Chapter 1
Knowledge Management Technologies, Applications, and Implementation in the Public Sector:
An Explorative Review

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to emphasize the various but major aspects essential to advance knowledge management (KM) as nations progress and deal with the technological explosion that began during the early 1990s and upsurged dramatically ever since. The focus in this chapter, however, is the several ways in which technology was introduced, resisted, and finally accepted and adapted to, as well as the different ways it has and can still affect the industry in private and public sectors, negatively and positively. Through this literature review, different perceptions, opinions, solutions and suggestions are introduced to regulate the simultaneous coexistence of technology and people in the field of knowledge management development using articles from 1990s to 2018. A discussion is also introduced with supporting and opposing arguments in regard to the different perceptions the authors have proposed.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management (KM) is an ambitious concept that needs to gain interest in the public sector to facilitate the transformation of human capital to organizational knowledge. Several researchers have advocated its implementation in improving the effectiveness of the public sector in studies focused on organizations in both the public and private sectors, including public organizations (Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi, and Mohammed, 2007, Chong et al., 2011; Ferguson et al., 2013; Salleh et al., 2012). Most of these studies were conducted in developing countries because they concentrate on social and economic growth processes, and they have indicated that the public sector within developing nations is embracing innovative tools and practices to create overall social growth.

Organizations within the public sector depend on stakeholders, while organizations within the private sector depend on shareholders (Salavati et al., 2010). Consequently, public sector organizations face greater pressure in terms of accountability and representativeness than those in the private sector, as the legitimate demands are higher; thus, the requirement to improve the practices of organizations as a strategic approach for the public sector is crucial to maintain economic growth (Jain and Jeppe Jeppesen 2013). Innovative KM strategies fall into this category. Al-Alawi et al., (2007) noted that in traditional knowledge management emphasis was placed on technology or the ability to build systems that efficiently process and leverage knowledge, [but] the new model of knowledge management involves people and actions. It aims at creating an environment where power equals sharing knowledge rather than keeping it. (p. 22)

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to the application and implementation of KM technologies within the public sector, using a strategic approach based on examining a variety of studies and publications.

KM has been a popular area of study in recent years because of its effectiveness in transforming organizational performance from good to excellent and in the promotion of the efficient use of resources. However, it has not only been studied from the commercial or private sector perspective but also from the public sector point of view.

The public sector is considered notoriously difficult to change because of its rigid organizational structure. Public organizations tend to operate without the need to earn profits or effectively use resources, as they provide services to the community on a nonprofit basis. Because of this mentality, there is no pressure to perform, as financial performance is seldom a performance indicator. Even if financial considerations are taken into account, failure to comply will not lead to bankruptcy in most cases.

Furthermore, as Amayah (2013) noted, in the public sector, organizational goals and culture are more conflicting than in the private sector. Additionally, different factors, such as political elements, affect these goals. Consequently, the public sector is relatively unfamiliar with knowledge sharing, or knowledge sharing might not be encouraged with incentives.

KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWLEDEGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge is one of the major aspects that could lead an organization to excel. Because of its crucial role in organizational success, knowledge should be leveraged. Tiwana (2002, as cited in McNab, 2006) defined organizational knowledge as employees' insights, actions, and beliefs that could be shared with other employees to provide the working environment with new sources of information and new experiences.

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