

# Key Success Factors that Affecting Knowledge Transfer among Public Organization Employees: A Conceptual Framework

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## **Abstract**

Knowledge transfer is a process that comprises one group that affected by the experience and knowledge by the other group as it involves the two parties together meanwhile the effectiveness of knowledge transfer in organisations can be assessed by measuring changes in the knowledge of the recipient unit. This paper aims to identify the key success factors influencing the knowledge transfer effectiveness in the public organisation and it will discuss more details on the factors that affect the process of knowledge transfer. Based on the framework, the three independent variables was identified which are organisational cultural practise, information technology and leadership. The dependent variable is knowledge transfer which has been adopted from the previous model and scholarly literatures. This study will be a significant in understanding the important of knowledge transfer in public organisations in order for employees to have an adequate information and knowledge to serve people. Besides, this study provides benefit and useful for the public organisation's employees, manager, top management and also for a researcher by providing a study that establishes the overview about the factors influencing knowledge transfer.

**Keyword:** *Knowledge Transfer, organizational Culture Practice, Information Technology, leadership, Public Organization*

## **Introduction**

Within the last decades, many organisations in Malaysia are beginning to develop their own Knowledge Management (KM) centers and initiatives in order to build up their knowledge base within their organisation. This is to ensure that the employees in their organisation are able to generate, share and utilise knowledge to its fullest for a better competitive and innovative organisation. The intention or implementation of knowledge management is to improve the decision-making, increase innovation and performance and improve competitive advantage. In addition, knowledge is found as a most of the important strategic resources and actively

determine in order to transfer the effective knowledge across the borders. Numerous findings have founded that the successful of knowledge transfer process can help in creating a competitive advantage for the organisation. This statement was supported by Argote and Ingram (2000) which a successful knowledge transfer can help in creating competitive advantage in an organisation.

According to Ives et al. (2003); Spander (1996) posit that key organisational factors that consist of the culture, structure, process, strategy and the implementation of information technology influenced the effectiveness of knowledge transfer in the organisation. Thus, knowledge can be counted as most of the vital resources for the organisation and the knowledge transfer between the employees in the organisation should be the stand out factors for the organisation itself in order to improve the services to people. The more knowledge transfer was applied in the organisation, it will contribute to the saving the organisation's fund and deal with a better position in order to deal with the challenge in future.

Jasimuddin (2012) defined knowledge as one of the key resources in many organisations. Start from the creation, transform and utilisation of knowledge are seen as an important concern for management research and practise. Nonaka (2000) stated nowadays, knowledge was recognised as an important as critical resources for the competitive advantages for an organisation. Wong and Aspinwall (2004) posit the concept of knowledge itself, if it well manages and fully utilised, it can assist the organisation to become more effective, adaptive, innovative and stay sustain. Truly, knowledge is very off limited values if people are reluctant to share and transfer with others within the organisation. Knowledge transfer has been claimed as one of the critical knowledge management activities in this current and advancement of information age where organisation are kept on learning and be innovative in order to remain competitive with other organisations. However, knowledge transfer will be not occurring if there are no existing system and tools that enable the process.

Zahra et al. (2000); Phan and Peridis (2000) said knowledge transfer considered as an important method of obtaining and maintaining the values of competitive advantages. Knowledge expanded and gained from various ways including dialogues, discussion, innovative thought, storytelling, and community of practice. Besides, Zhang and Ng (2012) mentioned organisations are unable to create knowledge by themselves since knowledge is created by individuals and to leverage the knowledge will only possible if people are ready to share their knowledge with others.

### **Problem Statement**

Nowadays, in the context of the knowledge economy, Westlund (2006) stated knowledge becomes the main resource in an organisation which it leads in taking places as fundamental factors of production of the organisation itself and knowledge transfer become as the core part of it. Levin et al. (2004) mentioned organisation are paying more focus on inter and intra organisational knowledge transfer performance. Concerning to this issue, lots of internal and external factors need to be considered. Previous studies had focused on cross-border knowledge transfer that had point out the impacts of differences cultural in knowledge

transfer and few studies also had done on the factors of the knowledge transfer that consist of a different culture. Other than that, the previous study only analyses on the relationship between cultural factors towards knowledge transfer rather than focus on another dimension.

## **Literature Review**

### **Knowledge Transfer**

In the context of organisational perspective, Hassan et al. (2013) defined knowledge transfer as a process that comprises one group that affected by the experience and knowledge by the other group as it involves the two parties together. Meanwhile, similarly with Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland (2004) argued that knowledge transfer needs to be involved with the willingness of a group or individual to work with others and share knowledge to their mutual benefit. According to Albino, Garavelli and Gorgoglione (2004) mentioned most of the authors that have been conducted the study in this field agreed that knowledge transfer fully depends on the individual characteristics which consist of experience, skills, beliefs, values, and motivation. Hackney et al. (2008); Perez-Nordtvedt (2008) mentioned that there is theoretical and empirical research that addressed the role and importance of knowledge transfer in the organisation. Herman and Renz (2008) noted knowledge transfer able to help the organisation to develop the skills among employees; help in increasing the value and at the same time contribute to sustaining the organisation competitive advantages. Although the knowledge transfer is a part of knowledge management, but it is awfully the most important one as it contributes to the widespread of the information and can represent a profitable of resources. Sharing knowledge will remain the one who shared it but at the same time it enriching the one who receive it.

Alavi and Leidner (2001) summarised knowledge transfer will be important if it was properly handled and knowledge will be moved to locations where it needed and most important it helps in creating competitive advantages for an organisation. Meanwhile, Levine and Gilbert (1998) in their study mentioned the importance of knowledge transfer has grown up for three main reasons which the first is knowledge itself was known as an advantage for the business in the almost organisation. Secondly is from the individual's knowledge in the organisation, it can help in improving business process and the last one is with the existing of information technology nowadays, it has created new means of knowledge transfer as now knowledge can be transferred faster within a large number of members.

### **Organisational Culture Practise**

From an organisational perspective, the collective values and beliefs of the individual members of that organisation represent a phenomenon called as an organisational culture. Organisational culture is one that considered as one of the factors that influence the knowledge transfer process. At this point, Devenport, De Long and Beers (1998) stated the organisational culture is one of the most influential factors that make knowledge transfer effective and success. This is because cultures that promoting changes and innovative behaviour will inspire the positive exchange of ideas and at the same time increase the knowledge transfer. In line with the previous authors, Janz and Prasarnphanich (2003) described organisational culture is assumed to be one of the most vital factors towards the effectiveness of knowledge transfer and organisational learning that will determine the values, beliefs and work system which it can

help in encourages or promotes learning as well as knowledge sharing and finally the process of decision-making.

Since organisational culture is defined as " the set of values, beliefs and norms, meanings and practises shared by personnel in an organisation", Robbin (2001) mentioned from the guidance and shaping the values, the attitudes and behaviours of people, it will help in controlling and encouraging people to freely voluntarily to share their insights and knowledge among each other's. Hills and Jones (2001) stated organisational culture is one of the key factors that require the interaction between employees and between organisation's stakeholders. Meanwhile, Schein (1995) claimed organisational culture was referred to the values and also view that was entrenched in the organisation for a long time ago and how it can affect the attitude and behaviour among employees in the organisation.

### **Information Technology**

"ICT tools that exist in public organisations can help and facilitate employees to share knowledge" (Syed Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004). Technologies could be called one of the main instruments for formal knowledge transfer process, but very often is used for informal transfer as well. Nowadays, employees in organisation keep often exchange the knowledge by using an information technology as a medium. For instance, telephone, a conversation that supports by ICT such as Skype, video conferencing, MSN and etc. In the other hand, information technology tools such as database and intranets help to support the collection, storage and the dissemination of knowledge. The main role of ICT in knowledge sharing and transfer is connecting people with others. (Van den Brink, 2003).

O'Kane and Hargie (2007) claimed years back, organisation starting to apply various types of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in order to facilitate the knowledge transfer in the organisation. Similarly with Sajjad and Zhang (2011) stated that ICT plays a vital role in knowledge transfer process within the organisation. Meanwhile, Phang and Foong (2010) posit due to the booming of technology, ICT help in coordinate and promoting communication in the organisation. Van and Brink (2003) proposed ICT is needed in order for supporting the creation of knowledge, knowledge structure, and knowledge utilisation. In the previous study that conducted by Syed Omar and Rowland (2004), ICT infrastructure is defined as the latest advancement of technology that helps employees to create, share and transfer knowledge in an organisation.

With the existing of information technology nowadays, it has form new dimension of knowledge transfer as the knowledge can be transfer more quickly and it can be shared within a large number of people in the organisation. Besides, Phang and Foong (2010) stated information technology is effective in supporting the knowledge transfer and it is commonly used for managing and codifying the knowledge well.

### **Leadership**

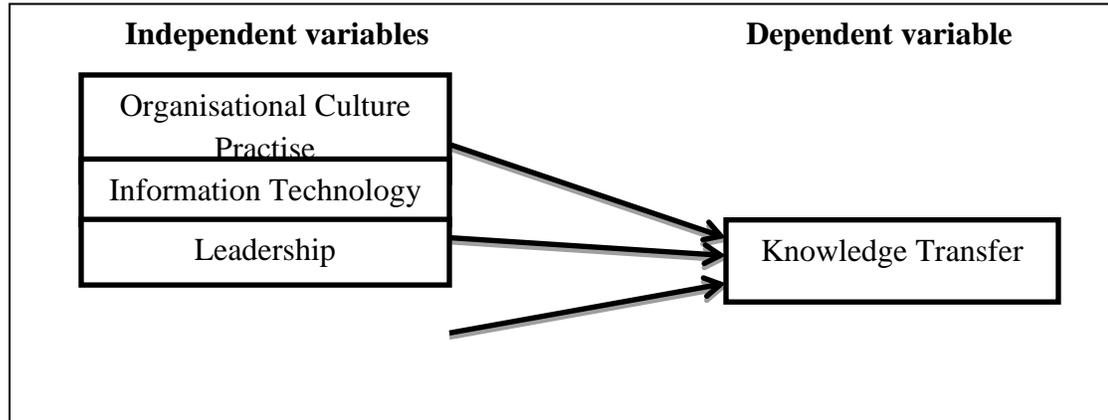
Consequently, knowledge transfer within organisations has emerged as a vital area of study relating to theories of organisational power structures, leadership, decision making, and

routines. Cleveland (1995) in his book stressed leadership plays the main role in managing knowledge activities in an organisation and it needs to be involved by a good team, a community of practise and network which is the leaders in managing information and knowledge. It is true that every leader in the organisation will become a role model for employees and due to that leader bring a big impact on how organisation need to manage knowledge activities including knowledge transfer to be good practise. DeTienne et al. (2004) posit if knowledge management does not well inform and publicised to all levels in the organisation starting from top management, it is unlikely that knowledge management programs will ever catch on or be effective. In the same way, Kluge et al. (2001) pointed out if the leader does play a role in managing knowledge, it is particularly important for top management to involve in knowledge transfer and sharing the process. Further, various authors stated that if the leader takes knowledge seriously, the rest of the company will follow automatically.

Knowledge transfer as the process that needs to get a huge concentration and emphasis on organisation leaders because it is understood that knowledge transfer will affect knowledge creation, organisational learning and organisational performance. The leader's behaviours surely will give a huge influence and impact on employee's behaviours and thinking. As regard to the connection between roles of leadership and knowledge transfer, mostly of the researchers in the Knowledge Management field includes Goh (2002); Nonaka and Toyama (2002) agreed that leaders' plays a vital role in creating the key conditions required in facilitating knowledge transfer effectiveness among employees. Leaders need to have a passion for freely showing their readiness to share also transfer the information and knowledge and always seek it from others in organisation. Leaders have to show the sharing attitude among employees and express that knowledge will help in solving organisation problem and indirectly assist in improving the organisation effectiveness that can exist at any level by not following the hierarchy of job position. It can be in showing an attitude that creates an environment of trust, influences attitudes throughout the organisation about information sharing and collaboration each other. Based on that, Bass and Avolio (1994) claimed leaders who act like transformational leaders are more likely can be effective leaders than who behave like transactional leaders. Mittal and Dhar (2015), said among the different styles of leadership, transformational leadership has gained more attention from organisational researchers and academics.

### **Proposed Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is adopted and modified from Gholipour, Jandaghi, and Hosseinzadeh (2010). The previous study revealed that there is a positive relationship between organisational culture practise, information technology and leadership elements for the effectiveness of knowledge transfer. The dependent variable indicates knowledge transfer while the independent variables measured by organisational culture practise, information technology and leadership elements as illustrated in Fig. 1:



### Conclusion

In the knowledge base era, knowledge transfer is considered to be one of effective ways especially for the recipient in the organisations in order to develop skills and competencies also help to extend staff knowledge base. Other than that, knowledge transfer is not just a process but also it also highlights to the positive effects sides when the knowledge is transferred to the recipient. Moreover, knowledge transfer is vital to the performance of the creation of knowledge and also in leveraging the knowledge for the better organisational performance. In order to have an effective knowledge transfer process in an organisation, various elements need to pay an attention including the culture that practises in organisation, the technology used and also the encouragement from the leadership in making the process of transferring knowledge become more and more efficient.

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