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Research on knowledge management in Pakistan: A literature review

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Abstract

This research is about knowledge management in academics and organizational business practices of Pakistan. Research proceedings revealed that knowledge management is emerging as new concept and is getting grounds in Pakistani environment. Article reviews the knowledge management literature in and about Pakistan. An overview of knowledge management initiatives and attempts in any form were focus of this research. Knowledge management related information was collected by literature search through websites, research journal archives, and library catalogues. This research is of practical use for researchers and organizational management who are involved in knowledge management research and practices.

Keywords: Knowledge management, knowledge, knowledge research.

Introduction

Knowledge management has identified as the most valuable resource of organizations in recent age. Despite, unavailability of unanimous definition, knowledge has made knowledge management a complex phenomenon (Ahmed, Lim, and Loh; 2002). In broader perspective, knowledge is familiarity, awareness, know-how, skills, and expertise that has embodied in humans with experience and/or has embedded in organizations in the form of practices, procedures, and processes. So, knowledge management is comprised of strategies and practices that are used in organizations for identification, creation, storage, sharing, and application of human and organizational knowledge (Fuller; 2002). Knowledge management attempts have core focus on organizational objectives of high profitability, improved performance, competitive advantage, and innovation.

This research serves some direct and indirect objectives. On one side, it strengthens theoretical perspectives of knowledge management research in Pakistan and on other side, it presents actual situation for knowledge management in and about Pakistan. This study also

highlights major contributions for knowledge management in and about Pakistan. It also attracts attention of researchers for better understanding of knowledge management and onward theoretical contributions. Similarly, for organizational administration this research serves the purpose of creating awareness about knowledge management for better productivity. This study fits in the knowledge management literature on global perspective as representative to the geopolitical circumstances of Pakistan.

This study was aimed to identify various facets of knowledge management that encircled both theoretical and practical perspectives of knowledge management with special reference to Pakistan. Research studies were included in this research that were conducted in Pakistan and abroad but were about the actual position of knowledge management in Pakistan. Main focus was on core subject of KM in Pakistan, so researchers from abroad were also included in this study. In addition to literary contributions, knowledge management initiatives were also focused in this study.

Methodology

Information collection was through internet resources like Google, WorldCat, Academia.edu, LISTA, IEEE Xplore, five year archives of well known knowledge management journals, and catalogues of some libraries in Pakistan. Three keywords – knowledge, management, and Pakistan, were used for searching on websites. Google results delimited to first twenty five (25) pages. LISTA search on aforesaid keywords presented one hundred eighty two (182) records as a whole with few relevant to the study. IEEE Xplore digital library search sorted sixty one (61) items with titles having any from the keywords of knowledge, management, and Pakistan. Similarly, five year archives of ten knowledge management journals, and library catalogues of five universities were browsed for literature for this study. These proceedings provided information about research articles, books, websites, persons involved in knowledge management, and course contents of some universities that teach knowledge management as a subject.

Literature Review

Psychological aspects:

Some researchers discussed human psychological aspects for knowledge management on the parameters of behavioral theories. Mahmood and et al (2011) concentrated on tacit knowledge sharing intentions. Sample of their study was 209 IT professionals affiliated with seventy (70) IT registered companies working in five (5) major cities of Pakistan. Similarly, Tayyab, Finegan, and Walker (2004) presented biases and limitations of human mind in their research about tacit knowledge management. Their research was based on literature on cognitive psychology. In the same way, Ajmal, Helo and Kekale (2010) enlisted some psychological factors that directly influence on participation in knowledge management initiatives. In addition,

Ahmad, Kausar, and Paul (2006) projected the view of cognition and culture to go hand in hand for knowledge-based development of organizations.

Theoretical perspectives:

Theoretical perspectives of knowledge management were under discussion of some researchers. Mikulecky and Saeed (2009) focused on importance of knowledge management for academic sector of Pakistan in their study. Iftikhar and et al (2011) checked seven knowledge management capabilities in two hundred and fifty (250) SMEs of Pakistan. They emphasized on application of knowledge management capabilities in small and medium sized enterprises. Similarly, Ahmad, Hasan, & Ashraf (2010) encircled five dimensions of learning environment that are, culture, learning styles, resources, methodology, and environment. They also elaborated challenges of globalization and diversity that directly effect knowledge of students in practical field. Syed-ul-Haque and Irfan (2010) explained all segments of knowledge management process – creation, gathering, capturing, accessing, and use of knowledge. They described all these processes in the form of knowledge management life cycle. In the same way, Schcher, Kashif., and Aslam (2010) highlighted various factors that are required for better performance of knowledge management initiatives in corporate sector of Pakistan. Furthermore, Waheed, Arshad and Kashif (2011) described effects of knowledge management practices on organizational performance, Rukhsana and Suleman (2002) explained economic bases of knowledge, Khusro and Sobiah (2008) presented factors affecting the knowledge management initiatives in their focus on tacit knowledge. Additionally, Iftikhar and Shakeel (2010) illustrated personal knowledge abilities for knowledge management, and Anwar and Ba (2010) described the role of information management for the preservation of indigenous knowledge in organizations.

Cultural aspects:

Culture has enhanced influence on knowledge management attempts. So, few researchers considered it as the major area of their studies. Cultural aspects of knowledge management in academic sector of Pakistan came to discussion by Fakhra and et al (2011). They selected two hundred (200) employees for their research that were affiliated with various public sector organizations in capital city – Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Similarly, Ahmad, Hasan, & Ashraf (2010) discussed role of culture for learning environment that contribute for knowledge management in academic environment. In corporate sector, Ajmal, Helo and Kekale (2010), and Ahmad, Kausar, and Paul (2006) emphasized on the role that culture play for knowledge management initiatives. On manufacturing side, Kalyar, Shahzad, Rafi, & Kalyar (2011) discussed culture and self-leadership in their study of 227 manufacturing firms in Pakistan. Saeed and et al (2010) discussed cultural attributes and their involvement in knowledge management. In research details, they collected data from 813 corporate sector employees on various managerial positions. Kanu (2005) discussed tensions and problems of knowledge transfer in South Asian perspectives with more emphases on Pakistan. Waheed, Arshad and

Kashif (2011) emphasized on culture for improved performance in organizations. Similarly, factors related to inter department coordination in addition to the cultural perspectives of trust, and acceptance among decision makers came to discussion by Zainab, Mai, and Akram (2011). Ahmad, Kausar, and Paul (2007) introduced the concept of social democratization for e-learning in cross-cultural perspectives in their research. In another research, they described interactive social structures for knowledge management.

KM tools and models:

Different strategies, models, tools, and techniques for knowledge management were introduced by some researchers. Fehmida and Ali (2004) designed a mapping model that described functioning of tacit and explicit knowledge, and their links in medical practices. Similarly, Bilal and Shuaib (2009) presented comparison of three knowledge management tools on the basis of search criteria. On the same lines, Naveed and Kathawala (2004) developed knowledge city model that was based on latest futuristic technologies. Further, they described its usage to cater the needs of education, socio-cultural, business, and public sector. In academic sector, Mahwish, Abdul, Gufran, and Shahid (2012) illustrated course management system (CMS) as a tool for knowledge management. This tool serves dual purpose of electronic learning and knowledge management in an integrated system. Another researcher, Saba (2012) designed a conceptual model for knowledge sharing on the basis of her qualitative research on existing tools and models. In public sector of Pakistan, Iram (2010) checked adequacy of various existing models of knowledge management for public sector organizations and derived Knowledge Groups model. Similarly, Eram and Arshad (2005) derived a knowledge management model for public sector universities of Pakistan. On other sides, Waheed, Arshad and Kashif (2011) presented conceptual framework model of process, intellectual capital, culture, and strategy (PICS) for knowledge management. In the same way, Fehmida, Abidi, and Ali (2005) described tacit-explicit knowledge morphing system for healthcare and clinical practices.

Knowledge flow:

Khaleel (2004) presented theoretical review of technological knowledge flow in multinational national firms. He discussed technological knowledge flow in four UK-based firms in his study. Mahwish, Abdul, Gufran, and Shahid (2012) described knowledge flow and its utilization in an integrated system of electronic learning and knowledge management. They quoted practical example of Allama Iqbal Open University knowledge flow system. Halai and Manzoor (2011) described the importance of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in teaching and knowledge flow to students in schools. Eram and Arshad (2005) thoroughly discussed the information flow in the information system. They discussed information and knowledge flow in the form of knowledge in public sector universities of Pakistan. Syed-ul-Haque and Irfan (2010) described knowledge flow as a part of knowledge management life cycle. Waheed, Arshad and Kashif (2011) emphasized on knowledge management environment for better outcome. Ahmad,

Kausar, and Paul (2007) described social interaction patterns for knowledge flow in different contexts of culture and boundaries.

Knowledge management challenges:

Khalique, Isa, & Jamal, (2011) discussed knowledge economy for SMEs in Pakistan. It was literature based study in which they focused on intellectual capital for SMEs. Ajmal, Helo and Kekale (2010), in their empirical study, pointed out various barriers and enablers for knowledge management initiatives. Abuzar and Asim (2009) illustrated knowledge management processes, strategies, levels and challenges in organization. Zainab, Mai, and Akram (2011) described financial challenges faced by organizations to rationalize knowledge management in organizations. Ahmad, Kausar, and Paul (2007) illustrated challenges faced in cross-cultural perspectives in e-learning for creation, codification, and retrieval of knowledge. Fehmida, Abidi, and Ali (2005) described design and functionality of knowledge management system in health sector. Khusro and Sobiah (2008) described factors that influence knowledge management initiatives in Pakistan.

Impacts of Information Technology usage:

Ramzan (2004) discussed correlations between level of knowledge and librarians' attitudes toward IT usage. He collected responses from two hundred forty four (244) librarians working throughout Pakistan. Abuzar and Asim (2009) discussed trends and issues due to the emergence of internet and ICTs. Zainab, Mai, and Akram (2011) focused on technology related issues involved in knowledge management. Ahmad, Kausar, and Paul (2007) described knowledge creation, codification, and retrieval in e-learning.

Education of knowledge management:

Knowledge management has emerged as course in some universities of Pakistan. It's of three credit hour course at department of management science in Virtual University (VU) of Pakistan. Knowledge management is part of elective course of management in BBA honors and MBA programs in business administration curriculum (HEC, 2005). Similarly, it is elective course of Library and Information Science in four years graduation and two years masters program in Library and Information Science (HEC, 2009).

Discussion

Knowledge management research in Pakistan supports Gu (2004) conclusion who indicated that most of the research in knowledge management is from developed part of the world. Research on knowledge management in developed countries is considerably low. Knowledge management research literature in and about Pakistan is primarily from academics and, so far, could not be rooted enough in practice. As in North America where knowledge management research is mostly sponsored having direct impact on business. It is highly

pragmatic and measurement-focused rather than more concerned about theoretical and fundamental perspectives (Rivard and Smith; 2007).

Research pattern on knowledge management in Pakistan and China has some similarities where knowledge management research is in exploratory stages, theoretical explanations with some achievements in developmental phases, suggestions for practical implications, and need of collaborations between academia and research sides (Zhong, Wu, and Zhao; 2013). The situation in case of Malaysia is quite different from other countries in Asia. Knowledge management research in academia and practical knowledge management initiatives go side by side in case of Malaysia. Most of the organizations in services and corporate sector have formal knowledge management initiatives (Rahman, 2004). It was observed in due course of literature review that knowledge management research and publications are mostly from the eastern part of the world in comparison to the west.

Conclusion

Knowledge management is new and growing discipline in Pakistan. It has gained attention of researchers and is strengthening from recent past. Some research studies generally described philosophy and theory of knowledge management. Few researches covered cultural aspects and various segments of cultural phenomenon with reference to knowledge and its management. Similarly some studies are about tools, models, knowledge management challenges, and impacts of information technology on management of knowledge. As, knowledge management is getting roots in geo-political circumstances of Pakistan. Major trends of knowledge management were observed in corporate and education sectors of Pakistan. As knowledge management is gaining roots in Pakistan, that's why, there are many gaps in its theoretical and practical implications. Many research studies were conducted for academic purpose rather than for the fulfillment of industrial requirements. Therefore, gaps between theory and practice are understood. In addition, there are various attempts in routine business that are of knowledge management but in routine business they are not entitled as knowledge management initiative. Similarly, fewer studies were about knowledge sharing and knowledge flow in organizations while other segments of knowledge management – identification, creation, storage, and application of knowledge were not found in knowledge management literature in and about Pakistan. No doubt, knowledge management is emerging discipline in Pakistan. Therefore, there is a lot to do for due acceptance of knowledge management and its various segments in Pakistan. Generally, knowledge management is directly linked with organizational objectives of high productivity, innovation, and greater outputs. Therefore, its ignorance has no substitute for any nation in the so called emerging knowledge society. In the nutshell, it is recommended that industry and academics should join hands to go side by side for proper grooming of knowledge management in Pakistan.

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