

Book review

Knowledge Mobilization in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Moving From Research to Action

Authors: Alex Bennet and David Bennet

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Reviewed by Arthur Shelley

We all know how hard it is to engage people to participate in knowledge programmes; it is even harder to directly attribute business benefits to these programmes. Alex and David Bennet are proposing 'knowledge mobilisation' as the link between the two.

Knowledge Mobilization in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Moving From Research to Action creates linkages between knowledge theories and knowledge outcomes by demonstrating how knowledge theory can be put into action.

The authors define knowledge mobilisation (KMb) as "the process of creating value or a value stream through the creation, assimilation, leveraging, sharing and application of focused knowledge to a bounded community."

They propose KMb as "an approach to weave the flow of knowledge (the capacity to take effective action) among researchers, practitioners, advocates, policy-makers, communities and other stakeholders, weaving a whole cloth that wraps around a messy problem and – through leadership, resonance, collaboration and energy – dissolves it".

This addresses a common issue of knowledge approaches being too theoretical, relying on education rather than action. Successful programmes involve people applying thought and behaviours to drive the flow of knowledge triggering decisions and actions. They add: "When knowledge in the hands of committed decision-makers is connected to a clear, worthy need, that knowledge moves beyond the capacity to take effective action to the role of focusing and energising action."

Although written around social sciences examples, there is much useful material for the knowledge practitioner in any field. KMb is an effective process to use knowledge to create positive change, including improving behaviours and building relationships. As such, the principles can be applied in any industry or organisational setting. Chapter Six, Execution in the Action Space, provides a pragmatic approach to bring together theoretical and practical aspects of knowledge into a cycle of actions to create benefits and cultural change.

Three particularly useful inclusions are the guiding principles, the references list and practical appendices to help the practitioner focus on areas that will generate positive outcomes.

Successes build momentum and help to create the critical mass of support and participation required for ongoing self-sustainability of your knowledge programme.

The seven guiding principles listed in Chapter One provide a good foundation for knowledge initiative leaders to consider the potential of knowledge mobilisation in their organisation.

These will come to life in different ways in each organisation or context and as such enable readers to focus how they can best apply these concepts for their specific programme.

The 175 references cover a wide range of management and education disciplines, which is helpful to those whose expertise is more focused. It is important for knowledge practitioners to access a broad range of literature to be successful and to enable innovative approaches to create knowledge driven changes.

The six appendices contain a wealth of useful information, especially definitions, ideas, concepts, tools and practical tips. Collectively they provide a checklist of potential opportunities to enhance your progress.

I found the book interesting to browse for thoughts on a particular topic, rather than read from cover to cover.

The authors state that knowledge mobilisation is not a prescription, but a combination of concepts which should be adjusted to your particular circumstances. The book will provide a useful strategic guide for those wanting to accelerate their knowledge programmes and a useful resource for those well underway to a self-sustaining knowledge-sharing environment. There is no doubt that the authors are widely read and passionate about creating more value from our collective knowledge. They deeply believe that knowledge should be mobilised to create benefits for the 'greater good'. The book provides good coverage of both theory and practice and will be a useful resource for both researchers and professionals in commercial and social knowledge roles.

Arthur Shelley is former global technical knowledge director, Cadbury Schweppes, author of The Organizational Zoo, A Survival Guide to Workplace Behavior, and now an independent business consultant in Melbourne Australia.