

Assessment and Prioritization of the Effective Factors on Employing Knowledge-led Management in Sabzevar Municipality

Maryam Sadat Mousavi

MA in Geography and Urban Planning, Hakim Sabzevari University, sabzevar, Iran

Seyyed Hadi Hosseini¹

Assistant Professor in Geography and Urban Planning, Hakim Sabzevari University, sabzevar, Iran

Reza Khosrobeigi Bozchelouei

Assistant Professor in Geography and Rural Planning, Hakim Sabzevari University, sabzevar, Iran

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The expansion of urbanization as a result of the globalization process has created new markets and intensified competitions over resources. To keep up with these macro changes occurring at a global level, cities are required to seek ways in line with new knowledge creation and knowledge management so as to retain competitive advantage across global markets. Subsequently, during the past few years, the concept of knowledge cities and knowledge-based urban development has received special attention within the literature on urban policy-making studies. However, the important point revolving around said concept, particularly in a developing country such as Iran, involves creating an urban management that is aware of the values of knowledge and its related capitals in the city and is capable of managing such knowledge correctly and efficiently. Cities are places where the notion of sustainability could succeed or fail in the long term. Accordingly, the subject of management in cities has become one of the central issues in the 21st century. Such a significance has manifested itself in the increased emphasis on concepts such as city development strategies, good urban governance, and sustainable urban development.

Knowledge is regarded and emphasized as an important factor in sustainable urban development in line with achieving sustainable development in many countries and scientific communities. In the recent developments, particularly with respect to the countries that have managed to enter the circle of developed countries or countries at the transition stage, knowledge has been relied on as an important development factor; it has also been considered as a sustainable pillar in development, stating that knowledge sharing could be one of the main challenges faced in development activities. The challenge and how to mitigate it have resulted in extensive attention paid to the subject of knowledge management in private and public domains.

2. Review of Literature

Knowledge management is a concept created and developed in the private sector; moreover, the background of the study on knowledge management is limited to public and government organizations, particularly municipalities. Consequently, an examination into the status of knowledge management in these institutions and their effective factors can be an introduction to creating basic knowledge structures and knowledge-based developments. A keyword search for knowledge management in the municipality at Noor Specialized Magazine

1. Corresponding author, E- mail : sh.hosseini@hsu.ac.ir

Database indicates that the number of related articles was less than 17 cases, of which 11 were for the municipality of Tehran. For example, in a number of articles Tabarsa et al. (2016), Khalil Nejad and Mehri (2016) and Farashi and Reshadatjoo (2014) have addressed the importance of the topic. Overall, the theoretical framework of this research has been developed to expand the idea and concept of knowledge management in urban areas. To this end, Sabzevar municipality, with a background of almost 90 years, was selected as the case for the present study. The main research question is as follows: Does Sabzevar municipality have the necessary capability and potentials to employ and implement knowledge management in its own organization?

3. Method

The present inquiry was conducted using the descriptive-analytical and survey methods. In terms of purpose, this study is an applied research. Data were collected using surveys. The total population of the study included approximately 330 Sabzevar municipality staff; the sample population was calculated as 177. Finally, one third of the total population (i.e. 115 individuals) participated in the study. The main variables of the study based on a review of theoretical foundations and the related literature involved 5 main factors including human resources, organizational culture, leadership, organizational structure, and information and communication technology. To analyze each factor, 50 items were selected which are in fact, components of the main factors. As for the content validity of the questionnaire, formal validity was employed using the findings of researchers and experts. Cronbach's alpha was also used to assess the questionnaire's reliability. The content validity was confirmed by experts while the reliability was obtained as 0.962, demonstrating a very suitable value for the study.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study showed that in order to implement and establish knowledge management in a local organization such as Sabzevar municipality, first its prerequisites and underlying factors should be provided at the organization. The results indicated significant common grounds between the extracted factors from the item factor analysis in this study and those of other related research. Important backgrounds to establish knowledge management in Sabzevar city were found to include factors such as information technology and provision of its related infrastructure, social capital and organizational culture, human resources and the presence of powerful labor, risk-taking, creative and knowledgeable organizational leadership, and knowledge-centered organizational structure. According to the examinations, Sabzevar city is currently at an unsuitable state as to implement and establish knowledge management. Among the aforementioned factors, Sabzevar city has only managed to receive an average score (not good or very good) in the hardware-related domain, i.e. information technology. In other factors that are majorly related to the software domain of the subject, the municipality is at an undesirable condition with scores below average. Accordingly, a possible answer can be provided to the hypotheses of the study: given the results, Sabzevar municipality does not have the suitable capabilities to implement knowledge management in terms of cultural capacities and social capital, knowledge-centered organizational structure, the presence of knowledgeable and supportive senior managers, and powerful, educated, and enthusiastic human resources. Such a situation and its continuity due to lack of attention will result in Sabzevar municipality's failure to enjoy the necessary capabilities and potentials to provide knowledge-based sustainable urban development and become a knowledge city.

5. Conclusion

The subject of knowledge management has been greatly neglected in Iranian municipalities. With the exception of Tehran municipality, other municipalities have practically overlooked this area. Subsequently, the most important recommendation for Sabzevar municipality, as a local organization, as well as the rest of Iranian small and medium municipalities is that they transform knowledge management into an inclusive, public concern through

providing the necessary hardware and software related infrastructure over time. Undoubtedly, conducting more quantitative and qualitative studies on the implementation of knowledge management at local and non-government organizations, particularly the involvement of municipalities as urban affair representatives could contribute greatly to the issue at hand.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Underlying Factors, Assessment, Municipality, Sabzevar

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