Is There A Relationship Between Knowledge Sharing Practice And The Quality Of Service Delivery?

A Case Study In Three Government Agencies In Malaysia

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ABSTRACT:

The quality of service delivery in the public sector has always been intriguing as it reflects the accountability and transparency of government. As developing nation, Malaysia is striving towards having efficient and competent agencies in serving its citizens. Thus, several steps has been taken to improve the quality of public sector service delivery. In this respect, knowledge sharing has been identified as capable of playing significant role. But study on knowledge sharing in public organizations particularly on the relationship between knowledge sharing and public sector service delivery in Malaysia is relatively at scarce. This study seeks to examine the relationship between knowledge sharing and the quality of service delivery in public sector in Malaysia. Does knowledge sharing among employees could really improve their service to the general public. of A survey of 48 government officers in three selected central agencies in Putrajaya was conducted using questionnaires as the instrument. The result reveals that there is a significant relationship between knowledge sharing and public sector service delivery.

Keywords: *Knowledge sharing, Public sector, Service delivery, Government of Malaysia, Public service delivery*

1. Introduction

It is common that there are always two main task embracing any government in office. These tasks are service delivery and policy making (OECD, 2003). Service delivery is particularly important as it will determine the efficiency of any one government which in turn reveals its accountability and transparency in serving the nation. As such, service delivery particularly in the public sector has always been important issues in many countries including Malaysia (Ali, 2006).

The quality of public service in Malaysia is ever receiving complaints from the general public though steps has been taken to improve the situation. Statistic (Public Complaint Bureau (PCB) (2008) and Ninth Malaysia Plan Report (RMK9) (2006) shows that a large number of complaints about the quality of public service delivery were received every year. Table 1 shows the number of complaints received by public sectors from 2000 to 2007.

Table 1: Number Of Complaints Received And Solved From 2000 To 2007 (RMK9, 2006 & PCB, 2008)

Year	Received	Solved	Percentage solved
2000	3721	2695	72.4%
2001	2769	2549	92.0%
2002	3452	2753	79.7%
2003	3199	2591	80.9%
2004	2756	2252	81.7%
2005	2707	2247	83.0%
2006	3397	2936	86.4%
2007	2941	2731	92.8%

There were 3721 complaints received in the year 2000. The complaints decreased to 2707 in 2005 but increased again to 2941 in 2007. But there is improvement in the number of complaints solved. In year 2000, the percentage of complaints solved was 72.4%. This has increased to 83.0% in 2005 and finally 92.0% in 2007. The increased number of complaints solved reveals the capability of government organizations to respond to public complaints. Most complaints were on the failure in attending or delayed response to the complaints (PCB, 2008). This clearly shows that there ought to be improvement in public sector service delivery.

There are many factors contribute to poor service delivery in the public sectors. The low level of information and knowledge sharing among government agencies has been identified as the prime contributor. Wiig (2002) suggests that knowledge management could reverse the situation. In the Ninth Malaysia Plan, the government of Malaysia stipulates that cooperation among government agencies be improved so as to materialise information sharing (RMK9, 2006). Public complaints ought to be managed effectively and used to rectify weaknesses and repeated poor service delivery.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Najib Razak in his keynote address at International Conference of Increasing e-Governance through Knowledge Management (EG2KM), asserted that knowledge management should be adopted as an effective tool to improve public sector service delivery. It is suggested that knowledge management model developed by the west ought to be adapted with modification to suit the local culture and social norms (Najib, 2006). In the light of such appeal, the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Planning Unit (MAMPU) take an effort by implementing knowledge management initiatives in public sector. Such an initiative is to enable the government manages and restructure the knowledge posses by various government agencies. In this project, MAMPU developed 'knowledge bank' structure in Public Sector Information Technology and Communication Framework in order to ensure that knowledge sharing really takes place among government agencies (Ismail, 2006). This initiative has carved a step forward towards effective and customer oriented service delivery.

Literature in knowledge management field shows that there are only limited studies on knowledge sharing in public sectors (McAdam & Reid, 2000; Syed Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004) particularly in Malaysia. Previous studies on Malaysia focused on antecedents on knowledge sharing or knowledge transfer (Mohd Bakhari & Zawiyah, 2008; Syed Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004). The study ignored the impact of knowledge sharing on organizational outcome. Based on knowledge-based theory of the firm (Grant, 1996; Spender, 1996) which consider knowledge as the most strategically significant resource of the firm to gain competitive advantage and superior performance, this study try to identify the relationship between knowledge sharing quality and public sector service delivery.

2. What Is Knowledge Sharing?

Defining the term 'service' draw great attention among writers and researchers in service delivery area. Different writers give different definitions (Fogli, 2006). According to Gronroos (2001), service is a process towards a result during the process of partly simultaneous production and consumption. Nakamura (1988) relates the definition of service with the concept of customer satisfaction. Service is a process to provide the customer what, when and how they want, expect and wish.

Lovelock (2006) argues that service delivery could be defined from two aspects: behavioural and economic. In terms of behavioural, a service means an act or performance provided by one side to another. In economic perspective, service is an economic activity that creates values and benefits to customer in a particular time and place as a result of change. Schneider and White (2004) differentiate between 'how' and 'what' components in service delivery. 'What' is a product like food served in a restaurant and 'how' is the reservation process, seating arrangement, serving and attention received and this is actually service delivery. Customer expectation of service delivery differs from one to another, a product to another product, a service to another service, a culture to another culture, a business to another business, an industry to another industry and a country to another country (Fogli, 2006). Zeithmal et al. (1990) consider service delivery is part of service quality model as shown in Figure 1.

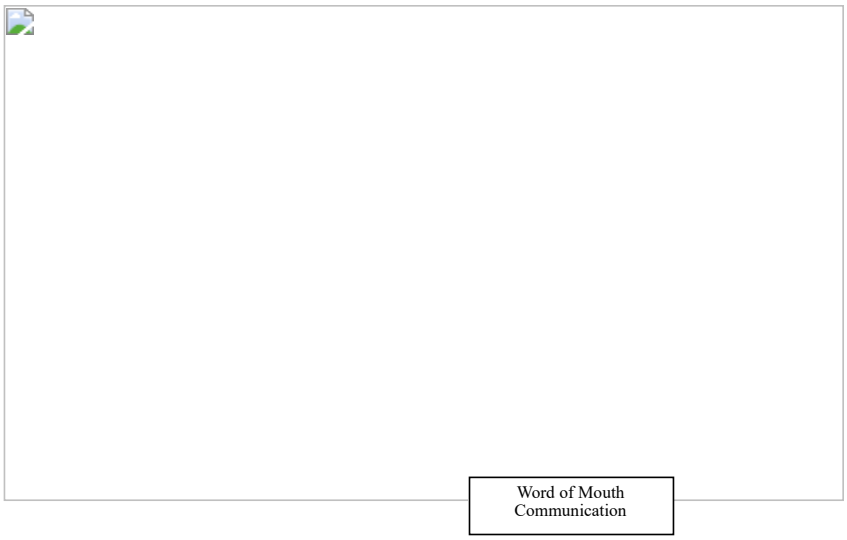

Figure 1: Service Quality Model By Ziethmal Et Al. (1990)

In this model, Zeithmal et al. (1990) identify there is a gap between service delivery and service quality specification which is in the provider side. The gap between service specifications and actual service delivery is known as service-performance gap. The gap exists when employees are unable and/or unwilling to perform the service at the desired level. Factors that contribute to service-performance gap are role ambiguity, role conflict, poor employee job-fit, inappropriate supervisory control systems, lack of perceived control on the part of employees and lack of teamwork. Best people with best training and compensation, and best technology will deliver high-level efficiency and service. Mahbar (2002) suggests a public sector service delivery system model as shown in Figure 2.

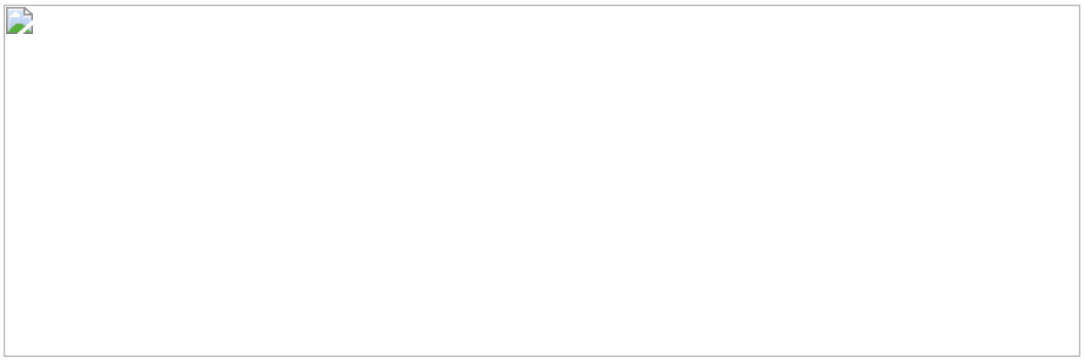

Figure 2: Public Sector Service Delivery Model.

According to Mahbar (2002) service delivery is a combination of two dimensions: Human behaviour and physical infrastructure. Human behaviour consists of attitude, skills and knowledge. Meanwhile physical infrastructure encompasses of buildings, facilities, documents, forms etc. The combination of these two factors will determine success of service delivery in public sector:

- Service delivery related to system and process in providing services or products from provider to the customers (Lam, 1998). Lam (1998) advocates, it requires serious attention because of the following reasons:

- Service delivery gives direct impact on the quality and quantity of services provided to the public. Efficient and effective delivery systems could give good delivery to the public and create public trust, satisfaction and political loyalty. In the contrary, inefficient and ineffective delivery systems will stop the original attention of the policy maker because decision made is not implemented as

intended by the street bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1976). This deteriorates the relationship between government and people, and waste public fund.

- Service delivery could also influence the life chances such as education and housing because this is one way of how to distribute wealth.

- Service delivery could also give impact on the moral and satisfaction of employees. A good delivery system through appropriate training and evaluation could make employees feel appreciated, respected, given courage to increase productivity and commitment to organization.

As service delivery is important to build public trust, life chances and employees' moral (Lam, 1998), it is important to create good relationship between service provider and service receiver in public sector (Pendelton, 1996). Kristiadi (1998) agrees that a good public service management has to be rational, fast, easy, cheap, transparent and customer satisfaction oriented. In public sector, customer satisfaction does not mean to ignore rules and regulation in order to satisfy the customer (Damanhuri, 2004). It is actually the ability to create and maintain good and lasting relationship with the customers. Service delivery means the service provided by public sector are fast, of quality and satisfy the customer.

Today, people expected that their problems should be solved at individual level (OECD, 2003). Customer's satisfaction has become an important indicator to quality and output in the future (Andreassen, 1994). Crosby et al. (1990) urge that customer's satisfaction in the past affect their decision to continue relationship with service provider. Public organizations are expected to be more proactive in delivering service to the customers (OECD, 2001). Hence, policy making and service delivery are getting more complex since public sector deals with a big number of customers. This creates pressure on government to capture and integrate personal knowledge to modify policies and service delivery (OECD, 2001). Apparently, one way to integrate personal knowledge is through knowledge sharing.

However, there is a typically question frequently arise in knowledge management, that is the quality of knowledge shared. Larsson & Ohlin (2002) report that it is difficult to define quality knowledge sharing. There are a variety of definitions on quality such as up to date, accurate, relevant and meaningful knowledge. Quality knowledge may become the main focus of a matured community (Chiu et al., 2006). Knowledge quality shared is measured in terms of relevancy, easy to understand, accuracy, completeness, reliability, and timeliness.

3. Theoretical Framework And Hypotheses

The framework outlined in this paper examines the relationship between knowledge sharing quality and public sector service delivery (see Figure 1). It is adapted with some modification from Chiu et al. (2006) and Jones (2001).

Figure 3: A Model Of Relationship Between Knowledge Sharing Quality And Service Delivery

The framework is used as a guidance to formulate and test the main hypotheses and sub-hypotheses as listed below:

H_1: There is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing quality and public sector service delivery.

H_{1a}: The relevancy of knowledge shared is positively related to public sector service delivery.

H_{1b}: Easy to understand knowledge shared is positively related to public sector service delivery.

H_{1c}: The accuracy of knowledge shared is positively related to public sector service delivery.

H_{1d}: The completeness of knowledge shared is positively related to public sector service delivery.

H_{1e}: The reliability of knowledge shared is positively related to public sector service delivery.

H_{1f}: Timely knowledge shared is positively related to public sector service delivery.

4. Method

4.1 Sample And Population

Three central agencies in Putrajaya have been selected in this study. The list of central agencies was obtained from Public Service Department booklet (JPA, 2007). The agencies were chosen due to their role in planning, coordinating and monitoring the implementation of national policies (Damanhuri, 2004). Policy making and business development are trusted by the knowledge-based activities of government agencies (Husted et al., 2005). The roles of the agencies are elaborated below:

Agency A – public sector human resource management policies.

Agency B – public sector financial management policies.

Agency C – national socio-economic policies.

Questionnaires were sent to 60 respondents. 48 were returned and usable. The sample consists of officers from Management and Professional Group (MPG). This group are middle managers between top management (Premier Group) and support staff (Support Group). Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample. Officers from MPG were chosen because they are directly involved in policy making of the public sector human resource, financial management and socio-economic development of the country. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) knowledge are aspired and created by middle managers who are the leaders of a working group or task force that mediate the exchange process between top management and support staff. Moreover, knowledge is systematically generated at this level (McAdam & Reid, 2000).

4.2. Measurement

The questionnaire consists of three main parts: Part 1 consists of demographic information; Part 2 measured the respondent's attitude towards knowledge sharing quality and service delivery; Part 3 asked for comments from the respondents. Six items were used to evaluate the response towards knowledge sharing quality which was adapted from Chiu et al. (2006). Each item represents a construct of a dimension in knowledge sharing quality. Three items were used to measure the response towards service delivery which was adapted from Jones (2001) and Damanhuri (2004). The respondent were asked whether they agree to the statements related to six dimensions of knowledge sharing quality and three dimensions of service delivery using Likert scales with 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly disagree. The Cronbach Alpha values for the variables in the questionnaires are above 0.70 meeting the acceptable value as suggested by Nunnally (1978).

5. Findings And Discussion

5.1 Demographic Profile Of The Respondents

The respondents' demographic characteristics are presented in the Table 2 below.

Table2: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics (N=48)

Demographic Characteristics and Classification		Frequency	Percentage
ıder	Male	32	66.7
	Female	16	33.3
:	<26 years old	2	4.2
	26 to <30 years old	12	25.0
	30 to <35 years old	10	20.8
	35 to <40 years old	9	18.8
	40 to <45 years old	6	12.5
	45 to <50 years old	3	6.3
	≥ 50 years old	6	12.5
el of Education	PhD	0	0.0

	Masters	17	35.4
	First Degree	30	62.5
	Others	1	2.1
ition Grade	54	4	8.3
	52	11	22.9
	48	12	25.0
	44	7	14.6
	41	14	20.2
rs of service in public sector	<1	3	6.3
	1-5	17	35.4
	6-10	5	10.4
	11-15	11	22.9
	16-20	5	10.4
	>20	7	14.6

There were 32 male and 16 female respondents. This imbalance situation happened because there are more males than female in these three central agencies. Most of the respondents age ranged between 26 to 40 years old. There were only 8.3% of the respondents are in the position grade 54 which is the highest in the Management and Professional Group (MPG). Majority of the respondents have a first degree and been working more than 10 years in public sector.

5.2. Profile Of Knowledge Sharing Quality And Service Delivery

The distribution of responses is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Of Knowledge Sharing Quality

Items	Mean	S.E	S.D	Var.
Knowledge Sharing Quality				
Relevant	4.10	0.080	0.555	0.308
Easy to understand	4.06	0.075	0.522	0.273
Accurate	3.71	0.084	0.582	0.339
Completeness	3.52	0.107	0.743	0.553
Reliability	4.00	0.067	0.461	0.213
Timeliness	3.88	0.064	0.444	0.197
Service Delivery				
Fast	4.23	0.061	0.425	0.180
Quality	4.25	0.063	0.438	0.191
Satisfy the customer	4.25	0.073	0.504	0.254

As shown in Table 3, the mean of distribution of knowledge sharing quality variables were more than 3.5. The relevant dimension had the highest mean with a statistical value of 4.10 and standard deviation = 0.555 followed by easy to understand dimension (mean 4.06, SD=0.522) and reliability (mean 4.00, SD=0.444). Most respondents believed that the knowledge they shared with their colleagues are relevant. They also believed that the knowledge shared are easy to understand and reliable. Based on the item mean scores shown in Table 3, respondents have reported relevancy as being the most important in their knowledge sharing quality. This was followed by easy to understand and reliability. The effectiveness of service delivery shows that to satisfy the customer as being the most important followed by quality service and fast service.

5.3. Relationship Between Knowledge Sharing Practice And Service Delivery

Table 4: Correlation Analysis Between Knowledge Sharing Quality Variables And Service Delivery Dimensions

	Fast Service	Quality Service	Satisfy the customer	Overall Service Delivery

Relevancy	.438**	.416**	.346*	.425**
Easy to understand	.414**	.396**	.334*	.405**
Accuracy	.190	.125	.151	.166
Completeness	.220	.180	.097	.173
Reliability	.326*	.316*	.275	.325*
Timeliness	.155	.164	.167	.174
Overall Knowledge Sharing Quality	.389**	.353*	.297*	.368*

**p<0.01 (2-tailed)

*p<0.05 (2-tailed)

The correlation matrix of all scales of knowledge sharing quality showed significant correlation between relevant knowledge shared and 3 dimensions of service delivery. The relationship between relevant knowledge shared and fast service has strong significant correlation with r=.438 (p<0.01). Relevant knowledge shared also had significant results with quality service and satisfying the customer with r=.416 (p<0.01) and r=.346 (p<0.05) respectively. The results also indicate that easy to understand and reliability had a significant correlation with service delivery dimensions.

Of the 6 knowledge sharing quality components, relevancy showed the strongest correlation (0.438) with fast service, followed by a correlation of 0.416 between relevancy and quality service. Both correlation are significant at p<0.01 level. Reliable knowledge shared showed a lesser correlation of 0.326 with fast service at p<0.05 significant level. The other three components which are accurate, completeness and timeliness of knowledge shared have no significant relationship with any of the service delivery dimensions. However the overall there is a positive significant relationship between knowledge sharing quality and service delivery with r=.368 at 95%t significant level. Hence, the main hypothesis of the study was supported. With regard to sub hypothesis, 3 hypothesis (H_{1a}, H_{1b} and H_{1e}) were supported which are relevancy, easy to understand and reliability are positively related to service delivery. Whereas 3 hypothesis (H_{1c}, H_{1d} and H_{1f}) which are the relationship between accuracy, completeness and timeliness between knowledge sharing quality and service delivery were not supported. These 3 dimensions of knowledge sharing quality had no significant relationship with service delivery.

5.4. The Contribution Of Knowledge Sharing Towards Service Delivery.

The correlation of three measures of knowledge sharing quality namely relevancy, easy to understand and reliability were the most significant to the respondents in this study. Therefore a linear regression analysis was carried out between knowledge sharing quality variables (independent variable) and summated scales of service delivery (dependent variable).

Table 5: Regression Analysis Between Knowledge Sharing Quality Variables And Service Delivery Dimensions

Independent Variable	Pearson r	R^2	Adj. R^2	F-value
Relevancy	.425**	.181	.163	10.146
Easy to understand	.405**	.164	.146	9.042
Accurate	.166	-	-	-
Completeness	.173	-	-	-
Reliability	.325*	.106	.086	5.449
Timeliness	.174	-	-	-
Overall KSQ	.368*	.135	.117	7.201

**p<0.01 (2-tailed)

*p<0.05 (2-tailed)

The results in Table 5 indicate that relevancy alone explains 18.1% of the variance in service delivery. Easy to understand and reliability explained 16.4% and 10.6% of the variance in service delivery respectively. However overall knowledge sharing quality explained only 13.5% of variance in service delivery (R^2=0.135; F=7.201, p<0.01). This shows that the other 86.5% of the variance is explained by other factors. It is assumed that the relationship between knowledge sharing quality and service delivery is

mediated by employee performance. This intervening variable ought to be taken into consideration for future research.

6. Conclusions

It is the main aim of this study to seek to identify the relationship between knowledge sharing quality and the service delivery of public sector. The results of this study are preliminary in the sense they are derived from a relatively small sample that should not be considered representative of the Malaysian public sector. Results of the study strongly support the objective. The relatively moderate correlation (r=.386) and R square value (R^2=.135) indicates that knowledge sharing quality is an important factor that influence the effectiveness of public sector service delivery. As anticipated, though only at moderate level, knowledge sharing quality has a positive significant relationship with public sector service delivery. Thus, it is essential for civil servants in Malaysia to embark on knowledge sharing so as to improve the quality of public sector service delivery. It is time for the government of Malaysia to encourage its man power particularly in the public sector to share their knowledge among themselves. However, this need a thoughtful planning, as knowledge sharing in not easy to embark on since it is an 'unnatural' act.

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