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Application of Knowledge Management in Zamfara State Secondary Schools

Abdulrahman Sheidu

DEPARTMENT OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT
ABDU GUSAU POLYTECHNIC TALATA MAFARA ZAMFARA STATE NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

This research aims at investigating the application of Knowledge Management (KM) in Zamfara State secondary schools. The study was descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised 225 public and private secondary schools (150 public and 75 private) in Zamfara State. The sample for the study comprised 200 (90% of the population) secondary schools drawn from the population, using the stratified random sampling technique of lucky deep, which yielded a total of 200 school administrators used as respondents for the study. The reliability of the study was obtained using a 34-item of 4 points structured Application of Knowledge Management in Zamfara State Secondary Schools. The data collected were analyzed using statistical tools in order to analyze all the research questions formulated for the study. The findings of the study is expected to reveal how public and private school administrators are aware of KM concept to low extent; and both the public and private schools administrators whether they putting KM practice to a large extent. The research is expected to recommend that, knowledge management should be put into practice by both schools administrators and staff; and school administrators and staff personnel should be computer literate to be able to convert data into information using computers since technology is one of the key realms of knowledge management.

INTRODUCTION

The continuous survival of the organizations is increasingly depending on the use of a wider range of highly effective knowledge management solutions. Many organizations have implemented several knowledge management techniques to achieve various objectives. Even though organization today are well aware of the impact of knowledge management, they are yet to fully grasped the paramount benefits that could be derived from the latest knowledge management solutions available now. There is therefore, the need to carry out further research in order to determine the value and promising future that knowledge management has for a better performance of the organizations.

According to Martin (2001) knowledge, although invisible, is a commodity just like any other. It can be stored, sold, bought, traded and stolen. It can also be grown, developed and harvested just like any crop in the world of agriculture. He further pointed out different forms of knowledge: special knowledge, practical knowledge, business related knowledge, wider knowledge, and accumulated knowledge and experience of the people who work within the organization in how to make it all work relatively smooth.

Moreover, organizations such as secondary schools contain much information within them and in addition have access to a vast range of information from sources; such as records management, decisions and minutes of meetings, (Nwala, Nyenwa&Nwosu 2011), unmet needs and aspirations of the consumers of education. On top of all these information, there is the development of computer-based technology such as database systems and the internet over recent years, the opportunity to capitalize on the information available has never been greater. In short, knowledge is now a significant part of the strategic and competitive activities of any organization. In this study knowledge management is define by Turban and Volonino (2011) as the process that helps organization identify, select, organize, disseminate, and transfer important information and expertise that are part of the organizations memory and that may reside in unstructured form within the organization. The globalization and improved technology also means that competition is much more intense and market power is shifting to management of the business knowledge.

Pearlson&Saunders (2009) points out that the best reason for knowledge management is that it can be a source of lasting and sustainable competitive advantage. They explained the reasons for managing knowledge to include the benefits derived from sharing best practices, the need to respond to globalization and rapid change, organizational downsizing, the need to manage information and communication overload, controlling knowledge embedded in products, and leveraging knowledge to gain competitive advantage.

The significance of this review is knowledge which is obviously the key to continued survival and development of organization. How the organizations manage their knowledge as an organization-wide resources using knowledge management tools, solutions and approaches to achieve effectiveness of business activities. It was found by Lin, Yen & Tarn (2007) that today knowledge is regarded as the key resource to gain competitive advantage and competitive advantage drive from knowledge management could leads to efficiency, integration and collaboration of business activities.

Sambamurthy&Subramani (2005) identifies knowledge as the fundamental asset for firms in the contemporary economy. They further argue that in order to be successful, organizations must not only exploit their existing knowledge, but also invest in continually exploring new knowledge as a strategic option for future strategies and competitive advantage (Nonaka, 1994). They points knowledge to be a complex concept adding that a number

of functions determine the nature of knowledge creation, management, valuation and sharing.

Attempting to define knowledge, Jasimuddin, Connell & Klein (2012) pointed out that there are many conflicting issues concerning a precise and ubiquitous definition of knowledge which have still not been resolve. But they maintain that the common theme that permeates much of the literature is that knowledge is linked to the capacity for action. This means an action to share, transfer or use information for a purpose.

In the same previous study with Nevo&Chan (2007b) pointing that researchers have studied knowledge management in order to determine its contribution towards managing and leveraging organizational knowledge. According to them, critically reviewing the knowledge management literature shows the changing view of the focus of knowledge management, which resulted in different definition and different level of technology support pointing to the early conceptualization stage, when knowledge management research focused on empowering the knowledge worker and providing support for organizations starting to adopt its methodology on the technology side. They cited examples about the predecessors of knowledge management to include executive information systems, decision support systems and expert systems. However, as they finally stated when knowledge management gain popularity the focus shifted into practical approach. Thus, showing the reason why many knowledge management definitions were prescriptive or emphasizing specific activities of knowledge management that could be captured, managed or facilitated by the IT. Evidently pointing this to be the reason why earlier definitions include list of specific manageable activities, such as knowledge creation, identification, codification, sharing and application.

But earlier Pillania (2008) proposes two definitions, one for knowledge and another for knowledge management. In their view, they defined knowledge as a whole set of intuition, reasoning, insights and experiences related to technology, products, processes, customers, competition that enable effective action. They further defined knowledge management as a systematic, organized, explicit and deliberate on-going process of creating, disseminating, applying, renewing and updating the knowledge for achieving organizational objectives. In their view, they look at knowledge management as a comprehensive concept covering people, process and technology aspect.

Laudon, Laudon&Brabston (2012) refer knowledge management to the set of processes developed in an organization to create, store, transfer and apply knowledge. In their view knowledge management increases the ability of the organization to learn from its environment and to incorporate knowledge into business process. Turban and Volonino (2011) defined knowledge management as the process that helps organization identify, select, organize, disseminate and transfer important information and expertise that are part of the organization's memory and that may reside in unstructured form within the organization.

As enshrined in the NPE, secondary education is the education received by children after primary education and before the tertiary stage. (NPE, 1998). The aim is to prepare the children for useful and purposeful living within the society as well as higher education. It is unfortunate that in general terms, the quality and accessibility of secondary education in Zamfara State is greatly inadequate. To be able to improve the quality of education we must be able to reduce cost of training to the barest minimum, especially the cost of learning materials. We must embrace the new techniques and opportunities offered by the IT. We must be able to develop our own secondary education courseware in the internet format to be adopted in all schools across the state. We should design mechanism for updating the internet formatted courseware to conform to the dictates of the IT and New world order.

There is no doubting the fact that many of these problems mentioned earlier can be easily overcome with the modernization of secondary education in the State, especially in the area of IT deployment for development and keeping with globalization and new world order. This research therefore concerned with the critical application and analysis of knowledge management practices for secondary education in Zamfara State.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

The area of educational administration over time has undergone fundamental changes yet education is perceived as low. Standards are falling and there are complaints from stakeholders. This study investigated the level of awareness, practices, challenges and prospects of school administrators on the influence of Knowledge Management practices in Zamfara State.

Nigerian secondary school students on a regular basis performed poorly in public examinations due to lack of achievement in the National Policy of Education goals. According to Nwosu (2011) in Nwokocha (2007), indicated that about 80 percent of unemployed persons in Nigeria are primary and secondary drop-outs. Hence derogating our secondary school education with appellation "falling standard" accompanied with sterile arguments on "who is accountable to who and what". This is more so even among the some group of people who could not help but hold on, rather tenaciously, to the traditional management practices that are guided by a theory of change that is fundamentally flawed with the twin pillars of "scientific management" and the maximization of short-term profits.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The aims of this research are to investigate how Knowledge Management could assist the development of secondary education in Zamfara State. Other specific objectives are:

1 To investigate how the secondary schools in Zamfara State makes use of knowledge management as a tool for educational management in order to effectively achieve the educational objectives.

2 To discover the existing gaps involving the extent to which the secondary schools in Zamfara State make use of Knowledge Management and identify the crucial factors that are responsible for the successful implementation of Knowledge Management as a tool for educational management and administration.

Using the analysis and findings the research will identify the problems, challenges and opportunities involves in using Knowledge Management as a tool for effective administrative and educational management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In their review of Knowledge Management Laudon, Laudon&Brabston (2012) have revealed that the key problem in managing knowledge is the creation of an appropriate classification scheme, or taxonomy to organize information into meaningful categories so that it can be easily accessed. They further maintain that some knowledge exist within the organization in the form of structured text documents (such as reports and presentations) adding that Decision Makers also needs knowledge that is semi structured, such as email, voicemail and digital pictures.

Discussing on the relevance of knowledge management, Nevo&Chan (2007a) claimed that knowledge management now addresses policies, strategies and techniques aimed at supporting an organization's competitiveness by optimizing the conditions needed for efficiency, improvement, innovation, and collaboration among employees.

According to Holsapple&Wu (2008) they argues that the critics of knowledge management have characterized it as a temporary buzzword or hype, and predicted that knowledge management would fall into dustbin of management fads or at most, have a minor impact on research and practice. However, they maintain that knowledge management has proven to have relevance to modern organizations and is here to stay. Adding that knowledge management is now of great importance to firm's performance because it allows the firm to better leverage its knowledge and resources. Therefore, an understanding of an organization's knowledge management capabilities is essential to both efficient deployment of resources and achievement of the organizational values.

McGinnis&Huang (2007) identified two types of knowledge that exist. The Explicit knowledge exists as words and numbers, which can easily be communicated. The Tacit knowledge which is personal and hard to formalize such as the subjective insights and intuition are its examples. They further maintain that there are four possible conversion paths or modes between these two types of knowledge: Socialization(S), Externalization (E), Combination (C), and Internalization (I), and that all of these modes contributes to the effective knowledge management adoption and practice.

McKenzie (2008) have argued that within the established KM literature, there is a general consensus that the common aim of most organizations is to be able to create and transfer the knowledge of the organization in a way that results in firm success, be it financial or operational. There are two main types of knowledge. The first is the knowledge that can be readily communicated, that is 'explicit knowledge'. This type of knowledge is derived from technical or propriety data and information sources and often serves as the basis for the development of tools and systems that help the firm to increase efficiency or other management metrics. In contrast, the knowledge that a organization possesses that is more difficult to articulate, and thus more difficult to translate operationally within formalized system is labelled 'tacit knowledge'.

Technology has brought significant impacts to every sphere of human life and activities. In her study Lucey (2004) claims that technology has alters the skills requirements for individuals and it changes jobs and the way they are done, alters relationships between individuals and departments within organization, example with customers, suppliers and clients. Elsewhere, McGinnis&Huang (2007) maintain that knowledge management is now use by organization to capture, documentation and sharing knowledge. They added that knowledge management has increasingly become a business process, supported by database technologies and activities aimed at the creation and sharing of knowledge.

In general, the study has significant implication in that it has confirm the role of knowledge management to the organisational success. The literature confirmed how organisation now depend and use knowledge management tools and solutions in the face of increased competition and acceleration of organizational activities. The study identified these knowledge management tools and the IT based support they are providing and how organisations are using them for Knowledge Management promotion. It has also identified with the organisational characteristics and structure, the people and cultural factors to the success of organization processes in the context of Knowledge Management adoption and practice. Furthermore, the research suggest that use of these Knowledge Management would definitely improve the overall organisational performance in terms of decision making processes, operational efficiency and adopting organizational changes and general enterprise. This is because organisational success has always depended on the sharing of knowledge, but now in the face of the increased competition and acceleration of knowledge, organisation are putting even greater emphasis on the dissemination of knowledge and best practice. The rapid development of information technology has given organizations new ways to improve access to what they know and they have deployed the technology in new knowledge management initiatives (Gorry, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study will be a descriptive survey design. The population for the study will comprised 225 secondary schools (150 public and 75 private) in Zamfara State. The sample for the study will comprised 200 (90% of the population) secondary schools drawn from the population, using the stratified random sampling technique of lucky deep, which is expected to yield a total of 200 school administrators to be used as respondents from the study. A 34-item of 4 points structured Application of Knowledge Management in Secondary School Administration Assessment Scale will be developed and administered by the researchers. The data collected will be analyzed using statistical tools in order to answer the research questions formulated for the study. The analysis of the data obtained for the purpose of this study will be presented logically in the report findings.

Scope

The research will be conducted in Zamfara State secondary schools. The population for the study will comprise public and secondary schools across the state. The research will further focus on the application of KM practices in Zamfara State secondary schools. It will assess the level of awareness of KM and its overall impact to the development of education policy and management.

The research is limited to the application and analysis of knowledge management practices in Zamfara State secondary schools with the aim of investigating the patterns of behavior and interaction that actually emerge with a group context study. In support of this investigation, Guiney (2002), explains that knowledge management is not just knowing everything the organization knows but creating a synthesis between the people and the information to the point that the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In general, the study has significant implication in that it has confirm the role of knowledge management to the organisational success. The literature confirmed how organisation now depend and use knowledge management tools and solutions in the face of increased competition and acceleration of business activities. The study identified these knowledge management tools and solutions, the IT based support they are providing and how organisations are using them for KM promotion. It has also identified with the organisational characteristics and structure, the people and cultural factors to the success of business processes in the context of KM adoption and practice. Furthermore, the report suggest that use of these KMS systems and solutions would definitely improve the overall organisational performance in terms of decision making processes, operational efficiency and adopting business changes and general enterprise. This is because organisational success has always depended on the sharing of knowledge, but now in the face of the increased competition and acceleration of business, companies are putting even greater emphasis on the dissemination of knowledge and best practice. The rapid development of information technology has given companies new ways to improve access to what they know and many businesses have deployed the technology in new knowledge management initiatives (Gorry, 2008).

The literature findings have numerous implications. Furthermore, considering the implication for the organisation using knowledge management solutions tends to promote their business excellence and profitability, survival and more competitive edge over rivals. All previous research conducted on the impact and relevance of knowledge management to the organisational performance has attested to the strategic role in decision making and general purposes.

A potential extension of this type of work would be to investigate the role, impacts and contribution of the latest knowledge management tools and solution in the form of Artificial Intelligence tools, the simulation tools, semantic networks due to the rapid technology development that could support effective KM implementation and practice. Moreover, since to date there is no total KM solutions with this technology, it means the roles and relevance of people, culture, organizational structures would continue to be studied in the future research. A related question for future research is whether there would be a total KM 'solutions' with technology. Would the roles of people and culture be overtaken by these technologies in KM practice and adoption.

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