

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: A TOOL WHICH PUTS PEOPLE ON THE DRIVER'S SEAT, A SHIFT FROM TANGIBLE TO INTANGIBLE

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Abstract:

It's relatively easier to put technology and processes in place, but a herculean task when comes to people. The human asset of an organisation has tremendous implicit tacit knowledge which needs to be converted into explicit knowledge in order to create a win - win situation. Both knowledge sharing as well as reuse needs to be encouraged and recognized. This article emphasizes the need for knowledge management in higher educational institutions and highlights the benefits reaped by implementing knowledge management. The researcher has proposed a conceptual framework for creation, acquisition, refinement, memory, sharing, utilization, performance and reviewing of the knowledge in an educational institution.

Key Words:

Knowledge Management, Organizational Culture, Higher Education and Conceptual Framework.

Introduction:

Knowledge builds on knowledge and past events helps in generating new knowledge. Knowledge includes insights and wisdom of employees, an important source of value creation. At the most basic level knowledge management can be described as a set of practices that help to improve the use and sharing of data and information in decision making. The key to successful innovation process lies in the mobilization and conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit recorded knowledge. Tacit knowledge is knowledge people carry in their head, it is embedded within the individual whereas explicit knowledge is well documented information which facilitates decisions and actions. Knowledge management in the field of education can be thought of as a frame work or an approach that enables people within an organization to develop a set of practices to collect information and share what they know , leading to action that improves outcomes of an organisation.

Review of Literature:

Knowledge management is the practice of harnessing and exploiting intellectual capital to gain competitive advantage and customer commitment through efficiency, innovation and effective decision making. Knowledge management concentrates on the organization gaining knowledge from its own experiences and experiences of others, to judicious application of knowledge to fulfill its mission and vision. It includes not only innovation but also learning, which can shape and develop approaches to daily work (Nonaka , 1995) Nonaka and Tkeuchi (1995) first proposed the concept of explicit and tacit knowledge. Members can effectively accomplish organisational goals through knowledge management process and procedures (Von Krong , Ichijo, & Nonaka, 2001) Knowledge management in educational settings should provide a set of designs for linking people, processes and technologies and discuss how organisations can promote policies and practices that help people share and manage knowledge (Petrides & Nodine, 2003). Tacit knowledge can only be exploited by effective communication and share.(Ramanuj and Kesh, 2004). Tacit knowledge is experimental, intuitive, and experience based knowledge that cannot be expressed in words, sentences and formalized or articulated and therefore difficult to share also (Alhawary, 2011).

Problem Statement:

Business organisations today are applying knowledge management as an effective management tool to create more knowledge, convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, increase productivity and share value. An educational institution which is a power house of knowledge can effectively apply knowledge management to improve their decision - making, enhance creativity and innovation, develop stronger lines of lateral as well as vertical communication, improve student outcomes and build a more sharing and caring society.

Are educational institutions applying this tool in their day to day interactions with students, staff and faculty and reaping benefits? Are they aware that knowingly or unknowingly they are implementing knowledge management in their organisation? This paper is an attempt to understand significance of knowledge management in educational institutions.

Objective of the study:

1. To know the significance of Knowledge Management
2. To mobilize tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge
3. To create knowledge sharing culture.
4. To identify and analyze the conceptual framework for developing knowledge management system.

Research Methodology:

This study is based on secondary data collected from research papers, articles, literature reviews and observation and interaction with staff members.

Knowledge management brings together three core organisational resources - **people, processes** and **technologies** to enable the organisation to use and share information more effectively. People manage knowledge not systems. Knowledge management is an extensive concept which uses technology to facilitate the smooth flow of information. Formal and informal administrative procedures, curriculum development processes, information sharing patterns, pay and allowances, leaves, promotions, grants and funding, organisational culture and many other work practices that affect the flow of information within an organisation. These processes exist, whether to choose, participate or pay attention is the option to be exercised by the people. Technology is a vital and necessary contributor to the health and effectiveness of the organisation.

The **Data - Information – Knowledge** continuum is a crucial component of knowledge management practices because it emphasizes on a feedback mechanism that may either produce an action step or re - assessment of the kind of information needed to take effective action. It is an internal audit tool in assessing where an organisation stands in its practice of knowledge management in various areas.

Globalization, Privatization, UGC, NAAC, Autonomy and Funding agencies, are the key drivers for Improvement and Accountability in Education and has increased external and internal pressure for improvement in information system. Educators have been using information management tools for decades to improve the efficiency of administrative services and the effectiveness of academic programs. Institutions use technology to collect, organize and disseminate the organization's expanse of quantitative data in areas, to name a few such as student enrollment, progression, pay roll accounting, source and application of funds. Is this data regularly transformed into useful information through interpretation and presentation, given the crucial circumstances of organizational context and applied in the decision making process?

Auto Gear Shifting - Knowledge Management conceptual framework

At the beginning of a new academic year the organisation collects student's data (demographic) at the time of admission- data **Creation** stage, as the student's progresses **Acquire** data of the student's relating to attendance, participation in activities, academic performance, awards received, student trend data, and

feedback . Data must be **Refined** regularly, a master sheet which collates students data from admission till date stored in repository – **Memory** with collaborative effort of administrative staff, faculty and student. This data has to be transformed into Information by **Sharing** and **Utilizing** it.

At the end semester exam an institution witnessed high failure rate for a particular elective subject. How does one try to address this issue? It is through knowledge management. The administrators must study the student's data of that particular class of student's. Transform that available data into useful information through interpretation and use this information for taking necessary decisions. Sometimes this step leads to a new round of data accumulation and interpretation. At times leads to articulation of an action plan and the creation of outcome measures. The **Performance** and **Reviewing** of the decision and action has to be monitored.

The same data can be used by a faculty who feels the class attendance is thin only for her subject. The student data must be analyzed by the faculty in terms of attendance for her subject, other subjects and lecture timings. Knowledge sharing plays an important role here where faculty members of the department can collectively find a way out to improve the attendance and this fact must be documented for the near future.

A database of faculty can be created with teaching experience, subject expertise, classes taught, number of students, hobbies, research papers, books authored, conferences attended and so on. This database can be utilized for generating multiple reports, allocating duties , responsibilities and updated every six months. Conferences, Seminars, Symposium are organized in colleges by various departments. Each department undergoes an entire process of brainstorming, planning, receiving quotations from vendors, printing brochures, conference proceedings; flex board, hospitality, budgeting and ensuring good participation. If a database is created and is easily accessible then other organizers do not have to go through the entire rigmarole. Through sharing of this information it becomes much easy for other departments to organize the same and additional information can be added to the database.

Academic calendar is drafted at the beginning of the year by collating inputs from various departments. This calendar may be available to staff, faculty and students in E-form at the beginning of the year. It must display date wise the activities to be carried on by various departments with details like date, time, topic, department, speaker and venue.

Teaching Learning and Evaluation - A senior faculty has mastered the art of teaching learning and evaluation through experience, guidance and challenges encountered by them in their academic career. Their tacit knowledge, that is expertise in teaching skills, communication skills, notes making, fast track revision, class control may be penned down and shared with the juniors. How a particular topic may be dealt with, time allocated to it, best testing pattern. This may be shared within the department and inter department. So the expertise of one no more becomes a monopoly in order to serve our students better. Session Plan per subject, references, time allocated to a particular topic, if prepared by each faculty and a copy of it available in the library will help create a data base on how to go about conducting a lecture. If there are parallel teachers sharing and exchange can take place and additions can be made to it. A novel way of going about it, a website, a book, You Tube video may be added to the data base in due course.

Placement cell database, alumni association data base, sports database, prize winners, students receiving scholarships and freeships when collated with main data base will be of much importance to the organisation for generating various reports, tracking the performances of students, deciding on the best girl prize. This practice will help to promote those processes that lead to more informed decision - making.

Faculty attending seminars, programs, workshops must be encouraged to share the information . Organisational culture must foster to bring out the implicit knowledge within an individual by giving them opportunity, encouragement, recognition and motivating them to share it with others for effective class and student management skill, teaching skills, student counseling skills. Organisations that establish effective forums and processes for sharing knowledge also tend to excel at bringing new employees in par with the seniors. On the other hand, organisational knowledge can be lost when people in an organisation leave. The administration can prepare an orientation video or presentation for new students, staff and faculty – permanent, temporary and visiting. This must be screened at the beginning of the academic year and a copy of the same readily available at the library. This puts a new comer at ease and acquaintance one with the new system.

Alumni of the institution acts as a brand ambassador. All possible efforts can be put in to collect the details of alumni to create a data base.

Assets of the college - database may be prepared which gives the details of the assets. This will facilitate while deciding upon new purchases, vendor details, applying for quotations, things available on campus. This data must be updated at regular basis.

Appointment of Knowledge Officer to appoint a knowledge officer who will be responsible for collecting data, storing and updating it at regular intervals and making this data readily available as and when needed.

Recommendations:

- Knowledge an asset for decision making.
- Promote policies and practices for knowledge management.
- Library a repository.
- Short orientation film - organizational culture.
- Proper documentation.
- Chief Knowledge Officer.
- Quantified and recorded.

Limitations of the study:

This study focuses on the application and benefits of knowledge management. The researcher has not taken into account the cost benefit analysis of this approach. Further democratization of data may lead to data manipulation and data misuse.

Conclusion:

The challenge is to convert the information that currently resides in those individuals and make it widely and easily available to any faculty member, staff or others. The democratization of data is the key to success.

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