KNOWLEDGE SHARING AMONG FACULTY MEMBERS IN RESEARCH INSTITUTES IN IRAN

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ABSTRACT
This study aimed to explain the status of knowledge sharing among Iranian faculty members of research institutes and to study the effective factors on it. The research method was qualitative. For data collection, an interview was conducted with 16 experts and faculty members of research institutes. After interviewing, the findings were analyzed by open source coding. The results of interviews showed that the prerequisite for the sharing of tacit knowledge and experience in Iranian research institutes were: academic policies, legal support, organizational climate, academic culture, and individual culture. Also, there was knowledge sharing in research institutes and only in some cases due to the lack of prerequisites or factors facilitating the sharing of knowledge or the existence, it has been interrupted or ineffective. However, the main focus of the phenomenon of knowledge sharing among faculty members was their individual factors in sharing knowledge with colleagues.
Keyword: Higher education, knowledge sharing, faculty members, research institutes

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays and in the society of knowledge, knowledge is a considerable resource (Kende et al., 2007). knowledge can be defined as "information processed by individuals including ideas, facts, expertise, and judgment relevant for individual, team, and organizational performance" (Wang and Noe, 2010). There are two types of knowledge, including: (1) explicit knowledge and (2) tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is the type of knowledge that is easy to disseminate. in contrast, Tacit knowledge is not easily articulated and exists within a person's mind and can be seen in his actions, but may be difficult to codify (Jones and Leonard, 2009). By shifting from natural resources to intellectual assets, the importance of knowledge and Knowledge Management has been widely accepted. Knowledge Management can be identified as a framework for designing the strategy, structures, and processes of an organization. Thus, the organization is able to use what it knows to create economic and social value for the customers and the wider community (Olubunmi Omotayo, 2015). Knowledge Management can transform organizational new levels of effectiveness, efficiency, and scope of operation. (Dhamdhere, 2015). So, it has increased in popularity as a management tool and as a research discipline, as well (Joy Cranfield and Taylor, 2008). As other organizations, knowledge management is a significant issue of higher education institutions. Higher learning institutions are no longer just disseminating knowledge to students, but they serve as a storage of knowledge (Sohail and Daud, 2009). So, since knowledge and creativity are the essential elements of thriving societies (Joy Cranfield and Taylor, 2008), it is important that Higher education institutions improve their knowledge management to better respond to internal and external need of their environments (Pircher and Pausits, 2011).

Knowledge Management can be classified in three processes, including: knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization (Tiwana, 2002). In other words, one of the key activities of effective Knowledge Management is Knowledge sharing (Ekeke, 2011; Olatokun and Nwafor, 2012). Knowledge Sharing is defined as Processes that "involve exchanging knowledge between individuals and groups" (Yu et al., 2010). It is the act of disseminating and making available the knowledge that is already known (Tiwana, 2002). By Knowledge sharing, individuals' knowledge and experiences can be transferred as an important asset of organization and maintained for creating new knowledge (Liaw, et al., 2008). In other words, during the knowledge sharing process, individuals exchange their knowledge (both explicit and tacit knowledge) and produce a new knowledge. This process has two stages: knowledge presenting and knowledge reception (Van den Hoof & de Leeuw Van Weenen, 2004; cited in Salimi, 2012). Studies have been done about knowledge sharing in Higher Education (e.g. Sohail and Daud, 2009; Ramayah et al., 2009; Howell & Annansingh, 2012), however, the studies in this field are relatively less. Sohail and Daud (2009) found that nature of knowledge and working culture played a significant role in improving knowledge sharing among the teaching staffs. Yassin et al. (2013), in their study, found that positive and significant correlation existed between organizational factors and behavioral intention of teachers to use ICT in knowledge sharing. Bock and Kim (2002) suggested that reward and recognition were among the factors that could motivate people to share knowledge. Yang (2007) stated that there was a strong and positive relationship between a collaborative culture and the effectiveness of knowledge sharing. Table 1. Shows findings of some researches on knowledge sharing in academic settings

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Table1. A samples of researches about knowledge sharing in academic settings

researcher	Objectives, method, population and country	Main findings
Howell & Annansingh (2012)	To examine knowledge sharing of creation in universities. Constructive approach and focus group. Two focus groups of two faculty members in two universities, in England	The results showed that organizational culture and cultural expectations play an essential role in higher education institutes' tendency to knowledge sharing and creation.
Salimi (2012)	Designing a model for knowledge sharing among faculty members, Public Universities, Tehran, Iran	Some factors influence knowledge sharing including: enjoying helping others, attitude toward sharing (internal and personal motivations), three motives for promotion in organization, the nature of being a faculty member, and the motivation for gaining financial benefits (external and organizational motivations).
Zawawi et al (2011)	Exploring factors and obstacles of knowledge sharing behavior or among non-faculty staff of universities. The method is correlational descriptive and case study of 156 employees in Malaysia	There is a negative relationship between lack of self-efficacy (individual factor), lack of information and communication technology (technological factor and organizational rewards (organizational factor) as obstacles of practical knowledge sharing.
Ma & Yuen (2011)	Studying motivational factors of online knowledge sharing. The method is a survey including 581 students in Hong Kong	The results showed that online received motivations and commitment has a positive and significant relationship with online knowledge sharing.
Xue et al (2011)	To examine the effect of team atmosphere and empowering leadership on individual's knowledge sharing behavior. The survey was used of 434 samples of students in US.	The results showed that team atmosphere and empowering leadership have a significant impact on students' knowledge sharing behavior through affecting their attitude.
Teh et al (2010)	Studying the relationship between internet self- efficacy, computer self- efficacy and cultural factors that affect knowledge sharing. A survey and significant of 135 Chinese students in Malaysia	Computer, offering a face knowledge has a positive relationship with knowledge sharing behavior and face to face knowledge reception has a negative and significant relationship with knowledge sharing behavior
Chang et al (2009)	Studying the effect of individual, organizational and technological factors on knowledge sharing of faculty members. A survey of 60 faculty members in Malaysia	The results showed that reward systems and individual expectations have impact on knowledge sharing. But resorting to force faculty members to participate is not a suitable policy.

Reference: Salimi, 2012

According to the importance of knowledge sharing in organizations in general, and in research institutes in particular; this research addresses the knowledge sharing among faculty members of research institutes in Iran and so, can be considered as an important study in the field of higher education research in Iran.

METHODS

The main objective of this research is to study the sharing of tacit knowledge (experiences) among faculty members of Iranian research institutes. This qualitative research is applied and exploratory study, which is part of a larger project on the status of organizational experiences documentation of directors and deputies in research institutes of Iran. The statistical population of this study included faculty members of research institutes in Iran. By targeted

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sampling, a list of eligible individuals for the interview (about 30 people) was selected initially, and after communicating with those, only 18 individuals responded positively for interview. They were also asked to submit their suggestions, and they would introduce people who shared better tacit knowledge or documented and transmitted their experience. For data collection, deep interview conducted, interviews were recorded and implemented. Interviews continued until theoretical saturation reached after 16 interviews. Data analysis done through open source coding, and for its validity, participants were simultaneously assisted in analyzing and interpreting the data.

Data Analysis and Findings

After analyzing the interviews, the findings showed that the prerequisite for the sharing of tacit knowledge and experience in the research institutes and Iran were: academic policies, legal support, organizational climate, academic culture and individual culture. In other words, it is the individual culture that provides the basis for sharing tacit knowledge and internal experience, and it was influenced by social culture. Also, academic culture was influenced by the organizational climate of the research institute, which impacted the process of registration and sharing of tacit knowledge. The findings showed that research institutes needed policy and legal infrastructures to create the basis for sharing of tacit knowledge.

Table 2. Results of coding

Prerequisite of knowledge sharing	Incentives	Barriers of knowledge sharing
Policy infrastructures	Regulations	Administrative bureaucracy
legal infrastructures	promotion regulations	Bad governance in research institutes
organizational climate	The support of the heads of research institutes	Lack of support and encouragement of knowledge sharing
academic culture	Information Technology	In-group and intra-organizational inadequate competition
social culture	Financial privileges	Organizational silence
individual culture	religious factors	Individual anti-ethical features of some members
---	Media and social networks	---
---	Internationalization of research institutes	---
---	Competitiveness of higher education and research institutes	---
---	work Teams	---
---	Organizational Agility	---

Also, based on the findings from the interviews, the current status of research institutes faculty members in terms of knowledge sharing is as follow (Table 3):

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Table 3. Status of research institutes' faculty members regarding knowledge sharing

Personal status	Organizational status	Knowledge status	Status of external factors In the Department of Science	National factors status	International status
Ethics	Internal work teams	Subject knowledge	external work teams	International research interactions	International research interactions
Religious beliefs	Information Technology	Content knowledge	Research interactions, and academic implementation (consulting, testing, project, etc.)	Traditional and virtual national teams	International lectures
Individual Beliefs and Attributes (Ownership or Fellowship)	The support of the heads of research institutes	Experimental and Organizational Knowledge	Cooperation Memorandums	Lectures	International articles
Insights	Organizational Media	---	Internal media	Scientific Articles	International research fellowships (consulting, testing, projecting, etc.)
Attitudes	---	---	---	workshops	International virtual science teams
Professional capability	---	---	---	Teaching (face to face and electronically and ...)	workshops
Brand of the faculty	---	---	---	Media (social and ...)	Teaching (face to face and electronically and ...)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings showed that there was knowledge sharing among Iranian research institutes and only in some cases, due to lack of prerequisites or factors facilitating knowledge sharing, or due to preventive factors, it was interrupted or slowly and incompletely implemented. The experience of participants showed that the main focus of knowledge sharing among faculty members in Iranian research institutes was their individual factors in sharing knowledge with colleagues. In other words, factors, such as organizational factors, only played a supportive role in sharing of knowledge. And it is a faculty member who is the ultimate decision maker in knowledge sharing on the basis of his/her knowledge and individual and personality factors. These factors were influenced by the brand of the faculty member, his professional abilities, attitudes, professional ethics, religious beliefs, and personal characteristics. Also, individual factors regarding organizational knowledge sharing (organizational experiences) about performance or unethical behavior play barrier role. It is notable that in the interviews, it was emphasized that for sharing of knowledge, the individual factors in both the knowledge transmitter and the person receiving the knowledge are important and emphasized. Other results of the study were that some lack of regulations and financial support and lack of legal infrastructure prevented the sharing of knowledge among faculty members, and this issue, is more serious regarding the content of the knowledge of organizational experience. Therefore, financial

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incentives and promotion, as well as legal and judicial support, are suggested for knowledge sharing among faculty members of research institutes. Also, it is suggested that in order to accelerate the sharing of knowledge, and particularly, the knowledge of organizational experiences, it is suggested that policymaking is carried out at the national, inter-organizational and internal level. So, knowledge sharing, especially tacit knowledge, in the organizational culture of research institutes being done.

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