

Chapter 6

Grounded Theory Approach in Knowledge Management

ABSTRACT

Knowledge management (KM), as a new field having many concepts and strong conceptualization, is a vital business process in organizations that, because of the nature of knowledge, is closely linked to individuals. Because sociological research is mainly qualitative and KM contains sociological components, KM can take advantage of methods such as grounded theory (GT) approach that are specific to qualitative research. Accordingly, the chapter provides an understanding of the use of GT in KM. For this purpose, the chapter focuses on understanding process of transforming knowledge into wisdom, presenting KM model, determining factors of knowledge sharing, and consequently, developing a framework of knowledge sharing and determining the critical success factors (CSFs) of KM and their relationships within a model.

INTRODUCTION

According to Wang and Noe (2010), knowledge as a critical organizational resource, in a dynamic and competitive economy, provides a competitive advantage to its holder. Jelenic (2011) believes that knowledge is a strategic resource for the organization as well as a factor of competitive advantage and business success, so the knowledge management (KM) process is the most important process in a modern company. In order to empower people, improve learning efficiency and increase competitive advantage, KM provides

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people with the tools and techniques to manage large volumes of information that they receive (Gao et al. 2018). KM has been used in many settings since the 1990s, especially in non-profit companies of all sizes, as well as in the non-profit sector (Agrawal & Marouf, 2016). Because of its important role in knowledge transfer for decision making at all levels of corporate governance and structure, the KM process is a routine business process in the organization. KM is also related to the management of business processes that deal with resources, in addition to manage knowledge as a resource (Jelenic, 2011).

The dissemination and sharing of knowledge and its application within and between specific organizations is an essential part of a KM system that seeks to guide and support the flow of ideas and experiences of the organization's people. Knowledge, in its exact sense, cannot be shared and therefore, unlike commodities, relies on cognitive matter and cannot be freely distributed. Re-shaping behavior is an integral part of acquiring knowledge that uses knowledge to obtain and thus, sharing knowledge. In knowledge sharing, there is at least a relationship between the two parties, one having knowledge and the other acquiring knowledge (Zheng, 2017). Knowledge sharing as a knowledge-focused activity is an essential tool whereby employees can participate in the application of knowledge, innovation and, ultimately, the organization's competitive advantage. Exploiting and investing in knowledge-based resources is possible through knowledge sharing within and between teams in the organization. According to research in this regard, knowledge sharing and combination is positively associated with lower production costs, faster completion of new product development projects, team performance, firm innovation capabilities, and firm performance including growth of sales and revenue from new products and services (Wang and Noe, 2010).

When we want to study in depth an issue or problem in the organization, a qualitative research approach should be used. Integrating theories, extracting some undiscovered relationships, clarifying some concepts, and offering connections are among the benefits of using a qualitative approach in the field of KM that was not achievable with the quantitative approach (Luciana, 2013). Direct observation, interviews, documents, and texts as well as researcher's feelings and reactions are generally used in qualitative approaches such as action research, case studies, and Grounded Theory (GT). When we aim to understand contextual information about people's way of living, the use of qualitative methods is preferred (Grossman and McCarthy, 2005).

Because of the importance of knowledge and its widespread application in the organization, KM is inextricably linked to individuals (Onions, 2006). Because sociological research is mainly qualitative, and KM contains

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