Chapter 4

Knowledge Management Systems Characteristics That Support Knowledge Sharing and Decision-Making Processes in Organizations

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of the knowledge economy and the growing importance of knowledge societies, organizations are constantly seeking new ways of leveraging and sharing knowledge to support decision-making (DM) processes. This chapter presents an initial insight to the little-researched phenomenon of how knowledge management systems (KMSs) can facilitate knowledge sharing (KS) to support DM processes in organizations. In this chapter, authors aim to extend the existing literature of knowledge management, decision making, and knowledge sharing by proposing a new conceptual framework, namely “ECUA” (easiness, communication, unification, and analytics characteristics). In this study, 42 semi-structured interviews have been conducted. The proposed conceptual framework will benefit managers in both public and private sectors in finding new ways of leveraging and sharing knowledge to support DM processes via using KMSs. This framework can be used to explore KMSs characteristics that can support DM processes by facilitating knowledge sharing in organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge can be considered as one of the most important resources in any organization that can provide a sustainable competitive advantage at any competitive market and dynamic economy (Wang and Noe, 2010). Gaining a competitive advantage is challenging, especially in public sectors, as it is essential for public organizations to rely on knowledge systems that encourage employees who have specific knowledge, skills, talents, abilities, proficiencies or competencies to share their knowledge with other people in their organizations. Therefore, with the advent of the knowledge economy, organizations are continually seeking new ways of leveraging and sharing knowledge to support Decision Making (DM) processes and to achieve a lot of benefits in this competitive market place (DeTienne and Jackson, 2001). In the DM processes; decision makers combine different types of data like internal and external data, and different types of knowledge like tacit and explicit knowledge which are available in a variety of forms in organizations (Bolloju et al., 2002). In this highly competitive global environment, organizations are now recognizing an urgent need to institutionalize Knowledge Sharing (KS) as a mean of obtaining the best value from all available knowledge assets (Goh, 2007; Makela et al, 2012). Accordingly, Knowledge Management (KM) and decision support processes are mutually dependent activities in many organizations. Nielsen and Michailova (2007) state that over the past two decades, many organizations have developed Knowledge Management Systems (KMSs) designed specifically to facilitate the sharing, integration and utilization of knowledge. Alavi and Leidner (2001) highlight that KMSs can support the creation and dissemination of firm expertise and knowledge. In addition, Nemati et al. (2002) emphasize that those KM initiatives can facilitate the capturing, coding and sharing of knowledge within organizations, which is expected to result in well informed decision processes. Therefore, KMSs can facilitate KM functions by ensuring knowledge flow from the person(s) who know to the person(s) who need to know throughout the organization (Abdelrahman et al., 2017; Abdelrahman and Papamichail, 2016; Bose, 2004). Moreover, Wang and Noe (2010) highlight that research has shown that knowledge management strategies are positively related to organization’s performance. For example, decisions based on KM can help organizations in reducing costs, elaborating products and services, improving team performance, encouraging firm innovation capabilities and increasing sales and revenue from new products and services. Choi et al. (2010) highlight that, little is known of how IT support for KM practices in organizations affects the development of KMSs, and the precise role of KMSs on knowledge sharing and knowledge application, which in turn influences team performance. Furthermore, Nag & Gioia, (2012) suggest a need to understand how key decision makers utilize the use of knowledge in their organizations by using what they know and seeking out what they do not know to guide the creation of unique knowledge-based competencies. Furthermore, there are many unprecedented challenges facing managers outside their organizations along with environmental “forces of change” such as: globalization, emerging technologies, emerging best business practices, government regulations, competitive global financial markets, limited knowledge workers and higher worker turnover rates (Abdelrahman et al., 2016; Cuffe, 2007). Therefore, in order to succeed in the global information society organizations need to identify, value, create, evolve and develop their knowledge assets since knowledge is one of their meaningful economic resources (Abdelrahman and Papamichail, 2016; Ergazakis, 2003; Maier and Schmidt, 2015).

Thus, the past decade has shown an explosive growth in research on knowledge and KM in the economics, management and information systems fields. However, there is a little research and field data that exist to guide the analysis and to assess the implementation of KMSs (Alavi et al., 2006; Alavi and Leinder, 2001; Cole, 1998; Wang and Noe, 2010). Likewise, the public sector nowadays face several
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