Knowledge Management and Organizational Performance: A Study of Private Universities in Kurdistan

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Abstract: In today's modern global education, universities are required to enhance their employees' performance in order to survive. Knowledge management is one of the essential key sources for innovation and transformation in education sectors. This study is aimed to examine the relationship between the knowledge management processes and private universities' performance in Kurdistan. The researchers used a quantitative research method to test the developed research hypotheses. The researchers distributed 120 surveys at private universities in Kurdistan; however only 113 surveys were filled and received back from the participants, therefore the sample size for the current study is 113 participants. This study is able to reveal that knowledge management is a key driver of education sectors' performance and a significant instrument for profitability, competitiveness and survival. Thus producing, using, sharing and managing knowledge efficiently is fundamental for education sectors to take full advantage of the value of knowledge. The findings of this study revealed that there is positive relationship between knowledge transfer and organizational performance in private universities, comparing with other knowledge management process.

Keywords: Knowledge Management Processes, Kurdistan, Organizational Performance, Private University

1. Introduction

These days the employ of knowledge and information has been growing each day in every sector in order to simplify all the activities and improve the process decisions making. The significance of managing the firms' knowledge and information becomes very fundamental. If a firm does not have knowledge, it will not be able to manage itself to be a successful and competitive firm. In today's competitive marketing, knowledge management systems have become one of the greatest growing domains of corporate sector. Firms are living in information economy in which the main cause of success and wealth is the distribution and creation of knowledge and information. KM as a system has been a central point of argument over the past decades. In recent years, the significance of KM has been extensively acknowledged as the fundamentals of industrialized economies shifted from natural resources to intellectual assets. The significance of KM as a vital instrument in firms and the society can consequently not be overemphasized. According to Teng and Song (2011), the significance of KM has been found not only in knowledge intensive organizations in high technology sectors, but in every sector. In fundamental nature KM is positive to all sectors, be it production/manufacturing, educational,

telecommunications, banking, and even the public sectors. KM has created significant interest in organizations and its management circles because of the ability to convey to firms, strategic consequential linking to competitiveness, productivity, and capacity improvement. KM is endorsed as a vital and essential feature for organizational maintenance and survival of competitive strength. KM is recognized as a framework for scheming a firm's structures, strategy and processes consequently that the firms are able to utilize what it knows to learn and to produce and make economic and social value for its customers and community. Firms are required good competence to grow, organize, sustain, and use their staff's abilities in order to stay at the front position and have an edge over competitors. This paper investigates the relationship between knowledge management process and organizational performance in education sectors.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Knowledge

Knowledge is a more than one concept to define. Bergeron (2003) outlined it has information that is organized, created or summarized to improve understanding or awareness. Similarly, Karlsen and Gottschalk (2004) defined knowledge as input sorts of information shared with skills, experience, setting, clarification, reflection, and originality. Likewise, Davenport and Prusak (1998) sees it as "a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. In addition, according to Peter Drucker (1993) "knowledge is the only meaningful resource today." Briefly, knowledge is more inclusive and more valuable compared to information and data. Knowledge is the most important resources for an organization to make value. According to Carneiro (2000) mentioned that knowledge is the most important asset of organizations.

2.2 Knowledge Management Process

According to Martelo-Landroguez and colleagues (2011), understanding how organizations are able to generate and maintain a competitive advantage becomes something fundamental in the field of strategic management (Zott, 2003).

The knowledge management processes are in the literature mentioned as the knowledge management practices. KM practices are defined here as observable organizational activities that are related to knowledge management. It is an interrelated set of various business processes developed in an organization to create, store, transfer, and apply the knowledge. Knowledge management practices the first stage is knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation, knowledge storage, knowledge distribution, knowledge use, and knowledge maintaining (Patrick & Choi (2009).

Knowledge management practices are defined here as observable regulatory activities related to knowledge management. It is an interconnected number of different business processes developed in an organization to create, store, transfer and apply knowledge. Knowledge management practices are fragmented into a number of stages where the first stage is knowledge creation, knowledge acquisition, knowledge storage, knowledge refinement, and knowledge transfer, knowledge sharing, knowledge re-use (Patrick & Choi, 2009).

2.2.1 Knowledge Creation

According to Giddens (1984) the concept of knowledge creation, a process that interacts with various entities (individuals, groups, organizations, etc.). Knowledge creation is a process of aggregation through which the organization interacts with individuals and the environment to overcome the emerging contradictions that the faces of the organization. This interdependence between entities and structure makes the process of knowledge occur as a dynamic and interrelated interaction of the level of individuals to society. Previously in traditional organizations, it was the only entity to process and process information from the environment to solve the problem and adapt to the environment based on a particular objective. Giddens (1984) argues that in modern organizations, the information is processed, the problem is identified by all the members of the organization, and obstacles are dealt with in an integrated and rational manner, and then the development of new knowledge is continued through working to solve the problems. This interaction leads the organization and individuals to grow and develop through this process, considering that the organization is not only an information processing machine but an entity that creates knowledge during work and interactively to build a positive environment for work.

In addition, Quinn et al. (1996) presented four principles for knowledge creation:

- Enhance the ability of individuals to solve problems.
- Overcoming the opposition of professionals to share information. Conversion from hierarchical structures to inverted organizations or network organizations.
- Promote intellectual diversity within knowledge institutions.

The process of creating knowledge begins with an idea presented by the individual who has acquired or invented it. This is also indicated by (Coffee, 2000) when he emphasized that the highest degree of knowledge lies in the minds of users. But new knowledge can be created through R & D, experimentation, learning lessons and creative thinking. The representation and absorption of knowledge refers to the acquisition of knowledge. It is worth noting here that individuals and organizations differ in the ability to absorb and represent knowledge for a number of reasons, such as absorptive capacity, and potential communication between source and target. Vorbeck and Finke (2001) pointed out that the efficiency of knowledge generation depends on the ability of the organization and its individuals to learn and communicate. Ferjani (2001) pointed out, to knowledge is gained across three ways: learning, research, and technical development.

2.2.2 Knowledge Acquisition

Acquiring knowledge relates to the organization's acquisition process which facilitates the creation of implicit and explicit knowledge, ranging from individuals, integration and organizational level, as well as identification and assimilation of information and external knowledge (Gold et al, 2001; Huber, 1991) The organization through the learning process, the second acquisition of external knowledge, arise through working with others, organizations, and external consulting.

2.2.3 Knowledge Transfer and Sharing

Knowledge as an increasingly common use and participation, and in the exchange of ideas, experiences and interpersonal skills, grows and grows in each, so organizations have sought to encourage participation. Knowledge distribution is those processes that include: distribution, publishing and distribution, flow, transportation, moving.

According to (Padarco, 1993) identified four conditions for the transfer of knowledge:

1. There must be a way to transfer knowledge, and this method may be a person may be something else.
2. This method must be aware of and fully aware of this knowledge and content and also able to transmit.
3. The instrument shall have the incentive to do so.
4. There should be no impediments to this transfer of knowledge.

In this regard, the role of communities of practice that share knowledge and the technical agent model that transfers and distributes knowledge across industries is indicated (Heisig &Vorbeck, 2000). There are several methods of knowledge distribution:

1. The project teams are ideologically diverse for internal distribution.
2. Intranet
3. Training by old colleagues.
4. Knowledge agents.
5. Internal communities through documents.
6. Expert teams, knowledge rings and learning workshops.

The knowledge management experience with the educational background confirms that training enhances user knowledge, while others interested in interpersonal relationships are responsible for the methods of sharing knowledge among teams and working groups. Attention should be paid to three important points:

1- Sharing knowledge requires a shift from individual to collective work.
2- The difference in style and nature of participation depending on the type of knowledge.
3- Sharing knowledge is different from sharing information because the latter does not include the element of thinking.

Training and dialogue techniques are appropriate for the distribution of implicit knowledge. The visible knowledge can be disseminated with internal documents, brochures and learning. The important thing in distribution is to ensure that appropriate knowledge reaches the person who is looking for it in a timely manner.

2.2.4 Knowledge Re-use

The purpose of knowledge management is to re-use the knowledge available to the organization. This application is the most prominent of its operations. This process refers to: use, reuse, utilization, and

applying.

Successful knowledge management is the one that uses the knowledge at the right time, without losing the opportunity to be available to achieve an advantage or to solve a problem. Burk (1999) noted that knowledge-seeking institutions have to set the knowledge manager, who has the duty to stimulate good application, and that he acts as a component dedicated to applications of knowledge sharing and audit implementation, and emphasizes that use and reuse include informal communication and reporting, good applications, successful stories and other forms including presentation and training sessions. Modern technology, especially the Internet, has provided more opportunities to use knowledge and reuse it far from where it was generated. The re-use of knowledge allows new individual group learning processes, which lead to the creation of new knowledge. Hence, knowledge management processes are called closed loop.

Knowledge must be employed in solving and adapting to the problems facing the institution, in addition to the application of knowledge must aim at achieving the broad goals and objectives for which growth and adaptation are achieved. This necessarily leads to the interdependence of the knowledge management strategy with the enterprise strategy as a whole. For example, if customer service is of strategic importance, it is the first candidate to apply knowledge. The re-use of knowledge is the goal of knowledge management. It means investing knowledge. Getting, storing and participating in it are not enough what is important is to transform this knowledge into implementation. Knowledge that does not reflect implementation is merely a cost. The success of any organization in its knowledge management programs depends on the volume of knowledge implemented compared to what is available to them. The gap between what you know and what you have implemented is one of the most important evaluation criteria in this area. In order for institutions to implement what they know to define the model, knowledge management models are what guide administrations to how knowledge is invested and turned into implementation.

2.2.5 Knowledge Storage

Are those processes which include: Keeping, Sustainability, Maintenance, Search, Access, recovery? The process of storage of knowledge refers to the importance of organizational memory. Organizations that face a high risk due to the loss of the knowledge of the individuals they leave for one reason or another. The storage and retention of knowledge is very important especially for institutions that have high rates of turnover, Temporary contracts and consultancy to generate knowledge, because they take their implicit knowledge is not documented with them, but the documented remains stored in the rules.

2.2.6 Refinement

According to King (2009), at the refinement stage, knowledge is organized into useful forms for the organization. Knowledge is then transformed into written materials or knowledge bases. This makes knowledge capable of achieving benefits for the organization.

2.3 Knowledge Management in Organization

Knowledge management “is understanding the organization’s information flows and implementing organizational learning practices which make explicit key aspects of its knowledge base. It is about

enhancing the use of organizational knowledge through sound practices of information management and organizational learning" (Broadbent, 1997). Human is the cornerstone of asset management, as knowledge management is carried out by members of the organization to provide protection and raise the level of knowledge management in the organization.

To maintain and develop organizations in the top ranks and have an advantage over competitors it needs a good capabilities to use within the organization, knowledge distribution is the key to understanding the success and failures of knowledge management within the organization (Riege, 2007). In addition, managing knowledge is the one of successful organization, improve plans as to how to achieve this objective and apply time and energy to these efforts.

According to Bousa and Venkitachalam, 2013; Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, 1997; Kamhawi, 2012 the application of time and improvement of plans to achieve the objectives of the organization are among the main points of a successful organization and this is coming through knowledge management, which is the main organizational performance and the security of the most important resources for the development of the organization Changes in the environment such as information speed, competition markets, and increased globalization of competition have given rise to increased interest in knowledge management, (Bosua &Venkitachalem, 2013; Greiner, Bohmann & Krcmar, 2007). Martensson (2000) considers that productivity of the public and private sectors Knowledge management for managers is essential for organizations to stay in the competitive market at the required level.

2.4 Organizational Performance

The organizational performance of the researchers in the field of management is the final approved variable, where the researchers considered competition in the market and capital as a necessary organizational performance for the survival of business success, where the contribution of the organizational performance of the organizations with marketing, operations, human resources and this contributed to the evaluation of organizational performance with Competitors and the course of the company's development over time, and the final evaluation criterion is reflected in its use as a dependent variable (Richard, et al., 2009).

The key element of the organization is the relationships between people with each other to build a set of goals and policies that interact to perform the career effectively to achieve the goals. Recently, in the new management approach trends to human resources, works organization to separate departments or groups of activities, horizontal coordination of work activities, and use of staff teams from different functional areas. In modern times, the boundaries between management and organization have become more flexible and more responsive to changes in the external environment that facing companies than competitors and customers, where exchange of information and cooperation with competitors is a mutual interest, according to (Daft, 2009).

The work of knowledge requires more collaboration than it allows business administration and hierarchical way to organizational knowledge. New Defend (Davenport & Brusac, 1998) an organization in age knowledge is the one that learns, works on the best basis available Information, and knowledge. All of these developments have created a strong and deliberate need a systematic approach to the cultivation and sharing of the knowledge base of the company. In order to be successful in today's

organizational challenge, the environment of companies need to learn from past mistakes. Organizational knowledge is not intended to replace Individual knowledge but to complete it by making it stronger and more coherent, and more broadly applied.

3.1 Conceptual Framework

3.1.1 Research Model

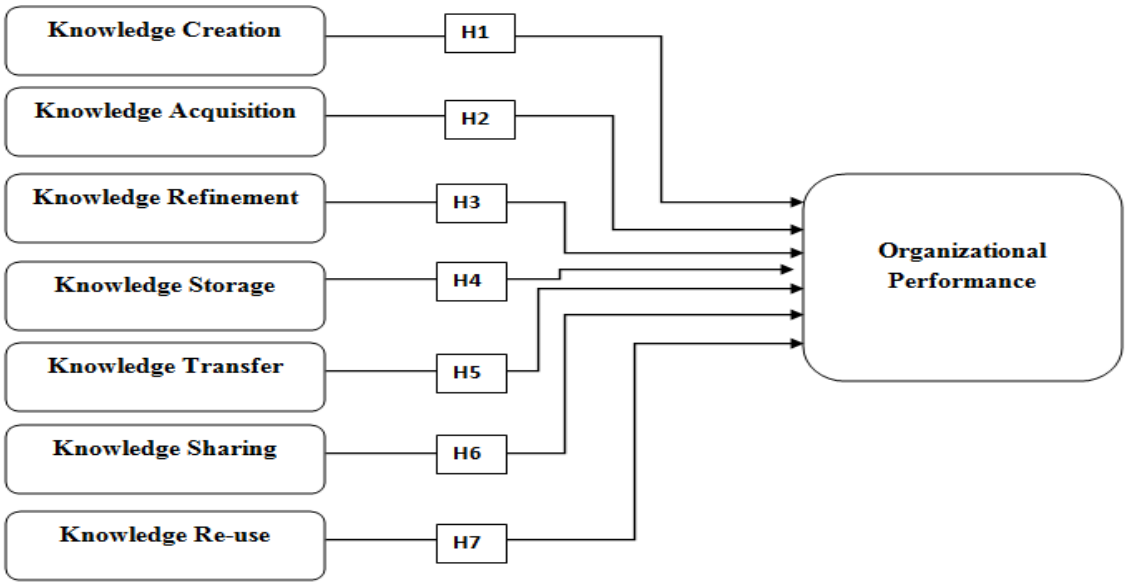

Figure 1: Research Model

3.1.2 Research Hypotheses:

H1: There is positive relationship between knowledge creation and organizational performance in private universities

H2: There is positive relationship between knowledge acquisition and organizational performance in private universities

H3: There is positive relationship between knowledge refinement and organizational performance in private universities

H4: There is positive relationship between knowledge storage and organizational performance in private universities

H5: There is positive relationship between knowledge transfer and organizational performance in private universities

H6: There is positive relationship between knowledge sharing and organizational performance in private universities

H7: There is positive relationship between knowledge re-use and organizational performance in private universities

4. Methodology

The researchers used a quantitative research method to test the developed research hypotheses. Currently there are 12 private universities in Kurdistan. Based on the participants' request, the researchers kept companies identity confidentially; therefore the researchers kept any identifying information out of published reports. The researchers distributed 120 surveys at private universities in Kurdistan; however only 113 surveys were filled and received back from the participants, therefore the sample size for the current study is 113 participants.

5. Analysis

5.1 Demographic Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Analysis

Items		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	69	61.1
	Female	44	38.9
Marital status	Single	48	44.4
	Married	60	55.6
Level of education	Bachelor	16	14.2
	Master	61	54.0
	PhD	36	31.9

As seen in table (1) demographic analysis for respondents participated in this research. Based on to the descriptive analysis, the researchers were able to analyze respondents' background information. Concerning the respondents' gender; it was found that 69 male from total of 113 respondents participated in this research and 44 female from total of 113 respondents participated in this research. Concerning the of respondents' marital status; it was found that 60 married respondents participated in this study and 48 single respondents participated in this study. Concerning the respondents' level of education; it was found that 16 respondents from total of 113 respondents had obtained college degree, 61 respondents from total of 113 respondents had obtained master degree, and 36 respondents from total of 113 respondents had obtained PhD degree.

Table 2- Reliability Analysis

Variables	Item N.	Cronbach's Alpha
Knowledge Creation	9	.812
Knowledge Acquisition	9	.782
Knowledge Refinement	9	.776
Knowledge Storage	9	.779
Knowledge Transfer	9	.755
Knowledge Sharing	9	.787
Organizational Performance	11	.877

The researchers implemented reliability analysis to (as seen in table-2) the values of Cronbach's Alpha for knowledge creation as independent factor, found to be .812 > .6 this indicates that the items used to measure knowledge creation factor were reliable for the current study, the values of Cronbach's Alpha for knowledge acquisition as independent factor, found to be .782 > .6 this indicates that the items used to measure knowledge acquisition factor were reliable for the current study, the values of Cronbach's Alpha for refinement as independent factor, found to be .776 > .6 this indicates that the items used to measure knowledge refinement factor were reliable for the current study, the values of Cronbach's Alpha for knowledge storage as independent factor, found to be .779 > .6 this indicates that the items used to measure knowledge storage factor were reliable for the current study, the values of Cronbach's Alpha for knowledge transfer as independent factor, found to be .755 > .6 this indicates that the items used to measure knowledge transfer factor were reliable for the current study, the values of Cronbach's Alpha for knowledge sharing as independent factor, found to be .787 > .6 this indicates that the items used to measure knowledge sharing factor were reliable for the current study, and the values of Cronbach's Alpha for organizational performance as dependent factor, found to be .877 > .6 this indicates that the items used to measure organizational performance factor were reliable for the current study. However, the results revealed that all items used to measure the relationship between all independent factors and dependent factor were reliable for the current research.

Table 1- Correlation Analysis

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Knowledge creation	Pearson Correlation	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)							
	N	113						
Knowledge acquisition	Pearson Correlation	.481**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000						
	N	113	113					
Knowledge refinement	Pearson Correlation	.472**	.578**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000					
	N	113	113	113				
Knowledge storage	Pearson Correlation	.472**	.587**	.804**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000				
	N	113	113	113	113			
Knowledge transfer	Pearson Correlation	.653**	.799**	.659**	.716**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N	113	113	113	113	113		
Knowledge sharing	Pearson Correlation	.824**	.676**	.559**	.546**	.682**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	113	113	113	113	113	113	
Knowledge re-use	Pearson Correlation	.793**	.582**	.420**	.328**	.511**	.704**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

	N	113	113	113	113	113	113	113
Organizational performance	Pearson Correlation	.587**	.574**	.454**	.474*	.699**	.602**	.557**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	108	108	108	108	108	108	108

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The researchers attempted to find the correlation between seven independent variables and a dependent variable, therefore the correlation analysis was implemented (as seen in table-3). It was found that the value of Pearson correlation for knowledge creation = .587** > .0.01 therefore there is a positive and significant correlation between knowledge creation and organizational performance, in terms of the strength it was found to be a moderate correlation, the value of Pearson correlation for knowledge acquisition = .574 ** > .0.01 therefore there is a positive and significant correlation between knowledge acquisition and organizational performance, in terms of the strength it was found to be a moderate correlation, the value of Pearson correlation for knowledge refinement = .454** > .0.01 therefore there is a positive and significant correlation between knowledge refinement and organizational performance, in terms of the strength it was found to be a weak correlation, the value of Pearson correlation for knowledge storage = .474**> .0.01 therefore there is a positive and significant correlation between knowledge storage and organizational performance, in terms of the strength it was found to be a weak correlation, the value of Pearson correlation for knowledge transfer = .699**> .0.01 therefore there is a positive and significant correlation between knowledge transfer and organizational performance, in terms of the strength it was found to be a strong correlation, the value of Pearson correlation for knowledge sharing = 602**> .0.01 therefore there is a positive and significant correlation between knowledge sharing and organizational performance, in terms of the strength it was found to be a strong correlation, and the value of Pearson correlation for knowledge re-use = .557**> .0.01 therefore there is a positive and significant correlation between knowledge re-use and organizational performance, in terms of the strength it was found to be a weak moderate.

Table 2- Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.746[a]	.556	.553	.31736

a. Predictors: (Constant), re-use, storage, acquisition, sharing, refinement, transfer, creation

It was found that the value of R square = .556 (as seen in table-4) this indicates that 56% of the variables have been explained.

Table 3-ANOVA

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	124.152	7	17.736	176.098	.000[b]
	Residual	99.005	983	.101		
	Total	223.157	990			

a. Dependent Variable: satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), re-use, storage, acquisition, sharing, refinement, transfer, creation

It was found the value F = 176.098and since the value is greater than .001, this indicates that that there is a positive association between variables used to test research hypotheses.

Table 4-Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.869	.101		8.587	.000
	Knowledge creation	-.196	.055	-.214	-3.564	.000
	Knowledge acquisition	-.230	.051	-.222	-4.467	.000
	Knowledge refinement	-.063	.032	-.076	-2.002	.046
	Knowledge storage	.008	.036	.009	.231	.817
	Knowledge transfer	.684	.048	.728	14.222	.000
	Knowledge sharing	.196	.043	.214	4.540	.000
	Knowledge re-use	.361	.044	.361	8.188	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

The researchers utilized multiple regression analysis to find the most effective and suitable factors increasing level of organizational performance in private universities in Kurdistan. It was found that the value of B for knowledge creation = -.196 >.001 this indicated that there is a negative relationship between knowledge creation and organizational performance, accordingly the first research hypothesis

was rejected which stated that '' There is positive relationship between knowledge creation and organizational performance in private universities'', the value of B for knowledge acquisition = -.230 >.001 this indicated that there is a negative relationship between knowledge acquisition and organizational performance, accordingly the second research hypothesis was rejected which stated that '' There is positive relationship between knowledge acquisition and organizational performance in private universities'', the value of B for knowledge refinement = -.063 >.001 this indicated that there is a positive relationship between knowledge refinement and organizational performance, accordingly the third research hypothesis was rejected which stated that '' There is positive relationship between knowledge refinement and organizational performance in private universities'', the value of B for knowledge storage = .008 >.001 this indicated that there is a negative relationship between knowledge storage and organizational performance, accordingly the fourth research hypothesis was supported which stated that '' There is positive relationship between knowledge storage and organizational performance in private universities'', the value of B for knowledge transfer = .684>.001 this indicated that there is a positive relationship between knowledge transfer and organizational performance, accordingly the fifth research hypothesis was supported which stated that '' There is positive relationship between knowledge transfer and organizational performance in private universities'', the value of B for knowledge sharing = .196 >.001 this indicated that there is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and organizational performance, accordingly the sixth research hypothesis was supported which stated that '' There is positive relationship between knowledge sharing and organizational performance in private universities'', the value of B for knowledge re-use = .361 >.001 this indicated that there is a positive relationship between knowledge re-use and organizational performance, accordingly the seventh research hypothesis was supported which stated that '' There is positive relationship between knowledge re-use and organizational performance in private universities''.

6. Conclusion

The significance of management of knowledge in education sectors has been debated. The effective management of knowledge has been highlights as an essential ingredient for education sector seeking to confirm sustainable strategic competitive advantage. It has been brought out that processes and technology alone are not sufficient and adequate to drive an education sector, however its employees and the knowledge that exist in the staff are a very essential pivot in education sector's success. Thus, in order for an education to be effective and efficient, employees should be taking into consideration as the main asset of creating and distributing information and knowledge cross education sector. KM has also been verified to be strongly connected to goals and education sector's strategies and therefore a very positive instrument in management. The findings of this study revealed that there is positive relationship between knowledge transfer and organizational performance in private universities, comparing with other knowledge management process. Moreover, the researchers found the weaknesses of knowledge management process in educations sectors and highlighted as knowledge creation, knowledge acquisition and knowledge refinement.

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