Knowledge Management Approach in the Non–Profit Sector

Le Ngoc Quang
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6677-1885
Dong A University, Vietnam

Kulthida Tuamsuk
Khon Kaen University, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) defined as "a high propensity to innovate the supply of social services from several points of view such as in the types of services provided, in the target groups and the organization of services provision" (OECD, 2003). The NPOs have also been encountered challenges that the ability to supply better benefits packages for the staffs. Slatten et al. (2020) noted that the NPOs are often insufficiencies this ability; subsequently, these organization can result in a high percentage of turnover rate. The United Nations categorized NPOs into three groups on local, national, and international levels, which aim to overcome social issues in support of the public good. It also can be called as not-for-profit or third sector organizations. NPOs present as "important actors" to the national economy (Lyons & Passey, 2006). Overall, the critical purpose of the NPOs is to create social value for the community or society. Thailand has considered as a success case study for developing countries. Since 2011, The World Bank grouped Thailand's income from a lower-middle-income economy to an upper-middle-income economy (World Bank, 2020). In the situation of emerging and developing markets, for instance in Thailand, the non-profit sector plays a vital role in order to contribute to economic growth, develop civic infrastructure, share and create social values, and mitigate adverse spillover effects through its program or activities (Anheier & Salamon, 1998). Culturally, Thai NPOs remark as "embracing associations and foundation, engaged philanthropy, economic and social development, health and social services, advocacy, and cultural and recreational activities" (Amara & Nitaya, 1997; Pongsapich, 1993). From the 1970s, it was traced to the flourished development of the Thai non-profit sector. In recent years, many international organizations have registered in Thailand as "a popular relay location," which emphasized regional development as in Southeast Asia (Pongsapich, 1998). Remarkably, the significant impact of these organizations has been recognized, with more than 80,000 NPOs in Thailand, earning around USD 4,1 billion and recruiting more than 26 million members in 2017 (NSO, 2018). Although many practical proofs indicated that these organizations have actively contributed to the communities and society in Thailand, there is still a lack of empirical evidence on how NPOs operation, perform, and utilization the knowledge assets. Therefore, it is emerging a need increasingly for more research and empirical studies to discover and investigate different processes on knowledge management (KM) to maximize their social impacts.

Vast of investigations on the KM model and implementation of KM systems have been conducted in for-profit-organizations and large firms, where existing resources and competitive conditions can enable leverage the utilizing and using of KM capabilities. Authors agree with other scholars that other sectors

or types of sizes and organizations could also come up KM systems to improve the organizational impacts and outcomes, for instance in social enterprise, small and medium-sized enterprises, local service organizations, voluntary or charitable organizations, and international non-profit organizations (Huck et al., 2011; Ragsdell et al., 2014; Downes & Marchant, 2016; Granados et al., 2017). However, the KM approach among non-profit landscape is still limited because this research trend has recently been recognized (Lettieri et al., 2004). There is a paucity of study on KM practices in the NPOs, including several contributors with different perspectives related to KM, for example, knowledge needs (Rathi et al., 2016), knowledge sharing (Stauss, 2007; Bloice & Burnett, 2016; Curado et al., 2021; Fullwood & Rowley, 2021), the effectiveness of KM (Downes & Marchant, 2016a), and organizational culture for KM activities (Chang et al., 2021). Consequently, in order to explore the potential for the NPOs to gain the benefits from KM activities and how the knowledge-creating process can be implemented in the non-profit landscape. The study indicated KM approach by four critical components of the KM-NPOs domain: knowledge sharing (KS), knowledge resources (KRs), knowledge creation (KC), and knowledge needs of international non-profit-based organizations that have a branch in Thailand. The chapter adopted a mixed research method approach that used deploying semi-structured interviews with senior managers and national survey with 213 respondents from the NPOs in Thailand.

The overall purpose of this chapter attempts to deeply understand how the KM implementation among the NPOs, which characterize the KC process, type of knowledge needs, barriers of KS, and KRs. The study also seeks to apply KC theory in non-profit rather than for-profit in previous literature. In order to achieve the proposed objectives, this research is structured in the following manner: it begins with a brief theoretical foundation regarding KM-NPO domain. The further section provides an approach of KM in the non-profit perspective, including the KS, knowledge needs, KRs, and KC. Finally, conclusions and limitations of the research are provided.

BACKGROUND

KM-NPO Domain of Industrialized Countries

The studies on KM of for-profit institutions are well-known and established background and foundation in order to investigate examinations on KM-NPO domains with many perspectives (see. e.g. Lilleoere & Holme Hansen, 2011; Ode & Ayavoo, 2020). However, less attention has been given to the non-profit sector. Recently, some KM studies have researched the NPOs context from several perspectives.

Ragsdell et al. (2014) presented that there are many inherent differences regarding organizational structures (Ragsdell et al., 2014), legal requirements, infrastructure, operational guidelines of NPOs, and for-profit organizations; thus, the studies on KM for these organizations are divergent. These differences significantly influence on KM practices in the non-profit sector (Hume et al., 2012). Unlike for-profit organizations, NPOs are, however, not maximizing financial value but create value for the community and society (Lettieri et al., 2004). Recently, the number of research emphases on knowledge activities with common issues, for instance, knowledge sharing, management, and capture, are emerging in the non-profit sector, especially in the European context (Ragsdell et al., 2014). From the beginning stage, Lettieri et al. (2004) mainly contributed to conceptualizing a model concerning KM and performance improvement in Italian NPOs. The model describes a KM cycle with seven steps on how NPOs effectively manage all resources their knowledge in order to maximize the benefits in the non-profit environment. This cycle shortly includes: knowledge acquisition; knowledge codification; knowledge retrieval; knowledge

Related Content

A Three-Tiered Approach to Global E-Commerce: Experiences of Nu Skin International
David Paperand Ken B. Tingey (2002). *Global Perspective of Information Technology Management (pp. 123-144).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/three-tiered-approach-global-commerce/19280

Standardization and Other Coordination Mechanisms in Open Source Software
Tineke M. Egyediand Ruben van Wendel de Joode (2008). *Global Information Technologies: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1110-1125).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/standardization-other-coordination-mechanisms-open/19028

Lines of Advance in Global Information Technology Management: American/West European Approach
Ana R. del Aguila, Sebastián Bruqueand Antonio Padilla (2003). *Advanced Topics in Global Information Management, Volume 2 (pp. 87-111).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/lines-advance-global-information-technology/4513

Factors Motivating the Acceptance of New Information and Communication Technologies in UK Healthcare: A Test of Three Models
Janice A. Osbourneand Malcolm Clarke (2008). *Global Information Technologies: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 2274-2286).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/factors-motivating-acceptance-new-information/19111

CIO Competencies From the IT Professional Perspective: Insights From Brazil
Luiz Antonio Joiaand José Carlos P. Correia (2018). *Journal of Global Information Management (pp. 74-103).*
www.irma-international.org/article/cio-competencies-from-the-it-professional-perspective/201008