

## **A Preliminary Study on Knowledge Retention Strategy in Faculty of Information Management of UiTM**

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**Abstract.** Knowledge retention strategy is very important to retain valuable knowledge in an organization. Like other organizations, Faculty of Information Management in UiTM Puncak Perdana campus is facing an issue of lack of staff due to retirement and resignation of experts. This study therefore is conducted to provide preliminary insight on the knowledge retention strategy implemented in the faculty. This study adopts one-on-one interview approach where three participants who are selected based on their roles in the faculty have been interviewed to identify and understand the practices of the strategies. The findings show that there are some initiatives have been adopted by the faculty to retain valuable knowledge for the staff. Thus, it could be a reference for the faculty to enhance the knowledge retention strategies in future in order to have better impact.

**Keywords:** Knowledge retention, retention strategy, information management

### **1 Introduction**

Knowledge is a valuable asset needed by an organization to operate effectively (Ahmad Kassim et al., 2016). It can be considered as the most essential economic resource, exceeding the conventional resources of capital, labour and land (Stephen, 2016). Nevertheless, most of organizations today are confronted with the knowledge loss, which is a risk to them especially to the higher education institutions. In order to protect this valuable asset, the organizations need to implement knowledge retention as their strategies to protect their tacit and explicit knowledge. Knowledge retention can be defined as the process of capturing and storing the valuable knowledge to be used in the future. It refers to the process of reminding and recalling specific knowledge (Ramona & Alexandra, 2019). Hence, it is the act of capturing important knowledge and expertise that could be lost when people leave their jobs (Alameri et al., 2019).

Universities are one of the important organizations that need to retain their knowledge (Abu Bakar et al., 2020). It is because the main goal of the universities is to generate, manage and transfer knowledge. The universities as the higher education institutions need to concentrate on retaining their organizational knowledge both in tacit and explicit format (Wamundila & Ngulube, 2011; Stephen, 2016). In Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) however, the trends of the numbers of the staff has definitely declined since 2019 due to the number of staff retirement and resignation. This critical situation is specifically also happening in Faculty of Information Management, UiTM Puncak Perdana campus. As a consequence, the faculty may have lost some critical and valuable knowledge asset which are very important to the its operations. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify and understand the knowledge retention strategy adopted in the faculty in order to provide preliminary insight for preparing and guiding possible solution and policy in future (Akhla et al., 2022).

In the next section, this paper presents literature review on knowledge and knowledge retention strategies as well as a theoretical framework to guide this research.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Knowledge

According to Nickols (2010), knowledge can be defined as the facts, methods, beliefs, procedures, and so on that have been codified, captured, and gathered. Although various scholars have attempted to define knowledge, it lacks a definitive definition. Knowledge is a rational belief in the existence of a relationship between concepts relevant to a certain region (Becerra-Fernandez et al., 2004). In terms of organization, knowledge is one of the valuable assets of the organization. Thus, it must have the strategies and planning to retain the valuable assets for future use. Stephen (2016) points out that many organizations have invested in knowledge management to capture, maintain, and keep knowledge for reuse for the good of their organizations due to the increased understanding of knowledge and its value.

Tacit knowledge can be defined as the knowledge that cannot be articulated and hard to be documented. It exists on the people's mind and also acquired to the experience. Based on study by Haughton (2021), tacit knowledge has two components which are cognitive and technical. The cognitive element refers to a person's mental model, which includes their views and perspectives. Concrete experience, crafts, and skills applied to a given environment make up the technical component (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). On the other hand, explicit knowledge is a knowledge that are easily to be documented, codified and also can be shared. According to Nickols (2010), explicit knowledge is a knowledge that has been expressed and, in the majority of cases, captured in the form of text, tables, diagrams, and product specifications. In other word, explicit knowledge is a knowledge that can be accessed through documentation such as journals, annual reports, books and important documents.

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## 2.2 Knowledge Retention Strategies

As higher institutions, it is important for universities to plan and strategize in retaining the knowledge they own (Ruslie et al., 2022). The universities are able to maintain knowledge through a variety of tactics, including teaching, training, the establishment of communities of practice and professional networks, the documentation of procedures, and the deployment of advanced software to capture work processes (Wamundila and Ngulube 2011). According to Peterson (2012), interviews, videotaping, organized usage of subject matter experts, repositories, mentoring and apprenticeship, knowledge mapping, recruiting strategies, storytelling, using retirees' in-house training roles, and sharing knowledge are all used by the organizations to ensure knowledge retention have been practiced. Table 1 shows several previous studies on the knowledge retention studies.

Table 1: Previous studies on knowledge retention

| Author(s)             | Purpose of Study  | Research Method        | Findings   |
|-----------------------|---|------------------------|--|
| Haughton, 2021        | To investigate knowledge retention strategies to avoid knowledge loss in project-based organizations<br><br>To find out what knowledge retention strategies managers employ to reduce the risk of knowledge loss  | Qualitative case study | New knowledge retention tactics to strengthen an organization's competitive advantage with its consumers.  |
| Wikström et al., 2018 | To explore the process of knowledge retention that include knowledge capture, codification and internalization in organization<br><br>To facilitate a better comprehension of the issues involved in the process<br><br>To examine the consequences for organizational knowledge retention strategies | Field research         | The study showed that information retention is a complex issue, in part due to tacit valuable knowledge which is seen as totally subjective and transmitted via collaborative learning in the setting of performing tasks and working together under job conditions. |

| Author(s)                 | Purpose of Study   | Research Method                   | Findings   |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| Wamundila & Ngulube, 2011 | To determine how knowledge retention at the University of Zambia (UNZA) can be improved  | Quantitative case study           | Recommendation for incorporating a framework for knowledge retention into UNZA's knowledge management policy   |
| Agarwal & Islam, 2015     | To explore how library protects the loss of organizational knowledge when employees leave or resign, as well as the strategies they employ to maintain this knowledge and transfer it to new employees | Qualitative survey                | Documentation, training and digital repositories were found to be primary strategies used. The study also proposes a theoretical framework for knowledge retention and transfer in libraries |
| Stephen, 2016             | To develop a model for knowledge retention at higher learning institution  | Qualitative case study and survey | The findings suggest that higher leaning institution develop a knowledge retention policy  |

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

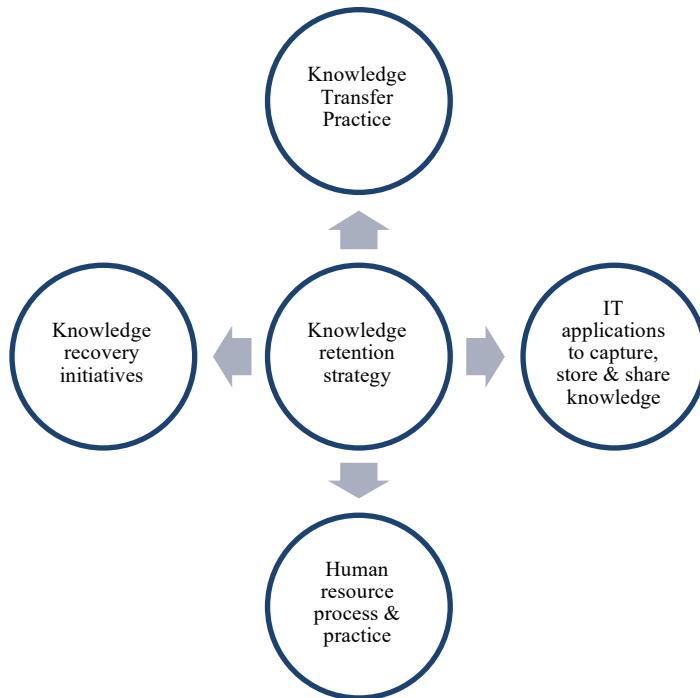
The theoretical framework for this study is adopted from DeLong (2004) and Stephen (2016) which listed out four main components in knowledge retention strategies. The components are; (i) Knowledge transfer practice; (ii) Information Technology (IT) applications to share, capture and store knowledge; (iii) Human resources practice and process; and (iv) Knowledge recovery initiatives. Fig. 1 illustrate the framework with its components.

The component of knowledge transfer practice can be defined as the process of transferring expertise, knowledge, skills, and capacities from the knowledge base to those who require it, such as from outgoing to current employees, current to incoming employees, or databases and documents to current or incoming employees (Agarwal & Islam, 2015). It is used by higher education institutions as the process of transferring tacit knowledge in the institutions. It can be seen as one of the importance factors especially for UiTM faculties to transfer their valuable knowledge from one person to another person.

IT component, meanwhile, is one of the important strategies in the organization for retaining their knowledge assets (Baharuddin et al., 2016). It is a very critical tool to support communication among the staff in an organization. In the context of knowledge

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retention, the role of IT can be viewed as one of the important factors for the higher education institution to support the process of capturing, storing and sharing knowledge since the emergence of various technologies are able to help the organization in retaining their valuable knowledge assets.



*Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of Knowledge Retention Strategies*

Human resource process and practice component can help the companies or organization in gaining competitive advantage in the fast-evolving knowledge-based economy (Chen & Huang, 2009). The human resource practice usually plays vital roles for encouraging employee in the knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer in the organization. Besides that, it is important for human resource to be concerned with the policies, practices, and systems that influence behaviour, attitude, and performance of employees. The leaders of organization may use some of the human resources strategies in order to motivate the commitment of their employee, shaping their skills and soft skills and also to get them to joining in creative thinking and innovation (Matošková & Směšná, 2017).

Meantime, it is very important for organizations to have knowledge recovery process for ensuring that they will not lose their valuable knowledge. The organization especially UiTM and other higher education institutions need to have the initiative plan and strategies for the knowledge recovery. Some examples include programs with the retirement staff which the staff may share their knowledge and experiences during they

work period in the organization; outsourcing knowledge capabilities to use or find the new capabilities of the organization that have been lost; regenerating lost knowledge which the organization may regenerate the new knowledge that have been lost during the staff retirement and resignation.

This study therefore uses the framework components as described in Fig.1 to obtain an overview and insight on the strategy used by the faculty for the purpose of retaining its knowledge. In the next section, this paper describes methodology adopted in the study.

### 3 Methodology

In this research, a one-on-one interview method has been adopted to investigate what strategy used in the Faculty of Information Management, UiTM to retains its knowledge (Baxter & Jack, 2015). In the interview sessions, three staff have been identified and chosen based on their roles in the faculty. They are the ones who are usually involved in the development of initiatives, policies and practices with the top management in the faculty. Table 2 shows the information of the sample for this study.

Table 2: Sample for data collection

| Category     | Position                | Number of Participants | Code |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------|
| Academic     | Head of Centre of Study | 1                      | F1   |
|              | Head of Quality Unit    | 1                      | F2   |
| Non-academic | Chief of Librarian      | 1                      | F3   |

The one-on-one interview is chosen as a method to collect data from the participants due to a few reasons. The main reason is it helps the researcher to explain, better understand and explore the faculty staff's opinions, behavior and experiences. Moreover, interview questions are usually open-ended questions which allow in-depths information will be collected. For the interview, the questions are designed based on the components of theoretical framework as described in the previous section.

For data analysis, this study uses thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It includes the process of detecting, analyzing, and reporting on patterns (themes) within the data collected. It also organizes and describes the data set in detail in the simplest way possible. In the next section, the findings of this study are discussed based on the theoretical framework components in Fig. 1.

## 4 Findings and Discussion

This section presents findings and discussion about the knowledge retention strategies implemented in the Faculty of Information Management, UiTM. The discussion will be guided by categorizing the answers of the interview questions that have been formulated for this study.

### 4.1 Knowledge Transfer Practices

Based on interview findings, the faculty has been implementing knowledge transfer practices among the staff. It can be seen through the activities and programs that have been conducted by the top management of the faculty such as knowledge sharing, training program, coaching and mentoring. Some examples of activities of knowledge sharing held in the faculty include department meetings, morning discussions, seminars and workshops. As stated by respondent F2, the faculty has strategy at program level such as in Record Management program whereas experts are invited from Archival Unit to share their expertise in the program.

As indicated by respondent F1 and F3, coaching is one of the tools used in the faculty for knowledge transfer activities. Its evidence can be seen on a program conducted by library management which is known as e-colloquium library management. In the program, project manager and staff from the first e-colloquium program have to coach the second e-colloquium staff, and the staff from the second e-colloquium program have to coach the third e-colloquium program staff. There are also activities that involve coaching whereas expert in IT skills need to coach the person who lack in the IT skills.

In the interview, all the respondents agree that mentoring is one of the parts of knowledge sharing or transfer which is important to the faculty. But at the faculty level, there are no initiatives by the faculty due to certain reasons. The mentoring program is only available in the program level whereas the expert senior staff will be paired with the newbie or the senior staff that are not expert in the task or activities that have been assigned.

### 4.2 Knowledge Recovery Initiatives

From the findings, respondent F2 has given an opinion stating that the faculty for now does not have any strategy for knowledge recovery in specific. However, the respondent also points out that the faculty is having the knowledge recovery initiatives by adopting a few of information technology applications. For example, the faculty is using the systems or databases that have been provided by UiTM such as Google Drive, cloud applications as well as a few of UiTM database and repository applications to store valuable information and knowledge which could be used for knowledge, information and data recovery.

#### *4.3 Human Resource Process and Practices*

Human resource process and practice is another aspect of knowledge retention strategy that has been implemented in the Faculty of Information Management, UiTM. There are three methods that have been used under this strategy which are reward system, job rotation and training program.

Based on the interview, the faculty has non-monetary reward system such as giving appreciation and acknowledgement to the staff that have shared their knowledge. However, at the university level, there are many monetary awards provided by UiTM such as sponsorship for staff to attend training programs, honorarium for expertise or professional services, services awards and other incentives for staff. This kind of rewards have been given as one of the initiatives for motivating the staff to be more efficient and productive.

Meanwhile, job rotation process is always implemented at the faculty level. Every two years, there is a job rotation among the academic staff. For example, job positions of deputy dean, coordinator program, unit members and heads of department are rotated among the academic staff in the faculty. Nevertheless, it is slightly different for the job rotation process adopted in the library whereas it happens in every five years among the non-academic or management staff as indicated by respondent F3.

From the interviews finding, the faculty does not have any training program related to the knowledge retention strategies. But there are training programs at the level of university. For example, respondent F3 who is a librarian states that Perpustakaan Tun Abdul Razak (PTAR) of UiTM has many training programs such as workshops for staff to share knowledge with each other in order to improve and enhance their knowledge and skills.

#### *4.4 IT Application to Capture, Store and Share Knowledge*

IT applications for capturing, storing and sharing knowledge is another aspect of strategy for knowledge retention implemented in the faculty (Amran et al., 2015). The applications such as staff and student database and system applications, Google Drive, cloud-based applications including Microsoft Office 365 and other technology have been provided by UiTM for its staff to support the operations in the faculty.

Based on the findings, the faculty and librarian staff are using the information communication technology and system tools such as One Drive application to store, share and preserve important and valuable things. Other ICT applications such as Google Meet, Zoom and WebEx are used for conducting and recording class, meeting and training activities, as part of knowledge sharing practices (Masrek et al., 2011). Furthermore, there are a few of UiTM applications developed to support integrated quality management system which have been used by the faculty for knowledge retention.

## 5 Conclusions

The results from this study shows that the Faculty of Information Management of UiTM has been practicing knowledge retention strategies in terms of knowledge transfer and sharing practice. This practice could be noticed in the faculty and department meeting, morning discussion, job rotation, knowledge sharing session, seminar and training program. In addition, the faculty also adopting IT applications to support knowledge recovery as well as to capture, store and share knowledge among staff. In term of human resource, there are process and practices implemented in the faculty such as job rotation, training programs and rewards to encourage the staff to practice knowledge retention.

The feedback from respondents show that the faculty values knowledge and thus adopts the knowledge retention strategies in order to retain and protect valuable knowledge from loss. The faculty staff either academician and non-academician should play their roles and support the retention strategies to retain the valuable and critical knowledge to ensure that it could be preserved and used in future. For future research, it is suggested to conduct a study on the impact of knowledge retention strategies with bigger sample of respondents. Another potential research is a study on the strategies and its impact in the university level.

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