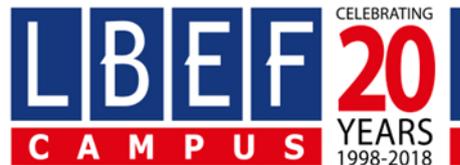


STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

at

ASIA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION



Module – CE00543-M Knowledge Management

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING (OL) AND A REVIEW OF A CHOSEN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK IN PROMOTING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN A TYPICAL APPLICATION.

Hands out Date: 2018 April 23

Hands in date: 2018 July 22

Insert Student ID number not student name or e-mail.

This is to ensure anonymity in the assessment process

#NP000179

For the attention of:

Module Leader: Mr. Ayushman Shrestha

The date of submission.

July 22, 2018

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ABBREVIATIONS

KM	Knowledge Management
OL	Organizational Learning
IT	Information Technology
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IS	Information System
ICT	Information Communication Technology
SECI	Socialization, Externalization, Combination, Internalization

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to especially thank my respected teacher and instructor, **Mr. Ayushman Shrestha** for his concept, guidance, advice, and motivation for conceptualizing the project which supported me to have a clear understanding of the assignment and the project.

On top of this, I would also like to thank our Academic Director, **Mr. Prakash Kumar**, all my dear friends of MSc. ITM 2nd Semester and whoever has guided me most of the time and supported me throughout the preparation of this project.

ABSTRACT

An organization that is able to translate tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge applicable to a different context and formalize it. Over time, the new knowledge itself becomes tacit and available to become explicit in yet another context (Nonaka, I., Takeuchi, H., 1995). To achieve these transformations, managers and staff need to engage in continuous reflection at the individual, team, and organizational levels, and time and space for such reflection needs to be provided.

A knowledge sharing community establishment within an organizations is highly recommended since, the knowledge sharing is the best way to learn and earn knowledge, which ultimately results into the establishment of a proper learning organization. Since the concept of Learning Organization is still novice in the context of Nepal, most organizations including the Amber Technologies Inc. must strive to learn the knowledge management activities and learning organization ethics and code of conduct to sustain in this global era of competition.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Learning Organization, Nonaka Model, Knowledge Sharing, Socio Technical Knowledge Management

1. Introduction

Knowledge management is essentially about getting the right knowledge to the right person at the right time. This in itself may not seem so complex, but it implies a strong tie 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. (Frost, 2018)

"Knowledge management is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets. These assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, and previously un-captured expertise and experience in individual workers." (Duhon, 1998)

Organizational learning is the process of creating, retaining, and transferring knowledge within an organization. An organization improves over time as it gains experience. From this experience, it is able to create knowledge. This knowledge is broad, covering any topic that could better an organization. As organization learning happens when there is a change in the knowledge of an organization, knowledge is considered to be a big indicator of organizational learning itself. Therefore, the concept of knowledge management is the process of collecting, developing, and spreading knowledge assets to enable organizational learning. (NV, 2018)

Knowledge management guarantees long-term superiorities for organizations and societies. Regarding knowledge management, twenty six models are presented until now that most of them are almost similar to each other in terms of content. Among these models, Nonaka Model is one of the best models in terms of explaining how knowledge is generated. In this paper, an attempt has been made to deal with the ways of employing Nonaka Models-based knowledge management in organizations. (Jaleh Radgah, 2015)

2. Literature Review

The operational origin of KM, as the term is understood today, arose within the consulting community and from there the principles of KM were rather rapidly spread by the consulting organizations to other disciplines. The consulting firms quickly realized the potential of the Intranet flavor of the Internet for linking together their own geographically dispersed and knowledge-based organizations. Once having gained expertise in how to take advantage of intranets to connect across their organizations and to share and manage information and knowledge, they then understood that the expertise they had gained was a product that could be sold to other organizations. A new product of course needed a name, and the name chosen, or at least arrived at, was Knowledge Management. The timing was propitious, as the enthusiasm for intellectual capital in the 1980s, had primed the pump for the recognition of information and knowledge as essential assets for any organization. (Koenig, 2012)

Knowledge management incorporates ideas and processes from a wide variety of disciplines such as information management, information technology management, communication, human resources management and other. It is dealing with various processes such as knowledge identification, creation, capture, sharing, retention, and utilization. So, it can be conceptualized differently and applied to numerous areas of organizational activities related to people, technologies, and processes. In order to see the whole picture of knowledge management in the organization, it should be analyzed as a system (Šajeva, 2010).

Any organization that acknowledges and encourages learning and has specific learning culture by which it develops its own employee learning practices to select the most appropriate strategies can be identified as a “learning organization” (Skuncikiene S, 2009). Also, a learning organization is “a place where employees excel at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge” (Garvin D, 2008). The main building blocks of learning organizations are supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and practices, and leadership practices (Rijal, 2009)

Organizational Learning is an area of knowledge within organizational theory that studies the way an organization learns and adapts. It is also defined as “a system of actions, actors, symbols, and processes that enables an organization to transform information into valued knowledge, which in turn increases its long-run adaptive capacity” (Schwandt, 1999).

Organizational learning is the way firms build, supplement, and organize knowledge and routines around their activities and cultures, adapting and developing organizational efficiency by improving the use of the broad skills of their workforces (Dodgson, 1993).

2.1 The Sociotechnical perspective

In general, a socio-technical knowledge management system could be defined as a set of technological and social elements that ensure the development of knowledge management process and the creation of appropriate organizational conditions. According to the analysis below, we could stress, that a knowledge management system includes three main sub-systems:

- 1) the subsystem of knowledge management process
- 2) the subsystem of technological context
- 3) the subsystem of social context

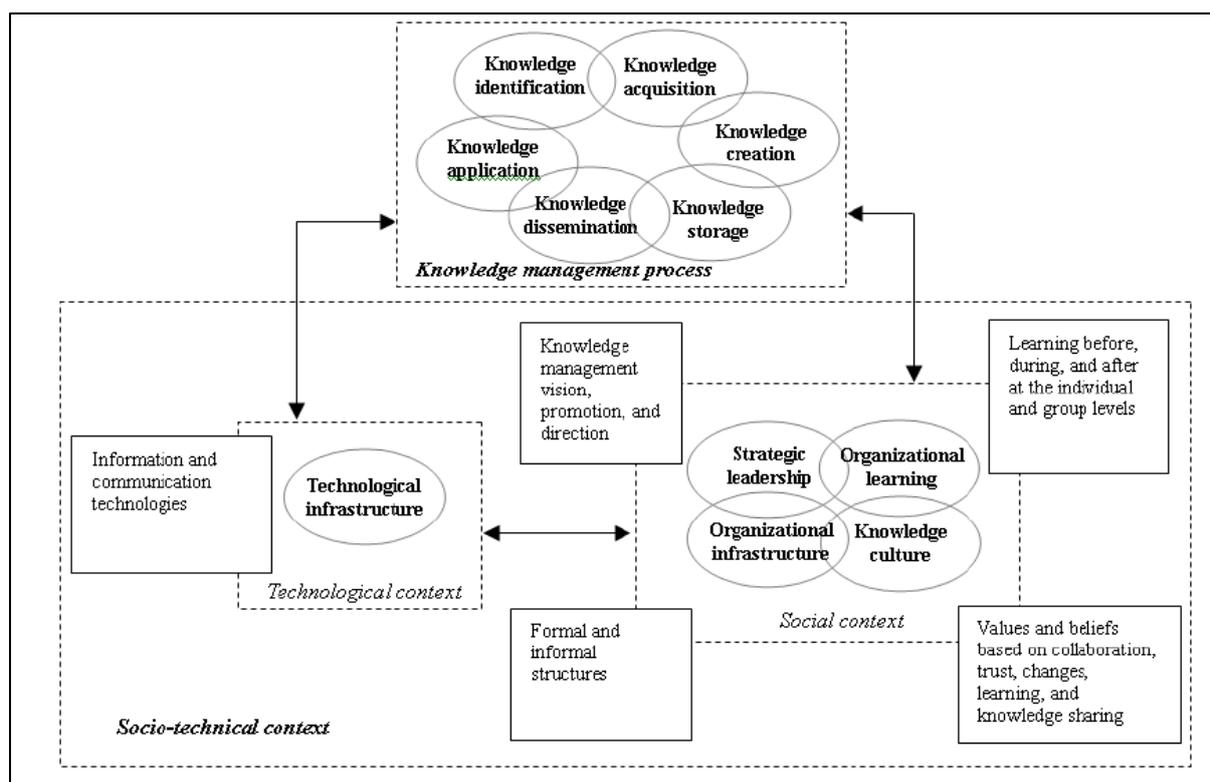


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of socio-technical knowledge management system

The most obvious components of the socio-technical knowledge management system are people and their knowledge. Knowledge includes explicit knowledge that is expressed in words and numbers and codified in manuals, databases and information systems as well as tacit knowledge that are shared collectively in the firm in the form of routines, culture and know-how. Knowledge is located in the head of the person and is not seen and inseparable from him

or her. Individual knowledge is transformed into the organizational knowledge through the process of knowledge management. The process of knowledge management includes a set of practices or activities that are initializing in organization in order to identify, acquire, create, store, disseminate, and apply knowledge.

While designing the knowledge management system in the organization, these key processes should be established:

- Knowledge identification means the determination of all critical knowledge that is possessed by employees and their groups in the organization.
- Knowledge acquisition involves the renewal of employees' knowledge by attaining new information, knowledge and experience.
- Knowledge creation is the creation of new knowledge that is materialized in new products, services, processes, and concepts.
- Valuable knowledge storing deals with the structuring and storing knowledge in the ways that make it more formalized and accessible.
- Knowledge dissemination means the diffusion of knowledge, experience and valuable information between individuals and their groups in the organization.
- Knowledge application is the productive use of organizational knowledge in business processes through solving the problems, making the decisions, designing new products and services for the benefit of the organization.

The process of knowledge management, however, does not exist "in vacuum". It should be integrated into other organizational processes that create value. The process of knowledge management should be also harmonized with general corporate strategy and maintained by appropriate culture. This requires the formation of suitable organizational context, i.e. particular socio-technical environment, which is created in order to ensure the working of the process of knowledge management.

In accordance with the analysis of the main components of socio-technical knowledge management system **five major elements** of socio-technical environment could be identified, which are explained below:

- **Strategic leadership** means the active interest in knowledge management and its promotion by the leaders and chief officers of the organization.

- **Organizational infrastructure** includes formal and informal structures that ensure the creation of formal and informal social networks through which knowledge and information flow in the organization.
- **Technological infrastructure** is designed by technological products (tools) and their systems which are based on information and communication technologies and used to facilitate the process of knowledge management.
- **Organizational learning** encompasses the processes of individual and collective learning that ensure the creation of new knowledge and enhancing the organization's knowledge base.
- **Knowledge culture** deals with the systems of values, beliefs and norms accepted and supported by all employees in the organization, and based on the acknowledgement of the importance of knowledge and its management.

The presented model could provide a holistic view and better understanding of how the knowledge management could be practiced in the organization. Furthermore, it could be used as a general tool for designing the unique knowledge management systems in various organizations. (Šajeva, 2010)

2.2 Knowledge Sharing

Before an organization begins facilitating any knowledge-sharing activities it must get a good sense of the supply and demand for knowledge. Networks and partnerships between central and local levels can help reveal “who needs to know what” and “who knows what.” That information would ideally be collected by a central organization to broker just-in-time knowledge-sharing activities. The central organization might create an online platform in which seekers and providers can identify and choose each other directly as presented in below diagram. (Janus, 2016)

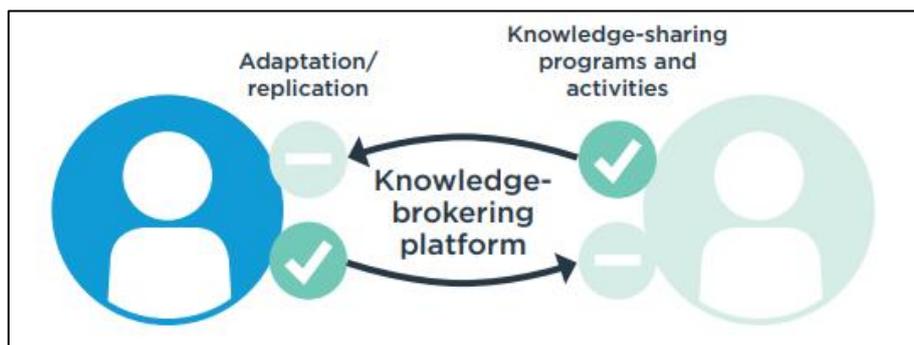


Figure 2: Knowledge brokering platform

The organizations may use communities of practice, online forums, or wikis to support the brokering of knowledge. More traditional formats can also include face-to-face instruments such as conferences and multi-stakeholder meetings, although these are usually confined to a specific time and place and thus not continuously accessible and expandable.

Implementing the knowledge sharing program

Once the objectives are clear, the right audiences have been identified, and the design of the program agreed upon, the knowledge-sharing program moves into its implementation stage.

2.3 Story-telling (Narrative enquiry)

The management and information systems literature of the 1990s reflects profound and continuous changes in the business climate due to uncertainty. In this world of uncertainty, organizations need to continually renew, reinvent and reinvigorate themselves in order to respond creatively to market forces. This process of reinvigorating requires shifts in organizational structures and processes. Organizational knowledge, or rather, how organizational knowledge is optimized, is a critical issue for organizations and for business activity. Many organizations invest heavily in implementing information technology (IT) to provide a seamless solution to the management of information resources and organizational knowledge. Unfortunately, these initiatives are often implemented without much regard to how people in organizations go about acquiring, sharing and making use of information and the result is that many such initiatives are unsuccessful. (Davenport, 1994)

Few writers investigating the social and organizational factors that may underpin successful information system development and usage suggest that investigation of these issues necessitates a sound understanding of organizational culture and relationships, human social interactions, and communication. Such postulations reflect an increasing awareness of the importance of the social aspects of socio-technical systems. (Pendegraft, 1996)

Informal, activity-based learning is inherent to all human activities. It is this capacity to learn from one another that leads to the advancement of the human race. Workplaces are full of learning opportunities and in work life, socially based learning is occurring all the time. As interactions occur between peers, genders, functional groups and ages, and across hierarchies, learning takes place and it happens in ways not normally recognized as learning. It is through

these interactions and interrelationships that we build social and intellectual capital of the organizations. As social capital grows stronger, it helps to create intellectual capital. It can be argued then that, through nurturing social capital in organizations, the web of interrelationships between people expands and contributes to the building of trust between individuals, to knowledge sharing and to personal growth. (Leoni Warne, 2006)

Businesses have to go through constant innovations on management, and innovation principles must be acquired through constant learning. Learning principles are realized through knowledge and wisdom sharing with colleagues, clients, and others in such learning activities as instruction, sharing, and self-study. Such knowledge and wisdom sharing activities include study circles, on the job training, and technology exhibitions. Different learning activities such as survival learning, benchmark learning and leading learning are subject to different sharing mechanisms. Moreover the mastery of each sharing function is fundamental to enhancing the performance of knowledge management in a learning organization. (Jon-Chao Hong, 1999)

3. Research Approach

The research approach of this study is an exploratory since it attempts to bring new insights on the phenomenon and to understand what is happening with the subject today.

A present study uses a combination of **deductive and inductive research approaches**. The use of a deductive approach is justified, because it is aimed at developing of a theory based on already existing research, then a hypothesis is created and tested through a selected data collection technique. For example, the present study used already existing research on globally implemented agile methodologies.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

This report made use of both primary and secondary data to address and analyze the research problem, and hence a number of collection methods have been used.

Primary Data Collection

Primary data collection consists of interviews, observations, questionnaires, and experiments. However, throughout this study, observations and interviews were collected from secondary sources for study to investigate on the reality of the matter. The collected information helped in deciding the current trend and needs of the organization and people.

Secondary Data

The secondary data consisted of various documentation. The secondary data collection made it possible to establish a thorough understanding of the problems related to the evaluation of agile methodology. Furthermore, using secondary data is relatively uncomplicated and it has provided ease of exploring the problem area step-by-step.

The information about relevant literature is collected from the internet, journals, articles and research papers. The literature on 'Learning Organization' and 'Knowledge Management' has been studied and collected for reference. In order to get access to the latest developments in this area, a number of articles published in academic journals and trade magazines have been used. We have also used secondary information from Internet-based discussion forums. The collection of data for preparing this report has mostly been based on the secondary data rather than primary data.

3.1 Company profile and project domain description.

Established in 2002 AD, Amber Technologies Inc., has been promoted by some highly experienced professionals dedicated to providing total IT solutions under one roof. The company possesses the most knowledgeable and experienced hands to offer most user-friendly customized software solutions. The company is located at Patan Industrial Estate, Lagankhel, Nepal.

Company's Mission

At Amber Technologies Inc., we continuously work to ensure that our services are maintained at the highest possible level of reliability and satisfaction. We are not successful until every customer starts achieving a return on their investments from reduced production costs and streamlined processes. We believe we are one of the leading learning organization in Nepal, sharing knowledge about process, procedure and people to our esteemed staffs.

3.2 Organization Structure of Amber Technologies Inc.

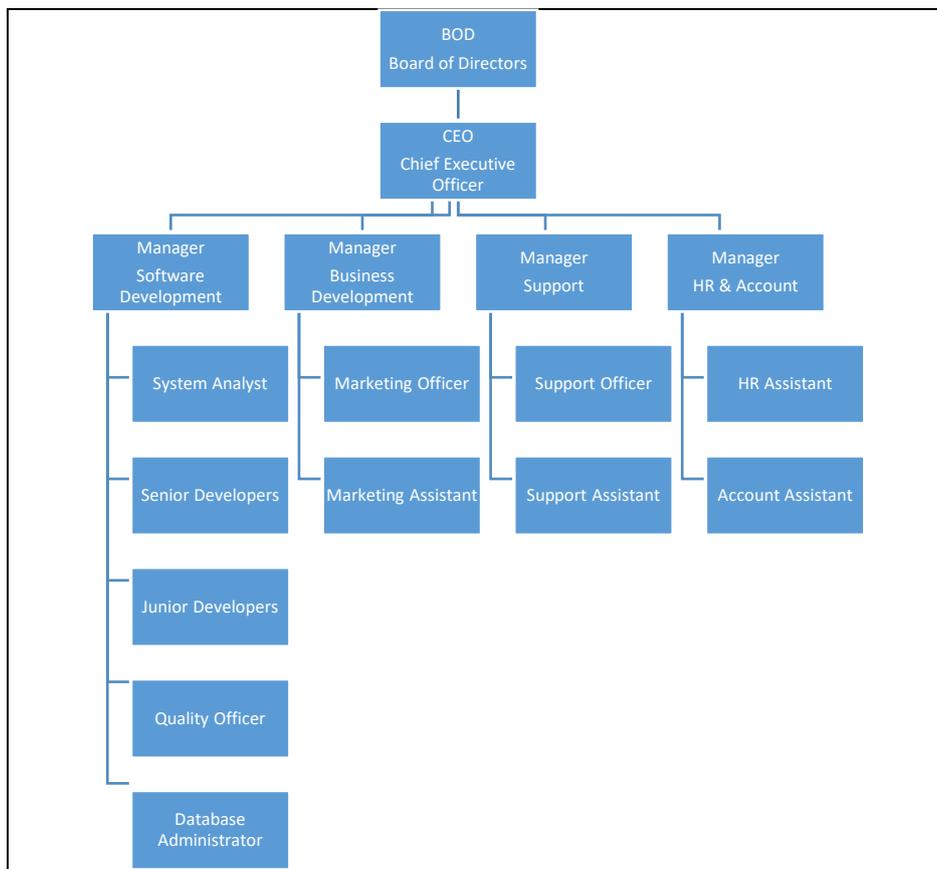


Figure 3: Organizational Structure of Amber Technologies Inc.

3.3 SWOT Analysis of Amber Technologies Inc.

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A core team of professional experts with having excellent work culture. • Targeting market with best management skill and corporate strategy • Time-bound targeted goals & promotion of environment-friendly techniques • ISO 9001:2008 certified company. • Market leader in website development 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company is in the vibrant stage of growth. • A small team to handle multiple projects.
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vast and growing market for Information System (IS) development. • The company can grab lots of government projects. • Create awareness among industries regarding qualitative software development. 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large number of software development companies in the market • Price competition and monopoly business of old market players.

Figure 4: SWOT Analysis of Amber Tech.

Being an ICT firm, **Amber Tech’s** major concern regarding its future advancement and development is completely dependent on knowledge management and organizational learning. Hence, every week they conduct knowledge sharing meeting and workshops whereby the project teams share their knowledge and experiences with each other. Every member in the team learn and note the agendas and learning points out of the discussion session and keeps in record. By following this mechanism of knowledge transfer every week, every single member of the team learn how to proceed ahead in those programs and thereby resulting into proper information dissemination and leading to development of Amber Technologies as an organization of learning with proper knowledge management workouts in order to become successful IT firm in Nepal.

3.4 Method, Process and Techniques adopted

Nonaka developed his confirmed model that how information could be transferred. Basically, Nonaka model was suggested to express that a dynamic complexity exists between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge so that the extracted tacit knowledge is converted to explicit knowledge and is internalized as tacit knowledge again. (Bashar Sarayreh, 2012)

Nonaka developed his ideas. In a series of different papers in 1990 and in a book co-written by Hirotaka, he reached his apogee of fame. Through these publications, Nonaka was in search of creating a dynamic sense in the Model of Knowledge Transference and therefore, he suggested SECI Model as follows: (Jaleh Radgah, 2015)

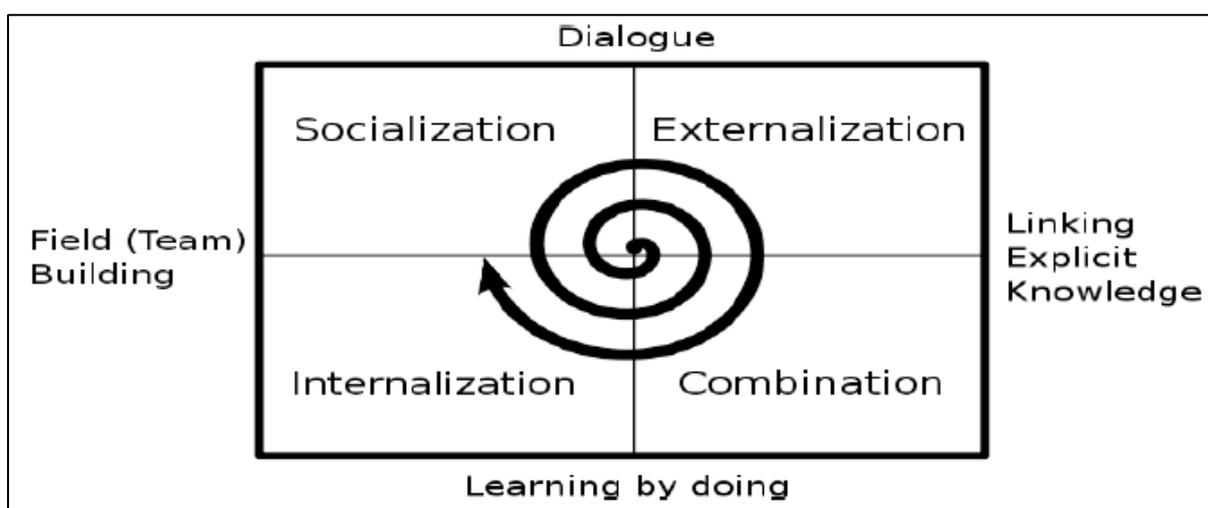


Figure 5: Nonaka Model Framework

The first phase is **socialization** in other words, move from experience, individuals' different education and their hidden knowledge to other individuals' hidden knowledge.

The second phase is **externalization** in order to manifest an individual's tacit knowledge who has obtained the required information and knowledge in respect to the made problem for it. The basis of this phase is disseminating and manifesting knowledge.

The third phase is the stage of **combination** so that the individual can use several kinds of objective knowledge of the documentations of organization simultaneously and in fact, combines them.

The last phase is **internalization** so that the individual takes and makes the best actions and decisions in organization by combining available explicit knowledge with his education and personal experience.

The four phases mentioned above continue constantly and in a snail-form move so that each phase completes its previous phases internalizing knowledge in organization and generating new kinds of knowledge. (Jaleh Radgah, 2015)

The important point here is that when individuals participate in these processes, organizational education also occurs, because individuals' knowledge is shared with others, explained and accessible to them. In addition, generating and producing new knowledge occurs through these processes. Certainly, it should be noted that these processes do not occur in isolation, but they happen in different combinations and in working situations among individuals working with each other. (Afrazeh, 2008).

The Application of Nonaka Model and Organizations

Organizations need dynamism for their activity and existence in the third millennium and dynamic organizations use knowledge well and need employees who can participate in new methods rapidly, communicate effectively, cooperate, search and evaluate information independently and share their knowledge with their colleagues eagerly in an understandable way for using (Ekhvan, 2002). Nonaka model views knowledge from two dimensions. One dimension is tacit or hidden knowledge and the other one is objective or explicit knowledge. The most important part of this model is the way of sharing this knowledge with each other. Amber Technologies has adopted the use of few models derived by Nonaka Model in order to foster growth in its organizational learning attribute.

When an individual enters an organization, he or she has passed some kinds of education concerned with his or her working field or has obtained worthy experience in other organizations. When this person enters the new organization, he or she needs other information and knowledge that can satisfy his or her needs of organization. Here, individual's knowledge with the knowledge of organization (group) requires a strong and mutual interaction, because the newly-arrived person has information and knowledge in other areas, but cannot make an appropriate relation with his or her new working area. Nonaka model of the process of generating knowledge makes this relation between the individual and organization.

In most of organizations, the use of employees' tacit knowledge in the direction of their explicit knowledge in order to improve the performance level of organization is unavoidable. For this purpose, the appropriate atmosphere for transferring this knowledge and making employees in contact with each other should be provided, because tacit knowledge often transfers through language, body, and physical exhibition of skills (Movahedzadeh, 2008).

4. Discussion

Nonaka Model is consisted of four snail phases including socialization, externalization, combination and internalization. The four phases mentioned above continue constantly and in a snail-form move so that each phases completes its previous phases internalizing knowledge in organization and generating new kinds of knowledge. (Jaleh Radgah, 2015)

According to the four phases of Nonaka Model, the following solutions and ways are suggested in order to reach each of the four phases:

Suggestions

The following suggestions are made for organizations and other researchers for the dynamism of organizations and useful use of individuals' knowledge: (Jaleh Radgah, 2015)

- The stratagem of the preliminaries of implementing the ways of using Nonaka Model-based KM
- Promoting the culture of using tacit and explicit knowledge in order to offer better services in organizations
- Forming a bank of individuals' knowledge of organization
- Top managers should provide the background for encouraging the personnel towards KM
- Researchers should investigate the circumstance of applying other models in organizations
- Researchers should study the application of KM in educational organizations

4.1 Stories and Scenarios for Elaboration, Analysis and Negotiation

On the verge of the third millennium, organizations use the overall knowledge of individuals accumulated in their mind in order to achieve their goals. Knowledge management is suggested as a strategic need for institutes and organizations. Knowledge management guarantees long-term superiorities for organizations and societies. Regarding knowledge management, twenty six models are presented until now that most of them are almost similar to each other in terms of content. Among these models, Nonaka Model is one of the best models in terms of explaining how knowledge is generated. The obtained results of Nonaka Knowledge cycle indicate that this model is consisted of four phases and four elements. (Jaleh Radgah, 2015)

The four phases namely socialization, externalization, combination and internalization continue constantly and in a snail-form move so that each phase completes its previous phases internalizing knowledge in organization and generating new kinds of knowledge. (Jaleh Radgah, 2015)

In most of organizations, employees use the tacit knowledge in the direction of their explicit knowledge, in order to improve the performance level of organization. For this purpose, the appropriate atmosphere for transferring this knowledge and making employees in contact with each other should be provided, because tacit knowledge often transfers through language, body, and physical exhibition of skills (Movahedzadeh, 2008).

5. Conclusion and future direction

An organization that is able to translate tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge applicable to a different context and formalize it. Over time, the new knowledge itself becomes tacit and available to become explicit in yet another context (Nonaka, I., Takeuchi, H., 1995). To achieve these transformations, managers and staff need to engage in continuous reflection at the individual, team, and organizational levels, and time and space for such reflection needs to be provided.

A subset of knowledge management encompassing the exchange of knowledge (information, skills, experiences, or expertise) within and across organizations. Although it can be one-directional, knowledge sharing in most cases is a two-way or multilateral exchange in which the parties learn from each other. Knowledge sharing is more than mere communication because much knowledge in organizations is hard to articulate. In development work, some knowledge sharing has a regional aspect. For example, South-South knowledge sharing refers to exchanges among partners and peers across developing countries.

Organizational Learning involves making tacit theories of action explicit so that people can become aware of, critically examine, and change them it facilitates accountability by increasing self-awareness and enhancing the ability to exercise conscious choice and intention” (Lipshitz, 2007). To increase the organization’s readiness one must develop the capability to learn how to learn. Policy, structures, and skills are needed to do so (Schön, 1975).

Since the concept of Learning Organization is still novice in the context of Nepal, most organizations including the Amber Technologies Inc. must strive to learn the knowledge management activities and learning organization ethics and code of conduct to sustain in this global era of competition. The concept and implementation of learning organization ethics may be expanded by including more companies to collect more data and reach a sample that covers a wider range of industries; where more effort is needed to find new and uncovered knowledge.

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