

Knowledge management in public sector organizations

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Introduction

Knowledge itself is an abstract concept but its application can be seen in every walk of life. Knowledge and innovation go hand in hand and together they generate success for the development of any society. Knowledge accumulation creates value and it is this wealth which has transformed the agrarian societies into industrialized nations (Milner, 2000). Knowledge gives a competitive edge to companies as it is one of the most useful resources that they possess. However in this fast pace world one has to cope with the changing needs of the environment and utilize the knowledge in the most efficient manner in order to extract its full potential. Moreover the rapid pace of technology has facilitated this entire process and Internet has changed the landscape of business environments. Today's economies are knowledge based economies (Emrich, 2005).

Peter Drucker said,

“ The Purpose of management is the productivity of knowledge”

(Kelly, 2004)

There are various definitions of knowledge management, however to put it simple it is the management process within the organization that deals with the collection, organization and sharing of knowledge in the enterprise which is then integrated, evaluated and developed and distributed to all the other parts of the organization. Knowledge management has become an integral part of managerial activity as it helps to take right decisions at the right time

with the real information in hand. This information is then provided to all the members of the organization (Gurrieri, 2008). In other words this knowledge is transferred to other products and services of the company which helps in value creation. This also helps in giving an enterprise a strategic edge over other firms. Knowledge management on the whole is not just confined to information technology only but it covers all the aspects such as the employees, the processes and the workflow, which means that knowledge management doesn't have to be limited to information technology though there is no doubt that technology plays an integral role in the KM but our focus of this paper is going to be on the aspect of technology and knowledge management in the public sector firms particularly our focus is going to be on the education sector here (Hetland et al, 2007).

The distribution of tasks among the knowledge management dimensions

Source: (Milner, 2000)

Information technology and knowledge management in the Public Sector

The way we access the information has now changed due to which the relevance of knowledge management has increased over the period of time. Therefore all the firms including the public sector organizations through the aid of knowledge workers are investing more in technology in order to make use of newer applications to increase productivity, accountability and transparency in order to increase the level of efficiency and to improve the entire process of public sector reforms. Government sector organizations are knowledge based due to which this area of study is of so much importance to

them. They need its application at the local regional and national level (Milner, 2000).

When we talk about technology and management together, this means that data warehousing is an essential element of the KM. there are several software's that are used to assimilate the information and distribute it among the various organs of the firm such as document management systems, e learning tools, objected oriented databases, artificial intelligence, real time access to a firms data base, enterprise information portals (ERP). These and several other IT programs tend to be effective tools for the management of the information without which work is not possible. The public sector organizations have also entered into this digital age of electronic means especially after the advent of policies like the ICT (Kelly, 2004). The public sector therefore fulfills itsresponsibilityby recruiting the best people for the development of knowledge, growth and learning because it has to accomplish the followinggoals:

Knowledge development and provide information unlike the private sector

Promote knowledge for every one

Quality

Management efficiency

The structure of the government matters in this context because as the government has to take care of the intellectual rights

Knowledge Kiosks (Watts and Lloyd, 2004)

The analytical knowledge management framework

(Steyn and Kahn, 2008)

The above diagram shows various elements of the knowledge management. It is an integration of people, processes, technology which together create value.

In the government sector knowledge gets dispersed because governments are segmented by state and local level. Other than that as per the government policy the government keeps on changing due to which the current government gets to learn from the previous one, this gives an opportunity to the government to every time learn from its experiences and improve its system through good governance (Slabbert, 2004). Knowledge management in the government sector paves the way for incorporating the electronic means into the government sector. The ICT infrastructure helps the government to achieve its goals and to educate the citizens of the country to have access to quality information which they can utilize and also they themselves can bring value to the nation through knowledge sharing (Beal and Thomas, 2004).

The public sector organizations depends more on people based approach but to do so they have to come up with an appropriate framework for knowledge management. Moreover it has been seen that the level of accountability is stricter in the public sector organizations as compared to the private sector

but studies have shown that the public sector organizations have been slow in terms of adaptability relative to private sector (Alleman, 1992). This is owing to the lack of awareness, rigid policies, people are not willing to share because they don't see much incentive in doing so and also people on the public sector are less resistant to change. The entire set up is based on bureaucracy and the goal is not profit maximization. People working in the domain of public sector are more inclined towards the national interest and they are not self centered as they put their personal interest secondary. The public sector organizations face constant competition from the private sector, NGO's, the government of other countries, All these reasons justify as to why the models for the knowledge management are taken from the public sector unlike the private sector where the culture, the interest, perception and everything differs. However the traditional approach of the public sector sometimes becomes a hurdle in the development of knowledge (Burr and Girardi, 2003).

Every firm has its own set of requirements and based on them they create their model of knowledge management and technology is always changing so the public sector firms also adopt different technological infrastructure based on their requirements. There are a collection of technologies that are used in the process which together constitute the software. The reason why these firms spend so much on this software's is because they need up to date information for better decision making. Government sector tries to incorporate IT into their solutions for better performance.

Knowledge Management and the Education in the Agricultural Sector

Generally the concept of knowledge management can be applied in all government sectors such as education, transportation, healthcare and so on. However, this paper will be focusing mainly on the education sector which can be uplifted and further developed by the knowledge management strategies. Education is by all means one of the most significant sectors of a country's economy. It is the backbone of the nation which paves the way for the future growth and development. Therefore this sector is given utmost importance because its development is the nation's development (Cook et al, 2004).

We will take into consideration the education of the agricultural sector of the country through knowledge management systems. There are many ways to achieve this like research into innovative ways to develop the sector and the development of the learning programmes for all the stakeholders for better yield and growth.

This can be done in a number of ways as follows:

The systems can be used to do an assessment of the human resource of the business. Human resource is the lifeblood of the business therefore their input plays a crucial role for the development of the sector.

The management systems can be used to facilitate agricultural sector through the deployment of case studies and various tools relevant to the agricultural education.

The sharing of the knowledge and the use of newer techniques and methods among the communities

The private sector can also help the public sector in meeting their goals through the induction of their systems and technologies.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has facilitated all the sectors. Similarly it can be used to impart agricultural information to employ newer software's and implementation of newer systems to navigate the progress and learning (Watts and Lloyd, 2004).

Open and Distance learning is an effective tool which can be used by the agricultural sector to enhance their learning and can be used for the development of the professionals in the field.

Knowledge sharing systems can also be used to manage the work and distribute the knowledge among the stakeholders (Vilma, 2008).

Technology has advanced so much that it is on the sector and the expertise of the knowledge workers that are employed to make use of the variant opportunities and their knowledge to develop and upgrade systems which are able to meet the standards because there is no end to innovation and more and more learning tools and techniques can be employed with the passage of time for growth and development (Torgerson and Elbourne, 2002).

UK government increased ICT expenditure for the next three years

Those governments which have been valuing the concept of knowledge management will also reap benefits out of it. The UK government in the year 2008 increased their budget for the ICT to an amount of 2.9 billion pounds. The idea was to give a further boost to the education sector by utilizing the technology and improve governmental performance and strengthen the education sector of the country (Tearle, 2004). The main motives behind such a move were as follows:

Better coordination with the parents through online facilities

Newer learning methodologies for the improvement of the curriculum

Enhance the resources available to the sector and increased participation

This would also improve the performance of the educational sector through better monitoring and control

However in both the cases that is agriculture and the education sector of UK, the government takes all these measures then it has to look into the training of the staff because people need to be equipped with newer software's and technologies and they need to be well versed in that in order to use it effectively (Tearle, 2004). By doing so the government also raises the opportunities and market for the firms in the private sector because then firms such as Microsoft and open source firms try to get into the market by being the supplier of technology to the sector, hence it creates employment and development of both private and public sector (John, 2002).

There are many specialized firms in the market which are willing to provide assistance to the government's public sector initiatives through their advanced systems. Companies such as Informa, it is specialized in providing advanced knowledge and services to the public sector. They have services such as data monitor, Informa Economics and Agra for the agricultural sector. The company has clients worldwide including governments and other corporate sector businesses such as Pfizer and EU and WTO. Hence the government has an opportunity to make use of external sources to improve their knowledge based systems in the sector (Paolo, 2010).

Innovations in the education sector mean the achievement of high standard of education. These are the performance measures used by the government. The role of knowledge management is to look for newer ways to develop the different institutions of the sector. Education gives a competitive advantage to a nation. This is why all the organizations are systemically looking for newer ways to achieve excellence. Through the use of knowledge management the universities will be able to retain more students and it will also help them in the research process. Knowledge management helps in the strategic management process (Polkinghorn, 1992).

The government can make use of web based systems in which it can collect the grants from the donors. However those donors need information in order to make effective decisions and this is where knowledge management plays an important role as it helps the donors to decide and then function. It can be used to share information among grant makers. The organization can also make knowledge management systems and form a network in which they

can share their problems and have person to person connections with one another for better understanding (John, , 2002).

There can be issues in the knowledge management because

The culture does not support knowledge management

Lack of funds for knowledge management

Lack of training

Uncoordinated knowledge management roles

Inability of senior management to incorporate newer measures and look for opportunities

Lack of competence of the firm to measure financial benefits (Steyn and Kahn, 2008).

Conclusion

The concept of knowledge management is not new to the government. The government has significant opportunities it and the related informational technology opportunities associated with it. However it is on the ability of the government that how well they able to integrate this concept into the organizational culture of the firm and promote knowledge management which will further help them to grow and achieve competency (Emma et al, 2005). Private and public sector firms have some form of similarity in developing a framework for knowledge management but the public sector organization needs to be more careful as it has stricter regulatory practices.

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