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**Knowlege-management in concrete form:
dealing with knowledge in institutions**

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Summary

Knowledge management (KM) or knowledge sharing (KS) has moved rapidly through the larger private sector companies in recent years. At the initiative of the World Bank (1998) knowledge became linked not just to business but to development, through the World Development Report for 1998-9 *Knowledge for Development.* Along with several other bilateral agencies, such as DFID (UK) and CIDA (Canada), Switzerland's SDC became interested in KM, and it has since June 2001 undertaken a number of initiatives to share knowledge within the organisation.[1] KM & KS have also appeared in non-governmental organisations such as OXFAM and Tearfund.[2]

The challenge for this workshop, and for today's session, is what the KM & KS movement might mean for institutions whose primary purpose is education and training. Understandably, the attraction of KM & KS for the corporate sector was to make staff more efficient, and to increase company profits by exploiting the underused knowledge resources embedded in the employees. The bottom line was the dollar. With development organisations, the motive had to be different since their objective was the alleviation of poverty in the developing world rather than profit. For such bodies, by contrast, a key motive in their use of KM & KS has been the need to make available rapidly to their staff scattered across many countries the lessons of best practice. These organisations generate an enormous quantity of information & knowledge via surveys, feasibility studies, evaluations, consultancies, as well as commissioned research. One of their constant challenges is ensuring that the best advice is available to their heaquarters and their field staff. More effective KM and KS are seen to play a role here.

But when it comes to education and training institutions, paradoxically, it would appear that there has been less thinking about the potential of KM and KS, apart from the work of Gibbons et al (1994) on the new modes of knowledge production. What, therefore, this morning's workshop will seek to develop, both in the plenary sessions and in the working groups, is some account of how the KM and KS revolution might be relevant to education and training institutions.

Amongst the subjects to be addressed by plenary and working group sessions are the following:

- As education and training centres are almost by definition 'knowledge-based institutions', is there really any need for KM and KS? In other words, do educational institutions already have a culture of knowledge-sharing?

- Is knowledge-sharing actually privileged and rewarded in academic institutions? In many such institutions, the real kudos is derived from success in competitive research funding and highly selective publication in the 'best' journals. Activities such as routine dissemination of research through bulletins, or good teaching and student supervision are frequently held to be valuable but are not rewarded in the manner of funded research.

- Communities of practice or thematic groups or informal knowledge networks appear to play a vital role in KM and KS in both the private sector as well as in development organisations. What, if any, is their counterpart in the world of academic education and training? Obviously

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[1] See (http://mail.bellanet.org/kmdir/) for a KM profile of SDC done by Manuel Flury.
[2] For a critical coverage of knowledge management in development agencies , see *NORRAG NEWS no 28* (2001), Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh (or www. norrag.org).

the formal professional associations do not really meet this need for more informal knowledge sharing.

- In many organisations, the intranet (which is not open to the wider public) has played a key role in building knowledge sharing as well as greater efficiency across the organisation. This seems to be absent in academic institutions. Is this because they are very open organisations or for other reasons? Communication from the leadership of academic organisations to regular staff is perhaps less open than is often thought?

- Yellow pages or directories of staff expertise have also played a role in both the private sector and development assistance bodies. By contrast, such directories of staff expertise seem to hold little value in academic institutions. Is this because such directories are valuable for the identification of consultancy capacity, and this is less well regarded than research?

- The role of web-sites whether of departments or of individuals is likely to be rather different in academic as compared to corporate or development organisations.

- Information and communications technology (ICT) has been central to the KM/KS revolution. It has the potential to turn organisations upside down and inside out (Box 2001). Arguably, ICT has made little change to the hierarchies of education institutions, though it has altered some of the methods of study and research.

Other dimensions of KM/KS will also be examined for their application to educational institutions.

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R e f e r e n c e s

Box, L 2001 'Inside out and upside down: a case study on the harsh realities of going virtual' in Gmelin W, King K, and McGrath S (eds) *Development knowledge, national research and international cooperation* Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh

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Flury, M 2002 A KM profile of Swiss Development Cooperation (http://mail.bellanet.org/kmdir.

World Bank 1998 *Knowledge for Development* World Bank, Washington.

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Professor Kenneth King: brief curriculum vitae
[BA (Cantab); PGCE (London); PhD (Edinburgh)]

Professor King was educated in the universities of Cambridge, London and Edinburgh. He taught in Ethiopia in the early 1960s and in Kenya (at the University of Nairobi) from 1968 to 1972. He has been associated with the Centre of African Studies in the University of Edinburgh since 1972. But in 1978, he was seconded for three years to be Director of the Education Research Programme of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, Canada, with responsibility for funding educational research world-wide. He has carried out research and advisory work in Africa for more than 20 years, including in Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Zaire and Ethiopia. He has also worked in Latin America, India, Thailand, and in his own country, Scotland.

Professor King has been the Director of the Centre of African Studies and Professor of International and Comparative Education at the University of Edinburgh for 17 years. His research interests over the years have focused on aid policy towards all sub-sectors of education, including higher education; technical and vocational education and training; science and technology education; and education and training in micro-enterprises and the informal sector.

He is currently the Editor of *NORRAG NEWS*, a critical aid policy review, published in both English and French, which he has edited for 15 years. He is on the editorial boards of the following journals: *The International Journal of Educational Development, Studies in Science Education; Science, Technology and Development; The International Journal of Educational Research; The Vocational Aspect of Education, Prospects* and *The Journal of Modern African Studies* .

Published work since 1991 as author and editor of books and monographs includes: *Aid and Education in the Developing World* (Longman 1991); *Strengthening Analytical and Research Capacities in Education* (with W. Gmelin, DSE, Bonn, 1992); Section Editor (responsible for 44 articles) on technical and vocational education and training for the *International Encyclopedia of Education* (2nd edition, Pergamon 1994); *Gender and environment in Africa: perspectives on the politics of environmental sustainability*, (with Yngstrom, I. Jeffery, P. and Toulmin, C., Edinburgh 1994); *Education and Training for the Informal Sector* (with S. McGrath, ODA, London 1995), and *Learning from Experience: Policy and Practice in Aid to Higher Education* (with L. Buchert, CESO, The Hague, 1995); *Learning to Compete* (with Dela Afenyadu, Simon McGrath, Henry Oketch, Christian Rogerson and Kobus Visser). Education Paper 42, Department for International Development, London.

He has published under the title *Jua Kali Kenya; development and change in an informal economy 1970-1995* (James Currey, London, 1996), in which he revisited, 20 years later, the informal sector which he analysed in the early 1970s, under the title *The African Artisan* (Heinemann 1977).

In 1998, he published for DFID a *Synthesis evaluation of higher education* (DFID, London), and in 1999 *Changing international aid to education: global patterns, local contexts* (NORRAG/UNESCO, Paris (edited by King and Buchert), *Changing Education and Training in South Africa* University of Cape Town Press (edited by Wally Morrow and Kenneth King), and *Enterprise in Africa: between poverty and growth* Intermediate Technology Publications (edited by King and McGrath). In 2000, he edited with Tom Salter *Africa, Islam and Development* (Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh). In 2002, he edited with colleagues *Africa's young majority*.

On higher education specifically, he has edited special issues of the aid policy bulletin, *NORRAG NEWS*, on higher education (e.g. 1998), as well edited a book-length analysis of the World Bank's higher education policy paper of 1994 (see above). More recently, he has reviewed the university staff development programmes of the DSE (2000), and written on the challenge to life long learning of higher education in Africa. His most recent publication relates to knowledge policies in development agencies: Gmelin, W., King, K. and McGrath, S. (eds.) *Development Knowledge, National Research and International Cooperation.* Centre of African Studies / German Foundation for International Development, Edinburgh / Bonn.

Professor King has been closely involved with the British Council's Academic Links Committee for Africa; he is Chair of the Royal African Society in Scotland, and a Vice-President of the Royal African Society, on the Executive Committee of the Northern Policy Research Review and Advisory Group in Education and Training (NORRAG); on the Council of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning (now CARA); and Co-Chair of the UK Forum on International Education and Training; he was Chair of the British Comparative and International Education Society from 1990 to 1994. He is on the Executive Committee of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) and convenor of its Working Group for Cooperation in Training.

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