Tool for the Quality Improvement in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge is Power. Doing a job, with good knowledge about it, will result in productivity. There are two main types of knowledge- explicit and implicit. Everyone has explicit and implicit knowledge. Higher education plays an imperative role in creating a knowledgeable society. Our aim is to make the Universities perform well in the future, using Knowledge portals. In this paper, the focus first and foremost, is on the identification of the implicit knowledge sources available in connection with the Universities. Once the sources of the implicit knowledge are found then it will be easier for Knowledge creation. Implicit knowledge is extracted from the sources identified by using different methodologies. The knowledge extracted is now explicit. This may be converted into different forms based on the need. The converted knowledge is shared and enriched. It is organized in a way to be retrieved as and when it is needed. The available explicit knowledge from text books and other sources is combined to form a combined knowledge. This combined knowledge can also be stored in the Knowledge Portal and can be retrieved. This knowledge portal is now ready to for use. From the Knowledge Portal it is possible to design effective Knowledge Management systems, which can improve the quality of the teaching-learning process. This paper concludes that the Universities must concern themselves with the development of human capital, through the supply of new professionals that have universalistic skills which provide a better identification of social and economic responsibilities. The results reveal that the creation of Knowledge Portals will make the universities play a strategic role in the economic and social development of the country and of the regions where they are located.

Key words: Knowledge Management systems, Portal, Higher education

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is Power. Doing a job, with good knowledge about it, will result in productivity. At the same time, doing something without knowledge or irrelevant knowledge will make the whole work a failure. Knowledge is available in abundance, but it is not in a form to be used at the instant as it should be. Hence, there is a need for managing the available knowledge, namely, Knowledge Management. There are two main types of knowledge- explicit and implicit. Everyone has explicit and implicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is described in formal language, like mathematical expressions and statements in textbooks. It consists of technical knowledge. Implicit knowledge is automatic, resembles intuition and is oral. It needs some methods to get extracted. The development of a country relies highly on the Education policy followed in that country. The development rate will be high only if quality higher education is given to the people. Education has been seen as the foundation in a person's life. The most important and urgent reform needed in education, is to transform it, to endeavor to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people, and thereby make it a powerful instrument of the social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals. Education is the very basic need of the society. Without education, usage, invention and advancements in different fields will not be possible. Higher education plays a vital role in creating a knowledgeable society. Higher educational institutions and organizations work for a creating.

Knowledgeable society Progress towards a knowledge-based society and economy will require that universities, as centers of knowledge creation, and their partners in society and government, give Knowledge Management their full attention. Once the sources of the implicit knowledge are found then it will be easier for Knowledge creation. Implicit knowledge is extracted from the sources identified by using different methodologies. The knowledge extracted is now explicit. This may be converted into different forms based on the need. The converted knowledge is shared and enriched. It is organized in a way to be retrieved as and when it is needed. The available explicit knowledge from text books and other sources is

combined to form a combined knowledge. This combined knowledge can also be stored in the Knowledge Portal and can be retrieved. This knowledge portal is now ready to for use. From the Knowledge Portal it is possible to design effective Knowledge Management systems, which can improve the quality of the teaching-learning process. Some of the knowledge management systems designed by the use of the knowledge portal are the Students' performance improvement system and the faculty performance improvement system.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Organizations have realized that "knowledge" is a strategic resource that gives them a sustainable competitive advantage, and helps them achieve their long term organizational goals. The realization that knowledge is the key driver behind organizational success comes from the need to respond to markets, that are becoming global and increasingly competitive, stakeholders that are more sophisticated and demanding, and an ever increasing rate of technological change. It is knowledge that helps organizations deal with these challenges effectively. With the realization that knowledge is their core competency, organizations are now attempting to manage knowledge in a more systematic and effective way using the latest advances in computer and information technologies. Knowledge management techniques and tools, a collective of processes or activities that helps organizations harness knowledge, have been used by organizations to encourage the creation and sharing of knowledge. It thus results in the improvement of productivity, innovation, competitiveness, as well as the relationship among people in those organizations. Higher education in today's environment is subject to the same pressures of the marketplace. WTO provisions coming into effect very soon and increased competition have pushed universities and higher education institutions to think business. Educational markets are becoming global as universities and higher education institutions are attempting to internationalize their curricula and offer high-quality programs to students, regardless of their location. They are also facing higher competition for a share of the student market, both local and international. Moreover, they have to adjust themselves and develop strategies to respond rapidly to the changes in technologies and the increasing demands of stakeholders.

Indian Universities and institutes of higher learning are trying to get an appropriate market share in this global education market. Some of the Institutions have already established their campuses abroad. In this new Millennium, knowledge is power and more knowledge is within individuals, more than in records. Consequently, knowledge management is mandatory in higher education. Universities are knowledge-based organizations in nature. In such an organization, constituencies acquire the knowledge and skills they need from many different sources, within and without the institutions. They openly share their own knowledge and skills with others; for they realize that they are all working in a non-profit academic community for the advancement of the society.

It may well be found that the needs of today's "knowledge worker" cannot be adequately addressed by the university as one knows it today, and that new elements should be introduced into institutions of higher learning to fill the widening vacuum, developing between traditional higher education and the demands of today's knowledge intensive workplace. Such an element is "Knowledge Management in Higher Education" as an integral system with the holistic commitment of all the constituencies of the university. Higher education institutions have "significant opportunities to apply knowledge management practices to support every part of their mission". Knowledge management should not strike higher education institutions as a radically new idea. The problem generally is that, it is such a "wide open area of study that it is difficult to understand the implications of knowledge management for an educational setting". Knowledge Management involves much more, going beyond the inherent knowledge industry of colleges and universities. Knowledge Management involves the "discovery and capture of knowledge, the filtering and arrangement of this knowledge, and the value derived from sharing and using this knowledge throughout the organization".

It is this "Organized complexity" of collaborative work to share and use information access all aspects of an institution, which marks the effective use of knowledge. The growth of technical education in India has been very rapid in the last decade. Private participation in higher technical education has been encouraged by Government regulatory bodies which have seen manifold expansion in the availability of technical education. However, this has led to a severe dearth of qualified faculty members in almost all institutions. Institutions are becoming 'Factories' instead of being sacred places like a temple. The regulatory bodies, though, have framed guidelines for various infrastructures, faculty and other resources, but in many cases this has been grossly violated leading to inferior education, further culminating in unemployment to the students. This has also been coupled with the fast changing requirements of industries, which are demanding more and more from the graduates. Institutions are unable to change that fast, which results in a clear cut gap between "expectations" and "availability". The big question in the present scenario has been "Are we producing quality technical manpower?" They must start realizing the importance of "what they know". Institutions must be able to identify this and make the maximum use of this knowledge. Most of the time, institutions are repeating the work of another institution / faculty

members, because it is not well documented, or they do not keep track of it. Success in an increasingly competitive market depends critically on the quality of knowledge which the organization applies in its work.

Knowledge Management initiatives in an organization often involve one or all of the following aspects:
- Managing explicit knowledge
- Managing implicit knowledge
- Creating new knowledge
- Transferring knowledge

Institutions must generate value from the intellectual ability of the faculty members and their knowledge-based assets. Every organization needs a very good system integration to make Knowledge Management successful. Implicit knowledge is highly complex, as compared to the qualitative form it usually takes and is hard to extract, as opposed to explicit knowledge.

Knowledge originates in individuals, but it is embodied in teams and organizations. In an organization, examples of explicit knowledge are strategies, methodologies, processes, patents, products, and services. Examples of implicit knowledge in an organizational context are skills and competencies, experiences, relationships within and outside the organization, individual beliefs and values, and ideas. Information and communication technology (ICT) enhances and supports knowledge processes (Seufert et al 1999). The challenge in knowledge management is to make the right knowledge available to the right people at the right time. Knowledge management helps in enhancing an institution's ability and capacity. The value of knowledge management relates directly to the effectiveness with which the managed knowledge enables the members of the institution to deal with today's situation and effectively create their future, since being efficient without being effective leads to failure. Institutions which can rethink their future based on the best practices and value additions can certainly be ahead of others by doing the right thing today. Changing industrial trends, competition from other institutions, society and government regulations, etc. make the present performance obsolete more quickly compared to earlier days. Institutions must prepare well in advance to ride the next wave of changes so that the product ""students" are highly employable.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rebecca McNeil (2011), the author of the article, 'Application of Knowledge Management for Sustainable Development in Institutions of Higher Education' suggests that sustainability in Higher Education (SHE) is a fast growing topic that has sprouted up at campuses around the world in recent years. Universities and colleges are inspired for a number of reasons to strive for a more sustainable campus, from altruistic goals set by keen campus leaders, to implementing greater efficiency for fiscal purposes, to simply cashing in on the popularity of the term "SHE". Institutions of higher education are unique in the vast amounts of knowledge they accumulate through staff, faculty, administration, and the student body. From purchasing to housing, accounting to academics, and a plethora of different positions in between, the sharing of knowledge throughout each unique aspect of campus life could help transition our academic institutions into leaders of sustainable development. There is growing recognition of the complexity of environmental management, and in some cases practitioners are learning to bust out of their silos and draw from other areas of expertise. Perhaps one of the most obvious places to start would be from management, particularly the management of knowledge. Convincing staff and faculty to attend the sessions, complete the follow-up work required, and continually provide input on a project may be difficult and present itself as a major roadblock for applying KM to SHE. As with most things, it is hard to implement any project or management system without integrating one's own biases and KM is no exception. To stay true to the integrity of the framework, SHE managers may have to identify and shelve their own conceptions or perceived understanding of the barriers to achieving campus sustainability and be open to an honest dialogue.

Methodology for assessment of knowledge management in higher education institutions' by Jasmina Arsenijevi (2011), suggests that the introduction of knowledge management in higher education is inevitable due to current social and economic changes in the knowledge economy, research of its presence in higher education institutions is important not only for establishing its current state or for following the progress of its implementation, but also for establishing strong and weak points, predispositions and obstacles of HEIs for its implementation. The methodology presented in this paper is based on KM framework which equally addresses KM processes and KM culture. There are plenty of theories on KM processes in the literature, but the one which unites all of them is taken as the basis for this methodology. In addition, examining these processes will also involve examining technological aspects, since this KM framework includes the process of storing and organization of knowledge and at the same time analyzes if these processes are in progress and if organizations are using an adequate technology. The methodology was designed to provide several advantages. It begins with the inseparability of organizational aspects of KM in educational institutions and application of KM in educational

process, so it examines both KM levels, as opposed to other similar studies. Furthermore, it encompasses perspectives of two most important groups within HEIs, teachers and students, and thus provides a clearer picture which is not affected by a subjective point of view of a specific and consistent group of respondents.

New Trends In Knowledge Management

Several trends shape the field of knowledge management:

- Emerging technology solutions
- The convergence of knowledge management with e-business
- The movement from limited knowledge management projects to more enterprise wide projects
- Increasing use of knowledge management to enhance innovation
- Increasing use of tactic knowledge (rather than explicit knowledge)

Knowledge Management System Abstract Model In Higher Education

Universities are the main instruments of society for the constant pursuit of knowledge. Knowledge management in educational setting should provide a set of designs for linking people, processes, and technologies and discuss how organizations can promote policies and practices that help people share and manage knowledge (Petrides & Nodine, 2003). There are two types of knowledge involved in higher education settings: academic knowledge and organizational knowledge. Academic knowledge is the primary purpose of universities and colleges. Organizational knowledge refers to knowledge of the overall business of an institution: its strength and weaknesses, the markets it serves, and the factors critical to organizational success (Coukos-Semmel, 2003).

Applying Knowledge Management In Higher Education For Quality Improvement

Using knowledge management techniques and technologies in higher education is as vital as it is the corporate sector. If done effectively, it can lead to better decision making capabilities, reduced "product" development cycle time (for example, curriculum development and research), improved academic and administrative services, and reduced costs. Consider the number of faculty and staff who possess institutional knowledge. For example, what institution does not have a faculty member who has led successful curriculum revision task forces? Or a departmental secretary who knows how to navigate the complex proposal development or procurement processes? Or a researcher who has informal connections to All India Management Association? Or a special assistant to the president who has uncovered (or generated) useful reports that individual deans or department heads could use to develop their own strategic plans?

Relying on the institutional knowledge of unique individuals can hamper the flexibility and responsiveness of any organization. The challenge is to convert the information that currently resides in those individuals and make it widely and easily available to any faculty member, staff person or other constituent. An institution wide approach to knowledge management can lead to exponential improvements in sharing knowledge-both explicit and tacit and the subsequent surge benefits.

Is higher education ready to embrace knowledge management? A key ingredient in an institution's readiness to embrace knowledge management is its culture-the beliefs, values, norms and behaviors that are unique to an organization. Informally, it is the unwritten rules or "how things really get done". Higher education is moving from the old culture that considers, what's in it for me? "To a new culture that says, "What's in it for our customer?" And it is developing a culture that is ready to embrace knowledge management. As institutions launch knowledge management initiatives, they can learn lessons from their counterparts in the corporate sector.

Following are the key points to be remembered:

- Start with Strategy: Before doing anything else, determine what you want to accomplish with knowledge management.
- Organizational infrastructure: Human resources, financial measurements of success, and information technology-should support knowledge management. Think of technology as an enabler, and measure the impact of KM in financial terms, such as cost reductions, customer satisfaction and speed to market.
- Seek a high-level champion for the initiative: Someone who believes in its benefits and who can advocate as needed.
- Select a pilot project for knowledge management: Ideally one with high impact on the organization but of low risk to build credibility for knowledge management
- Develop a detailed action plan for the pilot that defines the process, the IT infrastructure, and the roles and incentives of the pilot project team.
- After the pilot, assess the results and refine the action plan

CONCLUSION

Colleges and universities have significant opportunities to apply knowledge management practices to support every part of their mission-from education to public service to research. Implementing knowledge management practices wisely is a lesson that the smartest organizations in the corporate and not for profit sectors like education are learning all over. . This paper finally concludes that the Universities must concern themselves with the development of human capital, through the supply of new professionals that have universalistic skills which provide a better identification of social and economic responsibilities.

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