

# A CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR OF THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the critical success factor (CSF) and perceived benefits of the KM (knowledge management). A greater success may come from the knowledge management as it opens the way for the real competition between organizations, to performance and so it becomes significant that the knowledge management is interpreted as a key concept in the organizational development, being a strategic issue for their survival in the modern society. A qualitative research method was used in order to examine the relationship between the CSF and perceived benefits of the KM.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

P.Drucker (1993) noted that the transition from the industrial age to a global knowledge economy, has determined the classical factors of production (land, labour and capital) to become secondary assets and knowledge to become the primary resource for the new economy. Therefore, managing knowledge is significant and it has become one of the top problems in today's organizations.

Connected with all these considerations, this paper attempts to identify the relationship between the soft element of CSF, particularly the organizational culture and the perceived benefits of the KM, that can be applied in a higher educational organization. This research is fully concentrated on the results of the implementation of a soft element such as the organizational culture. This CSF of KM was applied in the "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacau and the data was collected by using some structured interviews with the educational staff from this university, in five faculties .

Numerous studies have pointed out the importance of the organizational culture to the KM. An essential element of success in the KM is the creation of a motivating, supportive and encouraging organizational culture that could capture, create, share, and reuse knowledge at the individual or at the organizational level. Generally speaking, a supportive culture of the KM is one that highly values knowledge and encourages its creation, sharing and application, but creating a knowledge culture is the most difficult challenge, affecting knowledge-sharing, inside the companies . Anyway, the KM project must fit in with the existing culture. A culture with a positive orientation to knowledge is one that highly values learning on and off the job. Likewise, there were identified 11 components of the success factors in the KM, among them being a knowledge-friendly culture, which is important in the KM implementation.

The culture supposes the successful practice of the KM and it is an important part of the formal wisdom of the KM. The organizational culture can create a proper context for the social interaction and build the processes for the creation and the adoption of the new knowledge. Studying the management modern literature, it can be concluded that the organizational culture and its forms, such as a knowledge-friendly culture, a knowledge-sharing culture, a knowledge-creating culture and lifelong-learning culture may be an obvious CSF of KM.

## **2. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

The objectives of our research are:

- to identify the CSF (the organizational culture) of the KM application in the “ Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacau;
- to identify the perceived benefits of the KM application in this higher educational organization;
- to identify the relationship between the CSF ( the organizational culture) and those perceived benefits of the KM.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology consisted in a specific literature review and the identification of CSF (the organizational culture) of the KM application in a higher learning institution. The results of the implementation process were collected by using structured interviews with the educational staff of the five faculties. The procedure to get the respondents was the random selection. The interviews were conducted with a total of 5 operators, talking with the professors, with the senior lecturers and lecturers of all the departments. The interviews with the educational staff were conducted face to face, during about 15-20 minutes for each participant. These interviews were conducted based on the action of implementation of CSF (organizational culture) in this university.

## **4. PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF KM – THEORETICAL APPROACHES**

Many practitioners and researchers have proved that the organizations can sustain long-term competitive advantages, by developing knowledge. According to Becerra-Fernandez and others (2004), there are three basic types of improvement after the implementation of the KM, such as: efficiency, effectiveness and innovation. Some of the specific parameters for measurement can offer a cost reduction in the following areas:

*Efficiency:* effectively managing knowledge may determine the organizations to be more productive and efficient. By implementing the knowledge sharing, information can be easily spread out and the result is a major cost-saving to the organization;

*Effectiveness:* the KM makes possible that the organizations become more efficient by helping the employees to be selected and to perform according to the most appropriate processes. The effective KM enables the members of the organization to collect the right information needed for taking the right decisions.

*Innovation:* Innovation involves performing the processes in a creative manner. This can improve not only the effectiveness and efficiency but also the marketability. Organizations rely on shared knowledge across individuals to produce more innovative solutions to the existing problems. These days we can find specific organizations that rely on knowledge in a profound and extended sense inside the collective behaviour of all the groups and inside the whole organization. Here , the fund of knowledge is understood as the main resource of the organization, a decisive resource for her global and strategic performance; the intellectual-intensive processes are not only prevalent, but also essential for the functionality of the organization in order to achieve its objectives; the organization requires new demands, new roles and new responsibilities for the individual and the collective actors, reffering to the knowledge management and to the processes related to it; the organizational culture consensually establishes benchmarks for perpetuating normative values related to creativity, competence, learning, and communication; the

aspects referring to knowledge gain a critical role in affirming the organization's identity, its integrity and consistency, in terms of structure, strategy, action.

In our opinion, the use of the KM techniques in a higher educational institution is more vital as it is in the corporate sector. The KM can lead to better decision-making capabilities, to a reduced "product" development time, to issues such as *the research quality* (increased competitiveness and responsiveness for research grants, contracts and commercial opportunities, facilitation of the interdisciplinary research, leveraging of previous research and proposal efforts), *improved academic and administrative services* (improved effectiveness and efficiency of administrative services, improved compliance with administrative policies such as procurement, preferred vendors, budgeting procedure), *the curriculum development processes* (an increased speed of curriculum revision and updating, an interdisciplinary curriculum design and a facilitated development by erasing the departmental boundaries, an enhanced quality of curricula and studies programmes by identifying and leveraging the best practices and monitoring the outcomes).

## **5. THE APPLICATION OF THE MODEL OF CSF: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF KM INSIDE THE UNIVERSITY**

The following activities were implemented:

1. the identification of the organizational culture elements of the KM;
2. the investigation through structured interviews—results and discussions.

### **1. The identification of the organizational culture elements of the KM.**

The KM was implemented in the different departments for 6 months. The model of the implementation is the following:

- a knowledge-friendly culture was achieved through good relationship between managers and the employees;
- the subordinates were encouraged to give a proper feedback to their supervisors;
- the managers had to be open-minded, to accept the new ideas coming from the employees;
- a knowledge-creating culture has been developed through the employees' participation in sharing their best practices;
- a life-long learning culture is established, leading the employees to enhance their knowledge and skills.
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### **The investigation through structured interviews—results and discussions.**

The questions addressed to the educational staff in our university were:

*Question 1:* Please, can you give us the details of the implementation of the organisational culture of KM?;

*Question 2:* What were the problems you faced during the implementation of the KM?

*Question 3:* What are the solutions you can find for the problems encountered?

*Question 4:* What are the perceived benefits, in your opinion, after the implementation of the KM?

The synthetic results pointed out from our colleagues are summarised as follows:

No.	obtained summarized answers	problem encountered	solution	benefits
1	The organizational culture in our higher educational organization is characterised by a knowledge-friendly culture	At the beginning, there was not too much feedback and ideas coming from the staff. They were not openly shared their mistakes, because of the fear.	The top management kept on encouraging and motivating all the staff to give ideas and to learn from the mistakes.	By sharing knowledge, all the creative ideas are shared. This increases work efficiency, creativity and innovation .
2	A knowledge-sharing culture exists only to enhance knowledge for decision-making in the joint curriculum development.	-	-	This can speed up the process of the implementation of the joint curriculum development. With good design of the joint curriculum, this increases the recruitment rate of the students. This also reduces the time and cost for setting up a new course and increases efficiency, creativity and innovation.
3	A knowledge - sharing culture will encourage the creation of new knowledge and competencies.	The staff are required to share their knowledge after they come back from external or internal training or after their post-graduate studies, on their behalf.	The top management must have a proper perception about the employees' expenses for training and research	By exchanging knowledge, this effort increases the competency of the staff. Staff will be more competent in their area of teaching and researching. Consequently, this upgrades the image and reputation of the university.
4.	A life-long learning culture determine employees to enhance their knowledge and skills	At the beginning, very few employees were willing to participate in these activities.	The top management kept on encouraging all the employees to participate in these activities by giving them paid free time(only for postgraduate studies)	Continuous learning can be periodically updated to meet changing demands. This increases the staff's competencies and helps them to achieve a high quality performance. With the new skills and knowledge that employees have gained, they facilitate the quality provided in education .

**Table 1. Results coming from the structured interviews.**

The findings revealed that a knowledge-friendly culture may be a CSF of the KM. This knowledge-friendly culture will bring up many new ideas, new teaching methods , so necessary to improve providing educational services.

A knowledge-sharing culture will speed up the process of the joint-curriculum development. Besides that, this also can speed up the decision-making process.

A lifelong-learning culture enables the employees to enhance their knowledge and skills. All the teachers are barely willing to attend training, conferences and seminars after the implementation of the the KM . A continuous-learning culture helps the staff to gain new knowledge; and this may increase the educational staff's competency.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

After the implementation of CSF (organizational culture) of the KM for 6 months, in the University “ Vasile Alecsandri” in Bacau, we may conclude that there is a positive influence of the organizational culture related to the perceived benefits of the the KM. The results of this case study are in concordance with the findings of previous international studies .

The most important contribution of this study consists in providing a proper framework for the development of some measurement instruments for the KM implementation in an higher educational organization.

This study also provides an implementation model of the KM for all the higher learning institutions that are aiming to launch a KM initiative. This study adopts a participative approach to introduce the KM practices.

Another soft elements of the CSF, such as the top management commitment, the participative management, the employees' trust are so many topics, for some future research, filling a complete image of the KM implementation inside an organization.

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