EVALUATING THE KNOWLEDGE SHARING EFFORTS IN THE
CHIEF MINISTER’S DEPARTMENT, SARAWAK

Jane Ngo Siok Ing

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EVALUATING THE KNOWLEDGE SHARING EFFORTS IN THE CHIEF MINISTER’S DEPARTMENT, SARAWAK

JANE NGO SIOK ING

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Corporate Master in Business Administration

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this dissertation is based on my original work except for quotations, references and citations which have been duly acknowledged.

Dated Submitted

Name : Jane Ngo Siok Ing
Matric No. : 09031589
ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the knowledge sharing efforts in the Chief Minister’s Department, Sarawak, Malaysia. The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between individual dimension, organizational dimension and technological dimension and knowledge sharing efforts in this organization and also which the most dominant dimension among the three. The respondents for this research are employees that are currently serving in the Chief Minister’s Depart, Sarawak from Management and Professional, and Support Group 1. The findings are based on the results of 143 self-administered questionnaire feedback carried out in May 2011. The results revealed that there is significant, positively moderate degree of relationship between these three dimensions and knowledge sharing efforts in this organization. Based on the multiple regression analysis, technological dimension was deemed most dominant towards knowledge sharing efforts.
ABSTRAK

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(JANE NGO SIOK ING)
Matric No.: 09031589
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since Malaysia's independence, the public sector in Malaysia has undergone a number of significant changes to meet the ever increasing needs and expectations of the general public and other stakeholders (Official Website to the Chief Secretary to Malaysia, n.d.).

With these assumed roles, the public sector are expected to perform numerous duties, amongst others, multi-task services to be delivered, manage public interest, ensuring public security, safety and community programs carried out.

Currently, the public sector of Malaysia has an estimated total of 1.2 million employees comprising of Federal Public Service, the State Public Services, the Joint Public Services, the Education Service, the Judiciary, the Legal Service, the Police and Armed Forces (Official Website to the Chief Secretary to Malaysia, n.d.). Hence, the public sector is undoubtedly the largest organization in Malaysia.

As such, knowledge has been recognized as the integral resources to ascertain the public sector's competitive advantage and superior performance in decision making and service delivery (Mohd. Bakhari & Zawiyah, 2009). McElroy (2003) described knowledge management as a field that focuses on knowledge sharing which connects knowledge management with organizational learning and knowledge making which links knowledge management and innovations management.

Based on the survey feedback from 94 government agencies and interviews presented by Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG), a consultancy firm engaged by Malaysia
Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) in October 2010, it was highlighted that knowledge management exists in silos within the public sector and only 12% of government agencies claims to have KM strategy. 83% believed that their knowledge belongs to their agencies alone and handing over notes (Nota Serahan Tugas) was considered as a form of knowledge transfer when staff leaves. The survey also identified that many public sector agencies had difference of understanding in KM concept and had minimal knowledge sharing across the public sector as well as insufficient work transition plan relating to knowledge.

As the public sector strives to provide a world class service delivery, knowledge sharing among public sector employees poses significant challenge to management in ensuring excellent service delivery to the public at all levels (Kim and Lee, 2005) as cited by Mohd. Bakhari and Zawiyah (2009). Knowledge sharing can be defined as “a process that involves individuals in public organizations who share their knowledge either tacit or explicit for the purpose to increase performance and service delivery” (Mohd. Bakhari & Zawiyah, 2008). Since findings from study conducted by KPMG Consultancy has revealed the lack of Knowledge Management in the public sector, it is imperative to evaluate what are the significance and relationship of individual, organizational and technological factors which may have influenced the lack of knowledge sharing culture and efforts among the public sector agencies and its employees.
1.1 Theoretical Framework

Former head of Royal Dutch Shell, Arie de Geus summarized that “The ability to learn faster than your competitors may be the only sustainable competitive advantage which is termed to be similar to a newly discovered natural resources since knowledge and continuous learning being a predetermine criteria for business success” (Mc Elroy, 2003).

Knowledge sharing (also known as knowledge transfers) basically refers to the conveyance of knowledge from a person, group or any other sources to another (Syed Omar Sharifuddin & Rowland, 2004a). As such, this study will refer to two theoretical perspectives that are related and supports the concept of knowledge sharing.

First model is the popular inter-personal theory of communication developed by Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver in 1949 known as Shannon-Weaver Model (or Information Model). This model has been used by many researchers to examine the factors that make knowledge transfers difficult. In applying this theory in the context of knowledge sharing, a transfer of knowledge equates to conveyance of a message from the source to the receiver, whereby the difficulty of knowledge transfer is affected by the nature of the message or the situation which can limit the amount of knowledge transferred (Cummings, 2003).

The Shannon-Weaver Model has identified eight (8) key elements that must be present for communication, or information transfer to take place. These elements are shown in the Shannon-Weaver Model below (Dyer, Hayden & Lanctot, n.d.):
Below are brief descriptions of each of the elements of Shannon-Weaver Model (Dyer, Hayden & Lanctot, n.d.):

**Source**
Source is the initiator that sets the communication process into action. The source can represents individual or a group that has a message that they wish another party to receive.

**Encoder**
The sender or source of the message is referred to as the encoder. Encoder takes the concept that the source wants to convey and convert it into an appropriate format for interpretation later on.

**Message**
Message refers to the information, idea or concept to be communicated from continuum to the other within the communication process. However, it is important to note that the Shannon-Weaver model is not concern with the content of the message but rather that the message is conveyed.
Feedback

Upon receiving the message, it is important that the receiver gives feedback to the source. Feedback enables the source to validate if the communication has been successful, whether the intended message has been received and correctly interpreted or further clarification or explanation is required. Cyclical route of the model allows both parties to communicate indefinitely if necessary.

Second theoretical perspective is the organizational learning theories. The reason being that, in order to achieve successful knowledge sharing or transfer, an ongoing process of learning interactions are more and more seemingly required instead of just a sequence of communications (Cummings, 2003).

Although the notion of organizational learning has been present in the management literature for many decades, organizational learning only gained recognition around 1990 (Smith, 2001). The concept of organizational learning was first introduced by Chris Argyris and Donald Schon in mid 1970s and later popularized by Peter Senge in 1990s. Organizational learning theories are recently seen as a focal area in this field (McElroy, 2003).

According to Senge, knowledge is held by both individuals as well as organizations and that organization not just individual in fact also learns. Under organizational learning, the distinction is made between what individuals learn and what organizations learn collectively (McElroy, 2003).
The Organizational Learning Model developed by Daniel Kim reflects the process through which individual learning advances organizational learning (Kim as cited by Starkey, Tempest & McKinlay, 2004). It is important to be aware that an organization can only learn from its members; however the learning is not dependent on any specific member.

Below are brief descriptions of the key elements of Organizational Learning Model as shown in Figure 2 (Kim as cited by Starkey, Tempest & McKinlay, 2004):

- **Individual Learning**

  **Individual Learning Cycle**

  For this model is based on Kofman’s model of *Observe* (concrete experience) – *Assess* (reflect on observations) – *Design* (form appropriate abstract concepts) – *Implement* (test concepts) (OADI).

  **Individual Mental Models** – Refers to an individual’s view of their surroundings, including both explicit and implicit understanding such as assumptions, generalizations, and images which influences the way of understanding and interpretation of new materials, as well as to determine the relevancy stored information towards a situation. This would therefore shape the actions of individuals.

  **Frameworks and Routines**

  There are two levels of learning, namely operational and conceptual. Operational learning refers to learning at procedural level (know-how) that is captured as routines. Based on the Figure 2, overtime, the operational learning accumulates and changes routines.
The mutual influence is reflected by the arrows going both directions. On the other hand, conceptual learning is about reflecting why things are done in the first place which sometimes challenges the existence of the current conditions, procedures and amongst others can give rise to new frameworks in the mental models.

- **Organizational Learning**

  **Role of Individuals in Organizational Learning**

  It is the process through which those beliefs change and are then codified in the individual mental models. The cycles of individual learning affects learning at the organizational level through their influence on the organization’s shared mental model.

  **The Transfer Mechanism - Shared Mental Models**

  Organizational memory refers to everything within an organization that is retrievable, including intangible and often invincible assets of an organization that resides in the individual mental models. As such, the organizational memories relevant for organizational learning are active memory in both individual and shared mental models. Organizational learning is reliant on members of the organization to improve their mental model. Thus, to develop new shared mental models, it is vital that the mental models are made explicit and enables organizational learning to be independent of any particular members.

  **Double Loop Learning**

  Double loop learning involves developing and putting to test deep rooted assumptions and norms of the organization that have previously been unattainable, unknown or known but were not open for discussion.
Individual double loop learning refers to the process on how individual learning have an effect on individual shared mental models that will impact future learning.

Organizational double loop learning is when individual mental models become infused into the organization through shared mental models, which can determine the organizational action. Both individual and organizational learning provides "opportunities for discontinuous steps of improvement where the reframing of a problem can bring about radically different potential solutions" (Kim as cited by Starkey, Tempest & McKinlay, 2004).

Figure 2: Organizational Learning Model by Daniel Kim

![Organizational Learning Model](image-url)
1.2 Problem Statement

Knowledge sharing is one of the key elements in knowledge management process. Typically the most important yet most difficult challenge as it is firstly a people issue and success requires motivation and their willingness to share knowledge.

Knowledge sharing exists when individuals have the willingness to help others in terms of knowledge and information to help them in terms of skills and competency. According to Senge, to share or disseminate knowledge is how individual provide the right knowledge to the right person at the right time (Mohd Bakhari et.al., 2008). To share knowledge does not mean to give or get something from others since knowledge would still belong to the owner even when it is shared.

Cong and Padya (2003) stated that according to the knowledge management survey, an organization’s main challenge stems from the absence of a sharing culture and employees lack of understanding of knowledge management and the benefits it offers. Critics of New Public Management (NPM) also argued that the difference between private and public sector is so great that business practices cannot possibly be transferred across. Typically the mindset of public sector is that knowledge is seen as power and information is only provided on a need to know basis (Cong & Padya, 2003).

According to Kim and Lee (2005) [cited by Mohd. Bakhari et.al. (2009)], as knowledge is a fundamental resource of public sector services, effective knowledge sharing among members of the public sector is an important management challenge in order to provide excellent services to the public.
The importance of knowledge management was highlighted by YAB Chief Minister of Sarawak stated in his keynote address during the State Civil Service Day on the 20 October 2007 that "Knowledge management must become part and parcel of the development of our public sector". Hence, it is undeniable that effective knowledge sharing is vital in achieving one of Sarawak Civil Service's 21st Century new image, that is to be "on par, if not better, than the private sector and driven to produce a world class service delivery" (Jabatan Ketua Menteri, 2009).

Based on a preliminary feedback obtained from three (3) senior government officers from the Sarawak State Civil Service on 22 November 2010, there is still no visible or formal Knowledge Management Strategy in the Sarawak Civil Service and that existing knowledge are embedded in policies and procedures, Job Manual Procedure, ISO, Desk File, work flow and databases. In addition, knowledge sharing within the Sarawak State Civil Service tends to exists in silos due to lack integration and proper management.

Thus, this study aims to evaluate the knowledge sharing efforts from the perspective of individual, organizational and technological dimensions in order to identify the significance of the elements within these dimensions on knowledge sharing in the Sarawak State Civil Service. These will provide a better understanding to the public sector on the elements that enable or impede knowledge sharing, especially at the State level.
1.3 General Objective of study

This study aims to evaluate the knowledge sharing efforts in the Sarawak State Civil Service.

1.3.1 Specific Research Objectives

i) To determine the relationship between individual dimension and knowledge sharing efforts;

ii) To determine the relationship of organizational dimension and knowledge sharing efforts;

iii) To determine the relationship of technological dimension and knowledge sharing efforts; and

iv) To determine which dimension is most dominant towards Knowledge Sharing Efforts.

1.4 Significance of Study

Most empirical studies on knowledge sharing within the Malaysian public organization context are focused on: knowledge performance transfer in a ministry; factors affecting knowledge sharing in higher learning institution and its impact on performance; knowledge sharing in public sectors from business process management perspectives; relationship between knowledge sharing practice and the quality of service delivery, as well as demographic factors and knowledge sharing quality among Malaysian government officers (Zawiyah & Mohd. Bakhari, 2009).
As such, many of the respondents for these studies were comprised of officers from ministerial level and federal government agencies of Malaysia, such as agencies in Putrajaya (the government administrative capital of Malaysia) and higher education institutions, of which none of the studies are done from the perspective of State Government level.

Hence, this study which aimed at evaluating the situation at a State level public sector will provide additional insight as well as to provide a more holistic perspective towards the knowledge sharing efforts in the Malaysian public sector.

This study will also give a better understanding on the significance of the dimensions towards knowledge sharing efforts within the Sarawak State Civil Service specifically, as well as, contributing to the knowledge sharing literature with regards to the public sector of Malaysia in general.

1.5 Limitation and Scope of Study

Being an academic study, this research is limited to the scope of all officers of Sarawak in the Sarawak State Civil Service from Grade 27 (Support Group 1) to Grade 52 (Management and Professional Group) in all 10 units in the Chief Minister’s Department which is located in Wisma Bapa Malaysia, Kuching Division, Sarawak.

This study was limited to the scope above due to several limitations such as:
**Time factor**

As there was a set dateline for submission of this research, this has limited the research in terms the number of departments and quantity of respondents. In which, this may also affect the depth of subject being researched.

**Manpower factor**

As this study was conducted personally by the researcher alone within a fixed time frame through questionnaire survey had confined to this study to a specific department located in Kuching.

**Financial factor**

Financial resources to conduct this study were constrained by a limited budget as this was self financed study.

**Geographical factor**

Sarawak Civil Service has more than 13,000 employees that are spread throughout 11 divisions. Thus, the researcher was not able to cover the whole State Civil Service during this study.

As this study was only limited to Sarawak State Civil Service, thus the findings of this research cannot be used to represent the opinion of the Malaysian public sector as a whole.

**1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview on the current knowledge sharing scenario in the public sector Malaysia, related theories that are related to this study, the research