

Call for Papers for a Special Issue

Values and ethics in the global knowledge nexus

Process, people and governance challenges in knowledge organisations

Deadline for the submission of full papers: 1st December 2015

Guest editors

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Knowledge intensive institutions (KIIs) create, manage and disseminate knowledge. People are their major asset, and interestingly, research on how people create, manage and disseminate knowledge, their challenges, their frustrations and motivations in such organisations, has not kept pace with research in other areas, e.g. manufacturing organisations. Universities and research organisations are paradigms of such institutions.

The university and research sector, as a knowledge intensive service (KIS), faces a number of challenging developments in its competitive environment including a global shortage of talent (Schuler et al., 2011), information technologies that are reshaping the competitive landscape (Federoff, 2012), the development of new business models such as offshoring of knowledge-intensive services (Lewin et al, 2009) and global open innovation models (Chesbrough, 2010). The plethora of publications on “knowledge management” contains little that addresses the management and leadership, process and governance, ethics and values challenges peculiar to organisations whose fortunes revolve around knowledge activities.

The Journal of Academic Ethics examines ethical concerns in research, teaching, administration, and governance. Moreover, in response to the rapidly changing global knowledge economy, the journal offers sustained inquiry into the values, purposes, and functions of the world's principal institutions responsible for the creation and dissemination of knowledge

In delineating the scope for this Special Issue, we focus on services where ‘knowledge is the main production factor and the good they offer’ (European Commission, 2012), including the academically relevant activities of “organisations / firms whose primary value-added activities consist of the accumulation, creation, or dissemination of knowledge for the purpose of developing a customised service” (Bettencourt et al. 2002), (also Caniëls & Romijn (2005), Simmie and Strambach (2006), Strambach (2008)), “companies / organisations which rely heavily on professional knowledge, i.e. knowledge or expertise related to a specific (technical) discipline or functional domain, to supply products and services that are knowledge based” (Den Hartog 2000), and public administrations, e.g. those pursuing reform agendas whether applying “new public management” or later approaches (Hood, 1991; Willem & Buelens, 2007; Pollitt, 2014).

The types of knowledge and the types of organisational form are varied. As well as technical knowledge and factual/data knowledge, attention needs to be given particularly to intangible knowledge assets such as tacit knowledge (e.g. Polanyi, 1966). Research in this area has not progressed strongly and major gaps are observable.

As attested by the increasing range of external contacts and collaborations of universities, organisational forms with academic significance also span a wide range from dedicated R&D, creative or professional services firms to Civil Service / public administration departments and in-house centres of excellence or expertise in multinationals. While these are very specific environments with specific values, processes, functions and governance challenges, they share the common factor that people are their major assets and success depends on behaviour of all, leading and managing them so that their knowledge – both explicit and tacit - is fully exploited for the benefit of the organisation.

Contrasts also exist with long-established organisations that base professional services on their knowledge assets (e.g. law, accountancy, consultancy). Often these are characterised by partnerships without external ownership, informal management, up-or-out promotion, and an emphasis on professionalization, which tends to manage quality by the use of control mechanisms not necessarily suitable to the demands of the contemporary knowledge intensive operating environment. As professions, many also thrive on a monopoly on the use of the knowledge for their profession, autonomous (self-) regulation, rules and practices that exclude non-professionals and mitigate competition amongst professionals; this can lead to a club-like environment with distinctive behaviour and even its own code of ethics. Attempts to apply skills from elsewhere to such an environment regularly end in failure (see also Von Nordenflycht, 2010). The academic world has its own particular styles of management and interaction which have evolved alongside a more open approach to dissemination of knowledge; of late however there has been an increasing emphasis on ‘valorisation’ and commercialisation of knowledge, raising the question of whether traditional approaches to people, process and governance remain the most appropriate.

The environment is one in which a more recent wave of commercially-oriented KIIs has arisen, characterised by emphasis on the search for innovative and self-starting individuals, giving them freedom to deploy their talents creatively, and basing revenue generation and growth on the value of the input given to clients together with the star quality of staff or teams. In such organisations employee bargaining power and preference for autonomy make authority problematic (Anand et al., 2007) and lead to organisational responses in the form of alternative compensation mechanisms and autonomy and informality in organisational structure. While behaviour, leadership and management in such organisations may often be “light touch” at the same time it needs to pay particular and constant attention to inspiring, developing and retaining staff. Would the university sector copy, amend, reject such experiences?

It can also be observed that the individual’s professional knowledge often becomes outdated at a faster rate than ever before. Rapid changes in the job market and work-related technologies are necessitating continuous education. In some sectors AI and other forms of automation may eliminate 50-80% of the work currently undertaken by professionals and skilled workers. Time consuming and repetitive tasks in the academic environment are also currently being targeted. Hence staff deployment and career management are a serious challenge.

The objective of this Special Issue is to further insights into values, processes, functions and governance in knowledge organisations such as universities, other centres of research and knowledge intensive institutions, as well as to draw implications from research in Knowledge intensive institutions in general for the university sector.

We welcome papers contributing to this objective. We see the need for a values conscious approach to people processes and governance in universities and KIIs in general and we draw attention to the following list of possible topics, but of course without limiting the type of papers that are relevant for submission:

- (crafting) reward structures
- assessing academic achievement
- validation, verification and trust policies in research
- exploitation of information asymmetry
- impact of web-based technologies on performance management of academics
- responses to plagiarism, imitation and flattery
- basing advancement on potential vs achievement
- inspiring academic teamwork
- IPR protection and constraints on academic mobility
- moral rights and obligations of spin-off commerce (companies)
- setting penalties for misconduct with data
- continuous professional development obligations

Review process

For the JAET Special Issue we welcome the submission of original full papers and policy papers, or case studies, to include contributions based on robust empirical investigation(s), with solid theoretical underpinnings within any of the specific domains identified, and where possible building on a comprehensive body of literature and setting the agenda for future research. All Special Issue submissions will be reviewed by members of the editorial board and judged according to rigour and relevance as well as their ability to enhance JAETs reputation.

Submission for the JAET Special Issue

- All manuscripts will be double-blind reviewed
- Papers are submitted with the understanding
 - That they are original, unpublished works
 - That they are not being submitted elsewhere
- For paper details please see JAET's Guidelines for authors:
<http://www.springer.com/education+%26+language/journal/10805>
- Submissions should be made as email attachment (Word)
- Please submit to aircsi@ashridge.org.uk , with 'JAET' in the email heading

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