

# **Overcoming Knowledge Management Barriers and Implementation problems through Human Resources Management Practices**

## **Abstract:**

Due to the emergence of the knowledge economy, knowledge is perceived as an essential asset in achieving competitive advantage. Knowledge, whether embedded in individuals or organizations, provides firms with uniqueness which is not attained by traditional assets. (Stewart, 2001) Realizing the potential edge over competitors and matching the needs enforced by the knowledge economy, organizations strive to manage their knowledge to extract its short-term and long-term values. (Neef, 1999)

Knowledge management (KM) wasn't defined as a distinctive research topic except in the late nineties. (Smith, 2004) Its activities were addressed previously under various topics such as innovation and organizational learning. (Scarborough and Swan, 2001) At first, KM focused on IS solutions where the main concern was codification and harvesting existing information. (McCuiston and Jamrog, 2004) Afterwards, there was a shift towards the people perspective emphasizing networking, knowledge sharing, social contracts and organizational culture. (Davenport et al., 1996) Edwart et al. (2003) found in a survey that the main causes of KM failures are people and culture. (From Hislop, 2006, pp.407) Accordingly, the human resources practices were highlighted as enablers in achieving successful KM systems. (Depres and Hiltrop, 1995) Scholars found a relationship between HRM and KM labelling practices such as recruitment and selection, performance management, reward and remuneration, training and development (Brown and Pryke, 2006), career management (Currie and Kerrin, 2003), and retention planning (Harman and Brelade, 2001). Moreover, HRD has a strategic role in advising management on the KM strategy and promoting a knowledge sharing and creating culture. (Smith, 2004)

Identified in the literature, KM initiatives have several barriers and implementation problems. Mccann and Buckner (2004) identified two major types of barriers: cultural and conceptual. Mccuiston and Jamrog (2004) added complexity as an implementation problem. Further research is suggested to identify if there are more barriers to add.

Even if organizations adopted the most appropriate KM systems, KM implementation won't be successful if not supported by organizational agents, functions and individuals. Hence, it is suggested that the HR practices can play a major role in overcoming such difficulties. Consequently, certain research questions arise:

What are the barriers and implementation problems of KM initiatives?

What are the HR practices/solutions to overcome those carefully identified barriers and problems?

This research aims at clarifying the strategic and functional role of HRM in overcoming KM barriers and implementation problems. Hopefully, it will add to the KM literature and help practitioners in utilizing the HR role in their KM initiative. Many empirical researches indicate that HRDs are suffering of a declining influence at the strategic level, due to the wide spreading belief that HRDs lack business knowledge and emphasize short-term administrative roles rather than long-term strategic ones. (Gurthridge et al, 2008) Nevertheless, HRD are weakly involved in KM initiatives. (McCuiston and Jamrog, 2004) By neglecting the HR function, organizations are sacrificing a major potential success factor in KM initiatives. Repositioning the HRD in its strategic role through contributing to KM initiatives is indicated in the literature, and the aim is to enforce this believe by empirical evidence.