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Investigating the Relationship between Personnel Knowledge Management Maturity and Instructional Services' Quality of Islamic Azad University of Kerman

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C H R O N I C L E	Abstract
	The maturity of employee knowledge management is a systematic effort to develop, promote, and apply knowledge of organizations in order to achieve success and goals that can have a significant impact on the quality of services as well as the development of organizational innovation. The present study deals with the assessment of personnel's knowledge management maturity and the instructional service quality in Islamic Azad University of Kerman. Questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. Research population consisted of 300 personnel of Azad University of Kerman, and the sample size was 271. The structural equation model was used for the assessment of the relationship between personnel knowledge management maturity and instructional services quality. The results indicated that there was a positive relationship between instructional services quality and knowledge management maturity.

Introduction

The success of all types of organizations increasingly depends to organizational capabilities and how the professional knowledge of people is employed. Based on knowledge-based viewpoint, knowledge is the most important source with the opportunity of granting stable competitive advantage to the company. Knowledge management (KM) is an

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approach to personnel knowledge, methods, and instrument, for a company that consciously develops its management, resources and information. In fact, knowledge management has been recognized as a key resource of organizational operation and success. Managerial plans emphasize the identification and usage of collective knowledge in an organization, which consists of a set of managerial activities aimed at improvement of effectiveness and efficiency of organizational knowledge resources (Maija, 2015).

Since knowledge management requires abundant and meaningful changes in the process, infrastructures, and culture for desired perfection, continuous improvement is required (Guoquan, 2011). The assessment of the status of knowledge management maturity makes implementation of knowledge management capability possible for organization. There are indexes for measurement of knowledge management maturity in organization. These indexes should represent the value and effectiveness of knowledge management. It seems that ultimate success or failure of knowledge management activity in organizations results from a set of conditions, situations, and challenges, that management should consider before investing resources in this field. Lack of proper mechanisms for assessing the status of knowledge management can result in additional charges. The prior assessment is crucial for making knowledge usage purposeful as a competitive and strategic advantage, as well as organizing the stages of knowledge management development. Consistent with progress of organizations

maturity, more complicated dimensions of knowledge, as well as more diverse and more specialized indexes would be needed for assessment and management of organizational knowledge. Therefore, as the organizations develop and their processes become more complicated, more knowledge-based processes are necessary (Cheng, 2008).

Knowledge management is essentially about getting the right knowledge to the right person at the right time. This may not sound so complex, but it is strongly related to corporate strategy, understanding of where and in what forms knowledge exists, creating processes that span organizational functions, and ensuring that initiatives are accepted and supported by organizational members. Knowledge management may also include new knowledge creation, or it may solely focus on knowledge sharing, storage, and refinement. Knowledge and its management, solely and independent of organizations strategic objectives, would be meaningless and worthless. Knowledge management of the organization, consistent and coordinated with strategic actions of the organization, should be attended to and be proposed at macro level (Maria and Kostas, 2017).

In the globalization era, universities as important organizations, playing important role in development of human resources and sustainable development, are trying to find new high-quality methods and strategies for problems of instructional services, therefore, development of instruction quality is part of management and marketing of all universities all over the world.

The concept of quality, with no exception, is applied in all fields especially in college education, and is defined as a set of instructional plans consistent with

expectations of beneficiaries, and is considered as a key operation for measurement of superiority in instruction and the main strategic variable for universities as provider of services. Higher education is faced with a pressure for improving of value of its activities. Consistent with increase of instructional value, wide efforts were made for continuous improvement, focus on beneficiaries' interests, and enhancement of students' satisfaction. The large number of beneficiaries in higher education (students, faculty, parents, society, government, etc.) has specific expectations and perceptions regarding the services (Pariza Manea, 2015).

Various factors affect the quality of services provided by an organization. Factors such as the relations between faculty members, personnel and students, and improvement of these relations would affect the future decisions of the organization using knowledge management. Examination of above mentioned factors makes it clear that universities working in competitive environments are severely inclined to knowledge, expertise, and personnel commitment, as key inputs in the process of creating value. According to the previous studies several issues affect the quality of service provided by an organization, one of which is the importance of maturing employee knowledge management, such as improving relationships among faculty members, employees, and students. Considering this, the present study is aimed at testing if there is a meaningful relationship between personnel knowledge management maturity and the instructional

service quality in Islamic Azad University of Kerman.

Literature Review

During the last decades, there have been fundamental and abundant evolutions in organizations. These changes have led to appearance of modern management principles and skills, the most important of which involve knowledge management maturity. Despite wide range of research in the field of knowledge management, the focus is often on production and industries and fewer studies have deeply dealt with knowledge management and its models in universities (Finnegan, D., Willcocks, 2006). All instructional institutes have knowledge inside themselves. Processing the data they turn them into knowledge during routine processes and combining them with values, strategies and experiences form the foundations for decision-making and future actions of the organizations. What is important in this process is awareness and conscious creation of knowledge. Knowledge management is the system which creates participatory environment, promotes opportunities for creation of new knowledge with the purpose of creation and distribution of knowledge. It provides required instruments for accomplishing strategic objectives. KM is connected with the viewpoint of going beyond the organizations objective with creation and development of knowledge assets, and requires all the activities related to recognition, sharing, and creation of knowledge (Gorlic, 2005).

Our universities as service organizations like manufacturing organizations are faced with competition. These organizations

should be able to maintain the current customers while attracting new ones, meeting high level and growing demands. Present seeks to achieve the best output of universities in terms of personnel knowledge management maturity (P-CMM) and is consistent with strategic plans delineated for higher education in Iran. Various evidences indicate that higher education system would manage its duties and objectives if it is in desirable situation in terms of services quality. Meanwhile, although the knowledge management system is not restricted to specific organization, it is of prime importance to be present in instructional organizations, particularly higher education, which is the production and publication center of knowledge in every society. Instruction in a systemic structure can have key role in knowledge transfer. Instruction can be based on national needs and toward development of new management culture and knowledge when the management system is created with qualitative approach. Instructional institutes as a bridge between producers of knowledge and researchers need serious evolution in order to be able to be responsive to their social, political, economic, and cultural changes. Authorities relate success and prosperity of higher education in current dynamic environment to spiritual wealth such as knowledge management and its maturity (Liao, 2004).

Based on the mentioned researches and the results obtained from conducted surveys, personnel knowledge management maturity is a predictable variable of the present study. Personnel capability maturity model is considered as one of the most admired global models for improvement processes of human capitals operation and organizational framework. This model consists of five levels and 22 process areas, and each process involves three to five aims and several activities, and except the first level, different key process areas have been recognized in each maturity level (Armour, 2002).

Five levels of maturity model for personnel capability are as follows:
1. The Initial Level: characterized by inconsistency in performing practices, displacement of responsibility, ritualistic practices, and an emotionally detached workforce.

2. The Managed Level: the key processes of this level focus on management of basic and initial workforce practices; such as work environment, communications, employment, management operation, instruction, and reward.

3. The Defined Level: the key processes of this level identify the initial competency of the company, and based on it manage individuals' practices, involving: knowledge, and proficiency analysis, workforce planning, competency development, professionalism development, participatory culture.

4. The Predictable Level: the key processes of this level focus on quantitative growth of organizational management including individuals' competency and empowering the groups, such as method teams, organizational performance management, and organizational capability management.

5. The Optimizing level: the key processes of this level refer to continuous improvement of methods in order to develop other previously mentioned levels and the organizational capabilities, such as individualistic capability development, preparation, and continuous workforce innovation.

Based on HEDPERF (SRVPERF) model, instructional service quality has been considered as the criterion (independent) variable. HEDPREF Model is one of modified forms of SERVQUAL which is used for assessment of instructional service quality. In fact, HEDPERF model is used for identification and analysis of customers of instructional centers, dimensions of which are specified in **[Table 1]**.

In regards of the above-mentioned factors, the analytical model of the study was outlined as follows in **[Figure 1]**.

Table 1: The HEDPERF Model Dimensions

Dimensions	Definitions
Non-academic responsiveness	Duties of non-academic personnel
Academic responsiveness	Responsiveness level and its quality in instructional section
Reliability and credibility	The ability of university in creation of a professional image of the field
Accessibility	Ease of communication and use of facilities and equipment
Plan	Appropriateness, flexibility, and diversity of curriculum
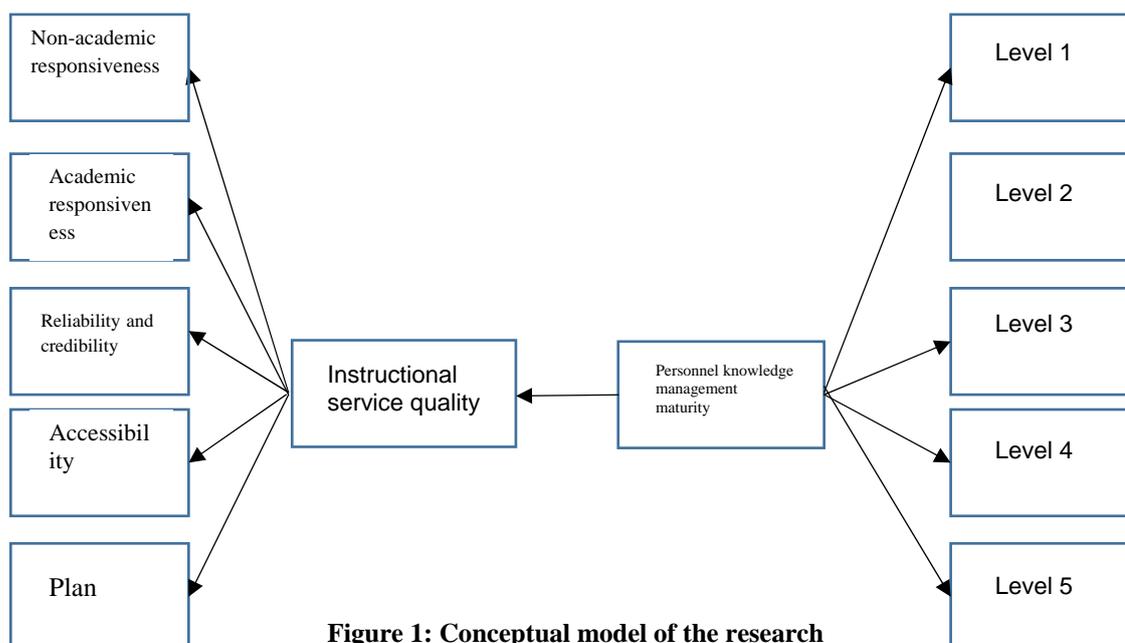
Figure 1: Conceptual model of the research

Accordingly, the main hypothesis of the research is if there is a relationship between personnel knowledge management maturity and instruction service quality in Islamic Azad University of Kerman. The secondary hypotheses are as follows:

1. There is a relationship between level 1 (initial) and instructional service quality in Islamic Azad University of Kerman

2. There is a relationship between level 2 (managed) and instructional service quality in Islamic Azad University of Kerman.

3. There is a relationship between level 3 (defined) and instructional service quality in Islamic Azad University of Kerman.

4. There is a relationship between level 4 (predicted) and instructional service quality in Islamic Azad University of Kerman.

5. There is a relationship between level 5 (optimizing) and instructional service quality in Islamic Azad University of Kerman.

Research Method

Considering the subject and objective, present study is of practical kind, and its method is descriptive- analytical, which is conducted in a cross-sectional manner. In this study we deal, firstly, with the explanation and description of personnel knowledge management maturity, then with its relation with instructional service quality, and after that we investigate the relations between variables using statistical tests. Required data and information of the research were collected using

questionnaire. The questionnaire, designed for evaluation of personnel knowledge management maturity, consists of 26 questions related to five branches (initial level, managed level, defined level, predicted level, and optimizing level). Likert scale was used to rate the responses from "very little" to "very much". From 26 questions, five questions were allocated to initial level, three questions to managed level, nine questions to defined level, three questions to predictable level, and five questions to optimizing level. Then, seven questions were allocated to non-academic responsiveness, four questions examine academic responsiveness, six questions examine reliability and credibility, four questions examine accessibility, and four questions examine the plan. Research population of this study consists of all personnel of the Islamic Azad University of Kerman in educational year 2015-16 (1394-95). From 300 distributed questionnaires, 271 were returned.

Research Findings

The hypotheses were tested using Pearson and Spearman tests. The results, interpreted in Table 2, show that there is a positive correlation between knowledge management maturity and quality of educational services with the coorelation coefficients equal to 0.668 and 0.680. Thus, the main hypothesis is confirmed.

Further, there is a relationship between the level 1 (beginning) and the quality of educational services since the correlation coefficients between Level 1 (beginning) with the quality of educational services are 0.69 and 0.653

Table 2: Correlation between knowledge management maturity and service quality

Variables		Pearson	Spearman
knowledge management maturity	educational services	0.668	0.680
Level 1		0.690	0.653
		0.396	0.418
Level 2		0.585	0.588
Level 3		0.258	0.288
Level 4		0.165	0.178
Level 5			

Then, there is also relationship between the level 2 (managed) and the quality of educational services in the Islamic Azad University of Kerman with the correlation coefficients equal to 0.396 and 0.418, respectively.

The analysis indicated that there is a positive relationship between level 3 (defined) and the quality of educational services with correlation coefficients equal to 0.585/0 and 0.588 respectively.

The fourth and the fifth hypotheses were also confirmed with the correlation coefficients 0.285 and 0. 288, and 0.15 and 0.178, respectively. Accordingly, the results indicated that all the factors have influence on educational service quality. However, it should be mentioned, that some factors have higher impact than others, with the highest one being Level 1 (initial).

Discussion and Conclusion

In the present study, we have dealt with investigation of the relationship between knowledge management maturity and instructional service quality in the Islamic Azad University of Kerman. For this purpose, five hypotheses were proposed consistent with presented literature. Research findings indicate that there is a relationship between level 1 (initial) and instructional service quality in Islamic

Azad University of Kerman. Path coefficient of the relation between two variables 0.287 is indicator of direct relationship. In other words, paying attention to characteristics of this level, like displacement of responsibility, ritualistic practices, and an emotionally detached workforce, would affect instructional service quality. Further, we found that there is a relationship between level 2 (managed) and instructional service quality of Islamic Azad University of Kerman. In managed level, items like work environment,communications,employment , management operation, instruction, and reward affect the instructional service quality. Then, the relation between level 3 (defined) and instructional service quality of Islamic Azad University of Kerman was confirmed, meaning that workforce planning, competency development, and similar items have significant effects on service quality. There is a relationship between level 4 (predictability) and instructional service quality. Thus, the key processes of this level affect the quantitative growth of service quality. Finally, the findings indicated that level 5 (optimizing), which includes items like individualistic capability development, preparation and continuous workforce innovation, has relationship with service quality.

Research Suggestions

1. Attention to cultural characteristics of organization and enactment of different programs in order to prepare cultural environment for acceptance and application of knowledge management

2. Consistency of knowledge management method with organization conditions and its generalization

3. Evaluation of knowledge management success, and in case of success, its generalization to other departments

4. Improvement of competitive capability, measurement criterion for organizational performance, strategic coordination in all colleges, productivity and income research development, economization on time and expenses, instructional quality development, innovations, and processes redesign, services

5. Improvement of work culture and communication, development of scientific, technical, and cultural capabilities of individuals, measurement criterion for individuals' performance, improvement of reward policy

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