Assessment of to What Extent Knowledge Management Applies at Islamic Azad University West Islam Abad Campus

Mehdi Sadeghi[1], Manijeh Bahamirian[2]

[1]Department of business management, Eslamabad-E- gharb Branch, Islamic Azad University,
Eslamabade gharb, Iran
[2] PhD Candidate in Education Administration

ABSTRACT

Knowledge is the first strategic resource for institutions in 21st century. Researchers and practitioners attempt to find how knowledge resources can be collected and managed to use as competitive advantages. Therefore, knowledge management in educational organizations is significantly important especially in universities. So the aim of the study is to determine how much knowledge management applies in Islamic Azad University of West Islam Abad branch. The study has been done in terms of main components of knowledge management including: knowledge creation, organizational learning, and obtaining knowledge, sharing knowledge, storing and applying knowledge. Statistical population has been included all faculty members of the university. Data have been collected by a researcher-developed questionnaire and sampling has been done through census. Experts' opinion has been applied to develop the questionnaire and assess its validity; also it was confirmed by factor analysis. To analyze statistical data non-parametric methods have been applied. Results show there are significant differences (at 0.05 level) between all components of the research. Regarding to the mentioned results, status quo of the university is not satisfied in terms of applying knowledge management. However, obtaining knowledge and organizational learning were relatively evaluated desirable regarding to obtained frequencies.

KEY WORDS : Knowledge, knowledge management, assessment, Islamic Azad University

INTRODUCTION

In 21st century, the most fundamental characteristics of a smart organization are knowledge and information. Knowledge is a powerful device that can bring changes and innovation to the world [1]. Knowledge and organization capabilities are forms of strategic assets which promote long-term goals of the organization in terms of competition and environmental contingencies. They have strategic application in dynamic environments [2].

Undoubtedly "knowledge has been constantly a valuable asset and an important component of production" [3]. However, what is knowledge management? Is knowledge management a modern way to understand organizing and organizational tasks? Is it a tool to utilize knowledge? Or is it only a changing title in endless process of management concepts? Whether knowledge management is an essential tool for more efficient management or it is solely " an emperor in new costume".

Knowledge management refers to attempts that systematically done to achieve organization, get accessible intangible capitals of the organization, foster continuous learning and share knowledge in the organization. Most enterprises try to achieve benefits yield knowledge management by concentrating on knowledge management and extensive investment on information technology [4].

According to the mentioned view and importance of educational organizations in 21st century, it has been undeniable the necessity of attention to knowledge management. It can be also referred to " educational managers trends to apply information systems in educational centers, aiming at extending and using these systems to create an effective learning setting". The trends are known as inspiring to start new era in education management in the world. Although the existing literature in applying information management to improve instructional learning is few; a conscious trend of educational organizations to information management, especially knowledge management, will provide them to emancipate traditional bureaucratic structures and approach to new system of management in the world [5].

Today, knowledge is considered as a valuable asset and strategic source as well as capital in the organization. Providing quality and economic services is difficult and often impossible without utilizing and managing the valuable source. Knowledge management is applied by enterprises and organizations- by tasks such as listing useful knowledge, storing knowledge in appropriate way and finding knowledge in available knowledge base- to manage their knowledge effectively [6].

*Corresponding Author: Mehdi Sadeghi, Department of business management, Eslamabad-E- gharb Branch, Islamic Azad University, Eslamabade gharb, Iran. Email: mehdisadeghi@iau-ea.ac.ir

Natural, physical and human capitals transfer to wealth when they are combined and integrated with knowledge. Today the statement of " wealth results from wisdom and wisdom is capability" is more than before acknowledged. While knowledge power is considered as an important factor, legal and true persons use knowledge in various ways. However, today's problem is not how to find information and knowledge the problem is how to manage it. If an organization cannot apply its stored knowledge, chance of its survive will be less [7].

Knowledge management is related to go beyond organizational goals by creating and developing its knowledge assets, and involved all activities to identify, share and establish knowledge. This needs policies to create and maintain knowledge sources, develop and facilitate knowledge and organizational learning. Regarding to the matter, those organizations are successful that consider knowledge as an asset and develop values and norms of organization which lead to support creation and sharing of knowledge. Knowledge management deals with creating, sharing and influencing on thought, mind and imagine of people and tries to collect and manage widespread knowledge of organizational people in a way which lead to create new knowledge [8].

Knowledge management includes a large number of benefits for organizations. Knowledge management benefits are both at individual and organizational level; at individual level allows to staff promote skills and experience through collaboration with others and sharing knowledge with them. At organizational level, knowledge management has four main benefits for organization; enhance organizational performance by efficiency, productivity, quality and innovation, therefore organizations are considered as a strategy and a competitive advantage [9].

Unawareness of people knowledge leads to awful results for organizations. The following items make clear the point:
●decrease of knowledge and expertise
●decrease of production force
● loses of learning opportunities
●decrease of communication with organizational stakeholders
●impact on organizational culture and social capital

Higher education is a kind of investment on human resource which provides and promotes knowledge, skills and attitudes that top vocational, professional and managerial staff needs help economic development. Certainly, higher education not only leads to boost knowledge also creates new knowledge by investigating, technological and scientific progress [10].

What are existing strategies to keep universities update, face rivals and survive national as well as international competition force? Appropriate policies to obtain knowledge, increase capabilities, gain and adapt global knowledge and its application regarding to educational needs of society, promoting and extending knowledge management culture especially at universities and so on, are elements which reflect on responsibility scope of higher education and universities. [11]

According to Mann (2002), universities are ideal settings to produce and create knowledge. Furthermore, there is evidence that theories and knowledge management initiatives can be easily applied in higher education [12]. Universities require knowledge management and its application toward a structure which can develop knowledge management at department levels that are most influential unit of organization at universities. Their findings get applicable and accessible all. Therefore this study examined to what extent knowledge management apply at West Islam Abad campus of Islamic Azad University.

METHODOLOGY

The research is practical and as a kind of descriptive analysis. Non-parametric methods have been used to analyze data [13].

Sample / Population
Statistical sample of the study was included all full-time faculty members of West Islam Abad campus of Islamic Azad university which were totally 43.

Data collection instruments
A data collection instrument has been a researcher-developed questionnaire in 5 degree of Likert scale which collected and formulated according to components of Rojan's questionnaire and a check list of knowledge management components taken Knowledge Management In Education by Sallis & Jones [7]. To get reliability coefficient before final implementation, a sample was randomly chosen and the questionnaire was conducted. Cronbach α was estimated through Spss software and it was 0.91.

To get validity of the test, content validity was estimated and consulted by experts then the test was provided. Both experts' opinions and adaptation to aspects and components of knowledge management have been considered. Also, factor analysis was used as a confirmative factor.

Testing hypothesis and findings analysis

Q1: To what extent is important to create knowledge at West Islam Abad campus?

	Gender	College degrees
Chi square	19.882	23.059
Sig.	.000	.000

Table 1- Results of first research question

As it has been shown on the above table the test was significant at 0.05 levels and it can be inferred that college degrees and gender were two factors which related to amount and importance of knowledge creation.

Q2: To what extent have elements of organizational knowledge been applying at West Islam Abad campus?

	Gender	College degrees
Chi Square	19.882	23.059
Sig.	.000	.000

Table 2- Results of second research question

As shown on the above table there was significant difference between organizational learning, gender and college degree. The significant level was at 0.05.

Q3: To what extent is important to gain knowledge at West Islam Abad campus?

	Gender	College degrees
Chi Square	19.882	23.059
Sig.	.000	.000

Table 3. Results of third research question

Table 3 showed that there was significant difference between study groups at 0.05 and college degrees and gender are variables and factors which related to gain knowledge.

Q4: to what extent share and transfer knowledge between faculty members at West Islam Abad campus?

	Gender	College degrees
Chi square	19.882	23.059
Sig.	.000	.100

Table 4. results of testing research question 4

As it has been shown on table 4. there was significant difference between college degrees, gender and sharing, transferring knowledge at 0.05. It can be also recognized that college degrees and gender affects on amount of sharing and transferring knowledge.

Q5: To what extent is important to store knowledge at West Islam Abad campus?

	Gender	College degrees
Chi square	19.882	23.059
Sig.	3.00	.000

Table 5. results of testing research question 5

Table 5 showed that there was significant difference between gender, college degrees and storing knowledge. There was relationship between gender and storing knowledge as well as college degrees with storing knowledge.

Q6: To what extent is utilized knowledge at West Islam Abad campus?

	Gender	College degrees
Chi Square	19.882	23.059
Sig.	.001	.002

Table 6. test results of research question 6

As it showed above there was significant difference between gender and college degrees with amount of utilization knowledge. This shows that people with various college degrees and different gender have not similarly assessed amount of utilizing knowledge.

Q7: How is knowledge management at West Islam Abad campus?

According to the obtained frequencies, unawareness of knowledge management aspects had the most frequencies (20.92).While many concepts of knowledge management in educational organization exist, but faculty members are not aware of these concepts or not familiar with their real meaning. Some of the concepts have been known by members but they undermined since almost 17 % of faculty members recognized carelessness to concepts and aspects of knowledge management. The other more effective factor on organizations- education, business or service- related to adverse conditions and an inappropriate organizational culture and atmosphere which were major factors in terms of applying knowledge management. While almost 21% of faculty members also indicated an environmental factor as an effective factor on applying knowledge management which can lead to decrease people motivation and underestimate and overlook knowledge management concepts. However other factors such as favorable conditions, familiarity with knowledge management concepts, motivating and lack of conflict between groups and organizations will be effective if efficient and administrative power supports them and admit all these aspects. Unless there are administrative power and efficient as well as effective management, the application of knowledge management is not ensured. Since management is executive advocacy of many factors in organizations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Data analysis of a knowledge creation component has been indicated 60 per cent of faculty members chose rarely and very rarely items which showed there is not desirable condition while 3 per cent of them evaluated the component at desirable level and rest of them almost 37 per cent assessed university condition at approximately desirable level. On the other hand, there is relationship between college degrees and extent of consideration and importance toward knowledge creation and there was significant difference at 0.05. Frequencies also indicate almost 37 per cent of faculty members have assessed existing condition of knowledge management at average level.

Results of Martin[14] research also supported findings of the study, more capability of them to admit mistakes faculty members have more desire and enthusiasm to create, produce and gain knowledge. Karami's study like our investigation showed individual autonomy and independence play major roles in implementing knowledge management effectively.

Data analysis of organizational learning indicated that in opinion of more than half of the faculty members organizational learning components are not applied at universities, however, in desirable condition it has been estimated 44 per cent. Marsh and Jones' [15] study showed lack of continuous and informal learning affect on extent of knowledge management practice.

According Shien [16] cultural features which inhibit learning include:
1. Task issues precede communication affairs
2. Staff focuses just on resolving problems not creating new ideas
3. People conceal information and problems are not solved by group
4. Group work is perceived as necessity but inherently not believed in

The above mentioned obstacles which referred to the study and all respondents acknowledged them.

Findings indicated that faculty members' opinion in obtaining knowledge has not been positive. In a way 54 per cent of people assessed the condition undesirable and selected rarely and very rarely. Significantly, at approximately desirable level was 43 per cent and in desirable condition involved 3 per cent. Thus it can be concluded according to faculty members currently there is no importance on knowledge management, especially obtaining knowledge, at the university.

Holsky's (2003) [17] investigation showed delegate more autonomy to organizational people, they will try more to effectively gain knowledge. One of the ways to promote knowledge of faculty members to knowledge management concept is reconsideration toward groups goal through which management concept and knowledge acquisition can be distributed. Also results of Rahnavard and Mohammadi [4] study showed key factors of knowledge management systems at colleges and higher education institutions in Tehran supported knowledge-based strategic direction.

Data which obtained through the questionnaire indicated 77 per cent of faculty members chose rarely and very rarely items that manifested sharing knowledge is on undesirable condition, and only almost 3 per cent assessed the condition desirable that had PhD degrees. Those with MA degrees did not assess the condition very desirable or very much. Findings of present study supported by the findings of Rahnvard and Mohammadi's [4] (2009) investigation which showed that key success of knowledge management system related to participative culture of higher education institutions.

The key success of knowledge management in educational organization is to apply all kinds of knowledge- formal and informal- which can be possible through developing, sharing, and distributing knowledge and implementing it through appropriate technologies [7] what is not considered at universities especially implicit knowledge of people is not utilized properly. There are not any flexible and multi direction models which people can communicate freely and offer their knowledge to others while Holsky [17] (2003) and Bhatt's (2002) [18]

investigation emphasized on the mentioned points and recognized them as much effective factors on individual and organizational development. Prevailing media like internet and intranet are effective tools on storing knowledge which supported by study of Mc Crackan as well as Rahnavard and Mohammadi (2009) [4] which was titled infrastructure of informal systems, and results of the study adjusted by these studies and showed extent of applying media as an effective factor on storing knowledge. The study indicated people with different college degrees stressed on applying knowledge of qualified people, practice new technologies to store knowledge, training required skills and competences and exchange knowledge between people. One of the reasons to be significant difference between faculty members' responses can be referred to their qualifications and experience to use devices and exchange knowledge. That is faculty members may emphasized on storing knowledge due to more familiarity with technologies or apply them professionally on their field of study, therefore they could have different views.

Educational organizations to utilize knowledge effectively should properly balance between various knowledge management activities and such balancing requires practice of technology [18] which faculty members believe in overlooking these factors.

Obtained results indicated the following main challenges on knowledge management at that university:

● Unawareness of knowledge management (20 / 92 per cent)
● Lack of motivation (12/55 per cent)
● Lack of consideration management (17/49 per cent)
●Conflict between group members (7/98 per cent)
● An adverse setting (15/97 per cent)
● Inactive group members
● Negative competitions
● Lack of exchanging knowledge
● Without purposes
● Time
● Cost
●Organizational culture

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