Chapter 4

The Roles of Lifelong Learning and Knowledge Management in Global Higher Education

Kijpokin Kasemsap
Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand

ABSTRACT

This chapter reveals the roles of lifelong learning and knowledge management (KM) in global higher education, thus explaining the theoretical and practical concepts of lifelong learning and KM; the application of KM; and the significance of lifelong learning and KM in global higher education. The utilization of lifelong learning and KM is necessary for higher education institutions (HEIs) that seek to serve students and faculties, increase educational performance, strengthen competitiveness, and achieve continuous success in global higher education. Therefore, it is essential for HEIs to examine their lifelong learning applications, develop a strategic plan to regularly check their practical advancements, and immediately respond to lifelong learning and KM needs of customers in modern HEIs. Applying lifelong learning and KM in global higher education will significantly enhance organizational performance and reach strategic goals in the digital age.

INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning is a highly important issue that most of the governments emphasize on their educational programs (Kapusuz & Can, 2014). Current theory, policy, and practice of lifelong learning are strongly influenced by ideas about the transformations that are taking place in contemporary societies (Zhao & Biesta, 2011). In an age of uncertainty, one of the aims of higher education is to establish lifelong learning abilities in students (Su, 2011). With the focus of more and more governments and related organizations, the concept of lifelong learning has been an important strategic target and guiding theory of formulating education policy and promoting educational reform (Ding & Yang, 2012). Lifelong learning is recognized as an indicator of competence and professionalism in higher education (Arnold, 2002; Duff, 2002).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-9455-2.ch004
KM, which has been long established in business, must be established in the educational sector as society moves from the industrial to the information age to improve teaching and learning, and to provide a strong knowledge base for research-based practices and strategies (Ramachandran, Chong, & Ismail, 2009). There is as much need for KM in education as there is in industries (Sallis & Jones, 2002). HEIs are suitable places to apply KM practices to support their functional and operational processes (Kidwell, Vander Linde, & Johnson, 2000). HEIs are posited to profit greatly from the development and application of certain KM mechanisms that assist in identifying not only what is known, but also what must be known, similar to business organizations (Tippins, 2003).

The strength of this chapter is on the thorough literature consolidation of lifelong learning and KM. The extant literature of lifelong learning and KM provides a contribution to practitioners and researchers by describing a comprehensive view of the functional applications of lifelong learning and KM to appeal to different segments of lifelong learning and KM in order to maximize the business impact of lifelong learning and KM in global higher education.

BACKGROUND

Lifelong learning has become an emphasized topic in the field of education (Can & Yüksel, 2012). Lifelong learning is accepted, in policy terms, by all Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and many other countries (Bengtsson, 2013). In the 1970s, some international organizations (i.e., OECD and UNESCO) applied lifelong learning for humanistic purposes (Hake, 1999), which was accepted as a popularized slogan in the educational policies of European Union (EU) (Dehmel, 2006).

In 1973, lifelong learning was used for education by UNESCO (Demirel, 2009a; Friesen & Anderson, 2004; Kang, 2007), which developed life skills programs for adults (Viswanathan, Gajendiran, & Venkatesan, 2008). Since the emergence in the 1970s of the notion of the learning organization, KM and lifelong learning have progressively entered into the debates (Casey, 2012). Humans are able to acquire and maintain knowledge during their complete lifetime (Kirstein, Wersing, Gross, & Korner, 2012). This outstanding ability is called lifelong learning (Bagnall, 1990).

KM is a process where HEIs formulate ways in an attempt to recognize and archive assets from within that are derived from the employees of various departments or faculties in HEIs (Joseph, 2001). HEIs are knowledge-intensive organizations where they are recognized to be in the knowledge business (Goddard, 1998) since knowledge production, distribution and application are ingrained in the institution (Ho, Cheng, & Lau, 2008). Knowledge is both an HEI’s main production factor as well as its final product (Goddard, 1998).

LIFELONG LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION

This section explains the theoretical and practical concepts of lifelong learning and KM; the application of KM; and the significance of lifelong learning and KM in global higher education.