Embedded Knowledge and Offshore Software Development

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Offshore software development scenarios may include groups with domain specific knowledge who collaborate internationally across multiple local contexts. In this paper we develop a conceptual scheme based on theories associated with embedded knowledge. Drawing on evidence from case studies of software companies with offshore subsidiaries in India and other locations, we discuss problems associated with the embeddedness of knowledge in geographically-separated units of a firm. We provide some practical implications for managing embedded knowledge in offshore software development.

Dr Brian Nicholson is a Senior Lecturer at Manchester Business School. For the last 11 years, he has been involved in teaching, research and consultancy projects in the broad area of managing global outsourcing of software and other business processes. This has involved work in India, China, Costa Rica, Iran, Egypt; Malaysia and Bangladesh. Dr Nicholson's research at the firm level has resulted in several influential publications in international journals and a book Global IT Outsourcing (Cambridge University Press, 2003). Policy level consultancy studies have been undertaken for the governments of Costa Rica and Iran to stimulate software exports. In the case of Costa Rica, this resulted in production of a national level strategy. His most recent work has been commissioned by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales: “Risk and Control of Offshore Outsourcing of Accounting Services.”