Factors Contributing Knowledge Sharing In Higher Learning Institution

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ABSTRACT

This paper is to discuss the factors that might be the contributors to the knowledge sharing in a Higher Learning Institution of Malaysia. Currently a study is conducted at a higher learning institution to identify the factors that can enhance the practice of knowledge sharing among the staffs regardless academic staffs or non-academic staffs. The study will be carried out by using two major approaches that are questionnaire survey and case studies. Therefore, the final product of this study is to compose the factors that have been determined within the study and it will be conferred in this paper.
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Keywords

Knowledge sharing, Higher Learning Institution, Cultural factors, IT factors

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A strategy in ensuring a country able to face the globalization challenges and sustain the economy growth is by establishing a dynamic human resource which able to support the development of k- based economy and to leverage the country productivity and competitiveness. Practicing the knowledge management is not as easy as we thought for without proper plan it would not reach the objective furthermore it will spend many cost.

The perceptions on the knowledge management are varies but the main intention is to share and capture the knowledge. Knowledge may involve gathering, structuring, storing and accessing information to build knowledge. It is also involves creating a culture that encourages and facilitates the creation and sharing of knowledge within an organization" (Boyett & Boyett, 2001)

The habit of knowledge sharing promotes constant innovation. The passion or desire to donate ideas irrespective the original quality can establish a strong and health sharing community. The habits can be implemented with high trust and mutual respect among all idea donators without neglecting on giving due credit to others idea. The knowledge advantage is sustainable because it generates increasing returns and continuing advantages. Unlike material assets, which decrease as they are used, knowledge assets increase with use.

According to Wah (1999), there is a problem of people's tendency to hoard knowledge. Knowledge should be shared because when organizations use knowledge resources, these assets tend to increase in that both the giver and receiver are enriched as a result of the transaction (Davenport & Prusak, 2000). For example, more than one individual can use knowledge at the same time, and shared knowledge stimulates the creation of new knowledge. More importantly, this process appears to reduce costs and significantly contribute to overall organizational success by preventing individuals from repeating the mistakes of other individuals (Gruenfeld, Martorana & Fan, 2000).

According to Gurteen (1999), getting things done in an organization today requires collaborative effort. Not only input is needed from other people, but also their support and buy-in. Being open with them and sharing with them helps in achieving one's or an organization's objectives.

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although higher learning institution has adopted knowledge sharing in its system, it is still uncertain to what extent it has been practiced in this university. So this study is to find out the factors contribute to the sharing of knowledge among the staff.

Research in this area would therefore contribute towards further understanding of knowledge sharing among academic staff of higher academic institutions.

3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Knowledge sharing has increasingly been viewed as playing a very important role in the exchange, transfer and dissemination of knowledge. It is therefore important to identify the factors that affect knowledge sharing to enable knowledge sharing activities be carried out effectively in Higher Learning Institution

The objectives of this study are therefore as follows:
1) to identify the factors contributing to knowledge sharing in Higher Learning Institution
2) to measure the effectiveness of factors that contribute to knowledge sharing in Higher Learning Institution

4.0 RESEARCH SCOPE

This research will focus on the knowledge sharing among staff. The aim is to identify the factors that contribute to knowledge sharing in Higher Learning Institution. An Institution in Malaysia has been selected for this research.

5.0 EXPECTED FINDING

At the end of this research the following results are expected to achieve:
1) the factors contribute to knowledge sharing in Higher Learning Institution
2) the level of effectiveness of factors that contribute to knowledge sharing in Higher Learning Institution

6.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research will be conducted as a quantitative research where all related information would be gathered using survey methods. The respondents will be selected randomly from every faculties and departments. The data collected will be analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software.

This study employs two methods of analysis, namely exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and logistic regression. Factor analysis will be used to reduce and consequently group the independent variables. Logistic regression will be used subsequently to analyze the relationship between the categorical dependent variable with the independent variables found in the factor analysis. Primary data will be collected for the purpose of analysis which will be further discussed in the collection of data section.

7.0 KNOWLEDGE

The concept of knowledge is dissimilar from information. Information, which can be associated with facts about the real world, is the fundament of knowledge. Knowledge is information collective with experience, context, reflection, intuition, interpretation, and creativity

Knowledge can be categorized to explicit and tacit (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Nonaka et al. (2000) defined explicit knowledge as the knowledge that can be expressed in formal and systematic language and shared in the form of data, scientific formula, specifications, and manuals. In contrast tacit knowledge is deeply rooted in action, procedure, routines, commitment, ideals, values and emotions.

8.0 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management which is about a whole lot more than just getting tacit knowledge transformed into explicit knowledge. It is also about more than just building huge repositories of knowledge and best practices. There are three basic processes of knowledge management namely, knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization. Knowledge acquisition is the process of development and creation of insights, skills and relationships while knowledge sharing is the act of disseminating and making available knowledge that is already known, and knowledge utilization is where learning is integrated into the organization (Tiwana, 2002).

Through knowledge sharing between the person leaving and the person coming in can make a world difference to an organization. This is because knowledge sharing is every bit important to knowledge management as capturing, storing and distributing information, ideas, experiences and knowledge.

In knowledge management, knowledge is considered as part of the production resources which must be shared, applied and improved so as to generate creative ideas to a particular problem or challenges (Wang, 1999).

Knowledge sharing is refers as "activities of transferring or disseminating knowledge from one person, group organization to another (Lee, 2001).

8.1 Knowledge sharing

The ability to transfer knowledge across an organization has been found to contribute to organizational performance. Knowledge transfer requires the willingness of a group or individual to work with others and share knowledge to their mutual benefit. According to the KM life cycle, there are 4 processes view of KM –capturing, organizing, refining and transfer. The sharing is a part of transfer process view of KM (Awad, 2004). Without sharing it is almost impossible for knowledge to be transfer to another person, this shows that knowledge transfers will not occur in an organization unless its employees and work groups display a high level of co-operative behaviors (Goh, 2002).

Employees need to understand how to access and work with information and knowledge, share it and create conditions on how to use it. The understanding of information and knowledge will become a source of intellectual capital through its expression in goods and services. In order to maximize the sharing and communication of knowledge, companies need to consider several organizational dimensions such as information technology, organization structure, organizational culture and reward systems (Liebowitz & Beckman, 1998).

Knowledge sharing success does not depend on technology alone but it is also related to behavioral factors (Calantone, Cavusgil, & Zhao, 2002; Kidwell, Mossholder, & Bennett, 1997; Liao, Chang, Cheng, & Kuo, 2004; Walsham, 2002). An innovative culture, a capacity to learn from failure and good information quality are factors for successful knowledge sharing in public service organizations (Taylor & Wright, 2004).

8.2 Factors Contributing to Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is not easy to be implemented for everyone has they own reason. Somehow there are some factors that can lead to the sharing process which benefits many people. For this research, four factors have been selected which can be broadly categorized namely 'Organizational Support Factors', 'IT Factors', 'Communication Factors' and 'Cultural Factors',.

A study on knowledge sharing practices has been carried out at national car industry Malaysia and the results showed that immediate supervisors and employees' attitude are the main contributors to the successful of knowledge sharing besides organizational culture and work group support (Heng et al., 2005). According to Davenport and Prusak (1998), successful knowledge

management which include the knowledge sharing could be obtained through cultural and behavioral change, organizational change and technological innovation. Van Beveren (2002) has indicated that the need to create the right organizational culture and infrastructure in which knowledge can be created and disseminated is important. Technology can certainly contribute by providing methods for the processing, delivery and sharing of valuable information that is needed for knowledge creation within individuals.
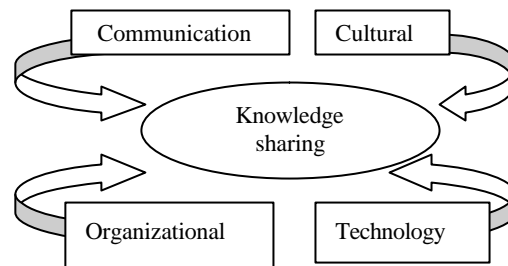

Figure 8.1 Knowledge Sharing factors

Communication is also a driver to sharing. An open-door communication policy, including open communication between individuals, teams and departments to gain new perspectives, is therefore necessary to create a supportive culture (Filipczak, 1997; Samaha, 1996). At the same time employees must feel emotionally free and safe to develop trust among them and within the organization in order to be able to learn and share knowledge which in turn is promoted by open communication.

Clarke (2001) mentioned that technology platforms may assist, but no technology will stimulate the flow of knowledge without attention to the cultural and organizational contexts in which people are encouraged to develop and share their knowledge. According to Anthes (2000), in the U.S. military, their knowledge management programs are praised not only for their use of Information Technology but also for their attention to the often-overlooked cultural and psychological factors that govern learning. Therefore, as regards to culture factor, Dixon (2000) stated that culture could be changed first or it could fit in with the existing culture as sharing culture would come later. BP (British Petroleum) one of the recognized leaders in knowledge management, have introduced a safety culture that encourages communication and sharing. (Martin, 2002).

As per discussed above the four factors: Organizational Support Factors', 'IT Factors', 'Communication Factors' and 'Cultural Factors', will be tested at the higher learning institution to identify whether they are the factors that contribute to the knowledge sharing in the respective institution.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Knowledge nowadays is the most important asset to an organization. The sharing of knowledge give a lot of benefits for example will help in reducing doing the same mistake, save more time in conducting task and will leverage the level of performance of every people. Research in this area would therefore contribute towards further understanding of knowledge sharing among staff of higher academic institutions. By understanding the factors that drive the knowledge sharing, a suitable framework on how to share among staff effectively could be design.

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