

A Study in Order to Provide a Model for the Management of Organizational Ignorance

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide a model of the factors affecting organizational ignorance through which an organization can prevent ignorance and promoting knowledge in the organization. This is the main discussion that knowledge management activities cannot to fully express the complexity of organizational ignorance. Paper starts with brief description of Knowledge Management (KM) and expression of how this technique of management resulting in ignorance and neglecting the unknown then the nature of ignorance and its relationship with knowledge has been discussed. After reviewing the literature on organizational knowledge and ignorance, we extract factors that may lead to ignorance then we provide a model for the management of organizational ignorance. This model has two parts. The first part is knowledge management process, the model explains how this may be lead to ignorance. The other part of model is a set organizational factor that affects corporate ignorance.

KEYWORDS: organizational ignorance, organizational knowledge, knowledge management process, organizational factors affecting ignorance.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1990s, the use of knowledge management techniques has developed among companies. Nevertheless this focus on knowledge results in forgetting other factors affecting business performance includes ignorance or lack of understanding. Although many organizations actively manage their ignorance, unlike knowledge ignorance is not the subject of a systematic process management (Roberts, 2009, p2). Knowledge management is valuable but managing ignorance is more important for organizations. Knowledge management is trying to determine the status and plans of what the organization knows. But the ignorance management expresses that knowing all or even most of the issues are never possible. Organizations do not know how to manage knowledge when problems do not understand; they not know which questions should be answered. (Zack, 1999, pp36-49)

Ignorance refers to lack of knowledge; Knowledge is a complex philosophical issue, Knowledge is defined as "the true belief". Nature of Knowledge usually is considered to be its constituent elements (Data & Information). Therefore, organizational knowledge is more than a true belief. For better understanding of ignorance, we should appreciate knowledge. Two distinct types of ignorance should be recognized. In the first stage ignorance is refers to knowing unknown and it is about limitations of existing knowledge. There are many things that we are aware of their lack of understanding about. We know the question, but we don't know the answer, in this case we are aware of our ignorance. In the second stage ignorance is lack of knowledge (Roberts, 2009, p3). Ignorance has several dimensions in internal and external operations of the organization. Emphasis on knowledge management in organization activities has prevented our attention from the need to expand resources to manage the organization's ignorance. Knowledge management with its emphasis on knowledge and focus to overcome ignorance through the production and application of knowledge; cannot recognize ignorance as well. However, knowledge management does not just ignore the important unknowns, even unintentionally attempt to create and sustain certain forms of ignorance. Ignorance management requires not only focus on controlling and minimizing the unknowns also need to focus on the creative process of employees which generate wealth in the company. Ignorance through knowledge management solution is not manageable but special attention is needed (ibid, p2).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge management and its differentiation from the ignorance get their historical roots from the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates. He believed that the identification and explanation of ignorance is a part of Wisdom (Harvey et al, 2001, p450). Ignorance is the lack of knowledge or information. Therefore, it is related to knowledge. Angleton stated that we all entered the world in a state of ignorance, but gradually over time as our

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knowledge increases our natural ignorance is reduced (Roberts, 2009, p4-5). Of interpretations and explanations provided are clear that organizational ignorance and knowledge is highly interdependent and in fact constitute a spectrum, one of its head is organizational knowledge and another is organizational ignorance. In the pursuit of knowledge there is a process to convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge that this process is called externalizing process. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) said Converting tacit knowledge in people's minds into explicit knowledge which is transferable is creating new knowledge. We called it new knowledge because we could convert things in the mind of people into knowledge that is available to others. This process is externalizing (Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1995). The difference between successful and unsuccessful organization is due to a difference between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge (Goh, 2005, p11).

The conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge creates organizational knowledge and if this conversion failed it will lead to organizational ignorance. Any factor that affect and disorder every step of the knowledge management process, will lead to lack of knowledge or ignorance. Uncertainty, complexity, dynamism, instability and ambiguity are known as powerful indicators for knowledge and ignorance. Organizations often turn to knowledge management solutions that are not relevant to fit the problems of knowledge. What we need a coherent framework for describing ignorance management. Ignorance is expressible in four unique problems of knowledge process. First is uncertainty (Not enough information), second is complexity (Having more information than what we are able to understand and manage), and third is ambiguity (Lack of a conceptual framework for interpreting information) and opacity (Having several competing or contradictory conceptual framework) (Zack, 1999, pp36-49).

Challenges can lead to organizational ignorance

The technology challenge: In an environment where its output is very diverse, automation tasks and workflow optimization and redesign of work processes, would not be enough. Most organizations need to develop the capacity to enhance the adaptability of the organization values. Digital model of the organizations need to improve rapidly in the field of traditional concepts like industries, organizations, products, services and marketing channels, distribution and sales (Sharifzade, Budlai, 2008, p.276). The use of new technologies for getting rid of ignorance is necessary for organization.

The challenge of organizational control: Control is necessary for achieving purposes, actions and predetermined outputs. In an environment where change is continuous and non-ejection, survival of the organization depends on continuous evaluation of the assumptions to ensure that the performance of the organization is consistent with market conditions, changes in consumer preferences, competitive requirements, organizational models and industry structure (ibid, p.277).

The challenge of organizational culture: Organizational culture can be the greatest obstacle to success is knowledge management (and an important factor for creating organizational ignorance). There are three aspects of knowledge components: 1. Sharing of knowledge 2. run applications based on sharing knowledge with others 3. Reuse of knowledge. The first aspect, shared knowledge, has a direct relationship with organizational culture. That cultural which encourages hoarding knowledge instead of sharing it, is a serious obstacle for knowledge management. Another cultural barrier is encouraging current situation, which called organizational blindness and refers to the people who believe current situation is the best. Culture and values in organizations should provide a learning environment in which all people are committed to be superior, failure and the risk should be tolerable and it should accept external ideas (Adli, 2005, p.235). So some cultural factors such as hoarding knowledge, encouraging current situation, avoiding the creation of organizational learning, fear of risk and so on, can lead to organizational ignorance.

The challenge of organizational structure: Non-flexible and hierarchical structures cannot be good tools for knowledge management. An appropriate structure is one that has flexibility and dynamism, so communications will not limited to team border or organizational border and it will simple for employees to communicate with the outside of organization (Sharifzade, budlai, 2008, p.280). Accordingly, non-flexible, formal and limited structures, will lead organization into ignorance.

Ambiguity in the Reward system: Another serious obstacle is the ambiguity in the reward systems. At present, despite the best technology and the richest sources of information, evidence shows that motivation and commitment to use them is very low. This is while motivation and commitment to creativity, sharing and applying knowledge are known as invisible factors of knowledge management success. Reward systems can be a stimulus for the development of knowledge and skills of staff. It seems ignorance about the motivation and commitment of employees (knowledge creators) in the organization is more than knowledge in this field (Adli, 2006, pp.235-238). Therefore, any ambiguity and inequality in the reward system, prevents the development of knowledge and lead to organizational ignorance.

Command and Management Control Challenge: Lack of support of top management from knowledge management activities and programs, short-term attitude and inappropriate leadership styles also hinder the successful implementation of knowledge management programs. Organizational control aimed to make acceptance and agreement about predetermined goals, it is essential to achieving superior methods and standard operating procedures (Sharifzade, budlai, 2008, p.280-281).

The political challenge: These challenges mostly are in government agencies, if we believe that knowledge is a source of power and a person who has the power can influence in decision, it is believable that some

employees are trying to achieve knowledge exclusively (ibid, p.282). According to compete for achieving knowledge exclusively and thus getting power, Cause defects in the development of knowledge and will result in the creation of organizational ignorance.

Research background

In this section we discuss various models related to knowledge and factors which influence knowledge and ignorance, thereby we can extract factors that are affecting the range of knowledge and ignorance.

Jalaldeen et al (2009) in their study "organizational readiness and factors affecting the adoption of knowledge management processes" Provide three independent structures Includes "knowledge management infrastructure", "the amount of belief of getting job benefits", "simplicity and convenience of knowledge management processes". In this model, knowledge management infrastructure comprises organizational culture, organizational structure and infrastructure of information technology (Jalaldeen et al, 2009). Holt et al (2007) argues that knowledge management projects and sharing knowledge in organizations often requires significant organizational change, and to achieve success leaders must prepare their organizations to make changes. He offers five factors for organizational readiness to manage changes: 1-People (includes assessing the willingness to change, profitability of change and usefulness of the innovation), 2- Background of change (subject to review whether changes are needed for organizational effectiveness), 3- Content of change (it considers why this should be done and it includes change assessment, appropriateness of change and individual values), 4- Change process (discuss about amount of involvement and including senior management , employee involvement and quality information) and 5- Knowledge management trends (includes assessing optimism and pessimism and obligation of knowledge management as an effective , sustainable and legal) (Holt et al, 2007).

In the Quinn's research in the public service organizations in Malaysia, success factors of knowledge management are: structure and organizational form, knowledge management techniques and approaches, drivers of knowledge management and technology resources (Quinn et al, 2005). Siemieniuch and Sinclair (2004) argued that with any degree of functionality and capabilities, organizations should be prepared for the knowledge management. They propose some factors include leadership, culture, structure, IT infrastructure (Siemieniuch, Sinclair, 2004). Taylor and Wright (2004) created a model in which six factors has been identified as important prerequisites for effective knowledge sharing. These factors are the open leadership, learning from failure, satisfaction of the change process, quality of information, performance orientation and one response to change (Taylor, Wright, 2004). Choi also propose a model to describe success factors for implementing knowledge management which include: staff training, employee participation, teamwork, strengthening individuals, leadership and commitment of senior management, the restrictions, information systems infrastructure, benchmarking and the equality and knowledge structure (Choi, 2000).

Chait (2000) has Said Success factors for implementing knowledge management are ensure vision, manage the content areas, culture, process and infrastructure, and create an effective culture (Chait, 2000). In this field Chung said there are 6 factors: senior management commitment and leadership, employee involvement, teamwork, strengthen staff, information systems infrastructure and performance measurement (Chung et al, 2005). Forcadell and Guadamillas rely on organizational culture and introduce success factors of knowledge management as follows: people, creative capabilities, leadership style, knowledge management tools, structure, organizational culture, knowledge management strategy (Sanchez, 2003). Davenport et al also reviewed factors affecting the success of KM projects and have extracted eight factors include: relationship with economic performance or industry value, institutional or cultural infrastructure, standard and flexible knowledge structure, language and clear objectives, change in motivational practices, multiple channels for knowledge transfer, senior management support and Knowledge- oriented culture (Davenport et al, 1998).

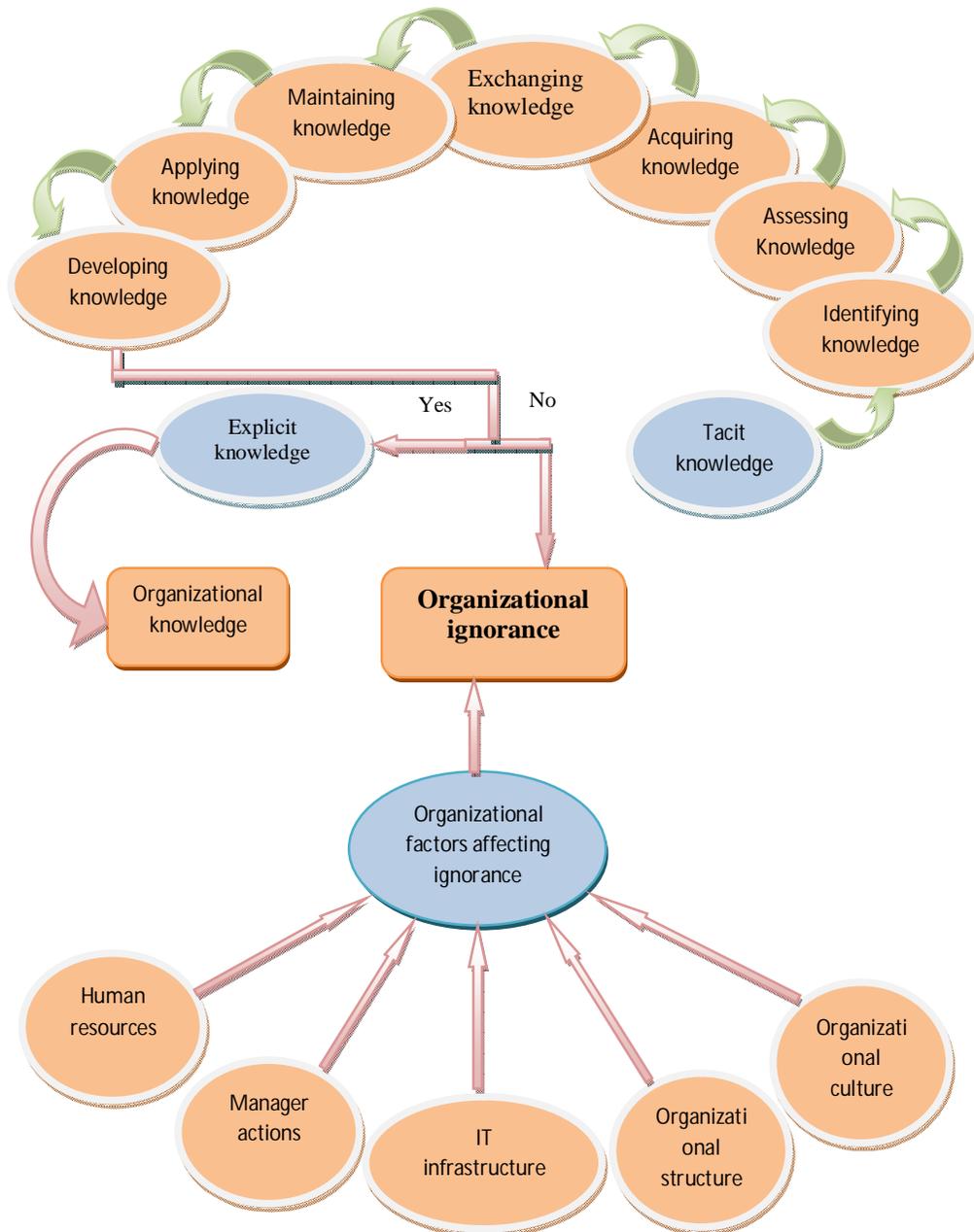
RESULTS

Literature review on ignorance and knowledge has resulted in various factors. These factors can be considered by organizations, either through direct influence on the ignorance or the impact on organizational knowledge. The lack of attention to them, especially about human factors, makes organizational ignorance. Focusing only on technical factors and communication infrastructure, does not guarantee successful knowledge management. So managers should be focus on more difficult issues such as social and cultural issues which are related to organizational knowledge management (Mohayidin et al, 2007). According to literature review as shown in Table 1, factors include "organizational culture", "organizational structure", "IT infrastructure", "management actions" and "human resources" are introduced as factors influencing organizational knowledge and ignorance in this study. We selected these factors because of its high impact on research subject and also they exist in more than five models we presented.

Table 1: Organizational factors affecting ignorance in the various models

Quinn Model	Jalaldeem Model	Davenport Model	Chung Model	Siemieniuch & Sinclair Model	Chair Model	Forcedell & Guadamillas Model	Taylor & Wright Model	Choi Model	Holt Model	Organizational factors affecting knowledge and ignorance
✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	organizational culture
✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	organizational structure
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	IT infrastructure
✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Managers actions
✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓	human resources

Based on the extracted factors, the following conceptual model is offered:



This model shows if knowledge management process is properly done (Yes) it will lead to organizational knowledge and if not (No) it will lead to organizational ignorance. Also it shows Organizational factors affecting ignorance.

Explanation of model factors

Explicit knowledge is an academic knowledge which we can learn. It has different ways to transfer it to other people. In fact, this knowledge is a systematic knowledge which can be used to solve many organizational problems. Tacit knowledge is how to do a job without thinking about it and doing it automatically. This knowledge is in the mind of a person but he/she cannot say it and transfer it to others (Smith, 2001, pp.314-315). Knowledge management cycle, include creation, acquisition and development of knowledge, knowledge transfer, knowledge sharing, evaluation, storage and application of knowledge.

Creation, Acquisition and Development of Knowledge: accumulation and development of knowledge substantially depend on the minds of staff and their decisions and activities, but knowledge sources may be exist outside of the organization. Selecting a source for obtaining the required knowledge depends on several factors that include: strategic importance of knowledge, access to knowledge and the possibility of selecting external sources.

Knowledge transfer: the primary goal of knowledge management is to ensure that valid and relevant knowledge can help problem solving and decision making. So transferring appropriate knowledge in the right time to decision makers is crucial for organizational success. Knowledge transfer is not only communication or sharing information or makes it available for people who need it, but it includes development and absorption of knowledge (Goh, 2005).

Sharing knowledge: organization, in which sharing information is supported by managers, may be more effective and efficient in defining processes and improving their organizational performance. In an organization which has a culture of knowledge sharing, people share their ideas with others because they consider it as a natural process. Therefore, we should create an incentive among the organization members to engage in knowledge sharing without fear of losing their position (Lee, Choi, 2003).

Evaluation, storage and application of knowledge: this step is a process to create and maintain reliable, comprehensive and easily access sources of information. This process evaluates documents critically; and continuously updated information and capabilities of the organization. It should confirm that knowledge management process provides:

- Facilitate access to reliable information
- Facilitate access to human capabilities
- Includes all information from the organization activities
- Includes problems which institute needs to solve them to improve its performance
- Ensuring the security of the institution's knowledge (Kakabadse et al, 2003).

Organizational factors:

Organizational culture: it is "a set of values , common beliefs among organization members" (Daft, 2001) which is a key factor for organizational success. Knowledge is effectively creating and sharing in the organization when organizational culture supports it. A knowledge-based culture makes challenges among people for spreading knowledge in the organization (Davenport, prusak, 1998). Therefore, managers should try to convert procedures and rules of managing knowledge in organizations into cultural norms (Soliman, Spooner, 2000). If in the organization does not promote some factor like collaboration, learning and trust, the organization will have difficulty in creating knowledge and then efforts to promote knowledge management failed and it leads to organizational ignorance. Organizational culture has different characteristics that are mentioned in the following: *Trust* (maintain mutual faith to each other) (Lee and Choi, 2003), Employee participation (participation in the distribution of knowledge) (Chung et al, 2005, pp183-184), Culture of philanthropy (sharing knowledge for free, this makes people who have knowledge willing to share it without waiting for compensation) (Davenport and prusak, 1998), Learning (Brand, 1998), Engagement (collaboration is a degree to which individuals help each other in the works. If the common understanding between members of the organization is low, a little knowledge will be created) (Lee and Choi, 2003).

Organizational structure: successful implementation of knowledge management strategy depends on the flexible structure, elimination of control and traditional systems. Studies have shown the formal and decentralized organization has large impact on coordination, cooperation within the company and as a result developing knowledge (ibid). Sharing knowledge creates learning and establishes working groups in the organization and also develops interpersonal skills (Moffett et al, 2002). Another factor influencing organizational knowledge or ignorance is organizational structure. Its influence is through spreading and creating of knowledge. Inappropriate organizational structure prevents the process of knowledge creation and ultimately leads to organizational ignorance.

IT infrastructure: IT is not only for communication and dissemination of knowledge but a means to collect, store and retrieve knowledge and it is known as a major donor for knowledge management (Adenfelt, Lagerstro, 2005).

Management actions: management is considered one of the most important human activities. Community's progress depends on the group efforts. And as developing organized groups, management performance became more important (Zareimatin, 2007, p.23). Management actions have some factors include:

- Human Resource Management: KM project implementation requires a culture of acceptance by employees, people are the cause of knowledge in organizations and a significant part of knowledge is in the mind of them (ESCFWA, 2003).
- Open leadership: spreading knowledge occurs just by voluntary cooperation. Leadership styles in knowledge-based organizations are more democratic and direct control is lesser than others.
- Supporting and participating of senior management: senior managers are trying to increase the knowledge of organizations and to design and implement management strategies. One of the main duties of them is creating an appropriate infrastructure and environment for knowledge sharing (Turban, 2003).
- Reward and compensation systems: motivational factor affect knowledge sharing. For disseminating knowledge, an organization should increase the desire of its employees for knowledge dissemination and coordination (Watson, 2003). Since knowledge sharing is a voluntary action, knowledge-based organizations should present a reason to people about sharing knowledge so they have to provide some incentives (Soliman and Spooner, 2000, pp337-345).
- Change Management: people need compelling reasons to accept the knowledge management (Taylor, Wright, 2004). It means people should understand the benefits of knowledge sharing to accept it (Davenport and Prusak, 1998) (Wiig, 1997).

Human resources: employees, who are working for organizational purposes, prefer great work, ventured and freedom called capable human resources. They freely express their views without fear, work based on the enthusiasm not the pressure comes from outside, take responsibility for their actions and are accountable for their performance. These employees have some characters: flexibility, coordination, committed to team goals, good communication, competency, reliable, regular, and grateful and Provide assistance (Zareimatin, 2007, p.219-221). If these indicators found in the employee they will improve knowledge management in organizations but lack of them will lead to ignorance in the organization.

DISCUSSION

This paper presents a model for managing the organizational ignorance. According to results the model consists of two parts. The first part is about knowledge management process through which tacit knowledge convert to explicit knowledge. If this process failed, it will lead to ignorance in the organization. This process includes seven steps; therefore it is necessary to complete all these steps correctly to prevent ignorance and developed knowledge in an organization. For this purpose, the following suggestions are offered:

- Collect evidence of knowledge of events, projects and processes
- Definition standard forms for knowledge documentation
- Registration and enrichment of knowledge documentation including text, audio, image and ...
- Link between knowledge documentation and knowledge map includes areas of
- knowledge, projects, processes and ...
- Increase team productivity by providing easy means of sharing information
- Develop appropriate solutions for business process of organization
- Create the good environment for cooperation and information sharing
- Provide high-level security for resources
- Provide a valuable infrastructure for creating Web applications
- Provide technical documentation, instructional resources and business strategies
- Compatibility, integration and communication with other servers

The second part of model is the organizational factors affecting ignorance. These factors are: culture, structure, information technology, management practices and human resources. So for effective management of organizational ignorance these factors should be implemented in the organization in a way that there were not obstacles to the organization and the organization will not lead to ignorance. In this context the following suggestions are offered:

Organizational culture

- Trust and knowledge sharing: creating a friendly and intimate environment which increase trust between people (especially subordinates and superiors). Because of the lack of trust, knowledge sharing is decreasing.

- Participation: organization should provide participative management culture through providing the environment for team work and encouraging individuals to participate in organized group.
- Learning and Development: encourage people to participate in programs such as seminars, workshops, etc., give enough time to people for job training, use non-formal educational opportunities such as job rotation and assignment for learning and personal development.
- Creativity and innovation: encourage people to give new ideas toward new solutions, encourage people to give new ideas to solve business problems, consider innovation as one of the important indicators when hiring.

Organizational structure

- Lack of concentration: encourage people to participate in decision making, give them authority of decision making insofar as they don't need to have permission from the supervisor in some matters; because the "focus" reduce providing creative solutions.
- Lack of formality: processes, procedures and current guidelines should be reviewed and improved so that employees have easy access to the knowledge.
- Team Structure: different types of teams like scientific or professional associations (engineers, researchers etc.) should be used to meet the needs and solve problems. They prepare and share knowledge in organizations. Team work in organizations should be encouraged and teams are given authority to make decisions because innovation is one of the important parts of the work team.

IT infrastructure

- Participation in technology development: providing electronic database, virtual education and virtual software in order to meetings and discusses in the organization so the employees can share their knowledge without a need to deal face to face. They can do it in different places through using tools such as email, chat groups, chat rooms and voice and video conferences and etc.
- Storage and retrieval technologies: the organization should provide software in this field and install it. And also it should provide a data bank of knowledge producers, knowledge areas, knowledge resources, knowledge structure, knowledge users etc.
- Flexibility: meetings, public meetings and discussions regarding the use of modern information technology and other topics related to knowledge should be held for all employees in the organization. By providing this situation, organization can adjust itself to new technologies.
- Information Technology staff: professionals and experts in the fields of technology should be used more than before and organization should provide specialized programs related to individuals in the field of information technology for its employees.

Management actions

- Knowledge-based strategies: strategy, goals and programs must somehow be presented to the entire of organization that people can easily and freely express their views about it.
- Remuneration policies: organization must use incentives in order to create knowledge-based situation. These incentives include granting financial rewards (salary and benefits, etc.) and spiritual rewards (praise, thanks and a job promotion, etc.)
- Support senior management: it should say to the personnel of the organization that senior managers support knowledge management. Comments will be given to individual ideas to improve organization and provide a condition in the whole of organization for expressing ideas.

Human resources

- Feelings of competence: provide a situation of challenging in work and study for staff to promote science and practice which leads one to believe in their abilities and effectiveness, culture activities in the creation and exchange of knowledge be conducted in the organization.

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