Chapter 4.16
Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing Practice in Malaysia:
A Preliminary Overview

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The need for the adoption of knowledge management practice, particularly knowledge sharing is pressing in any modern organisation today in order to ensure their survival in this highly competitive world. It is evidence that knowledge sharing has given untold advantages to organisations such as the ability to make good decisions and formulate new strategies. This in turn enables organisations to remain competitive in their respective industry. Knowledge bears no value unless it is shared and well disseminated, particularly among workers within the organisation. Despite its advantages, knowledge sharing seems to be taken lightly by many organisations in Malaysia and only a few studies have been carried out. Therefore, the authors take an initiative to identify factors affecting knowledge sharing in Malaysian public sector. An extensive literature review has been conducted in this area in order to determine such factors. Synthesizing from the literatures, this chapter proposes a theoretical framework that takes into consideration the individual, organizational and technological dimensions that might affect knowledge sharing practise in Malaysian public sector. It is not the intention of this chapter to include the findings of this study and therefore the current study only develops a framework based on literature review. The findings of the study will be reported upon completion of the entire study.

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia, as many other countries, is always concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness of its public service. As the government is striving towards becoming a developed nation in the year 2020, the role of public agencies is seen crucial to materialise the vision. Thus, the efficiency, speedy, transparency, openness, resourcefulness, integrity and accountability of public agencies have always been important issues (Ali, 2006). It is indicated statistically by the Public Complaints Bureau (PCB) of Malaysia that on average, 50 per cent of complaints received by the PCB were on the failures or delays in attending or responding to the needs of customers (Ninth Malaysia Plan, 2006). Though there are many factors contributing to this problem, but it has been identified that lack of information and knowledge sharing become the prime reason for the situation.

It has been argued that knowledge management could improve both the speed and the quality of public service delivery (Wigg, 1999). On the contrary, organisations hardly embark on the endeavour as they are not convinced of the advantages of sharing their knowledge and expertise. This is due to the fact that people are not willing to share knowledge unless it is useful and beneficial to them (Ryu, Hee & Han, 2003). Furthermore, it is simply difficult for any one person to share knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

It is the aim of this paper to extensively and critically review the existing research in the area in order to determine the factors that contribute to the seemingly low acceptance of knowledge sharing. Finally, a theoretical framework of factors that influence knowledge sharing in public sectors is proposed. The results from the proposed model will not be presented here as the empirical study yet to be completed.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AS A DIMENSION TO KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management is a fast growing discipline with various issues yet to be tested, resolved and discovered (Beckman, 1999). Knowledge management is a process of identifying, organizing and managing knowledge resources (Al-Hawamdeh, 2003). It involves creating, generating, capturing, storing and using of knowledge to support and improve individual performance (Kinney, 1998; Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Despite the wide area covered by knowledge management field, Al-Hawamdeh (2003) suggests that there are at least five important dimensions to knowledge management activities namely: knowledge capture, knowledge creation, knowledge use (leverage), knowledge sharing, and knowledge retention. This paper focuses on the knowledge sharing dimension of knowledge management.

What Is Knowledge Sharing?

Knowledge sharing is a process that takes place between individuals (Ryu, Hee & Han, 2003). This process is not visible as it cannot be observed physically (Lee, 1989). In a broader perspective, knowledge sharing refers to the communication of all types of knowledge including explicit knowledge (information, know-how and know-who) and tacit knowledge (skills and competency) (Al-Hawamdeh, 2003). However sharing knowledge does not merely mean giving something to someone, or getting something from someone (Senge, 1990). This process occurs when an individual is interested to help others in developing a new capability for action. Thus, knowledge sharing is perceived to be only taken place if there is willingness of individuals in an organization to share the knowledge they created or possessed (Gibbert & Krause, 2002). Knowledge sharing is also defined as a deliberate act that make knowledge reusable by other people through knowledge transfer (Lee &

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