

Knowledge Management Techniques in B-Schools - With Special Reference to Entry and Exit Points

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Abstract

The management education in India is undergoing turbulent time. This is creating a sad plight of management education in India. In any B - School the most important aspect is admissions, placements and the alumni base of the B - School. The author believes that if knowledge management (KM) techniques are applied in the B - School will probably help the management education in India. It is a bit difficult to study on all the aspects of the B - School Management. Hence, emphasis will be given on the entry point and the exit point of the B - School i.e. the admissions, placements and alumni. To put forth our point we will take a case of a B - School where we will be applying KM techniques.

Keywords: KM Techniques, Logic for KMS in management institute, KMS Architecture, education.

Introduction

Education system in India ranges back to 2000 years. The very first university was set up in India which had not less than 10000 students in its campus which included foreign students also. After independence the government decided to create such knowledge reservoirs that will impart quality education to the people. The management education in India is now more than 50 years old. The first decade of management education was only for the practicing professionals. For the purpose of study we will be limiting ourselves to Pune market. In the last eight years, the management education has seen the mushrooming of management institutes. Due to this mushrooming the management education is passing through a critical stage. The field has unfortunately grown quantitatively and not qualitatively, which is expected from field. The crisis in the field can be explained with the help of following figure.

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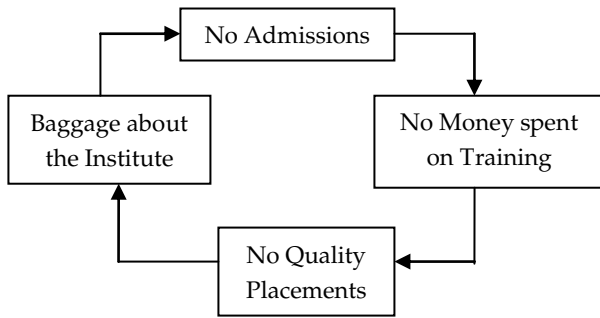


Figure 1: Vicious circle for management institutes

Based on the above figure, it is clear that the management institutes are not able to get admissions due to which they are not in a position to spend the money on the training of the students. This results in no placements and ends up into having a baggage about the institute in the market. The corporate sector has jobs but they are having jobs for the students who are skilled, dynamic and highly talented. Due to the scenario above, the students who are average in nature are not able to fetch jobs in the market. This becomes a vicious circle for the institute, which, with the help of KM techniques may be overcome.

KM Techniques

What is Knowledge?

Data transformed into information and information transformed into knowledge (Refer Figure 2).

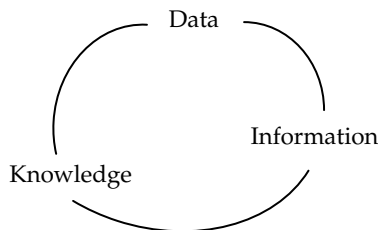


Figure 2: Knowledge Creation

Knowledge can be defined as “the understanding that is obtained through experiences or proper research.”

Knowledge has become an increasingly critical resource, and it is almost impossible to gain competitive advantage without managing it strategically. Knowledge is information that managers and workers transform, contextualize and apply in order to create value for the business, which in turn allows them to remain in the market (Pearlson and Saunders, 2004). Knowledge also occurs when people add their own experience and judgment to the already existing information (Kidwell, Vander Linde and Johnson, 2000).

Combe (2006) divides knowledge into four types:

- **Explicit Knowledge:** The formal knowledge of the company in the form of documents, etc.
- **Tacit Knowledge:** stored in employees’ minds, also called “know-how.”

- **Theoretical Knowledge:** in other words, the reason for this particular knowledge.
- **Strategic Knowledge:** commonly called “know-what,” which implies knowledge that is relevant for decision-making and for adding value to the company.

What is Knowledge Management?

O’Leary in the year 2000 defined knowledge management as “the strategies and practices that are used to attempt to create and distribute and enable adoption of strategic insights and specific experiences”.

The term knowledge management is older than twenty years. The American scientist Wiig was the first to use the term “manage the knowledge” in 1986 during the international conference in Switzerland. Information and its availability are one of the core conditions for market functioning and it is very important for its surroundings, the processes that are taking place in it, the source of the knowledge about the participants of the environment (Legenzova, 2007).

In scientific literature knowledge is studied in two aspects: knowledge as practical information, and knowledge as production, as a product of selling and buying. The first aspect analyses knowledge that is applied to solve tasks and problems as well as in decision making (Wiig, 1993, 1995). That is why to manage knowledge means to form them systematically, renew and apply them. That is why it is possible to state that knowledge is any word, fact or example, event, rule, hypothesis or model that strengthens understanding and actions. Knowledge management means the formalization of them, the access to practical experience, expert data, which create new possibilities to stimulate innovation and raise the price of usage. The second aspect claims that knowledge is what the majority of organizations produce sells and buy (Prusak, 2001). By solving different tasks it is necessary to develop knowledge and apply it effectively.

An effective knowledge management system (KMS) can prove to be a key to success for an organization. KM system may enable the stakeholders, students, administrators, faculties and the management to store, access and retrieve the documents, courseware, corporate linkages and external knowledge repository. KMS is a process through which institutes can generate value from their intellectual property. KMS involves creation, distribution and utilization of knowledge created in the institute. The implementation of KMS can lead to better decision making and increased productivity for the institutes. KM is a term that has not only gained credibility over the years by virtue of the increased research projects on the subject but also through the increased application of it as a management tool within business organisations. In 2000, Rowley (2000) asked the question, “Is Higher Education ready for Knowledge Management?”

The management institutes have started understanding the importance of implementing KM. They have understood that if the staff comes together and works, it will certainly increase the performance of the institute regarding the admissions and placements of the students. If the institute is able to increase the performance level of the staff for these two activities then the

institute will be able to establish its brand value in the market. However, getting people together in an institute becomes a task for management. To implement KMS in an institute the institute uses different techniques. These include panel discussions, regular meetings etc.

Today’s management education is facing the most important challenge of admissions. It’s not that the market is not in a position to offer jobs. However, the market has become choosy and is offering jobs to the right candidate which does not yield admissions to the institutes as they are not in a position to place all the students who have taken admission with them.

Implications of KM

The benefits of using Knowledge management can be summarized as follows:

- KM would help institutes capture the tacit (hidden) knowledge and experience of faculty and student, pertaining to projects and courses usable by a larger community over a longer period of time.
- KM would definitely increase the pace and efficiency of research by (a) decreasing the time spent in doing Mundane tasks/ activities (b) finding the right guidance to derive help from (c) facilitating inter-disciplinary collaboration. This would make optimum use of resources both tangible and human.
- KM would enable the creation of an auxiliary mentor system making the learning curve less steep for students as it will solicit relatable and practical student contributions to organizational knowledge. It enables guided exploration in ones stream of interest and the scope of study possible within immediate environment.
- For the knowledge creator, his/her knowledge reaches a wider section of the community, attributing importance to his/her study and secondly, collect critical opinions on any topic/idea/method leading to the betterment of his/her own project.

Case History

It is already defined that if the admission and the placement functions of the institute have to run smoothly then the team members working in these functions should be very transparent with each other. KMS will help the institutions to learn from the environment and include the knowledge gained from the screening into the admission and the placement strategy of the institute. KMS will also help in solving inter personal issues of the team members who are into these two functionalities of the institute.

A management institute was set up in the year 2004 by a leading educational group in Pune. The group has been into the field of education since 1990. The group under its aegis has engineering, pharmacy and hotel management institutes. The group had decided in the year 2003 to enter into the field of management education. As per their strategy they have started the management wing with MBA and MCA as two courses in the year 2004 with required permissions and affiliations. Due to the boom in management education the group introduced more management courses and few short term management courses.

Problem Statement

The institute since its inception in 2004 never saw a downfall in the admissions and placements. The institute was able to place 80% of the total intake that was sanctioned to them. The institute had allocated team who had a full time job for doing admissions and placements. However, since 2008 the institute is undergoing a major problem for admissions and placements. The strategy specifically designed for admissions and placements, failed in 2008. The institute was only able to place 50% of the sanctioned intake and the total students who were admitted for the 2008 batch were 90% of the sanctioned intake. The placement and admission ratio went down drastically to 15% and 5% respectively till 2012.

The trust has decided to investigate the issue and apply knowledge management techniques to overcome the problem with the help of committee.

Logic for KMS in Management Institute

The management institutes in today’s world have been working on the basis of sharing their knowledge. The management, administration and students share their knowledge base with each other. This helps the institute to create a knowledge repository and access the information from that repository. Fortunately, in India the education field is considered to be pious and is generally out of the reach of competition or jealousy. Hence, no one in an institute is having a problem from sharing, expressing or publishing the knowledge that they have.

The institutes are being rated by different media’s on a regular basis. Applying KMS helps them in increasing their brand value in the market. The plight of management institute is so worst these days that they need to continuously scan information from internal as well as external sources. Application of KMS helps them in doing this activity more easily. The management institutes need to plan strategies for their admission and placement drives. KMS will help them in doing this more easily year after year.

The management institute will work in framework of knowledge.

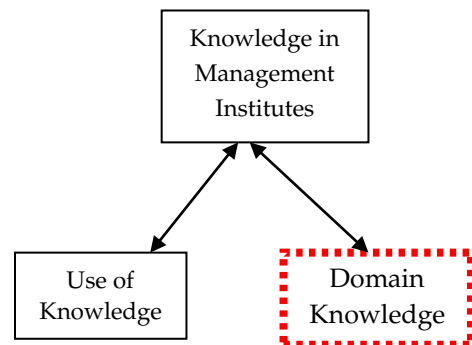


Figure 3: Knowledge Framework

Knowledge framework is multi dimensional however; for the purpose of our case study we have only considered one parameter of the framework (Refer Figure 3). Any management institute needs to collect, analyze and store knowledge with them (Chou and Tsai, 2004). The institute has to ensure that the knowledge that has been stored is domain specific. The objective is to create institution-based knowledge instead of working on personal knowledge.

Case Research

The trust has decided to take some initiatives regarding the problem that they were facing for the admissions and placements.

The committee after investigating the problem found out following issues with the respective teams:

- The admission team is not having cohesiveness amongst themselves.
- The admission team members are not concentrating on the proper channels and market for admissions.
- There is no reference to the past strategies for admissions from 2004 to 2007 that were successful for getting admissions.
- Due to this, the admission team is beating round the bush for seeking admissions.
- The placement team was not able to bring good companies on the campus.
- The placement team had lost contact with old companies that came on campus and had offered attractive salaries.
- There were no efforts from the placement team taken to attract the alumni towards the institute.

Based on the observations of the committee the following KMS was applied at the institute end.

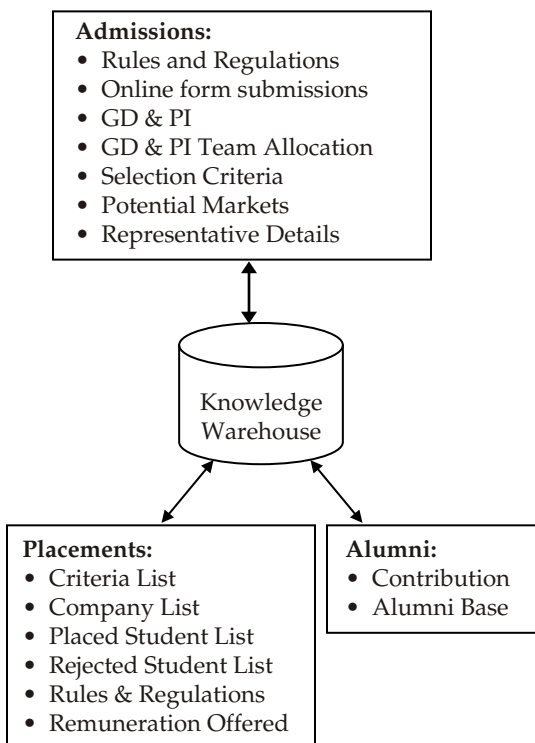


Figure 4: KMS Architecture

The committee recommended following measures (Refer Fig 4) for application of KMS.

- The institute should implement an online system.
- There will be a knowledge warehouse where all the data will be stored.
- It is mandatory on the part of the team leaders and members that they will store everything that they have gained knowledge while completing a process.
- The admission team will store the data about potential market from where the admissions will be coming.
- The admission team will also be storing the selection criteria set for the student for seeking admission.
- The important dates for admissions will be stored in the warehouse.
- The GD & PI schedule and team allocation will be stored.
- The details of the representative that are working for the institute for getting admissions should be stored.
- The placement team will be looking after the current placements and the alumni of the institute.
- The committee has understood one thing very clearly that the institute having a strong alumni base yields maximum placements for the existing batches.
- The placement team has to store the entire alumni information in the warehouse.
- The team has to be in touch with the alumni on a regular basis.
- The placement team has to store the company lists that are going to visit the campus.
- The criteria put forth by the company are to be stored for further reference.
- The team has to maintain proper records of placed students, unplaced students, rejected students.

Table 1: Representation of KMS

Data	Admission data	Placement data	Alumni
Information	Candidate data stored	Company and student data stored	Alumni data stored
Knowledge	Admission status	Placement status	Alumni base of the Institute
What	Analyze the status of admission	Analyze the placement status	Feedback from alumni about the candidate placed
How	Query solving of the candidates	Query solving of students and corporate	Internet
Why	Use of intranet & internet based systems	Use of internet for conversing with corporate	Updating alumni about institute and Receiving Feedback

- The details of package offered by the company to the candidate are to be stored for further reference.
- The rules and regulations for the placement team are to be stored.

The table represents the KMS that will be applied at the institute (Refer Table 1). The KMS accepts data which is transformed into information and further knowledge. The knowledge is then categorized into what type of knowledge we will get, how are we going to achieve that and the purpose for achieving that knowledge.

Implication

Based on the KMS architecture and the tabular representation of that KMS we can say that by designing online system for the preparation, storage and distribution of knowledge, the institute will certainly emerge out with the current situation that it is facing. The domain knowledge that has been created and stored by the respective teams will be useful for the future team members getting added to the team.

IT Implementation

A phase wise plan was designed for the implementation of the system that was designed.

Phase I: The knowledge based functionalities which are related to the core areas along with publication lifecycle, reports and templates were created.

Phase II: Integration reports were generated.

Phase III: The self - service portal was implemented.

Phase IV: Additional repository indexed.

Phase V: Deep integration.

Phase VI: The system will be implemented to additional departments.

Ongoing feedback and evolution of the system will be done.

With this phase wise implementation of the system the results that were desired will be delivered more accurately. To achieve this, the system has to be transparent.

Conclusion

The portal that will be developed will be an online portal as mentioned above. The adoption of this policy will help the entities involved in the process. The approach of KMS is going to help the institute to set, achieve and attain the goals with a rapid speed. This will help the institute to be in the race of management education. The paper is discussing about the participation of various entities involved in the admission and placement process of the institute.

Application of KM tools in education industry is a new concept. There has to be initiative taken by the promoting body to implement such futuristic applications for the betterment of the institute. I am very much sure that the KMS system proposed by the committee will help the institute to a larger extent. The trust should take the initiative and invest in the project.

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