Knowledge Management Implementation in Public Services

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Abstract— Knowledge has become a critical asset for nation’s pursuit of development. Globalization and the advancements in information and communication technology (ICT) during the 1980s and 1990s facilitated the growth in knowledge or learning networks. For effective public administration it is vital to promote integrative management culture by fostering a knowledge-supportive culture – including safe environment, ethical and mutually respectful behavior, minimal politicking, collaboration, and a common focus on delivering quality work without delay. The paper intends to analyze some possibilities of knowledge management exploitation in public administration as well as in various public services. On the basis of the case of Pakistan some steps are recommended that could help developing countries to achieve higher quality of public services.

Keywords— Public Administration, Knowledge Management, Organizational Learning, Knowledge worker.

I. INTRODUCTION

Public administration can be considered as an ecosystem where different entities, from central government units to local authorities, and public sectors agencies interact, cooperate, and sometimes clash to achieve both general and private goals. Knowledge management will assume a different shape and appearance in the government sector than in the private sector. The government’s ultimate directive is to better serve and protect its citizens not for profit orientation but also protecting all sort of issues related to public interest. According to [1], the governments of the 21st century will only be capable “to anticipate a new age of sustainable human development if they ensure not only access to universal knowledge, but also everyone’s participation in a society of knowledge”. A vital aspect of the society’s success is the knowledge that its citizens possess, is made available to its public servants, and is embedded in structural and other intellectual capital assets that can be leveraged internally as well as externally. Knowledge management involves systematic approaches to find, understand, and use knowledge to achieve organizational objectives. According to [2] managing knowledge creates value by reducing the time and expense of trial and error. In case of public organizations it is most important to do the right things instead of doing things right. Being knowledge-intensive organizations, public administration’s professionals should be trained knowledge workers. The smooth conduct of knowledge-intensive organizational processes cannot be taken for granted. The need for knowledge management is argued in various government ministries in terms of the nature of the primary process, i.e., the process that concerns knowledge. The resources including natural resources, geographic location and intellectual capital are important for any society, largely depending upon the functions of how to leveraged and utilized. Comprehensive knowledge management for public administration is very essential because it can play a mid role to make its function effective and competitive. Knowledge management governed by public administration in support of societal goals can provide broad benefits that allow the society to prosper and increase its viability by making its people and institutions work smarter and thereby increase the quality of life for its citizens. As an example, Pakistan is facing critical challenges, such as terrorism, corruption, and bureaucratic organizational structures and an aging work force among others. These challenges are creating a clear need for Pakistan’s governmental agencies to embrace knowledge management solutions.

II. WHAT IS PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

Public administration can be broadly described as the development, implementation and study of branches of governmental policy. Those who work in it should share a commitment to offer public service, are called public servants, and they perform a wide range of tasks. Public administration is the study of public entities and their relationships with each other and with the larger world: how public sector organizations are organized and managed; how public policy structures the design of government programs that we rely upon; how our states, cities, and towns work with the federal government to realize their goals and plan for their futures; how our national government creates and changes public policy programs to respond to the needs and interests of nation. German professor Lorenz von Stein (around 1855) is considered to be the founder of the science of public
administration. In the time of von Stein, public administration was considered a form of administrative law, but von Stein believed that this concept was too restrictive. According to von Stein “Public administration relies on many reestablished disciplines such as sociology, political science, administrative law and public finance”. It is possible to view public administration as an integrating science as public administration is both an academic discipline and a field of practice.

The success of any government to respond effectively to the challenges is dictated largely by its ability to recruit and retain a talented workforce. Nations that fail to compete successfully in the global quest for talents are likely to suffer dire consequences, while those that excel will be well positioned to succeed. According to [3] the viability of any society depends on the quality in supplying public services and that quality is influenced by many factors: governmental structure, public servants’ responsibilities, specialization and capacities, information, and available knowledge. Public administration is always “placed” in a wider structure of governance and it need to understand how their roles depend on the effective working of other arms of the political and policy-making system.

Public administration is important and complex in any society. It governs and facilitates public aspects of operations and life of public and private organizations and individual citizens. It affects most aspects of society. Approaches and effectiveness of public administration determine the society’s culture, quality of life, success, and viability. It also acts as pace setter, planner, implementer, educator, peacemaker, and disciplinarian, all with different emphases depending on the society’s culture and agendas. A competent public administration with sufficient capacity and influence can provide for a great society, but on the other hand an incompetent or dysfunctional one can lead the society into severe decline.

III. INFORMATION SHARING AND INFORMATION ACCESS

Information has the central importance for managing public administration affairs. When information is managed successfully, then it can be used to enhance government agencies operations by raising employees’ productivity, however the mismanagement of that same information can contribute to serious lapses or points of exposure. Knowledge sharing can only take place between people through suitable form of communications during particular actions. Some of these actions are common for both the automated and non-automated information systems, but a significant number of the processes that can generate organizational knowledge are relevant to the digital information only. In [4] the following actions related to processes for transformation of the information into organizational knowledge are considered:

- Collection of information;
- Indexing;
- Filtering;
- Linking information and putting it into a context;
- Dissemination;
- Usage of the created knowledge.

However, the concept of information sharing and access varies greatly across governmental agencies. Only the more process-oriented agencies are prone to information integration in the sense that they are handling such information that can be shared. For agencies that handle highly sensitive information, such as local police departments, the prominent challenges are the ability to secure access and provide just-in-time access to information.

Often there is a tendency for a one-way flow of information and culture from rich to poor countries, but information and knowledge should be flowing in both directions. Public administration can play its part not only by utilizing new information technologies for improving its own performance but also by providing guidance to the society. By doing so there is a possibility that developing countries will be able to show a certain degree of innovative spirit in combining technologies and creating new ones, thus making the best use out of the technology.

At present whole world is facing various problems like terrorism and Pakistan is particularly one of the most effected countries by that problem. Among others, it is important for public administrators to tackle these problems carefully with sounds techniques. Terrorism is not just about physical attacks; it might take the form of attacks on vital information or communication systems, causing disruption and economic damage. Some of mentioned attacks are easier to carry out but if the terrorists are assisted either directly or indirectly by an ‘insider’ or by someone with access to information, then it is very difficult to handle them. Therefore it is important for public administrators to be good knowledge workers to be able of handling information properly.

IV. ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN PUBLIC SERVICES

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are already expanding into developing countries, transforming them into information societies, but usually this remains a privilege for just a few, further widening the gap between those who can afford it and those who cannot (the digital divide). ICT usage has a positive impact on development and thereby on closing the gap, so it is the most important prerequisite in becoming an equal and balanced information society. ICT can be used to expand, compare, and learn from each other and thus for improving performance. But the use of technology should not be the only aim. Papers [5] and [6] highlighted that the use of ICT in government is not only intended to have a focus on efficiency and effectiveness but also on empowering citizens by making an interactive access to and use of information available to them.

Public administration can improve e-government services by providing value through essential functionality, good organization, content accessibility, building easy navigation to content and function and presenting clear information for
building trust among the public servants. According to [7], [8] electronic governance is the application of Information and Communication Technology to government processes to bring Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent (SMART) governance. In view of [9] the institution of the electronic government is one of the initiatives of the public sector that allow for knowledge society to fortify and maintain governance through administrations that are:

- Open and transparent, i.e. a government that is citizen-accountable and receptive to democratic participation and scrutiny;
- To the service of all, i.e. citizen-focused and inclusive;
- Productive, i.e. yields maximum value for tax money, which implies that less time will be spent in queues, mistakes be drastically reduced, more time destined for one-on-one assistance and public servant’s labor more rewarding.

To promote e-government, it is essential to promote e-learning because e-learning applications represent a paradigm shift in learning models which provide the base for e-government. ICT has played an important role in public administration reforms in many countries. It changes the way the government performs its functions and helps reduce operational costs. At the same time, ICT can increase the efficiency of government services. ICT is one of the key instruments that support good governance by increasing government transparency and accountability; this could eventually help to reduce corruption opportunities. ICT empowers the general public to actively participate in policy formulation and help to ensure transparent usage of public funds.

The experience of successful developed and developing countries suggests that putting in place the appropriate infrastructure and widely deploying ICT is a multi-sector and multi-stakeholder task. ICT, in the form of e-governance, have a great potential for improving institutional effectiveness and efficiency and changing the information flow between governments and citizens. The use of ICT can, for example, influence the delivery and standards of governance services, the access to such services and the participation of people in the governance sphere, possibly leading to empowerment of the citizen. Developing countries can improve their public services with suitable ICT policies that help them to fight against terrorism and poverty.

V. SOCIETAL KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Social innovation has a major role to play in the contemporary development of public administration because traditional ways of addressing social issues are not working effectively. Several generations of highly professional, dedicated public administrators have worked their way from the welfare state to contracting out social welfare provision. According to [3] governments in order to sustain the creation of a knowledge society for everyone should direct their actions towards three cornerstone initiatives:

- Evaluating current forms of knowledge to improve its sharing;
- Conducting a more participative approach to knowledge access;
- Promoting effective integration of knowledge policies.

Public administration functions in the modern, democratic society are complex; therefore ideally (but unrealistically) civil servants should possess the best expertise and collaborate with experts with the most advanced state-of-the-art understanding. The conceptual leadership for knowledge management must in part reside with public administration, but must also be shared with all stakeholders. In [2] it is stressed that people, processes, and technology are the three key elements of the environment. Knowledge management focuses on people and organizational culture to stimulate and nurture the sharing and use of knowledge; on processes or methods to locate, create, capture and share knowledge; and on technology to store and make knowledge accessible and to allow people to work together without being together. People are the most important component, because managing knowledge depends upon people’s willingness to share and reuse knowledge. Societies where performance culture and higher productivity are maintained through continuous build up, diffusion, and utilization of information and knowledge will remain competitive among others.

According to [10], “Societies throughout the world strive to improve their governments, their public services and the quality of life for their citizens. Each nation has urgent needs to improve knowledge and other intellectual capital assets available to government and public operations, to commerce and industry, and to the general public”.

Innovation and intellectual capital supported by information technologies lead to a broader involvement of the society into knowledge management and to the integration of knowledge management into societal needs. This can help to establish knowledge environment. According to [11], “Knowledge environment is to get the right knowledge to the right person at the right time”. Societal management is focused on satisfying the needs of society as a whole, generating favorable relations between the organizations and communities where public administration role is crucial. Following [10], “Societal knowledge management is the innovation enabler by providing the driving intellectual capital resources”.

Public governance is more effective when citizens have understanding of directions, options, issues, and opportunities. It is particularly value if value systems and ‘models of the world’ are shared with public administration, however, no society can expect that all its citizens are prepared to build deep and shared insights. Nowhere will the complete citizenry be fully educated or of one mind. There will always be legitimately different opinions, knowledge sparse misunderstandings, and value-based disagreements. According to [12] to have the
VI. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The roles of knowledge and understanding for organizational performance have become more noticeable now then ever before. Knowledge management is a set of tools and processes, which served to improve the performance of public servant by transforming them to knowledge workers. Major characteristic of managing knowledge in the public organizations is the existence of additional information sources and transformers of information. For instance the utmost importance in the public organizations is the knowledge that is being accumulated, stored and processed within the relationship of the administrative authorities and the political actors with whom the public managers are in direct dependence. Usually this type of knowledge is highly unstructured and hard to systemize and automate. The specific of the administrator-policy maker relationship is such that in most of the cases the knowledge is being created at individual level, which makes it difficult for codification, standardization and linkage to other sources and transformers of knowledge in the public organizations. In [13] it is suggested that the knowledge management objectives for public administration in a democracy may be expressed as the intent to provide:

- Effective PA services and functions to implement the public agenda. Public services must address issues and requirements relevantly, competently, and timely and consume minimal resources. They should also deal appropriately and expeditiously with unexpected challenges and disasters.
- A stable, just, orderly, and secure society. This includes preparing citizens, organizations, and public agencies to be effective policy partners – to create sound public opinions – to engage in public debates and policy formation – to participate in processes to conceptualize, plan, decide, and implement public actions – to observe society policies – and to provide support for the administration.
- Acceptable level of quality of life, particularly through building, maintaining, and leveraging commercial and public intellectual capital.
- A prosperous society by developing its citizens to become competent knowledge workers and its institutions to be competitive.

We suppose that the importance of knowledge management for public organizations is based on the following:

- The nature of the public policies assumes that the public organizations fulfill their missions mainly through processing of information.
- The role of the public administration in the policy formulation.

The capacities of the public organizations to collect process and disburse information effectively are determining how well these organizations will perform in formation and implementation of policies. In [14] it is presumed that the “knowing” public organization, that not only possesses information but also transforms it into knowledge, will choose the best alternative among the possible options for solving a particular social problem. In that respect the knowledge management can be regarded as just another stream of the new public management, but on the other hand the increased capacity of the public organizations through knowledge management is a safeguard for democratic governance and high quality services that correspond to the citizens’ needs.

According to [13] knowledge management plays several roles in public administration. Each role serves to specific constituencies and purposes and is implemented differently. Jointly, they build society’s intellectual capital to improve the effectiveness of public and private decision making and situation handling. Knowledge management areas in public administration are considered, they enhance decision making within public services, aid the public to participate effectively in public decision making, build competitive societal knowledge and intellectual capital capabilities, and develop knowledge-competitive work force. When considering knowledge-related issues, such responsibilities cover not only knowledge-related functions within public administration, but responsibilities extend to govern and facilitate other knowledge-related and affected areas, particularly preparing effective policy partners, building and leveraging societal intellectual capital, and building and maintaining a capable and competitive workforce.

Public services organizations lacking in knowledge management find it difficult to maintain process effectiveness when faced with turnover of experienced and new employees. In contrast, a good knowledge management system can enable those organizations to become more effective by helping them to select and perform the most appropriate processes. Effective knowledge management enables the organization’s members to collect information needed to monitor external events. This results in fewer surprises for the leaders of the organization, and consequently reduces the need to modify plans and settle for less effective approaches. Further on, knowledge management enables public services organizations to quickly adapt their processes according to the current circumstances.

VII. CASE OF PAKISTAN

Political turbulence, compounded by systemic corruption and regional instability, has characterized the 60-year history of independent Pakistan. Since the national constitution created a federal government structure in 1973, civilian and military governments have traded power in a pattern described as the “recycling of elites”. In [15] it is stated that the Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International lists Pakistan in 142nd place out of 163 countries surveyed. Unfortunately recent report by Transparency International is even worse as Pakistan lists as 143rd. Good governance in Pakistan has eluded the masses since its independence. At several occasions, governance has been based on personal
whims, influential connections and vested interests of civil and military bureaucracy which is riddled with inefficiency and low performance. There are several causes for the above scenario, some of these include prolonged political instability, weak political structures, corruption of public enterprise senior officials, mismanaged financial institutions, misused media freedom, increased public sector unproductive costs, lower productivity, unmanageable inequality undermining safety nets and security systems; erosion of the legitimacy of the government, bloated, inefficient and arrogant bureaucracy and now also terrorism. But all the above predicaments can be controlled if not completely overcome by introducing knowledge management approaches in public services. Strategies and plans for implementing knowledge management must be carefully thought-out in advance in order to succeed in the attempt and effort. There is a need of modern management accountability techniques in almost all organizations particularly in government services. Weak accountability controls stem from inadequate separation of duties and functions, inadequate supervision of staff, absence of surprise checks, no rotation of staff, weak asset and inventory management, reliance on improperly maintained manual records. To be an intelligent Knowledge Society, it does not suffice to be rich in knowledge assets and to foster their development. It is necessary to have a new sense of direction for this development and commitments to this new direction. These will ensure high levels of security and quality of life. This new direction in development can be formulated through the use of techniques and means of knowledge mass-production, so as to produce and apply knowledge to “be”, to “live together” and to maintain development balance. The current public service management systems in Pakistan do not encourage innovation, favoring instead predictability in a given range of activities. On the other hand, failure to transform bureaucratic organizations into “intelligent” and “learning” organizations, able to explore and find new and better ways of achieving their mission, might signal their declining relevance in the future.

We suggest some steps which can be helpful in improving the performance of public service in developing countries like Pakistan:

- Clear knowledge map for the public sector;
- Clear strategic goals on knowledge management support for government and public governance;
- Integration of knowledge management into governmental and governance activities;
- Awareness of governmental work as knowledge work par excellence;
- *Think big - start small* approach should be adopted.

The top reasons for pursuing knowledge management in public administration included enhancing internal collaboration, capturing and sharing best practices, and providing e-learning. Driven by the need for greater internal collaboration and accelerated by homeland security initiatives, as well as by the anticipated exodus of employees, government agencies are embracing knowledge management solutions to create knowledge-sharing organizations, as well as to capture and make better use of best practices. Knowledge management has potential to actually strengthen government effectiveness and competitiveness in the changing environment.

**REFERENCES**


