Interpreting the Czech Knowledge Management Experience

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Abstract

Knowledge Management (KM) is today a relatively well-established managerial discipline. A self-administered questionnaire is conducted to investigate hypotheses focused on Knowledge Management and managerial perceptions. The main research question becomes “what is the nature of this attitude and whether the perception of KM can be generalised or is specific to certain groups”. Data are processed using descriptive statistics, Pearson chi-square, Likelihood ratio, Cramer’s V, and additional supportive tests. It is apparent from the data analysis that a negative perception of KM prevails among Czech managers. Moreover, the study proves that there is no significant relationship between the replies of various respondent subgroups segregated by age and the non/existence of KM in an organisation. A shift in the responsibilities and the democratisation of knowledge are contrary to the ideologies and practice of doing business today in the Czech Republic.

Keywords: Czech Republic, knowledge management, technology, perception, knowledge sharing, culture

JEL Classification: M14, C12, D83

1. Introduction

Several business concepts have been established to improve organisations’ competitiveness or performance. Knowledge Management (KM) as a managerial discipline emerged approximately two decades ago. From this time, many companies...
have demonstrated significant interest in KM. However, although exceptions may be found, these are mostly multinationals headquartered in western Europe or the United States. As cited by Brunet-Thornton and Bureš (2009), or Marešová (2010), successful KM implementation in the Czech lands, wherein KM remains a controversial topic, is rare. The economic benefits and liabilities of KM related to corporate competitiveness have been investigated, discussed and substantiated by several studies (Miklosik, Hvizdova and Zak, 2012; Mihi Ramírez, Morales and Jesus, 2011). However, the current study rises beyond the economic analysis. The reason for this approach is that current issues are both technical and social (Lin and Joe, 2012). Despite the endeavours of a few organisations and public institutions to attract KM adherents, it remains largely a neglected resource in the Czech business environment. As similarly conducted in Spain (Forcada et al., 2013) the problem becomes in determining the reason as to why this condition exists. The aim of this paper is to investigate reasons for the current state of Knowledge Management in the Czech Republic and provide interpretation that can serve as a lesson learnt in other countries. The paper is organised as follows. The next section briefly describes the theoretical background based on the research analysis on KM conducted in various countries as well as the Czech Republic. The third section presents the research methodology whereas; the fourth section depicts the acquired results. The subsequent section discusses the results using several perspectives and finally, the last section concludes the discussion.

Conclusions

Five hypotheses are tested in this study. It is apparent from the data analysis that negative perception of KM prevails among Czech managers. The results do not unambiguously explain if there is a relationship between the replies of respondents with different seniority, or gender. In particular statements, reactions
differ between male and female, or between junior and senior professionals. However, the study substantiates that there is no relationship between replies of the respondent subgroups divided by age and the non-existence of KM in an organisation. Given that only 40% of respondents claim to have any sort of KM programme in place, it is not surprising that there are those who claim to have no idea as to when other KM related activities are planned. The results indicate that there is an overall lack of motivation through feedback and encouragement. In addition, the environment lacks incentive to develop new ideas.

Knowledge Management is a foreign concept complete with its case studies of the larger enterprises such as GM, British Telecom, and IBM. There is little content that is Czech or substance in which the Czech entrepreneur may acknowledge as a tangible association. KM requires interaction with colleagues and subordinates that entails additional work. A shift in responsibilities and the democratisation of knowledge are contrary to the ideologies and practice of doing business today in the Czech Republic. Lastly, the experience reflects not only the Czech cultural values but also a culturally demographic divide. Lacking national heroes and traditions, youth adopt a progressive and contemporary view on learning whereas the knowledge providers are in a process of evaluating the impact of the past twenty years. The inherent sense of bureaucratisation, and changing priorities dictated by the state and the EU, add already to the anxious nature of the society.

References


