Managerial Practices for Knowledge Sharing in Organizations

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Abstract: **In today's organizations managers are increasingly becoming aware that the proper use of knowledge can be a source of sustainable competitive advantage. While it is true that organizations try to attract the best personnel in terms of skill and experience, these skills do not automatically translate to increased efficiency, productivity and sustainable competitive advantage. Research has shown that worldwide organizations lose up to $10 billion due to lack of knowledge sharing. [1].Drawing from secondary sources of data the roles of individual, managerial and contextual factors in facilitating or impeding knowledge sharing has been analyzed. The benefits of knowledge sharing include improved organizational productivity, development of new strategic capabilities, better customer service, development of new knowledge, improved job satisfaction to the employees and job security among others [5], [6],[8], [4].The individual, managerial and contextual factors hindering knowledge sharing have been identified by,[5-6], [9], [4], [10], and others. These can be mitigated through better managerial practices for the benefits of knowledge sharing to be realised.**

Key Words: **Knowledge sharing, Organizational Culture, Task Structure.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is increasingly being recognized as an important factor which significantly contributes to a firm attaining sustainable competitive advantage. Both public and private sector firms are investing substantial amounts of time and resources in order to build their knowledge base and utilize it to offer value added goods and services to their customers. While it is true that knowledge if properly utilized can leverage a firm's performance, the full benefits of knowledge have not been tapped by organizations in both public and private sectors. This situation is true because managers in these firms spend a lot of time creating knowledge systems, practices, and cultures in ways that do dot unleash employee's potentials. The result is skill hoarding, frustration, inadequate performance, loss of customer value and increased employee turnover. Worldwide, it is estimated that companies lose up to, $10 billion annually due to failure to share knowledge. (Brown, 2019[1]. It is therefore my view that firms can achieve great advantages if managers recognised the contribution of knowledge sharing to employee job satisfaction, innovation, motivation, and customer value added and improved organizational performance. This paper sets out to highlight the managerial practices required for effective knowledge sharing, the challenges expected, and the benefits of knowledge sharing practices in the organization.

1.1) Objectives of The Study

1) To identify the factors influencing knowledge sharing in organizations.
2) To identify the benefits of knowledge sharing in organizations.
3) To highlight the leadership practices necessary for effective knowledge sharing
4) To identify the role of management in knowledge sharing in organizations.

1.3) Materials and Methods

The study relies on various secondary data sources such as books and journals. Extensive literature review is carried out to establish the relationships that exist between the variables under investigation. Multidisciplinary research approach has been used to draw conclusions based on analysis of literature.

1.3.1 Theoretical Framework

To understand the relationship between managerial practices and knowledge sharing, this paper uses the following theories;

A) Absorptive Capacity Theory

This theory was developed by Cohen & Levinthal(1989,1990).Absorptive capacity is the Organizations ability to recognize the value of new external knowledge, assimilate it and apply it to commercial ends i.e. to achieve its goals. To engage in Knowledge sharing, organizations must collect knowledge from different sources. Absorbing new knowledge allows the organization to be more creative, innovative and flexible. For organizations to benefit from knowledge managers need to understand the processes of knowledge acquisition and exploitation. This theory shows that organizations need to develop capacities at different levels to benefit from knowledge. At the initial stage, organizations must develop the capacity to acquire external knowledge resources deemed valuable for internal operations. Secondly, organizations must develop assimilation capacity i.e. develop routines and processes that enable them to interpret, understand and diffuse knowledge. Thirdly, organizations should develop transmission capability, i.e the ability to internalize and recognize assimilated knowledge within the existing knowledge base. Fourthly, Exploitation capabilities ,i.e,the ability to refine, extend or leverage existing competencies and or building new competencies through adding new knowledge. When these processes are not adequately understood, it is impossible for managers to create

the right conditions that allow knowledge sharing in organizations.

B) Participative Leadership Theory

This theory proposes that both subordinates and leaders participate in decision making (Kurt Lewin, 1939). According to this theory, partcipication in decision making brings about better acceptance and ownership of goals. In organizational settings, participation can be enhanced through provision of greater discretion to employees, increasing support and involving them in problem solving. This theory proposes that participation increases the prospect of knowledge sharing and increases the responsibility of employees in knowledge in knowledge analysis, utilization and renewal, improvement of self worth and commitment to goals. Participative leadership theory shows the importance of changing organizational communication systems to allow for easy sharing of ideas at team level. It also emphasizes on the need to change the task structure by empowering employees to take risks in decision making. This means moving away from routinized tasks and embracing task autonomy as the preferred means of delivering organizational results. To build employee commitment to tasks and to encourage risk taking, managers should focus on team rewards.

1.3.2) Meaning and Concept of knowledge sharing

Knowledge is the ability to Access and recombine new knowledge into innovation. It is the justified true beliefs that organizational members hold about what constitutes effective organizational actions and practices. Knowledge sharing is the process of integrating explicit, formalized information existent in an organization with the tacit knowledge existent in the minds of individuals in an organization. Lionel & Rutherford, 2012[2].It is the process of exchange of explicit and tacit knowledge among individuals, teams and units, Anne and Ashly, 2011[3].Knowledge sharing is the action of individuals in making knowledge available to others within an organization. It is the sharing of organizationally relevant information, ideas, suggestions one's acquired knowledge, and expertise with one another. It may also include the activities of transferring or disseminating knowledge from one person, group or organization to another, Pangil, 2013[4].Given the above meanings about what knowledge is and what knowledge sharing means the paper sets out to explore why knowledge sharing has gained importance in modern management literature. Many management thinkers, writers and practitioners have recognized the importance of knowledge sharing practices in helping the organization to achieve its objectives. Among the direct benefits of knowledge sharing include the following:

1.3.3) Benefits Of Knowledge Sharing

According to Kimiz, 2005[5], Davenport & Prusak, 2000[6-8], Pangil, 2013[4].

1) Knowledge sharing helps the organization to achieve its objectives

2) It helps the organization to develop standardized professional practices
3) It helps an organization to avoid making mistakes
4) It helps an organization to connect professionals across platforms and distances
5) Helps an organization to build its reputation
6) Helps an organization to improve its strategic capabilities
7) Leads to improvement in work practices.
8) Better problem solving abilities.
9) It brings better accountability for results.
10) It brings about innovations which can lead to new product development
11) It leads to improved productivity due to more efficient information searches and issue resolution and reduction in duplication of activities.
12) It enables organizations to meet their targets at lower costs.
13) Helps the managers to understand the importance of coaching as a tool for knowledge sharing.
14) It leads to the generation of new ideas and knowledge.
15) It leads to organizational learning where individual knowledge is converted into organizational knowledge.
16) Helps organizations to overcome redundancy in knowledge production and ensure diffusion of best practices.

1.3.4) Factors Hindering Knowledge Sharing

According to, Kimiz, 2005[5], Riege, 2005[9], Pangil, 2013[4], Razmerita, Kirchner& Nielsen, 2016[10], certain managerial behaviours and practices make knowledge sharing difficult in organizations. Some of them include the following;

1) Employees' lack of communication skills and social networks.
2) Lack of time to share knowledge and time to identify colleagues in need of specific knowledge.
3) Low employee's awareness and realisation of the value and benefit of possessed knowledge to others.
4) Lack of contact time and interaction between knowledge sources and recipients.
5) Sometimes managers view the knowledge possessed by employees as their property which they must own and control
6) Managers develop reward systems based on what people know and not what they share.
7) Taking ownership of intellectual property due to fear of receiving just recognition and rewards from managers and colleagues.
8) Managers develop individualistic cultures based on knowledge hoarding
9) Managers intolerance of employee's mistakes.
10) Lack of leadership and managerial direction in terms of clearly communicating the benefits and values of knowledge sharing practices.

11) Shortage of formal and informal spaces to share, reflect and generate knowledge.
12) Lack of a transparent rewards and recognition systems that motivates people to share their knowledge.
13) Applying a culture that does not support knowledge sharing.
14) Lack of prioritization of highly skilled knowledgeable workers.
15) Shortage of infrastructure to support knowledge sharing practices.
16) Overemphasis of top down approach to management.
17) Lack of integration between knowledge management strategies and knowledge sharing initiatives into organizations goals.
18) Instead of sharing knowledge managers are busy defending their social status.
19) Managers' inability to assess usefulness of the knowledge.
20) Lack of information about the quality of others knowledge.
21) Difficulties in assessing the returns of knowledge acquisition and sharing.
22) Managers' view that it is costly to access and assimilate knowledge.
23) It leads to changes in methods of work hence improving employee creativity.
24) Sometimes employees fear that if they share knowledge their personal value in the organization will decline.
25) Employees' may not be sure how the employer will use the newly acquired knowledge.
26) Knowledge sharing is perceived to have actual negative consequences by employees.
27) Low expectation of rewards by employees.
28) Lack of trust among employees.

1.3.5) Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing

Effective knowledge sharing requires that managers develop a new culture, new structures and new leadership styles. This can be achieved by,

1) Developing cross-functional teams to collaborate in task execution
2) Developing new values based on collaboration
3) Developing new management and leadership approaches which encourage innovation and collaboration.
4) Developing capacity for people to develop different types of knowledge.
5) Improving capacity to disseminate information throughout the organization.
6) Enhancing reputation by giving credit to those who share knowledge.
7) Creating social network which make people aware about the sources of knowledge and those who are willing to share it.

1.3.6) Creating Conditions For Knowledge Sharing

Donald, 2009[11], Lionel and Rutherford, 2012[2], Richard, 2012[8], and others have pointed out the steps managers can take to encourage knowledge sharing, i.e.,

1) Develop positive attitudes towards knowledge sharing.
2) Developing a shared future
3) Developing effective feedback systems to avoid unnecessary reactions.
4) Building effective teams
5) Developing group based reward systems.
6) Developing a culture of trust. This will encourage cooperation and interdependence.
7) Delegating as a means of accomplishing tasks.
8) Rewarding and recognizing knowledge creators.
9) Encouraging knowledge sharing practices.
10) Encouraging creativity, innovation and risk taking.
11) Giving people time to fulfil the task.
12) Investing in team building activities.
13) Clarifying roles and tasks.
14) Resolving conflicts of values and beliefs.

1.3.7) Manager's Role In Knowledge Sharing

For knowledge sharing to be successful, managers must believe that there are real returns to be gained and the employees must believe that sharing what they know will be recognised and rewarded. Managers can play the following roles to encourage knowledge sharing;

1) Changing communication systems.

Communications needs to move away from the regular issuance of instructions and directives towards the goals to be achieved and feedback about progress towards goal attainment. Communication should focus more on business goals, business changes, and how to embed new behaviours in the systems of work.

2) Changing the organizational structure

For knowledge sharing to be effective, managers need to create a structure which allows free flow of information within the organization. This requires a reconfiguration of the structure to allow for delegation, change in task structure, reporting systems, feedback system and systems of motivation.

3) Changing the organizational culture

Managers need to introduce a knowledge based culture supported by day to day practices in decision making on matters of recruitment, task allocation and rewards. In addition, regular training through caching can help increase the levels of interactions and therefore facilitating knowledge sharing. For knowledge sharing to take place managers must adopt management information systems and encourage continuous learning and develop a culture based on trust,

Awad & Ghaziri,2010[12], Razmerita, Kirchner & Nielsen, 2016[10].

4) Changing the task structure

Managers need to realise the superior performance occurs when people share ideas and are allowed to develop creative solutions to problems impeding task accomplishment. This requires the establishment of team based tasks with clear autonomy on the management of the task, Tidd&Bessant, 2009[13]. This should be supported by team based rewards, Rucker, 2011[14].

5) Developing responsive human resource management practices i.e.

According to [13-14], [11], Leonard, 2010[15], Coakes, 2003[16].

1) Developing a clear strategy and vision.
2) Selecting the right employees who can operate effectively in team situations.
3) Clarifying roles and tasks.
4) Providing team based rewards
5) Encouraging work sharing practices
6) Giving autonomy to work teams.
7) Recruiting people with the required skill and knowledge.
8) Improving the ability of members to absorb new knowledge through training.
9) Providing feedback to tell employees how they can improve their capabilities.
10) Helping employees to develop objectives for self development.
11) Developing capacity to unlearn and challenge existing ways of doing things.
12) Developing trust to encourage people to share knowledge.
13) Transferring people to knowledge centres so that they can learn.
14) Organizing meetings and conferences for people to share knowledge.
15) Job rotation.
16) Sharing performance data.
17) Appointing inter- unit liaison officers to encourage knowledge sharing.
18) Carrying out induction to new employees.
19) Developing the right culture that encourages knowledge creation and use.
20) Encouraging leadership based on delegation.
21) Focusing on coaching as a means of knowledge sharing and transfer.

1.3.8) Influence of Technology

To facilitate knowledge sharing, Managers should choose technologies which enhance collaboration and knowledge exchange such as conferencing which can be complemented by face to face interactions in meetings and conferences. For technology to support knowledge sharing it must support user needs and improve user functionality. Knowledge sharing can be greatly enhanced when organizations develop electronic communications platforms and empower people to use them, [12], [10].

1.3.9) Managing knowledge politics

Managers need to understand the various knowledge sources and the factors which lead to knowledge hoarding so that that they can proactively develop systems of unlocking hoarded knowledge such as through provision of better rewards to people with specialised knowledge. Managers must also improve their knowledge search capabilities if they are to gain access to valuable knowledge from inside and outside the organisation which makes their work easier and rewarding.

1.3.10) Managing knowledge brokers

Managers need to improve their relationships with knowledge brokers so that they can know where what type of knowledge is needed. This enables them to allocate necessary resources to satisfy those needs.

1.3.11) Understanding of the functioning of knowledge market

Mangers need to understand those factors which make the knowledge market function effectively. Key among them it the reciprocal sharing of knowledge, building reputation for knowledge sources as well as building mentorship relationships which allow people to share knowledge freely. Another important element is Trust which can be developed through giving credit for knowledge sharing, ensuring that it is a value recognised by the organisation in its mission and ensuring that it is part of day to day managerial practice.

1.3.12) Working with informal networks

Managers need to understand that a lot of knowledge exchange happens at the informal group level. These informal groups provide opportunities for developing creative solutions to problems.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Available literature shows that knowledge sharing has tremendous benefits for the organization. Effective knowledge sharing practices enables organizations to attain their strategic objectives. Since Managers are charged with the responsibility of effectively managing organizations in very completive business environments, they need to play their roles effectively by creating systems that empower the employees to voluntarily share knowledge. Among the things managers can do include organizational visioning, creating and managing teams, managing relationships, creating appropriate organizational and task structure and improving communication.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Knowledge sharing effectively occurs in organizations that create an environment where leadership is based on trust. This leadership should be anchored on more employee

participation in decision making processes in the organization. Task structure greatly influences how knowledge is shared and how work related feedback is delivered. For effective decision making work should be organized around teams. For knowledge sharing to thrive, managers need to encourage employees to take risks in their day to day roles. Managers should create the right culture and structure and apply leadership based on delegation.

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