Chapter 2
Knowledge Management Initiatives in Indian Public Sector

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ABSTRACT

Today, knowledge management has come to be accepted and recognized as a source of competitive advantage in the private sector. Although Knowledge Management (KM) has been gaining attention all over the world, KM as a discipline is still in its infancy, and adoption of KM is still at its nascent stage when it comes to the Public Sector. It is vital for any organization to understand the concept of KM so as to align its KM strategy with the organization's strategy. This is all the more important when it is the Public Sector because the impact of Public Sector organizations directly affects the common man. Knowledge creation, generation, and application are a continuous process. Without thorough understanding and awareness of KM, the Public Sector may not be able to reap true and full benefits. This chapter aims to bring a comprehensive understanding of KM application to the Public Sector and through cases recognizes the initiatives of KM in the Indian Public Sector.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge Management (KM) is a key strategy, central to information sharing and access to the Public Sector by the government's partners. There is opportunity for developing nations to use KM as a key driver towards increasing Public Sector productivity and building trust in government.

Globalization and liberalization may have brought to the forefront the issue of a pervasive declining trust in Public Sector by citizens. This statement is not to imply any cause and effect relationship, but merely to suggest that through globalization, the public's awareness of the worldwide phenomenon of a declining trust in government has increased. It is also instructive to note that GDP growth is high when people trust in one another. Knowledge is the new "commodity" to be captured and exploited. Changing a culture that has long been

prevailing is not an easy task. Moreover, KM is not a cure all for the development but it can play a significant supporting role.

Managing and leveraging knowledge within and across has become a critical skill for Public Sector in the 21st century. Public Sector must successfully address the main KM challenges, i.e. in capturing, organizing, sharing, distributing and exploiting their knowledge assets. Erosion of citizen's trust in this sector due to rampant corruption at various levels is an area of serious concern. A well-planned strategy can build a more efficient, accountable and transparent government. If planned in consultation and representation from key stakeholders, KM applications can rebuild citizen trust, by improving service delivery, reducing corruption and empowering citizens to participate in advancing good governance. Information is one of the most valuable resources of Public Sector. In fact, the Public Sector has a monopoly on many types of information. Public Sector managers, however, are finding that the information needed to plan, make decisions, and act is often held outside their own organizations, and is collected for widely different purposes and maintained in disparate formats. As a consequence, Public Sector around the world is increasingly turning to information sharing as a strategy for maximizing the value of information in providing services and responding to problems. Gathering, handling, and sharing of information require not only adequate technical capabilities for sharing information across organizational boundaries and among multiple levels of government, but also executive involvement and strong inter-organizational collaboration skills.

KM is the acquisition and use of resources to create an environment in which information is accessible to individuals and in which individuals acquire, share and use that information to develop their own knowledge, and are encouraged and enabled to apply their knowledge for the benefit of the organization. KM, from the human resource management perspective, is more than just the management of information systems, more than just the management of the interface between people and those systems. Effective knowledge management facilitates the acquisition of knowledge by individuals. It encourages them to apply their knowledge for the benefit of the organization so that competitive advantage and service excellence are achieved. The direction is towards policies that respect and recognize the requirements of knowledge workers as individuals, and towards human resource development activities that support the changing managerial role and promote an understanding of organizational culture. Typically, policies are designed to facilitate differing 'lifestyle choices', through actively articulating the organizational values, supporting involvement and respecting diversity. Success will be seen in creating a culture that supports the sharing of knowledge and information, creates fluid organizational boundaries and focuses, on the Public Sector, on bringing resources together creatively to deliver social outcomes.

KM concepts and tools have been tried and tested in the private sector. KM is also becoming a key enabler of competitiveness in Public Sector. Since Public Sector organizations are knowledge-based organizations, KM could enable better formulation of policies with increased transparency, trust and can also deliver effective services by maximizing productivity in terms of process, time and cost. As Public Sectors cannot choose their customers, there is a change in mentality taking place, with Public Sectors viewing citizens and businesses as customers. Integration of back office systems is also required in order to provide a seamless service delivery to the citizens and businesses. Aside from investing in IT technologies, there must also be investments in human capital to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge by individuals. KM tools such as Communities of Practice, Best Practice Transfers and the Apprentice model are beginning to become popular in terms of facilitating the sharing of knowledge. Creating a culture that supports the sharing of knowledge and citizenship participation in policymaking is also important in

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