Chapter 21

Knowledge Management Utilization:
A Case Study of Two Jordanian Universities

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ABSTRACT

The interest in KM in Jordan is relatively new, since about 2003. Many Jordanian institutions, including universities are working to understand issues related to this field in order to use KM and achieve excellence and competitiveness. This study tries to highlight some of the factors affecting KM utilization at universities, such as KM awareness and the exercising of its operations, because failure to utilize KM is often due to a lack of awareness, and incorrect exercise of its operations. This study aims at identifying the impact of the workers KM awareness at YU and ANU, and exercising its operations on KM utilization. Data was collected from workers at senior and middle management levels, using a questionnaire consisting of three sub-measures. Several conclusions have been reached, and it is expected that they will contribute to helping universities utilize the KM system successfully.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is as old as man, but the new thing in this context is the interest in knowledge management (KM) and its utilization in institutions in the public and private sector in various parts of the world. This interest started to gain momentum by the late eighties, and coincided with the overwhelming wave of globalization. Studies, publications, and conferences related to KM have increased since the late nineties (Tamtana, 2007, p.125). The utilization of KM is one of the ways which institutions can resort to in order to meet the challenges, changes and developments in
different fields that do not stop at a certain point. Many modern institutions have implemented KM programs to improve institutional performance and achieve a competitive advantage with other institutions (Small & Sage, 2005/2006, p.156; AMIR & USAD, 2003, p.2). Like other institutions, universities are affected by what is going on, and exposed to growing pressure to improve their output and services they provide to the community (Al-Khatib, Maayah, 2006, p.82).

Universities are scientific and intellectual centers that are resorted to in order to solve the most difficult problems facing society, and credited for the superior technological innovation and the highest qualified personnel in the world. Its activity is basically academic, the direct output of which is thought and knowledge that is subject to different principles in its production and marketing compared with other institutions. The investment in this is a long term investment which requires the adopting of an effective management system, such as the KM system so that they can shift from management of the teaching staff and students to the management of knowledge and innovation (Faris, 1426 H, p.1; Mahjoub, 2003, p.25).

The importance of this study is that it addresses one of the issues affecting the essence of institutions in general, which is the utilization of KM. Since Jordanian universities do not apply the KM system formally, it is intended, to see whether KM is informally used, and what factors are influencing this, such as workers’ awareness of KM and exercise of its operations. This might help to obtain real information that helps universities management under study. A case study at Yarmouk University (YU) and Amman National University (ANU), to understand and accommodate the reality of KM at universities, and help decision-makers adopt this system formally in the future since failure to use KM in many institutions is due to a lack of adequate awareness of the concept of KM and operations associated with the use of it (Hijazi, 2005a, p.50). In addition, there is a possibility to benefit from the results of this study at other universities, both inside and outside Jordan, as an indication of the importance of awareness of KM and exercising its operations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study tries to understand and measure how workers’ awareness of KM and the exercise of operations related to it, affect the utilization of KM in Jordanian Universities (A case study at YU and ANU). Accordingly, the main query of the research is as follows:

What is the impact of the workers’ awareness of KM and exercising its operations in its utilization at YU and ANU?

To answer the research question, the degree of workers’ awareness of KM, exercising its operations, and utilizing it have been measured through a questionnaire which was distributed among administrative workers and academics from the senior and middle management levels of YU and ANU.

BACKGROUND

Knowledge Management in Jordan

As a result of globalization and increasing competition between international business organizations, Jordan began to review its economic and social status. This has been done through setting a sustainable comprehensive development plan. One of its highest priorities is to create a knowledge economy emphasizing performance improvement of institutions so that they are able to cope with the growing competition and meet the changing demands in the international business environment.

This cannot be achieved except through a culture of excellence based on knowledge. Hence, the rising interest in KM in Jordan for implementing KM systems. This interest increased after the King Abdullah II Center for Excellence (2006) decided
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