

Employee Participation: Success Factor of Knowledge Management

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Abstract—The purpose of this study is to examine one of the success factors of Knowledge Management (KM) implementation. The paper presented an evaluation on one of the success factors of KM implementation, namely employee participation in Mechanical Engineering Division, School of Technology, Tunku Abdul Rahman College (TARC). A qualitative survey was conducted at TARC after the KM implementation in order to examine the significant of employee participation. Data were collected by structured interview. The finding revealed that the employee participation was one of success factors for KM implementation. This study may help the practitioners and academicians to implement KM effectively. The result may inherent some limitations of qualitative survey in term of validity. Therefore, further empirical research is recommended in a form of survey research for the organizations by using multivariate analysis to validate this finding.

Index Terms—Critical success factor, employee participation, perceived benefits

I. INTRODUCTION

As the growing demand for knowledge-based services is changing the structure of the global economy, the role of knowledge in achieving competitive advantages is becoming an important management issue in higher learning institutions [7]. Thus, practice of knowledge management is essential in higher learning institutions. Many studies have shown that not all KM efforts carried by organizations were successfully implemented even with the deployment of advanced technology. However, practitioners are now realizing the importance of the soft aspects of KM initiatives, i.e. people involvement. Thus, the main purpose of this study is to examine the success factor (employee participation) of KM in higher learning institutions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW: CSF OF KM (EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION)

Employee involvement in making organizational decisions is a well-researched area. It describes how employees can contribute effectively to meeting the organization's objectives. It refers to the degree that employees share information, knowledge, rewards and power throughout the

organization [1]. Researchers such as Chong (2005) [2], Choi (2000) [3], Ow et al. (2001) [4] and Davenport and Volpel (2001) [5] acknowledged that *employee involvement* is one of the success factor for KM implementation.

Lately, corporate leaders begin to realize that employee knowledge is a critical resource for competitive advantage, so they encourage employees to share their knowledge to each other within the organizations. In order to ensure the success of KM *implementation*, the employees must share the nature of knowledge creation and sharing, many KM activities, it cannot be done without employee involvement [3].

This is also agreed by Davenport and Volpel (2001) [5], they stated that *employee involvement* is important in making the knowledge-sharing effective for the organization. *Employee participation* is the key to making knowledge-sharing activities work; knowledge that is required for successful knowledge-sharing activities is possessed by individual employees.

Besides, Sallis and Jones (2002) [7] also mentioned that most KM strategies failed due to insufficient of staff involvement in terms of knowledge-sharing. A trend toward employee information-sharing is emerging. People responsible for certain *business* process are now meeting to share and listen in communities of practice (COP). These communities can also share information with sister organizations that carry out similar work. It is important to remember that knowledge management is ultimately about people and must therefore start with them.

However, Ow et al. (2001) [4] said that people like to stick to the paradigm "*knowledge is power*" and refuse to participate actively and share experiences, ideas and insights. They stated that "*knowledge kept to oneself quickly becomes useless*". Only when people exchange knowledge with others can they be of influence. There is a need to accept that the sharing of knowledge is power.

Chong (2005) [2] suggested one of the strategies was to allow employees to be involved in their own job design and *evaluation* of their jobs. By doing this, the employees are now more committed towards using their knowledge for the general good of the organization. In a nutshell, *employee involvement* can add a value added for an organization and as a success factor of KM.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

The objective of the research is to validate *employee participation* as one of the success factors for KM implementation in Mechanical Engineering Division, School of Technology, TARC.

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IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study begins with literature review to identify the importance of one of the success factors of KM implementation, namely *employee participation* in higher learning institutions, followed by the KM implementation at TARC based on a model developed by Yip et al. (2010) [7]. The results of the KM implementation process were evaluated by using in-depth structured interviews with the lecturers of Mechanical Engineering Division, School of Technology, TARC. Each interview may last anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours and the focus of those interviews were about the employee participation in KM implementation at TARC.

V. IMPLEMENTATION MODEL OF CSF: EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION OF KM AT TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN COLLEGE (TARC).

The implementation of success factor of KM is considered as practical validation of the model elements in this research. The authors developed the training materials and conducted KM training as well as encouraged the employee participation in KM implementation in Mechanical Engineering Division, School of Technology, TARC for six months. The following activities were implemented:

KM Awareness Training

- 1) Implementation of success factor (employee participation) of KM (See 5.2)
- 2) Measurement through Structured Interviews–Result.

A. KM Awareness Training

The objective of the training was to familiarise all the staff of the Mechanical Engineering Division with the concepts of KM and the success factor of KM implementation. The title of the KM awareness training was “Implementing Knowledge Management in Higher Learning Institutions”. The following success factor of KM was conducted to create awareness prior to implementation.

B. Implementation of Success Factor (Employee Participation) of KM

KM project was implemented in the Mechanical Engineering Division for 6 months. The model of implementation is as follows:

- Employees have and continue to participate in their own job design and evaluation. Employees do the self-evaluation. A knowledge-need analysis has been carried out by their own in order to identify the knowledge gap of individuals.
- Employees have and continue to participate in problem-solving and the decision-making process. They are empowered to involve themselves in problem-solving and the decision-making process.
- Employees have and continue to participate in knowledge management activities such as training, discussion, knowledge sharing etc. They are encouraged to go to training such as teacher education workshops, knowledge sharing activities, conferences, seminar etc.

C. Measurement through Structured Interview-Result

The following are the results of the implementation process which consisted of in-depth interviews with the lecturers from Mechanical Engineering Division.

The questions are listed as follows:

Question 1: Describe in detail how you implement the success factor (employee participation) of KM.

Question 2: What were the problems encountered during the implementation of KM?

Question 3: What are the solutions for the problems encountered?

Question 4: What are the benefits after the implementation of KM?

The results from five interviewees are summarised as follows:

a) Employees participate in their own job design and evaluation.

- **Implementation:** The self-evaluation is done by the employees. Knowledge - need analysis is carried out on their own in order to identify the knowledge gap of individuals.
- **Problem encountered:** Self motivation are not much at the beginning stage.
- **Solution:** Top management keeps on encourages the employee to participate in their own job design and evaluation.
- **Benefits:** Increased the staff competencies and efficiency.

b) Employees participate in problem-solving and decision-making process.

- **Implementation:** The lecturers are empowered to involve themselves in the problem-solving and decision-making process such as moderating and reviewing the examination papers.
- **Problem encountered:** At the beginning stage, all the employees do not have experience in moderating and reviewing the examination papers. They lack of problem solving and decision making skills.
- **Solution:** The lecturers shared knowledge and experience among all the members. Knowledge sharing is power.
- **Benefits:** This reduced the mistakes made in setting examination question papers and reduced the success of appeal cases from the students. This increased efficiency, staff competencies, confidence and also quality of performance.

c) Employees participate in knowledge management activities such as training, discussions, knowledge sharing etc.

- **Implementation:** The lecturers participate in internal training programmes organized by the TARC and also external training programmes. Besides, they are actively involved in knowledge-sharing and discussion.
- **Problem encountered:** Nil.
- **Solution:** Nil.
- **Benefits:** Increased efficiency, staff competencies and quality of performance.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Post implementation of success factor (employee participation) of KM in TARC for 6 months, a qualitative survey was conducted by using a structured interview. This study concluded that there was a positive influence of employee participation with the perceived benefits of KM. The outcome of this case study matched the findings of previous studies whereby employee participation was the success factor of KM implementation and it brought perceived benefits to the organization. The most significant contribution of this study is to provide a framework for KM implementation in all the higher learning institutions. Further empirical research is recommended in a form of survey research in the organizations by using multivariate analysis to validate this finding.

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