A Preview on the Conceptualization of Contemporary Knowledge from Islamic Knowledge Management Perspective

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Abstract

The philosophy of knowledge is known as an established discipline both from Islamic perspective and Western viewpoint. Generally, it can be understood as a source of economy, power and prosperity. With the knowledge as a source of provider, the economic development, political power, business transaction and networking; rapid development in telecommunication and technology, with various other developments in human engineering and education plus, etc.'s; human civilization flourishes. Focusing on the philosophy of knowledge and comparing its traditional sense with modern practice might lead us to discover some ways in which knowledge should be realized, managed and applied. Obviously, the issue and criteria that determine what constitutes knowledge is indeed crucial. Therefore, this paper highlights general concept of knowledge management from Islamic perspective and its significant contribution to human development.

Keywords: Islamic Knowledge Management; Conceptualization of Knowledge; Intellectual Wisdom.

1. Introduction

The issue of what knowledge composed of are very much debated within the academic circle. Due to some reasons, the terms "knowledge", "sciences" and "information" have been used synonymously or

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interchangeably in many contexts. They might be referred to a particular understanding (theoretical or practical) or skill acquired by a person through experience or education and so on, i.e. there is no single agreed definition about them since the days of Plato up to this present time. The source of knowledge creation and its types, for instance, might be among the leading factors of defining redundancy and calamity. Here, we have to consider the fact that the meanings of words - sentences and texts can change with time or cultural and even emotional conditions. As mentioned by Tibor (1990), the consequence of this fact is that a true logical proposition in one relationship can be false in another. Davenport and Prusak (1998), refers knowledge as a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, expert insight and grounded intuition that provides an environment and framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. Obviously, the issue of criteria that determine what constitutes knowledge is indeed crucial. For that reason, the term used here is defined as a general concept that refers to a wise understanding of factual information. In other words, Nonaka (1994) highlighted that classical and modern theories of knowledge would only recognize two categories of knowledge namely true or false and explicit or tacit.

2. Conceptualization of Islamic Knowledge Management and Contemporary Knowledge

There is much difference on the formation of the conceptualization of knowledge management comparing between the Islamic knowledge and contemporary knowledge. Hence the contemporary knowledge management precisely based on human knowledge whereby through human knowledge; productivity and innovation are being created and initiated. Whilst, the Islamic knowledge management is based on the Islamic religious belief, the commitment and submission of Muslim towards Allah SWT as the obligation in fulfilling the duty of vicegerent in this world. Therefore, the understanding of these two concepts of Islamic and contemporary is crucial in viewing its differences and bases. Hence through these perspectives and differences, the authors are looking on the contemporary knowledge management through the eye of Islamic knowledge.

2.1. Knowledge from contemporary perspectives

Western studies recognized Peter Drucker as the 'Father of Management' (born in 1909), where he mentioned that the source of wealth is something specifically referred as originated from human experience; i.e. human knowledge. Hence, the application of knowledge should be applied to something that is known, whereby it is called as 'productivity'. On the other hand, the application of knowledge to something new then, is called as 'innovation'. In this regard Drucker successfully enhanced the concept of 'knowledge implementation' and 'knowledge innovation'; thus both concepts has been virtualized in real organizational practice and fully recognized world-wide on its importance and practicality contribution. While in the issue of Knowledge Management, Western recognized it as the knowledge that undergo the process of construed, focuses on the acquisition, structuring, retention, and dissemination of that particular knowledge. In managing something it is important to do it together with quantification; counted, organized and measured (Glazer, 1998). In order to maximize its value, it must be properly built, owned and controlled (Allee, 1997). In short, approaches to Knowledge Management on the wider perspectives is for the purpose of capture and control what is called 'structured knowledge' (Hildreth & Kimble, 2002). Obviously from the above discussion, Knowledge Management is an important determination factor for individual success and also the organizational performance. Whether the term 'Knowledge Management' has been used explicitly or not, it transforms an individual to be 'Knowledge-based Users', it helps organizations to gain competitive advantage and effective working through

systematic sharing procedure and workflow in which it lead to organizational improvement, responsiveness, innovation, competency and efficiency (Lotus, 2012).

2.2 Knowledge from Islamic perspectives

From Islamic understanding, Islam is a religion of knowledge. The notion of Islam as a "manner of submission" to God the Creator is a useful reference point to begin a discussion on the Islamic conceptualization of Knowledge Management. It is logical to assume that the Islamic idea of knowledge is related to and continuous with its notion of *'ilm* (knowledge) as the fundamental principle of conducts and practices. In Islam, the definition of knowledge is not confined to only epistemological concerns but also includes ethical truthfulness and other dimensions of objectivities as mentioned in the Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, (2:239); *"If ye fear (an enemy), pray on foot, or riding (as may be most convenient), but when ye are in security, celebrate Allah's praises in the manner He has taught you, which ye knew not (before)"*.

Muslim regards knowledge as God-given to Mankind to be used as a point of reference and guidance for every theoretical endeavor. This is meant to elaborate an Islamic paradigm, and intrinsically related to the fundamental concept of obligation *(taklif)* as drafted by the Quran and the Prophetic traditions in structuring Muslim worldview toward all aspects of individual belief, societal behavior and cultural domain (Sardar, 1993) as pointed in Surah Al-Baqarah, (2:30-33); *"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said, "Wilt thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not." And He taught Adam the nature of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: "Tell Me the nature of these if ye are right." They said: "Glory to Thee, of knowledge we have none, save that Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom." He said: "O Adam! tell them their natures." When he had told them, Allah said: "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?"* Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged the acquisition of knowledge by saying "*Verily, the men of knowledge are the inheritors of the prophets*". This indicates that the value of a man is the benefit of his knowledge. The Prophet also placed great emphasis on learning, when he stated in a well-known hadith that, "*One who goes out to search for knowledge is to the cause of Allah till he returns.*"

2.3 Islam and knowledge

According to the Quran, in Surah Al-'Alaq, (96:1-5); "*Proclaim! (or Read!) In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created -- Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful -- He Who taught (the use of) the Pen -- Taught man that which he knew not*". Hence, human beings are ordered to read as a mechanism in seeking knowledge. It should be done in the Name of Lord, the Creator, the Most Generous who has taught by the Pen, and has taught Man that which he knew not. The command here is not just to collect knowledge and information, but also direct man to organize, plan and manage properly the knowledge given to him. This concept of knowledge is illustrated in Figure 1.
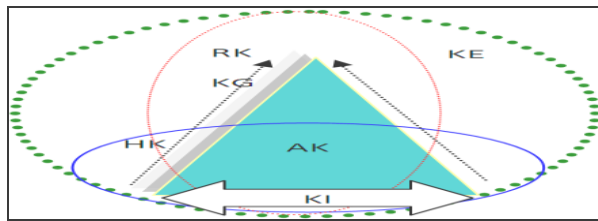
Figure 1: Islamic Conceptualization of Knowledge (Muhamadul & Khatijah, 2012)

(KE=Knowledge Existence; KG= Knowledge Growth; KM= Knowledge Management; RK=Revelation Knowledge; AK= Acquired Knowledge; HK=Human Knowledge; KI=Knowledge Investigation)

Figure 1 describes that Muslims believe knowledge originates from God and then is transferred to the Mankind by various channels such as revelation, sense perception, reason, and intuition (observationally and deductively) as affirmed by Muslim epistemologists (Al-Attas, 1980). In other words, knowledge is an existing phenomenon that Man has to explore and investigate. Once the knowledge is known to a person, it is regarded as information to him, in which it became an applied science and taught to others. A Muslim, as God's vicegerent on earth has to fulfil his task in seeking knowledge and support its growth and application as God created knowledge for the benefit of human being. This has been stated in the Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, (2:29-33); "*It is He who hath created for you all things that are on earth; moreover His design comprehended the heavens, for He gave order and perfection to the seven firmaments; and of all things he hath perfect knowledge…..*". In fact some of the Quranic verses in this regard refer to Islamic knowledge; its features are general in meaning so as to refer to the general learning. The output of an Islamic educational process will lead the learner to be a well-informed person who acts in accordance to the principles available at hand. This conception of knowledge regards education not only a process of learning acquisition, but the most important connection is between the human being and the command of God, to be an ethical being in carrying out the duty of a vicegerent on earth. With this view, it is hoped that it can serve as a step for the construction of a framework for an Islamic Knowledge Management Theory (IKMT).   Indeed, how humans view knowledge, its management and function, is a question imposed in the foundation of any civilization system. In fact on the general views there are denying the existence of any purpose of knowledge other than those which create its role function in usage and application. Due to this behavior, they became different from other beings. Indeed mankind is viewed as an evolving animal (physically and mentally).

2.4. Islamic knowledge management

The basis of knowledge management in Islam is that all knowledge is in Allah's hand. Muslim believes that Allah's Knowledge is infinite in which He know all; everything covers on the earth and the sky and what is in between them; both the existence of worldly life and the Hereafter world. Therefore, among His Divine Names is the All-Knowing. He, the Almighty says (what means): "*Verily, He, only He, is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.*" (Surah As-Shuara, 26:220). In this notion, Allah Almighty also has been known by other Names which reflect His attribute, such as Al-Khabeer (the All-Aware), which warns human being that He knows what will be happen, before something really happens. Al-Hakeem (the Wise) brings the meaning that He knows every single detail of things. Ash-Shaheed (the Witness) denotes that He knows what is seen and even what cannot be seen, i.e., that nothing is beside His awareness. And Al-Muhsiy (the Reckoner), entails that the fact that He knows everything does not distract Him from knowing the tiniest details of whatever happen in this world, such as whenever the

lightning struck, or the leaves fall or whenever the clock ticking. He knows the numbers and the movements of each day, hour and even the second. To summarize; His Knowledge encompasses generalities and minor details. Human beings indeed only have a small part of Allah's knowledge and from this small portion Muslim has to manage it properly so that it would be able to contribute positively to human development and prosperity economically and spiritually. Thus, knowledge management in Islam is very much related to the concept of 'belief' and the 'Oneness of God'.

Hence, as knowledge in Islam is intimately related to belief, knowledge, therefore, is part of faith. In this occasion, it is therefore obligatory for all Muslims to pursue knowledge, to cultivate the various branches of knowledge and then to construct a suitable model of knowledge management in helping Mankind to become effective users of knowledge. Islam, in this regard, looks toward IKM's construction and application as important vision and mission for human development and survival as vicegerents of God, in which it should be bound by its intellectual wisdom, spiritual strength, mental ability, and even socio-cultural conditions of scientific creativity.

2.5. Islamic knowledge management's (IKM) functional criteria

As highlighted earlier, Knowledge Management is composed of three elements: body of knowledge (BK), methodology (MK) and users (UK). Islamic Knowledge Management, however, has another additional element that is the knowledge source (KS). In this case, knowledge is considered as co-existing with Mankind. Therefore, their duty is to search and develop that knowledge according to their needs, urgencies and suitability. This approach is meant as a straightforward manner of looking into Knowledge Source, which is brought to light through interpretation based on an expert's specialization or collective, constructive finding which is known as *Ijtihad*. The output of this process should be valuable and convincing enough to appeal to the rational mind that inevitably appreciates their worth to apply them to enhance the effectiveness of productivities and achievements. These elements and their functional criteria of Islamic Knowledge Management can be illustrated in Figure 2.
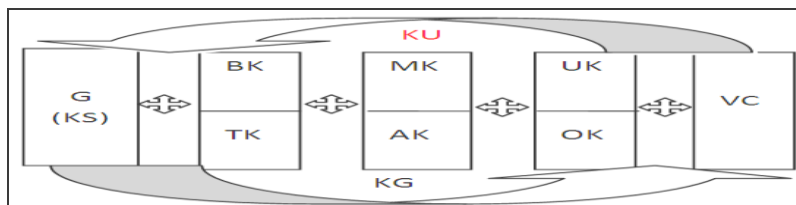

Figure 2: IKM Functional Model (Muhamadul & Khatijah, 2012)

(G=God;   KS=Knowledge   Source;   BK=Body   Knowledge;   TK=Types;   MK=Methodology; AK=Application Knowledge; UK=Users Knowledge; OK=Output Knowledge; KG=Knowledge Growth; KU=Knowledge Understanding; VG=Vicegerent).

Figure 2 describes the application of Islamic Knowledge Management and its operational function in helping users achieve the success as vicegerents of God. The hypothesis here is when human beings are able to manage knowledge for themselves as structured by Islamic Knowledge Management; they will be able to recognize the greatness and powerfulness of Allah, the Owner of the universe [Al-Quran; (39:38), (41:53)]. Finally, some holistic principles of Islamic Knowledge Management application can be listed from the above discussion as underlined below;

i. Islamic Knowledge Management conceptualization as drafted in this paper is an attempt toward knowledge realization from an Islamic perspective.

ii. Islamic Knowledge Management users have an optimistic view upon knowledge existence, its boundaries, categories and types. Consequently, they deal with knowledge as part and parcel of their life activities and routine.

iii. Islamic Knowledge Management users should be able to know from the smallest detail to the bigger concept of application. They should be able to concentrate mostly on what they need to know and when it is needed to identify any related additional condition in which it requires another inspection of the environment designed for its usage. On this basis, Quranic verses have been revealed in staged process, and not in one whole package.

iv. Besides satisfaction, utilization of Islamic Knowledge Management also focuses on users' safety. This is a fact of Mankind, that he will remain forgetful and careless by which his nature intuitively knows whether he is able in managing his own knowledge well or otherwise and leads him to achieving the status of vicegerent of God successfully.

v. Mankind is always facing problem after problem in all stages of his life. For this reason, he searches for solution and evaluation as an integrated approach and up-to-date investigation.

3. Conclusion

The central attention of discussion focusses on the idea of Knowledge Management as a step in approaching Islamic Knowledge Management conceptualization, to identify their components and functional behaviors. In actual fact, we observe that the penetration of Knowledge Management movement strategies begins with users and ends with users (internal or external), i.e. its functional modelling is taking more user-centric base behaviors in many multi-disciplinary management efforts. Islamic Knowledge Management, on the contrary, begins with knowledge resources from the concept of belief and "Oneness of God' and it is solely for the purpose of positive user development to achieve success in this worldly life and hereafter world. Hence, with effective usage and application, i.e. its functional modelling is more toward recourse-centric base behaviors where all knowledge understanding (KU) and output (OK) should be a reflection of knowledge source (KS) representation (physically or hermeneutically constructed). Therefore, the need for Islamic Knowledge Management is paramount in ensuring the existence of the following conditions:- (i) the inclusion of all types of knowledge including abstract (or revelation) knowledge reflected in conformities within the modelling process; (ii) defining a modelling process that comprehensively covers the reservoir issues that is humanistic in nature while leading to "fit-for-purpose" results in a defined time space and span; (iii) storing knowledge generated force during the modelling process to ensure adequate and efficient model adoption and adjustment to suit specific workflow.

Acknowledgements

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