

Impact of Individual Characteristics of Agriculture Inspectors on Knowledge Acquisition Process: A Study in *Hambantota* District in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Agriculture extension services are designed to enable the diffusion of knowledge about farm technology. Agriculture Instructors (AIs) act as bridges implying that their capacity to absorb and diffuse knowledge is crucial for the effectiveness of the entire knowledge dissemination system. Despite the vast amount of research done on organizational dimensions on knowledge acquisition by agriculture extension officers, few studies address individual dimension in general and the role of knowledge acquisition in particular. In this study, we examined the extent to which individuals' capability to identify and acquisition new knowledge from external environment is shaped by their motivation, ability and opportunities drawing on MAO (Motivation, Ability and Opportunity) framework. To explore this, 72 AI officers in the Hambantota District in Sri Lanka were surveyed using a semi-structured questionnaire. Multiple regression model was used for our analysis and tested basic four assumptions before data use for regression analysis. This study found a positive and insignificant effect of individual ability on knowledge acquisition process ($\beta=0.008$, $p>0.05$). Further, we found that individual motivation has a negative and statistically insignificant impact on knowledge acquisition ($\beta=-0.001$, $p>0.05$). Moreover, opportunities show positive and significant impact on knowledge acquisition process ($\beta=0.324$, $p<0.05$). Based on these research findings, we conclude that opportunities and individual abilities of AIs for the access of new knowledge is much more important in Sri Lankan context and individual motivation to accesses new knowledge does not equally important for knowledge acquisition. Therefore, government of Sri Lanka should improve individual ability of AI officers as the primary mechanism to improve their performances and should stimulate their interest by developing and sustaining opportunities through social interaction. Moreover, we can propose different groups of activities to HR managers of the organization such as increasing individual ability (through staffing, training, performance appraisal) and providing opportunities (by improving communication, team building, and creating the right corporate culture to acquire knowledge).

Keywords: Ability, Agriculture instructors, Knowledge acquisition, Motivation, Opportunity

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