



THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT TRAINING INSTITUTION AND ITS ISSUES & CHALLENGES – A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The information sharing in any organization is like blood flow in a human body. The free flow of information is like fluid which can get converted into actionable knowledge through out the organization whether private or public. Thus, knowledge becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices and norms. Knowledge Management (KM) is considered to be important component in governmental organisations due to its rotational transfer policy, improper documentation, change in strategy due to change in guard, individual perceptual differences, personal liking and disliking, Policy changes pertaining to mobility. Knowledge management in Governmental Organisations can also provide a way for transparent information, choices of approach to citizen, greater accountability of individual and organisational endeavours. But, it will not come on its own, there must be a system through which the organizational reward and incentive mechanisms to motivate an employee to share the information and knowledge. Incidentally the lack of information sharing came to lime light through an incident in one of the public training institute which in turn initiated the KM system implementation as part ICT enabled Training Management Information System (TMIS). This paper will focus and bring out the problems and issues related to lack of organized knowledge management practices followed in one of the public training Institutions in India.

Key words: Knowledge Management, Public Institutions, Case Study, TMIS.

Cite this Article: K.Govindarajulu and Dr. D. Venkataramaraju, The Importance of Knowledge Management In The Government Training Institution and Its Issues & Challenges – A Case Study, International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology, 8(11), 2017, pp. 191-200.

<http://www.iaeme.com/ijciet/issues.asp?JType=IJCIET&VType=8&IType=11>

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a well known fact that education plays an important role in boosting economic growth and development. If people are adequately educated they can participate and contribute more in development process. Training of those who are in the public sector more particularly in-service can help in increasing efficiency, productivity and international competitiveness of an economy.

Nowadays state-sponsored public sectors around the world have introduced several reforms with e-government being one of the most recent. Interestingly, e-governments are becoming part of public sector, but not taking off quickly. The transformation phase from manual to e-government therefore clearly has problems. As all the above issues concern organization and access to knowledge, the management of knowledge becomes critical to the success of e-government initiatives

To improve the quality of service offered by public agencies to clients at the "service" counter, the Government taken several measures to improve existing procedures and systems, introduced office automation and information technology to strengthen information and service delivery, and enhanced the capability to deliver. However, many organisations have not even started the process of knowledge management, because they have not felt the need of using the knowledge management for the organisational growth. The organisations that have started the process of knowledge management also have been triggered by certain incidents.

The present study would high light the incident happened in one of the public training institution which lead to the implementation of knowledge management system in the organisation.

2. WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The wide spectrum of practices used by the organisations to diagnose, develop, represent and spread knowledge for creating awareness, providing learning opportunities and strategising for reuse the same across the organisations can be referred as knowledge management.

Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experiences, values, contextual information and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information (Davenport and Prusak, 2000). Knowledge often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices and norms. Indeed, knowledge has been considered as an inevitable component in organizational practices. From the existing literature it has been observed that managing the knowledge in an organization would add more value to the organization. Further it is claimed that people should be the key driver of knowledge management in any organization (Civic, 2000; Gaijer, 2000; Solimon and Spooner, 2000). It also leads to benefits organization and provides a platform for further development and avoids reinventing of wheels.

Basically the utilization of knowledge in functional areas or departments need better management. In an organization, it is possible only through right relationships or networking, right skills or human abilities, right knowledge and right support system.

3. NEED FOR KM IN GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION

The recent initiatives of the government is emphasising more on the result framework document based on performance management systems across all government institutions. This Herculean task may not be achieved without realising the role of knowledge management with right perspectives in the organizational context. Knowledge management would also address the impacts in human capital development for enhancement of organizational effectiveness. It has been widely observed that an organisation which is not managing the tacit knowledge is not really recognizing the full potential of its capabilities, or harnessing the brainpower within them. In order to make the system more effective and responsive in public domain, the following areas of operation in governmental agencies may require certain serious thoughts and deliberations.

1. Rotational Transfer Policy

In the Central Government Organization, the Director and above level is occupied by all India service on tenure basis. In an organisational context acquisition of Knowledge and gaining expertise is a slow process and that takes lot of time. Transfer of knowledge takes place only after its acquisition after gaining expertise. But the officials have less and less time for this. Thus, it is essential to have a data base which captures the experiences and knowledge of the personnel in all verticals of the organizations.

2. Improper Documentation

In order to arrive at a decision, every organizational member have to go through a series of discussions and deliberations but the reasons and the criteria set for arriving at a decision may not be recorded/documented in most of the cases. This very incident would lead to discontinuity in the process of implementation and when ever there is any transfer or non availability of a person concerned, which further lead to intense difficulties for the respective organisation and further cause delay in varied activities of the organisation in implementing the decisions. If knowledge management system is in place, it would take care of all necessary requirements to provide input for taking informed decisions.

3. Change in Strategy when Change in Guard

The role played by an individual in a particular position generally at the top level, would have his or her own understanding in solving problems using their own strategies after taking due approval from all stakeholders. Ironically, when the concerned officials move out of the office, the same strategies and decisions made by the then official seems to be redundant or unable to comprehend by the successors. Thus, there is a need to manage increasing complexity as changes in strategic direction due to the successor's understanding may result in non comprehensiveness of the previous practices. This very situation may compel the present incumbent to review the earlier practice or else assume the practice followed earlier or to revisit the entire document to understand the nuances in making those strategies and make very delicate decisions which in return should not affect any stakeholders.

4. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

1. Deputation Practices

Most of the Public training institutions operate on deputation mode for a period of 3 to 5 years. Generally an individual takes 03 to 06 months to start to deliver, hence the pressure is more on the individuals to focus on the delivery aspect. Consequently, documentation and sharing of information takes back seat. This is because the faculty members give importance to

demonstrable and visible output rather than institutionalising knowledge generated through experience. On completion of the short tenure when the officials go back, the knowledge acquired during the period of stay ie 3 to 5 years also goes along with them due to lack of documentation practices and sharing culture within the organisation. As a whole, the role of knowledge management in human capital development would be vital in enhancing and sustaining organizational growth.

2. Organisation Work Culture

In training institutes work culture is a multidimensional enigma that encapsulate the organization. Every member of the organization contributes to the culture in some manner because of history, style of leadership, dynamic structure and its instability, level of work-force empowerment and the ability to adapt to the changing environment, the institutions are compelled to contribute to the culture of an organization.

Team culture is essential for an organisational success and more so in case of training institutes. Hence, open, honest and regular communication amongst all employees irrespective of the levels / ranks is expected. There must be open door policy, which ensures the open communication among the individuals. This very practice of managing the culture needs to be documented as a “cultural document”. Knowledge management system place a vital role in maintaining such cultural documents for immediate reference.

3. Individual Perceptual Differences

Every organisation is having people from diversified background that leads to perceptual differences in the workplace. It is also evident that individuals tend to make assumptions and act accordingly. Especially in training institutions the faculty members try to prove their individuality more often. However, the institution must encourage team work culture to diffuse the perceptual differences. Thus, institutions need to cultivate the team culture through sharing of source materials, case studies, information related to the said topics and knowledge as a whole among the members of training faculty.

4. Personal Liking and disliking

It is sometimes natural as human beings to be more comfortable with set of individuals and less comfortable with others. This attitude will have an impact on the decision making process and the work culture of an organisation. Personal likes and dislikes of an ideal employee should be in line with the professional requirements. The individuals joining in the training institutions may not be having the professional knowledge and scheduling process of the training organisations. This input needs to be provided by the individuals already working and experienced in the institutional set up. However, this type of sharing always depends on the relationship at personal level. In order to enhance the relationships among colleagues, it is essential to create an environment within the organisation which intern enable the employees of the organisation to share the work experiences and the challenges encountered by them.

5. Policy changes pertaining to mobility

The system practiced in the public sector training institutions are movement of employees in an increasing phase, which leads to loss of knowledge. The need to manage increasing complexity and sudden changes in strategic direction is resulting in loss of knowledge in a specific area. Subsequent to reversal of policy may then lead to renewed requirements of new knowledge. Once the policy gets reversed, the employees are no longer available in the capacity concerned. Hence, Public organisations today are challenged to define and implement, innovate and operate strategies in an efficient and effective manner.

Whenever any changes / reforms introduced by the Government, has to be implemented by the officials in a time bound manner. It takes time for an employee to acquire knowledge and implement it productively. Employees have lesser time for knowledge acquisition. In this context, the responsibility for upgrading the knowledge and skill of the individuals for implementing lies in the hands of training institutions. This in turn, puts pressure on the training organizations to do the fire-fighting activities rather than institutionalization. The ever increasing public expectation on better and efficient delivery of service, requirement to handle increasing workload with fewer personnel with multiple responsibilities; and sharing of supporting staff demotes information sharing among the officials. They are more worried to complete the day to day assignments only hence, the record keeping and information sharing is the last priority of the organisation.

As a whole, the knowledge of the officials, implementations of varied knowledge processes, completion of varied assignments needs to be managed in the training institutions in order to connect citizens to government and vice versa for overall satisfaction. That brings transparency and accountability in the process and functioning of the organisations. The entire spectrum of knowledge management systems and its related issues would be discussed in the following case study.

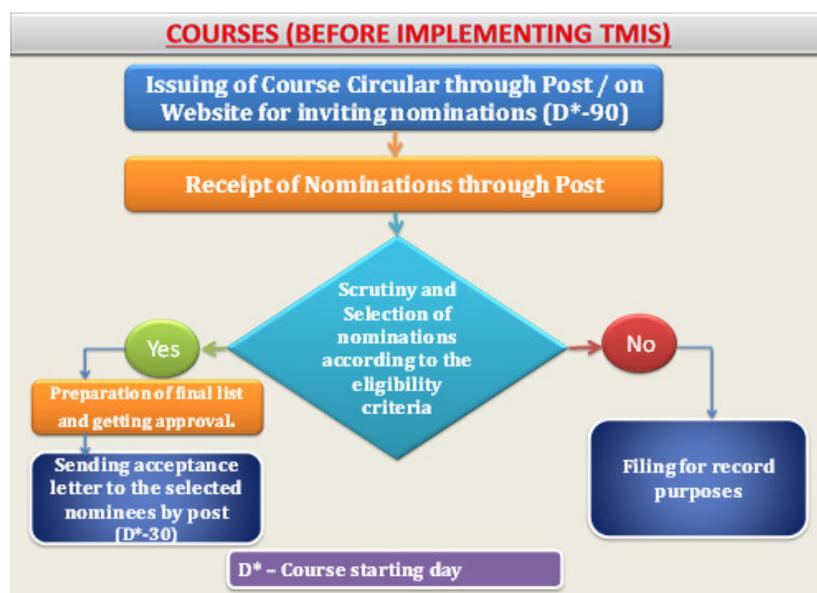
5. CASE STUDY

This case relates to the non-responsiveness of the system followed in one of the Training Institutions. This incident came to lime light and the resultant review paved way for implementation of knowledge management system.

The incident narrated in the case happened in one of the Public Training Institution, which is involved in capacity building, consultancy and research support, particularly for the officers and staff of the Central/ State Governments and public sector under takings. The Institute has been conducting training programmes of varied kind ranging from operational to behavioural areas.

Systems and Procedure followed

The procedure and process followed in the Training Institute from publishing of training circular to finalisation in selection participants is shown in the picture below:



The second level of activity is preparation of detailed session plan indicating number of sessions allotted for class room input, field visits, study tour, examination, group work, presentations, valediction, tentative allotment of faculty members, earmarking sessions for guest speakers etc.

Identifying the class room in association with Coordination and Administration including seating arrangements. Booking the computer Lab as per the session plan, sending note to Hostel, send details of outstation participants to the reception at Hostel and requesting the caterer for the tea and lunch arrangements. Sending Note to Library for issue of books to the participants. Getting the required stationery items issued, arrange special Training Equipments, Preparing the name plates of participants, course introduction and filling up of Registration forms.

In the mean time checking of study material / training equipments /drinking water/ catering /toilet facilities /hostel arrangements. Briefing the course secretary about daily tasks that get generated, Ensuring the handouts/hard copies of print-out copies of print-outs given by the guests are prepared and distribute to the participants. Inter-acting with the participants and the faculty members and arranging for group photograph, taking up activities for local visit / domestic tour / foreign tour

Feed Back: preparing weekly feedback form, getting the feedback form filled up and consolidating the feedback form, discussing the course feedback with seniors / participants. Submitting the feedback and analysis to Director. Settling the advance received for guest speakers and other advances received for the course, closure of file and sending it to Record Room.

Even after following the standard process certain lapses have taken place in the institute in terms of responsiveness to the applicant in one of the case which came to light.

Shri XYZ who is working in one of the Government organisation in the accounts section felt the need to undergo a financial training programme. Qualifying this training programme would facilitate his career progression. Hence, the applicant applied for the training course conducted in the aforesaid training institute for nearly 15 years from 1996 to 2010. However, he did not get any response from the training institute and he was not getting any communication in this regard from 1996. So, he was forced to approach the institute personally in the year 2010 and demanded information under RTI Act 2005.

The Institute was not aware who is Shri XYZ , for the past 15 years, till the time he personally approached and sent the RTI application to know the reason for not getting selected for the course being conducted in the institute. The CPIO of that Institutions retrieved all the old records related that particular financial programme to provide the requested information under RTI Act, 2005. There are few eligibility conditions to be fulfilled by an applicant to get selected by the training institutions to participate in the training programme.

- a) The applicants must not be above 50 years
- b) He must be a Grade 'E' officer with a minimum of 05 years service
- c) He must actually be working in account section
- d) Application must reach with in the prescribed time

In certain cases, the Director of the institute may relax the eligibility conditions on receipt of specific request from the organisation as per their functional requirements.

- (i) Minimum years of service
- (ii) Age limit
- (iii) As of now not working in the accounts section

The Institute follow the process of issuing circular 90 days in advance and the organisations nominate their officials within 60 days from the date of issue of circular for undergoing the training. In the case of Shri XYZ , his application always reached the institution between 70th - 75th day onwards i.e on completion of the selection process at the institute's end ie 60 days from

the issue of course circular. The nominees are selected on the basis of the eligibility criteria and first cum first served basis. For the finance course the institute generally receive more than 100 plus applications every time. However, the seat availability is only 25. Accordingly, the selection process takes place to consider only those who fulfil all the stipulated eligibility criteria listed above. In case, more than 25 eligible candidates are available, then selection is on first cum first served basis. On some occasions, Shri **XYZ** 's **application** reached the training institutions after the last date. On occasions it reached in time, he was still not considered because he did not fulfil the conditions of number of years of service in Grade 'E', he had become more than 50 years old by that time. Thus becoming ineligible on above said condition (a). Once the selection process completed by the course coordinator as per the selection criteria, any application received after the due date is not taken into account ie after 60 days from the date of issue of course circular. In the case of **Shri XYZ**, his applications were received most of the time on completion of the selection process.

The Institute conducts on an average of two to three training programmes in a year on this subject and coordinated by different faculty members. Each faculty members is responsible for the process from starting to end of the course which includes the records finalisation. Accordingly, every faculty member operates in isolation and there was no procedural communication followed among the faculties to transfer the eligible applications which was not considered due to lack of number of seats / received after the due date.

The Institute sends a communication only to the applicant selected for the training course. The unsuccessful/ineligible applicants are not formally informed. On non-receipt of confirmation letter 30 days before the commencement of course, the applicant assumes that he has not been selected for the training course applied by him. However, there is always an element of doubt in the minds of the applicant whether his application has reached the institution or not, and whether he has been selected for the course or not. Shri XYZ also had the same doubt. So Shri XYZ used to apply for every alternative course for getting selection in the subsequent programmes.

Though the governmental system has the standard operating procedure, still it was not followed in the training institution due to various reasons and the outcome was that the applicant never got any communication from the institute for the past 15 years. The isolated procedure of the course coordinators made the situations in a way that every time more than hundred plus fresh applications reach the training institute out of which only 25 applicants get success and the remaining application get closed in the file with out the knowledge of other course coordinator. Hence, the next course coordinator has no information that **Shri XYZ had applied earlier or not**. Every coordinator always re-invent the wheels again and again to get fresh nominations for the next course with out considering the nominations received by the earlier course coordinator.

The case of **Shri XYZ has proved** that the system is not responsive to the trainees due to the inbuilt issues and problems of inoperative systems/procedure being followed in the training institute in isolation by the faculty members, which in turn brought to the light that getting the acknowledgement from the public institutions is a difficult task for anyone due to the inbuilt problems like inefficient employees, etc.

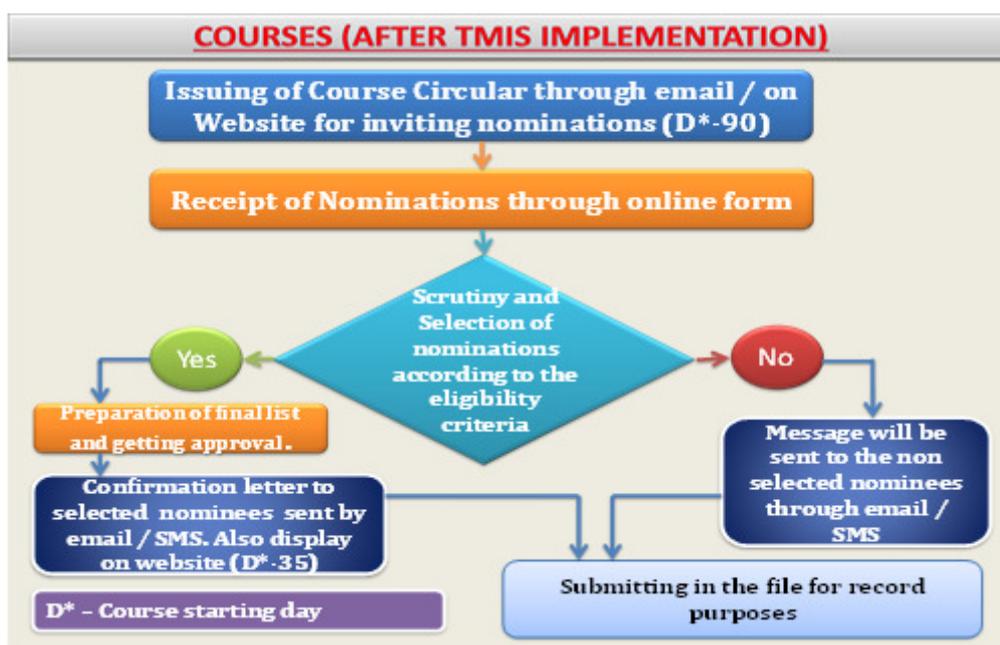
This particular incident triggered the organisation to change their traditional manual way of functioning to online Training Management System, e-office, knowledge portal and computer based training module. Hence, the organisation has been forced to go for the Training Management Information System including Knowledge Portal.

The training management information system(TMIS) is providing a complete solution for the training management activities including availability of training circulars on line, submission of application in online, receiving acknowledgement / confirmation, preparation of

annual calendar with duration and course coordinator details, preparation of quarterly calendar with duration, course coordinator details and venue, define and modify templates for annual and quarterly calendar, Publishing of calendar on web portal, Intimating course coordinator, faculty etc. on various events, Preparation of weekly course schedule, consolidated weekly schedule, Mapping of Faculty with subject etc., Guest faculty tracking, subjects allocation, Attendance tracking, Resource Utilization and workload management, Trainee Nomination and Confirmation/Cancellation , Trainee Enrollment, Registration and Trainee Performance Tracking and obtaining online feedback.

The knowledge portal created by the institutions is having the facility for housing all the electronic documents. The documents will be cohesively linked to the workflow management system and move between various owners based on defined workflows. KM system will allow Definition of type and life of the document, Hierarchical storage of documents, Storage of documents at any level – folder / sub folder, Indexing of documents for faster access, Filtering of the document / folder data as per the access privileges available to the user and Provision to attach keywords to documents and folder.

The portal shall enable to provide a ‘One Stop Shop’ solution for its trainees and stakeholders. The portal shall seamlessly integrate with various channels of communications like Internet, SMS, Email, FAX etc to enable the customers to apply, track request status on real time and avail services through their preferred mode of communication and transaction. With security channels integrated, the portal ensures the transactions are performed securely and hence increase the quality of service provided by the the training institute.



5. CONCLUSION

This particular incident of Mr SHRI XYZ paved the way and sensitised the training institute to move towards implementing the **knowledge management system** as part of Training Management Information System for its efficient and effective operation to fulfil their stakeholders requirement. The ICT enabled TMIS overcomes the problem of isolated operation procedure followed by the faculty members, by providing internal connectivity and data sharing facility among the faculty and also allowing the applicant to know their status on line.

KM allows standardization and automation of customer service and support processes, as well as introduction of customer-centric universal front office delivery model in public sector institutions. By which it could bring the following benefits:

- Real time information accessibility
- Consistent service delivery
- Easy accessible services, aligned with trainee preferences
- Better streamlined and efficient trainee service process

Hence, the implementation of knowledge management system may be considered as an important component and building block in improvement of public services delivery and successful realization of initiatives in the training institution.

6. SUGGESTIONS

To make a successful knowledge management system it is further recommended that:

- Knowledge management portals should be based on citizen centric by providing multi-channels delivery of public services to cater for all levels of stakeholders.
- All the public sector institutions in central and state Governments should take proactive measures for establishing Knowledge Management systems as a pivotal step for administrative reforms in general and e-Governance in particular in support of Digital India as Government of India's major initiative in the paperless communication system.

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