

Knowledge Management and Business Education

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Knowledge management emerged as a direct result of developing the knowledge economy and the information technology that enables complex data and information processing [1,2]. In the knowledge economy, knowledge becomes the strategic resource of any firm in achieving the competitive advantage and the driving forces for value creation. “Knowledge, unlike information, is about *beliefs* and *commitment*. Knowledge is shaped by value, ethics, and morality. Unlike information, knowledge is about *action*” [3] (p. xi). Thus, knowledge management integrates operational management with strategic thinking, offering a new perspective of the business environment. This is a new framework of the theory of knowledge-intensive organizations and the nonlinear integrator of knowledge workers, knowledge work, and knowledge processes [4,5].

Knowledge management evolved from processing rational knowledge to focus on knowledge dynamics and value creation through entropic processes. Knowledge dynamics encompasses knowledge creation, acquisition, transformation, sharing, transmission, and embedding. Knowledge is created in the minds of people and then, through a spiral process, is integrated and developed into organizational knowledge [3]. Knowledge dynamics reflects the continuous interactions between the fields of rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge based on the principles of thermodynamics and influences decision-making processes in business and economics [6]. Nonlinearity and synergy are the most important characteristics of this entropic knowledge dynamics that constitute an extension of the knowledge creation dynamic model developed by Ikujiro Nonaka and his colleagues [3].

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how important knowledge, knowledge dynamics, and knowledge management are in complex crises for dealing with uncertainty generated by the absence of knowledge [7,8]. Moreover, the business disruptions and lock-downs resulting from imposed restrictions by governments evidenced the links between knowledge management and business performance and between knowledge management and business education. Therefore, there is a vital need to switch business education from classical knowledge transfer and the learning process based on the accumulation of knowledge to developing generic competencies [9]. The competence construct integrates knowledge, skills, and attitude, which involve all fields of knowledge and the entropic transformation of one type of knowledge into any other one.

The impact of knowledge management on business education is multidimensional and highly nonlinear. The whole process is very complex, and it can be analyzed by using different lenses and different investigation methods and tools. The present Special Issue “Knowledge Management and Business Education” selected 14 of the best contributions to this topic, which individually explore key aspects of these dynamics and create a synergy for understanding the complexity of the whole phenomenon.

Business education is based on a long tradition and on a dynamic equilibrium between the requests of companies and the capacity of universities to prepare future professionals. Within universities, the decisions concerning the structure and the content of business education programs are made by the academic management. Constantin Bratianu, Dan Florin Stanescu, and Rares Mocanu analyze in the first paper of the present Special Issue the correlations between academic management and business education through the



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mediation of knowledge management and the moderation of the curriculum and the business environment. Their research is based on the students' and professors' perceptions of these interactive and iterative correlations during a questionnaire-based survey in two universities with undergraduate and graduate programs in management and business administration from Romania. Findings demonstrate that knowledge management plays a significant role in moderating the academic management decision-making with respect to business education through both curriculum and business environment interactions (Appendix A, 1).

Globalization and increasing market competition between companies lead to developing corporate integration strategies resulting in supply chains. Thus, the optimization of tangible and intangible resources is done at the meta-level of supply chains instead of at the level of each company. The new business approach should be introduced into business education to have new decision-making frameworks. Thomas Cherkos Kassaneh, Ettore Bolisani, and Juan-Gabriel Cegarra-Navarro perform a systematic literature review on this topic and reveal the importance of knowledge resources in achieving a competitive advantage at the supply chain level (Appendix A, 2). The COVID-19 crisis shows that the absence of knowledge can be more important than the known knowledge in creating strategies and developing dynamic capabilities. The COVID-19 crisis revealed the lack of knowledge experts in health systems had in explaining the nature and the infection power of the new coronavirus, the lack of knowledge in applying adequate treatment in hospitals to those infected, and the lack of knowledge of producing an anti-coronavirus vaccine rapidly. Thus, knowledge strategies should include an emergent component able to deal with such uncertainty and to efficiently contribute to reducing the gap of knowledge in health systems, economic systems, educational systems, and cultural systems. These issues were addressed by Eduardo Tomé and Elizaveta Gromova in their paper on developing emergent knowledge strategies and new dynamic capabilities for business and business education in times of crises (Appendix A, 3).

Business education focuses on economic principles as driving forces for profit maximization while ignoring the needs of working spirituality and ethics. The new wave of research on business spirituality and organizational *phronesis* shows the importance of these constructs in business education. *Phronesis* is a construct developed by Aristotle and signifies prudence or practical wisdom. It is the right decision applied to action. Organizational *phronesis* is based on organizational knowledge and the transformation of spiritual knowledge into rational knowledge in yielding wise business decisions. The question of how business education can incorporate practical wisdom is being addressed by Raysa Rocha and Paulo Pinheiro in their research based on interviews with managers from 14 countries (Appendix A, 4). The efficiency of business education is conditioned by the motivation students have in learning and developing generic competencies which can help them in finding the expected jobs. Thus, it is interesting to figure out what the most important personality traits are which contribute to building up the motivation for getting a solid business education. Maja Daraboš Longin, Domogoj Hruška, and Vedrana Sedinic investigate in their paper the relationship between personality and learning goal orientation preceding the first employment. Their findings show that before the first employment, two personality traits—openness to new ideas and disposition to negative emotions—influence the level of motivation to acquire knowledge and new modes of actions (Appendix A, 5).

Business education is a complex process that should be approached within the framework of the rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge fields and their entropic dynamics. That is necessary, especially when considering constructing a hybrid learning environment for students. Rational knowledge may be dominant in the online interaction between professors and students, especially in the asynchronous mode, while emotional knowledge will play the dominant role in face-to-face lecture delivery. Hybrid learning education should be designed as a personal learning environment with the co-creation contribution coming from students. Such a learning environment proved to be very useful during this pandemic crisis and in the internationalization of academic courses, as demonstrated by

Ioana Pavlidou, Nikolina Dragicevic, and Eric Tsui at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Appendix A, 6). The COVID-19 pandemic led, in many countries, to the closing of university campuses and switching the whole teaching and learning process to online learning. Thus, the live academic communities transformed almost overnight into virtual communities. For many universities, that came as a great challenge because there was no previous experience in using online platforms by both professors and students. Due to the fact that a full academic year had to be online, for many students, there were significant transformations in their perceptions concerning their chances for employment and the new generic skills needed by the business environment. This issue is investigated by Ștefan Andrei Neșțian, Ana Iolanda Vodă, Silviu Mihail Tiță, Alexandra Luciana Guță, and Elena-Sabina Turnea in their paper focusing on individual knowledge management in online education of business students (Appendix A, 7). Online learning imposed the unlearning of habits that students formed in face-to-face classes on campus and developed new learning habits. Developing these learning habits before and during the pandemic and how to integrate them into the knowledge management systems of universities constitutes the research interest shown by Dávid Máté Hargitai, Florina Pinzaru, and Zoltan Veres in their paper (Appendix A, 8).

Knowledge sharing is a pivotal axis in knowledge management, and it is also crucial in business education. Knowledge sharing is based on a different kind of motivation than rational knowledge transfer, and it can be performed between professors and students as well as between students with different business experiences. Knowledge sharing reflects the willingness of some people to use their own experience in explaining some business phenomena or transferring some successful solutions from the past to some novel problems in team working. Delio Castaneda and Sergio Cuellar analyze knowledge sharing evolution in business education by performing a systematic literature review of more than 300 papers. Their findings suggest that it is essential in business education to decrease the time spent in lectures and increase it in knowledge sharing, such that direct experiences of professors and students can be better exploited (Appendix A, 9). Knowledge sharing becomes a key driving force in developing knowledge management agile solutions for knowledge-intensive business processes. In project management and team management practices, sharing tacit knowledge is crucial in developing fast and adequate solutions for complex problems, as demonstrated in the Agile Software Development practice. Meira Levy, Irit Hadar, and Itzhak Aviv share their experience of agile-based education for teaching and their agile requirements engineering methodology for knowledge management (Appendix A, 10).

Business education has focused in recent years on developing entrepreneurial competencies based on knowledge and innovation skills, especially in the emerging European economies. In addition, they imply a risk-taking attitude based on random or probabilistic thinking. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report for 2019/2020 shows that the cultural heritage and political strategies and practices in different countries have a significant influence on developing these competencies. Mia Maric, Mladen Subotic, Branislav Dudic, Boban Melovic, Natasa Brankovic, and Stevan Milisavljevic present in their paper the experience in business education in universities from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on evaluating relations between originality, efficiency, conformism, and entrepreneurial potential of students in a fast-changing business environment (Appendix A, 11).

The complexity of both knowledge management and business education processes leads to nonlinear and iterative dynamics. Knowledge management influences the efficiency of business education, and business education influences the knowledge transfer between universities and the business environment. One of the best examples of such iterative dynamics is introducing business simulation in students' curriculum. Daniel Lovin, Monica Raducan, Alexandru Capatina, and Nicoleta Cristache analyze in their paper the effect of business simulation on developing students' thinking skills, which can be very useful in performing professional activities after their graduation (Appendix A, 12).

Business education is not restricted to only universities. It continues within many companies, where the new employees have to learn new competencies in order to perform their jobs efficiently. However, in this case, business education is designed for achieving specific goals, which are related to the complexity of the technology used and processes developed. The problem with these specialized training programs is their efficiency and the measuring system used in evaluating the final results. This issue is addressed by Hana Urbancová, Pavla Vrabcová, Minka Hudáková, and Gabriela Ježková in their paper (Appendix A, 13).

Business education is centered on the idea of a continuum between the present time and the future, such that strategic thinking supports deliberate business and knowledge strategies. However, in times of crisis, as in the present COVID-19 pandemic, the future comes over us in an accelerated way, and our well-designed, deliberate strategies cannot help us in finding fast and adequate solutions to the new problems. That is why during crazy times, managers should develop emergent strategies to cope with the new needs of people and the economic restrictions imposed by governments. Thus, business education and knowledge management educational programs, especially those at the master level, should be adapted quickly by introducing new priorities in choosing the topics to be delivered and the skills to be developed. An interesting experience is revealed in this perspective by Paola Adinolfi and Fernando Giancotti in their paper focusing on pedagogical triage and emergent strategies in managing educational programs in pandemic times (Appendix A, 14).

Knowledge management is evolving continuously, trying to answer the new challenges coming from artificial intelligence applications, robotics, cognitive sciences, and disruptive economies resulting from multiple crises and their global propagation. As a result, knowledge management is directly influencing business education through different mediating factors, but also indirectly due to the new perspectives created by the global disruptive phenomena and the absence of knowledge in understanding and managing them efficiently.

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Appendix A. List of Contributions

1. Bratianu, C.; Stanescu, D.F.; Mocanu, R. Exploring the Knowledge Management Impact on Business Education.
2. Kassaneh, T.C.; Bolisani, E.; Cegarra-Navarro, J.G. Knowledge Management Practices for Supply Chain Management: A Challenge for Business Education.
3. Tomé, E.; Gromova, E. Development of Emergent Knowledge Strategies and New Dynamic Capabilities for Business Education in a Time of Crisis.
4. Rocha, R.; Pinheiro, P. Business Education: Filling the Gaps in the Leader's Awareness Concerning Organizational Phronesis.
5. Longin, M.D.; Hruška, D.; Sedinić, V. Relationship between Personality and Learning Goal Orientation Preceding the First Employment.
6. Pavlidou, I.; Dragicevic, N.; Tsui, E. A Multidimensional Hybrid Learning Environment for Business Education: A Knowledge Dynamics Perspective.
7. Neştian, Ş.A.; Vodă, A.I.; Tiţă, S.M.; Guţă, A.L.; Turnea, E.S. Does Individual Knowledge Management in Online Education Prepare Business Students for Employability in Online Businesses?
8. Hargitai, D.M.; Pinzaru, F.; Veres, Z. Integrating Business Students' E-Learning Preferences into Knowledge Management of Universities after the COVID-19 Pandemic.
9. Castaneda, D.I.; Cuellar, S. Knowledge Sharing in Business Education.
10. Levy, M.; Hadar, I.; Aviv, I. Agile-Based Education Teaching an Agile Requirements Engineering Methodology for Knowledge Management.

11. Maric, M.; Subotic, M.; Dudic, B.; Melovic, B.; Brankovic, N.; Milisavljevic, S. Evaluating Relations between Originality, Efficiency, Conformism and Entrepreneurial Potential of Students in a Fast Changing Business Environment.
12. Lovin, D.; Raducan, M.; Capatina, A.; Cristache, N. Sustainable Knowledge Transfer from Business Simulations to Working Environments: Correlational vs. Configurational Approach.
13. Urbancová, H.; Vrabcová, P.; Hudáková, M.; Petru, G.J. Effective Training Evaluation: The Role of Factors Influencing the Evaluation of Effectiveness of Employee Training and Development.
14. Adinolfi, P.; Giancotti, F. Pedagogical Triage and Emergent Strategies: A Management Educational Program in Pandemic Times.

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9. Bratianu, C.; Hadad, S.; Bejinaru, R. Paradigm shift in business education: A competence-based approach. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 1348. [[CrossRef](#)]