

Chapter 27

Relationship Between the Motivational Language of School Administrators and Tacit Knowledge Sharing of Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates motivational language of school administrators and its effect on tacit knowledge sharing - which may hold vital and critical importance – by teachers at schools. While doing this, the contextual factors regarding organisational culture, such as the employee voice and perceived psychological safety are also taken into consideration. It is expected that the use of a motivational language by administrators that reduces uncertainty and helps create understanding and empathy, and which thus forms a positive environment that increase employee voice, will also have an effect on tacit knowledge sharing. Additionally, the effect of motivational language can be enhanced through psychological safety perceived by the employees, which in turn is dependent on the work environment. As such, a higher perception of psychological safety will tend to increase employee voice and the level tacit knowledge sharing. Finally, implications for knowledge literature and suggestions for future studies are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Eastern Bloc countries have shown that possessing knowledge does not by itself have an impact on competitiveness, development, and innovation. Ellerman et al. (2001) argues that to achieve development and increase their competitiveness, organisations must not only produce knowledge, but also possess an organisational culture that facilitates the sharing of knowledge and has a dynamic learning process. The

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-0417-8.ch027

inability to share knowledge effectively, as well as the inability to reach outside information due to relative isolation, hindered the development of Eastern Bloc countries, and eventually led to the inevitable downfall of these closed systems. In developing Asian countries, on the other hand, it was observed that with effective knowledge management (KM), information/knowledge sharing leads to economic development and competitive strength (Kim and Tcha, 2012). Knowledge sharing is seen as one of the main constituents of KM with two subcomponents; tacit and explicit knowledge sharing (Burke, 2010). At this point KM is defined as management of all organisational and individual knowledge/ information to increase the effectiveness and productiveness of organisations. KM can increase effectiveness and productiveness with its knowledge generation, knowledge representation, knowledge storage, knowledge transformation, knowledge sharing, knowledge transferring, knowledge practicing, knowledge developing, knowledge protecting functions (Tutorial, 2015). The recent economic experiences show that developing Asian countries are capable of managing knowledge effectively. Developing Asian countries were characterised by a general attitude that encouraged the learning of foreign languages, the use of transferred knowledge, the development of existing potential, and the utilisation of outputs generated by shared and transferred knowledge. The experience of these countries can be considered as a significant illustration of the importance of sharing knowledge. These countries, known as the rising stars of Asia, are viewed as concrete examples of the benefits associated with knowledge sharing (Pack, 2000). Knowledge sharing, which has such significant impact at a macro level, is also considered as one of the most important and critical elements for present-day organisations (Geiger and Schreyögg, 2012; Huang et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Wang and Noe, 2010). At an organisational level, knowledge can be defined in two ways. The first of these is called explicit knowledge, and comprises the information accessible to all through the official channels and communication instruments of an organisation (Smith, 2001; Bergeron, 2003). Nonaka and von Krogh (2009) draw attention to the universality of the explicit knowledge. It is easily reachable. The second, and perhaps the more important type of knowledge, is tacit knowledge, which comprises the information acquired by the members or employees of an organisation through their work and through personal training and experience (Smith, 2001; Bishop et al., 2008). The willingness of employees to use this knowledge in their work environment is considered an advantage and benefit for the organisation (Davenport, 1997). It is also critical and strategic in that it “is difficult to copy and substitute and vital to deliver solutions to clients” (Swart et al., 2014:1) as well as “highly idiosyncratic and thus very difficult to imitate” (Salis and Williams, 2010:438). Tacit knowledge is obtained through the reshaping and enrichment of raw knowledge by personal experience, with the intention of providing information that is more effective for the relevant tasks. However, it is also clear that this knowledge can only be of benefit if it is used and collectively shared. In this context, it might be useful to distinguish the concepts of information sharing and transfer. To distinguish knowledge sharing from knowledge transfer, Hendriks (2000) defines the former as the voluntary sharing within the work environment of structured, processed, and analysed information, with the intention of ensuring its use in the organisation. Knowledge transfer, on the other hand, is defined as the circulation of raw information between employees and units. Kim and Nelson (2000) describe that knowledge sharing is the product of the dynamic learning process that employees form within the organisation and their environment.

To ensure that schools, which are one of the most important catalyses on social development and competitiveness, can raise individuals equipped with the knowledge and skills necessitated by the present-day world, these institutions must also possess a conducive, dynamic, and motivating organisational environment. In this context, schools administrators are responsible for ensuring that schools can become institutions that can “learn,” and where information can be easily accessed (Noteboom, 2000). To this end,

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