

Knowledge management according to the symbolic heritage of universities

Maribel Brull González¹, Pura de la Caridad Rey Rivas², Ailén Fonseca Martínez^{3*}

¹*Social Communication Department, Faculty of Humanities,
Universidad de Oriente, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba*

²*Language Center Department, Faculty of Foreign Language,
Universidad de Oriente, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba*

³*Social Communication Department, Faculty of Humanities,
Universidad de Oriente, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba*

Abstract: Studies about heritage and the way it works retrieve today special importance to rescue and preserve main values that according to history and knowledge management favor sustainability. This research aims at socializing the strategic communicational model for the conservation of the symbolic heritage of universities based on the construction of new theoretical and methodological foundations. It is built on the confluence between the Technologies of Information and Communication and Social Communication where knowledge management and university symbolic heritage are articulated. A hierarchy-subordination approach is adopted from the systemic-structural-functional method. The hermeneutic-dialectic approach permitted the process of interpretation from the dynamic of observation, comprehension and explanation.

Keywords: knowledge management, symbolic heritage, universities

1. Introduction

Heritage expresses the link between historical memory and the real construction of the present times. It favors the reading and the social appropriation of culture according to identity. Its preservation constitutes a current discipline with the urgent need of procedures and operational categories that require multidisciplinary approaches since it goes further than the nature scale or what is built to assume a larger scope to implicate the whole society.

In these circumstances heritage is in a constant process of renewal and re-expression conditioned by extent, flexibility and dynamism.

Knowledge management concerning heritage has been gradually incorporated to the university speech, and it grows with new cultural and scientific practice that takes into account the concepts of safeguard and putting into value. At present, Higher Studies Centers are contexts where actions and reflection are based on identification, recognition and promotion of their heritage.

From the view of hereditary and contemporary theories universities promote strategies to defend their historical memory, in which symbols are essential for the history of the evolution of an institution, their significant events as well as the most transcendental speech. The consumption of foreign symbols is not a phenomenon typical from a given region or a specific country. In the present times they are not conceived only from the perspective of fashion but to become a transcultural issue not only in Latin America but around the world.

The reflection and debate are centered in different contexts not only in the area of cultural marketing but also from the commercialization scenarios in which the economic globalization, industry of entertainment and the media are present.

Cultural globalization is a growing effect and makes the world be interconnected from the most diverse fields, that is economic, social, technological, political, and cybercultural. The possibilities of multicultural exchange are growing and favor the simultaneous communication of activities organized through the diverse and massive networks that origin messages, products and outside symbolic goods among them those that are called foreign symbols.

This issue emerges in the polemic, when from the view of some people it is positive when people share customs, traditions and connections among markets. From the perspective of others, it means trying to damage, from the transactional, the roots of peoples by establishing that citizens and cybernauts generate the

public opinion of power sustained in cultural models that are based on the manipulation through the propaganda, publicity or different forms of public relations what cause silence and the neutralization of institutions sometimes through an arrogant and authoritarian speechor publicity stunt to streamline the behavior of the big mass.

Higher Education Institutions, in their reformer dimension, constitute an outstanding space for the most useful exchange due to their contribution to knowledge, development and cultural dialogue. They argue on the need to be influential in the protection of their symbolic heritage. They become custodians of the traces from the past. Hence, they are alive realities that make possible the comprehension and interpretation of their evolution in which identity is the social product that identifies them.

Therefore, the choice related to knowledge production from new paradigms has evolved in the questioning to the traditional conception of knowledge management to define more flexible and new alternatives with bases in the inside part as well as transdisciplinary which are used here as epistemological bases.

This research aims at socializing the strategic communicational model for the conservation of the symbolic heritage of universities based on the construction of new theoretical and methodological foundations.

2. Development

2.1 University symbolic heritage

In the international scale there have been wide experience concerning management associated to university heritage, its protection and diffusion since the beginning of the 21st century. The growing aware of its particular characteristics and its importance generate consecutive scientific criticism causing transformations and updating strategies for its preservation as well as a conceptual consolidation in publications and specialized forums.

Nevertheless, the approaching to the limits and singularities of what is considered university heritage is not sufficient enough since it has only been related to its elements and not to the value that people give it, what is the key that identifies it.

In 2000, the European Academic Heritage Network (UNIVERSEUM), was established. Many meetings and relevant texts are outlined: Arranging and rearranging: planning university heritage for the future [1], and Shaping European university heritage past and possible future [2]. There was an approach with the academic community to heritage value associated to universities.

The General Assembly of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), that was held in July, 2001, in Barcelona, was the scenario for the creation of the International Committee of Museums and Academic Collections. In this way, university heritage was given a singular identity in the sphere of museums. The aim of these first and essential steps in the heritage management of higher education centers was placed in emphasizing cultural heritage as an actor of joint responsibility that guarantees moral, intellectual and human values.

In the normative text of international scope devoted to the academic cultural heritage Recommendation (2005), derived from the Council of Europe, [3] there are multiple perspectives adopted by the academic heritage, and there is a recurrent reference to the composition by material and immaterial goods. Therefore, some elements that constitute university heritage are:

- University heritage integrates the whole material and immaterial heritage related to institutions, organisms and higher educational systems, as well as the academic community of students and teachers, in addition to the socio-cultural environment of this heritage.
- University heritage must be understood as every trace of the human activity related to higher education.
- University heritage is an accumulative source directly associated with the academic community of teachers, students, their believes, values, achievements, social role and cultural function, the ways in which it is transmitted and its capacity of invasion.

Another reference is The Declaration of Alcala (2013) concerning the protection, conservation and diffusion of university heritage. It is relevant the fact that with the evolution of societies, universities have become an essential wealth of knowledge for the universal development. The united historical areas constitute an exceptional witness of this fact for future generations [4]. Therefore, the real universal condition of higher education centers and their intrinsic values is relevant.

Thus, universities are tangible and, at a time, a state of spirit. They are real and imagined. They have a historical own course and they also indicate the courses of their environment. They are symbols of tradition and renewal, emphasized traditions and revolutionary conflicts, inquisitive youth and thoughtful maturity. About these facts is university heritage erected [5].

From these perspectives university heritage is not considered a close concept in this research, but a close view to the representative value that human activity as creator of every of its processes grant to a joint of symbols for its character as historic and artistic source, knowledge or tradition. Therefore, symbolic heritage will be used. This term is related to the importance of heritage. It is a valuable good capable of being known and preserved since it is part of the socio-cultural characteristics and identity signs of the university. The symbolic value is close to a feeling, the symbol in the social action promotes the feeling of ownership to communities [6], [7].

2.2 Knowledge management as a process of integration of the symbolic heritage of universities

Knowledge management could be seen as a process of transformation of the information and the intellectual assets in lasting values [8]. Researches recognize different criteria that are not contradictory.

Some researchers define knowledge management as the ability of an enterprise to increase tacit knowledge and create previous conditions for the exchange of information among the workers of a given organizational unit, and among the units of that organization [9]. However, knowledge management not only happens in institutions to promote the exchange of knowledge and for decision-making.

Other academics define knowledge management as an organized process of creation, capture, storage, dissemination and use of knowledge inside and among institutions to keep competitive advantage [10], [11]. Thus, this viewpoint limits knowledge management to aims to balance or surpass competence; even when it states it is an organized process of creation it does not conceive what type of creation, what kind of capture and storage are referred to at the information level.

“Knowledge is the main component in the productive process that is not limited to technological instructions of a given process. It is spread out to the culture and creativity of its workers” [12]. Knowledge has a content structure and that content expresses a transmissible specialized value at a given field of knowledge. Its generalization is feasible through social insertion.

Knowledge management permits organizations comprehend their ways and mechanisms of performance as well as understand the way in which innovation, training and research processes are taken. It means that through the production of knowledge feasibility and sustainability of activities in organizations are guaranteed.

Knowledge production and identity in universities evidence the statement that “production is incorporated to new circulation knowledge networks. These bibliometric facts indicate that in spite of everything there is a renewal in the styles of intellectual work of universities.” [13]

Hence, knowledge management according to the symbolic heritage will be the result of studies not only from the social and humanistic sciences, but also from technical sciences where strategies to preserve and promote heritage are based on instrumental and methodological tools.

For this reason, multidisciplinary research workshops are needed in close relation with data processing and analysis, in addition to the scientific interconnection among the social psychology, sociology, historiographic and ethnographic analysis in which the Science of Communication can play the active role of knowledge intelligence in the benefit of preserving the intellectual capital.

With the recognition of the importance of symbolic heritage, modern societies face the urgent need of acquiring and promoting respect and knowledge of one’s own. As a logical process, knowledge management is organized systematically to produce, transfer and apply a harmonic combination of knowledge, experience, values, contextual information and expert statements in concrete situations, to provide a frame for the evaluation and incorporation of new experience and information.

As it was stated before, the cultural environment cannot be seen without a definition of the area which points out the human occupation, history, meaning and sense for its inhabitants. As a result, an urban planning

without cultural factors has irreversible effects on its heritage. That impedes the practice of its creativity. Cultural transversely includes also society of knowledge, the new Technologies of Information and Communication as well as the access to archives, libraries that make possible the virtual dimension, the exchange of information and international connectivity.

Consequently, it is necessary to develop mechanisms with all the potential of the knowledge that is scattered in universities. This implies the creation and opening of a knowledge management strategy that integrates five fundamental actions: interpretation of needs, identification of opportunities of knowledge, its construction, organization and distribution, the creation of conditions for its application, incubation and capitalization.

Knowledge management acts as a resource that generates innovation actions and activities in universities. This makes possible to conceive actions and make decisions that lead to achieve sustainability through the effective and productive use of their experience, capacities and resources. Then, knowledge management is built in a permanent cycle of creation, transference and innovation.

2.3 Strategic communicational model for the preservation of the symbolic heritage of universities

Knowledge management is about culture, strategic, technological knowledge and procedures. That is why it is essential to have in mind that there is a great variety of ways of generating value to higher education institutions based on knowledge assets where that variety does not always mean technological solutions. They are rather a combination of aspects of diverse interrelated components which represent a possible solution to needs.

From the perspective of [14], knowledge management is based on three main factors: culture, technology and processes. Figure 1, shows that integration:

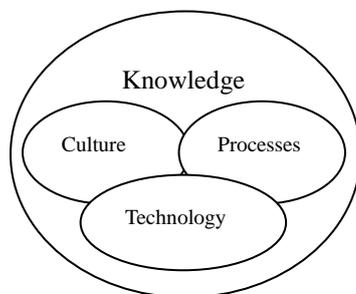


Figure1. Factors of Knowledge management.

Source: Saavedra, Verdugoand Lacruz (2000).

Taking into consideration this system, a model of knowledge management for the sustainability of symbolic heritage of universities is proposed: (Figure 2).

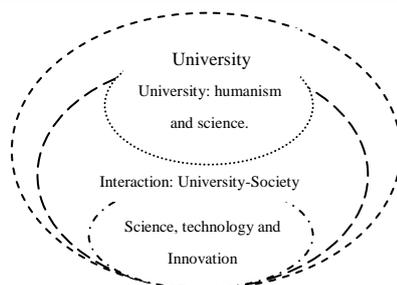


Figure 2. Interactive Process of Knowledge Management.

Source: Elaboration of the authors of this research, 2020.

2.3.1 Principles of the model:

1. Humanistic and scientific training of excellence: the university has the essential commitment to train the human capital that is required at a given region and in the whole country. Through the academic performance that is based on research processes the university has to achieve the very strict training of the students with pertinence and high levels in the diverse areas and disciplines of knowledge. The training at the university is complete, focused not only on the development of the cognitive potential or on the capacity for a given performance but also from the enhancement of reflexive and critical skills to assume the social engagement that contribute with knowledge and experience on the transformation processes of the region and the whole country.
2. Science, technology and innovation are ways of knowledge: the university is strengthened on research as a crucial part of the academic life. It is a source of knowledge that generates and supports the academic training and the articulation with society.
3. Interaction university-society: the sense of higher education institutions is related with the projection of knowledge to society, mainly when it is about public institutions. In this way, the mission of the university is closely related to the destiny and project of the society and its culture. Universities are thoroughly interconnected to enterprises and enterprises linked to universities.
4. Continuity: university heritage is protected with value and expression of permanency in a knowledge system that is managed and generated by university students and professionals of different historic and social contexts.

This socio-cultural process is supported on scientific notions that are common to the pedagogy of higher education on the bases of the interrelation of learning through education, the close link between theory and practice, and the articulation of the university with society.

2.3.2 Strategic objectives

The strategic objectives for the model are directed to:

1. The diffusion of knowledge related to the use of cultural goods after restoration/preservation.
2. The communication of relevant practices related to financing, particularly, with collaboration models.
3. The improvement of experience that evaluates ecosystem service and the way it can be applied in the symbolic knowledge.
4. The relation between symbolic heritage and innovation.
5. The export/diffusion of the Know-how to foreign contexts.
6. The participation of the society in new innovator products and services of symbolic heritage.

7. The identification of appropriate practices related to the experimentation and determination of risks.

The following requirements are established on this strategy:

- To base knowledge management on projects that take into consideration elements from innovation and appropriation of the new technologies. This organization of researches and their connection with society permits to determine, circulate and increase knowledge to gain a favorable change.
- To increase and up-date the historic memory of universities since it constitutes the strategic base of the present proposal.
- To have a network of knowledge resources that allows the flow starting from its generation to its use. This is a strategic base of this model which emerges directly from the actions, ambitions, the critical and creative aware of university students and teachers who act as individuals that are vital in knowledge management for the sustainability of university heritage.
- To consolidate knowledge generation for the achievement of creativity and innovation by means of tools that permit information interaction, skills, and experience, not only from a personal viewpoint but also from the university perspective.
- To be closely interrelated to the Technologies of Information and Communication. Their development has permitted the generation, processing, managing and exchange of information, and above all they have modified the reasonable use of knowledge, its meaning and results on the various successful factors of every human work. The Technologies of Information and Communication have demonstrated their value in the diffusion, transformation, collaboration and joint construction of knowledge.

Heritage can be preserved and strengthened through different forms, human networks and technologies where education plays an outstanding role since it is the starting point to know the cultural heritage and the essence to be aware of values which promotion and development will power cultural identity.

From a dynamic, complete and renewed perspective, knowledge management widens action fields for its preservation. Its protection and development demand the participation of communities through different forms of promotion.

For the sustainability of the symbolic heritage of universities, taking into consideration the strategic and systemic model that the authors of this research propose, the definition of policies that favor decentralization and participative communication is implied. This achieves a balance between the historic memory and innovation starting from the use of the Technologies of Innovation and Communication.

In this way, the mission of the university is closely related to the faith and project of the society and its culture. They not only entrust part of the historic and cultural heritage to the university but also the responsibility of generating values. It is about promoting the dissertation of changes in higher education, specifically concerning to the sustainability of knowledge management.

To outstand factors that favor success in a project at a given time, it is important to identify them in order to promote them. Among these factors can be: culture in function of knowledge, the disposal of technical and institutional infrastructure, the support of executives, orientation to the process, clear vision and language, influential motivation assistants, levels of knowledge structure, different forms for knowledge transferring.

To achieve this strategic conception, the following proposal of systemic relations represented in five levels of knowledge management emerges. Figure 3:

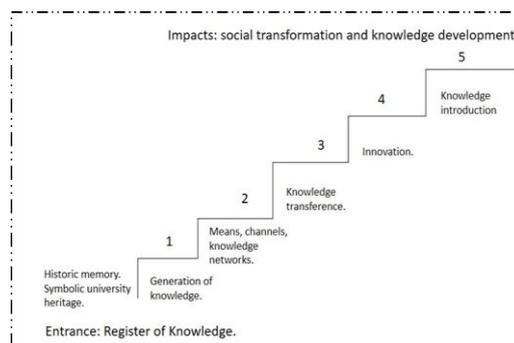


Figure3. The five levels of Knowledge Management.

Source: The elaboration of the authors, 2020.

1st level: Knowledge generation originates at a given context, space and time according to the needs of man and the sociocultural evolution.

2nd level: Social communication and its methods, techniques, tools, media, channels and supports facilitate knowledge created in different organizational structures.

3rd level: The amount of knowledge that society demands and that is generated towards the inside and outside university system is transmitted with cultural and technological intelligence.

4th level: Science, granted with up-dated knowledge and productive capacity, promotes sociocultural and technological innovation in the service of human and local development.

5th level: Knowledge generation in favor of the social transformation and the sustainable development of universities, organizations and territories is applied.

3. Conclusions

Symbolic heritage can be preserved and strengthened through different means, channels and human and technological networks where education has a relevant place since it is the starting point to know the cultural inheritance to be aware of values which promotion and development will reinforce cultural identity.

From a dynamic, total and renewed perspective, knowledge management widens the action fields for its preservation as well as the responsible persons. Its protection and development demands the participation of communities through different forms of promotion.

Taking into consideration the strategic and systemic model proposed by the authors, knowledge management for the sustainability of the symbolic heritage of universities implies the definition of policies that favor decentralization and participative communication which achieves a balance between the historic memory and innovation with the use of the technology.

4. References

- [1]. Talas, S. y Laurenço, M. (2012). Arranging and rearranging: planning university heritage for the future. Padua, Italia: Padova University Press.
- [2]. Maiso, L; Safia, T. y Roland, W. (2013). Shaping European university heritage past and possible future. Noruega: The Royal Norwegian Society and Akademika Publishing.
- [3]. Consejo de Europa (2005). Recommendation. <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Rec%282005%2913&Language=>.
- [4]. Rivera, J. (2013). Declaración de Alcalá sobre la protección, conservación y difusión del patrimonio universitario. Madrid, España: Universidad de Alcalá de Henares.
- [5]. Felipe, C. (2015). Al abrigo del Alma Mater. Patrimonio cultural universitario: valores y

- experiencias de gestión desde la Universidad de La Habana (tesis doctoral) Universidad de Granada, España, p.74.
- [6]. Frómata, A. (2008). Los símbolos como expresión comunicativa del lenguaje cultural de la Universidad de Oriente (tesis de pregrado). Universidad de Oriente, Santiago de Cuba, p.18.
- [7]. Labañino, N.D.(2018). La opinión pública sobre el uso de los símbolos nacionales y extranjerizantes (tesis de pregrado). Universidad de Oriente, Santiago de Cuba, p.1.
- [8]. Tasmin, R y Yap. L. S. (2010). Determining Factors of Knowledge Management Implementation in Knowledge-Based Organizations, 49–54 in Proceedings of Knowledge Management 5th International Conference. <http://eprints.uthm.edu.my/1836>
- [9]. Adams, L. y Lamon. B. T. (2003). Knowledge Management Systems and Developing Sustainable Competitive Advantage. *Journal of Knowledge Management* 7(2): 142–54.
- [10]. Davenport, T. y Prusak.L. (2000). *Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage What They Know*. Massachusetts, Estados Unidos: Harvard Business School Press
- [11]. Darroch, J. (2003). Developing a Measure of Knowledge Management Behaviors and Practices. *Journal of Knowledge Management* 7(5): 41–54.
- [12]. Lage, D. A. (2013). *La Economía del Conocimiento y el Socialismo*. La Habana, Cuba: Sello Editorial Academia, p.108.
- [13]. Gilber, J. (2017). La Redefinición de las Identidades de los Cientistas Sociales Latinoamericanos: ¿Hacia un Nuevo Colonialismo Intelectual? *Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Inclusiva*, 11(1): 35-55.
- [14]. Saavedra, J.J.; Verdugo, D. y La cruz, A. (2000). *Gestión del conocimiento*. <http://www.gestiondelconocimiento.com>.
- [15]. Fonseca, A., Brull, M. y Guerra, A.M.(2020). Modelo de gestión del conocimiento para el desarrollo sostenible del patrimonio simbólico de la Universidad de Oriente, *Revista Santiago* No. 152, pp.279-272. <http://ojs.uo.edu.cu/>

Author Profile



Maribel Brull González, is full professor and member of the scientific council of the Universidad de Oriente. Cub, Prof. Brull holds a PhD in Communication Sciences, a Degree in Philosophy and History and a Master's Degree in Communication, specializing in cultural processes. She is also a member of the Information and Communication Sciences Doctoral Program of the University of Havana and a member of the National Accreditation Board of academic programs.



Pura de la Caridad Rey Rivas, is a teacher of English for General and Specific Purposes at Universidad de Oriente. She has been a teacher for 29 years. She is a PhD and full professor from the Faculty of Foreign Languages. She is a member of the Scientific Degree Board at the university. Member of the Scientific Board of her faculty. President of the Board for the Teaching Categories of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and

Full Professor at the university.



Ailén Fonseca Martínez. Professor of the Department of Social Communication. PhD candidate of the Communication Sciences program. Master in Language and Speeches. Graduate in Social Communication. Member of the Info-communication project of the Universidad de Oriente.