BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEWS

213

From Knowledge Management to Learning Organisation to Innovation by Fawzy Soliman (Ed.)

"From knowledge management to learning organisation to innovation" is built on the argument that innovation is heavily influenced by learning, which in turn is driven by knowledge. The editor of the book, Fawzy Soliman, argues that extensive knowledge and learning is therefore necessary for innovation processes. As he puts it, "Should appropriate knowledge and learning processes not be carefully considered, firms could expose themselves to unnecessary risk" (p. 5). Soliman is a Senior Academic at the School of Business at the University of Technology, Sydney. He has published extensively in the fields of innovation, knowledge management and organisational studies (Soliman, 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Soliman and Spooner, 2000).

The background for this book is to fill a gap in the literature on knowledge management, learning and innovation. With this book, Soliman aims to investigate which types of knowledge can be suitable (or defective) for innovation. Furthermore, the book is meant to offer readers an opportunity to enhance their understanding of the knowledge management and learning practices that are relevant to organisational activities. On a practical level, the book is designed to make leaders and managers of organisations aware of the risks they could face if their innovation processes are not carefully managed. In his introduction, Soliman writes that he hopes the book will be of benefit for practicing management, and for researchers and business professionals in their managerial roles. The theoretical frameworks and discussion aim to help firms to ensure that their innovation activities will assist them in achieving competitive advantages.

The book contains an introduction and thirteen chapters written by fifteen contributing authors. In Chapter One, "Knowledge management to learning organisation to innovation: an examination of consumers' consideration sets", Antoine and Herbert Hermens argue that consumers respond to perceived risk by applying consideration sets. The authors define consideration sets as "a cognitive reduction strategy that reduces the number of available options in making retail, product or service decisions to a more manageable size" (p. 8). Their chapter provides insights of how better knowledge about products could lead to a better understanding of the order in which the consideration of products and retailers occurs in a production process. In Chapter Two, "Innovation Gap Spirals", Soliman suggests that knowledge should be useful for the innovation project and proposes a method for assessing attributes of knowledge. Chapter Three ("Technology Transfer in Technological Innovation

Center"), by Silva, Kovaleski and Gaia, examines knowledge management in the process of the transfer of technology in a technological innovation centre in Brazil. In Chapter Four, "Organisational Knowledge Management Dynamics", Perrott examines the knowledge literature and reviews the experience of a leading healthcare group with the objective of gaining a better understanding of the issues confronting effective knowledge management in organisations.

In Chapter Five, Connell explores creativity, innovation and knowledge sharing, why they are important and how they may be supported through collaboration via networking (Connell and Ryan, 1998). Zineldin, in Chapter Six ("Information Technology, Learning Organization, Innovation and Knowledge Management (ILIK)"), examines the role of knowledge management, technology and innovation, and their effect on the competitiveness of learning organisations. In his chapter, Zineldin proposes that innovation is a function of learning and experiences, which in turn should be driven by knowledge. Chapter Seven, "Learning to facilitate innovation", written by Ronald C. Beckett, presents innovation as a means of solving community problems and as a source of economic competitive advantages. Beckett suggests that learning is an integral part of the innovation process. Soliman and Mehrez (Chapter Eight – "Framing the effectiveness of innovation management") discuss the concept of framing the effectiveness of the innovation management process. They argue that evaluating the effectiveness of innovation management is necessary for better performance in innovation efforts. Soliman is also the author of Chapter Nine ("The Role of Transformational Leadership"), where he presents recent research on the transformational leader's role in innovation processes.

Schweitzer and Jakovich (Chapter Ten – "The emerging potential of Crowd-Sharing") present the emerging potential of crowd-sharing in relation to learning and innovation. They point out the difficulties of improving organisational processes and learning mechanisms for innovation in increasingly complex and ambiguous business environments. In Chapter Eleven ("Incremental innovation and knowledge exploitation in SMEs"), Wang, Clegg, Tang and Fang discuss learning and social facilitation in small-medium enterprises (SMEs). The chapter addresses the research question of how social and learning facilitation enhance knowledge exploitation and incremental innovation in SMEs. Magd and McCoy (Chapter Twelve – "KM in the Middle East: The Leadership Challenge") examine the relationship between leadership and knowledge management in a Middle Eastern context. The various dimensions of culture and the impact culture can have on the success of knowledge management initiatives are considered. In Chapter Thirteen ("Knowledge management and absorptive capacity"), Talaja and Hajdic present a relationship between absorptive capability and knowledge management. They discuss the conceptual foundations of knowledge management and absorptive capacity, and relate them to dynamic capabilities.

"From knowledge management to learning organisation to innovation" is not as diverse in its content as I would have anticipated from the title of the book. Soliman's book deals with a topic that undoubtedly has the potential to be of interest for a wide group of readers. Knowledge management, learning and innovation all represent large scholarly fields in their own right. However, this book focuses mainly on knowledge management, learning and innovation processes in businesses and firms. This narrows the groups of potential readers who will find this book useful quite a bit. In his introduction, Soliman does point out that the book is aimed at managerial teams, business professionals and leaders, and a main objective of the book is to help firms ensure successful innovation activities. The book fulfils this objective very well and is more than likely to be highly useful for this group of readers. Researchers in the field of business and management with an interest in knowledge management and innovation will probably find this book interesting as well. Yet, scholars in

other social science fields might not find this book as beneficial to read. While reading and reviewing this book, my personal favourite chapters were Chapter Five, "Networks and Co-working: Supporting Creativity, Innovation and Knowledge Sharing" by Julia Connell, as well as Chapter Nine, "Role of Transformational Leadership in Driving the Innovation Chain" by the editor himself.

Theoretically, the added value and implications of the book appear to be limited. A main premise of the book is that knowledge and learning processes needs to be carefully considered to avoid risks associated with innovation processes. For most innovation researchers, this argument is obvious and self-explanatory. A main merit of this book is its potential to create new knowledge and value on a practical level. Many of the chapters have well written empirical examples from firms and businesses. This is more than likely a great benefit for business owners, managers and leaders in firms seeking to learn more about the links between knowledge management, learning and innovation processes. In this way, the book contributes significantly to society and the practitioners it is aimed at.

Anne Tjønndal
Faculty of Social Science, Nord University, Bodø, Norway

References

Connell, J. and Ryan, S. (1998), "Culture change within Australian business network", in Mabe, C., Skinner, D. and Clark, T. (Eds), *Experiencing Human Resource Management*, Sage, London, pp. 129-145.

Soliman, F. (2012a), "How good is your organisational knowledge?", *Academy of Taiwan Business Management Review*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 28-35.

Soliman, F. (2012b), "Could innovation be drives by globalization?", *Journal of Modern Accounting and Auditing*, Vol. 8 No. 12, pp. 1848-1860.

Soliman, F. (2013), "Does innovation drive sustainable competitive advantages?", *Journal of Modern Accounting and Auditing*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 131-144.

Soliman, F. and Spooner, K. (2000), "Strategies for implementing knowledge management: role of human resources management", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 4 No. 4, pp. 337-345.