

Success of Public Knowledge Management in the Light of the Rossian Ethics

Mehdi Shami Zanjani, University of Tehran, Iran

Hossein Dabbagh, Shahid Beheshti University, Iran

Roshanak Rouzbehani, University of Tehran, Iran

ABSTRACT

Researchers have attempted to integrate the fields of management and ethics for the past 50 years. Although the moral aspects of knowledge management have been studied, its philosophical attitude has been overshadowed. This work designs a philosophical background—in moral philosophy—for public knowledge management. To achieve the research goal, the relationships between human critical success factors of knowledge management and moral duties are discussed. These moral duties are based on the Rossian ethical framework. The authors recommend moral duties to public organizations that try to manage knowledge successfully. The results show that “beneficence” is the most significant to knowledge management success in the public sector. In this paper, the authors integrate knowledge management with the Rossian ethical framework to increase successful knowledge management in public organizations.

Keywords: Ethics, Human Critical Success Factors, Knowledge Management, Moral Duties, Rossian Ethics

INTRODUCTION

It is said that the economics of new age is shaped on the basis of knowledge and network (Kelly, 1999; Lester, 2000). We can consider the intellectual property movement in the third industrial revolution as the most important characteristics of novel business (Thurow, 2003). Based on this fact, the nature of organizations is changed in a way that intangible assets such as knowledge and human resources rather than tangible and physi-

cal assets determine the value of organizations (Stewart, 1997). Therefore, the importance of knowledge management, increasingly, is taken into account (Alavi, 2000).

It is near a half of century that management scholars and philosophers attempt to set up relations between the two sciences: management and philosophy. The issue is about how we can have an effective knowledge management incorporating ethics? Is this possible?

Researchers who work on knowledge management, commonly consider that knowledge and its processes (process of acquire, refine,

DOI: 10.4018/irmj.2011040105

maintenance, and disseminate of knowledge) should be ethical. In other words, they believe in morality of knowledge and ethical information (Geva, 2006; Blanchard, 1987; Land et al., 2007; Mason et al., 1986; Carroll & Scherer, 1999).

The main point in these articles is in regards to the subject of some moral advice or recommendations to knowledge managers and workers. In fact, these ideas help public organizations to move towards ethical knowledge management. Nevertheless, two issues have been overlooked. First, a philosophical understanding for these moral advice and suggestions has been neglected. Whereas, we need some background in moral philosophy in order to achieve successful knowledge management, because without a firm philosophical foundation, any advice would be arbitrary. Second, the effect of declared moral advice is not clear in knowledge management success. Namely; it is vague that how moral advice helps us to have successful knowledge management. It follows from this that without considering moral philosophy (especially Meta ethics) and obvious linkage between moral duties and knowledge management, we could not have successful knowledge-based organizations.

In contrast, the viewpoint of this paper is totally different. Since moral philosophy, normatively, suggests some moral duties for being successful in knowledge management, we can put forward the tabloid of this work in this way: ethics is used as a context or nexus for knowledge management success.

By the way, the relations between knowledge management human critical success factors and some moral duties are investigated. These moral duties are taken from the ethics of prima facie duties of Ross; one of the controversial moral philosophers in twentieth century.

This paper is organized as follows: after an introduction, the next section deals with the literature, especially our points of view about ethics, knowledge management and knowledge management success factors. Thereafter, the framework is discussed. This framework examines moral duties of Rossian ethics and human critical success factors. Suitable moral

duties are also proposed for public organizations which try to manage knowledge flawlessly. Furthermore, corresponding moral duties to knowledge management success factors will be illustrated.

This paper has important implications for public organizations seeking to improve their knowledge management through morality.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Ethics

According to some philosophers, animals and humans can be distinguished from each other by reason of morality. In other words, humans can be labeled as moral animals. Thus, morality and its branches speak about human and humanity in every debate.

At this point, let us have a look at ethics and its different branches in general. Moral philosophy, according to some categorizations, consists of meta-ethics, normative ethics and applied ethics (LaFollette, 1997). Normative ethics take care of ethical theories which say that what ought and ought not to be done in different circumstances. To do this, these theories have to give their explanation of the concepts 'goodness' and 'badness' in the first place. For instance, consequentialism, as an ethical theory holds that goodness and moral obligation are associated with the total amount of pleasure and pain in each moral situation. Morally speaking, the more the total pleasure is, the better the situation with which we are faced will be. Deontologism, virtue ethics and intuitionism are other theories which are discussed in normative ethics (Baron et al., 1997).

Applied ethics, on the other hand, deals with practical and realistic issues in different field such as: medicine, business¹, environment, engineering and information technology (IT) with which we are confronted in everyday life. An applied ethicist attempts to concretize the mentioned ethical theories in order to give an account of how the issues can be resolved.

Moreover, meta-ethics which is the most philosophical part of moral philosophy, takes

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/article/success-public-knowledge-management-light/52824

Related Content

Building Police/Community Relations through Virtual Communities

Susan A. Baim (2009). *Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology, Second Edition* (pp. 421-427).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/building-police-community-relations-through/13608

Effective Supply Chain Management Strategy for Food Products: An Insight to Linked Partnerships

Witaya Krajaysri (2010). *International Journal of Information Systems and Social Change* (pp. 62-74).

www.irma-international.org/article/effective-supply-chain-management-strategy/45877

Impediments to the Successful Implementation of ICT

S.C. Lenny Kohand Stuart Maguire (2009). *Information and Communication Technologies Management in Turbulent Business Environments* (pp. 157-175).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/impediments-successful-implementation-ict/22546

The Roles of Knowledge Management and Organizational Innovation in Global Business

Kijpokin Kasemsap (2016). *Handbook of Research on Information Architecture and Management in Modern Organizations* (pp. 130-153).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-roles-of-knowledge-management-and-organizational-innovation-in-global-business/135765

Intellectual Capital Measurement

Lukasz Bryl (2019). *Advanced Methodologies and Technologies in Library Science, Information Management, and Scholarly Inquiry* (pp. 367-379).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/intellectual-capital-measurement/215939