost cuts, so you have a fantastic site with not enough resources	T, R
6.2.1	185	P3 Chief Executive	The residual culture is antithetical to knowledge-sharing, because of the problem of finances. Money is the driver in offices with wholly nationally staffed officers who have to raise funds themselves. They do get some core funding, but also they need the balance from local fundraising. This does not help knowledge-sharing	C, R, P, KM
6.2.2.1	187	T10 Head of IT	From a project management point of view, there was clarity on the business benefit and this focused on that. There was good communication with the rest of the organisation	KM, PR
6.2.2.1	188	T3 Director	The knowledge management challenge is not to see it as separate from what we do. It is a homogeneous method because you do this as part of your job	KM, A
6.2.2.1	188	P2 Image librarian	It is a plus that it is needed to do the job effectively and there is a big demand for that	A
6.2.2.1	188	L9 Head of HR	Learning Reviews are successful because they seamlessly fit into work and are frequently talked about	L, A, P
6.2.2.1	188	T9 Head of HR	Yes, I can see the link. I can forge a link, particularly in making better, more effective use of resources. This makes sense, thinking of our mission and values	A, R
6.2.2.1	188	L2 Learning officer	So we would have learnt from partners or listened to partners, certainly and their views, and we have a strong relationship with the majority of our partners	L, A, P
6.2.2.1	188	L1 Knowledge manager	So in that sense it was quite close to what we were doing but it’s bringing in a slightly different viewpoint on it, incorporating the right language and methodology	A, KM
6.2.2.1	189	T1 Knowledge officer	There was one team based in three offices (long extract)	KM, P

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.2.2.1	190	P10 Head of IT	I don't think that people were trained too well and there wasn't the sort of implementation plan that said what documents do you produce and these should go in and these shouldn't and that sort of analysis for people	P, KM, T
6.2.2.1	190	P6 Operations officer	Again it is one of the targets on my performance management on which I am rated, but there is no reward for whether I do well. The opposite goes on my list. The opposite if I haven't	M, P
6.2.2.1	190	P4 Director	We were still talking about same things for three or four years, so it felt as if there was not much progress. But some things have moved on. For example we have some form of intranet	T, P
6.2.2.2A	192	L3 Director	The General Director quickly spotted the value or importance of this	P
6.2.2.2A	192	L7 Comms manager	It is a concept that has come from the top of the organisation... it has been modelled by our leadership, so it all makes sense	P
6.2.2.2A	192	T7 Comms officer	The drive is at senior management level and directorate level	P
6.2.2.2A	192	P6 Operations officer	And also perhaps a clearer organisational direction on what knowledge we are trying to manage and what we should do with it and the priority for it, so that feeds down – that everybody is clear in their job, the level of importance that knowledge management should have. It is important	K, A, KM
6.2.2.2A	192	L6 Support manager	He is credible and with integrity, and he sees other people's contexts	P
6.2.2.2A	192	L6 Support manager	There was leadership from the Board and buy-in lower down so that people do prioritise learning. They can be told about the long-term value	P, A, L, S
6.2.2.2A	193	P3 Chief Executive	Although we have senior management buy-in, but the people chosen were low down the pecking order and these people did not feel empowered to change the culture and our way of working	P, C, S
6.2.2.2A	193	T2 IT liaison officer	There was no clear lead until the Corporate Strategy of 2005 to 2010, which has this as one element: "Strengthening the Organisation". That has focused us more on internally how we do things. So now maybe it has found its place	M, P, KM
6.2.2.2A	194	T2 IT liaison officer	There is no real leadership above X (knowledge management team leader)... not from the senior management team. There is no lead from there. They are sure to be in the background but there are no real champions. No one director is seen as a key person, or even at a level below. This is maybe not a bad thing, as people don't feel it is being pushed on them	P, S

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.2.2.2A	194	T8 Head of Finance	The corporate directors have kept faith	P
6.2.2.2B	195	L3 Director	Leadership can have lots of wonderful ideas but unless you really persuaded the middle managers and won them over and helped them to see that this was not only valuable for the organisation but could also help their team	P, S, A
6.2.2.2B	195	P8 Web manager	I will still be the main manager for the whole site. It's just that each country office will be responsible for uploading its own material. And I will be much more of an executive editor keeping an eye on it, making sure they are sharing things	KM, P, A, I
6.2.2.2B	195	T3 Director	Clear leadership and a consistent message can lead to greater changes. This depends on one or two committed people down the food chain	P, PR, S
6.2.2.2C	196	T5 Overseas administrator	X [knowledge management leader] was crucial and is a team worker. He is dynamic and driven to move things forward. He has the enthusiasm to sell things. He sticks out as the person who is driving the process. He can convince the directors that this is the way forward	KM, P, PR
6.2.2.2C	196	T8 Head of Finance	But we had a person and that was important. If someone was not as charismatic, then it could have fallen flat on its face	P
6.2.2.2C	196	T1 Knowledge officer	Totally! This is the leadership of the project, rather than the organisation	P, S
6.2.2.2C	196	L4 Overseas manager	I think the appointment of X [the original knowledge manager] two or three years ago, was a key focus in bringing on that awareness and it has now been mainstreamed	P, PR
6.2.2.2C	196	L2 Learning officer	But it was very much that they involved the organisation. I don't know what the project plan was but certainly we felt enthused and encouraged to do it rather than ordered to do it	A, KM
6.2.2.2C	197	L3 Director	Essentially X (the original knowledge manager) floated a few ideas with a few people who he thought would be sympathetic and got one or two people to try things, which was very informal	P, KM
6.2.2.2C	197	T2 IT liaison officer	He saw that this is a change programme at a high level to be broken down into projects. It was well led so this builds confidence. People see that things happen when it is said they will happen	P, KM
6.2.2.2C	197	P6 Operations officer	She was very clear about it and very purposeful and since then there isn't anybody really who is doing that	P
6.2.2.2.C	197	T10 Head of IT	There was also a touch of humour	L, KM

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.2.2.2D	198	T2 IT liaison officer	It was very popular, with two hundred applications for the fifteen places. I heard it was heavily oversubscribed, even though it was not part of people's own role. They had to do this work on top of their own work; so it was not an easy life	P, KM
6.2.2.2D	199	P3 Chief Executive	You need Champions who are intuitively able to understand the value of knowledge sharing. They will act as catalysts	P, KM
6.2.2.2D	199	P9 QA Admin	We have a great strong network with all our people in the regional offices, so we deal with them all the time	P, I
6.2.2.3A	200	P10 Head of IT	Well, probably again the organisational structure, which in terms of countries, which is fairly evolved and federated in style, does hinder the implementation of things from the centre out	S, I, KM
6.2.2.3A	200	P3 Chief Executive	The first thing is the reorganisation of programmes ... Before this, there was lots of reinventing wheels and all offices had their own structures and there was no talking together	I, S, KM
6.2.2.3A	202	T10 Head of IT	Silo mentality still exists. There is a "this is mine" mindset that does not want to share	S, P
6.2.2.3A	202	P2 Image librarian	There is a tendency not to work outside your own space. You work with close colleagues and cross communication doesn't seem to happen. I think it is more a physical thing than organisational structure	P, S, PR
6.2.2.3A	202	L4 Overseas manager	Not just how we become more effective managers of an organisation, but how do we learn between programmes, between teams, between partners	P, L, S, I
6.2.2.3A	202	T10 Head of IT	They have set up the site to mirror the structure of the organisation, with parts to be cross-organisational. This will change when there's a new version	T, S
6.2.2.3B	202	T10 Head of IT	There is progress to reduce re-inventing wheels but this is slow because there is so much change across the Charity T world	KM
6.2.2.3B	203	T9 Head of HR	Charity T began to feel the pain of being a disjointed organisation and we saw the need to work more as one	S, P
6.2.2.3B	203	T1 Knowledge officer	This structural change, of it, strengthens the need for our work, while the other change process destabilises it	S, A
6.2.2.3B	203	L3 Director	Change is happening all the time at Charity L	S, P
6.2.2.3B	203	P4 Director	Since then there have been lots of structural change so these things have got a bit lost	S, KM
6.2.2.3B	203	T8 Head of Finance	Four years ago it was shifted around from Human Resources to IT and it was not clear where it belonged. It is a function that does not belong	P, T, S

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.2.2.3B	204	T1 Knowledge officer	Charity T is undergoing structural change. One frustration is how much change is going on. There are so many things happening at once	S
6.2.2.4	205	T2 IT liaison officer	There were bits of that. For example, the knowledge management team went off and bought their own servers at first and then expected the infrastructure team to support them	KM, T, P
6.2.2.4	205	T2 IT liaison officer	It was one of the best collaborations because it was not seen as a business project, nor was it seen as an IT project but seen as an organisational priority	T, P
6.2.2.4	206	L10 Head of IT	So we are sharing fifty percent for the official launch	T, P, KM
6.2.2.4	206	P8 Web manager	I am in the Knowledge and Communications Unit	S, KM
6.2.2.5	207	L9 Head of HR	There is a calm and peaceful feel to Charity L but actually it is a very intense place to work. People don't really want to take time to review	C, P
6.2.2.5	207	T4 Overseas manager	People are well meaning but they find loads of reasons for not doing things	P, C
6.2.2.5	207	P3 Chief Executive	So getting peanut processors to share together, with focus on the people. That is where the value will be brought in for facilitating this	I, P, KM
6.2.2.5	207	P6 Comms manager	That is the sort of knowledge management really. The intention is that this would be a database accessible via all Charity P offices to improve the knowledge-sharing between the different offices	T, I KM
6.2.2.5	208	L8 Head of Finance	Charity L is very consultative and can share thinking too early	C
6.2.2.5	208	T1 Knowledge officer	People think if they share, everyone will inspect their work. They don't see how it can be useful. Cultural change still needs to happen. However this answer is a 'yes and no' because there is lots of resistance but when they do engage there is no stopping them	P, C, A
6.2.2.5	208	T10 Head of IT	There are problems of different cultures in different localities	C, I, S
6.2.2.5	208	P4 Director	Because internationally each office has its own culture and they do things differently	I, C
6.2.2.5	208	L5 Evaluation officer	So I think that culture is there, but whether it is in all teams, I think varies	C, P
6.2.2.5	209	T6 Operations manager	How do you share across language, culture and technology	I, C, T
6.2.2.5	209	P6 Comms manager	It's not standardised. It could probably do with a bit more standardisation. The other thing is that they do their work in their own language so there is a limit to how much you can cross over	KM, I, S

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.2.2.5	209	T5 Overseas administrator	This is a training issue, as the language is French so they are not using it	I, KM
6.2.2.5	210	P2 Image librarian	They just expect it to happen	P, KM
6.2.2.5	210	P4 Director	They say it is important and worth investing in but it's at Programme Management level where you find the people to make it happen, and to get people to think about it	KM, I
6.2.2.5	211	T4 Overseas manager	Charity T's values of participation and recognition of everyone's commitment and values is important because these individual motivations combine to make a powerful organisation. This draws on the idea of you having the ability to share and learn. You always want to improve and there is a culture of reflection, challenging ideas and willingness to change	P, A, KM, L
6.2.2.5	211	T8 Head of Finance	Because we work in development and work with partners and value learning and development, that knowledge management is an important part of that	P, C, KM
6.2.2.5	211	T3 Director	You see it as part of your values and use tools so that knowledge flows and is shared in wider circles	P, C, KM
6.2.2.5	211	L1 Knowledge manager	Within the organisation, there is a real sense and spirit of the great value of it	P, L, KM
6.2.3	212	T8 Head of Finance	It is critical to its success that they don't just tick the box and move on. They have just gone through the process to say lets absorb [the knowledge management unit] into the business as usual. It is a challenge, as it won't just happen on its own. We all have to contribute to its success but we will need someone to crack the whip	P, KM, S
6.2.3	212	T9 Head of HR	Some aspects have to be taken on by people themselves. So, I will be one cog in the wheel	P, KM
6.2.3	212	L9 Head of HR	Before this, I saw knowledge management as useful and worthy but mainly a lot of hard work. Now we know that the process is helpful. It is not rocket science, but we can all apply it	KM
6.2.3	212	T4 Overseas manager	But it does need a spark to make things happen, so this is a lively area of debate	KM
6.3.1.1	218	L4 Overseas manager	We had learning on the Orissa evaluation: things on impact, HIV aids, water and sanitation, all these kinds of things, and what came out of those key points	L, I
6.3.1.1	218	L10 Head of IT	The one for Disaster Recovery was helpful. When we go into somewhere, it is brilliant to do those kinds of things. This is where it has been very useful	L, P, E

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.3.1.1	219	T1 Knowledge Officer	They used Videos in Haiti which are now on U-Tube, a website with lots of exposure to bring voices of the partners from the field to the ears of supporters. It gives them a voice, which is the whole aim, to give resources to do that; although they could still be used better	I, T, A, R
6.3.1.1	219	L4 Overseas manager	We came out with a lot of learning experiences in our interaction with that partner and also in the implications that would have on Charity L's systems	L, P, KM
6.3.1.1	219	L1 Knowledge manager	We can learn from each other. We don't need to go through the process again You might need to make some adjustment to the local context but it is effective and very much justifiable cost-wise	L, P, KM, E, C
6.3.1.1	219	T9 Head of HR	This cuts out all the non-productive use of manpower. This leaves reserves of extra time for more useful things	P, E, KM
6.3.1.1	220	P3 Chief Executive	We have not got there yet and so there are no measures yet. So there are no targets	M, KM
6.3.1.1	220	T9 Head of HR	You want to see that this is taken over and does not become a white elephant	T, KM
6.3.1.1	221	L4 Overseas manager	And corporate accountability, namely that at the highest level we have a corporate indicator and this cascades all the way down, whether we like it or not, we have to respond to it	M, P, KM
6.3.1.1	221	P5 Operations officer	We have a performance management, which includes a set of competencies some of which are round things like that – whether it works as a system or not, it does at least say that part of how you perform is the way that you treat other people... Also the system is used internationally not just here	P, M, I, KM
6.3.1.2	222	P6 Comms manager	They are quite pleased with it – they have supported quite a lot of reference centres on different subjects and ours worked better than some other ones	D, P, KM
6.3.1.2	222	T5 Overseas administrator	People seem to be on it [the intranet] quite a lot and it is used by all staff, so that shows it is quite successful	T, P, E
6.3.1.2	222	P3 Chief Executive	The aim was to get one million items on our knowledge base. (<i>Expression of horror</i>) But we want to prioritise and get good quality up there.	E, T, KM
6.3.1.2	222	P1 Knowledge manager	For the G8 summit, we produced two reports but no hard copy was given to the library yet. Has the electronic version been sent to the intranet? I would hazard a guess it has not!	KM, E, T
6.3.1.3	223	L5 Evaluation officer	To me it's a big success that Charity L has it on the agenda, its serious and we can move on it	E, KM

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.3.1.3	223	P5 Operations Officer	You might begin to talk about things that have not gone so well. So that's one thing that's successful	E, P
6.3.1.3	223	T7 Comms officer	There are good systems to handle things and they have done a lot of work	E, P
6.3.1.3	224	L5 Evaluation officer	Let's now think about what we have learnt. That doesn't seem to be happening	L, KM
6.3.1.3	224	T4 Overseas manager	One problem is that people think that the Intranet Project is done but it is not. They are still at square one	T, KM
6.3.1.3	224	P6 Operations officer	What we also have, that I regrettably don't think works nearly so well, is an intranet	T, E
6.3.1.3	224	T3 Director	Then we will be able to spend time on knowledge rather than on mining for information. Now it is like pulling teeth. There is no time for the positive work	K, T, KM
6.3.1.3	224	L4 Overseas manager	But we don't have a system whereby the partner organisation has processes of learning. We will move into that at some point	KM, F
6.3.1.3	225	P4 Director	So the sector is into it. That is threatening because if you are serious you have to do it	EE, KM
6.3.1.3	225	L10 Head of IT	Some people are quite enthusiastic about what has happened but I am less so	P, E
6.3.2	226	T10 Head of IT	The first one is how to manage knowledge in the new devolved way of working. This involves a move from a hub to a network structure, where the UK will no longer be the centre. Significant decisions will now be made in different places	K, S, I, P
6.3.2	227	L3 Director	I genuinely believe we have taken some significant steps forward	KM, F
6.3.2	227	P3 Chief Executive	We want to be an external knowledge broker who can help people to get access to real knowledge and this means setting up appropriate networks	EE, K, P
6.3.2	228	P2 Image librarian	I don't think what people put to it, is matched by their commitment and resources	P, A, R
6.3.2	228	P10 Head of IT	For us it is rather difficult to identify what knowledge is going to be used for. It is easier if you are with an organisation that is focused on making sales, and making profits from those sales	K, A, CS
6.3.3	229	P8 Web manager	A lot of our programmes cannot get web-based. We can't start chat rooms or anything like that, as its not technically viable	T, I
6.3.3	229	T2 IT liaison officer	I think that most people still have not got the tools yet, as they have not rolled it out fully internationally	P, T, R, I
6.3.3	229	T4 Overseas manager	Africa has two hundred Charity T people but they seem to be invisible. This goes back to the fact that if you use technology, you can have a common platform but this is only the minimum	I, P, T

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
6.3.3	230	T4 Overseas manager	We have to share the professional expertise of our Country Managers, as we have devolved responsibility. As a peer group, they are the beating heart of the Africa Division and sharing knowledge is what gives this dynamism. We have tried to set up an Extranet but the connectivity was not fast enough. So these tools have potential but they are not yet firing on all cylinders	I, S, Km, T, F
6.3.3	230	P3 Chief Executive	It is good and cheap. But I think they worked the wrong way round. They began with the UK and are now trying to latch on international offices. But the problem is how? The intranet should be the glue to international organisation, using your multicultural nature as a starting point. This is the challenge	I, EE, T
6.3.3	231	L4 Overseas manager	We had plans for him [the knowledge manager] to go to visit some partners in Bangladesh and really communicate with them about learning issues but it hasn't happened	I, KM, L
6.3.3	231	P6 Operation officer	I think the situation is very different in Sri Lanka and Peru, for example, more sophisticated. But in Africa it is much more spotty	I, T
6.3.3	231	P1 Knowledge manager	Overseas offices have not had their feedback into the process so they don't have resources	I, R
6.3.3	232	P6 Comms manager	The briefs have come traditionally from the UK office (extract)	I, R
6.3.3	232	P1 Knowledge manager	The Peru office has always recognised the importance of knowledge management from the Director down. They have a strong and well-led programme - with an IT background. They have one key person plus a communication team and they developed into a good team	I, P, T, PR
7.2.1	240	P5 Operations officer	It's about practical things that I think of, as well as bigger things that hold them together	KM
7.2.1	240	L6 Support manager	It seemed 'Utopian' at first and lots of theory, so people were not clear why it was relevant	KM, A
7.2.1	240	L8 Head of Finance	At first it was too abstract, whereas accountants are practical and I didn't like the airy-fairy 'big sell'	KM
7.2.1	240	P8 Web manager	I think knowledge management used to lack credibility and was seen as remote and ethereal	KM, A
7.2.1	240	L5 Evaluation officer	Dare I say it, it was a typical IT project. We think about technology but forget the soft issues and cultural changes. All that stuff gets swept aside	T, P, C

Section	Page	Person	Quote	Topic
7.2.2	243	L5 Evaluation officer	I would say we are starting to set some processes up, within the organisation, which could lead to success	KM, E
7.2.2	244	T4 Overseas manager	It is a quantum leap and very exciting	E
7.2.3	245	P3 Chief Executive	Included ideas about the use of “info-mediaries”, or knowledge brokers in the field	KM, I
7.2.3	245	L4 Overseas manager	We are definitely not at that stage of sharing knowledge management and Learning Organisation with partners	KM, L, I, EE
7.3.2	252	T2 IT liaison officer	People used to say “why is there no intranet?” No one knew what they needed it for, but there was a sense of frustration	T, P
7.4.1	253	L5 Evaluation officer	Then they see how those lessons will benefit them next time round. So they see the value	E
7.4.1	253	P6 Operations officer	For being active in networks and spotting opportunities for our work	P
7.4.1	253	L3 Director	We have learnt the lessons about the importance of getting someone out to the field getting valuable information	L, I, E,
7.5.3	258	L6 Support manager	This will focus on how we use the web and digital technology and use of the ‘Nets’	C, T, KM

Appendix 5 Contemporaneous Reports

Knowledge Management Report for Charity P, August 2005

This report was produced in August 2005 and presented to the Knowledge Manager in Charity P. On a later visit, a new member of staff, now taking the Knowledge Manager role, commended the report as a valuable resource for his role. Only a part of the report is produced here – the full report is available on request.

(Excerpts from 9 page document)

Background.

This report is produced by a PhD student, after a series of visits to research a case study on knowledge management. It is offered to staff at Charity P in the modest hope that it will help them access the range of ideas currently held by the staff who were interviewed in Head Office. The report is based on interviews with thirteen staff.

The report is in four sections:

- What is knowledge management in Charity P?
- What do staff think is working well?
- What do staff think could be improved?
- Some suggested ideas for the future

Part 1. What is knowledge management in Charity P?

Knowledge management is a term commonly accepted by staff in Charity P.

Here is one list of ideas that were put forward to describe it:

- Sharing knowledge and the organisation and classification of this
- Learning from experience, around the world
- Making knowledge accessible to people, for example in a local language
- Knowledge that is available, not just through the Internet but also spoken word
- Communication
- Culture change – moving from information as power to information to share
- Allowing (permission) for time to capture, produce knowledge and organise
- Linking needs to knowledge resources
- Turn information into action
- Using knowledge for external collaboration and influencing.

This list suggests a wide understanding of the term, and the items reflect a general view of knowledge management rather than a focused ‘Charity P’ consensus. There is no evidence of a knowledge management identity shaped by being part of this organisation. The theory of knowledge management is accepted by staff as an important part of working life, but with much less confidence about what that means to them in practice.

Strategic Importance

Knowledge is at the heart of the Group Strategy 2003 – 2007:

This states that Charity P will lead the field in creating and disseminating knowledge on the use of technology to reduce poverty and contribute to sustainable development. It makes clear that knowledge is vitally important for the current strategic direction.

Only developing the ability to use its accumulated international knowledge effectively will allow the organisation to meet its vision.

This knowledge is seen as the 'explicit knowledge' included in electronic files, databases, the Internet and on paper, as well as the 'tacit knowledge' that staff and their wide network of contacts hold, which can be accessed by face-to-face meetings and conversations. Charity P wants to share all this knowledge with both internal and external audiences, where externally this knowledge is intended for use by those people who need it directly, but also for an academic audience, and various identified knowledge *infomediaries*. Where possible, the knowledge sharing should be demand led, and work cohesively with funding potential. The impact that the organisation can make will depend in part on the quality of its 'knowledge products'. Staff in the organisation are aware that good knowledge sharing will enhance the reputation of Charity P and increase its ability to make a real impact in providing technical solutions to the problems faced by the poor.

Current Practice

- Central libraries including a book library, Image Library and the Intranet Knowledge Base
- Publications and briefing papers, and other externally presented information through the Website, including Hands On information
- Locally organised information in various databases, on IT network drives in the UK, and local drives in regional and country offices as well as a basement full of archived information
- Knowledge sharing services, such as the Technical Enquiries Service, and the database of work achieved
- Networks of professional contacts and practitioners
- Communications systems based on meetings, email, and conferences, including some sub-systems successfully developed in different local offices.

Potential additions that are currently planned

- Improved Intranet
- Project Management system
- Knowledge broker system

Organisational Processes

There are some processes backing these systems and practices, such as performance management targets for individual staff. Activities have been used to generate interest in knowledge management too, for example, exhibitions, bag lunches, discussions and research papers. In some offices, there has been more direct reward systems used to help staff prioritise knowledge management. For a while there was a dedicated Knowledge Manager post based in the UK but due to a recent reorganisation, this no longer exists.

Summary.

Knowledge management is very closely aligned to the fundamental vision and purpose of Charity P. Activity is already taking place to make knowledge one of the central parts of the strategic direction. But good knowledge management requires wide ranging changes in the way an organisation works, and, from listening to staff's own views on progress so far, the quality at present is varied, with some successes and some areas needing considerable attention.

Part 2. What is working well?

This part of the report presents the aspects of Knowledge Management that staff consider to be positive. From this, it is possible to identify the organisation's strengths.

Practical things

- There is confidence in some of the practical elements of Charity P's knowledge management.
- The Image library is well used and effectively organised. There is a big internal demand
- There is a good physical library of hard copy resources which supports technical enquiries
- A Knowledge Base is in place and staff believe that this is where they can find key documents.
- The Publications section produces works that are commercially viable and well promoted.
- The Website has helped the organisation become less inward looking. It includes useful case studies and briefing information contributed by local offices.
- This enquiry service and its supporting database gives a significant knowledge broker role that is supported by donors and well used by an external audience.
- Face to face meetings with international teams are seen as particularly vital to good knowledge sharing and the trust that needs to be developed.
- There is interest in the model for Internal Communications developed by staff in Latin America and the experience of knowledge management frameworks used in other regional and country offices.
- The international Quality Assurance network has established a process that provides a model for cross-organisational coordination.
- The Project Management system currently in place includes a quarterly reporting system that is used fairly consistently. This will be improved further through the use of a new database in the near future.
- There are some legacies of the 2001 Knowledge Management project, including work to identify knowledge outputs and a useful document summarising what was then called the 'Capability Statement' for making knowledge work for the poor.

People

Among staff interviewed, there is an encouraging level of interest and understanding, with a very wide-ranging set of well-articulated ideas. There is a sense that staff are positive about knowledge management and many see it as powerful and motivating. There is recognition of the benefits that knowledge management could bring to Charity P. Limitations to actual practice are not considered to be evidence of hostility to knowledge management ideas but rather are attributed to poor resource allocation. People feel supportive of the fundamental ideas, and accept that they are central to the organisational vision and rationale.

Culture and behaviour

The culture here is, like all organisational cultures, complex and varied. It is seen as a culture of partnerships, with emphasis on mutual respect and listening skills. The culture has also been characterised as academic, where there is emphasis on the value of accuracy and professional expertise. There are no obvious negative factors, as people with specialist knowledge are aware of their responsibility to share.

Some further sections cut from here

Part 3. What needs to be improved so that things work better?

Staff made clear that there remain many hurdles and limitations.

Focus and leadership

Although the strategic vision as presented by the Chief Executive, is very clear, there seems to be considerable lack of consensus about what precisely knowledge management in Charity P is all about. While the breadth of ideas about knowledge management is excellent, it also suggests that the overarching vision is not followed up with a focused set of priorities within the organisation. This means staff are aware of what they 'should' be doing but much less clear about its priority so that despite the emphasis in knowledge in the current Strategy, this is not in fact what is considered important or urgent by line managers. The central vision can appear remote, with a gap between this and the practical work that should support it. The suggestion is that although knowledge management was strongly advocated through a focused manager in the past, there has not been a consistent identification of the responsibilities for each member of staff. This means there is a lack of line management support and role-modelling to clarify how everyone contributes personally to the big picture.

Specific Systems and Issues

1. IT infrastructure

A major concern is that the IT Wide Area Network is not sufficiently robust and so IT systems are currently difficult to access or even inaccessible to many staff outside the UK. Staff see the IT communications infrastructure as a vital foundation to improve knowledge management, however there is concern that lessons from the past have not been assimilated. Improvements in infrastructure are underway, but there is still more need for sufficient involvement of appropriate staff to demonstrate a strong understanding that new IT requires commitment and support from all user teams. There needs to be an appropriate focus on systematic development of clear specifications for improvements to the system together with staff commitment to defined procedures for testing and providing constructive feedback.

Summary of some of the big questions:

- Local, regional and central knowledge – how to get the optimal focus
- Priority for internal or external knowledge sharing or how to make them mutually supportive
- Relationship to funding and rewards
- Explicit and tacit knowledge focus – how to combine documents and networks
- Language
- Coordination of new systems development

Some further sections cut from here

Part 4. Recommendations:

1. Knowledge management can be recognised as a long term change process

Despite the problems discussed in part three of this paper, there are enough signs to encourage a positive view of knowledge management. Knowledge management is never a 'quick fix' as it involves changing behaviour and developing a new way of working together. It is linked in to other changes in inter-office relationships and the new Team approach. It is not surprising that in three or four years there has not been huge progress.

It seems likely that change may have been held up by other priorities such as the recent Re-structure and the current funding focus, and solving these may have been seen as prerequisites before much specific knowledge management development could take place. Comparable organisations are also struggling, and Charity P has one major advantage in that knowledge has been clearly identified as central to the long-term vision of the organisation.

2. Holding Strategy

If competing organisational requirements have pushed knowledge management from being a top priority, then it would be sensible to ensure there is a plan in place for maintaining the progress made so far. There are useful resources such as the library and the current Knowledge Base that need to be maintained, or alternatively scaled back in a controlled manner, rather than simply left to deteriorate, if the organisation is to get the optimal value from these assets.

Some further sections cut from here

Recommendation for additional study

I would like, if acceptable to Charity P staff, to visit the Latin America office, on my own schedule and budget. This would give the perspective of their recent experience to see how this links with the international view of knowledge management that I have already studied.

Learning Reviews – are we capturing and acting on the lessons?

11/01/2017 10:00:00 AM

11/01/2017 10:00:00 AM

(Pages 3,4 of 14 pages)

This report is based on a series of interviews and a written questionnaire survey carried out between November 2006 and March 2007.

The study was commissioned by X, Knowledge & Information Manager, Corporate Services Group.

1. There is a strong affirmation of the Learning Review process

Most staff know about it and believe that what it is setting out to do is appropriate for Charity L. There is no evidence that people reject this learning tool or consider it to be a wasteful investment of time.

2. The purpose of the Learning Review process

Some people speak very persuasively of the value of the review to the participants. The process is cathartic and valuable for providing time for reflection and communication. This is built on the belief that there is a value in individual learning and also in group discussion and sharing of personal learning. The role of 'tacit' learning within groups and its value is under-valued by Charity L staff eager to see 'real results' in some concrete form.

3. Improving capture and accessibility of 'Lessons Learned'

Given the very considerable emphasis on 'output' rather than process, there is clearly a need for a system for people to see that learning is being captured and used. There is a known danger in building a bank of 'lessons learned' that could fail to embody the value of learning that Charity L is trying to establish. However, it is seen as a priority by a large proportion of the staff that responded to the survey, as well as the interview subjects and therefore needs careful consideration.

4. Emphasising the value of 'Learning Before'

Charity L staff believe that the learning that emerges from the Learning Review process will be relevant to others in different contexts. This is why the suggestion is made that people would use lessons learnt if they were presented in searchable and accessible format. However it is less clear that people want to learn from the ideas and mistakes of the past in practice. Now that 'Learning After' is so well established, any focus on storing lessons would need to be accompanied by delivering a process for making the use of this store before new work commences.

5. Using Learning Reviews to support previous lessons.

Where there is evidence of lessons not being applied, the Learning Review process itself can do more to help. There is no stated requirement that Learning Reviews must refer and reference previous learning. It makes sense that where a work process will be repeated by the same team (even though staff may change within the team), then previous lessons learned should be available and referred to at all stages of the process, including the final Learning Review.

6. Active role modelling by Senior Managers

The role of Senior Managers is positive, when they actively participate in the Learning Review process. They are seen as a group who can add momentum to Charity L's commitment to learn and there were positive accounts of Senior Managers sharing Lessons Learned in high-profile ways.

7. Improvement of the Learning Review process itself

While there is ample evidence that Charity L staff believe the Learning Review process is appropriate for meeting their intention to learn from experience, some thought can be given to the range of suggestions for change. This process refreshment could be useful in confirming Learning Reviews in Charity L's set of tools for learning, by showing that it is not set in stone but capable of itself valuing Lessons Learned.

8. Increasing the take-up of Learning Reviews.

The option to make the Review process mandatory is not popular with Charity L staff but there is a widespread belief that it should be used more widely.

The Learning Review survey and interviews confirm their value and provide some pointers for updating and strengthening the system. There is agreement that it is now a useful and well-established tool for learning, but there is an opportunity to provide more clarity about its purpose as well as encouraging more take-up, and perhaps more flexibility in how it is made available. The demand for a bank of Lessons Learned is high and this needs some creative thinking to provide more value to Charity L. This is a quiet success story but the results should lead to a refreshing of the Learning Review process, rather than complacency.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all those who contributed to this research, through their willingness to be interviewed, and by completing the survey

The detailed report is not included here

Appendix 6 Sample Interview Transcript

Charity P Interview P5: Research Officer.

What is knowledge management?

It's about practical things that I think of, as well as bigger things that hold them together. On a day to day basis it's things like sharing useful and interesting bits of information that come my way or to my team, about filing electronic copies of things where they can be found again and it's also about, knowledge management; I also think about face to face things that we do. Um. I help to run a couple of large project and also have a role in programme access to services and we have international meetings and I call people on the phone; that kind of knowledge management. Then there are some of the systems that go around knowledge management that help people to share like our reporting systems, our Project Management system, that takes a project through from inception to finish. So the systems...

What has been successful?

Meeting people face to face is one of the building blocks of managing information and sharing knowledge because, it's easy to say this. But you feel it more when it's real people meeting each other. But it's really true that until people meet, they are less confident in communication with people remotely. Sometimes I think we do more things where senior people meet, so we have institutional meetings where all the directors and country directors meeting twice a year. If you are a person working on a project somewhere you don't have that built into your way of working but there will be people working around the world working on the same issues around the world. But people don't feel confident in sharing information if they haven't met. You can't always do this, but I know it makes a lot of difference. It's the quality but also the quantity – you might begin to talk about things that have not gone so well. So that's one thing that's successful.

I've been at Charity P for about 3 years. People said to me: find out what we have done, get a feel of it - but there was no way of finding that information. You were caught because people had not been storing things in sensible ways that you would have had when there was a secretary filing things in paper files. So it's taken a while to get organised but this year we are going to roll out a global database of our projects which will revolutionise my job and hopefully the role of all the people who work on projects in other offices.

I have a role, encouraging people to share knowledge and information across our team. It more often boils down to trying to make connections between ideas, people and projects to make connections when someone is doing something and another country needs to know that and playing a role in the middle of putting people together and getting a conversation going and sharing bits of documentation or whatever. Um. But without having... Until I could have a sensible idea of what all our projects are, and what they are doing, which is partly the Quarterly Reports and that. But sometimes you want to follow that up and it can be a nightmare.

They are a kind of pyramid of information, which flows from the - too much about who did what and not enough about what it means or it shows that it's leading towards something. There is a pyramid of information, which starts with each project manager writing their little paragraph, which is then sent to their programme team leader in their country and the same here in the UK. And that person then summarises and puts things together under a few set headings which they can translate – things like a section on project progress. But we can give you one rather than me trying to remember.

That's the main source of information, although it is getting easier to put together but there is a list of projects registered on our page, if you can call it that, and some excel files which are accessible on the intranet that lists all the projects that are currently active. So that is another source of information. The new database will have every document linked to the project linked on a page. So I think those are a couple of things that are successful.

There is another thing, which initially we did last year, which was around the World Urban Forum, which is run by UN Habitat – their big annual jamboree for people interested in things to do with urban poverty. We held a workshop and then that led to a parallel, side event, which was looking at how people share information at grass roots level and how you can try to promote that and how to make that work better. So we collected together a whole series of case studies on how people experience sharing information at the grass roots level and that – sharing information so that ideas are taken up, and so an idea is transferred, is taken up in another country or another town, or by more people in the same town. So there are and that is something that we are keen to promote and to be more along those lines. It's almost like a project, but it's not quite. Something that we try to build into what we do. A lot of our work is in terms of exchange between communities in projects and even to get people to meet internationally and there are case studies available on the web site.

Can you clarify that?

We had a range of organisational reps through some of our networks that we are involved with. Well, we are trying to stay in touch with them. We sent messages out to people in our networks saying we have an idea to hold this event – would you like to submit a paper, would you like to be part? But there is one of the organisations we have got on-going work with, others we have networks with. So whether it's on this issue or not, we will keep in touch. This is a special initiative that was linked to the opportunity at this forum. There are a couple of other organisations that are very strong for example, Homeless International, which works with Shack Dwellers International which is a federation of poor people across the globe and also something called.... Things have different names but called GWIA which stands for Global Women International Academy which is supported by HUAIROU commission who are like the women's coalition of grass roots organisations and they were formed around the Beijing Conference, hence the Chinese name. And they hold events, workshops, events, linked with big global forums where they bring them together specifically for those grass roots organisations to learn from each other and then take messages from that workshop to the forum. They are represented in the case study.

What are the factors that help knowledge management?

(Pause) Well, they do all require resources, and money and some time. Um. Time to define systems, time to plan and exchange and money to make it happen. And those resources become available if there is support in the organisation that encourages that initiative.

Do you get support and resources?

You need support but you also need - I'm sure there are other factors - having people interested in the same sort of issues coming together, having something specific to talk about. Whether it's a project, an idea or a particular problem, something that people have in common. One of the experiences with the grass roots, because of peer learning, people are facing the same issues which applies to us in NGOs as well if people have something that they really want to know about. And I think the other thing is that in terms of the sort of circulating or sharing of information between... - if I get an interesting publication and I think I might send it round to my team, or try to make connections with different projects.

What I try to do is say very briefly at the top before I send it why I think people would be interested: 'this is about this topic' or 'I know you have some work on this, so this report on how they work in Country X may be of interest'. To make it obvious what the use of the information might be. Something I try to do but it is hard to get. I mean, one or two times when I have made connections between people in a NGO or something, or got people talking, contacting each other who might not necessarily have done that because they could see that there was something they could get out of it. I am conscious that here in the UK that there is a danger that we are always asking for information.

Yes, I am conscious that I don't have enough time, so it happens on an ad hoc basis and if I had time I'd do more, but you do what you can - perhaps it's one of those things that is as long as a piece of string. I know that you can do so much. But it's true also that one of the things that has to happen if a document based system is to work is that it has got to be really easy to put information up. Because one of the - we have an internal database of documents here, which will be part of the project, the project documents will be part of that broad system but at the moment it has our library documents and copies of reports and a load of images. It's got useful papers on it, I suppose and the idea is that anyone can load up documents on to that but the fact that it takes about five to fifteen minutes to load something up because you have to think about what category it's got to go in and think about writing an abstract for it means that it gets pushed down your list of priorities because there is a barrier, even if a small one, to putting it up. Yes, you need low barriers for people to share things.

Do you think leadership was a factor?

I think that links to what I was saying about support. You need resources behind it, so you need leadership and a framework in which things happen and forcing systems saying you will produce a quarterly report. Yes, I think in terms of the systems, the ones that have been taken forward the best that have support behind. Although we have not always been that well coordinated. Yes, there is a whole system of management, which ensures that these things happen.

The intranet has not been enforced in the same way?

No, because the largest part of what we do is around projects and running projects. If you took all of what we do on the ground, - we do advocacy, producing documents and other briefing publication - but if you say what is the largest thing we do, it is running projects and putting information on the intranet is not necessarily an integral part of doing our work whereas quarterly reporting is part of the system of managing the work that is the majority of what we do.

We restructured about two years ago, in April 2003, and so that gave us a new team to be part of, new people to link up with, so there needed to be some leadership around what are the issues we are tackling around those programmes. So what do we want to be sharing knowledge about and that has taken us some time to come to grips with, but as we get more learning about that issue we are moving slowly which requires some leadership, a leadership role. Better ideas about what we want to share knowledge about.

How well does the knowledge management align to your work?

I think I have captured that and also about whether you can see there is something in it for you, which is what I was saying before. Are we always requesting information or are we also providing information and I am trying to be conscious of that. And then if people have a motivation that people provide you with information, you show that you value it, that you are using it and that it has not gone into a black hole. That they can see that you have done something with it, added value to it.

That is what I would want to know about if I was sharing information and there are some very simple things about if somebody says people have done work here and shared it, but when it was put on display the right people were not credited with it. Motivation is also about making people feel good about what they have done and shared and what has been done with what they have shared.

Being more conscious and aware of that, so that when I was writing a paper to present at a conference together with a colleague in Kenya and his name was on the paper and now it is being published in a book and his name will be there. When people can see that things are valued there will be more chance that they will want to share.

Was IT a factor?

(Long pause.) It is one of the means by which we communicate and share information. Um. The way we have used has been a hindrance because we have not had a sensible system of filing but I think we are moving towards better IT system, which holds a world of opportunities for sharing across the globe. It's a potential but it's again about - is that IT system a barrier or does it facilitate you doing it? Can the users see what systems they have got?

Was the structure of the organisation a factor?

I don't think it is an especially large factor. We work in programmes and they get together and share in the usual way. The structure may mean that we are more kept in our box but I don't think it is too bad. Every organisation has to have a structure, and you are more likely to share within your own part of that because you are in that area together and you have work in common. We are not as good as we should be at sharing information across programmes but I don't suppose that is a big feature.

Do you have any system of measurement?

Not a major emphasis on numbers of entries to the Knowledge Base or counting the number of interesting emails we sent to my team. We don't seem to measure in that sense; although I gather there was some talk at most senior management meetings about them wanting to get more of a handle of how international teams work together. Although the idea that I heard which I like much better was - could we share stories of success rather than bean count? We don't do that and I think we are going to try not to. We share stories of success of projects but not what has been success of knowledge sharing that you have done. If you were going to try to measure our success of sharing in international teams it would be better to do it in a narrative way rather than bean counting.

Was the culture of organisation a factor?

I think the culture is helpful, because we do have a culture where there is an emphasis on listening and treating everybody with respect and everybody's ideas as valuable, whatever job they have or where they come from. But when people meet internationally and face-to-face it's helpful to feel that they can share what they have done. Of course it's to do with individuals and it's going to vary. We have a performance management, which includes a set of competencies some of which are round things like that – whether it works as a system or not, it does at least say that part of how you perform is the way that you treat other people. It's what is expected at least, Also the system is used internationally not just here. I mean not to say we don't have our fights, but at least there is something there to say how we deal with people.

What about communications?

No, nothing to add

What about the international aspect?

That has a huge impact. I have worked for a South Asian NGO for a while, where you were not dealing internationally and just sharing information with one office. There is the remoteness of it and sometimes that lack of systems that join up. Then there is the human side of things, where the environment of the country, and the culture that people are in make a huge difference to how they might feel about communicating with each other in an opinion free type of way. And the fact that they don't see each other very often because they are across the world or if I want to phone someone in South Asia I have to phone in the morning but if I want to talk to someone in Peru I've got to phone them in the afternoon. There are limited times when you can catch people, some have weekends which are Friday, Saturday instead of Saturday, Sunday, so if you want to form a team that makes a difference. In Kenya, their electricity goes off quite often, even Nairobi. I am trying to get a report finished and I need some help from my team in Zimbabwe but their email has been down for two days. And I tried to phone yesterday and could not get through. So it makes a huge difference.

Have you worked in a commercial organisation?

I have no experience, no

What do you think is the big challenge for the future?

We are working hard at getting our systems worked out but a system is only as good as the information that is put in it. Given where we are and that, we don't do too badly in terms of face to face in many ways. We could do better but.... So we need to keep on doing what we are doing but with new systems coming on there are huge challenges about getting them used and the information up there and making sure everyone across organisation knows how to use the thing and is confident in using it. About the people side of it, it's all very well having a system but it has to be used.

But, until people meet, they are less confident in communication with people remotely. Sometimes I think we do more things where senior people meet, so we have institutional meetings where all the directors and country directors meeting twice a year. If you are a person working on a project somewhere you don't have that built into your way of working but there will be people working around the world working on the same issues around the world. But people don't feel confident in sharing information if they haven't met. You can't always do this, but I know it makes a lot of difference. It's the quality but also the quantity – you might begin to talk about things that have not gone so well. So that's one thing that's successful.

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