

Chapter 26

Knowledge Management in the Public Sector: A Futuristic Approach

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ABSTRACT

Although knowledge is recognized as a very important element of any business, the public sector does not fully explore the depth of the knowledge management (KM) as compared to private sector business. As days are passing by, public sector business has also started to realize the importance of KM. The public sector is a business that is run by the government. This sector includes organizations like government cooperation, enterprises, militaries, education, health, and related departments public services. In the public sector, the managers have started to adopt and develop practices of KM. Government organizations are facing many challenges to adapt and engage themselves in an electronic work environment. Over the years KM has grown and has been in continuous change in the public sector and has become essential to any organization in the world. Managers have been looking for a more futuristic approach for the past years. The purpose of this chapter examines the ongoing change in KM in the public sector and tackles the gap in the literature.

INTRODUCTION

The public sector, which includes all organizations that provide public services, is driven by providing services to improve citizens' quality of life and not necessarily by profit. Usually, the public sector is characterized by being less advanced than the private sector, and public sector organizations seldom search for changes that could benefit them, as they do not necessarily see the advantages of experimenting with unfamiliar concepts and investing time and resources in ventures with questionable returns on investments. However, knowledge management (KM) is becoming widely accepted, even as organizations become more complex, with knowledge that is difficult to locate and share. Thus, this chapter provides a survey of the field of KM and its application in the public sector to provide a literature review of the development of the field that can be used to formulate a futuristic approach.

In the modern environment of rapid change and improved technical knowledge, expertise must be quickly shared, so KM applications and technologies have attracted more attention. Some technologies have similar databases, data mining processes, and knowledge-based systems, while others involve different technologies and applications, which indicates technological diversification. Moreover, some applications have a high degree of technological disruption, introducing functions such as the filtering and collection of relevant topics that address KM problems across several industries. Those applications have become a major trend in KM development, and many technologies focused on the same problems (Al Essa & Bach, 2014; Sholla & Nazari, 2011).

This chapter covers KM within the public sector, strategic ways of utilizing KM, and the improvements needed within the sector.

Knowledge lies at the center of institutional performance; thus, understanding the mechanism of KM and its future implementations are crucial to creating a successful business environment (Patriotta, 2004). The application of KM within the public sector is rapidly increasing, and researchers are investigating its future implementations and effects on the sector. The contractual models illustrating the dynamic flow of knowledge are still considered pivotal within KM research. Furthermore, Dang and Umemoto (2009) suggested that the government should be engineering the knowledge economy (KE) and proposed a model of this economy based on three epistemic capabilities, namely national capability, economic capability, and institutional capability. They added that the role of government is, first, to encourage the development of the knowledge economy by developing the field of scientific research, the educational system, and the economic system. They further contended that the government should use its ability to implement regulations to create an environment that promotes the knowledge economy and its activities (Liao 2003).

The KE has become important for sustaining healthy economic growth, and information and communication technology (ICT) can be used to achieve a knowledge-based economy by facilitating the sharing of knowledge. However, Ghosh and Ghosh (2009) pointed out that the development of the KE faces several challenges, such as awareness, bureaucratic roles, and the transparency of information. In addition, the authors argued that ICT is a major influencer on resolving this challenge, and they recommended focusing on the content of a particular project and not only on using ICT. The concept of a knowledge-based economy has drawn attention to the KM process, although this process is labor and capital intensive. Being knowledgeable enables employees to work independently and promotes

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