Spirituality in Management from Islamic Perspectives

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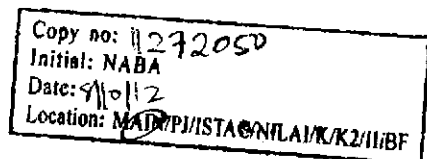
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CHAPTER 5

Knowledge Sharing in Islam: Implications for Practice in Organisations

Zabeda Abdul Hamid

Abstract

Organisations are currently utilising all their capacity in the turbulent economy to try to maintain competitive advantage. One of the best capitals for an organisation is the knowledge of the employees. However, employees who are experts in their field but do not share their skills or knowledge with other members of the organisation are not going to benefit the company and this situation needs to be rectified. Furthermore, it is an amanah (responsibility) as Muslims to do the best we can in our work and also to share knowledge with others so that we may learn from each other. This chapter will discuss some Islamic perspectives that can affect the knowledge sharing behaviour among employees within organisations. Despite some barriers to sharing knowledge, there are methods that can be implemented to enhance the knowledge sharing process within organisations which is discussed in this chapter. At the same time, some motivational tools will also be presented so that organisations may implement them as a way to enhance the knowledge process within their respective companies.

Introduction

It is well known in Islamic history that after the battle of Badr, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) extended an offer to the prisoners of war that whosoever can teach ten children of the tribe to read and write will earn their freedom. The offer of freedom through teaching or passing on knowledge is a clear indication that sharing knowledge

was highly regarded even during the Prophet's time over 1000 years ago. This was further supported by a *Hadith* by the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.):

"May Allah set right the affairs of a person who hears something from us and shares it with others exactly as he heard it (both meaning and words)" (narrated by Jubair bin Mut'im, reported by Ahmad bin Hanbal in *al-Musnad, Hadith* no. 16389)

The concept of sharing knowledge therefore becomes an important factor in earning the blessings of Allah (s.w.t.) and gives guidance in our daily practices of passing on what we have learnt to others. The Holy *Qur'an* has also dictated that Muslims should share knowledge with each other or else face the consequences of withholding knowledge. In Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 159 of the Holy Book:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَآ أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ ٱلْبَيِّنَٰتِ وَٱلْهُدَىٰ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِى ٱلْكِتَٰبِ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ ٱللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ ٱللَّٰعِنُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

"Verily those who hide that which We have sent down of evidence and the guidance, after We have expounded its unto mankind in the Book, these! – they are the ones cursed by Allah and cursed by the cursers" (2:159).

These lessons from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* have formed the foundation for individuals to actively participate in sharing knowledge with each other to benefit mankind in general. From the economic and managerial point of view, sharing knowledge among individuals within organisations will also be beneficial for companies.

Currently, organisations are being pressured to remain competitive by changing their corporate strategies to utilise their employees knowledge more efficiently (Labich & Graves, 1993) as the economic changes in the globalised word is creating more challenges for the organisations in terms of productive utilisation of knowledge (Nhira, 2001). According to MacDougall and Hurst (2005), competitive advantage requires organisations to build and continually replenish capabilities at both the individual and organisational level to work effectively with the uncertainty that exists in today's global and rapidly changing market. Therefore, in order to survive in an ever-changing world, organisations would have to adapt faster or else they could fail in the economic evolutionary process (Harrison & Leitch, 2000). This is particularly important if the consumers are constantly demanding improvement in the quality of service and products they receive as well as requesting diversity in the products and services offered by the companies (Bray, 1995; Conway & Roenisch, 1994; Taggart, 1993). According to Grugulis (1999), there is an average organisational life expectancy of 40 years and those who exceed this 'natural' life-span do so by re-inventing themselves and changing their principal activities. In addition, any information gained would benefit the organisation as Du Toit (2003) states that participation from new international competitors with different cost structures and different manufacturing of production processes are drastically changing and reducing the manufacturing life-cycle.

As knowledge sharing is considered a key element in managing the knowledge within an organisation (McAdam & Reid, 2000), the companies would have to be determined in sharing knowledge among their employees in order to improve the knowledge base already available within the organisation (Labich & Graves, 1993; Maccoby, 1996; Stewart & Curry, 1997). Furthermore, Estiénne (1997) mentioned that organisations that promote a culture of life-long learning within their organisation make it conducive for employees to become more skilled and employable. This is because, according to O'Donoghue and Maguire (2005), in the knowledge economy, life-long learners who are competent, capable, adaptable, flexible and innovative are needed. Therefore, sharing knowledge not only becomes an encouraged practice among the Muslims, but it also becomes an *amanah* (responsibility) of an employee to share knowledge as well as learn more from others so that they may benefit the organisation and the *ummah* (society) as a whole.

Literature Review

Knowledge

It is written in the Holy *Qur'an* in *Surah Al-Imran*, verse 66:

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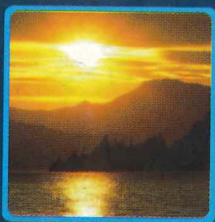
Spirituality in Management from Islamic Perspectives

Organisations are continually searching for methods to improve work environments and workplace relationships. Both academic scholars and employers have recognized that employees are now looking for soul enriching fulfillment at work. Management scholars are taking urgent steps to include spirituality studies in responding to this trend, particularly after the recent episodes of ethical and moral violations through many financial scandals in the corporate world. Spirituality in workplace is now gaining prevalence as a mainstream topic in management theory. Although Spirituality has been studied from several religious perspectives, very little research has been done from Islamic perspectives, and no book or major publication is available that covered the Islamic religious issues which are closely related to spirituality studies. This book, *Spirituality in Management from Islamic Perspective* attempts to fill this gap, and presents the functions, roles, and purposes of spirituality studies based on the learning from the Islamic religious scripture (Holy Qur'an), and teachings of the prophet (Ahadiths). The book covered several major areas of organizational management (e.g., Human Resource Management, Organisational Behavior, Quality Management, Entrepreneurship, Business Ethics, Leadership, Human Capital Development), and discussed the implications of spirituality from Islamic perspectives on these areas. The various chapters of the book presented several conceptual models, which were developed based on extensive reviews of relevant literature. Those conceptual frameworks would help future researchers in designing new research agenda for studying the effects of several independent variables on relevant dependent variables of individual and organizational performance. The conceptual frameworks may also help managers and policy makers to understand the potential impacts that spirituality might have on employee performance, and thereby management could be inspired to nurture and develop employees' spirituality at workplace for enhancing ethical standards, integrity, and commitment to work. Hopefully this book will trigger substantial research interests among the readers for conducting empirical research in future, results from which would provide significant contributions to the contemporary Management literature.