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IT based knowledge management: Need of the hour for higher educational institutions in India

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Abstract

Knowledge is generated various procedures, processes and systems adopted in higher educational institutions. This knowledge needs to be tapped at source. Organized and transformed rationally to share the knowledge among the users working on these procedures, processes and systems for better functioning and sooner realization of goals. In India, in particular in the state of Andhra Pradesh, there are many higher educational institutions, each facing stiff competition from others. In this scenario, every higher educational institute should realize the need of knowledge management practices to perform better to render better services to all stake holders. This paper aims to elicit, perception of managements and staff of higher educational institutions about implementation of IT based knowledge management implementation.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, HEI, Higher educational institutions, knowledge encapsulation, knowledge mining.

Introduction

In 21st century, the competition has increased among higher educational institutions in India by leaps and bounds to impart quality education to students graduating various courses. Students need multiple skills so as to succeed in current competitive world. The new breed of professionals need to be efficient to tackle breed of professionals need to be efficient to tackle problems from cross functional, cultural and ethical perspectives and equipped with skills to benchmark for global leadership positions. They expect the institutions to guide and make them fit and ready to take any kind take students expectations into cognizance in administrations otherwise they would not survive in the current cut throat competition. So as to provide quality education to students and maintain high standards and to be rated among top institutions by third party agencies, institutions need to administer various domains quite effectively in the campuses. The commonly identified domains are institutional Planning, Research and Development, industrial Projects and consultancy, Placement Services, Teaching & Learning Process, Recruitment Process, Performance evaluation of faculty, Administrative services and Students affairs.

Knowledge in the organization needs to be identified, encapsulated, transformed and disseminated effectively. For this higher educational institutions need to respond to dynamic technologies and increasing demands of academia. This paves the way for usage of information technology to identify, encapsulate, transform and disseminate the knowledge within the institution for effective knowledge management. Application of IT based knowledge Management will enable higher educational institutions to gain more comprehensive, reflexive and integrative view of institutional knowledge for application in cross functional areas for better performance.

Objective of the study

- To find out determinants of various domains in HEIs influenced by IT based.
- To find out the degree of awareness of knowledge management among the individuals working for HEIs.
- To find out the perceptions of managements of HEIs to implement IT based knowledge management techniques within the campuses.

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Hypotheses of the study

- a. Knowledge management is the best technique for HEIs to improve their Performance.
- b. Individuals working for HEIs are aware of significance and benefits of knowledge management.
- c. Perception of managements of HEIs is high for use of IT based knowledge Management in the campuses.

Methodology

Survey method has been adopted for gathering primary data in the research. The authors have limited the study to the geographical area of state of Andhra Pradesh. 50 higher educational institutions which are well established and accredited by NBA, NAAC etc, offering various UG and PG professional courses. One set is for faculty and administrative staff and second set is for management members of HEIs. First set consists of 3 sections. First section aims to capture the bio data and technical and experience profile of respondents. Second section contains questions for gathering information about the awareness on knowledge management from respondents. Third section is to get the recommendations of respondents to implement IT based knowledge management in their campuses. Second set questionnaire contains 3 sections as well. First section is to capture details of the institution profile. Second section contains questions to know the perception on use of IT based knowledge management. Third section contains questions to know college managements limitations and recommendations about implementation of IT based knowledge management practices in their campuses. The survey questions have been prepared very cautiously in simple English and 90% questions are multiple choice questions with simple choices so that respondents do not feel any ambiguity while answering the questions. The authors have identified 300 staff members from targeted institutions and requested for their email IDs. The authors have taken enough care while choosing staff members to make sure that staff of different academic and technical background are covered in the study. Questionnaires have been sent as attachments with a request email clearly indicating the purpose of research with an undertaking that the responses shall be kept confidential and not shared with others, to the staff and management members. Within a month time after couple of reminders, respondents been received from 142 staff members and 18 institution amounting to 47.33% and 36% respectively from sample sizes taken for staff and managements.

Literature Review

Significant work has already been done in the area of Knowledge Management in higher educational institutions and many researchers contributed so much in this area through their holistic research. The following describes in brief the work already has been done in this area in chronological order (see also annexure).

Wing (1996) defines knowledge as "the insights, understandings and the practical know-how that we all possess". Nonaka (1998), Tiwana (2000) and zack (1999) identified two types of knowledge - tacit and explicit. Tacit knowledge is the form of knowledge that is Subconsciously understood and applied. Tacit knowledge is highly personalized, gained through experience and influenced by beliefs, perspectives and values of the individuals. It is difficult to codify and resides in the minds of the people

Possessing it. it is usually shared through highly interactive conversation and shared experiences. Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is easy to articulate, capture and distribute in different formats. It is formal and systematic (Nakkian, Swery 2002, pp. 235 -245). Explicit knowledge can be documented and easily communicated. This knowledge is easier to share and use across the organizations.

Duffy (1999) defines knowledge managements the "identification, growth and effective application of an organization's critical knowledge. Eppler (2002) defines knowledge management as "the systematic, holistic approach to the sustainable improvement of the handling of knowledge on all levels of an organization". According to Nakkiran and Sewry (2002, pp. 235 -245), knowledge management is the process of identifying, growing and defectively applying an organization's existing knowledge in order to achieve the organization's goals, while creating an organizational culture that permits further knowledge creation.

From above definitions and literature review, it is derived that every organization in particular higher educational institutions, need good knowledge management system in place for performing better and achieving organizational objectives. Information technology facilitates gathering of knowledge generated out of various activities taking and making the knowledge accessible to each and every authorized stakeholder on demand to generate knowledge further.

Knowledge Management in India: In 21st Century, India has become supplier of human resources to entire world. Indian professionals have been working in many foreign companies and making great contribution to their success. Higher educational system is the key to generate such skilled professionals in India. Knowledge is created at various levels in different forms and is required at each level in a different form. Academic and administrative processes of teaching, examination, evaluation, admissions, counseling, training and placement and research and consultancy result in many useful experiences and studies which may be defined as knowledge in the context of higher educational institutes (Ranajan, Khalil). Any academic institute consists of students, faculty, administration, research and development, placements etc levels. Each level generates knowledge created and consumed differs from level to level. It is very important to identify what knowledge is created and consumed at each level. It is great challenge for higher educational institutes in India to tap the knowledge generated by each level and provide the knowledge required by each level to perform its functions effectively. This challenge can definitely be faced by implementing IT based knowledge management to process it and make it available in the form required by other levels in their functions.

Not many higher educational institutions in India have been benefited with knowledge management practices. Though many institutions have implemented college automation packages to capture and store the data generated by various components, they have not succeeded in making use of knowledge thus generated and making it available to other components on time. Indeed many managements have not realized how effective implementation of knowledge management helps them in realizing organizational goals. It is the time for higher educational institutions in India need to think of implementation of IT based knowledge management.

Results and Discussions

The authors have identified the functional domains and the determinants effected with impact of implementation of knowledge management through careful study of functioning of all the departments in a typical higher educational institute and the authors' professional experience associated with HEIs. The authors could identify data on major domains and their determinants through discussions with HODS, Deans and principals during his visits to various higher educational institutions. The data thus gathered has been compiled and analysed using content analysis technique. Content analysis technique consists of analyzing the contents of documentary materials (books, magazines, newspapers) and verbal materials (interviews, group discussions) for the identification of certain characteristics that can be measured or counted (Kothari, 2010). The major domains have been identified as Institutional Planning & Development, Academics, Admissions, Accounts and Administration, Examinations, Library, Staff, Training & Placements,

Students, Transport and Hostel. While answering section 2 of the questionnaires, the respondents marked determinants 'Yes in favour of knowledge management intervention, else it was marked 'No'. The responses have been codified and computerized and percentages have been obtained pro and against for each determinant. Table 1 consists of the identified domains and their determinants to indicate the impact of implementation of knowledge management.

Table 1

(Values in brackets are average % responses of staff and managements of institutions were knowledge management practices are already adopted)

From the responses, the authors observe that only 10% of the institutions have implemented some kind of knowledge management practices and both the staff and management members of these institutions responded more positively on impact of KM intervention on the determinants of various domains than those of other institutions.

Table 1: Impact of knowledge Management on functional domains.

Domain	Impact of KM intervention	Avg % of Yes responses from staff	Avg % of Yes responses from management
Institutional Planning & Development	* Establishment and realization of institutional goals and objectives.	45(85)	65 (82)
	* Framing up sustainable and better focused policies.	39(78)	61(81)
	* Effective decision making.	38(70)	59(83)
	* Improved procedures and processes.	40(74)	56(79)
	* Improved quality management	41(60)	51(75)
Academics	* Optimum use of faculty resources.	54(71)	55(79)
	* Better time management	52(74)	52 (78)
	* Increased students' attendance to classes.	51(75)	51(75)
	* Better access of educational resources to students and faculty.	60(74)	49(69)
	* Better supervision of students by faculty.	60(75)	51(70)
	* Improved quality research by students and faculty.	59(77)	54(78)
Admissions	* Increased academic performance by students.	61(79)	51(71)
	* Increased number of admissions.	51(65)	52(67)
	* Improved access too infrastructure, facilities and benefits information by parents and prospective students.	55(68)	54(70)
	* Easy admission process.	53(67)	50(69)
Accounts & Administration	* Improved anti ragging mechanism implementation.	51(65)	50(66)
	* Better financial planning and budgetary control.	60(80)	59(78)
	* Improved fee collection and dues recovery procedures.	56(75)	57(79)
	* Better Hr planning and recruitment.	55(71)	54(79)
	* Optimum use of infrastructure and other resources.	54(70)	52(71)
Examinations	* Improved purchase and disposal procedures.	52(70)	51(70)
	* Improved registration and examination procedures.	51(75)	52(71)
	* Effective results analysis	55(76)	53(77)
	* Increased reliability in communication with students regarding exams notifications, time tables and seating plans.	56(75)	52(78)
Library	* Improved procedures in delivery of mark sheets, TC and other certificates to students.	55(70)	57(71)
	* Effective use of library resources by students and staff,	56(75)	51(70)
	* Improved procedures in issue, renewal and return of books and journals to students and staff.	54(81)	52(73)
Staff	* Improved on line search Options for faculty and students to check the availability of books and journals for students and staff.	60(80)	53(75)
	* Improved teaching methodologies.	51(75)	50(70)
	* Assures right man at right place	52(70)	51(71)
	* Increased accountability and commitment to work by staff.	54(69)	52(75)
	* High employee satisfaction and low manpower attrition.	53(68)	55(70)
Training & Placements	* Improved relationship with students.	55(76)	54(74)
	* Improved relationship with visiting companies.	56(78)	57(79)
	* Increased on campus placements	54(78)	55(74)
	* Bridging the gap between academics and industry.	52(76)	57(76)

