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Knowledge management in a higher education institution – Case Oulu UAS

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Universities are naturally higher education institutions. Today in mass higher education institutions (MHEI) can be found the progressive deployment of market-oriented regulatory frameworks, and those frameworks create requirements for both higher education and knowledge (Guzman & Trivelato 2011, 452). According to Guzman and Trivelato (2011, 452) that seems to be closely related to the application of knowledge management principles in MHEI. In doing so, the role of learning and knowledge transfer need to be better understood in MHEIs. Today, MHEIs apply more market-oriented strategies because of their changing environment and competition between universities. Further, their resources are also tied to government funding. Government funding is then connected to student enrolment numbers, achieving research outputs, and graduate outcomes, etc. (Guzman & Trivelato 2011, 453–455).

In addition, there are requirements for effective governance in these turbulent times. The university should ask “What knowledge do we require in order to understand the possible futures so that we can pursue strategic goals?” and “What knowledge manipulation processes allow us to create, develop, and utilize that knowledge?” (Blackman & Kennedy 2009, 560). This is one reason why this research is important.

Studies show that the new academic environ-

ment is characterized by discontinuous changes and demands that needs to carry out a new mandate for knowledge creation and implementation (Hanson & Léautier 2011, 387, Adhikari 2010, 95). A very important point is that knowledge is essential to adding and creating value to build a rich environment for learning and teaching (Goel et al. 2010, 384, Adhikari 2010, 99).

The research process

This study brings a new approach to the research of knowledge management with the new research through a different case organization. This study shows the strategic role of knowledge management and the significance of knowledge transfer and sharing in a higher education institution. Also, the impact of knowledge management on organizational performance can be seen. This kind of research has not been conducted at Finnish universities of applied sciences, and only a little in the international context. The fact that only one organization was studied can be considered as limitation of the study.

The aim of the research was to increase the vision of strategic knowledge management in higher education institutions. The problem for the research was to clarify the importance of knowledge management in higher education institutions.

The research questions were:

- How is the importance of knowledge management perceived in the organization?
- How can knowledge management be developed in the organization?

The research is a qualitative case study of knowledge management at Oulu University of Applied Sciences. Twenty-five theme interviews were conducted in the study. The results of the study will serve as a basis for the development of the organization's knowledge management. Knowledge management is a competitiveness factor in service business organizations. This research will disseminate information about the importance of knowledge management in developing professional service organizations and service business and improving competitiveness. Finding out the core competencies will improve an organization's competitiveness. Defining the core competencies and developing knowledge management may create value for customers.

The results of the study

The strategy basis of knowledge management came up as the main result of the study. Knowledge management has to be based on the strategy and vision of the organization. The core competencies of the organization have to be determined on the basis of them. Especially in a changing environment, strategic knowledge management is important.

Networks are important in knowledge sharing. When the staff of the polytechnic has relationships with working life, knowledge can be shared on both sides. Through research and development working life is served but, at the same time, knowledge is also acquired for the organization. Also, inside the organization the significance of cooperation is emphasized. The organizational culture has to be supportive of open discussion and cooperation. Acting in the group accumulates knowledge. Space and possibilities for acting together have to be arranged.

The support and example of the management in knowledge management are important. The uppermost management gives the guidelines for developing. The superiors have to inspire, to encourage, to support and to make the develop-

ment of knowledge possible. The guidelines for developing knowledge are defined in development discussions. In the control of knowledge an information processing system can be utilized.

In the organization there is a wide spectrum of core competencies which can be divided into know-how which is related to the substance and into knowledge which supports it. This knowledge will be important also in the future but more knowledge needs will also appear. Flexibility, adaptability and the skills of information management are examples of the knowledge needs for the future.

The results of the study strengthened my perception of knowledge management and its connection to the strategy of the organization. Top management's support for knowledge management and knowledge sharing is remarkably important. Knowledge creation possibilities and networking with students and other customers is also noteworthy. In the future, there are needed more competencies because of living in a competitive situation.

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