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**AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH ON KNOWLEDGE SHARING  
THROUGH FANTASTIC MOVIES: THE LORD OF THE RINGS CASE**

**Abstract**

Significance of knowledge sharing within an organization has been studied many times but this study does not aim to replicate these studies by only portraying the methods of efficient and effective knowledge sharing methods in a usual organizational setting. Instead, we seek to answer specific questions; whether effective and efficient knowledge sharing methods could be pursued through movies and if the answer is yes, in what ways and to what extent this process could be revealed and applied by the organizations. In order to answer these questions and develop a broad approach to comprehend this issue, the Lord of the Rings trilogy is selected as a case study. This trilogy is selected because we believe that movies have a potential to provide a different point of view in terms of understanding the concept of knowledge sharing, particularly tacit knowledge. By the method of document analysis, knowledge management literature has been examined carefully and five main headings are selected to investigate knowledge sharing methods within the selected sample. The data obtained is analyzed by the method of discourse analysis. Findings are discussed in the concluding part of this paper.

**Key Words:** Knowledge, Knowledge Management, Knowledge Sharing, Tacit Knowledge.

**Introduction**

In current studies, it could clearly be seen that knowledge management—which is defined as the combination of organizational culture, strategic goals, individual needs, and the expertise of people to create an atmosphere of learning and growth (Hovland, 2003; McElroy, 2000; Edwards, 1994; Argyris, 1992)—has increasingly been pointed out as a significant concept in terms of sustaining the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization in a fast-changing knowledge society (Marquart, 1996; Young, 2010; McElroy, 2000; OECD, 2004; Davenport and Prusak, 1998). Assessing and meeting each individual's needs becomes essential at

this point because it is believed that through the use of applicable knowledge, people and organizations could sustain their positions and therefore, improve. Accordingly, improving people within an organization would probably result in improving the organization's strategic goals (Rosenberg, 2001; Voosen and Conneely, 2002; Newman, 1999). It is also stated that knowledge management becomes legitimate through its conceptual components (Marquard, 1996; Nanoka and Takeuchi, 1995; Fowler, 1992). To manage knowledge successfully, significance of these components and knowledge transfer within an organization has been studied many times but this study does not aim to replicate these studies by only portraying the methods of efficient and effective knowledge sharing. Instead, in this study we aim to develop a broad approach to comprehend this issue by adopting a different method to investigate the knowledge sharing methods within a completely different setting. The Lord of the Rings trilogy is selected as a case study. Three movies are examined in detail by the methods of document and discourse analyses and the findings are discussed in conclusion part.

### **Review of literature**

#### *Knowledge*

In literature knowledge is often defined as a “justified personal belief” (King, 2009). There are a number of taxonomies that specify different types of knowledge. The most fundamental distinction is between “tacit” and “explicit” knowledge. Tacit knowledge can be found in the minds of people and is either impossible or difficult, to express (Polanyi, 1966). Most knowledge is initially tacit in nature; it is laboriously developed over a long period of time through trial and error, and it is not utilized because “the organization does not know what its employees know” (O’Dell and Grayson, 1998). Some knowledge is well grounded in business processes, products and relationships that have been created over time through the implementation of ongoing series of improvements.

#### *Knowledge Management*

Knowledge management (KM) is the planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling of people, processes and systems in an organization to ensure that its knowledge-related assets are improved and effectively applied. Knowledge-related assets include knowledge in the form of printed documents such as manuals, knowledge stored in electronic repositories such as a “best-practices” database, employees’ knowledge about the best way to do their jobs, knowledge that is used by teams who have been working on specific problems and knowledge that is well grounded in the organization’s processes, products and relationships (Waterson,

2011; Clarke and Cooper, 2008). KM processes directly improve organizational processes; such as innovation, collaborative decision-making, and individual and collective learning. These improved organizational processes lead to intermediate outcomes; better decisions, products, services, organizational behaviours, relationships. These components will improve organizational performance as long as knowledge transfer is ensured within the organization (King, 2009).

#### *Knowledge Transfer*

Knowledge transfer is defined as the conveyance of knowledge from one place, person or ownership to another in literature. Successful knowledge transfer results in successful creation and application of knowledge in organizations. The process of knowledge transfer has been described by many researchers using models (Liyanageet al., 2009; Krishnaveni and Sujatha, 2012). Knowledge transfer does not necessarily mean that the knowledge has to be in exactly the same structure. As it is pointed out by Krishnaveni and Sujatha (2012) transfer of knowledge does not mean “a full replication of knowledge in the receiving unit”. Indeed, knowledge is often modified by the receiver. The key element in the knowledge transfer is the underlying (original) knowledge, but rather the extent to which the receiver gets useful knowledge and utilizes this knowledge in its own operations (Wilkesmannel al., 2009). Nonaka et al. (2000) argue that knowledge can be converted or captured in several ways; “from tacit knowledge to tacit knowledge (through socialization); from tacit to explicit knowledge (through externalization); from explicit knowledge to explicit knowledge (through combination) and from explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge (through internalization)” and in this study we focus on capturing tacit knowledge as it is pointed out much more significant.

#### **Methodology**

The population of this study includes all movies ranked among the first 250 of IMDb list. The sample of the study consists of the Lord of the Rings trilogy. By the method of document analysis, knowledge management literature has been examined carefully and five main headings are selected in order to investigate knowledge sharing methods within the selected sample. These headings are creation of artefacts, micro-level interactions, reflection, storytelling and questioning (Krishnaveni and Sujatha, 2012) and they are believed to be efficient in transferring especially the tacit knowledge. For instance, in the movie called “Back to the Future” (1985) we see that the idea of inventing a “time machine” which enable people to travel in time and in this way repair their mistakes but we also see that just having ability to travel in time is not sufficient for repairing all mistakes. While the character is trying to repair his mistake by means of an artefact, he involves in an

active learning process and thus; he learns how to behave as a grown up person within this process. Also in the movie “The Shawshank Redemption” (1994) we see one of the best examples of reflection method in the sentences of the character Ellis Boyd Red Redding, who is a former criminal and turns into a good and merciful person:

*Am I sorry for what I did? There's not a day goes by I don't feel regret. Not because I'm in here, or because you think I should. I look back on the way I was then, a young, stupid kid who committed that terrible crime.*

Furthermore, questioning method could clearly be seen in most of the movies but one of the best examples is the movie called “12 Angry Men”. In this movie we see that a simple “what if” question causes such results that even go beyond our expectations and we start to question what we really “know”. Similarly, we applied the discourse analysis method to analyze the Lord of the Rings trilogy and discussed the findings in conclusion part.

### **Results and conclusion**

Lord of the Rings Trilogy is selected because we believe that they have a potential to provide a different point of view in terms of understanding the concept of knowledge sharing in a completely different setting similar to daily life. Even more, it might help us to discover new natural and applicable ways of transferring the knowledge in an organizational setting.

As it is already mentioned we have determined five headings and examined the trilogy within that scope. We have found that there are many implications reflecting the tacit knowledge sharing and most of them are intermingled in each other. The most prominent examples are given below:

- **The Ring:** It is an example of both creating artefacts and storytelling. In the film we see that the ring has its own story and the plot is based on this story. As an artefact, it offers ultimate power and the holder of it would have the greatest dominance. The will to power so strong that leads to destruction in the end and it this way it adversely affects the fate of all races. Herewith the will to power is associated with evil and corruption, also there is a biblical reference that human race is inclined to evil by nature. Instead of destroying the ring, Isildur as a human, keeps it although he is well aware of that it only causes destruction and suffering. Therefore even the wisest people do not venture to carry it. This story and artefact presents ethical issues for the characters in the film as well as the audience. The ring urges the characters to question their deeds and intents while implying the fact that good people will always win. According to this film, the real power is abandoning the power itself. The key to a decent life is to

abandon your power for the sake of others.

- *Anduril (Aragorn's Sword)*: This sword is also a good example for creating artefacts and storytelling. Although there is a reference that human race is inclined to evil, there are brave heroes to fight against the evil as well. Here, Anduril, stands for the last hope of races who courageously fight for their lives. According to its history, the ring is taken with this sword from the Dark Lord, Sauron and it gives hope to people as it reminds that the evil can be defeated. Also this sword is very significant for Aragorn's personal journey to maturity. All these information presents us the fact that it is also possible for humans to make good choices when they have a chance to choose. Therefore, defeating the evil is possible as long as there are good ones.
- The very end of the Fellowship of the Ring is a good example for micro level interactions. In this scene Aragorn gives hope and courage to Legolas and Gimli by these words: "Not if we hold true to each other. We will not abandon Merry and Pippin to torment and death. Not while we have strength left. Leave all that can be spared behind. We travel light. Let's hunt some Orc." Although it is a really difficult mission, they become successful in the end as they start to believe in themselves and then they make other people believe. For instance, in the first movie we see that even Elves do not believe that the evil can be defeated so they do not eager to help them but in the second movie they send their best troop to fight together with humans. We witness that a micro level interaction positively grows in a way that gets beyond the imagination and in the end results in the transformation of all characters, as they receive support from the others they get strong and enthusiastic; even the most coward ones turn into heroes like Merry and Pippin.
- Gandalf is an outstanding example for reflection method. In the first movie Gandalf fights against the giant creature named Balrog. He stands on the bridge against Balrog and they fall into the pit. Gandalf continues to fight while they are falling together. Balrog follows Gandalf through the secret way leading to the top of the mountain but Gandalf manages to kill the most feared ancient monster in the Middle Earth. Gandalf also dies there. His soul goes to Eru. Eru decides that Gandalf has a mission to complete and sends him back to Middle-Earth. He transforms into Gandalf the White, who has great power and genius, as a divine representative of White Flame. Gandalf's white cloth stands for his wisdom. His vision changes and this makes him a great leader who brings all races together and encourages them to fight against Sauron. Gandalf does not only adapt to the new situation, but also experiences an internal transformation.

- In the first movie Gandalf and Frodo talks about Gollum in the Mines of Moria. Frodo keeps talking about Gollum and tells Gandalf his wish that Bilbo should have killed Gollum when he had a chance. Gandalf answers Frodo and tells him that they cannot decide who lives or who dies. Gandalf keeps talking and tells Frodo that Gollum may play an important role before everything finishes. The method that Gandalf uses here can be called questioning; he doesn't oppose Frodo's idea directly, makes Frodo question himself and Frodo's thoughts change after this process. Gandalf's foresight comes true at the end of the story. Frodo has a chance to kill Gollum but he decides to collaborate. Gollum helps Sam and Frodo to find the way to Mordor where the ring can be destroyed. The ring affects Frodo and he changes his mind about destroying the ring. When he puts the ring on his finger, Gollum gets the ring from Frodo. They fight for the ring and Gollum falls into the lava. The ring is destroyed. So Gollum plays his role, he helps to all races indirectly to get their freedom. The message is clear for the audience; be patient, evaluate the situation in detail, do not hurry to judge because people might be corrupted but this does not necessarily mean that their actions will not have any good results at all.

In 1990s, especially the significance of sharing tacit knowledge which is much more difficult to express, imitate and transfer within an organization setting, has started to be questioned in terms of gaining competitive advantage. In a recent study conducted by Krishnavi and Sujatha (2012), the significance of tacit knowledge to gain competitive advantage is clearly pointed out and five methods to share tacit knowledge are determined. In our study we use these headings to examine whether these methods have any similarities in a completely different setting. Also we tried to find out whether and to what extent knowledge sharing methods used in movies could be transferred to business. We found that knowledge sharing methods are similar in movies and these methods contribute to the personal developments of the characters. Also while these characters grow in maturity, they also assist other characters to mature in an informal way.

Sharing explicit knowledge might have high costs as it requires conducting trainings, employing experts, proper reporting etc. whereas sharing tacit knowledge in daily life does not necessitate any cost if there is an organizational culture based on trust. Besides, people are more inclined to internalize and utilize tacit knowledge compared to explicit knowledge. Furthermore, trainings basing on explicit knowledge sometimes may become a part of legitimization issue of organizations and hence may lose its influence when the organization conducts them only for the sake of legitimacy.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, areas on tacit knowledge include an important potential so these areas should be discovered and highlighted. It is suggested that organizations should ensure an organizational culture, which is based on trust and sharing, and encourage their employees to share their knowledge and experiences. In this way they could increase the corporate performance. Last but not least, these experiences and knowledge should be materialized by technological tools and transferred to new employees in this way.

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