

A Comparative Case Study of Institutional Work in Public Sector Organizations: Creating Knowledge Management Practice

Authors : Dyah Adi Sriwahyuni

Abstract : Institutional work has become a prominent and contemporary institutional theory perspective in organization studies. A wealth of studies in organizations have explored actor activities in creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions at the field level. However, the exploration of the work of actors in creating new management practices at the organizational level has been somewhat limited. The current institutional work literature mostly describes the work of actors at the field level and ignores organizational actors who work to realize management practices. Organizational actors here are defined as actors in organizations who work to institutionalize a particular management practice within the organizations. The extant literature has also generalized the types of management practices, which meant overlooking the unique characteristics of each management fashion as well as a management practice. To fill these gaps, this study aims to provide empirical evidence so as to contribute theoretically to institutional work through a comparative case study on organizational actors' creation of knowledge management (KM) practice in two public sector organizations in Indonesia. KM is a contemporary management practice employed to manage individual and organizational knowledge in order to improve organizational performance. This practice presents a suitable practical setting with which to provide a rich understanding of the organizational actors' institutional work and their connection with technology. Drawing on and extending the work of Perkmann and Spicer (2008), this study explores the forms of institutional work performed by organizational actors, including their motivation, skills, challenges, and opportunities. The primary data collection is semi-structured interviews with knowledgeable actors and document analysis for validity and triangulation. Following Eisenhardt's cross-case patterns, the researcher analyzed the collected data focusing on within-group similarities and intergroup differences. The researcher coded interview data using NVivo and used documents to corroborate the findings. The study's findings add to the wealth of institutional theory literature in organization studies, particularly institutional work related to management practices. This study builds a theory about the work of organizational actors in creating knowledge management practices. Using the perspective of institutional work, research can show the roles of the various actors involved, their practices, and their relationship to technology (materiality), not only focusing on actors with a power which has been the theorizing of institutional entrepreneurship. The development of knowledge management practices in the Indonesian public sector is also a significant additional contribution, given that the current KM literature is dominated by conceptualizing the KM framework and the impact of KM on organizations. The public sector, which is the research setting, also provides important lessons on how actors in a highly institutionalized context are creating an institution, in this case, a knowledge management practice.

Keywords : institutional work, knowledge management, case study, public sector organizations

Conference Title : ICIT 2023 : International Conference on Institutional Theory

Conference Location : Barcelona, Spain

Conference Dates : June 19-20, 2023