

Knowledge Management: An Effective Tool for Enhancing Higher Education

Dr. Hazarat Ali Seikh, Assistant Professor, Lalgola College, Lalgola, Murshidabad

Abstract: In the 21st Century a new society has emerged where knowledge becomes the primary production resource instead of capital and labour of a country. Proper utilization of existing knowledge can create sufficient wealth for the nation in the form of better health, education, employment or infrastructure for improving the quality of life. So higher education institutions should have significant opportunities to apply knowledge management practices to support every part of their mission. The present paper focuses on knowledge management practice and its contribution in our higher education.

Key Words: Information, Knowledge, Knowledge Management

Objectives:

1. To be familiar with the concepts of Information, Knowledge, Knowledge Management.
2. To know the importance of knowledge management in higher education.
3. To know the challenges and obstacles to implement knowledge management.
4. To know the strategies of knowledge management

Introduction:

Knowledge has been regarded as the prime mover for prosperity of a nation. A knowledge society makes the basic foundations for the development of any nation. So creation and acquisition of knowledge have become the thrust areas which are followed by sharing and utilizing the experience of knowledge to ensure the development of a nation. This process is known as Knowledge Management (KM) that can be understood through the terms – data, information, knowledge.

Data: It is known as a collection of discrete objects, facts or events out of context. It is unprocessed information without any reference to space and time. It cannot suggest any information of its own.

Information: When data is processed it becomes information. Data cannot be transformed into information if we are not getting any conclusion out of the data.

Knowledge: If we apply our experience or judgment to the information, we get knowledge. So knowledge is the result of internalization of information, data and experience.

Knowledge Management (KM): It is the process of transforming information and intellectual assets into an useful endeavour. It empowers people with knowledge for taking action in real life. KM helps an organization to identify and analyze the available knowledge resource and then to gain insight and understanding from its own experience. So KM involves creating, acquiring, storing and utilizing knowledge for dynamic learning, strategic planning, decision making and problem solving.

The process of Knowledge Creation

We have two types of knowledge – Tacit Knowledge and Explicit Knowledge. Tacit knowledge means the knowledge resides in our brain. Tacit knowledge is highly personal in nature. Examples of such knowledge are subjective insight, intuition and hunches. We cannot directly measure tacit knowledge. Such knowledge gets reflected in ones confidence, actions, commitments, values and ideas. But it is not easy to communicate tacit knowledge. It is important for any organization to “know what they know”.

Explicit knowledge is created in an organization in the forms of reports, documents, manuals, procedures etc. As compared to tacit knowledge it is easy to communicate and share. Such knowledge can be easily stored, transformed or shared using IT tools. Explicit knowledge without tacit knowledge or personal insight is incomplete. Different knowledge creation processes as well as KM program takes initiative to link between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge.

The process of knowledge creation works by linking the two types of knowledge in an organization. The process is continuous and self – transcending. Knowledge can be created between individuals or between individual and the environment. So individual has to transcend the boundary between self and others. According to Ikugiro Nonaka (2011) there are 4 processes of knowledge creation, known as SECI – Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization.

- a) **Socialization:** This process works from tacit to tacit knowledge linking. Tacit knowledge goes beyond boundary. Here new knowledge is created by interacting, observing, discussing, analyzing, spending time together or living in same environment. Socialization process is also known as converting new knowledge through shared experiences. Organization can gain new knowledge by interacting with customers, suppliers and stake holders. In traditional system son can learn technique of family profession from his father by working with him.
- b) **Externalization:** This process works from tacit to explicit knowledge linking. Here tacit knowledge comes out of its boundary and transformed into collective group knowledge. The knowledge is created by metaphor analogy and models. Through the process of externalization knowledge is crystalized.
- c) **Combination:** This process focuses on knowledge transformation from explicit to explicit knowledge. For example, the college or university collects all academic reports from each department and publish or consolidated annual academic performance report. Creative use of database to get academic report, sorting, adding, categorizing are the examples of this process.
- d) **Internalization:** In this process explicit knowledge is created by using tacit knowledge. Here tacit knowledge is practiced by individuals and then it is shared across the organization. Organization tries to innovate when new knowledge is shared in socialization process. Organizations or higher education institutions provide training program for its staff. Through training manuals and documents the staff internalizes the knowledge and creates new knowledge after internalization.

Importance of Knowledge Management in Higher Education

- 1. Knowledge Creation through Research:** Research aims at searching truth and creating new knowledge. So quality research as well as knowledge management adopted by higher education institution or any organization can assure knowledge creation and innovation.
- 2. Motivated Knowledge Workers:** An institution or organization can create stimulating environment conducive to research and innovation. Such institutions always motivate their staff or workers for knowledge creations. An organization can become a learning or innovative centre as a result of its intellectual assets and contribution of its knowledge workers. So they are the key to success and can play rolls in bringing necessary improvement and desirable changes to the organization. So the organization should provide sufficient opportunities or facilities for the knowledge workers.
- 3. Creating Culture for Knowledge Society:** For the interest of maximum benefit from K.M the organization should focus on culture building. Technology may provide a platform for exchange of knowledge and ideas but it alone cannot make any sense. We need a strong work culture of both sharing and innovating for success to K.M as well as knowledge society.
- 4. Proper Decision Making:** After knowledge creation the K.M system ensures the sharing of knowledge across the organization and getting details of feedback from every stake holder. In this way the future trends can be forecasted and proper decision can be made.
- 5. Intensity of Knowledge:** The future of an organization depends on today's knowledge creating capability. Equipment or the capital cannot be the key differentiator among the organization. Capital flows to the areas where knowledge creation is possible, which in turn can create more knowledge capital and related services or intellectual assets.
- 6. Expansion of Higher Education:** Today there is a trend in the field of higher education to the phenomenal growth of online courses, cyber colleges and virtual universities. Through K.M system these higher education institutions will be able to increase student retention and graduation rates, retain a technology workforce in the face storage of staff and expand new web or online education. This online system will be cost-effective, will ensure more enrollment and will meet the needs of the varied students anytime, anywhere.

Challenges and Obstacles to Implement Knowledge Management

The IDC Survey (Dyer and Mc Donough, 2001) has pointed out the following challenges and obstacles:

1. Staff has no time for KM.
2. Recent work culture does not encourage sharing.
3. Lack of understanding of KM and its benefits.
4. Insufficient skills in KM techniques.
5. Lack of funding for KM.
6. Lack of incentive, rewards or opportunities for sharing.
7. Lack of initiative for implementing KM.
8. Lack of appropriate technology.
9. Lack of commitment from top management.
10. Fear of responsibility for sharp knowledge.

Initiatives and Measures to be taken for effective KM

For an effective KM system an organization must pay attention to the following issues:

- I. Collaborative and organizational learning.
- II. Continuing best practices.
- III. Intellectual property management as well as document management.
- IV. Customer centric focus and
- V. Utilizing data effectively.

Among the best practices e-learning is very important. E-learning as adopted by KM is delivered anytime and anywhere. Now different organizations use online resources for training employees. Data warehouses, data meaning and virtual reality modeling are very useful to visualize and transcend complex data. Digital dashboard is also used to focus on critical information and to integrate information from a variety of sources. The focus in K.M should be on being customer centric and shared with the Total Quality Management (TQM).

Conclusion: The success of a learning organization depends on its ability to disseminate knowledge and expertise. The learning organization is an integral part of any KM strategy. Knowledge erected in such organization should be relevant and appropriate to its objective. Teachers in higher education institutions should use classroom based application of KM systems in curriculum development, assessment and course management to facilitate course completion. In short, we can conclude that knowledge management is more than a process; it is a strategy and even a culture.

References:

1. Milam, J.H. (2001) Knowledge Management for Higher Education (Pg. 53-58).
2. Shetty, N.R. (2002) Indian Society for Technical Education (Pg. 40-45), New Delhi.
3. Jaffer, P.C. (2005) Autonomy in the Academic, Administrative and Financial Spheres of Autonomous Colleges – An Evaluative Study (Pg. 50-60).
4. Higher Education Summit (2007) Innovation for Quality and Relevance, New Delhi.
5. Lewis, H.D. (1985) The French Education System (Pg. 58), Routledge.
6. Blurton, C. (2006) New Directions of ICT – Use in Education (Pg. 80-90).
7. Yashpal (2009) Report of ‘The Committee to Advice on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education’ (2008-09), New Delhi MHRD, Govt. of India.
8. <http://www.wikipedia>.
9. MHRD (2007), PPT Presentation in the Steering.
10. Thamarasseri, I. (2008), Education in the Emerging Indian Society (Pg. 150-160), Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi.
11. UNESCO (2007) EFA – Global Monitoring Report.
12. World Bank (1998) The World Development Report (1998-99).