

Chapter 29

Knowledge Sharing Practices Among Non–Academic Staff in a Nigerian University

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing, an important part of knowledge management, has particularly been regarded as an important way of increasing competitiveness and performance of organisations. This study investigated knowledge sharing practices among non-academic staff at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Descriptive research designed was adopted. Findings reveal that the staff shared knowledge among themselves, and majority had understanding of, and good disposition to, knowledge sharing. The study found that the staff shared both tacit and explicit knowledge, but majorly tacit, and mainly through face-to-face interactions. The major knowledge sharing enabler is improved productivity, while lack of time is the major knowledge sharing barrier. The study concludes that there is a good knowledge sharing practices among the staff. However, there is need for the university to promote more collaboration and knowledge sharing practices among the staff by providing enabling environment for knowledge sharing, in addition to provision of adequate information and communication technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge has become a key resource and very vital for the development and growth of any society. It is the collection of individual's skills and acquired learning, and one of the most important assets of any organisation. These days, organisations no longer compete solely on financial capital and strength, but on how they are able to leverage on knowledge to have competitive advantage in business. Hence,

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effective knowledge management (KM) through sharing of knowledge effectively is vital for all organisations. In actual fact, KS plays an increasingly significant role in determining the outcomes of KM (Yang & Chen, 2007). Knowledge sharing (KS) is a key element in the survival of any organisation and the driving force for enhanced productivity, economic growth and performance. Therefore, making knowledge available to members of organisation for effective use through sharing should be giving a top priority in organisations.

KS is a social interaction culture, involving the exchange of knowledge, experiences and skills. It is an activity through which knowledge (information, skills, or expertise) is exchanged among people, friends, families, communities or organisations. KS can be considered as the first generation of KM and is described as 'supply-side KM' because people can acquire supplied knowledge through KS systems (Vorakulpipat & Rezqui, 2008). Wei, Choy, Chew and Yen (2012) explain that KS is the dissemination or exchange of tacit or explicit knowledge, ideas, experiences or even skills from one individual to another individual or groups of individuals; while Cheng, Ho and Lau (2009) posit that KS is about communicating knowledge within a group of people. Thus, KS is not only defined as transmitting knowledge to target receivers, but also absorbing and being used by people. KS process consists of two parts: donating and collecting. Knowledge donation involves communicating to others one's personal and intellectual capital, whereas knowledge collection involves consulting colleagues in order to have them share their intellectual capital (van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004).

BACKGROUND

The concept, KS, has received immense attention due to the recognition of its value in learning, knowledge creation and innovation. KS is actually a key process in translating individual learning into organisational capability. KS comprises a set of shared understandings related to providing employees access to relevant information, thereby building knowledge network within organisation (Hogel, Parboteeah & Munson, 2003). Parekh (2009) highlights some benefits of KS: helps to avoid reinventing research, reduce redundant work, reduce cost of inventions, and expedite creation of knowledge with the help of experts and experienced persons. When properly managed, KS can greatly improve work-quality, decision-making skills, problem-solving efficiency as well as competency (Yang & Chen, 2007). KS is also a learning experience for the sharer. For example, if employees are motivated to share knowledge with their peers but are not sure if they are able to communicate the knowledge in a manner in which it will be understood, they are more likely to use KS as an opportunity to deepen their own understanding and find a better way to organise and explain knowledge before they share it. Moreover, knowledge sharers may learn others' perspectives on the same issue or problem being discussed. Additionally, individuals may share their ideas with others to further develop them and to facilitate creativity. Thus, KS not only improves competence of the people that are involved in the process but also benefits the community or organisations by speeding up the deployment of knowledge.

Liebowitz and Chen (2003) found that it is more difficult to share knowledge in public sector organisations because of the bureaucratic nature of many government organisations and the fact that knowledge is associated with power, and promotion opportunities. However, universities have different interests, goals, values, needs, and motivation compare to other public organisations (Siddique *et al.*, 2011). Universities are knowledge-based organisations or knowledge intensive environments which play major roles in KM through teaching, research and publication (Rowley, 2000). They play critical role

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