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KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS- A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The best sustainable source of competitive advantage and knowledge management in organization is knowledge - a key part of the strategy to create a sustainable competitive advantage. Knowledge sharing is one of the key processes in knowledge management as it transforms knowledge into a valuable organization asset.

The objective of this study is to understand the factors that govern knowledge sharing amongst the faculties of professional academic institutions in India. Institutions being a center of learning have a higher level of knowledge sharing among the teaching staff therefore could bring about an increased level of performance in the workplace. The findings of this study will aid in further understanding of knowledge sharing behavior of faculties and may thus contribute towards successful implementation of knowledge sharing as part of knowledge management in an organization.

On the basis of convenience sampling, three professional academic institutions from the National Capital Region (NCR) region were selected for the study. The outcomes from 298 respondents indicated that presence of IT for the purpose of knowledge sharing, management support, solidarity, knowledge sharing to be included in work process and mentoring are positively influencing knowledge sharing and that knowledge sharing is positively influencing performance.

Keywords: competitive advantage, knowledge management, professional, academic institutions

Introduction

As oppose to material assets, which decrease with use, knowledge asset increase as they are used. Several authors have defined knowledge as an organization's best sustainable source of competitive advantage (Drucker,1988; Nonaka, 1991; Argote & Ingran, 2000; Argote, Ingram, Levine & Moreland, 2000; Devenport & Prusak, 2000). Competitors can eventually match the quality and price of a market leader's current product or service. But with the time the knowledge-rich, knowledge-managing company will have excelled to a new level of quality, creativity or efficiency. The knowledge advantage is sustainable as it generates increasing returns and continuing advantage.

Knowledge Management Process

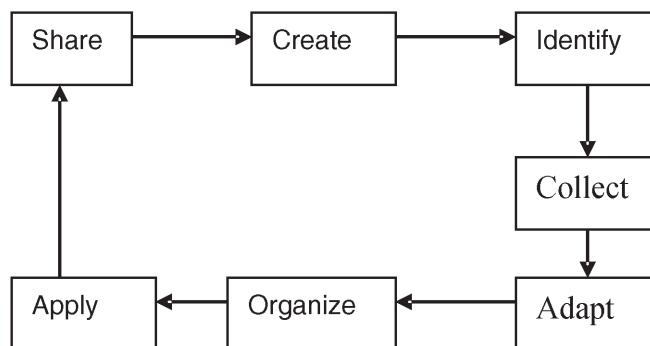
Knowledge management (KM) is considered a key part of the strategy to use expertise to create a sustainable competitive advantage in current business scenario. Knowledge sharing

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is one of the important stages of the KM process. This study focused this important step in the KM process.

The steps of **KM processes** are as below:



KM Enablers

The following factors are considered as KM enablers:

- Leadership
- Culture
- Technology
- Measurement

The knowledge management in any organization will not be effective till such time the employees contribute their knowledge to the cycle. This is one of the management's greatest challenges, as employees are often reluctant to share information.

Research Problem

The problem statement is that there is lack of knowledge sharing among faculty members in organizations. The research issues addressed by this study are:

- What are the factors that govern knowledge sharing?
- If knowledge sharing occurs, does this influence performance?

Research Objective

Knowledge sharing plays a very important role in the exchange, transfer and dissemination of knowledge. It is thus important to identify the factors governing knowledge sharing to enable knowledge sharing activities be carried out effectively.

The objectives of this study are as follows

- To identify and examine the factors that governs knowledge sharing.
- To investigate whether knowledge sharing has an impact on performance.

Factors Governing Knowledge Sharing

Based on the previous researches and literature reviews, factors that governs to knowledge sharing can be broadly categorized into four categories, named as 'Cultural Factors', 'IT factors', 'Communication Factors' and 'Organizational Support Factors'.

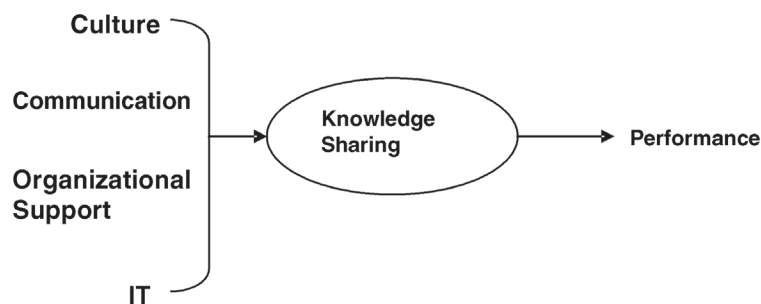
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The various factors studied under the four categories are as follows:

1. Culture
 - Sociability
 - Solidarity
 - Power Distance
2. IT
 - Availability of IT Infrastructure
 - IT Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing.
3. Communication
 - Trust building
 - Face-to-face Interaction
 - Reciprocity
 - Repute
 - Altruism
 - Acknowledgement
4. Organizational Support
 - Management Support
 - Rewards
 - Mentoring
 - Knowledge sharing as part of work process

These factors affect the knowledge sharing process and thus improve the organization performance

Model



Research Methodology

Data Collection

To study the propositions, data from three selected professional institutions were collected. The organizations were selected based on convenience sampling as they were situated in NCR region. The respondent for this study is composed of faculties in professional institutions that include those from public and private institutions.

In order to maintain confidentiality, the three institutions are named as Institution A, Institution B and Institution C. Institution A is a private University, Institution B is a public University and Institution C although a private institution, having its main funding from the Government of India.

This study uses a self-administered survey method. The questionnaires were self-administered by respondents as this enabled them to fill in the questionnaire at their own place and in their own free time. To ensure the response rate as well the distribution and collection of the survey form were systematic, the forms were distributed and collected through a representative of the faculty.

Initially in this survey, the total number of questionnaires received was 370. To maintain the validity of the survey, the cases with missing values were discarded. After discarding the cases with missing values, the number of cases remaining was 298. The data analysis is done using regression, the t-test and the path analysis (SEM) techniques.

Findings and Interpretations

The data analysis of the propositions indicated that overall, the output from the multiple regression and SEM were mostly in parallel with one another. Based on the findings obtained from the data analysis, it may be concluded that 7 propositions were supported and 11 propositions were not supported. The empirical findings reflected the importance of management support, solidarity and knowledge sharing to be included in work process, presence of IT infrastructure for the purpose of knowledge sharing as well as mentoring in affecting knowledge sharing. The analysis of mentoring however is conflicting as the proposition is supported using path analysis ($t = 1.83$, $t\text{-value} > 1.730$, significant at 0.05 level, 1-tailed, $df = 16$) and not supported using regression ($b = 0.102$, $p = 0.074$).

The findings are thus complementary to the existing body of knowledge and highlighted the importance of management support in knowledge sharing.

Suggestions

On the basis of the study it is recognized that there are many approaches to achieve a sustainable knowledge sharing for excellence. The following are the suggestions that will enhance the business performance or productivity:

- **Result Orientation**
Achieve results that delight the organization's stakeholders.
- **Customer focus**
Create sustainable customer value.
- **Leadership and Constancy of Purpose**
Have visionary and inspirational leadership, coupled with constancy of purpose.
- **Management by Processes and Facts**
Manage the organization through the set of interdependent and interrelated systems, processes and facts.
- **People Development and Involvement**
Maximize the contribution of employees through their development and involvement.
- **Continuous Learning, Innovation and Improvement**
Challenge the status quo and effecting change by using learning to create innovation and improvement opportunities.

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- Partnership Development
Develop and maintain value-adding partnerships.
- Corporate Social Responsibility
Exceed the minimum regulatory framework in which the organization operates and strive to understand and respond to the expectations of their stakeholders in society.

Conclusion

The findings of the study showed management support to be the most important factor followed by solidarity, knowledge sharing to be included in work process, presence of IT for knowledge sharing and mentoring. Assigning these factors under the larger categories of Culture, IT, Communication and Organizational support, organizational support emerged as most important factor followed by culture and IT. The study thus reveals that other than IT, Organizational support and Culture are important in affecting knowledge sharing and that knowledge sharing contributes to performance. It also demands an attitudinal change among the people of the organization.

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