Personal knowledge management by university faculty in an IT enhanced environment / Tami Neuthal

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine how academics manage their personal, practical knowledge in three main areas: research, teaching and SCholarly publication, and the role of information and communication technology (ICT) tools in this process. These aspects of personal knowledge management (PKM) processes of knowledge workers in an academic institution were examined in order to (a) identify the major components of these processes, (b) evaluate the participants' awareness of PKM as a key to personal and professional development and (c) map the nature and extent of their use of information and communication technologies in PKM processes.

Methodology: Considering the highly individualistic nature of personal knowledge management processes and the paucity of research in this area particularly in connection with academic environments - a qualitative methodology, based on grounded theory, was used, and study participants were chosen in a purposeful sampling (with some snowball sampling added in the course of research) among faculty in a large Israeli research university. Data were collected through personal face-to-face interviews, observation and document analysis. During data processing three core areas of academic activity were identified and focused upon: research, scholarly publishing and teaching.

Findings: The research findings indicate that PKM processes of academics in these core areas are complex and combine cognitive, social, learning and information literacy skills. They are influenced by personal, organizational, professional and environmental factors. The study participants' formal academic training did not prepare them adequately for optimal performance in all three core areas. The organizational culture in the university does not usually encourage knowledge sharing and mutual assistance among

colleagues, two important channels for personal knowledge construction. In addition it was found that most of this study's participants define their professional occupation in a limited manner, neglecting a methodical knowledge construction process in several areas of considerable importance.

Practical implications: Following these findings» Severe" persona. And organizational recommendations are presented in order to increase awareness among academics and academic institutions to this subject and improve personal knowledge processes in core areas of academic activity.

Research limitations: This study is based on a small sample, in one academic institution, and was designed as an exploratory research to examine issues neglected by the scholarly literature and identify future directions for further research. Therefore the findings might be context-specific and further research is needed.

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