

The Role of Knowledge Management in the Empowerment of the Extension Workers of Agricultural Organization of Iran

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Purpose: The present study aims at examining the role of knowledge management in the empowerment Extension Workers of Agricultural Organization of Iran.

Acknowledging the fact that Iran possesses features appropriate for the development of the agriculture sector – in terms of regional capacities – and that human resource empowerment can play an undeniable role in the development of agriculture in this province, the present study aims at examining the role of knowledge management in the empowerment Extension Workers of Agricultural Organization of Iran.

Context description; problem domain; conceptual framework: Modern age is undoubtedly the age of organizations; organizations that are operated by people, who can move organizations ahead thanks to their most important source of power – thinking. Thus, knowledge-based human resource is the main capability of the organizations to gain competitive advantage and is its most important intangible asset. Therefore, the management of people's knowledge is of crucial importance for exploiting their capabilities towards organization goals. Organizations in which knowledge management is practiced possess features that distinguish them from other organizations. In summary, it is of crucial importance for modern human resource managers to understand that empowerment is a necessary tool for improving people's satisfaction resulting in their higher performance and effectiveness.

Research questions: What role are Knowledge Management in the Empowerment of the Extension Workers of Agricultural Organization of Iran

Data collection and analysis; evidence: The present study is an applied, descriptive-correlation. The statistical population was composed of all Extension Workers (150). They were studied by consensus method. Data were collected by a self-designed questionnaire including closed-end items at Likert scale (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = fairly, 4 = high, 5 = very high). The face and content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by a panel of experts, and its reliability was estimated to be 0.89 by Cronbach's alpha. Research variables were in two categories of independent (knowledge management) and dependent (empowerment). Data were described by descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variations) and were analyzed by inferential statistics (Spearman test and multiple regression analysis) using SPSS₂₀ Software Package.

Results: According to the ranking of the items related to knowledge management aspects in terms of coefficient of variations (CV), the items “the employees of this organization mostly tend to describe organization issues to others with the help of objective analogies” and “the employees in this organization attempt to learn one another's experiences that are based on thought, beliefs and information” were ranked as the most important items as compared to other items related to knowledge application aspect. According to coefficients of variations, “doing tasks with required competence” and “competence required to do tasks successfully” were, together, were ranked as the most important items as compared to other items related to empowerment application aspect. Stepwise multiple regression test showed that all variables whose correlation with dependent variable was found to be significant were included in regression model.

Conclusion: Results showed a significant relationship between the main variable of the study, knowledge management and experts' empowerment. It implies that the more the extension workers upgrade and improve their knowledge management, especially in knowledge generation, exchange and application, the more empowered they will be in their jobs. In other words, if these aspects of knowledge management are soundly planned, improvements can be expected in experts' capabilities.

Also, no significant relationship was found between knowledge organization and extension workers' empowerment. Since knowledge management in general and experts' empowerment were significantly related, this finding may show experts' weak capability in organizing knowledge. In other words, experts should work more on organizing knowledge to be more capable in doing their jobs.

According to the findings of multiple regression, the variables of knowledge exchange, knowledge generation and the number of training courses had significant impact on experts' empowerment.