MANAGING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH EMPLOYEE FIT FOR TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

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Introduction

The concept of trust is an issue that cannot be taken lightly and can be applied in various areas of life; from trusting an individual to trusting an organisation. It is especially important when the respective organisation is the government of a nation. Governments are politically created entities whose main duty and responsibility is to ensure the safety and well-being of their citizens while providing them with goods and services (Vigoda-Gadot and Yuval, 2003). That is a serious responsibility to shoulder when the government is dealing with the wellbeing of thousands, even millions of people.

In order for the government to fulfil its significant responsibilities, the citizens finance the government and its programmes (Vigoda-Gadot and Yuval, 2003), thus they expect to be provided with efficient service and quality products by the government (Chi, 1999). Their involvement is only to the extent of financing the government as the majority of the general public takes a backseat when it comes to politics. They are quite willing to leave the ultimate political decision-making regarding the progress of their nation and its implementation, in the hands of the few people elected to represent them. Without playing an active role in politics, it would seem that the general public places a high degree of trust in the government that they will be provided with the much needed services and quality products. However, there is research conducted in different countries that indicate in general that the public trust in government and its administrative branches is low (Phar, 1997). This is particularly worrying if the governments are making political decisions for the betterment of the nation without the full support of the public. Lack of trust in government would mean less commitment in supporting the government’s ideas, policies and implementations by the people and this could lead to many disruptions in the daily activities of the country.

Therefore, in order to gain the trust of the people, it is prudent for governments to design and implement new ways of managing the services provided by the public authorities. This would consequently lead the citizens in having more faith and supporting their government. Although there are several approaches, this paper will only be focusing on the perspective of utilising knowledge management (KM) within the government sector in order to make civil servants even more knowledgeable in carrying out their work. A more efficient workforce could provide effective service and quality products that would please the general population. Only when the general public is kept content are they more likely to trust the government.
More specifically, to increase trust in government from a KM perspective, this paper focuses on the employee. This employee perspective comprises of hiring the right people for the right positions through Person-Job Fit (P-J) and ensuring that the employees are compatible with the organisation through Person-Organisation Fit (P-O). Employees who are knowledgeable as well as comfortable in the workplace have the tendency of being more committed to their job. Thus these employees are willing to learn more, do more and share more information with their colleagues. This would increase the knowledge base, as well as improve the service quality of the organisation, which is the government in this case. As mentioned above, satisfaction in the products and services provided by the government would in turn increase the trust of the people. The following section will elaborate on this argument further.

**Discussion**

**Trust in Government**

Trust in government is important for a country since Knack et al. (1997) propose that growth in GDP was higher in countries where people trusted one another. Furthermore, GDP growth and lower levels of corruption resulted in more trust in civil society (Slangen et al., 2003). Hence this is a win-win affect for the government and the general public because if the public are to trust in government, the authorities have to increase GDP and an increase in GDP in turn further leads to more trust in government. In order to achieve the target of increasing trust in government, the government must think and behave like a private organisation and consider the general public as their customers. In a business, an organisation will not survive unless customers are willing to buy and use their products and the organisation gains product recognition from the public. Trust in government works the same way. If the government is to gain recognition and faith in their products and services, they would have to consider their actions, attitudes and types of services or products offered. Wiig (2002) mentions that a competent administration with capacity and influence can be a great benefit to society. An incompetent one can lead the nation to ruin. Therefore, there is a need for government organisations to be more customer focused as well as gain more knowledge in the services offered (McAdam and Reid, 2000).

Also, in discussing about trust in government, we are actually looking at people’s perceptions towards the public administration. This notion is line with Straten et al. (2002) and van der Schee et al. (2006) who state that trust in government can be seen to be the trust placed by a group or an individual towards the societal institution or system, while being confident that the group or individual will be competently taken care of in the long term. As trust is a function of the institutional environment, this suggests that the government has a large role to play in making sure that there is a harmonious balance within the nation in terms of socio-economic factors (Slangen et al., 2003). However, Nye et al. (1997) has found that in many modern democracies, there is a great deal of dissatisfaction with the administration. This is not a good situation for any government to be in because if the people’s confidence in the public services falters, they will be less
likely to trust that the promised projects and programmes will be established or fulfilled (Slangen et al., 2003) which could lead to all manners of complication. In extending Nye et al.’s (1997) findings, Vigoda-Gadot and Yuval (2003) state that one of the crucial causes of lack of trust in government was the dissatisfaction in services offered by the government, which include the quality, type, policies and procedures as well as responses pertaining to the services. From a common sense point of view, this is perfectly logical. If a private company were to provide their customers with substandard service, complicated policies and procedures as well as lack of response from customer feedback or complaints, then it is only a matter of time before the customers would become increasingly dissatisfied and lose complete faith in that company. The government is no different from a company. It is in itself an organisation, a rather large one, but nevertheless, still an organisation. As such, the general public as the customers will expect a certain degree of quality and manner of service or else their trust in the government will undoubtedly decrease substantially. Therefore, there are some governments that utilises performance evaluation as a measure to gauge customer i.e. the general public’s, satisfaction (Vigoda-Gadot and Yuval, 2003) to monitor the performance of the public services.

On a basic level, trust in government is achieved through good socio-economic growth which benefits the people by being able to provide quality services (Miller and Listhough, 1998) such as healthcare (van der Schee et al., 2006) education, infrastructure and a stable life. Protection of property rights, lower levels of perceived government corruption as well as high economic growth (i.e. high GDP) are factors in increasing trust in government (La Porta et al., 1997; Slangen et al., 2003). It is also the duty of the citizens to indicate that they are satisfied with these institutions and public sector services, as this satisfaction is the prime indicator to the government that they are doing their duties well or that it is in line with their political attitudes towards governance (Miller and Listhough, 1998).

In addition to the factors stated above, the internal organisational political environment is also important for increasing trust in government. The work culture shaped by the organisation will affect the attitudes and behaviours in the public service in terms of job satisfaction, organisational commitment or even turnover (Vigoda-Gadot, 2002). This is because a positive work culture that is supportive of employee needs and their welfare would lead to increase in job satisfaction and organisational commitment while decreasing turnover. Furthermore, the quality of service provided to the customers; the general public, by these employees will also be influenced by the level of their satisfaction and commitment to the organisation and this, in turn, will affect the trust people have in the government. Moreover, satisfaction of the people in the policies and procedures attached to the services plays a role in increasing trust in government (Ulbig, 2002). If the people view the process as efficient and neutral, and perceive the authorities as fair, honest and trustworthy, this would enhance their trust in government. Therefore it is crucial that the government develops and maintains professional staff, takes due care to satisfy their employees and creates a fair remuneration system for the overall satisfaction of their staff (Vigado-Gadot et al., 2003) in order to increase responsiveness to their citizens (Miller and Listhough, 1998) thus promoting trust.
Furthermore, to create trust in government and in the public service, the managerial quality of the government should be taken into consideration. State leaders and public officers need to improve the output and outcome of the nation to a level that builds a positive image of the government and provides satisfaction for its people. Managerial quality leads to a higher level of actual and perceived administrative performance. Administrative performance is vital to the overall levels of citizens’ satisfaction especially when it is related to responsiveness towards customers (Vigoda-Gadot and Yuval, 2003). This indicates that it is possible that the level of responsiveness from the government and the satisfaction achieved by the general public could result in trust in the government by the people. Therefore, positive attitudes towards the political leaders and the state of the nation are important criteria in achieving trust in government as it is administrative performance that leads to trust instead of trust leading to performance. To recapitulate, managerial qualities, as well as high levels of performance, need to be taken into consideration, and only then can a real level of trust be achieved in order to support the democratic foundations of the state (Vigoda-Gadot and Yuval, 2003).

In addition to managerial quality and government performance, public trust in authorities comes partly from transparency and accountability of the government for their actions and decisions (Lebel et al., 2006). Transparency and clear accountability gains much respect among the people (Lebel et al., 2006) if the citizens believe that the government is doing what is best for the nation. When governments plan to undertake a project or that developments will be made for the country, the promises made are a criterion in which the general public will weigh heavily in their evaluation whether or not to trust the political leaders. If the public are left unaware of how government decisions are made, and to what purpose, the lack of transparency within the government could leave the public with suspicion as to the motives of the authorities as well as high levels of perceived corruption. People generally do not like to be kept in the dark about matters that affect their welfare. Moreover, they do not like to think that their hard-earned money, which goes to the government through taxes, is being used for anything other than for the growth of the nation. If the promises made by the government are not kept or followed up, or the developments carried out do not benefit the country as a whole, then the general public will be left with mistrust of the authorities (Lebel et al., 2006). Therefore, it is vital that government authorities are transparent in their judgements and are active in fighting corruption among their members. More information provided in a timely fashion to the general public and allowing two-way interaction between citizens and the authorities is expected to increase the transparency of government as well as empower citizens to monitor government performance more closely (Thomas, 1998; Markoff, 2000; Raney, 2000; Torres et al., 2005). This proactive role by the authorities i.e. allowing for transparency as well as providing information will be a strong indication to the public that the government can be trusted.

Overall, providing high quality services and being responsive to the demands of the general public (Wikström, 1996) through managerial quality and administrative performance, high levels of transparency and low levels of corruption will gain the trust and confidence of the citizens of the nation. As discussed earlier in this paper, an increase in the proficiency of services provided by the government goes a long way in increasing
the satisfaction of the general public in the government, leading to an increase in trust in the government. In order to further increase service quality, knowledgeable and professional staff are required and this can be achieved through good person-job fit (P-J) as well as person-organisation (P-O) fit. Good P-J and P-O fit can also help in increasing the knowledge base of the organisation through better knowledge management (KM). As mentioned by Gloet (2006), commitment to sustainable development requires not only appropriate infrastructure and the management of uncertainty and risk, but also enlightenment within the organisation as well as at the government level. Therefore, it is important that the government hires the right kind of people for the right kind of job as this will help in improving the services offered by the authorities to the general public as well as increase the overall knowledge base of the government. P-J and P-O fit, which falls under employee fit, are discussed in more detail below.

Employee Fit

There is a shift in the way organisations choose their employees from the traditional KSA (knowledge, skills and ability) to suit the job, towards organisations selecting employees whose work values is compatible with organisation’s culture, norms and values (Morley, 2007). According to various authors, P-J fit is the compatibility between a person’s characteristics and that of the job that is performed at work, while P-O fit is the compatibility between the person and the entire organisation, whereby one entity will provide what the other needs or at least share similar fundamental characteristics (Kristof, 1996; Sekiguchi, 2007). Westerman and Vanka (2005) add that P-O fit is based on the assumption that the attitudes and behaviours and other individual outcomes result from the relationship between the person and the work environment. The compatibility of the person to the job, organisation or the environment is important in making the employee feel comfortable in the workplace, at the same time encouraging the employee to be willing to contribute and be committed to the organisation. Werbel and DeMarie (2005) mention that a good P-J and P-O fit emphasises the importance of compatibility between the employee and work as well as creating an organisational identity through the formalisation of values that exist in the organisation’s culture. Furthermore, the type of people that are attracted to the organisation, selected and hired, will affect the psychological contract between the employees and the organisation (Sekiguchi, 2007). The psychological contract is the tacit exchange between the employee and the organisation in terms of the nature of work that is being done by the employee. This contract can affect the knowledge sharing capabilities within the organisation as it can either encourage or discourage the employee to share information with their peers (Finnegan and Willcocks, 2006). The P-J fit would therefore determine what kinds of employees are required within the organisation depending on the role that the incumbent has to play within the workplace (Sekiguchi, 2007). This is helpful as the organisation could then make sure that they are hiring the right kind of people for the organisation to make it more successful in providing better service for the customers. In

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1 An issue that is discussed along with P-J and P-O fit is person environment fit (P-E) which is the compatibility of the person with the various systems that exist in the work environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). However, this issue is not discussed further in this paper.
the case of this paper, it would be the government that is attracting the right employees so that they may provide quality service to the general public to increase citizen satisfaction, which will in turn help to increase trust in government.

In accordance with good P-J and P-O fit, values in the workplace are becoming increasingly more important as this would be the factor that attracts people to apply for jobs in the organisations if people think that the company’s values are in line with their personal values (Morley, 2007). Potential employees would explore and develop perceptions of fit with the organisation during the recruitment and selection process to see if there is congruence between their values and that of the organisation. Employees would even choose to select themselves out of the recruitment process if they feel that there is a misfit with the organisation (Morley, 2007) and this could be a loss to the organisation if they are trying to attract skilled and knowledgeable staff. Therefore, if the government wishes to provide quality service to the citizens, they would need professional staff and to attract such staff, the authorities would need to make sure that the values that exist within the workplace are considered attractive to the working market. In today’s world, hiring and managing a diverse workforce is an important factor to an organisation gaining an advantage over their competitors (Sekiguchi, 2007), and in the government’s case, the other competitors are other potential employers of skilled and knowledgeable staff. Therefore as discussed above, ensuring that there is a match between personal and organisational value is important in obtaining and retaining good quality staff.

In addition, a fundamental research by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) discovered that there is a strong correlation between P-O fit with job satisfaction. Furthermore, there was an equally strong correlation with organisational commitment whereas there was only a moderate correlation with the intention to quit. The relationship with P-O fit and attitudes include satisfaction with colleagues, supervisors and trust in management. This indicates that P-O fit is crucial in managing the satisfaction of the employees in terms of whom they work for, whom they work with, their job scope and increasing their commitment to the organisation. Moreover, if job satisfaction increases, the intention to leave the organisation also decreases which means that if the government employees are happy with the workplace, they will continue to stay within the organisation and continue contributing to it rather than looking for employment elsewhere (Wheeler et al., 2005). “A high level of PO fit is supposed to contribute to a good long-term relationship between employees and the organisations because the congruence and similarity of goals and values increase the mutual understanding and trust between the two parties” (Sekiguchi, 2007, p.121). Employees who chose to stay would ensure continuity in the services offered to the general public as well as be committed to constantly improve their services, consequently, increasing customer satisfaction. The knowledge base of the government organisation would also be retained and used to contribute towards the betterment of the country instead of being transferred to a private organisation.

The discussion above has indicated the importance of P-J and P-O in keeping employees satisfied in order to retain them. Now, the crucial issue is to determine the weights of P-J and P-O in hiring the employees. As it is now quite common for
organisations to hire different types of employees, for example full-time employees, professionals as well as contingent employees, organisations should use different weights of P-J and P-O fit during the selection criteria for the different employees as “the effect of each type of fit on various employee and organisational outcomes may differ according to the type of employees or employment relationships” (Sekiguchi, 2007, p. 120). When selecting employees for general work that can be applied in other organisations, P-J fit would be more important than P-O fit. As employees with common skills, knowledge and abilities (KSAs) are more likely to leave than those with firm specific knowledge, P-O fit is more important when the employees selected are compatible with the organisation (Sekiguchi, 2007). In this case, a high PJ fit is required in hiring professionals, whereas a high PO fit is required for administrators in an organisation (Sekiguchi, 2007) as the values of the administrators should be in line with the values of the organisation. Even if the P-O fit level is not very high, the government could structure the job of the professionals so that they can utilise their professional knowledge through perhaps the creation of independent departments (Sekiguchi, 2007) for example the legal unit or finance division of their respective ministries, which would help to enhance the P-J fit. As stated above, improving P-J fit would increase the satisfaction the employees as they are doing what they are qualified at.

Although it is easy to propose that the government emphasises on P-J and P-O fit, there are a few challenges that need to be overcome. First of all, the available pool of job applicants might not be sufficiently large enough so that the government will be able to find employees who are both high in P-J and P-O fit. The government might be able to find an employee who is high in one factor but not in the other. Also, the government would be wasting considerable time, money and effort attracting, searching, selecting and hiring employees that would have a high fit in both. Therefore, it would be prudent for the government to weigh a particular fit more than the other (Sekiguchi, 2007) based upon the job role that the employee would undertake. As mentioned above, those with a high P-J fit would be more suitable for a professional job as they can contribute directly to the job in question, while those with a high P-O fit would be better as administrators where their contributions will be in line with the overall culture and values of the organisation. In hiring employees that have suitable fit in the job and the organisation, they would be more inclined to not only contribute towards the organisation, but also be more willing to learn, gain more knowledge as well as share information and knowledge with others, mostly their colleagues. However, the knowledge base of the organisation cannot exist such as it is; there has to be controlled management of knowledge within the organisation so that it can be utilised effectively and efficiently. With an increase in the knowledge base, the government organisations could very well offer better services to the citizens which would help to increase their satisfaction with the government. Thus, this paper promulgates knowledge management which is discussed below.

Knowledge Management (KM)

One of the main assets of an organisation is the knowledge of the employees and it is vital that not only are the employees willing to stay within the organisation so that
the knowledge is retained, but that the employees are also willing to contribute to the knowledge base. Knowledge comes as a person uses information and combines it with their personal experiences. Much of an individual’s knowledge has its own value, and it is that which makes each employee unique and valuable to organisations and society as a whole (Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland, 2004). According to Harrison and Leitch (2000) and Puddy et al. (2001), national governments and international agencies are increasingly recognising that the emergence of knowledge-based economies has profound implications for the determinants of growth, the organisation’s production and its effect on employment and skill requirements and may call for new orientations in industry-related policies. This is possibly because people are beginning to recognise the importance of knowledge within their organisation “since all companies use and sell knowledge in some form or other, knowledge management is a crucial component of corporate strategies” (Wikström and Normann, 1994, p. 71). Similarly, this applies to governments as governments are the principal users of knowledge since their establishment. At the government level, knowledge management (KM) may be defined as managing knowledge in order to improve internal processes, formulate sound policies and procedures for efficient public service delivery for increased productivity (Misra, 2007). As knowledge transfer, capture and dissemination and organisational knowledge are considered as key elements of knowledge and KM (McAdam and Reid, 2000), therefore, the government would have to be determined to acquire, create, develop and share new knowledge among their own employees in order to improve the knowledge already available in the organisation (Labich and Graves, 1993; Maccoby, 1996; Stewart and Curry, 1997). If there is good P-J and P-O fit within the organisation, managing the knowledge of these employees would be easier as they would be more willing to participate in the KM processes within the organisation.

The need to manage the knowledge within the government stems from the recent changes in the economic sector. A global economic revolution from the industrial to the information age has forced organisations to re-evaluate their corporate strategies and customs. This economic change is not only creating more challenges within the organisations to try and utilise the knowledge of their employees more productively (Nhira, 2001), but organisations are also pressured into changing their corporate strategies to encourage this utilisation in order to remain competitive (Labich and Graves, 1993). Competitive advantage in today’s global, rapidly changing market requires organisations to build and continually replenish capabilities (MacDougall and Hurst, 2005), at both the individual and organisational level, to work effectively with uncertainty. This is particularly important if the general public is constantly demanding improvement in the quality of service they receive. Therefore, according to Harrison and Leitch (2000), in order to survive and grow in an ever-changing world, organisations would have to adapt faster and faster or else they could be naturally weeded out in the economic evolutionary process. A review of the largest companies in the United States reveal that there is an average organisational life expectancy of forty years, and those who exceed this ‘natural’ life-span do so by re-inventing themselves and changing their principal activities (Grugulis, 1999). However, the public administration sector seems to be lagging behind in the deployment of KM (Yao et al., 2007). This is because, even though some public sector organisations have KM, it is only implemented for providing
services rather than gaining financial profit (Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland, 2004). Although making profit is not a primary purpose of the government sector, income still needs to be generated to continue financing the much needed services. Therefore, the government would have to learn to adapt according to the needs of the general public. This can be achieved by maintaining a good P-J and P-O fit so that the employees hired are constantly learning as well as adapting to the changes in the environment. At the same time, the business strategy of the organisation has to be closely aligned with the knowledge available in the organisation. Through this, the authorities would be able to monitor the knowledge available within the organisation to cater to the services offered. In addition, the decline of the machine age and the emergence of an information age have made the traditional assets of a company secondary in nature as they can be obtained easily, provided there is knowledge. Therefore, knowledge has now become a utility as a means to obtain social and economic results (Drucker, 1993). In today’s information society, organisations reveal the most opportunities, and ultimately, utilise the most value from intellectual rather than physical assets. In order to do that, KM practitioners maintain that knowledge must be shared and serve as the foundation for collaboration (Danskin et al., 2005). Furthermore, success for organisations rests on “knowing how to locate and juxtapose critical pieces of information, how to organise understanding into forms that others will understand” (Quah, 1997, p. 4). Basically, KM assists the government in efficiently utilising knowledge already available within the organisation (Herschel and Jones, 2005) as well as co-ordinate information and the workflow of the employees (Darroch, 2005).

The above discussion indicates that knowledge is believed to be the new source of competitive advantage for businesses in the future as power belongs to the people with knowledge and information (Yeoh, 1998) as well to those who know how to manage it. This competitive advantage is similarly true in the public sector. However, before the power of knowledge and information can be managed in order to remain competitive, the government must be aware of what kind of knowledge is necessary within the organisations in order to manage the knowledge as well as create better P-J and P-O fit. Different units of the public service need different types of knowledge and it is important that the government is aware of the kind of knowledge their employees are capable of producing (Fu et al., 2006b). This is especially important when an organisation is a complex but systematic world where people of diverse professional relationships and goals, differing capabilities, understandings and worldviews exist and work together (Sbarcea, 2001). Therefore, the government organisations have to create the right conditions to build this knowledge capability and design an effective KM process.

A KM process may be possible if the government organisations work together with their employees to achieve their goals. The authorities could assist the employees in discovering which job would be most suitable for them or, in the case of the professionals, try to restructure the jobs. In order for the organisation to function as a team, there is therefore, a vital need to promote the effective creation, sharing and retention of knowledge through KM. The organisational activities will then be viewed as knowledge generating, subsequently transforming the organisation into a learning organisation that shares, adapts and retains their knowledge (Parikh, 2001). Although a KM process will
never replace the value of a twenty year veteran, it can help to mitigate the loss of critical knowledge, methods and best practices and intellectual capital if that person is to leave the organisation (Robb, 2003). Furthermore, since knowledge intensive firms, such as governments, are typically engaged in complex and difficult tasks that cannot be perfectly converted into standardised work procedures and regulations, they are forced to attract and retain qualified people, who can adapt their repositories to meet the demands of the task (Alvesson et al., 2001). As the primary function of government is decision-making, they have among the largest repositories of information and databases which could help them in making decisions that would benefit the growth of the country (Misra, 2007). However, these repositories would not be helpful if the organisations do not know how to utilise the knowledge available or find ways in which to reduce the gap in knowledge. In fact, the miraculous growth in the per capita income in countries in East Asia, for example Hong Kong (Yao et al., 2007), is largely attributed to closing the knowledge gap of the organisation as well as narrowing the gap between the more developed and less developed countries in knowledge about how to transform inputs into outputs (Stiglitz, 1999). This case is similar to that of Finland where they have restructured their nation’s public administrative system from education right up to the public services to create a more knowledge-intensive economy. Restructuring the government organisations could be an important step in managing the staff and the knowledge capacity within the government as it could streamline the units and make them more efficient in terms of policies, procedures and the services offered (Dann, 1996; van Beveren, 2003).

Efficiency in policies and services offered by the government organisations are just some of the benefits of KM. Other benefits of KM correlate directly to bottom-line savings, while some are more difficult to quantify as these benefits include long-term and short-term benefits (Wiig, 2002). It is mentioned by Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland (2004) that by managing knowledge, the government ministries could gain numerous benefits, especially improved efficiency and better decision making as well as catering to customer needs. Increased business efficiency, especially in the public sector, was considered to be a key benefit of knowledge management (McAdam and Reid, 2000). According to Santusos and Surmacz (2001), an effective KM programme should help a company do one or more of the following:

- Foster innovation by encouraging the free flow of ideas.
- Improve customer service by streamlining response time.
- Boost revenues by getting products and services to market faster.
- Enhance employee retention rates by recognising the value of employees’ knowledge and rewarding them for it.
- Streamline operations and reduce costs by eliminating redundant or unnecessary processes.

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2 Finland As A Knowledge Economy: Elements of Success and Lessons Learned, 2006, World Bank Institute.
Santosus and Surmacz further add that a creative approach to KM could result in improved efficiency, higher productivity and increased revenues in practically any business function (2001). This too applies to government, therefore, it is argued that with efficient KM, the government will see benefits in faster product development, improved decision-making, more skilled employees, and enhanced services that better meet customer needs, which needs to be achieved if we are to try to increase trust in government. Through KM, along with proper implementation of P-J and P-O fit, it is hoped that the benefits gained will lead to an increase in employee contribution through the sharing and retaining of knowledge in the organisation.

In order to share and retain knowledge, organisations need to understand that knowledge could be shared and retained in a variety of ways, and accordingly need to employ a wide range of systems and policies to facilitate this process. It was found that in terms of KM tools, the public administrative sector is more dependent than the private sector on people-based approaches, such as forums, informal discussion groups, etc., to disseminate knowledge across the organization (Yao et al., 2007). Among the methods suggested by authors as a means for sharing knowledge is social interaction or networking (Foley, 2001; Puddy et al., 2001). “Social interaction in an exchange relationship facilitates learning by making it possible to exchange and combine not only codified knowledge, but also tacit knowledge” (Mariotti and Delbridge, 2001). Through social networks, it has been proposed that employees could identify, share and work with corporate knowledge. This method is supported by McKinlay (2002) who says that the prime source of knowledge is the immediate team members of the employees and the key dissemination mechanism is face-to-face exchange. Therefore, organisations should encourage their employees to share best practices with each other through formal discussions thereby making better use of the knowledge that exists within a firm (van Beveren, 2003). Moreover, by allowing the employees to interact as well as communicate with one another, they are exchanging work experiences as well as customer information that are related to their job spectrum for more efficient public sector (Mavin and Bryans, 2000; van den Hoof and de Ridder, 2004) and for a better work environment (Malone and Yohe, 2002). The knowledge gained is then used to create new knowledge and convert ideas into valuable products and services through knowledge innovation by the employees. Furthermore, Xu and Walton (2005) suggest that organisations gain feedback from customers and utilise that information to improve the services offered, especially in the case of governments that would like to gain approval from their citizens. Through exchanging ideas and knowledge, the employees could identify experts, provide referrals for those seeking answers and create networking among groups (Bertels and Savage, 1999; Lesser and Prusak, 2001; Newell et. al., 2003; Yao et al., 2007). If there is good P-J and P-O fit, their knowledge will be focused towards specific areas of work and by sharing knowledge, they can combine their expertise in order to create better and higher quality service for the general public. By creating experts in the organisation, the government would not only gain knowledgeable staff, but also retain a large percentage of this knowledge. Some of the methods of retaining knowledge include asking the expert staff to write manuals, keep files on best-practices, train other employees as well as set up formal and informal networks with colleagues. While some governments may see these networks as promoting idle chit-chat, Gonsalves and Zaino (2001) report that Texaco
recognise social networking as a source of knowledge that employees gather through on-the-job experiences and thus store in their heads. This applies to government departments, however this type of interaction should be made optimally conducive rather than hinder productivity. Furthermore, knowledge transfer need not involve complex computer systems; often times, a simple conversation will suffice (McAdam and Reid, 2000; Cappabianca, 2002). In addition, strong alliances and networking with organisation’s partners in terms of collaboration can help acquire market specific knowledge and firm-specific knowledge necessary for organisational success (Laycock, 2005; Fu et al., 2006a; Ratten and Suseno, 2006) as well as help reduce the overall cost of managing the organisation.

Among the many costs of an organisation is paying for overcoming errors or mistakes made by the employees or the organisation as a whole. Knowledge sharing can be a means to avoiding mistakes or at least preventing the duplication of errors (McAdam and Reid, 2000; Schulte and Sample, 2006). Hoopes and Postrel (1999) believe that knowledge coupled with co-ordination will be beneficial to companies in reducing the number of glitches. Glitches here are defined as “costly mistakes that could have been avoided if some of the parties involved had understood things that were known by other participants” (Hoopes and Postrel, 1999, pg. 838). KM could help the organisation to reduce mistakes from occurring through knowledge sharing and retention and subsequently, decrease customer dissatisfaction. By sharing knowledge, employees will feel confident in their jobs and the level of knowledge shared could help the government organisations in maintaining the high quality of service to the citizens, thus keeping them satisfied. Therefore, organisations must give autonomy for better knowledge sharing and acquisition among employees (Politis, 2003), determine which factors promote or impede the sharing of knowledge within individuals, groups and respective organisations (van den Hoof and de Ridder, 2004) as well as guide and supervise the KM process.

The guidance and supervision of the KM process is important because the development leadership and management capabilities to support sustainability are particularly crucial within the political environment (Gloet, 2006). State leaders and higher level government officers must not only acknowledge the knowledge, skills and abilities that reside in the organisational members (Komache, 1997) but also manage the knowledge base effectively and efficiently. Therefore, organisations must have knowledge champions to strategise and guide the KM process (Jones et al., 2003) and employees should gain support from top level management for effective KM implementation (Laycock, 2005). Top level officers of the government should also encourage their staff to become more knowledgeable so that the employees would become experts and they would be able to influence and encourage others to be knowledgeable too (Politis, 2003). Therefore, sharing knowledge would be easier with the approval and encouragement of senior government staff as the lack of leadership by upper levels of management to encourage the sharing and retention of knowledge are factors that have prevented efficient KM (Yao et al., 2007). With a P-J and P-O fit, the employees themselves would know the gap in their knowledge and take efforts to close this gap. With the encouragement of top government officials, employees will contribute more towards their work and perceive their government authorities to be supportive of
their work. As referred to before, when employees perceive their organisation to be encouraging their work, they are willing to contribute more towards the organisation as well as share information with their colleagues.

To further encourage employees to contribute towards the organisation, a technique that the government organisations could use is a bonus plan (Lesser and Prusak, 2001). It involves paying bonuses to departing employees willing to share their knowledge with staff who are replacing them. The process provides an incentive to make outgoing knowledge more visible and this has been used by the Harvard Community Health Plan, a health-maintenance organisation in Massachusetts, United States (Lesser and Prusak, 2001). While on the subject of pay plans, Alvesson et al. (2001) and Yao et al. (2007) look at explicit rewards for employees for knowledge sharing and knowledge retention through various means including financial rewards, more access to information, participating in more knowledge sharing ventures as well as career advancements and job security. There are also subtle rewards that include recognition and personal satisfaction as a means of encouraging employees to share and retain knowledge and information. With good P-J and P-O fit, employees will have a sense of pride in their work as they are the experts in their field and they might not require monetary rewards but recognition instead. If they were asked to share their knowledge with their peers, by giving due recognition for their work, these employees are highly likely to comply with the organisations’ wishes and share their knowledge. This is because the practice promotes a sense of pride and of being valued, and therefore workers are more likely to pass along knowledge if they know they will get positive feedback from colleagues (Yao et al., 2007). Therefore, monetary or non-monetary rewards are important for the satisfaction of employees as well as encouraging the KM process within the organisation. "A culture that does not foster and reward sharing of knowledge cannot expect technology to solve its knowledge challenges" (Yeoh, 1998. pg. 28).

Even though organisations are supportive of their staff and are offering rewards for their contribution towards the KM process, there are some challenges that the government organisations have to be aware of. Among these challenges would be the lack of trust employees might have in sharing knowledge as they might feel that they are losing power (Hope and Hope, 1997; Truch, 2001; Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland, 2004). Since knowledge is power, the employees might feel that once they share knowledge, they will become replaceable in the organisation. Added to that is the difficulty of giving due credit to any one person or team for their knowledge contribution (Hope and Hope, 1997). Therefore, it is vital for effective KM that the behaviour of management reinforces an appropriate culture through deeds and not just words (Truch, 2001) whereby the organisation should continuously maintain contribution to the KM process as being advantageous to the individual. Furthermore, other challenges to KM include information overload where employees are overwhelmed with the information that is provided to them as well as the abstract nature of knowledge that is difficult to quantify as an intangible asset (Laycock, 2005). The limited knowledge sharing between departments and knowledge retention in the organisation is also another challenge to the employees. Moreover, government organisations tend to be very bureaucratic in nature, making knowledge sharing and retention rather difficult due to all the formalities (Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland, 2004). To a certain extent as well, although financially rewarding
employees for sharing knowledge is a noble thing, this could be rather difficult for resource-limited public organisations (Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland, 2004; Yao et al., 2007) that are accountable for their expenditure. In addition, many KM literatures tend to promote the use of IT as a means for managing knowledge (Gloet, 2006). However, IT should only be used as a supporting tool, and cannot be utilised as the sole means of managing knowledge as IT cannot encompass all the attitudes and behaviours of the employees or the general public.

To assist in the attitudinal and behavioural dimension of KM within an organisation, human resource management (HRM) plays a large role in achieving an efficient KM process. HRM decisions are part and parcel of the organisation’s strategic decision-making process (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1990) as they have to make sure that the employees are suitable for the job (P-J fit) and have common values with the organisation (P-O fit). Potential employees need to be carefully screened before the selection process, and decisions on whom to hire also need to be made. Although the organisation can use KM to build personal expertise (Wiig, 2002), it is HR that will need to identify necessary training procedures for better efficiency and effectiveness within the organisation. It has to be considered that different types of training is needed for different levels of staff. This includes training new staff on government policies, values and relationships with other units of the government as well as training higher level of government staff on how to set and guide strategy and direction for the government (Butler, 1996). Highly trained and skilled employees will help the government improve its group of expertise and enhance its ability to continue providing high quality services (Komache, 1997; Fu et al., 2006a). HRM would also assist in identifying the government’s core business, services and resources as well as help to supervise the skills necessary to achieve these goals (Komache, 1997). Furthermore, these skills need to be constantly updated and monitored so that the knowledge obtained from the work experiences can be shared and retained in the organisation. In addition to that, HRM is also important in designing remuneration systems that are considered attractive to the potential applicant, as well as to the current employees so that the government organisations will be equally competitive compared to private companies as a choice of employer. Moreover, the remuneration system could also be used to reward employees to share knowledge with their peers to increase the knowledge base of the government organisation. Furthermore, part of the rewards system in place could also include more training for the employees. Therefore in the knowledge economy, a primary focus of HRM should be the development of human capital and the management of knowledge as well as integrating individual, team and organisational learning for the benefit of customers, employees and the organisation (Gloet, 2006). With highly skilled staff being recruited to the right jobs in the organisation via P-J and P-O fit and an increase in the knowledge capacity of the organisation, the government would be able to better manage the knowledge existing in the various government units. With the efficient management of knowledge, government organisations will be able to provide desirable services to the general public which will increase their satisfaction.
Conclusion

As discussed in this paper, trust in government is important for the development and growth of a nation. Furthermore, there are various factors that lead to trust in government but among the most important one is customer satisfaction. The customers in this case would be the general public. By providing the citizens with quality services, maintaining quick and adequate response to their feedback, implementing effective policies and procedures as well as upholding transparency and low levels of corruption in the government, would enhance the perception of a trustworthy government. In order to achieve perceived trust in government, this paper proposes that the government hire and retain highly skilled workforce that are compatible to the job and to the organisation through P-J and P-O fit so that the employees would feel comfortable in their work environment. Employees who are satisfied with their job and the organisation are more likely to be committed as well as contribute more towards their job. By making them experts in their job through good leadership, managerial style as well as encouraging them to gain more knowledge, these employees will be more willing to share their knowledge and expertise with their peers as well as retain the knowledge in the organisation. Managing the knowledge of employees and existing knowledge within the organisation is therefore important to make sure that gaps in knowledge are not overlooked and filled, as well as mistakes or errors are avoided. Moreover, by utilising the knowledge efficiently and effectively, the government would be able to offer quality services to its people. Therefore, we can see that by managing the knowledge of the employees that have been selected and hired for the right job and the right position in the organisation, would lead to better services for the people. These improved services would subsequently enhance the people’s satisfaction with the services offered and the growth of the nation, which would ultimately lead to an increased trust in government.
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