Knowledge Management as an Approach in achieving Higher EducationQuality

A case study: Faculty of Economics, Management, and Commerce at Blida 2 University

إدارة المعرفـة كمدخل لتحقيـق الجـودة فـي التعليـم العالـي

دراسة حالة كلية العلوم الإقتصادية وعلوم التسيير والعلوم التجارية، جامعة البليدة 2

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Abstract: This research paper seeks to shed light on the importance of adopting knowledge management approach in achieving quality in the Algerian higher education sector. It is based on the descriptive perspective to demonstrate the importance of knowledge as one of the most important intangible assets in higher education institutions. It aims at clarifying the various applications of knowledge management which are vital to the success of educational institutions and aims to facilitate the selection of the best tools and methods which are applied in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Quality; Higher Education; Knowledge; Knowledge Management.

Résumé : Ce document de recherche a pour but à mettre en lumière l'importance d'adopter une approche de gestion des connaissances pour améliorer la qualité dans le secteur de l'enseignement supérieur algérien. Il s'appuie sur une perspective descriptive pour démontrer l'importance de la connaissance en tant que l'un des actifs incorporels les plus importants des établissements d'enseignement supérieur. Il vise à clarifier les différentes applications de la gestion des connaissances qui sont essentielles au succès des établissements d'enseignement et à faciliter la sélection des meilleurs outils et méthodes appliqués dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur.

Mots-clés : Qualité ; L'enseignement Supérieur ; Connaissance ; Gestion des Connaissances.

ملخص: يسعى هذا البحث الى تسليط الضوء على الأهمية البالغة لتبني مدخل إدارة المعرفة في تحقيق الجودة في قطاع التعليم العالي الجزائري. حيث يرتكز على المنهج الوصفي في تبيان أهمية المعرفة باعتبارها أحد أهم الموجودات غير الملموسة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي. ويهدف إلى توضيح مختلف تطبيقات إدارة المعرفة لما لها من أهمية حيوية في نجاح المؤسسات التعليمية ويهدف إلى تسهيل عمليات اختيار أفضل الأدوات والأساليب لتطبيقها في مؤسسات التعليم العالي مقارنة بالاحتياجات الخاصة بهم.

الكلمات الدالة: جودة؛ تعليم عالي؛ معرفة؛ إدارة المعرفة.

I- Introduction:

Higher education is considered to be one of the most important educational stages in the life span of the individual. It is a fundamental addition to what has been achieved in the primary and secondary educational stages which are delivered to provide students with necessary knowledge and skills to contribute in achieving human development in accordance with the rapid scientific and technological changes.

Higher education is one of the central sectors that societies are looking for in developing their people's life. As the higher education sector faces ongoing challenges and changes that may negatively affect the services delivered by higher education enterprises, most countries have sought to adopt various higher education quality approaches, so that their educational enterprises can meet the various challenges and gain the satisfaction of the beneficiaries.

Knowledge management is one of the approaches that support quality in higher education, which is an intellectual framework that enables individuals of the educational enterprise to improve and update their various activities and practices in collecting information and sharing knowledge. This will improve the services and outputs provided by the educational enterprises and will achieve the desired objectives in general. The previous statements entail reference to this relevant concern:

"How can knowledge management approach support higher education quality?" i.e. **"What is the interest of applying knowledge management in achieving higher education quality?"**

To have an answer for this concern, this research paper sheds light on the following elements:

- What is Higher Education Quality?
- What is meant by Knowledge Management?
- Why is Knowledge Management so important in achieving higher education quality?

In order to answer the previous questions, we will discuss the following elements in this paper:

- Higher Education Quality;
- Knowledge Management;
- Knowledge Management and Higher Education Quality.

I.1. HigherEducation Quality:

Higher education is considered to be the most important pillar of society, because it contributes in the preparation of technical, academic and professional staff for various community institutions. It also plays a role in the development, the use and spreading knowledge through scientific research, the development of specialists in all fields and the development of community service methods.

There are a lot of debates on the meaning of quality, but quality remains an elusive and contested concept. According to the Oxford Dictionary, it is defined as being:
- A high standard.
- A feature of something, especially one that makes it different from something else.
- The standard of something when it is compared to other things like it; how good or bad something is. (Oxford, 2010)

There are many definitions of the term "Quality" given by authors such as:

- **Quality is conformance to requirements:** This definition assumes that the specifications and requirements have already been developed. The next thing to look for is conformance to these requirements.
- **Quality is fitness for use:** This definition stresses the importance of the customer who will use the product.
- **Good quality means a predictable degree of uniformity and dependabilitywith a quality standard suited to the customer:** The underlying philosophy of all definitions is the same – consistency of conformance and performance, and keeping the customer in mind.
- **Quality is the degree to which performance meets expectations:** This definition provides a means to assess quality using a relative measure.
- **Quality denotes an excellence in goods and services:** especially to the degree they conform to requirements and satisfy customers.This definition assimilates the previous ones. (Chandrupatla, 2009)

Quality has become a significant term in higher education since the 1980s, but what is meant by 'quality' in higher education still unclear. It is a multidimensional term. It might be viewed differently by different groups. There are four main groups interested in higher education: government, students, employers and employees. It may be viewed differently from each viewpoint.(Dicker. R, 2018)

As an attempt to define quality in higher education, there are five ways of thinking about quality". These ways are frequently referred to in the higher education literature and by practitioners, and offers a good framework for thinking about quality in higher education.

- **Quality as exceptional/excellence:** this view refers to quality as exceptional with regard to the highest academic standards and excellence. By definition, this kind of quality is not attainable by all.

- **Quality as perfection or consistency**: this approach looks at quality as a process to eliminate defects and aiming for a consistent or flawless outcome. In this view, quality can be attained by all by focusing on consistency (constantly improving and eliminating flaws).

- **Quality as fitness for purpose**: in this view quality is measured by the level of fulfillment of a stated purpose, mission or goals - either by an institution or an academic program; the exact meaning will vary depending on the actual purpose envisioned.

- **Quality as value for money**: the focus here is on the output per input ratio, with the aim of gaining more efficiency. In other words, this is similar to a return on investment approach. Quality is attained when a better or higher outcome can be achieved at the same cost, or if the cost can be decreased while the outcome level is maintained.

- **Quality as transformation**: this approach looks learning that is centered on the student; views quality as value-added and transformation and empowerment of a student through the learning process. In this scheme, quality is achieved when the learning proves transformative for the student.(Liviu. M, 2016)

I. 2. Knowledge Management:

Institutions are increasingly focusing on knowledge as the key element that distinguishes a successful institution from other institutions. Turning to knowledge-based work is no longer an isolated act or an incalculable adventure. It is a broad and profound trend that covers different areas of life in all contemporary societies.

At the present time, the word "knowledge" is used widely, and there are many meanings, and everybody has different understandings in the ground of knowledge. Yet, these diverse meanings of the term knowledge led to different perspectives on knowledge concepts.

The word "knowledge" is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as:

- People's range of information;
- The state of knowing about a particular fact or situation;
- Awareness or familiarity gained by experience (of a person, fact, or thing);
- The information, understanding and skills that you gain through education or experience;
- Specific information; facts or intelligence about something; or a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. (Oxford, 2010)

There are many definitions of the term "Knowledge" given by authors such as:

- Knowledge is social acts. (Ralph.D, 1996)
- Knowledge is Information in context.(Bruce, 1970)
- Knowledge is understanding based on experience".(William., 1907)
- Knowledge is the experience or information that can be communicated or shared.(Liviu, 2016)
- Knowledge is considered to be justified true belief.(Ikujiro, 1995)
- Knowledge is the capacity for effective action. it is the definition favored by the learning community.(Chris, 1993)
- The most essential definition of knowledge is that it is composed of and grounded solely in potential acts and in those signs that refer to them. (Steve, 2000)
- Knowledge, while made up of data and information, can be thought of as much greater understanding of a situation, relationships, causal phenomena, and the theories and rules (both explicit and implicit) that underlie a given domain or problem.(David, 2000)
- Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers. In organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms.(Davenport, 2000)

Many researchers address the point of defining knowledge by distinguishing between knowledge, information, and data as it is shown in figure (1). A common point is that, data is raw numbers and facts, information is processed data, and knowledge is authenticated information. What is basic to well distinguishing between information and knowledge is not found in the content, structure, accuracy, or utility of the supposed information or knowledge.

Considerably, knowledge is information possessed in the mind of individuals. It is personalized information that might or might not be new, unique, useful, or accurate, related to facts, procedures, concepts, interpretations, ideas, observations, and judgments.(Fahey, 1998)

Knowledge Management has been described by various descriptions, by different writers and scholars. There are various definitions of Knowledge Management:

- Knowledge Management process consists of four sets. These are creation or generation, storage or retrieval, transfer or sharing, application.(Alavi, 2001)
- Knowledge Management understands what your knowledge assets are and how to profit from them.(Bose, 2004)
- Knowledge Management is a systematic process for capturing and communicating knowledge people can use.(Ahn, 2004)
- Knowledge Management is concerned with the exploitation and development of the knowledge assets of an organization with a view to furthering the organization's objectives.(Davenport, 1998)

- Knowledge Management is defined as any practice of creating, acquiring, capturing, sharing and using knowledge to increase organization's performance. (Abdelmagid, 2003)
- Knowledge Management as the attempt by management to actively create, communicate and exploit knowledge as a resource for the organization.(Scarborough, 2001)
- Knowledge Management is the explicit and systematic management of vital knowledge and its associated processes of creation, organization, diffusion, use and exploitation - in pursuit of business objectives.
- Knowledge Management is ensuring that workers can carry out their tasks effectively, by providing the right knowledge at the right place at the right time.(Skyrme, 2018)
- Knowledge Management refers to managing knowledge processes that facilitate the development and application of organizational knowledge. The main purpose of Knowledge Management is to maximize knowledge-related effectiveness processes with the aim to create value for the organization.(Zhou, 2003)
- Knowledge Management is defined it as a group of clearly defined process or methods used to search important knowledge among different knowledge management operations.(Ikujiro, 1995)

Knowledge is created through conversion between tacit and explicit knowledge. Knowledge conversion from one form to another occurs frequently and leads to the creation of new knowledge. According to Nonaka, tacit knowledge can be useful to organizations only if it is converted to its explicit form, which can be used.(Wiig, 2012)

The figure (2) shows Nonaka's model where a knowledge spiral results in the theory of organizational-based knowledge creation by the interaction of four activities: combination, internalization, socialization and externalization. This dynamic process of knowledge conversion is based on knowledge flows across individuals, groups and organizations.

- Combination (Explicit to explicit):It is the reconfiguration of existing knowledge like sorting, adding, combining and categorizing documents or manuals.
- Internalization (Explicit to tacit):It involves knowledge assimilation; it is the human act of assimilating the explicit knowledge, for example by reading and learning.
- Externalization (Tacit to explicit):It is the process of transforming personal knowledge into codified and documented knowledge, which can be stored, like writing a best practice report or a procedure manual.
- Socialization (Tacit to tacit):It results from the interactions and exchange of ideas between people. It occurs by sharing experiences and by direct exchange of knowledge, through conversation, electronic meetings, instant messaging or communities of practice.

Depending on the notion that the purpose of Knowledge Management is to keep and to enhance knowledge processes, it is so important to identify the different processes of Knowledge Management. There is a greater importance of processes related with knowledge creation, knowledge storage and retrieval, knowledge transfer and knowledge application or usage.(Alavi, 2001)

- Knowledge creation:It involves the generation and discovery of new knowledge. It includes activities such as acquisition, synthesis and adaptation of existing knowledge.
- Knowledge storage and retrieval:It consists in the codification, organization and representation of knowledge such that it can be accessed. It includes activities that preserve, maintain and index knowledge for easy browsing and searching.
- Knowledge transfer:It refers to the activities of knowledge dissemination and distribution within a community, through a specific channel. It can occur at various levels: individuals, groups, organizations or inter-organizations.
- Knowledge application:It is the fundamental scope for Knowledge Management. Competitive advantage resides in the application of knowledge, rather than in the knowledge itself. It includes activities and events related with the application of knowledge to business processes.

I. 3. Knowledge Management and Higher Education Quality:

Higher education institutions are the key centers for creating and leveraging knowledge. By using Knowledge Management, higher education organizations will be able to perform more effectively by spreading knowledge among cultures, and enlarging the process of learning and teaching.The key reasons for Knowledge management in higher education are: (Jayanthi, 2007)

- All higher education institutions possess a state-of-the-art modern information infrastructure;
- Sharing knowledge among faculty, staff, students, course, programs, placements and administration is usually done in all higher education organizations;
- The academic environment in general is considered trustful in the sense that no one is hesitating nor being afraid of publishing knowledge;
- Any higher education organization will look forward for its abreast position in their continuous ratings by newspapers and magazines;
- Higher education institutions want their internal documentation management and the level of information and knowledge sharing to be improved;
- The growing demand for new strategies that help higher education institutions meet external and internal demands.

Due to the entrance of new knowledge producers in the education area, more and more higher education institutions are looking into the option of applying knowledge management. In this

case, there are some factors which affect the accomplishment of knowledge management in a higher education institution:leadership; the nature of academic other staff; evidence of the benefits; the taxonomy for the application of knowledge management within the higher education institution; management structure; the history of the higher education institution.(Cranfield & Taylor, 2008)

The following elements reviews the role of Knowledge management in achieving higher education quality:

- Enhancing the quality of research process: Scientific research is considered to be a source of knowledge and a means of economic and social progress, as it is one of the aspects of human activity that aims at achieving prosperity. It is an important tool to solve the problems of society. It is widely practiced by higher education institutions in all societies.

  It can be argued that the quality of scientific research is a major feature that distinguishes the educational institution from other institutions. The relationship between scientific research and labor market institutions is based on theoretical and applied studies related to the problems of society and its actual needs.

  Knowledge management helps in achieving research process quality in terms of:

    - Increased competitiveness and responsiveness for research grants, contracts, and commercial opportunities.
    - Reduced turnaround time for research.
    - Minimized devotion of research resources to administrative tasks.
    - Facilitation of interdisciplinary research.
    - Leveraging of previous research and proposal efforts.
    - Improved internal and external services and effectiveness.
    - Reduced administrative costs.(Jillinda, 2000, pp.30-31)

- Enhancing the quality of the curriculum development process: Higher education is the cornerstone of any country. It has a special status in all countries. A lot of efforts are aimed continually at developing and improving it to increase its efficiency to achieve the desired goals. The importance of curriculum quality in the educational process is one of the most important elements aimed at improving the quality of higher education in general.

  The curriculum is defined as the used means by which education to achieve its objectives by building a systematic arrangement consisting of components with inputs, which conducts appropriate operations to give the outputs that enable and prepare learners at a certain level to serve themselves and society in general.

  Knowledge management helps in achieving the quality of the curriculum development process in terms of:

- Improved speed of curriculum revision and updating.
- Enhanced faculty development efforts, especially for new faculty.
- Improved administrative services related to teaching and learning with technology.
- Interdisciplinary curriculum design and development facilitated by navigating across departmental boundaries.
- Enhanced quality of curriculum and programs by identifying and leveraging best practices and monitoring outcomes.
- Improved responsiveness by monitoring and incorporating lessons learned from the experiences of colleagues, student evaluations, and corporate or other constituent input.

- Enhancing the quality of student and alumni services:Students are the focus of higher education, because the entire educational process has been built for them. Interestingly, recent theories have found that focusing on students is a key pillar in guiding them and meeting their needs and desires.
Student services are defined as the sum of the efforts and programs developed and offered by various educational institutions with the aim of achieving the objectives of education and development of students to the maximum possible extent, and helping them to take advantage of different higher education institutions to the maximum extent allowed by their abilities and preparations. That is, they become capable of carrying out their duties.
Knowledge management helps in improving the quality of student and alumni services in terms of:

  - Improved services for students.
  - Improved service capability of faculty and staff.
  - Improved services for alumni and other external constituents.
  - Improved effectiveness and efficiency of advising efforts (to integrate fragmented efforts currently undertaken by faculty, academic support staff, student services staff, and student affairs staff.(Jillinda , 2000, pp. 30-31)

- Enhancing the quality of administrative services: Administrative services are ones of the central issues that play a vital role in the development of higher education structures and formats. These services enable them to face current problems and to plan trends and future pathways to overcome them and achieve development goals in a specific and predictable time frame.
Knowledge management helps in improving the quality of administrative services in terms of:

- Enhanced ability to identify improvement efforts.
- Improved responsiveness and communication capabilities.
- Improved effectiveness and efficiency of administrative services.
- Improved ability to support the trend toward decentralization (for example, local business centres) by providing guidelines for consistency.
- Improved compliance with administrative policies such as procurement, preferred vendors, procurement card policies, budgeting procedures, affirmative action guidelines, and so forth.(Jillinda, 2000, pp. 32-33)

II– Methods and Materials:

In order to answer the research problem presented above, knowledge management and its role in achieving quality with an organization of higher educationpresented by the Faculty of Economics, Commerce and Management Sciences at the University of Blida 2 - Ali Lounici, located in the wilaya of Blida.

II .1. The Society:

This study seeks to address the level of knowledge management and its role in the quality in the Faculty of Economics, Commerce and Management Sciences at the University of Blida 2 - from the viewpoint of teachers as members of the university including male and female professors and different degrees. More than 225 professors hold different degrees in Economics in the faculty. The faculty also recruits professors in other disciplines.

II .2. The sample:

To carry out any research, a specific sample must be selected for the study.As it known, the study sample is a part of the phenomenon of the society being taken in a specific way.It is properly represented to the society in order to present the characteristics of this community.

A random sample of teachers was chosen as it was selected on the basis of giving opportunity to each member of the society. The number of the sample reached 60 teacherss divided between assistant teachers, lecturers and professors.

II .3. The study tool:

The aim of the study tool is to look at the role of knowledge management in achieving the quality of higher education in the Faculty of Economics, Commerce and Management at Blida 2 University.The study tool includedfour main parts of study represented in the sides of the impact of knowledge management on the quality in the faculty under consideration: the quality of scientific

research, the quality of student and graduate services, the quality of curricula and programs, and the quality of administrative services.

III- Results and discussion :

This part represents the importance of applying knowledge management in achieving quality in the Faculty of Economics, Management, and Commerce sciences at Blida 2 University from the viewpoints of teachers.

III.1. The quality of Research Process (RP):

Based on the frequency of the questionnaire responses of the study sample, as well as the averages and standard deviations of teachers' answers concerning the effect of knowledge management on the quality of research process, as in the table (1) in the appendices.

It is clear from the table above that the level of research process in the Faculty of Economics, Management, and Commerce sciences at Blida 2 University is high, which is confirmed by the mean of 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.86.

Accordingly, the Faculty must be more interested in scientific research process and knowledge management, especially in terms of providing sources of information and facilitating research.

III.2. Students and Alumni Services (SAS):

Depending on the frequency of the questionnaire responses of the study sample, as well as the averages and standard deviations of teachers' answers concerning the effect of knowledge management on the quality of students and alumni services, as in the table (2) in the appendices.**:**

The results of the table above show that the level of student services is medium in the faculty of Economics, Management, and Commerce sciences at Blida 2 University, which is expressed by the Mean 2.84 that is below the required level, with a standard deviation of 0.89.

This indicates that it is better for the faculty under consideration to be more interested in knowledge management and students and graduates' services.

III.3. Administrative Services (AS):

Based on the frequency of the questionnaire responses of the study sample, as well as the averages and standard deviations of teachers' answers concerning the effect of knowledge management on the quality of administrative services, as in the table (3) in the appendices.**:**

From the results in the above table, it is noted that the level of administrative services in the faculty of Economics, Management, and Commerce sciences at Blida 2 University is considered high, which is represented by the mean of 3.46, with a standard deviation 0.79.

However, the faculty should strive to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative services.

III.4. Curriculum Development Process (CDP):

Depending on the frequency of the questionnaire responses of the study sample, as well as the averages and standard deviations of teachers' answers concerning the effect of knowledge management on the quality of curriculum development process, as in the table (4) in the appendices.:

The results of the table show that the value of the mean of curricula and programs reached 3.12, with a standard deviation 0.88, which means that the level of curricula and programs development is medium.

The faculty of Economics, Management, and Commerce sciences at Blida 2 University must strive more for developing and updating curricula and educational programs, and supporting and encouraging faculty members.

Despite the lack of knowledge management as an adopted discipline, there is a considered level of the importance of knowledge management in the faculty Economics, Management, and Commerce sciences at Blida 2 University. It should therefore pay more attention to knowledge management processes and requirements, especially the distribution and application of knowledge to get the wanted results of knowledge management.

IV-Conclusion:

Higher education in Algeria faces a high demand for its institutions' services due to several factors such as rapid population growth and changing value systems, and considering the study in higher education institution as a social value in itself regardless of the feasibility of the study and the effectiveness of higher education.

This led to an increase in the number of students without the use of more appropriate efforts by Algerian higher education institutions to control this phenomenon. Most of universities are unable to deal with that effectively. Unless some policies are put in place to control this phenomenon, such as reconsidering the admission system in higher education institutions by linking it to the needs of students and adopting new managerial approaches like knowledge management, this problem will remain as a problem and will lead to produce groups of unemployed students to increase society's problems.

Through the field study conducted at the Faculty of Economics, Management, and Commerce Sciences at Blida 2 University, the level of implementation of the knowledge management in the faculty has been medium and the levels of educational quality are medium. Although there is no knowledge management in its real and modern concept, there was an accepted effect of knowledge management on the educational quality levels in the faculty.

Enter the article abstract here in the same format (font, size, distance between lines). Considers the main conclusions and deductions of the previous section that answer the question in the introduction, followed by the proposals made through the field study, The abstract of the article includes the theoretical and practical limits of the research (self-criticism: reflect author future research intentions.

V- Appendices:

Table (1): The quality of Research Process

	X	£	Level
Research Process	3.47	0.86	High

Source: Prepared by researchers using SPSS software

Table (2): The quality of Students and Alumni Services

	X	£	Level
Students and Alumni Services	2.84	0.89	Medium

Source: Prepared by researchers using SPSS software

Table (3): The quality of Administrative Services

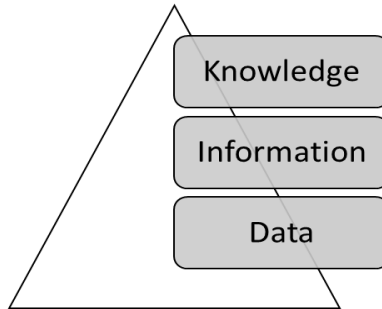|	X	£	Level
Administrative Services	3.46	0.79	High

Source: Prepared by researchers using SPSS software

Table (4): The quality of Curriculum Development Process

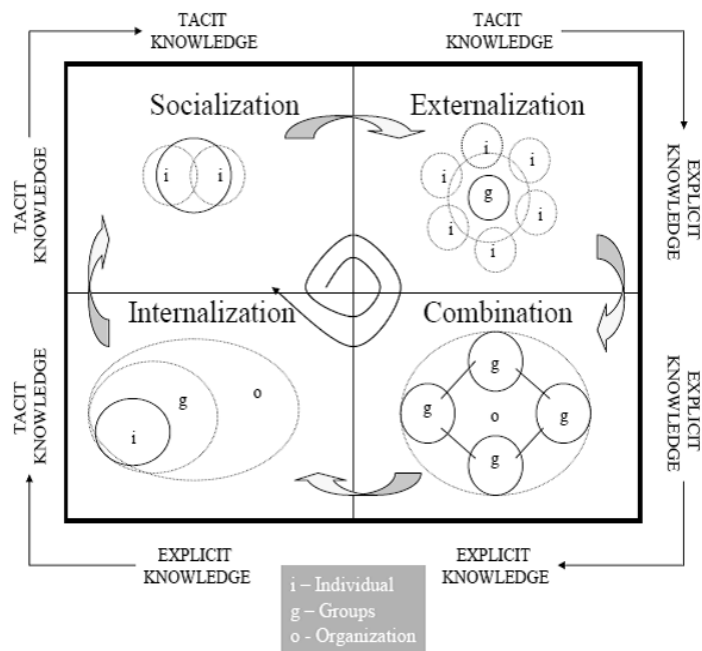|	X	£	Level
Curriculum Development Process	3.12	0.88	Medium

Source: Prepared by researchers using SPSS software

Figure (1): Knowledge Pyramid

The source: Fahey, L., Prusak, L. (1998) the Eleven Deadliest Sins of Knowledge Management, California Management Review, Vol.40, No.3, pp. 265-276.

Figure (2): The Nonaka's knowledge creation model.

The source: Ikujiro. N, Hirotaka. T, (1995), The Knowledge Creating Company, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p. 61.

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