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**UNDERSTANDING THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN  
ORGANIZATION**

oleh

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## UNDERSTANDING THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN ORGANIZATION

*“All knowledge is connected to all other knowledge. The fun is in making the connections.” (Arthur Aufderheide)*

### Abstract:

*Knowledge sharing is the most vital activities in knowledge management processes. Many organization members are still not realize the importance of sharing their knowledge. The perceptions on the knowledge management are varies but the main intention is; when knowledge is created in organization, it is need to be share and capture the knowledge itself. This paper attempts to give a basic understanding about knowledge sharing types, barriers, and factors that will affect organizational learning performance. The idea and illustration graph adapted from previous literatures in order to make a comprehensive overview about the topic discussed.*

**Keywords:** Knowledge sharing, knowledge management (KM), organizational learning

### Introduction

In present, knowledge management (KM) becomes a very famous approach where many organizations try to adapt this concept in order to be competitive in their markets. Servin (2005) was mentioned KM as, the idea that an organization's most valuable resource is the knowledge of its people. Therefore, the extent to which an organization performs well will depend among other things on how effectively its people can create new knowledge, share knowledge around the organization, and use that knowledge to best effect. In relations to managing knowledge within organization, Raja Abdullah (2005) cited that KM deals with both tacit and explicit knowledge in an organization, with regards to knowledge creation, sharing, and how these activities promote learning and innovation. The perceptions on the knowledge management are varies but the main intention is; when knowledge is created in organization, it is need to be share and capture the knowledge itself. Here, sharing knowledge is not only depends on a tangible parts of knowledge such as notes, reports and others but the most important is organization members can leverage and transfer of their tangible knowledge which is resides in their head such as experience, ideas, thought, feelings, emotions, and intelligences(Nonaka,1995). Hence, the knowledge sharing activities becoming the vital parts in organization in a meaningful manners and it is one of the important stages of the KM process. This paper attempts to give a clear overview about this knowledge sharing concept.

### Knowledge Sharing

Previous literature review on knowledge management revealed two forms of knowledge, namely tacit and explicit. Tacit knowledge, as defined by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), is highly personal, hard to formalize, difficult to communicate or share with others. Explicit or codified knowledge on the other hand, refers to knowledge that is transmittable in formal, systemic language. Shared knowledge is defined as extend to which critical or propriety information is communicated between partners (Lee and Kim, 2003). Lee (2001) defines knowledge sharing as activities of transferring or disseminating knowledge from one person, group or organization to another.





Knowledge sharing is refers as an activities of transferring or disseminating knowledge from one person, group organization to another (Lee, 2000). Through knowledge sharing between the person leaving and the person coming in can make a world difference to an organization. This is because knowledge sharing is much bit important to knowledge management as capturing, storing and distributing information, ideas, experiences and knowledge. Then, knowledge sharing is defined as an activities of transferring or disseminating knowledge from one person, group or organization to another with broadly includes tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka and Taeukchi,1995; Lee and Kim, 2003).

Knowledge should be shared because when organizations use knowledge resources, these assets tend to increase in that both the giver and receiver are enriched as a result of the transaction (Davenport and Prusak, 2000). As a result, more than one individual can use knowledge at the same time, and shared knowledge will stimulates the creation of new knowledge. Knowledge sharing is similar to knowledge transfer, but the “sharing” term often refers to exchanges of knowledge that do not have a clear objective and do not require knowledge utilization as they do in knowledge transfer (King and Marks, 2004). Although person-to-person transfer may be relatively inefficient, it can be very effective when the objective and intended use of the transfer is clear.

### **Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning**

According to Senge (1990) noted that sharing knowledge is not about giving people something, or getting something from them. Sharing knowledge take places when people are genuinely interested in helping one another develop new capacities for action; it is about creating learning processes. Linking knowledge management with organizational learning is helpful as it connects the various levels within an organization; individual, group and organization. When knowledge management is held up as being the management of organizational learning processes, then the link with the organization as a whole and its organizational goals is made clearer ( Senge,1990; Davenport and Prusak,2000; Huysman and Dirk,2002). This in fact, seems to be one of the key problems organizations face when engaging in knowledge management as it is often geared towards individuals within organization rather than towards the organization as a whole.

Yang (2007) states that putting knowledge management solutions in place can prove useless unless a company encourages its workforce to contribute its knowledge to the cycle. This is one of management’s greatest challenges, as workers are often reluctant to share information. Researchers (Tiwana, Davenport and Prusak, 2000; Huysman and Dirk , 2002) have expressed concern that effective sharing of knowledge among individuals or teams may not take place in organizations.

Huysman and Dirk (2002) claims organizational learning and knowledge sharing are intimately connected. For long-term success, organizations should be able to learn continuously, to leverage from the knowledge they capture, to apply it to reality and to increase innovative knowledge (Nonaka and Taeukchi, 1995). The process of successful organizational learning, by way of sharing information and knowledge among organizational members, enables individuals and organizations to reflect on the consequences of their behaviours and actions, to obtain insights from an environment where they operate, to understand the environment, and hence to interpret the meaning and react to it in more accurate approaches.

Four items from Lee and Kim (2003) and Lee (2001) were used to operationalize knowledge sharing in organization. These measures were adopted due to high reliability in previous studies. Table 1 depicts knowledge sharing measures.



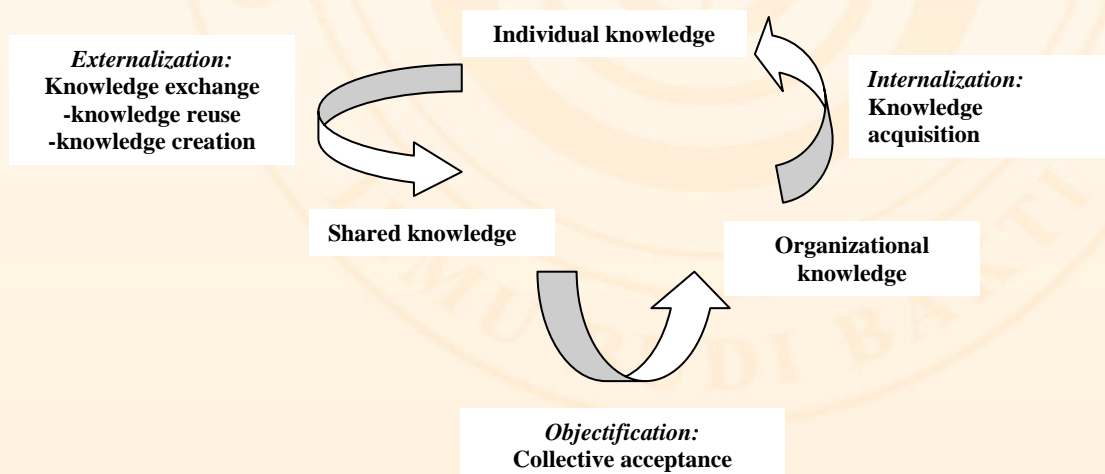
**Table 1: Dimensions of Knowledge Sharing in Organization**

1.	Share business knowledge of core business processes
2.	Exchange information that help the establishment of business planning
3.	Share environmental information that affects each other's business.
4.	Share each other's know-where, know-whom and know-how.

For knowledge to generate value in an organization, whether tacit or explicit, it must have the ability to be shared among employees. This deliberate (or in some instances unintentional) flow of knowledge can become the driver for organizational learning. When probing knowledge sharing, it is important to think the context in which the knowledge is developed, as the community in which the individual is learning can influence any knowledge that is created. Organizational learning is impacted by individuals, groups, and the organization as a whole, and how these three levels are linked by social processes (Seng et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2003; Yang, 2007).

### Types of Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing provides the basis for organizational learning; it is by sharing knowledge in whatever form this might take- that organizations learn- irrespective of the way in which this takes place and the results obtained (Huysman and Dirk, 2002). Organizational learning involves different types of knowledge sharing activities (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). It is very clear for us when Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) clarified about internalization and externalization processes which there are mentioned by social constructivists. Previously, Berger and Luckman (1966) in Huysman and Dirk (2002) book; *Knowledge Sharing in Practice*, described the process of knowledge sharing as consisting of three phases or moments: externalization, objectification, and internalization as shown in Figure 1 below



**Figure 1- The Knowledge Sharing Life Cycle**





From the Figure 1 above, there are three basic types of knowledge sharing that can be derived from the cycle:

- Knowledge Acquisition: as a result of internalization or learning from the organization. This process relates to individual learning.
- Knowledge Exchange: as a result of externalization or learning from individuals in order to reuse knowledge. This process also relates to individual learning.
- Knowledge Development: as a result of externalization or learning with individuals in order to develop knowledge. This process relates to group learning.

According to Cheng , Ho J, S. Y, and Lau P. M., (2009), there are two non-exclusive ways of knowledge sharing, i.e. closed-network sharing (person-to-person sharing) and open-network sharing (sharing through a central open repository). In the closed sharing model, individual has the freedom to decide the mode of sharing and choose partners to share his or her knowledge. This type of interaction allows more personal touch and more directed sharing is expected. Many factors would explain the success of the sharing activity in this model, including personal relationship and trust. On the other hand, the open-network sharing refers to the sharing of knowledge among members of a group through a knowledge management system, typically a central database system. It engages multiple individuals sharing multiple knowledge assets in the system. Knowledge asset in this form of sharing carries the characteristics of a public good (Müller, Spiliopoulou and Lenz, 2005), thus insufficient voluntary sharing is anticipated. Open- network sharing is widely adopted in organizations to share organizational- knowledge.

### Factors Contributing to Knowledge Sharing

Davenport and Prusak (2000) mentioned that successful knowledge management could be obtained through cultural and behavioral change, organizational change and technological innovation. Where knowledge has a tendency to spread easily, it reflects not suitable technology, but suitable social contexts . Van Beveren (2002) has indicated that the need to create the right organizational culture and infrastructure in which knowledge can be created and disseminated is important. Technology can certainly afford by providing methods for the processing, delivery and sharing of valuable information that is needed for knowledge creation within individuals. However, knowledge sharing success does not depend on technology alone but it is also related to behavioural factors (Maizatul Akmar and Yang, 2005; Yang, 2007; Cheng , Ho , and Lau, 2009). An innovative culture, a capacity to learn from failure and good information quality are factors for successful knowledge sharing in public service organizations (Taylor and Wright, 2004).

According to Tiwana (2000), technology platforms may assist, but no technology will stimulate the flow of knowledge without attention to the cultural and organizational contexts in which people are encouraged to develop and share their knowledge. Taylor and Wright, (2004), affirmed that outsourcing lead to loss of organization knowledge. Outsourcing total information system operation may lose irreplaceable tacit, cross-functional knowledge pertaining to the mind of professional system analyst. Hence, knowledge sharing is considered one of the dimensions of partnership quality associated with IT outsourcing.

Referring to Pan and Scarbrough (1998), the socio-technical analysis can be summarized in terms of three major layers of Knowledge Management systems:



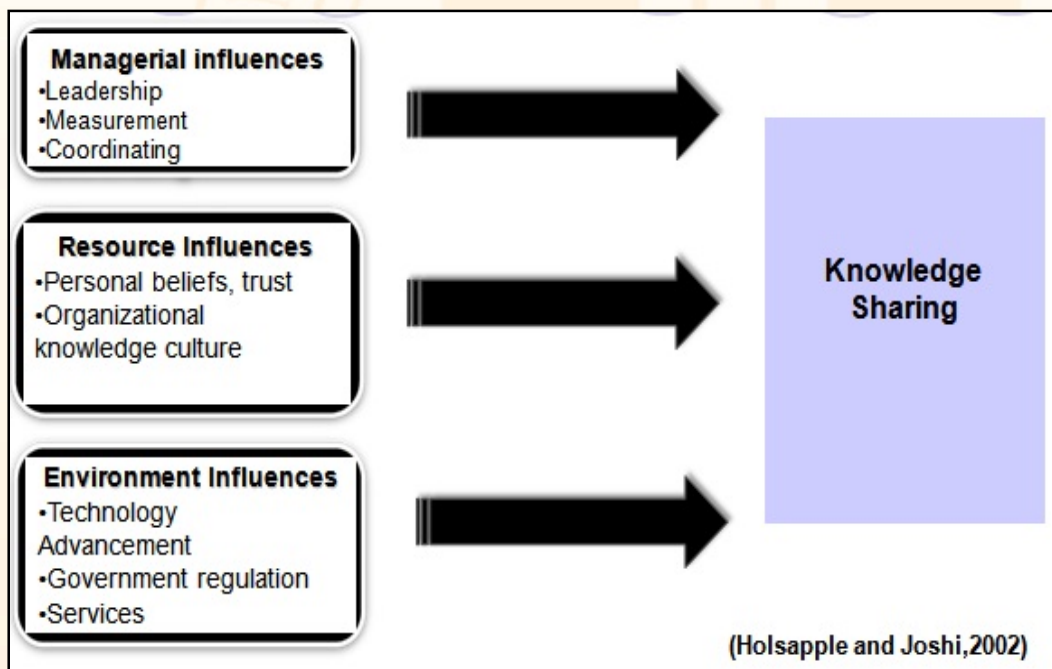
**1. Infrastructure:** the hardware/software which facilitates the physical/communicational contact between network members.

**2. Infostructure:** the formal rules which direct the exchange between the actors on the network, providing a set of cognitive resources (metaphors, common language) whereby people make sense of events on the network.

**3. Infoculture:** the stock of background knowledge which actors obtain for granted and which is embedded in the social relations surrounding work group processes. This cultural knowledge describes constraints on knowledge and information sharing. To encourage knowledge sharing, there should be a culture of trust, mistakes should not only be permitted but also valued, because they can be the source of new ideas and can help to identify innovative solutions to problems.

Figure 2 shows a model of ontology influence classes related to knowledge sharing to identify and organizes issues to knowledge sharing, an often mentioned notion in KM literature. For each influence class, we can consider its connection to knowledge sharing. This model can be used by Chief Knowledge Officer's (CKOs) or Information Professional (IPs) as a guide to ensure treatment of major factors in developing or evaluating knowledge sharing strategies and initiatives in their organizations.

**Figure 2: Model of Ontology Influence Classes related to Knowledge Sharing**







## Knowledge Sharing and Barriers

The previous literatures by many of KM researchers have identified host barriers to knowledge sharing, but generally focus on a single knowledge sharing context. A lack of trust amongst peers is often pointed to as an obstacle to knowledge sharing (Davenport and Prusak, 2000). Employees will not simply share their knowledge at the drop of a hat. There has to be a level of trust present that reassures them that the shared knowledge is in good hands. Confidence that the knowledge-sharing is a case of 'give and take' is necessary. Neo (2002) in a study of knowledge sharing practices in a Singapore news company found that cultural factors have significant impact on individual's decision to share or hoard knowledge. His study revealed that lack of motivation, management support, trust, and teamwork spirit were considered as major barriers to knowledge sharing. It was also observed that 'knowledge is power' mentality was hindering to promote a knowledge sharing culture in the company. Incentives and reward mechanisms were considered favorable components of organizational culture for creating knowledge friendly environment.

Ang (2002) conducted a study to assess the level of knowledge sharing in a Ministry in Singapore. The study indicated that possession of specialized knowledge and technical skills were perceived as source of personal power in the organization. There was a need to implement policies to assure employees that their value would not dissipate when they shared knowledge. It was suggested that appropriate reward mechanism should be put in place to strengthen these policies to create a climate of trust among employees. This was expected to send a message that employee's value might increase with willingness to share knowledge with their colleagues.

According to Wah (1999), there is a problem of people's tendency to hoard knowledge. Knowledge should be shared because when organizations use knowledge resources, these assets tend to increase in that both the giver and receiver are enriched as a result of the transaction (Davenport and Prusak, 2000). For example, more than one individual can use knowledge at the same time, and shared knowledge stimulates the creation of new knowledge. More importantly, this process appears can reduce costs and significantly contribute to overall organizational success by preventing individuals from repeating the mistakes of other individuals.

Meenakshi (2002) and Sundari (2003) surveyed the perceptions of teachers in Singapore schools about sharing knowledge in schools. They reported that teachers perceived sharing with their colleagues very helpful in enhancing learning and also viewed their own knowledge worthy of sharing with other colleagues. Teachers were willing to share and preferred knowledge sharing through casual meetings with their colleagues, online communication, peer coaching, and interactive workshops. They took full advantage of information technology for knowledge sharing but found them stressed because of time pressure. These studies stressed that to make knowledge sharing popular in schools, KM practices must be embedded into teaching and learning activities.

Jann Hidajat Tjakraatmadja, Lenny Martini and Agung Wicaksono (2008) were conducted a study on knowledge sharing at Bandung Technology Institute found that the barriers for knowledge sharing in the institute which can be classified into three groups:

**Personal barriers:** faculty member has not found meaningful benefit from knowledge sharing process, especially when the topic shared is out of his/her expertise or not one of his/her favourite topics, thus has not feel the need to share their own knowledge to others because they feel it also will be useless for others.

**Environment:** faculty member admitted that the environment, consist of other members, has not given appropriate support for the knowledge sharing process. There is little appreciation for those who shares his knowledge and not enough support from the leaders to do knowledge sharing. The organization leaders have not function as enablers to form conducive learning environment.



**Systematic barriers:** come from the routine task that does not provide them to spare a little amount of time to do knowledge sharing. Daily assignment demands even more than available work time. And the performance appraisal system is not giving more credit/score for knowledge sharing activities, thus not being a good motivator for faculty member to involve in the activities.

There are different reasons why people or organizations are failed in knowledge sharing process as we discuss above. The success of knowledge sharing thus depends on the willingness to participate by all of organizational member and fully utilization of organizational resources.

## Conclusion

Knowledge sharing is supported with different goals in mind: to acquire knowledge, to reuse knowledge, and to develop knowledge ( Huysman, 2002). It is, of course still debatable whether knowledge sharing in a specific situation will bring real benefits. Success depends on a myriad factor, such as the added advantage for an individual to share knowledge with others, collective involvement within the organization and the correct application of ICT. Ultimately, the most important success factor for knowledge sharing is the degree to which it is bound up in day-to-day operations of an organization. When knowledge sharing processes become institutionalized it suggests that all those involved in the organization consider knowledge-sharing to be a crucial part of their daily work. At that point, knowledge sharing becomes routine instead of just another task.

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