

## Identifying Documentation Methods and Experiences (Professional) Transference of Experienced Faculty Members and Less Experienced Ones in the University of Isfahan

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### ABSTRACT

*Until 2013, more than 38 percent of experienced human forces of the University of Isfahan will have been retired. Their experiences are the result of the organization's costs during their 30 year services and unless the organization documents these individuals' experiences, a large part of the organization's knowledge will void by exiting these individuals from the organization. On the other hand, there is a large number of retired individuals whose experiences have voided without documentation. The objective of the present study is to identify appropriate strategies for documenting experiences and transferring them in the University of Isfahan in order that based on their results, the organization's Administrative Reform Commission makes decisions. From this viewpoint, documenting organizational experiences as an important necessity in the domain of knowledge management has been paid attention. The method employed in the study is qualitative. The population includes all faculty members, experienced or less experienced, of all faculties in the University of Isfahan. The method of collecting data was interview. The obtained results indicate that supervisory support and in the next level, the existence of workshops are considered as the most influential factors in transferring experiences and furthermore, the research process in the first level and recording these experiences in the second level are the most factors of documenting experienced faculty members' experiences. To practical satisfaction of these results, selecting one of these managements of organizations as pilot is advised to, in addition to documenting, resolve the challenges and extend the obtained methods to whole organization. The obtained results are extendable to other organizations.*

**Keywords:** Documentation, experience, experience recording, knowledge management, experience transference

### INTRODUCTION

The implicit and covert knowledge is one part of explicit organizational knowledge which nowadays is ignored and in is less paid attention to in organizations. In the present study, this implicit layer of organization which is like an iceberg in the ocean is identified and studied as organizational experiences transferred from experienced faculty members in universities to less experienced ones and documentation methods of experiences and the way of their transference in the University of Isfahan. In the innovative and knowledge-based age of organizations particularly knowledge-based organizations for sustaining and advancing in the competitive domain and superiority and inferiority to other organizations and foes in providing favorable and effective educational services, they should be updated and consistent with the increasing upheavals of educational knowledge and technologies. Accordingly, in the present study, the following instances enjoy particular importance:

- i. Different organizational knowledge particularly implicit and covert knowledge of experienced faculty members and managers should be changed into explicit knowledge.
- ii. Scientific recession and cronyism should be avoided.
- iii. Intellectual capitals should be sufficiently exploited in the frontline of learning-teaching.
- iv. Valuable and efficient experiences of many years of teaching, researching and managing classrooms of experienced professors should be provided for less experienced ones.
- v. Less experienced professors should try to reinforce their qualitative and quantitative level of teaching.

According to the subject of the present study, two main issues:

- a. Investigating methods of documenting experiences
- b. Methods of transferring experienced faculty members' experiences to less experienced ones

It should be noted that one of the ways of attaining success and efficacy of knowledge-based organizations is that their managers and professors view the world with philosophical point of views. How do successful managers and professors pass the improvement steps? By answering this question, they can follow them and pass the shortest path to attain educational objectives. Surely, knowledge and experience are not efficient separately. Like oxygen and hydrogen which are essential elements of water, to sustain and survive organizations, these two essential elements (knowledge and experience) seems necessary. This intellectual capital may be individuals' unique information bank, document, policies, skills and specialty which are explicit and are not easily accessible and should be extracted from explicit layers and their effects on less experienced faculty members' professional skills efficacy. Concerning the value and place of gaining skills and improving the qualitative and quantitative levels of these skills in teaching for less experienced professors, the main skills on which we are to investigate the effect of transferring experiences in this study are as follows: educational, research, communicative and executive skills which faculty members are encountered during their services. What has attracted the researchers' interests to the this issue more than any others are points, advices, and religious teachings in the field of experience and gaining experience during learning, servicing, and teaching. In a statement, the Prophet of Islam believes that experience enjoys superiority to science and the value of this issue is revealed what reasons and issues is hidden in this statement that the Prophet takes experience and experiencing "implicit knowledge" and prior science and education (Payandeh, 2006). Paying attention to this issue that among the interventions which is influential in efficacy of teaching in universities is transferring experiences of experienced professors to less experienced ones is important. This issue is effective in the performance and academic research and teaching efficiency in universities. Nowadays, explicit and implicit knowledge are applied under the title of knowledge management as a key strategy for successfulness of educational organizations. The present study tries to investigate and study the documentation methods of implicit knowledge (organizational experiences) and the way of transferring it in the University of Isfahan and is to answer the following questions:

1. What are the methods of documenting professional experiences of experienced faculty members in the University of Isfahan?

2. How are the ways of transferring professional experiences of experienced faculty members to less experienced ones?

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Knowledge Management**

In the definition of knowledge management, different theorists have provided multiple definitions and each investigates this concept. According to Merwick, knowledge management refers to a collection of regular and systematic organizational activities which are used to access greater values through accessible knowledge. Accessible knowledge includes all experiences and learned materials of an individual of an organization as well as all documents and reports within the organization (Merwick, 2001). To Wiig, knowledge management includes human behavior, attitudes and capabilities, philosophies of business, patterns, operations, policies and complicated technologies (Wiig, 2002: p. 2).

The ability of knowledge management in knowledge-centered economy is essential and vital in the world of today. Knowledge management is defined as a process of adopting a systematic approach for attaining and creating knowledge, structuring, managing it and distributing knowledge all over an organization to facilitate activities and affairs and reuse the best strategies to reduce duplication (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

### **Explicit Knowledge**

Knowledge managers refer to this knowledge as an objective knowledge and Michael Polany refers to it as focal knowledge while Rosenborg refers to it as overt knowledge. Explicit knowledge, objective knowledge is well-documented and logical, which is available in the form of documents and modernized version and can be codified using a series of codes such as alphabets, numbers and ... in the form of writings, documents, voices, images, photos, database, messages and reports transfer it through language. In organizations, people refer to explicit knowledge as formal knowledge, people are aware of its presence and it is an overt knowledge, it is coded and classified; this knowledge is available formally and in the form of data, policies, methods, software, documents, agendas, films, organizational reports, statements, missions, plans, organizational charts, projects and objectives of every organization. An organization can easily and regularly collect and keep formal knowledge. This kind of knowledge can be easily processed by computers and are easily stored in databases (GoldoustJouybari, 2010).

### **Tacit or Implicit Knowledge (Experience)**

Another kind of knowledge is that which play a role in the process of creating formal knowledge. This knowledge paves the path and is the foundation of explicit knowledge of an organization and is called implicit or tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is that which is available in the minds of staff and organizations' memories (culture, codes and ...). This knowledge is invisible and is dependent on individuals who have created it and its place is in human mind. Technical skills and experiences, mind models, paradigms, views, beliefs and attitudes which are formed through individuals' mind analogies are located in these classifications. The importance of tacit knowledge or the organization and staff is as much as formal knowledge. It is not easily declarable, transferable and cannot be copied and its seizure is highly difficult for the organization. Furthermore, tacit knowledge as process-oriented one as is called an unofficial or implicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is transient, instable and bold one which in passing time and continuing the flow of life is institutionalized in individuals and tacit knowledge is not easily coded and transformed into regulations and

laws; it is accessible through observation and imitation. This knowledge is represented in the form of ideas, realities, assumptions, concepts, understandings, questions, decisions, hypotheses, stories, experiences and skills of work attitudes and value systems of human beings and organizations, and contributes to resolving problems, bargaining and decision making (Howeida et al., 2010).

One of the main and primary advantages of experience is creation of a historical image; using this image one can observe and perceive new conditions and events. Knowledge resulting from experiences creates familiar image or images in the mind which using them one can make a relation between what is being shaped now and what has been shaped. Kooter in his definition of experience only considers job experiences and analyzes the effect of general and family experiences separately. He states that by experience he means general experiences particularly specific job experience having obtained during lifetime (Goldoust Jouybari, 2009). On the other hand, Tiji (1999) believes that experiences of an educational leader and things which he learns construct his learnable views. This view covers most of the leader's important aspects and makes him capable to teach what he has learnt and train the future leaders regarding all organizational levels. An educational leader enjoys an overview of values and innovative ideas which provide the bounteous cycle of learning and teaching to others and this bounteous cycle of learning and teaching makes an organization a teaching one which has the following characteristics and features:

- I. For everyone in an organization teaching is a priority.
- II. Great instructors are great learners.
- III. Teaching shapes everyday activities.
- IV. Teaching reinforces the foundation of an organization.

For less experienced professors' efficacy, experienced ones should provide the required mechanism in the field of documenting transference of their valuable experiences by creating developed and systematic opportunities and present extensive plans for quick teaching of ideas and transference and promotion of new methods of thinking and practicing; in addition, they should transfer their experiences to others by establishing open relationships with them (Rajaeipoor et al. 2009).

Regarding the fact that experienced faculty members have gained experiences in universities during years of education and teaching and because that these experiences can be useful for new and less experienced faculty members, the present article is to investigate methods of documenting and transferring professional experiences of experienced faculty members to less experienced ones in the University of Isfahan. The researcher studied the documentation of educational experienced such as activities of controlling classrooms and teaching and the way of relationship between professors and students and educational system; furthermore, he investigated the research, executive and administrative experiences and methods of transferring each of these experienced to less experienced faculty members.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher investigated the experienced faculty members' professional experiences through collecting data and analyzing them qualitatively. The method employed for collecting data was qualitative and was conducted by interviews and methods of documentation. The researchers also evaluated the ways of transference of these experiences to less experienced faculty members and based on the data collected from the participants, interpretation or conceptualization was conducted. Therefore, the researcher chose the qualitative method for conducting his research. The research data was collected from

different resources and in "natural context" (the researcher directly investigated the statistical sample which was experienced and less experienced faculty members) and the participants' life and job conditions were narrated. What they answered in the form of researcher-made questionnaires was analyzed in terms of their content; therefore, the present study was conducted in content analysis method. The method of the study was qualitative and to analyze the data, two methods of narrative and content analysis were employed. The population of the present study included all experienced and less experienced faculty members of the University of Isfahan. For selecting participants in the study, the method of purposive sampling was employed. Since the study was qualitative, the statistical sample was selected in two groups of faculty members with work experience higher than 20 to 30 years as experienced professors and those with work experience of 1 to 10 years as less experienced ones. By using scientific principles of determining the size of the sample and regarding the nature of the subject and objectives of the study, the qualitative design was employed and the researchers collected the faculty members' ideas and attitudes as they were. The researcher continued the interview to the level of saturation to determine the sample size, i.e. he questioned the participants to the extent that when he felt questions and answers reached the level of saturation, he ended the interview.

To collect data, the researcher used three instruments as follows:

1. Interview: to investigate how these experiences should be documented and what methods are the best to transfer these experiences, interview sessions were conducted from experienced professors of each department. The researchers were to conduct a researcher-made interview by codifying questions and making appointment and using purposive sampling method.
2. Narrative method: it means what the narrator narrates, the researcher should record them and then transcribe them and in line with objectives and results of the research, he should reread, evaluate and present them.
3. Content analysis check-list: in this method, the researcher, using sampling methods, usually conducts content analyses on the interviews and what the narrators have narrated (Es'haghian, 2007).

Regarding the fact that this study is a qualitative one, to analyze the collected data, the common methods of this approach (qualitative) were used. In addition, to validate the data, the aligning Methods were used: 1) spatial method, i.e. using some faculties and educational department, 2) temporal method, i.e. in different temporal points, 3) researcher method, i.e. somebody other than the researcher conducted the interviews to minimize the prejudices and biases and the results enjoy reliability and validity (Kia Manesh, 1390).

## **STATISTICAL FINDINGS**

As discussed in the executive section, qualitative studies are inductive in nature and the findings are not predictable. There are only some general questions which lead the path of research. The researcher analyzes the data based on analyzing qualitative data steps which are as follows: extracting meaningful sentences, coding, classifying codes and identifying items. Therefore, the findings are shaped in the research and maybe multiple cases that have not been predicted prior to conducting the research will be found during the research. The present study is the results of hours of working and analyzing 36 interviews from experienced professors of the University of Isfahan which resulted in finding items and classifications.

**Table 1. Classification of qualitative findings**

<i>Item type</i>	<i>Item Title</i>	<i>Sub-Item Title</i>
Main Items	Methods of transferring experiences	1. Indirect relation and unofficial sessions
		2. Face-to-face transference
		3. Creating educational departments
		4. Creating an environments for transferring the retirees' experiences
		5. Apprenticeships
	Methods of documenting experiences	6. Supervisory methods
		7. Objective and practical methods
		8. Workshops
		9. Conferences and scientific sessions
		1. Creating films and CDs
Minor Items	The most effective method of classroom management	2. The effect of research and articles and publication activities
		3. Transcribing experiences and writing them by an experienced individual
		4. Preparing resume and experience records
		1. Using new technologies
		2. Creating effective and friendly relationship
	Barriers of transferring experience	3. Creating motivation and creative thinking
		4. Professors' capability
		5. Classrooms' environment
		6. Methods of managing classrooms
		7. Love and intention in Teaching jobs
		1. Organizational environment
		2. Organizational and managerial structures
		3. Lack of Apprenticeships of methods of transferring experiences in an organization
		4. Lack of transferring old managers' experiences to new ones
		5. Acculturation and institutionalization of documenting
		6. Lack of budget and tools for transferring experiences
		7. Business and physical and financial problems
		8. Lack of information banks and the lack of using electronic communications and software programs

**Table 2. Frequency of sub-items of transferring experience methods**

<i>Item Title</i>	<i>Sub-Item Title</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Transferring Experiences Methods	1. Indirect relation and unofficial sessions	3
	2. Face-to-face transference	5
	3. Creating educational departments	2
	4. Creating an environments for transferring the retirees' experiences	4
	5. Apprenticeships	5
	6. Supervisory methods	14
	7. Objective and practical methods	2
	8. Workshops	11
	9. Conferences and scientific sessions	8

**Table 3. Frequency of sub-items of documenting experiences methods**

<i>Item Title</i>	<i>Sub-Item Title</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Documenting Experiences Methods	1. Creating films and CDs	3
	2. The effect of research and articles and publication activities	11
	3. Transcribing experiences and writing them by an experienced individual	8
	4. Preparing resume and experience records	1

**Table 4. Frequency of sub-items of the most efficient method of managing classrooms**

<i>Item Title</i>	<i>Sub-Item Title</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
The Most Efficient Method of Managing Classrooms	1. Using new technologies	2
	2. Creating effective and friendly relationship	11
	3. Creating motivation and creative thinking	4
	4. Professors' capability	8
	5. Classrooms' environment	3
	6. Methods of managing classrooms	6
	7. Love and intention in Teaching jobs	1

## CONCLUSION

Documented experiences are considered as one of the most valuable human capital. In other words, documentation and the sum of all experiences obtained in different situations and conditions can help companies and organizations in attaining their macro and strategic objectives. Therefore, the structure of documentation, evaluation and publication of

experiences as a framework with scientific and applied method was designed. This structure by inspiring methods of knowledge management, management of education and promotion, Management of Performance Evaluation, IT Management as well as techniques such as case writing, memoir writing, speech, films and based on the concept of learning organization were designed and codified. Based on this structure, the process of the system of documenting managers' experiences follows a five-stage process. These stages are as follows: experience registration, experience evaluation, experience documentation, experience promotion. In addition, this process considers allowance and spiritual rights of documentation. By designing the structure of organizational managers' experience documentation, a ground was provided for processes of registration, evaluation, promotion and application of experiences ads national capitals.

The present study was conducted employing the method of interviewing managers and collecting information from them.

### **The Result of Findings in Answering the First Research Question**

1. What are the methods of transferring experienced faculty members' experiences to less experienced ones?

The obtained results after conducting interviews in the form of questions indicated that the supervisory support and in the next stage the existence of apprenticeships are among the most effective factors in transferring experiences in such a way that the interviewees declared that the method professor-student is significant in Islamic education. In the world, particularly Germany, England, France and Netherland, young professors are assistant of experienced ones. This issue is less observed in Iran; however it was common in the past. In this method, young professors learn the modes of controlling and evaluating classrooms in the presence of experienced professors and develop their experiences and this is the best method. Appropriate environments for doing this method are available in Iran because experienced professors who are somehow old do not have required energy to work while younger ones are more dynamic and active. Regarding workshops, they declared that creating workshops in such a way that it changes apprenticeship from theoretical state to practical ones and these workshops be held by young professors themselves and retell their own work experiences. This is more effective than speeches because speeches cannot fundamentally change human behaviors. Furthermore, holding workshops under the title of classroom managing is an appropriate for transferring experiences. He who enters teaching profession is different from he who enters industry; these individuals should be trained even psychologically and there should be organizational personnel for experienced professors to transfer their experiences to young ones.

### **The Results of Findings of the Second Research Question**

2. How is the method of documenting experienced faculty members' experiences?

The results obtained after conducting interviews in the form of questions indicated that the effect of the process of the study in the first level and transcribing experiences and writing experiences in the second level are the most effective factors in documenting experienced faculty members' experiences. In explicating this research question, based on the results obtained from interviewees and their attitudes regarding documenting, one can declare that research activities are the most important tools which can transfer ideas. Books and articles are long-term methods of documentation. Audiences of a written document are more and now and in the future are used; therefore, one can state that in case that research activities are case-centered and problem-oriented and be defined based on the needs of a society, they will enjoy a structure whose usefulness will be perceptible. If research activities related to



determined needs and missions use appropriate knowledge and information resources of the real environment of the article, the result of the article will be related to realities. Consequently, the experience resulting from the results will enjoy a knowledge aspect and develop learning with executing research results. In addition, in line with transcribing experience, one can say that the simplest method of documenting is that a professor codifies his experiences and findings in his privacy, i.e. he classifies and discriminates issues to transfer the points well. These works will remain and be used by the next generation. Therefore, by creating conferences of transcribing experiences in such a way that young professors use its benefits and after exiting the organization, the mechanism for organizational registration is created and some privileges are considered for individuals as well as some places should be considered for retired professors.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

### **Applied Suggestions**

Regarding the obtained results it is suggested that:

1. Developing the pace of documenting in organizational levels of independent VPs and managements and selecting certain relations for it for pursuing executive stages of documenting
2. Holding workshops for interface experts for familiarity with the importance of documenting tacit knowledge of the organization and knowing favorite and modern methods of it
3. Using effectively consulting services of the retirees in the organization
4. Selecting one of the managerial fields of the organization as pilot for doing documentation of experiences and extending its results to all part of the organization
5. Codifying criteria for selecting recordable experiences
6. Preparing the list of experiences for documenting the call for elites and corresponding with them for attracting their participation and cooperation in documenting
7. The possibility of frequent uses of experience and sharing knowledge, "promoting and sharing knowledge".

### **Research Suggestions**

Finally, to do the next research, the following issues are suggested to the researchers:

1. Using other methods such as questionnaires
2. Using a larger population
3. Investigating methods of transferring experiences in the managers of other organizations
4. Using statistical methods for attaining better results
5. Comparing the results of this study to those of other similar studies in the form of a wider research

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