Knowledge Management in the Palestinian Higher Education: A Research Agenda

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ABSTRACT

This research tries to highlight on how knowledge management (KM) will act as a good tool to connect all the university's Stakeholders such as: Students, teachers, researchers, business and external entities, with work processes and technologies. Today, the quality of higher education in developing countries has become more complex as they have to keep pace and compete with the international higher educational institutions (HEIs) standards. The purpose of this research is to provide empirical evidence that increases an understanding of KM practices in HEIs within the context of instable environments, focusing on the unique geopolitical situation of the occupied Palestine. A primary focus of this paper is to investigate the social phenomenon without explicit expectations or early assumptions, asking a deep qualitative questions of "why" people of Palestine look for knowledge, "how" they use this knowledge, and "how" they face the instability of the complicated situation in order to develop a knowledge society.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Higher Education, Palestine
JEL Classifications: D83, M10, I23, D74

1. INTRODUCTION

Establishing the knowledge society appears to be one of the essential pillars for creating competitive and modern society (Žarkovic et al., 2014). Knowledge society, as stated by Arayici (2014), refers to a society where knowledge is the main resource of production instead of other financial and raw resources, while human activities and development become dependent on a huge and unique capacity of knowledge. In the meanwhile, Gherardi (2008) pointed out that knowing is something that people and groups do together in eve ry activity, by negotiating the meanings of words, actions situations and material artifacts. They all participate and contribute in our socially and culturally structured world, which is constantly reconstituted by the activities of all those who belong to it. The use of knowledge in a knowledge society, says Roy (2014), is the main essential process in all domains of society such as economic, politics, instead of being limited to its pure societal cognition. Furthermore, Roy argues that knowledge society is characterized by the intensive connection between knowledge and action, as he is supporting the idea of

seeing knowledge in books that still in books, as an information, if not mere data. It is only considered as knowledge when a man applies it practically in an action by do something. Even though, every society has its own knowledge resources, however, Sharma et al. (2009) argue that if a nation contains people of diverse skills, experiences, attributes, education and beliefs, is it simply considered as knowledge societies and others as less-developed societies? Well, Sharma et al., finds it hard to classify societies according to their knowledge capital because knowledge is interchangeable and transferable commodity that loses its value if remained inactive.

In an increasingly complicated world, lifelong learning becomes indispensable, while education is no longer the privilege of an elite, nor a matter for one age group only; it tends to cover the entire society and the whole lifetime of the individual (UNESCO, 2005). Referring to Drucker (1994. p. 66) "education will become the center of the knowledge society, and the school its key institution. What knowledge must everybody have? What is 'quality' in learning and teaching? These will of necessity become central

concerns of the knowledge society, and central political issues." Consequently, Kamens, (2012) confirms that powerful and modern societies are built around the expansion of science and universities. Additionally, Kamens argues that universities, in the contemporary time, lose their limited and specialized function of career training, to become the main source of human capital development for a society, whereas everyone is deemed educable and education for all. In fact, universities, as learning organizations, will be able to increase knowledge skills, produce top quality, enhance creativity, and contribute effectively to knowledge production and human development (Pinto, 2012). Higher educational institutions (HEIs) are considered as knowledge hubs, where several activities are carried out to create, store, share, and apply knowledge. Whereas teachers, students, and researchers are integral parts of academic institutions and all are engaged in the above activities (Hoq and Akter, 2012).

Hoq and Akter (2012) continues, to spot the light on another group of people that are considered to be critical for setting and implementing the "knowledge agenda" of the university, called knowledge workers (KWs) who act across all functions and Departments Of a University, and they are people who, when working, use their brain more than their muscles (Mládková, 2011). As well as universities, firms are also seeking for flexible and adaptable KWs in order to gain the competitive advantage. On another hand, Ramakrishnan and Yasin (2012) argues that modern universities have a vital role and huge responsibility to produce highly qualified graduates to go beyond the present and be able to respond to a future which cannot be easily predicted; these people are considered to be the intellectual capital of a nation, that are expected to have the ability to lead, produce new knowledge, identify problems, and provide creative solutions. Due to the intangible character of knowledge, being deeply embedded in practice, which means that knowledge work does not lend itself particularly well to knowledge capture or standardication, hence, those who are engaged in this type of work need to be able to make decisions independently about what and how to do their work (Mládková, 2011; Newell et al., 2009).

The quality of work of KWs, as Mládková (2011) argues, depends not only on their ability to create, share and use of knowledge, but also on how the work with knowledge is organized and managed in their organizations. Therefore, knowledge scholars and researchers (e.g., Syaharizatul, 2013; Mládková, 2011; Newell et al., 2009; Spender, 2008; Rao, 2006; Hislop, 2005; Drucker, 1994), have pointed out the significant role of today's organizations to prepare an environment and facilitate a system where KWs are effectively empowered to produce and share new creative knowledge, whereas knowledge management (KM) helps organizations to meet this competitive role. In today's new competition, organizations become aware about the importance of having a systematic approach to create, store, and share knowledge. KM is a systematic effort to increase useful knowledge within the organization, by encouraging communication, offering opportunities to learn, and facilitating the sharing of knowledge (McInerney, 2002). Effective KM systems identify and leverage the know-how embedded in practice, with a focus on how it will be applied (Kidwell et al., 2000). Significantly, learning and KM are processes that involve

change towards new levels of cognition and ways of understanding among individuals in an organization or a society (Kamens, 2012; McInerney, 2002).

Today's HEIs as knowledge providers are aware of their valuable intelligences, and have adopted a changing role in a society, particularly the pace of evolution has entered a rapid speed, and those who can not learn, adapt, and change, are simply will not survive (Laal, 2011; Mohayidin et al., 2007). Academic sector have significant opportunities to apply KM practices to support their education, research, and public service mission (Kamens, 2012; Ramakrishnan and Yasin, 2012; Laal, 2011). According to Mohayidin et al. (2007), the reason of considering university environment as very suitable for implementing KM systems, is due to the nature of universities as an educational environment which involves in itself various kinds of knowledge creating and sharing processes, besides to the possess of modern information infrastructure. In addition, Mohayidin et al., continues to point out that KM principles have been proposed to be employed by HEIs for the purpose of doing essential and applied research, teaching suitable curricular program, utilization of knowledge for management decision support, increase knowledge shareing level, and application of knowledge for a qualitative change in the educational process.

Mainly, the influence of KM on the performance of todays organization is actually derived from the importance of knowledge it self as a competitive added value for humans, organizations, and nations (Cariša et al., 2014; Erickson and Rothberg, 2014; Radmila et al., 2014). In spite of the consensus between all scholars and researchers on the high importance of knowledge for organizational development and success (e.g. De La Vega, 2010; Newell et al., 2009; Gherardi, 2008; Tsoukas, 2003; Blackler, 1995; Drucker, 1994; Nonaka, 1994; Wiig, 1993), they still stand on different views when it comes to the meaning of the concept of knowledge. This variance is clearly obvious between the two main epistemological camps of knowledge: Objectivist perspective, and Practice-based perspective (Hislop, 2005; Cook and Brown, 1999). Generally, contemporary managerial approaches and knowledge researches in organizations have remained focused on considering knowledge detached from the human actions and practices (Souto, 2013), treating knowledge as a tangible objective entity that people can possess and could be separated from people or activities (Virtanen, 2010; Hislop, 2005; Nonaka et al., 2000).

In most of the studies and approaches conducted so far, knowledge in organizational context has been disconnected from its users, and so, these approaches have been mostly designed without been adapted to how and why knowers need a specific knowledge to contribute and support knowledge creation in their work practices (Souto, 2013; Souto, 2010), which led to limited designs of supportive approaches for such knowledge practices in todays organizations. Mainly, individuals in dynamic organizational contexts and complicated environments, who regularly need and use complex and new knowledge cannot rely on knowledge approaches that are based only on what knowledge needed for, or used for, or what one knows. Rather, they should contemplate on how and why practitioners need specific knowledge to create

meanings in specific knowing situations (Souto, 2013; Corradi et al., 2008), as knowing is not separated from doing and the practice-based perspective connects both (Souto, 2013; Mládková, 2011; Tsoukas, 2003; Cook and Brown, 1999). This study, therefore, is adopting the knowledge practice-based perspective, as knowledge is considered to be embedded in a situated activity and everyday life, where people create new knowledge by contributing cognitively and practically, in this socially and culturally structured life (Syaharizatul, 2013; Gherardi, 2008; Tsoukas, 2003). Whereas, practice-based perspective brings a deep understanding of how knowledge is situationally constructed, activated, transformed, emerged, mobilized and how it contributes to knowledge creation and is institutionalized (Souto, 2013; Corradi et al., 2008).

On the other side of this research, as mentioned earlier, HEIs are the main productive instrument of societies for the effective use of knowledge. While the main concern of today's universities is to develop top quality graduates, who should possess analytical and problem solving skills, and interpersonal understanding as part of their learning achievements, thereby, contributing to the national goal of developing a knowledge society (Mohayidin et al., 2007). Accordingly, KM in HEIs will provide a set of practices for linking people (i.e. students, teachers, researchers, business and external entities), processes and technologies. It also focuses on how institutions can promote strategies and practices that help the different actors and practitioners to share, manage and apply new knowledge (Pinto, 2012). Back to year 2000, Rowley claimed that higher education is in the core of knowledge business, pointing out that effective KM may require significant change in culture and values, organisational structures, and reward systems. Rowley's article was titled by asking a major question "Is higher education ready for KM?"

Only few educational institutions are found to have a full-fledged KM practice in place (Devi et al., 2013; Songsangyos, 2012; Cranfield, 2011), while there is a rich and growing interest of research into KM in commercial environments and public sector organizations (Fullwood et al., 2013; Sandhu et al., 2011). After reviewing the previous literature on KM as applied in the HEI sector, it was substantially lacking and limited. Moreover, it was claimed by Devi et al. (2013), Fullwood et al. (2013) that the majority of related studies on KM practices and its strategic key enablers, for example, policy and leadership, organizational culture, information technology, and measurements (Devi et al., 2013; Girard, 2005; Stankosky, 2005; McElroy, 2000), have focused on the commercial sector with only a handful on the HEIs. Amongst the studies that focused on HEIs, the majority of the "handful" was not supported by empirical evidence except for a few. Accordingly, there is a growing demand for more research that empirically assess KM practices and its key enablers at HEIs in the context of complexity and instable environment.

Another important matter, that even though the focus on KM has grown sharply in the past recent years, which sparked a plethora of definitions, a variety of explanations, and encompasses diverse disciplines (Cranfield and Taylor, 2008), however, these literature reviews are still remain elusive and lacking, when it comes to study KM in a complex cultural and societal contexts (Syaharizatul,

2013; van Wijk et al., 2008; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Moreover, most of the previous KM liteature, particularly in the educational sector, were based on the western developed context and few other developing countries (Perry, 2014; Syaharizatul, 2013; Barnard, 2013; Ghaffari et al., 2012; Sinha et al., 2012; Awang et al., 2011; Cranfield, 2011; Ali, 2009; Mohayidin et al., 2007; Jack, 2004). Within the context of Palestinian higher education, universities have become ineffective as a result of their incapability to adaptively respond to various critical environmental challenges and pressures (Shah, 2014). That is due to the Israel-Palestine conflict which remains one of the most intractable and polarizing in the world; whilst political and military elements of the conflict receive widespread media coverage and academic interests (Penfold and Ali, 2014; Horton, 2009), the educational status is less well reported.

Literature on higher education sector in Palestine suggests that most of the studies focus on easily quantifiable indicators such as teacher versus students' ratios, access to higher education and equity (Koni et al., 2013), however, these studies rarely assess the quality of education system in terms of knowledge process from the pointview of various stakeholder such as students and academic staff. Generally, education in Palestine is very unique because it is one of the very few places in the world that has been forced to develop under continuous challenges from external forces (Silwadi and Mayo, 2014). In this study, it will focus on this unique geopolitical situation of the occupied Palestinian territories. While this current research will have the initiative to study deeply the case of KM practices in the Palestinian HEIs, in particular the case of Gaza Strip. This study will also investigate more about the impact factors that posses its affects on managing the Palestinian HEIs and its knowledge resources towards developing potential KWs.

2. KNOWLEDGE AS A PRACTICE-BASED CONCEPT

During the mid-1990s, many organizations became more interested in the nature of knowledge, partly as a result of the introduction of information technology, which provided the promise of ability to manage knowledge as a corporate asset (Syaharizatul, 2013). Since then, knowledge was placed to be the most important and valuable asset in today's organizations (Žarkovic et al., 2014; Minati, 2012). It has been seen as a strategy and a resource to be managed; and has gained popularity in business management in both theory and practice (Syaharizatul, 2013; Fenwick, 2008; Lopes et al., 2005). The uprising significance of knowledge has raised desires of management studies scholars (e.g., Tsoukas, 2003; Brown and Duguid, 2000; Cook and Brown, 1999; Spender, 1996; Blackler, 1995; Nonaka, 1994; Wiig, 1993) to grub deep on the meaning of knowledge. They have wrestled over What is Knowledge (Newell et al., 2009), representing one of the most fundamental questions that humanity has grappled with, and occupying the minds and interests of philosophers for centuries (Hislop, 2005). As a result, it is obviously seen that there are two broad epistemological camps in the literature of knowledge: Objectivist perspective, practice-based perspective (Hislop, 2005). These two approaches, according to Schultze (1999), are actually derived from, firstly, an

objective stance which implies a realist ontology, which asserts that reality is independent of human perception, and a positivist epistemology, which claims that reality can be structured in terms of a priori concepts and categories. Secondly, a subjective stance which implies a nominalist ontology, which asserts that reality is socially constructed as a result of individuals' interactions with it, and an anti-positivist epistemology, which claims that reality is based on human experiences in this world.

On the one hand, objectivists see knowledge as something exist in the human head and is acquired, modeled, and expressed precisely in the most objective and explicit terms possible (Cook and Brown, 1999). They believe that knowledge exists as an object, and is waiting to be discovered by humans (Schultze, 1999), while knowledge is treated as an entity that people can possess (Virtanen, 2010). According to Hislop (2005), objectivist see that social world can be studied scientifically, and so social phenomena can be quantified and measured. As in Table 1, Hislop (2005) and Nonaka et al. (2000) are also supporting the idea that explicit knowledge has the privilege over tacit knowledge. Nonaka et al. (2000) believe that new knowledge is created dynamically and continually through a dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge. Hislop (2005) claims that developing and producing knowledge comes from a process of intellectual reflection, and is mainly a cognitive process.

On the other hand, practice-based approach conceptualizes knowledge as socially constructed, embedded within and inseparable from practice and human activity (Spender, 2008; Hislop, 2005; Tsoukas, 2003; Gherardi, 2000). This means that knowledge is not seen as an objective entity that can be separated from people or activities (Virtanen, 2010). Further, knowledge "is neither possessed by any one agent, nor contained in any one repository" (Schultze, 1999. p. 164). It is not resides in anyone's mind, instead, knowledge exists in practice (Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal, 2010). It is continuously shaping, and being shaped by the social interaction practices of communities and individuals (Schultze, 1999). In addition, as practice-based perpective believe that tacit and explicit knowledge are inseparable (Table 1), Tsoukas (2003) clarify that tacit knowing is essential to every thought and action, therefore, it can not be converted into explicit knowledge.

Table 1: Objectivist and practice-based epistemologies of knowledge

Objectivist epistemology	Practice-based epistemology
Knowledge derived from an intellectual process	Knowledge is embedded in practice
	Knowing/doing inseparable
Knowledge is a disembodied entity/object	Knowledge is embodied in people
	Knowledge is socially constructed
Knowledge is objective "facts"	Knowledge is culturally embedded
	Knowledge is contestable
	Knowledge is socially constructed
Explicit knowledge (objective) privileged over tacit knowledge (subjective)	Tacit and explicit knowledge are inseparable and mutual constituted
Distinct knowledge categories	Knowledge is multidimensional

Tsoukas argue that "tacit and explicit knowledge are not the two ends of a continuum, but the two sides of the same coin: Even the most explicit kind of knowledge is underlain by tacit knowledge" (p. 425).

The creation of new knowledge (from the practice-based perspective) is not when tacit knowledge becomes explicit, but when our skilled performance is punctuated in new ways through social interaction (Tsoukas, 2003). As gaining knowledge comes through learning, Gherardi (2000) mentioned that the concept of knowing in practice enables us to focus on the fact that, in everyday practices, learning and knowing are not separate activities, but they takes place in the experience flow, with or without our awareness of it. In meanwhile, we might know much more than we know we know, therefore, practice is a system of activities in which knowing is not separate from doing (Gherardi, 2006; Gherardi, 2000). Moreover, Blackler (1995) claims that rather than considering knowledge as something that we have, he suggets that knowing is better regarded as something we do. Cook and Brown (1999. p. 87) stated that "knowledge is commonly thought of as something we use in action but it is not understood to be action." They used the term "knowing" to refer to the epistemological dimension of action itself, which is not meant to be something that is used in action or necessary to action, it is however a part of action or practice. Cook and Brown (1999. p. 388) then concluded that "we must see knowledge as a tool at the service of knowing not as something that, once possessed, is all that is needed to enable an action or practice." Stenmark (2002) clarifies that knowledge is not meant to result in action in order to exist, even though the ability to take an action is necessary, but knowledge will be worthless if it remains inactive.

3. KM

The different perspective of each knowledge epistemological camps, objectivists and practice-based, has led to a different perceptions of KM (Syaharizatul, 2013; Newell et al., 2009; Hislop, 2005; Alavi and Leidner, 2001). From the objectivists side, knowledge is considered as an object that people can possess (Schultze, 1999; Nonaka, 1994), thus, KM should focus on building and managing knowledge stocks (Alavi and Leidner, 2001), by transfering or converting knowledge from one type (e.g., tacit, explicit) or location (e.g., individual, organizational) to another (Newell et al., 2009), while the role of information technology involves gathering, storing, and transferring knowledge (Alavi and Leidner, 2001). On the other side, practice-based scholars sees knowledge as socially constructed and embedded in practice (Gherardi, 2006; Tsoukas, 2003; Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Blackler, 1995); in this case, KM should focus on knowledge flow and the processes of creating, sharing, and distributing knowledge (Alavi and Leidner, 2001), by sharing, translating, and legitimating knowledge amongst interacting groups and overlapping practices (Newell et al., 2009), while the role of information technology is to provide link among the sources of knowledge to create wider breadth and depth of knowledge flows (Alavi and Leidner, 2001).

Generally, its argued by Alvesson and Kärreman (2001. p. 995) that "knowledge is an ambiguous, unspecific and dynamic phenomenon,

intrinsically related to meaning, understanding and process, and therefore difficult to manage." Therefore, a critical discussion was conducted by Hislop (2005) via asking a main serious question: Is knowledge manageable? Hislop argues that without considering knowledge as an amenable resource to management control, then the feasibility of KM become questionable. As mentioned earlier, knowledge is not easily measured and very difficult to control and manage, that is because knowledge is intangible, invisible, and inseparable from humans beliefs and actions (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Tsoukas, 2003; Hislop, 2005; Gherardi, 2006). In brief, we can say that "while you may be able to manage related organizational processes like community building and knowledge exchange, you can not manage knowledge itself" (von Krogh et al., 2000. p. 17). Even though knowledge may not be amenable to a direct control, however, Hislop (2005) highlights that its typically well understood that the management does have some ability in way or another to influence and control the process of knowledge. Therefore, Hislop argues that KM is viable, while knowledge can be managed more indirectly by encouraging workers to share and implement their knowledge in a specific ways.

4. THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN A SOCIETY

"Education will become the center of the knowledge society." So wrote Peter Drucker (1994. p. 66), as well as many other recent researchers, all agreed that higher education, in particular, has a critical role to play in the transition towards a knowledge society (e.g., Foo, 2013; Ramachandran et al., 2013; Hoq and Akter, 2012; Pinto, 2012; Cranfield, 2011; Goede, 2011). Universities, as HEIs have always served the needs of society and should continue to do so (Thomas, 2010). Higher education is considered to be a very unique intellectual contributor to a society, where powerful and modern societies are actually built around the expansion of science and universities (Kamens, 2012). In order to understand more about the role of HEI in today's societies, Cranfield (2011) has addressed a main question, what is the role of universities today, and what function do they have in today's society and economy? For this matter, Cranfield pointed out to Palfreyman's (2001) point-view, as he outlined the role of a university in terms of inputs-processes-outputs (Figure 1). Palfreyman proposal suggests that the inputs of HEI are students, staff, finance, and infrastructure, which are transformed by the university and its processes (e.g., teaching, peer pressure, collegiality), into outputs (employable graduates, research and technology transfer, a wider social role) (Palfreyman, 2001). Another proposal in line with Palfreyman's point-view was suggested by Metaxiotis and Psarras (2003). They highlighted three main roles of universities. Firstly, teaching which aim to improve the student's abilities to become successful lifelong learner. Secondly, research, to create and develop the human knowledge, and to promote creativity. Thirdly, service, by participating in community outreach activities, which serve the local, national, and international communities.

Today, the economical and societal environment is rapidly changing; whereas the traditional role of universities as providers of knowledge is greatly challenged (Kamens, 2012; Pinto, 2012;

Rowley, 2000). University mission has been expanded to contain new roles not only in teaching and research, but also as an innovation source, and a think-tank for policy formulation and decision making at various levels. Today's societies expect new ideas and concepts to be developed by the universities (Hoq and Akter, 2012). Based on the ideas of Boulton and Lucas (2011), universities should act upon five major roles, as they are considered to be the best respond to the modern educational and research practices, and current priorities for outreach and innovation. As shown in Figure 2, universities should mainly serve to educate, to conduct research, to innovate and create new opportunities, to engage on different levels with the local and international community. Boulton and Lucas emphasis on the important role of university education by focusing on developing not only what is learned, but also how it is learned, whereas universities should serve to make students think. Students should learn how to understand and seek meaning, how to find the truth, and how to distinguish between the true and the merely seemingly true; they should learn how to resolve problems by rational argument supported by evidence (Boulton and Lucas, 2011).

In the 21st century, this world is getting more interconnected, more integrated, and more accelerated; therefore, HEIs, must be aware about these challenges, and respond rapidly to their changing role in a knowledge-based society (Cranfield and

Figure 1: The process of a university
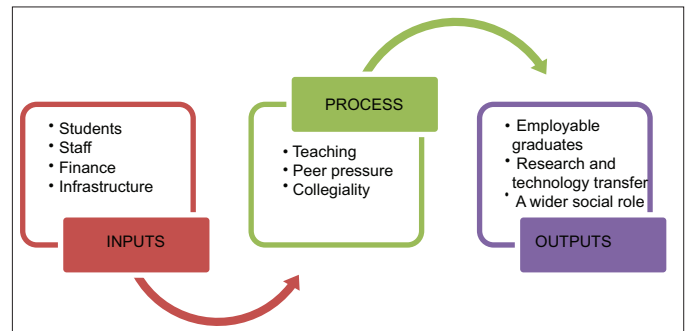
Source: Developed by Cranfield (2011. p. 25), adapted from Palfreyman (2001)

Figure 2: The roles of a university
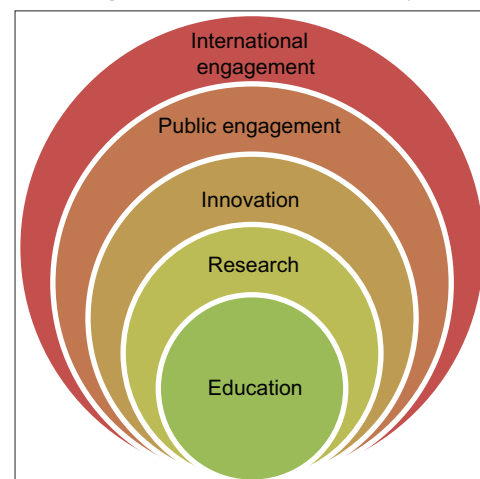
Source: Adapted from Boulton and Lucas (2011)

Taylor, 2008; Birgeneau, 2005; Rowley, 2000). They need to develop their knowledge assets, and recognize the value of their intellectual capital to their continuing role in society (Rowley, 2000). Moreover, in light of these challenges, universities need to think about the way in which they teach, conduct research, and manage the institution and its various stakeholders (Cranfield and Taylor, 2008). Indeed, as learning organizations, they will have to engage effectively in knowledge production, enhance creativity and innovation, be interconnected with the industry and society, and be able to produce top quality graduates (Pinto, 2012). On the other hand, Metaxiotis and Psarras (2003) go further to say that even students are not anymore satisfied with the level of education quality. They are now aware that the future will belong to those who can acquire and apply a very unique knowledge and skills which the global markets demand. Metaxiotis and Psarras argue that today's students require regular updating of their knowledge, skills, and competences; hence, universities need to jumb to higher levels of innovative learning and research.

5. THE HIGHER EDUCATION IN PALESTINE

In developing countries, higher education is recognized as a key force for development (Bunoti, 2011). However, the quality of higher education in developing countries is influenced by complex factors such as: The destruction of existing infrastructures, the underdevelopment of research infrastructures, the brain-drain towards the more developed countries, the digital divide and knowledge revolution, the linguistic and cultural barriers, rapid demographic change, and the reduction of public funding (Bunoti, 2011; Bloom and Rosovsky, 2007; UNESCO, 2005). In addition to these challenges, the issue of conflict, particularly the armed-conflict, has detrimental effects on the educational status in many developing countries (Gates et al., 2012). War kills; however, as Gates et al. (2012) elaborate more, the consequences extend far beyond these direct deaths; it leads to forced migration, refugee flows, capital flight, the society infrastructure will be destroyed, social, political, and economical status will be harmed badly. The consequences of war for development are profound (Gates et al., 2012; Lai and Thyne, 2007), in another words, civil war and conflict are "development in reverse" (Collier et al., 2003), whereas conflicts create a development gap between those countries that have experienced armed conflict and those who have not (Gates et al., 2012).

For over 67 years, the people of Palestine have been witness a long conflict with Israel and faced displacement, ongoing insecurity and violence, restrictions on movement and goods, poor service provision and internal fragmentation of the population (Shah, 2014; Jayousi and Zatari, 2012). In such an instable and complex environment, education services struggle to deliver meaningful, protective, and enabling education. In fact, the contenious aggression of the Israeli occupation into the Palestinian territories have had huge impact on the educational process, and made serious shocks on Palestinian education system, which is considered to be as the corner stone of any knowledge society.

This negative and harmful impact includes: Ongoing settler violence and harassment in West Bank, house and school demolitions in East Jerusalem and West Bank, and restrictions on movement and access for students and teachers within East Jerusalem (Shah, 2014; Jayousi and Zatari, 2012). Besides, many students, academic, and support staff have been killed, over and above the continual danger of detention and abuse at the occupation's barriers and checkpoints (MBRF and UNDP, 2009). In addition, according to the World Bank Report (2009) on equity and access to tertiary education in the Middle East and North Africa Region, Palestine faces many difficulties related to education and knowledge production such as: The socioeconomic profile of its students, the geopolitical situation, and the population boom among college age of Palestinians. Therefore, it becomes very essential to build self-sustaining education capacities in regions of conflict and instability such as Palestine (Penfold and Ali, 2014). Moreover and in particular, Gaza Strip also suffer from various Isralei policies that harms the education badly, as not only kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and other education centres, but also HEIs were directly targeted during the hostilities, sustaining significant injury and loss of life among staff and student populations, as well as damage to buildings and equipment (UNESCO, 2014). All of these challenges holds an affect, in away or another, on the implementation of KM practices in Palestinian HEIs.

In spite of that, the occupied Palestinian territories hold an advanced position among the Arab countries with regard to a number of indicators related to knowledge in general and education in particular (MBRF and UNDP, 2009) for instance, the literacy rate of Palestinians (15 Years and Over) in year 2014 equals 96.4% (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Besides, it is a stunning achievement for the Palestinian education that in the short span of 40 years and in the face of extraordinary obstacles, almost four dozen postsecondary instittions have been founded in Palestine, a rate of nearly one per year (Koni et al., 2013; Cristillo, 2009). Largely funded and sustained through private donations and tuition, nearly (43) educational institutions devided into: (11) Universities, (13) university colleges, and (19) community colleges, offer more than (300) educational fields of study across the arts and humanities, the social sciences, and mathematics, science, and technology (Cristillo, 2009). Like many HEIs in the region and worldwide, Palestinian HEIs struggle to fulfil the educational demands of Palestinians, while trying to maintain high quality and relevant style of education (Koni et al., 2013).

6. METHODOLOGY

6.1. Purpose of the Study

This research uses the practice-based perspective of knowledge as a theoretical basis, to develop a deeper and more grounded theory in KM. The purpose of this current study is to extend this stream of research, hence, it requires the research to provide empirical evidence that increases an understanding of KM practices. Therefore, the aim of this study is first and foremost exploratory since it seeks to find out how the Palestinian HEIs, particularly in Gaza Strip, face the daily challenges, exploring the growth and impact of these institutions and how this contribute to develop a

Palestinian knowledge society. Moreover, a primary focus of this study is to investigate the social phenomenon without explicit expectations or early assumptions, asking a deep qualitative questions of "why" people of Palestine look for knowledge and get education, "how" they use this knowledge for there own benefits, and "how" they face the instability of the complicated situation in order to have a knowledge society. More specifically, the research attempts:

1. To explore the perceptions and practices of KM within the context of HEIs in Gaza Strip.
2. To identify the influence of HEIs' role in developing potential KWs in Gaza Strip.
3. To examine other contributing factors that promote the implementation of KM practices within the context of HEIs in Gaza Strip.

6.2. Method and Case of Study

HEIs in Palestine either in the West bank and Gaza Strip, are almost (43) educational institutions divided into: (11) Universities, (13) university colleges, and (19) community colleges, offer more than (300) different educational fields of study. For the purpose of this research, universities in Gaza Strip will be included in this study, while the colleges were excluded. This study uses the Qualititative methodology to begin to unpack the issues related to the implementation of KM practices within HEIs in Gaza Strip. This research also uses case studies as a research method, which offer an approach for analysing social change as well as providing as answers to "How" and "Why?" questions.

The core method of this research to generate data to answer the above research aims will be in-depth semi-structured interviews. Besides, as a supplement to the main study tool, documentary analysis will be used to provide an additional source of evidence for further contextual understanding. The research will use a multi-case of all (5) universities in Gaza Strip. Additionally, a semi-structured, one-to-one interviews will be conducted at the case locations. The study will spot the light on a multiple stakeholders: Academic staff and Senior managers in HEIs, expected university graduates, Policy makers at the Palestinian Ministry of Education, Human Resources managers in Palestinian companies.

7. CONCLUSION

The concept of "knowledge" has been expanded and contained various meanings as consistent with the evolution of the so-called "era of knowledge." Yet, knowledge is not any more abbreviated to the stored knowledge in human minds, references, and data banks; however, this concept has been developed to be including and embodying cumulative experiences and skills, that gained over social interactions, practice, and continuous learning. While the most important part in the creation of new knowledge arises from the practicing process of human mind and other senses in an action (Souto, 2013; Syaharizatul, 2013; Mládková, 2011; Souto, 2010; Gherardi, 2008; Tsoukas, 2003; Cook and Brown, 1999). As a matter of fact, this study focuses on how and why people of Palestine need to have knowledge, rather than trying to spot on what they know. In particular, this

research paper provides a theoretical framework and empirical evidence that increases an understanding of KM practices in HEIs within the context of instable environments, focusing on the unique geopolitical situation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Another essential point to be highlighted here within the case of this paper, is that KM practices and initiatives in the Palestinian HEIs have been facing great external challenges due to the political and economic instability over there. Certainly, human security, freedom of expression, thoughts, information, and movement are indispensable requirements for the development of knowledge societies (UNDP, 2015; Robinson, 2010; UNESCO, 2005); however, these basic human rights are considered to be main challenges for education and knowledge development in Palestine, mainly in the higher education sector. Consequently, HEIs in developing countries, particularly in Palestine, are urged to show greater flexibility in adapting and anticipating the needs of society, where there is an urgent need to establish new university models, better geared to needs and conducive to national aspirations, and to regional and international cooperation (Alfoqahaa, 2015; Silwadi and Mayo, 2014; Koni et al., 2013; Romahi, 2010; UNESCO, 2005). While attempting to imitate the model of universities in the developed regions would be a mistake (UNESCO, 2005), likewise not from the business and commercial sector (Petrides and Nguyen, 2006).

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