



Exploring the competencies of information professionals for knowledge management in the information institutions of Bangladesh

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KEYWORDS

Skills;
Competencies;
Knowledge management;
Information professionals;
Information institutions;
Bangladesh

Abstract *Aim of the study:* The aim of the study is to explore the views of information professionals for knowledge management (KM) in the libraries/information institutions of Bangladesh. *Research questions:* This paper seeks to address the following research questions: How the information professionals of Bangladesh perceive the views of KM? What are likely to be the skills required by the information professionals of Bangladesh for KM in the libraries of Bangladesh? and what are likely to be the critical success factors for encouraging KM in the information institutions of Bangladesh?

Method: The methodology includes a quantitative approach. The study has been conducted through a survey using a pre-structured questionnaire. A short and structured questionnaire was sent to 50 information professionals who had been working in different libraries in Bangladesh through email and/or by postal mail. The respondents were selected from six divisions of Bangladesh (25 respondents from Dhaka division, 5 each in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barishal and Sylhet divisions). Out of the 50 individuals sent the survey we received 30 responses, for a response rate 60%.

Findings: The results of the study show that that 93.24% of the respondents first read about KM in the literature, but none had taken any courses on KM. Only 6.76% of the respondents had attended a workshop on KM. Findings also yield most professionals believed that several competencies including those in: communication, facilitation, coaching, mentoring, networking, negotiating, consensus building, and team working were essential for KM in the libraries of Bangladesh. This paper also suggests some critical success factors for encouraging the information professionals to KM in the libraries of Bangladesh. It investigates the original views of the library and information professionals of Bangladesh regarding the skills and competences of information professionals for KM in the libraries of Bangladesh.

Recommendations of the study: The department of Information Science and Library Management of Dhaka University and Rajshahi University should introduce KM course(s) either in the graduate level or in the post-graduate level.

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Introduction

In this information and knowledge age, KM has emerged as a current 'hot issue' for many organizations (Kim, 1999). One of the significant events faced by Library and Information Science (LIS) was the emergence of Knowledge Management (KM) as a business concept during the last decade (Roknuzzaman & Umemoto, 2009). According to Gartner Group (1997), KM is "a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving and sharing of an enterprise's information assets". There seems to be a close relationship between LIS and KM, and some authors explain KM is an old concept (Hawkins, 2000), and a new name for what librarians or information professionals have been doing for years (Ajiferuke, 2003), while Petrash (1996) argued that KM is getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time so they can make the best decision. Davenport (2004) on the other hand, consider that KM is distinct from both librarianship and information management; Koenig (1997) described KM as librarianship in new clothes; Rowley (1999) and Schwarzwald (1999) stated KM simply as a case of new wine in old bottles. Another way to define KM is that knowledge management is the conceptualizing of an organization as an integrated knowledge system, and the management of the organization for the effective use of that knowledge (Wang, Hjelmervik, & Bremdal, 2001). According to Watson (2003), KM involves the acquisition, storage, retrieval, application, generation, and review of the knowledge assets of an organization in a controlled way. In this regard, Jain (2009) carried out research on KM giving the importance of KM for the 21st century information professionals, their evolving new roles, skills and challenges, and finally recommended some important aspects to have in place for information professionals to be part of this KM economy. Ajiferuke (2003) explored that many information professionals are involved in the KM programs and playing key roles, such as design of the information architecture, development of taxonomy, or content management of the organization's intranet and others play lesser roles, like providing information for the intranet, gathering competitive intelligence, or providing research services as requested by the KM team. Kim (1999), on the other hand, defined knowledge, KM and considered the partnership for KM, especially how librarians as knowledge professionals, users, and technology experts can contribute to effective KM. Rehman (2006) explored management and functional competencies that would make LIS professionals relevant in the emerging market. In Bangladesh, Haq and Munshi (2005) defined KM, showed different approaches of KM activities and mentioned the modules and processes of KM and also discussed the KM techniques in libraries. Furthermore, they showed the present status of KM activities in the libraries of Bangladesh as well as gave some directions for better implementation of KM in the libraries of Bangladesh. The above review of literature reveals that the definition of KM, its implications to information science or libraries, skills and roles of information professionals that will help them to implement KM in the library premise. There is an acute gap of literature and initiatives to implement KM in the libraries and

information institutions of Bangladesh. Therefore, we made an initiative to explore the skills and competencies of the information professionals of Bangladesh for KM in the information institutions of Bangladesh and identified some Critical Success Factors (CSFs) that will be essential for encouraging KM in the libraries of Bangladesh. However, the rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2–4 describes the objectives, research questions, and methodology and the sample of the study; Section 5 presents the results and discussion, Section 6 discusses the critical success factors for encouraging KM in the information institutions of Bangladesh, and we conclude with a brief summary in Section 7.

Objectives of the study

This study explores the competencies, knowledge, skills, and attitudes of information professionals for KM in the information institutions of Bangladesh. In the current economic climate, organizations are characterized by more knowledge incorporated in the new content, business and services. The library as a social organization has its own tradition to deal with information and knowledge. In a digital environment, the role of knowledge has become even more significant. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the views of information professionals of Bangladesh about KM. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- investigate the competencies required by the information professionals of Bangladesh for KM in the libraries/information institutions of Bangladesh;
- identify some critical success factors for encouraging the information professionals to KM in the information institutions of Bangladesh.

Research questions

In pursuing the above research objectives, the following research questions (RQs) have been posed that will guide the study:

- RQ1: How the information professionals of Bangladesh perceive the views of KM?
- RQ2: What are likely to be the skills required by the information professionals of Bangladesh for KM in the libraries of Bangladesh?
- RQ3: What are likely to be the critical success factors for encouraging KM in the information institutions of Bangladesh?

Methodology and the sample of the study

The methodology includes a quantitative approach. The study was carried out through email and/or by postal mail survey (A letter was posted to the information professionals) based on a pre-structured questionnaire. The respondents were selected from each division of

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