

# Levels of Knowledge

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## Abstract

21<sup>st</sup> century is the Knowledge century . Knowledge production , knowledge use and knowledge dissemination, is an integral activity of the knowledge society. Information and knowledge are not mutually exclusive and contradictory to each other and they rather enrich each other. Mainly there are two types of knowledge viz. Materialistic knowledge and spiritualistic knowledge. The Information in Relation to Knowledge can be classified into three category: Transparent knowledge, Relative knowledge and Independent knowledge. These three principles of knowledge can be applied to any thing under the sun, such as life of Buddha to laws of Newton who formulated the concepts of Kaivalya and theory of gravity, respectively.

## Keywords

Knowledge, Information, Materialistic Knowledge Spiritualistic Knowledge, Transparent Knowledge Relative Knowledge, Independent Knowledge

## Introduction

Knowledge production , knowledge use and knowledge dissemination, is an inevitable initiative in the current context of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG). More importantly in a country with such large population, shifting targets of mere literacy to qualitative education, growing numbers of uneducated youth due to lack of employment opportunities and socio-cultural transformation due to urbanization have brought about a need for providing a direction to the country in terms of what to achieve in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century which is being termed as Knowledge Century.

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## What is knowledge

knowledge is a term, which is used widely and indiscriminately. It ranges from simple information to absolute mastery over any field of knowledge. For a common man if one does not have information of a thing he/she says that he/she has no knowledge of it. Here it is lack of information , which is viewed as synonymous with knowledge. One speaks of oneself as 'I am not a knowledgeable person in this field', it means one who has not reached a level of being 'Very high in regard ' so as to be considered oneself as an authority in that field

For most of philosophical history "Knowledge" was taken to mean a belief that was justified as true to an absolute certainty. Any less justified beliefs were called mere "probable opinion ". Philosophers often define knowledge as a justified , true belief. "In Plato's view knowledge is merely an awareness of absolute, universal Ideas or Forms, existing independent of any subject trying to apprehend them. Though, Aristotle puts more emphasis on logical and empirical methods for gathering knowledge , he still accepts the view that such knowledge is apprehension of necessary and universal principles. Following the renaissance, two main epistemological positions dominated philosophy: empiricism, which sees knowledge as the product of sensory perception, and rationalism, which sees it as the product of rational reflection".

However, knowledge may in fact be defined as a unique imprint left by an individual for the advancement of the living beings either materialistic or spiritualistic.

## Information versus Knowledge

Information and knowledge are not mutually exclusive and contradictory to each other. They rather enrich each other and lead to the perfect development of human potential. Information is the basis for knowledge and knowledge grows

as one become informed.

However, while layman’s terminology of knowledge is confined to information, intellectual usage goes much beyond this embrace knowledge developed by the self creativity and innovation etc. Though this kind of division of the functioning of human mind is nothing but simplifying of the complex process, it is quite relevant in the current context where we observe the increasing influence of information over knowledge.

Information according to some educationists is considered as mere acquisition of facts or rote memory and knowledge as a mental process that take shape in the mind or an intellectual process. Which has very little or nothing to do with outside elements. Emphatically speaking the society is slowly drifting from knowledge based society to information –based society and human being have become transponders of information rather than the repository of knowledge. This is mainly because of the revolutionary development of Information

Communication Technology (ICT).

### Types of Knowledge

Knowledge can be two types:

- i) Materialistic Knowledge (Excellent Attainment) The western concept of Knowledge, which is related to development, and takes place to further the cause of materialistic achievement, is one kind of Knowledge.
- ii) Spiritualistic Knowledge (development of Soul ) The development of soul in which the things beyond materialistic life and existence are given importance

### Classification of Information in Relation to Knowledge

Knowledge philosophically is distinct from simple information. Both knowledge and information consist of true statements, but knowledge is information that has a purpose of use. Philosophers would describe this as information associated with intentionality.



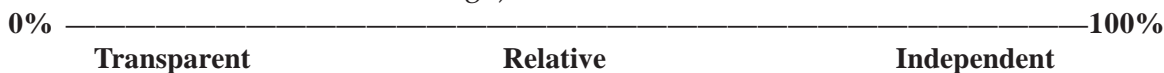
On the basis of the above the following classification can be made based on different types of intention, levels of comprehension and ingenuity.

- i) Transparent knowledge (Information devoid of knowledge) i.e. Information + Deviant Intention (unorganized collection of information in bits and pieces, ignorance, lack of interest, different goals etc.)
- ii) Relative knowledge (Information intertwined with knowledge).i.e.

Information +Intention +Comprehension.

- iii) Independent knowledge (knowledge beyond the realm of Information).i.e. Information +Intention +Comprehension +Ingenuity

However, the above classification cannot be considered as independent entities. They are on a continuum and if all the three are to be placed on a scale of attainment of Knowledge of 0-100% then it can be shown as below.



Though absolute Zero and absolute 100 do not exist, as any information will not be absolutely transparent, there will be a certain amount of retention. While Independent knowledge can never be 100%, as it will also have the impact of previously accumulated information and information related understanding.

### Transparent knowledge (Information devoid of knowledge)

Under this knowledge is considered as

transparent because it comes in and goes out with hardly any retention. Acquiring information i.e. acquisition of facts is considered as a reflex action, which does not require any thinking process. “Knowledge is appreciations of the possession of interconnected details, which in isolation, are of lesser value”. But in Transparent knowledge things are often learnt in isolation or in disconnected fashion. For example things, which are learnt in rote

memory, would remain in memory in separate blocks and unless they are linked together they cannot be comprehended. As long as repeated recollection or memorizing of the things takes



Here one can see that there is a two way direction of arrow between input and output which means, things are received and reflected like rays without any kind of processing involved in it. The best example for this is rote memory through which things are recollected. This is what is leading to transparent Knowledge, in the world of information revolution. Because the things are not taught in relation to each other but presented to the student in abstract terms. Transparent knowledge does not involve in looking at the things with body, mind and soul put together. In the modern educational system there is an enormous predominance of this information loaded teaching-learning-evaluation pattern. It makes the student breathless in acquisition of facts and leaves no room for their comprehension. In this process the students are treated as audio or videotapes, which are used for recording and replay.

The transparent knowledge is not to be confused with memory because in memory only biological process is involved whereas under knowledge, it is intention, which is a social act that plays a dominant role in addition to the biological activity. In case of transparent knowledge the purpose of acquiring the information is not with the intention of fulfillment of the objective, but something else. For example if a student collects a piece of information, not with the intention of developing an interest in that or further processing of it but to satisfy the teacher by reproducing it so that he gets a good impression of the teacher, he is acquiring transparent knowledge.

The purpose of acquiring such knowledge is mainly to serve the immediate purpose rather than the ultimate aim of attaining still higher levels of knowledge. Another example is if a student intends to score good marks in a subject of study, and strives to pursue that with more

place, they are retained and once when it stops automatically they are removed from the memory. In simple terms, the processing of information that takes place as follows

emphasis on obtaining marks then acquiring competence, he/she is not interested in acquiring the real knowledge. His ultimate aim is a goal, which is different from that of the real goal, set by the society i.e. developing an understanding about a particular subject, Here goal (acquiring knowledge) becomes subservient to means (good marks), and means has become goal. Marks are means because they indicate the level of performance of the students.

Though it is true that mere acquisition of information would always not solve any purpose either in education or real life, but that should not undermine the abilities that can be acquired by the students through information. From times immemorial verbal recital has been ingrained in our Culture. There are occasions, when one even does not understand the meaning of a verse still one may enjoy it. That does not mean that one should not attempt to try to understand the meaning of it. That also means that one should not simply stop reciting a verse because he does not understand the meaning of it, as one can do it at a later date. This is possible only when one can receive the information and store it. (This may be compared to the cow eating stalk and later when it is free, chewing it so that it could be digested fully.) Otherwise also further processing of the information can be done later by others also. The inquisition comes only when one has information and otherwise not.

Western philosophers have distinguished between two kinds of knowledge a priori and a posteriori knowledge. A priori knowledge is knowledge gained or justified by reason alone, without the direct or indirect influence of experience (here, experience usually means observation of the world through sense perception). Most of the a Priori knowledge is nothing but Transparent knowledge because this is not experienced by the people, but at the same time it can also lead to the higher levels of knowledge.

**Relative Knowledge (Information intertwined with knowledge):**

Unlike in the first category here Knowledge and Intention go together and that’s why it leads to the development of relative knowledge. Also, under this knowledge revolves around information and it is relative to the information acquired. There may be instances where it becomes highly difficult to differentiate between what is information and what is knowledge, and that falls under this category. It is a situation of synthesis of the two or it may be an instance where it is not possible to see them as independent entities. There is no complete

detachment between Information and knowledge, as we find in the above mentioned first category and at the same time Information is not absolutely independent of its existence of the domain of knowledge as it is observed in the third category.

“The posteriori knowledge that is, knowledge the attainment or justification of which requires reference to experience” (called as empirical knowledge) can also be termed as relative knowledge. This can however lead to Independent knowledge, but not in itself is independent knowledge. The processing of information may be explained as follows:

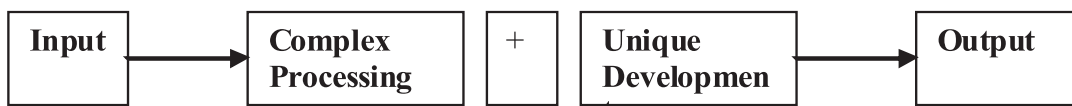


Between input and output there is simple processing involved which leads to the comprehension of facts and that’s how it is different from transparent knowledge. But this processing does not go beyond the level of comprehending what is present and that’s why it cannot reach the level of independent knowledge. But it is a step in right direction for the attainment of independent knowledge.

**Independent knowledge (knowledge beyond the realm of Information)**

All knowledge received by an Individual cannot become Independent knowledge. It can either become transparent knowledge (if the student to whom it is transmitted does not bother to understand that or fails to understand due to the reasons mentioned above) or relative knowledge if the student concerned can have a foil understanding of the process, and/or even

when it is practiced. It cannot go above and beyond these two levels. The development of Independent knowledge is where human ingenuity comes into play, which can have any number of its expressions. It is independent from the information and does not have close relation with the information. Though under this category, information too has some influence but it is highly negligible and remote. The ultimate goal of any educational system should be the pursuit of this objective i.e. to bring about the excellence out of each individual. As each individual is a unique creation, there is always scope to extract the best out of every one. The system of Education should not stifle the individual’s growth but become a conduit for the expression of oneself. The information processing under this category may be explained as follows:



Under this the processing is not very simple to understand the things but a complex one to find solutions for what is not present. This complex processing may also lead to the development of unique ideas/innovations/discoveries/anything of original nature for the advancement and/or well being of the individual/society either materialistic or spiritual. This should be the ultimate goal of the system of education.

The development of Independent knowledge among students is also necessary from the point of view of well being of the individual, Society and Nation because otherwise knowledge becomes a monopoly of few. The monopoly of knowledge through patents can be very disturbing and it questions the very survival of common man and puts his life at stake, unless the generation of knowledge and consequent



distribution of it is not taken care of. The issue of whether innovation justifies a certain amount of monopoly was a point raised most strikingly by the Microsoft case. In October 1998, America's Department of Justice launched an anti-trust case against the World's largest Software Company which resulted, in April 2000, in a ruling that the Company was an "abusive monopolist" that should be broken up. (Cairncross, frances-2001).

### Conclusion

These principles of knowledge (transparent, relative and independent) can be applied to any thing under the sun, such as life of Buddha to laws of Newton who formulated the concepts of Kaivalya and theory of gravity, respectively. To illustrate how the above three levels work on an individual, the life of Buddha can be cited. Siddhartha (Gautama Buddha) who led a life of comfort and luxury when went with a charioteer for an excursion from his palace he saw an old man, a sick man and a dead body in succession. When he asked his charioteer the meaning of the sight he had witnessed for the first time in his life, the charioteer said This happens to all men. Here comes the transparent knowledge of the charioteer, and to great extent most of the people who witness such events. They are simply brushed aside (ignored) as part of life, which need no importance. The events enter mind and disappear.

However the conversation with the charioteer had a tremendous effect on the mind of the young man, and brought about a sea change in his outlook on life. This can be defined as relative knowledge, as for Buddha the information did

not disappear, but the thinking process went on around those very events. Many people reach this stage also, but Buddha underwent the third stage. i.e. Independent Knowledge stage, as he renounced everything and after undergoing different kinds of self-torture attained Enlightenment or Bodh. He discovered the 'Law of Dependent Origination' a cycle of twelve causes and effects that conditioned the world. This law is the special contribution of the Buddha, never expounded by any other sage or philosopher hitherto.

The above story describes how the information of the suffering did not become a mere transparent knowledge, but revolved in the mind (Relative knowledge) of Buddha and ultimately led to the development of Independent knowledge. To put it alternatively, the thinking of Buddha was different, rational and unique.

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