

Knowledge Sharing Practices: A Case Study at Malaysia's Healthcare Research Institutes

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing is essential in the implementation of any knowledge management initiative. The real sharing required is between the employees and their co-workers. The actual success depends on individuals' willingness to encourage and share their organisational knowledge through internal organisational social exchanges. The process requires the element of reciprocal arrangement and trust. It requires intra-team trust and intra-team relational bonds, leadership and also intercultural training that foster regular and frequent mutual cross-cultural exchange of ideas. The real advantage of knowledge management initiatives can be realised by truly empowering the employees. The main objective of the study was to basically investigate the perception of the researchers and officers within the National Institutes of Health Malaysia (NIH) with regards to their understanding of knowledge sharing practices in their respective environment. Hence, among the questions under studied were such as, what are the perceptions of the respondents with regard to the knowledge sharing practices in their respective institutions? What are the benefits for knowledge sharing practices as perceived by them? What are their perceived organisational knowledge sharing practices motivating factors? Also, what are the hindering factors? This study employed survey research method to obtain the perception of the researchers and officers of the NIH with regards to knowledge sharing practices. The questionnaire was distributed to 400 respondents from the six research institutes under NIH, namely Institute for Medical Research (IMR), Institute for Public Health (IPH), Network for Clinical Research Centres (CRC), Institute for Health Management (IHM), Institute for Health Systems Research (IHSR) and Institute for Health Promotion (IHP). The responses seem to indicate in essence, the arguments with regards to knowledge sharing always hinge within the context of encouraging and rewarding the practices of organisational knowledge sharing. The findings seem to also suggest four factors, Environment and Infrastructure, Management Support, Culture and Technology as significant determinants in influencing the organisational knowledge sharing practices among the employees. However, the study only deliberates on the perceptual aspect of the issue, and specifically from the individuals' opinion and sentiment.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Malaysia; Knowledge Sharing, Malaysia; Organisational Knowledge; Malaysia; National Institutes of Health Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Organisations play key roles in the growth and development of the nation's economy. Conscious and continuous efforts are required to not only change and strengthen, but also support the development towards a K-based economy. These changes definitely involved the public and private sectors. Obviously, organisations need to respond to these forces of change. An approach seems logical and necessary is fast-forwarding the public sector into a knowledge-based public service. The process requires skillful, efficient and responsive civil service that functions effectively in a K-based environment. Fostering a K-based civil service would only mean developing the knowledge-based capabilities of the nation's human resource. The progression demands a transformation of the work culture involving massive unlearning and re-learning, and also reform in the organisational structure and processes. The Government has embarked on a number of key measures to transform the public service. Among the initiatives to strengthen the foundation of the transformation include enhancing economy-wide productivity, accelerate economic growth, create the right eco-system to promote innovation, also fine-tuning existing policies and institutional arrangements to promote the culture of innovation and creativity.

In the realisation of this aim, the Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) has been earmarked as one of the chosen leading agency in the Government's strategic plan to improve linkages, efficiency and the client centric public service delivery through knowledge management initiatives. Apparently, the changes in healthcare demand more innovative approaches and timely action. Health planning must evolve along the path of change, devising innovative methods and strategies with the ultimate aim of harnessing the entire resources of health sector

for the optimum benefit of the population. Hence, it is crucial to see the role of research in healthcare not only as a means to provide knowledge, but also as an integral part of the health development.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The real concern behind the implementation of a knowledge management initiative is culture - the culture of sharing the knowledge and using it instinctively. Abell and Oxbrow (2001) asserted that the implementation of organisational knowledge sharing requires change in corporate culture, from information is power to knowledge shared builds power. Knowledge sharing behaviours need to be encouraged as it is a positive force in the creation of innovative organisation, especially through the element of reciprocity (Connelly and Kelloway, 2003). Md. Zabid, Murali and Azmawani (2004) specified high sociability opportunities in organisation enables high commitment and ensures success to overall organisational sharing practices. Organisation environment and social communications are pragmatic factors towards indicating the affective aspects of organisational knowledge sharing (Lin and Lee, 2006; Syed Mustapha and Sayed, 2005). Organisation knowledge sharing practices requires adjustment in the corporate culture, especially in identifying, accessing and exploiting existing knowledge, and plays a key role in developing innovative and cooperative climate towards effective knowledge sharing process (Chen and Huang, 2007; Christensen, 2007; Oliver and Kandadi, 2006). For the initiative to be effective, it requires the identification and creation of a caring community with a strong organisational common interest, topic and destination of achievement.

Entrusted as among the chosen organisation to spearhead Malaysia's public sector drive towards efficient and client centric public service delivery via knowledge management initiatives, it is crucial for the Ministry of Health (MOH) to realise the role of healthcare research as not to only be a means to provide knowledge, but also as an integral part of the nation's health development. Mohd Najib (2010b) denoted primary health care will remain the thrust of the Malaysian transformed health service delivery system. A more efficient and effective system that ensures universal access to health care - a restructured health system that is responsive in meeting the health care needs of the population, provide choices of quality health care and ensuring universal coverage based on solidarity and equity. However, the implementation of knowledge management initiatives in organisation, especially in healthcare organisation is not about excellence processes alone, but it is also about inter-networking effects between various communications, procedures, norms and values in the organisation's practices. It is about how the people in the organisation view and perceive the change plan for the organisation. Evidently, the change plan will and can never be successful without the full cooperation and comprehension of the people. Nevertheless, perceptibly MOH will not face much problem in implementing the idea in their organisation as the initiative is a direction from the Top. Even so, the people still is the key to the effective and successful implementation of the initiative. The situation involves a transformational process where the norms, values and practices of the people evolve to be the effective organisational culture for the initiative. National Institutes of Health Malaysia (NIH) being the ultimate research arm of MOH definitely demands the presence of effective knowledge sharing practices within its community. Thus, the perceived state of knowledge sharing practices among the NIH community is vital, and contributes towards creating better understanding and sense of commitment among the organisation's members.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main object of the study was to basically investigate the perception of the researchers and officers within the National Institutes of Health Malaysia (NIH) with regards to their understanding of knowledge sharing practices in their respective environment. Hence, among the questions under studied were such as, what are the perceptions of the respondents with regard to the knowledge sharing practices in their respective institutions? What are the benefits for knowledge sharing practices as perceived by them? What are their perceived organisational knowledge sharing practices motivating factors? Also, what are the hindering factors?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drastic changes in the global economic era significantly change the world economic perspectives. The advent of the information and communication technology (ICT) and the information revolution totally changed the way information is being processed, managed and used. In the present knowledge era, the main attention and attraction is on the knowledge that would make people, the customers, clientele or patrons feel good, satisfied and contented at all times. These changes transformed the way organisations behave and react. The situation demands for optimum treatment of innovation and creativity in organisational operations. Drucker (2001) proclaimed that land, labour and capital are no longer valuable in comparison to knowledge. Organisation needs to emphasise on adding competitive value to their products and services. This is only achievable through the application of direct human expertise that is knowledge. According to Ohmae (2005) the global economy has its own dynamic and logic - the key emphasis, its success and survival is on learning. Cong and Pandya (2003) affirmed the new economy not only poses challenges, but also offers opportunities for the public sectors to take active initiatives to adopt new management tools, techniques and philosophies of the private sector. It is not simply about product competitive advantages, or return on investment, but more towards policy decisions and delivery of services. It is also about information provision and knowledge indication, sharing and utilisation. Knowledge and intellectual capital determine competitiveness and play key roles in fostering a culture that promotes information and knowledge sharing in organisation. Trends in the current global economies warrant knowledge and intellectual capital to determine competitiveness. The public and private sectors play crucial roles in ensuring technological literacy among employees as well as fostering a culture that promotes information and knowledge sharing.

In Malaysia, the civil service is among the earliest adopters of information and communication technology (ICT) in its administration and services. The principal motivation behind the effort was to fully exploit the benefits of ICT in raising quality and productivity of the services delivery. The National Information Technology Agenda (NITA) and the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) were among the initiatives initiated by the Government to explore and exploit the potential of creating a knowledge-savvy society. Mahathir (2000) acknowledged Vision 2020 as Malaysia's strategic step into the information age and it is a quantum leap towards re-making Malaysian corporations and re-inventing the Malaysian society. The Malaysia's Knowledge Based Economy Master Plan (2002) defines knowledge-based economy as an economy in which knowledge, creativity and innovation play an ever-increasing and important role in generating and sustaining growth. Abdullah (2005) indicated the key driver of economic growth and wealth creation is to develop means having the capacity to harness and apply existing knowledge, create and innovate new knowledge, and utilise cost-saving technologies. This includes efforts to fine tune existing policies and institutional arrangements to promote the culture of innovation and creativity at all levels of society, particularly strengthening the human resources capability, funding strategic research and development activities as well as providing the necessary infrastructure and support mechanisms. Apparently, knowledge workers play crucial roles in facilitating the country's economy to move forward. Knowledge workers create value through their ideas. Knowledge workers work with their brains rather than with their physicals. Nonetheless, what kind of knowledge worker an individual is, depends on the type of knowledge they produced. Knowledge workers convert their intuition into explicit knowledge later shared and turned it into opportunities made available to the organisation. In order to drive the transformation of the nation to a knowledge-based economy, efforts need to be intensified to develop the nation's human capital toward increasing innovation.

According to Izwan (2006), as part of the public sector ICT strategic plan to improve linkages within various agencies, a number of departments and agencies were chosen to pave way for a more efficient and client centric public service delivery through knowledge management initiatives. The Malaysian Administrative and Modernisation Planning Unit (MAMPU) announced Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Works, Ministry of Education, Anti Corruption Agency, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Economic Planning Unit, Prison Department and the states of Selangor, Perak and Negeri Sembilan to kick-start and lead the initiative. Obviously, implementation of such initiative will enable effective management and organisation of knowledge available within the various agencies. Mohd Najib (2010) attested Malaysian Public Service is a vital partner in the nation building, however challenging

environment requires it to take a critical stock of its new environment and realities. It requires a mechanism that measures quality human capital and quality of services. Human resource development needs to be given special attention and priority. This calls for the creation of an environment that supports competitiveness, flexibility, dynamism and performance-oriented. The quality of the nation's human capital will be the key determinant of Malaysia's future success. Therefore, there is a critical need to strengthen the overall mindset, culture, norm and values of the people to be more in step with the aspired development in the global economy.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research method. Population for the study consisted of 400 researchers and officers from all the 6 research institutes within the NIH. The list of researchers and officers obtained from the respective research institutes formed the sampling frame for the study. In-terms of sample selection, the study applied simple random sampling technique. The technique enabled every members of the population the opportunity for equal chance of being selected. The sample size was determined using the Krcjic & Morgan (1970) Table for Determining a Sample Size from a Given Population. The instrument applied for data collection for the study was a set of questionnaire. A pilot test was conducted after the instrument was tested for its validity and reliability.

Distributions of the questionnaire were coordinated by the research secretariat stationed at the Institute for Health Management. 199 (49.8%) of the questionnaires were returned within the time frame given. However, upon further inspection, some of the questionnaires were inappropriately or partially responded. Upon examining the situation, it was decided that incomplete questionnaires were rejected for further analysis. Thus, the respond rate was reduced to 46.8% (187).

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Respondent's Profile

The respondents' profiles are as indicated in Table 1. From the questionnaires received, 78 (41.7%) were from Institute of The Institute for Medical Research (IMR), 27 (14.4%) were from The Institute for Public Health (IPH), 24 (12.8%) were from The Network for Clinical Research Centres (CRC) and The Institute for Health Management (IHM), 29 (15.5%) were from The Institute for Health Systems Research (IHSR), and 5 (2.70%) were from The Institute for Health Promotion (IHP).

In describing the respondents' experience, majority of the respondents (99 or 52.9%) have only served the Ministry for less than 5 years. 36 (19.3%) respondents have served the Ministry for more than 20 years. 23 (12.3%) respondents have served the Ministry for 6 to 10 years, 18 (9.6%) respondents have served 16 to 20 years, and 11 (5.9%) respondents have served the Ministry for 11 to 15 years.

In terms of their ages, majority of the respondents, or 77 (41.2%) were within the age of 23 to 28 years old, 57 (30.5%) respondents were more than 40 years old, while the other 32 (17.1%) were 29 to 34 years old, and 21 (11.2%) were between the ages of 35 to 40 years old. In terms of gender, majority of the respondents were female. They consist of 130 (69.5%) of the respondents. The other 57 (30.5%) respondents were male.

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

INSTITUTIONS	n	%
IMR	78	41.7
IPH	27	14.4
CRC	24	12.8
IHM	24	12.8
IHSR	29	15.5
IHP	5	2.70
EXPERIENCE	n	%
< 5 years	99	52.9
6-10 years	23	12.3
11-15 years	11	5.9
15-20 years	18	9.6
> 20 years	36	19.3
AGE	n	%
23-28 years old	77	41.2
29-34 years old	32	17.1
35-40 years old	21	11.2
41-46 years old	16	8.60
>45 years old	41	21.9
GENDER	n	%
Male	57	30.5
Female	130	69.5
N=187		100

The Perceived Current State of KS Practices

In trying to explore the basic understanding of respondents with regards to knowledge management (KM), 76.5% confidently indicated yes, 23.5% replied do not know KM. In exploring further the respondents' opinion, and to know if their management encourages the activities and practices of knowledge sharing (KS) in their respective organisations, majority responded in the affirmative. 70.6% responded yes, only 10.7% responded in the negative, while 18.7% indicated not sure. In identifying if the culture of KS existed in the respondents' respective institutions, again 57.2% responded in the affirmative, 14.4% stated the opposite, and 28.3% expressed unsure. In identifying the availability of individuals or personalities championing the implementation of KS among employees, 68.4% answered yes, 5.9% responded no, and 25.7% indicated not sure. Nonetheless, when asked willingness to share organisational knowledge with colleagues, majority or 84% respondents responded affirmatively, 3.2% indicated no, while 12.3% were unsure. This is demonstrated in Table 2. The findings conclude that majority of the respondents perceived knowing KM and supportive about implementing the concept in their respective organisations. Obviously, this indicates the acceptance of the employees to embrace the KM initiatives at NIH.

Table 2: Perceived Current State of KS

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT KM?	n	%
YES	143	76.5
NO	44	23.5
SUPPORT THE IDEA OF IMPLEMENTING KM?	n	%
YES	183	97.9
NO	4	2.1
ORGANISATION PRACTICE KM?	n	%
YES	100	53.5
NO	15	8.0
NOT SURE	72	38.5
MANAGEMENT ENCOURAGE KS?	n	%

YES	132	70.6
NO	20	10.7
NOT SURE	35	18.7
KS CULTURE EXIST?	n	%
YES	107	57.2
NO	27	14.4
NOT SURE	53	28.3
KS CHAMPION?	n	%
YES	128	68.4
NO	11	5.9
NOT SURE	48	25.7
WILLING TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE WITH COLLEAGUES	n	%
YES	157	84.0
NO	6	3.2
NOT SURE	23	12.3
N=187		

However, the irony of the situation is when asked if their respective organisations have implemented KM or not, only slightly more than 50% of the respondents replied in the affirmative, 8% answered in the negative and a significant number of almost 40% were not sure if their organisations practice KM. The same responses were received when asked if the culture of KS exists in their respective organisations, almost 30% were not sure. Perhaps this could be due to their own confusion with regards to their understanding about the meaning of KM. They might have different views and interpretations with regards to KM. Perhaps also their different background and various designations and exposures created these contradictory responses. Hence, there is a need for the management to strategically plan to further educate and enhance awareness of employees with regards to the understanding of KM and KS culture in the NIH.

Table 3: Perceived Availability of KS Activities

KS ACTIVITIES	YES (%)	NO (%)
Story Telling	43.3	56.7
K-Portal	23.0	77.0
K-Repository	43.3	56.7
Tele-Video/Web Conf.	24.1	75.9
K-Café	30.5	69.5
Brain Storming	34.2	65.8
E-Group/Listserv	38.5	61.5
Community of Practices	42.2	57.8

In attempting to understand respondents' perception on the types of knowledge sharing activities being practiced and available in their respective organisations, 43.3% of the respondents indicated they share their experiences through story telling sessions. While, 23% respondents specified that they have their own knowledge portal to share their tacit and explicit knowledge. However, only 43.3% of the respondents expressed their institutions possess electronic knowledge repository to store all the knowledge, lessons learned and the best practices. Majority of the respondents, 75.9% respondents said they did not hold participation or conference through interactive information and telecommunication technologies such as via tele-video or web conferencing. Similarly, 69.5% of the respondents expressed negatively towards the notion that their organisations provide an open and creative environment for conversation on topics of mutual interest to surface collective knowledge, share ideas to generate more ideas and insights on subjects or issues. In the adoption of group creativity techniques to encourage spontaneous sharing of ideas to generate more ideas to solve problems, 65.8% of the respondents also responded negatively to the statement. Only 38.5% replied in the affirmative on the availability or creation of electronic discussion group allowing widespread distribution of e-mail discussions through e-group and listserv. And, only about 42.2% responded about availability of the formation of informal group of people sharing similar

concern or passion on the core objectives of their respective organisations through communities of practices. This is illustrated in Table 3.

In terms of provisions of technologies towards supporting the knowledge sharing practices in their institutions, respondents were asked about the provisions of Internet/intranet/portal facilities, Tele-video conferencing facilities, specific electronic or knowledge repositories facilities, specific KM application software, and also collaborative software by their respective institutions. Almost all respondent (94.7%) admitted that their institutions provide Internet, intranet and portal facilities. Slightly more than half (54%) of the respondents indicated their organisations provide tele-video conferencing facilities, and 69% responded negatively to the provision of specific databases or knowledge repositories. In addition, almost ninety percent (88.2%) of the respondents expressed the non-availability of specific KM application software, and 68.4% indicated collaborative software is not provided in their organisations. Refer to Table 4 below.

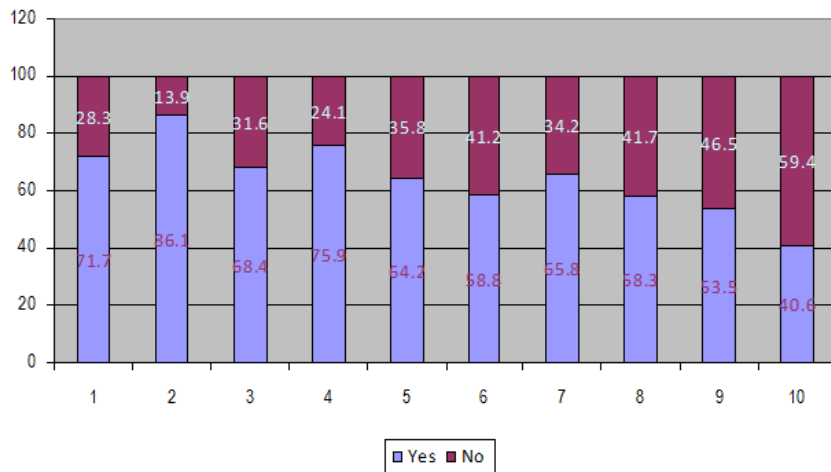
Table 4: Perceived Provision of Technologies for KS Activities

PROVISION OF TECHNOLOGIES	YES (%)	NO (%)
Internet / intranet / portal	94.7	5.30
Tele / Video Conferencing	54.0	46.0
Database / K-Repository	31.0	69.0
KM application software	11.8	88.2
Collaborative software	31.6	68.4

The Perceived Benefits of KS

As any planned changes in organisation are towards the betterment and improvement to the current and existing situations, respondents were asked on what do they perceived the benefit of the implementation of KS in the organisation. 86.1% indicated KS will improve employees' knowledge, skills and competences, 75.9% responded it will improve group productivity, 71.7% agreed that it will facilitate better decision making, 68.4% felt that it will increase individual productivity, 65.8% indicated it will increase their job motivation, 64.2% saw KS could encourage creativity and innovation among individual employees, 58.3% opined KS will facilitate best practices and lessons learned, 53.5% perceived KS will promote organisational learning. However, only 40.6% perceived that KS could manage and preserve organisational memory.

The finding indicated that the respondents were well aware about the benefits of KS. This is evidently demonstrated in Figure 1, where 9 over 10 of the benefits listed, scored high response rate of more than 50%. Nevertheless, one vital benefit of KS, manage and preserve the organisational memory only received only about 41% response rate. Perhaps this could be due to lack of understanding about knowledge management. It could also perhaps be due to confusion about the significance and benefits of organisational memory.



Benefits of KS	Yes (%)	No (%)	Benefits of KS	Yes (%)	No (%)
1 Better decision making	71.7	28.3	6 Increase job motivation	58.8	41.2
2 Improve skills & competences	86.1	13.9	7 Increase job satisfaction	65.8	34.2
3 Increase individual productivity	68.4	31.6	8 Facilitate best practices	58.3	41.7
4 Improve group productivity	75.9	24.1	9 Promote organisational learning	53.5	46.5
5 Encourage creativity & innovation	64.2	35.8	10 Manage & preserve organisational memory	40.6	59.4

Figure 1: Perceived Benefits of KS

The Perceived Motivating Factors of KS

The respondents in determining what most likely will be the motivating factors for them to practice KS, 68.4% indicated effective communication channels, 66.3% responded improve work process, and 57.2% recorded recognition and promotion. However, only 46.5% of the respondents perceived better time management as a motivating factor, and 38.5% respondents indicated monetary rewards is not a significant motivating factor to practice KS. Based on this finding, 61.5% of the respondents perceived monetary reward as an important consideration to encourage KS practices. Nonetheless, factors such as provision of effective communication channels, and efforts that can improve the work processes were also considered as more vital to motivate successful KS in their organisation. Perhaps the indication about monetary rewards is not a motivating factor is due to the fact that the respondents were being realistic of the reality of the employment in the public sector. On the other hand, the respondents indicated their high expectation to be rewarded in terms of recognition and promotion.

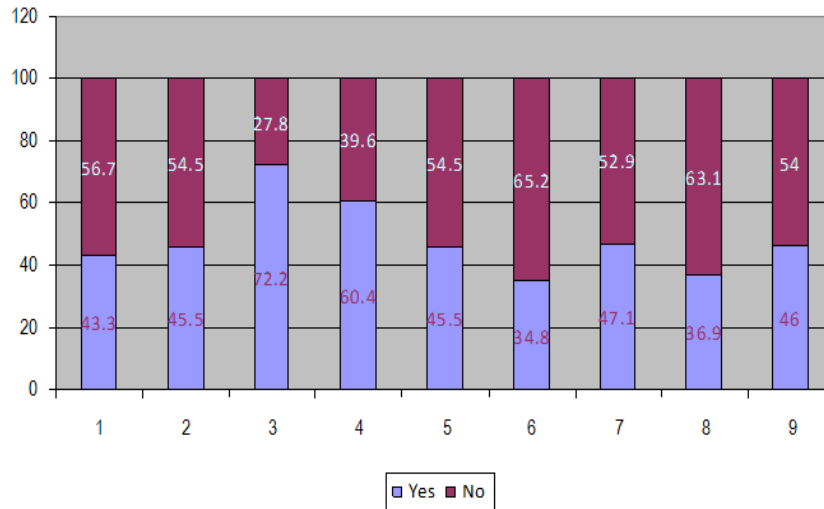
Table 5: Perceived Motivating Factors of KS

	Motivation	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	Monetary	38.5	61.5
2.	Recognition	57.2	42.8
3.	Promotion	57.2	42.8
4.	Improve work process	66.3	33.7
5.	Better time management	46.5	53.5
6.	Effective communication channel	68.4	31.6

The Perceived Hindering Factors of KS

In attempting to understand respondents' perception with regards to what might hinder employees from practicing KS, the respondents were asked about what would most likely be the hindrance factors to practicing KS. 72.2% of the respondents' perceived that lack of teamwork will hinder KS. On top of that, 60.4% of the respondents felt that lack of communication channels is another key issue that will hinder KS. However, the respondents were unclear and divided if lack of encouragement is a valid hindrance factor to practice KS, as only 52.9% of the respondents responded negatively to lack of encouragement as a hindrance factor to KS.

Similarly, the respondents also did not perceived lack of knowledge and skill about system as an obstruction to practicing KS, as 54% denied it as a hindrance factor. Nonetheless, 45.5% of the respondents accused lack of trust to peers and lack of training as a factor that might hinder KS. Besides that 43.3% felt that lack of trust towards management is another hindrance factor to be considered. On the contrary, respondents did not perceived lack of policies and guidelines and lack of reward schemes would hinder KS.



Hindering Factors	Yes (%)	No (%)	Hindering Factors	Yes (%)	No (%)
1. Lack of trust towards Mgmt.	43.3	56.7	6. Lack of reward schemes	34.8	65.2
2. Lack of trust towards peers	45.5	54.5	7. Lack of encouragement	47.1	52.9
3. Lack of teamwork	72.2	27.8	8. Lack of policy guidelines	36.9	63.1
4. Lack of comm. channels	60.4	39.6	9. Lack of knowledge about syst.	46	54
5. Lack of training	45.5	54.5			

Figure 2: Perceived Hindering Factors of KS

Obviously the findings indicated that the respondents perceived teamwork as the most basic an important aspect in KS. This is shown by the declaration of more than 70% of the respondents indicating lack of teamwork in the organisation, and they perceive this hinder them from actively participating and promoting in KS. Through the feedbacks also it can be understood that communication channels is also lacking within the organisation. Based on the earlier findings, this response is in line with the general perception of the respondents. The respondents perceived communication channel as a vital element for successful implementation of KS. However, the respondents also perceived that this factor is currently lacking in terms of its effectiveness. Besides that, the findings also reveal that lack of trust towards peers (45.5%) and lack of trust towards management (43.3%) is another factor that should be further highlighted and be a concern to the NIH management. Perhaps this could be related to the deficiencies in teamwork and lack of communication channels as perceived by the respondents. Another significant and crucial aspects discovered in the study is that the respondents still perceived that there are lacking in terms of encouragement (47.1%) and training (45.5%) towards KS. Again, perhaps these issues could be resolved by having effective communication channels readily available to support KS practices.

DISCUSSIONS

Knowledge sharing, in its broadest sense, refers to the communication of all types of knowledge, which includes explicit knowledge or information, the know-how and know-who which are types of knowledge that can be documented and captured as information, and tacit knowledge in the form of skills and competencies. Tacit knowledge is personal and can only be shared through socialisation, interaction, and training. It requires face-to-face communication and in most cases it gets transferred through observation, imitation, practice, and interaction

with the environment. Effective sharing involves the actions of transmission and absorption by the sender and potential receiver respectively. The critical outcome of knowledge sharing is the creation of new knowledge and innovation that will significantly improve organisational performance. One of the difficulties in getting people to share knowledge emanates from the nature of knowledge itself. Knowledge is personal, mobile, and portable, and knows no boundaries. This has made knowledge sharing potentially dangerous, in that a good idea can be easily copied once it has been shared. Knowledge sharing is an unnatural act in most organisations. The practice of storytelling, for example is very useful in preserving the organisational memory, and can be used to convey values, build esprit de corps, create role models, reveal how things works around the organisation, and communicate complex ideas. Participations in communities of practice, which are informal, ad hoc, spontaneous groups of people who voluntarily share similar interests and goals is another avenue for knowledge sharing. It enables organisation to tap into knowledge that is generated and held collectively.

The experience of colleagues is an important source of knowledge. This is particularly true with the respondents as their activities and processes involved transactions of creative ideas and exchanges of experiences. These exchanges of experiences, most of the times take place in informal and spontaneous situations or meetings. These experiences mainly tacit will then be shared among colleagues as stories, and later transformed into articulate knowledge through the process of sharing. In an organisation with a knowledge sharing culture, people share ideas and insights because they see it as natural, not because they are forced to do so. The only blockage and obstruction to this is, as the knowledge owner is considered to be in posses of power, disclosing it might erode the power of the researchers and officers individually. The fear of losing superiority and the perception of not being adequately rewarded for the knowledge shared is a major stumbling block. The key elements that should be emphasised in any knowledge management initiatives are (1) the culture, the values and beliefs about the organisational information and knowledge; (2) the behaviour and work processes involved in the usage of these information and knowledge; (3) the state of affairs, the pitfalls, the barriers and the drawbacks that might interfere with the practice of sharing these information and knowledge; and also (4) the technology, involving the information systems, the infrastructures and infostructures available to support and facilitate the knowledge sharing practices.

In realising a knowledge sharing culture, organisation members need to be convinced about the benefits that it would bring about to the organisation. Failing to make employees understand the benefit of sharing their strategic knowledge will result in hesitance to partake in any further knowledge sharing practices. The respondents were aware about how important it is to accept and promote knowledge sharing among them. The main challenge to introducing new concept is in changing the existing culture to accept the new values. In order to successfully establish an environment for knowledge sharing, organisations need to undergo a process of cultural change and socialisation, which require change management.

CONCLUSION

Creating a knowledge sharing environment in an organisation requires changes in the corporate culture. The knowledge sharing culture needs to be seen as a positive force towards creating an innovative organisation, especially through the element of reciprocity. The situation requires the organisation to identify and create a caring community among employees with a strong common interests and goals to achieve. The issue is about maximising the potential and ability of the employees towards creating new knowledge and build environment conducive for them to share their knowledge. The study cannot conclusively provide specific details about the knowledge sharing situation in every organisation, however the findings did provide some indicators and pointers towards the state of knowledge sharing practices as perceived by the employees, especially the respondents of this study. This is especially true in addressing some of the issues identified is crucial towards realising the vision of paving the way for a more efficient and client centric public service delivery through the knowledge management initiatives.

The initial findings clearly suggested the level of acceptance among the respondents of this study toward implementing knowledge management initiatives in their organisation is positive. They were very supportive about the implementation, practices and culture. The key to enabling the factor of knowledge sharing is through informal interactions and trust between

members of the organisation. Intrinsic rewards and factors that build expertise and provide recognition are the most appropriate means of fostering feeling of competence. Positive attitude towards knowledge sharing is formed due to expectations of reciprocation. Thus, certain educative and awareness measures need to be strategically implemented by the management to further enhance the awareness and understanding of employees with regards to the processes involved in the initiatives, practices and culture.

The study also discovered that respondents perceived monetary gain as not the primary reason to practice knowledge sharing. The respondents indicated their high expectation to be rewarded in terms of recognition and promotion and perhaps a comment given by one of the respondent would best describe this sentiment, "*Knowledge sharing culture and practices comes from the heart, sincerity plays a big role and reward is secondary, but recognition is a priority*". Rewards and incentives (extrinsic motivators) do not alter the attitudes underlying knowledge sharing behaviour and merely just a temporary change. Hard rewards provide only temporary effect, the incentives lose its effectiveness or completely gone when the hard rewards stopped. Non-monetary rewards do not give immediate effect, but impact long-term motivation. Knowledge sharing within organisation is dependent on changing employees' attitudes and behaviours to willingly share their knowledge. Based on this premise, obviously the respondents need to be convinced that the planned and proposed changes will bring about improvement and progression to their organisation life. Unless and until these conditions are fulfilled, no significance change will become visible to the organisation. The culture of sharing knowledge depends on the attitude of people within that culture. If members of the culture are reluctant to share their knowledge, then there will be no way that the knowledge can be shared effectively.

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