Chapter 21

Knowledge Management Practices in a Greek Public Sector Organization: The Case of OAED

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge management (KM) is a rather novice, but also a very highly appreciated, initiative in the field of management. Although initiated from the private sector, it seems that public organizations, having realized its significance, are in a continuous process of discovering its potential. Hence, many studies for KM implementation in the public sector have been already conducted; yet it seems this field needs to be further researched. In this research, a public organization in Greece called OAED, which is the main institution dealing with human resource’s employment, was selected to be analyzed. A questionnaire was designed and addressed to the employees of OAED, and it included questions regarding KM and knowledge sharing activities, information and communications technology instruments used, motives, and the evaluation of the learning organization. The analysis of data proved that OAED exhibits a well-established status, regarding the creation and KS and the use of ICT tools.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management (KM) is a management concept that initialized in order to acquire and manage a significant asset, circulating inside the organizations, called knowledge. We can state that knowledge is already recognized as a valuable asset in management theory, and in the modern information era, as it could be decisive for the sustainability of the organizations. With the additional contribution of ICT in these efforts, the private sector seems to have been benefited from the exploitation of knowledge, since many years. Later, the need to adopt these processes in the public sector as well, was inevitable.

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Public organizations are usually non-profit ones and their mission includes the provision of services that most of the times are critical for people/citizens. It is obvious that the provision of better services to the citizens, can improve the social and economic development of the nations. Hence, it seems that all the Governments put much emphasis to the level of quality of these services, because one of their main concerns is to keep their citizens satisfied. In order to control these actions, knowledge could be a valuable weapon and it is characteristic that many times public organizations are considered knowledge-intensive ones. Consequently, there is a boost for the research of KM in public organizations and KM seems to have become a hot subject for the public sector in the late years.

However, public sector presents issues (like bureaucracy and other structural problems) that establish KM’s implementation even more demanding, essential and being capable to solve many problems. Therefore, KM can play a vital role in the reorganization of the public sector and the necessary organizational change. However, public sector provides services to the public and it does not expect to acquire financial gain, hence the practices from the private sector can’t just be copied, but certain modifications should be made. As the main scope of the public organizations is to provide quality services to the citizens, KM can acquire and communicate knowledge in order to succeed in this effort and also to confront challenges that exist in the modern knowledge economy. Hence, a major subject is to select the appropriate solutions for each organization, as some of them function in a local, some in a regional and others in a national level. Many studies in the public sector have been already conducted, yet it seems that the subject needs to be further investigated.

As knowledge is a central resource of the government service, effective Knowledge sharing (KS) among employees is a significant public management challenge for providing excellent government service to constituencies at all levels. This study is an attempt to provide some insights into KS behavior of public sector employees in a developed, but rather problematic economy such as the Greek one.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are to identify the views of public sector employees towards:

- Policies of knowledge sharing
- Motives to assist knowledge sharing
- Tools and procedures for acquiring and sharing knowledge
- Learning organization

BACKGROUND

OAED

OAED is the public manpower employment organization in Greece with activities concerning the three following pillars:

- Promotion of employment
- Unemployment insurance and social protection of maternity and family
- Vocational education and training