

Effect of Knowledge Management on Organizational Growth and Sustainability in an Era of Economic Recession

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Abstract

Purpose: The study aimed at investigating the effect of knowledge management on organizational growth and sustainability in an era of economic recession.

Methodology/Design/Approach: The researchers employed the descriptive study design and all the respondents were used in the study. The objectives of the study were to examine the facilities available for knowledge management operations in the libraries; determine the level of ICT skills in the librarians; identify the medium used in sharing knowledge among the users and strategies used for enhancing knowledge management service in libraries. The study was conducted in Federal University of Technology Library, Minna, Federal University Library, Lafiya and Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia Library, University of Abuja. Fifty librarians from three universities formed the population of the study. Questionnaire was used for the data collection. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency tables.

Findings: The analyzed data revealed that 20 librarians have very high knowledge ICT skills. The finding also shows digital section and library OPAC as the major available facilities for knowledge management operations. Consortium acquisition of resources is the main medium used in knowledge sharing as revealed by the study.

Implications: The researchers suggested that continuous in-house training should be a top most priority of the library management. Librarians should see personal training and development as a privilege for equipping themselves for challenges ahead in their job.

Originality/value: Since knowledge management is capital intensive, the government should through the mother institution, improve library budget for acquisition purpose.

Keys words: Knowledge Management, Organizational Growth and sustainability, Economic Recession

Introduction

In the world in which we found ourselves today, knowledge has become an essential organ that is extremely useful for the survival and revitalization of any organization, institution or business for sustainability in economic growth and recession era. In addition, Ram (2014) asserted that knowledge has been recognized as the driver of productivity and economic growth in a knowledge-based economy. Furthermore, Davenport and Prusak, see knowledge as a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experience and information. This is because knowledge when applied, paves way for growth and development in an organization, institution and business. According to Mupa, Chabaya and Chiome (2011) the society is entering into an era where the future essentially will be determined by people's ability to use knowledge which is a precious global resource that is the embodiment

of human intellectual capital and technology. The knowledge-based economy all over the world is experiencing rapid growth; making knowledge an asset of importance that needs proper dissemination for use, creation and innovation amongst organizations, individuals and the society at large.

It is of paramount important that individuals, institutions and organizations in an era of knowledge-based economy strive to develop knowledge database to trigger teaching and learning spirit that could influence creativity and innovation. In same view, Psarras (2006) noted that individuals and companies are obliged to focus on maintaining and enhancing their knowledge capital in order to innovate, teach, learn, adapt and apply core competency for survival. Hence, knowledge has become an invaluable asset that foster change in creativity and innovation, knowledge management has become indispensable field in knowledge-based economy.

Knowledge management is essentially about facilitating the processes by which knowledge is created, shared and used in organisations, institutions etc (National Library for Health and Caroline, 2005) the above further states that, ensuring that people have the knowledge they need, where they need it, when they need it, the right knowledge, in the right place, at the right time is fundamental in this age.

Knowledge management is the methodology for systematically gathering, organizing and dissemination of facts called information (Davenport et al in Mehta, Naveen, and Jitendra, 2011). Supporting Davenport, KM is an indispensable task of librarians because systemic nature of gathering, organizing and dissemination of information. Maggie Haines in NHS (2005) sees knowledge management as a process with so much emphasis on generating, capturing and sharing information know how and integrating it into business practices and decision making for excellent organisational benefit. This implies that organizational growth is anchor on the availability of unimpeded information flow. Libraries as a matter of must ensure there is steady flow of timely and scientifically information to institutions and organizations. Organizational growth in the view Boggs (2004) is the potential that provides small business with a myriad of benefits for greater efficiencies from economies scales, increased power, a greater ability to withstand market fluctuations, increased survival rate, greater profit and increased prestige for organizational members.

The definition above necessitate urgent integration of knowledge management practice in the academic libraries to foster accessibility, share and dissemination of timely information among targeted clients for application, which will mean a way out of economic recession in Nation. Economic recession is a business cycle contraction which results in a general slowdown in economic activity (Encarta World English Dictionary, 2008). On the other hand, BBC News of 8th July 2008 defined economic recession as a negative economic growth for two consecutive quarters that occur when there is a widespread drop in spending which is triggered by financial crisis, external trade shock, adverse supply shock or the bursting of economic bubble. In of recession era all we need is effective knowledge management practice that will influence innovation by everyone. Mehta, Naveen and Jitendra (2011) in their view, acknowledge that

realization of enterprises in developing and sharing knowledge is a pivotal to sustain a cutting edge. Management must decide to place knowledge management high on their agenda- especially in economic turmoil. It is a known fact that institutions and organisations can do very well in recession era when they recognize the opportunities that comes with economic recession. This opportunity is only brought to limelight with empowered adequate information or knowledge shared.

Librarians as information managers in a knowledge- based economy must adapt their services to embrace knowledge sharing. This mean equipping themselves with wide range of personal and transferable skills in order to manage the changing environment in which they works. Supporting the view Laili bin, Hashim and Wan Nor did (2012) note that management and interpersonal skills will make librarians more effective managers of networked resources and services. Bishop (2001) opined that managing knowledge requires a mix of technical, organisational and interpersonal skills. This needed skills for the information professional in a knowledge-based environment are summed up by Teng and Hawamdeh (2002) to include IT literacy, sharp and analytical mind, Innovation and inquiring and lastly enabled knowledge creation, flow and communication within the organization, between staff and public.

It is now imperative that librarians must make conscious effort to integrate into the library operation knowledge management service and to also develop kin interest in acquiring ICT skills for effective service delivery. Since, knowledge management operation is driven in nature. The change in the library operation will contribute immensely to the accessibility of available information and also enhance knowledge sharing among intellectuals to foster creativity and innovation in institutions and organisations. The question then is how prepared and involved are libraries and the librarians in the adoption knowledge management services.

The study on effect of knowledge management on organizational growth and sustainability in an era of economic recession examine the level of ICT skills in the librarians, the facilities available for knowledge management operation in the libraries studied, medium used in sharing knowledge among the users and strategies used for enhancing knowledge management service in libraries.

Literature Review

Related study has been carried on effect of knowledge management on organizational growth and sustainability in an era of economic recession. Knowledge management enhances to access to knowledge created, dissemination, retrieval and the share of it in a multiple format to create awareness of available information that will inform creativity when applied. Jantz (2001) maintained that knowledge management can help transform the library into a more efficient knowledge sharing organization because its objective that is to draw out the tacit knowledge people have and make it accessible for application every one. Therefore there are a number of approaches that academic librarians should follow and harvest the tacit and explicit knowledge of workers to the full advantage of the library. Knowledge Management is defined as the capabilities by which communities within an organization and institution capture the knowledge that is critical to them, constantly improve it, and make it available in the most effective manner to those people who need it, so that they can exploit it creatively to add value as a normal part of their work.

Kin (1999) suggested acquisition of modern tools, updating skills and standardization, knowledge creation, knowledge capturing, knowledge sharing, and skills in ICT as the some the basic approaches academic librarians for KM operation. In addition, Raja et al (2009) enumerated the types of knowledge-related tools which are effective in managing and handling information in academic libraries to include, the Intranets/Extranets, electronic document management, data analysis, data warehousing, mapping tools, machine learning, workflow management systems, groupware, information retrieval tools, and web archiving. To implement effective knowledge management in academic libraries, Gupta et al (2007) is of the view adequate provision should made in the following areas namely: finance, cost analysis, information technology, standards, retrieval tools and metadata. Ugwu and Ezema (2010) notes that cultural skills, leadership skills, strategic and restructuring skills, among other skills competencies are tools for successful knowledge management applications in Nigerian academic libraries.

Also Maponya (2004), and Priti (2009) are of the view that sharp and analytical mind for librarians; innovation and inquiring spirit; and literacy on

how to use the appropriate technology to capture, catalogue and disseminate information and knowledge to the targeted audience are essentials for knowledge management in academic libraries. Since, knowledge acquisition is the starting point of knowledge management in libraries, Shanhong (2000) opined that knowledge in academic libraries can be acquired through:

- Establishing knowledge links or networking with other libraries and with institutions of all kinds
- Attending training courses, conferences, seminars and workshops
- Subscribing to listservs and online or virtual communities of practice
- Buying or borrowing knowledge products or resources in the form of manuals, blueprints, reports and research reports from other libraries and organizations.

Academic libraries because of its vital role in knowledge based economy to facilitate creation, access and sharing of knowledge for improve economy in recession era need strengthen the equipping of librarians with the know-how competence skills needed to cope with knowledge management operation.

Adomi and Anie (2006) noted that librarians in Nigerian universities are not highly computer literate as most of them are recently been introduced to computers in libraries. The researchers further states that the computers mostly used for cataloguing and for serials on a limited scale. Also Mohamed Haneefa and Shukoor (2010) observed the use of ICT-based resources and services, library automation software, and general purpose application software high among the junior professionals than the senior library staff. Also the use of digital library and institutional repository software is very low among the library professionals. Majority of the professionals had confidence in routine ICT and Internet tasks, and need training or orientation in library automation, digital library and institutional repository software. Furthermore, Adeyoyin (2005) noted that Nigerian university libraries, which form the basis of knowledge for the country, do not have professional librarians whose skill-set is adequate to meet the ICT applications which are indispensable for the acquisition, organization, provision and dissemination of knowledge. Library management, for its part, should acknowledge the wide-ranging benefits of both ICT and raise levels of ICT literacy for university

libraries and their mother institutions for good services delivery.

Methodology

The study used case study design method and all the respondents were used in the study. The population of this study is all the librarians in the

three universities (Laifiya, Minna and Abuja) for study which was 50. Questionnaire was used for the data collection. The findings of the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency tables.

Presentation of Data and Analysis

Table 1: Showing the distribution of the Respondents

Categories	Population	Total Copies of Questionnaires administered	Total Copies returned	%
Federal University of Technology Library, Minna	28	28	26	54.16
Federal University Library, Laifiya	11	11	11	22.91
Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia Library, Abuja	11	11	11	22.91
Total	50	50	48	99.98

Table 1 reveals the following report of the responses, Federal University of Technology Library, Minna has the highest response rate of 54.16%, while Federal University Library, Laifiya and Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia

Library, Abuja both has equal response rate of 22.91%. The response rate for the distribution of the questionnaire that was returned was 99.98% which was considered reasonable for the study.

Table 2: The level of ICT skills of the Librarians

Level of ICT Skills	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	20	40
High	18	36
Low	8	16
Very Low	4	8
Total	50	100

The data presented in table 2 shows that, few of the respondents (40%) have very high level skills of ICT and 18% of the respondents possess high level ICT skills. By implication most of the librarians who are supposed to be managers of information will be found wanting in delivering service as information providers due lack of ICT Skills.

IT managers, it is imperative that librarian should out grown accidental opportunities to be trained. Knowledge management operation in libraries has change librarians to personal skill seekers in order to retain relevance as knowledge creators through gathering, disseminating and of information.

In knowledge based society era, where librarians job as managers of knowledge is been threaten

Table 3: The Facilities available for Knowledge management operation in the Libraries

Available Facilities	Frequency	Percentage
E- Resources	7	14
Library Portal	3	6
Library OPAC	10	20
Human Resources (Skillful)	9	18
Technology (Digital Section)	14	28
Technology (automated Library)	7	14
Total	50	100

Digital section (28%) and Library OPAC are the main facilities available for knowledge

management operation in the libraries. With (18%) human resources that can distinguish themselves in meeting the users various

information needs and also their colleagues too. The finding by implication shows that most libraries are not ready for effective knowledge management that will deliver the Nation from

economic recession because of lack of adequate infrastructure of on ground, which is attributed to the low funding of the libraries.

Table 4: The medium used for Sharing Knowledge among the Users

Medium of Sharing	Frequency	Percentage
E- Resources sharing	02	4
Human Resource sharing	10	20
E- Referral Services	07	14
Library Networking	5	10
Online Inter Library Loan	00	00
Consortium Acquiring of Resources	12	24
Library OPAC sharing	14	28
Total		100

Table 4 revealed that library OPAC sharing (28%), consortium acquiring of resources (24%) and human resource sharing (20%) are most the common means of knowledge sharing in the

institutions. The study shows that libraries need to incorporate all the other means of sharing with more seriousness for proper coordination, access and sharing of the knowledge

Table 5: Strategies used for enhancing Knowledge Management Service in the Libraries

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Develop a reputable bibilometric database for institutional research Publication	9	18
Develop a network collaboration among libraries to foster availability and accessibility of knowledge among institutions	8	16
Continuous in-house training for Knowledge sharing among institutional community	13	26
Develop a good policy on knowledge management	8	16
Acquisition of latest Technology	12	24
Total	50	100

The findings in table 5 shows (26%) continuous in-house training for knowledge sharing among institutional community, (24%) acquisition of latest technology and develop a reputable biblometric database for institutional research Publication with (18%) as the most enhance strategies. The libraries need to strengthen the above identified strategies for effective service delivery. Development of good policy on knowledge management and network collaboration among libraries are major strategies that could foster application of knowledge management. Thus, it is now of necessity to embrace all the strategies in the table and also be open to embracing other strategies that seen well for adoption.

Discussion

The study indicated few librarians to be very highly skilled in ICT knowledge, with other very

few that are highly knowledge skilled in ICT. It is obvious that most librarians who are supposed to be managers of information are not ICT skilled, which is a clear indication that they will be found wanting in delivering services as information providers in an era where librarians profession has paradigm shift from the traditional library to integrate KM operation. This study agreed with that of Adomi and Anie (2006) who noted that librarians in Nigerian universities are not highly computer literate as most of them are recently been introduced to computers in libraries. The researchers further states that the computers mostly used for cataloguing and for serials on a limited scale. The study is not too far from that of Mohamed Haneefa and Shukoor (2010) observed the use of ICT-based resources and services, library automation software, and general purpose application software high among the junior professionals than the senior library staff. Also the use of digital library and institutional

repository software is very low among the library professionals.

Beside ICT skills in librarians, Ugwu and Ezema (2010) notes that cultural skills, leadership skills, strategic and restructuring skills, among other skills competencies are also tools for successful knowledge management applications in Nigerian academic libraries. By application ICT skills in librarians ready for KM application in libraries is just a stepping stone, but the beauty KM is glaring when other skills are embedded them.

The finding shows that most libraries are not ready for effective knowledge management operation due to the lack basic of infrastructure (E - resources, library portal, library OPAC, skilled human resources) on ground. From the study, only one library is fully automated and other digital section with few computers and having difficulty in accessing e- resources by their defined user. Supporting the above finding, Gupta et al (2007) is of the view adequate provision should made available in the following areas namely: finance, cost analysis, information technology, standards, retrieval tools and metadata. It implies that KM is almost impossible without adequate resources for proper integration.

The study is slightly similar to that of Raja et al (2009) that enumerated types of knowledge-related tools which are effective in managing and handling information in academic libraries to include, the Intranets/Extranets, electronic document management, data analysis, data warehousing, mapping tools, machine learning, workflow management systems, groupware, information retrieval tools, and web archiving.

The study revealed that library OPAC sharing (28%), consortium acquiring of resources (24%) and human resource sharing (20%) are most the common means of knowledge sharing in the institutions. It is imperative that libraries need to incorporate all the other means of sharing with more seriousness for proper coordination, access and sharing of the knowledge. Since, KM can only survive where gathering and creation, diffusion and sharing existed.

Continuous in-house training for knowledge sharing among institutional community, acquisition of latest technology and develop a reputable bibliometric database for institutional research Publication are the most identified strategies used in the studied. These libraries need to strengthen those strategies by developing a good policy on knowledge management. A

network collaboration among libraries adopted as a major strategies that could foster application of knowledge management. Thus, making it a necessity to embrace all the strategies in the table analyzed, at the same time ready to embracing other strategies that seen well for adoption. The findings of Olivier (2009) is similar to the current findings as it also identified learning events and publications, in- house training for staff, regional networks, thematic networks as strategies for enhancing knowledge management integration in libraries.

Conclusion

In conclusion, KM is design for the singular purpose of starring up creative and innovative desire in the people through the application of knowledge at their disposal. This knowledge is gathered from wealth of information acquired, organized, disseminated and shared among potential clients. However, this KM goal is been impeded as a result of low or no budget for academic libraries. Also, the ICT driven nature KM is a major that hindered effective integration of it in the libraries as most librarians and library staff are not skillful. On this note, the researchers suggested that government should improve on library budget allocation through the mother institutions for collection and infrastructure development. Librarians in knowledge –based economy should embrace personal training as opportunity and privilege for equipping themselves with skills to withstand challenges ahead such as KM today, tomorrow another field. Institutions should see librarians as assets in knowledge based society and make also librarians' training of top most important that deserved urgent attention.

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