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## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING QUALITY STANDARDS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*With the size and complexity of Indian population, it is a challenge for Educational Institutions to maintain Quality and competitiveness. The everchanging Global Educational Scenario in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by Innovative learning methodologies and state of the art infrastructure development, to facilitate various modes of learning. In the present context Knowledge Management strategies play a vital role in facilitating Quality achievement in Educational Institutions. The article investigates the impact of Knowledge management strategies in achieving Quality in Educational Institutions. Exploratory Factor Analysis is used to verify the Constructs and their reliability in achieving Quality standards in Higher Educational Institutions. The findings of the study have further contributed to the Literature in the area of knowledge management strategies and its application in the area of Educational Institutions.*

### KEYWORDS

knowledge management strategies, educational institutions, quality, innovative learning tools, competitiveness.

### INTRODUCTION

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Educational Institutions in India have undergone unprecedented technological changes in the quest for achieving competitiveness. Knowledge Management in Educational Institutions is all set to become a critical success factor in day to day Academic activities viz planning, implementation and evaluation. Knowledge Management is unique in its importance and plays a vital role in disseminating value based information in Educational Institutions. Unlike other forms of Assets viz Man, Machine, Money, Materials, Knowledge Management cannot be copied, transferred or sold to other parties. Faculty play a prominent role in implementation of Knowledge management Strategies for achieving Quality in Educational Institutions. Therefore, the prime objective of Management is to facilitate the process of knowledge acquisition, retention and Integration of Knowledge management to achieve Quality. Knowledge Management is a process oriented strategy which acquires, organizes, transfers knowledge management initiatives among various levels in Educational Institutions. Knowledge Management do consists of Work culture and values at work place [8]. In the process of enhancing the Quality and Values in Educational Institutions, Knowledge management strategies play a prominent role in implementation and evaluation [10].

### QUALITY DEFINED IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The definition of quality teaching depends on the meaning of "quality", a multi-layered and complex word. As Chen (2009) points out, "quality" can be defined as an outcome, a property, or a process. Therefore it is hardly surprising that the phrase "quality teaching" has been given several definitions. The review of literature showed that there are many ways to define quality in higher education because definitions of quality are "stakeholder relative" (Dimovski, V. et al., 2008). Lee (2005) also found that all stakeholders held their own view of what quality in education means to them. Some scholars define quality in higher education as the process of quality enhancement. Lee (2004) argues that quality in higher education, and quality teaching in particular, springs from a never-ending process of reduction and elimination of defects.

The Quality Procedures and Standards in Universities and Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) in India are frequently assessed by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), a statutory council which operates under the directions of UGC (University Grants Commission). The Process of Accreditation and Assessment in a time bound manner is a challenge for the Council to assess the various Qualitative processes and procedures practiced by Institutions. The Peer Team which visits Higher Educational Institutes (HEI) takes into account various Educational Systems and Protocols which are being thoroughly implemented. Finally the NAAC team awards grading to the Institutions with a detailed report on Educational Qualitative Analysis and Standards for the Institutions to adhere in future course of time.

The Universities and Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) offering Professional and Technical Education are regulated by All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) a statutory body formed to maintain Quality standards and regulations. National Board of Accreditation (NBA) plays a pivotal role in Accreditation of Technical and Professional Educational programs with focus on International modern innovative methods of teaching. The Board after periodic inspections of the Institutions suggests various Qualitative ways and means of Program identity and recognition on par with international standards and procedures. The Board further facilitates Transnational Recognition of Degrees and Programs, choice based Credit transfer (CBCT) System among the Accredited Universities and Higher Educational Institutions. It plays a prominent role in mobility of young Graduates and Professionals across the Globe on par with International Standards and Agreements in Higher Education.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Robinson, H. S. et al. (2006) identified Knowledge management for any type of Organization based on Knowledge gathering from their own experience and colleagues from process failures and success. As per Martin, V. A. et al. (2005) Knowledge management is an art and science of involved in the conversion of Experiences to Intellectual capital enduring values of stakeholders. According to Artail, H. A. (2006). Knowledge management is a process in organization which formulates and recognizes knowledge transformation within the Organization.

Greiner (2007) defines knowledge management as a process for capturing, disseminating knowledge base effective within the Organization. Williams (1994) information technology, human resources management, leadership, Organization learning, Organization culture, Organization structure and Organization strategy can be developed through Knowledge management. As per Marsh H.W (1985) Culture, Leadership, process, explicit, tacit, hub, market, measure, skill and infrastructure can be enhanced through knowledge management.

During the last decade many Academicians and Practitioners have contributed to the field of Knowledge Management Strategies and Institutional Performance. Perez, L. S. et al. (2004). show that combining the tactic-internal-oriented and explicit-external-oriented Knowledge management strategies implies synergistic effects on Institutional performance. The results of the study conducted by Zheng et al. (2009) shows that Knowledge management mediates the impact of organizational structure and design on Institutional effectiveness. Researchers do often articulate the positive effect of Knowledge management strategies on Institutional performance and Quality standards achievement. Empirical research proving the relationship between Knowledge management strategies and Institutional performance are less focus oriented. With this background to reduce the Gap and contribute to the domain of Knowledge management, the present article examines knowledge management strategies role in achieving Quality at Institutional level.

The paper is divided into five stages. First the Introduction and Theoretical background on Knowledge management strategies is discussed. Second, the Literature review related to the concepts and elements of Knowledge management strategies are highlighted. Third a relevant Hypothesis Model is developed related to the thematic area of the study. Fourth, the research methodology and data analysis is carried out with focus on the Questionnaire developed for the study and Fifth, finally the Conclusion and directions for Future Research are outlined.

## FORMULATION OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The Literature review on Knowledge Management strategies and experiences from empirical research establishes a strong link between Organization elements viz: information technology, organization culture, collaborative learning and its influence on achieving Quality in Educational institutions. The aim of the article is to investigate the role of knowledge management strategies in achieving quality at various levels in Educational Institutions. The findings from the Literature review and assumptions may be structured in the form of Hypothesis to be examined in the present article.

The linkage between knowledge management strategies and Information Technology was researched in the past and the results show considerable usage of I.T tools leads to better Knowledge creation process Kulkarni, U. & St Louis. R. (2003 ). The extensive use of I.T infrastructure and communication technologies leads to Quality achievement in Educational Institutions Artail, H. A. (2006).

Ha1: Knowledge management strategies have positive effect on achieving Quality standards in Educational Institutions

Ho1: Knowledge management strategies have no effect on achieving Quality standards in Educational Institutions.

## RESEARCH MODEL



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To test the formulated Hypothesis, an empirical research was conducted with the help of Questionnaire. The Questionnaire consists of 25 questions which are divided into three areas viz: Knowledge, Information Technology, Organization Learning elements and Quality Standards. The Questionnaire is further tested and validated with the help of a Panel who are subject experts in the area of Knowledge management practices and Education Management systems certification[21].

A five point Likert scale is used to further analyse the respondents response to the Questions

The drafted Questionnaire is sent to 500 faculty members working in various Educational Institutions in Coastal Andhra region. With subsequent follow up, 150 filled in questionnaires were received from the respective Educational Institutions. The response rate is around 30% which is a valid response rate [24]

The present model was empirically tested through Structural equation modeling on a valid sample of 150 faculty members working in various Educational Institutions around Coastal Andhra Region.

The four Constructs which are formed as part of Research are First, Information Technology which determines the extent of I.T applications use, the benefits derived out of implementing Information technology and achievement of Quality in Educational Institutions. Second Organization Learning Initiatives which include Innovative learning mechanisms, collaborative learning and intra-knowledge transfer among the Faculty. Third Knowledge Initiatives which covers knowledge accumulation, depository, utilization, knowledge sharing practices and recognition. Fourth Quality is defined as Construct which is composed of Quality teaching, elimination of defects, practical reforms, Certification and Accreditation

Exploratory Factor Analysis (SPSS 16.0) is used to verify the Construct validity and reliability in this Model. The Principal Axis factoring extraction method with Varimax rotation is further used to determine validity and reliability of drafted Questionnaire. The results are presented in the following table, whereby factor loadings higher than 0.50 are considered.

## ANALYSIS

TABLE 1: ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX FOR THE KNOWLEDGE INITIATIVES

KI Construct	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
KI1			.584
KI2	.621		
KI3	.650		
KI4			
KI5	.682		
KI6			.625
KI7	.648		
KI8		.725	
KI9		.628	
KI10		.615	
KI11			.615
KI12			
KI13		.658	
KI14	.627		.658
KI15	.682		
KI16			.618

Factors 1 and 3 are combined to articulate the elements of Knowledge Initiatives viz: collaborative learning, peer group learning, inter-active knowledge orientation, Domain area learning initiatives etc. Factor 2 represents the elements of Information technology and Factor 3 represents Quality. Several indicators were eliminated namely (KI4, KI12, KI14) as they did not meet the minimum criteria and standards required for factor loadings (less than 0.5 or multiplied over several factors) which makes it difficult to differentiate.

Factor loadings higher than 0.50 for the Organizational learning Initiatives (OLI) construct are presented in Table 2

TABLE 2: ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX FOR ORGANIZATION LEARNING INITIATIVES(OLI)

OLI Construct	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
OLI1			.584
OLI2	.621		
OLI3	.650		
OLI4			
OLI5	.682		
OLI6			.625
OLI7	.648		
OLI8		.725	
OLI9		.628	
OLI10		.615	
OLI11			.615
OLI12			
OLI13		.658	
OLI14	.627		.658
OLI15	.682		
OLI16			.618

Factors 1 and 3 are combined to articulate the elements of Organizational Learning Initiatives viz: e-learning, digital resource labs, Quality circles, Peer Learning groups etc. Factor 2 represents the Quality standards and procedures. Several indicators were eliminated namely (OLI4, OLI2, OLI14) as they did not meet the minimum criteria and standards for factor loadings (less than 0.5 or multiplied over several factors) which is relatively difficult to differentiate.

## DISCUSSION

The prime intention behind the research is to investigate the relationship between Knowledge management strategies and its related effects on achieving Quality standards in Educational Institutions. Many Academicians and Researchers have articulated the positive effect of Knowledge management strategies on achieving Quality Standards but empirically proven research links are very rare in these areas. With this background and research information a new model was developed and tested with practitioners, academicians and Educational consultants.

The result of this Research model is a newly defined Knowledge management Strategic model which consists of four empirically tested constructs viz: Knowledge Initiatives, Information Technology, Organization Learning Initiatives and Quality. The Research model proves that the Constructs identified are a valid measure for establishing relationship between Knowledge management strategies and achieving Quality Standards. Empirical Research in these areas are rare which covers detailed aspects of knowledge management strategies and achievement of Quality standards in Educational Institutions.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following are the important results of the present Research with suitable implications and suggestions for future research. The present study defines Knowledge Management strategies as an important maturity model which assess the role of Constructs namely Knowledge Initiatives, Information technology and Organizational learning Initiatives in achieving Quality at Educational Institutions. The research proved that Knowledge Initiatives and Organizational Learning Initiatives are very much interlinked with Information technology in implementing knowledge strategies at Educational level. There is always a Change which occurs during the course of Strategies implementation in Educational Institutions. In practice Information technology play a prominent role in overcoming resisting to Change among the Educational framework. Achieving Quality in Educational Institutions will be successful only with conducive Organizational climate, culture and readiness to accept Organization change. It is important to maintain positive Organization learning environment for Trust, Transparency and Technology to reach all the Knowledge areas in Educational Institutions. Educational Institutions are differentiated on the basis of Knowledge Initiatives implementation and measurement of outcome in terms of Knowledge management efficiency (KM). The present Research is conducted primarily to ascertain the three Constructs which play a prominent role in achieving Quality standards at Educational Institutions. The research results clearly exhibit that the selected constructs articulate measurable Quality standards in Educational Institutions. The findings may be used as a Bench mark for achieving Quality standards in Educational Institutions.

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The study is confined only to a Region which consists of Engineering and Technology colleges in neighbouring districts of Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam. The sample size for the Research is taken as 500 and valid sample for the analysis is 150 which is 30% of sample. In comparison the valid sample is small and a larger sample will result in detailed in-depth analysis. The scope of the Research will be enhanced with a larger sample size and distribution of the sample around the region. Further research is possible and thorough investigation needs to be performed to compare the results with various Institutions across India.

## CONCLUSION

The important constructs viz: Knowledge Initiatives, Information technology, Organization learning Initiatives which are selected for the Research are proved to be valid in achieving Quality standards in Educational Institutions. The interlinkage between the Constructs are presented through Hypothesis which is tested and proved through empirical Research. The results of the Research confirm the Hypothesis formulation which states 'Knowledge Management strategies have positive effect on achieving Quality Standards in Educational Institutions' (Ha1). The Organizational elements viz Organization culture, Organization climate, Organization Learning Environment play a prominent role in implementing Quality Initiatives at Educational Institutions. The effects of Information Technology as an important enabler in the process of achieving Quality standards are also confirmed. The findings may be further applied to improve knowledge management strategies in Educational Institutions. The possible strategies include Knowledge mapping, cross-functional working as Teams, formal channels of knowledge sharing and collaboration at work place. Finally we conclude that Knowledge management strategies positively influence the Quality standards in Educational Institutions. The Conclusion may be applied by Managers, Practitioners and Academicians who want to implement and research in allied areas of Knowledge Management and Organization Learning mechanisms.

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