KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICE AMONG ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN KASHIM IBRAHIM LIBRARY AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY COMPLEX, ZARIA

By

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Abstract

The study was conducted to find out knowledge management practice among the librarians of Kashim Ibrahim Library of Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex, Zaria. To achieve the purpose of the study three objectives were formulated with respect to the understanding of knowledge management practice in the Kashim Ibrahim Library Complex. That is to; ascertain the strategies that the library is adopting in retaining knowledge of its academic Librarians, to find out the channels used by the Librarians in acquiring knowledge for their profession and to discover the constraints that affecting knowledge management practice in the Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex, Zaria. The population of the study comprised of all the forty 40 academic librarians in the Kashim Ibrahim Library Complex, using purposive sampling technique the sample size 35(88%) librarians was used for data collection. The research method used is quantitative with survey research design approach for data collection for the study. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for collection of data and the data collected were quantified and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, tables and discussion. Some findings from the analysis revealed that the library complex is adopting involving librarians in to specific tasks as means of retaining their knowledge in the library; they used mentoring and coaching of lower cadre librarians by the senior librarians. The librarians used to acquire their professional knowledge through conferences, seminars, symposium, workshops and in-house trainings. The constraints affecting knowledge management in the library were identified to be poor perception of the librarians about the concept of knowledge management, lack funds among others. At the study recommend among others that the library management of Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex should put their heads together and enlighten their employees the importance of knowledge management as a means that would enhance services and become more relevant to the overall mission and vision set to achieved by the university.

Keywords: Academic Librarians, Knowledge Management, Tacit and Explicit Knowledge

Introduction

Knowledge management is a concept of concern to all information professionals, it is a combination of diverse fields of organized form of knowledge discipline. This includes information and knowledge management, cognitive psychology, philosophy, managerial sciences and communication. The main thrust of knowledge, is knowledge which is consider today, as an actual asset, rather than something intangible. Davenport and Prusak (2000) knowledge is a mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, expert insight, and grounded intuition that provides an environment and framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the mind of the knowers. In organizations it becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories, but also in organizational routines, practices and norms.

In the field of library and information science knowledge management is an important tool which can help libraries to better adapt to need of their users (Poonkhai, 2016). Academic institutions are having all significant opportunities to apply knowledge management practices to support every part of their mission. Libraries with knowledge management practices will be better able to increase their services, run their workforce in the situation of severe shortage of qualified employees, increase and expand scope of their programmes and activities. Activities, such as, information literacy skills for users and employees, knowledge acquisition, knowledge capturing, knowledge storage, knowledge distribution, knowledge utilization, organizational learning, learning absorption, knowledge transformation, community of practice, knowledge exploration and dynamic capacity.

All these activities are imperative and forever important, as per the importance of knowledge management. Knowledge management has been widely recognized today as the foundation of industrialized economies which is shifted from natural resources to intellectual assets. Poonkhai (2016) argued that activities of academic institutions have significant opportunities to apply knowledge management practice to support every part of their mission. Poonkhai (2016) further cited Ranganathan (2011) to supporting his argument from his five laws of Librarianship, where he postulated that "a universe of subjects is synonymous to universe of knowledge" and therefore by this assertion Ranganathan proposed the concept of knowledge management in libraries.

For the academic libraries to prove their relevance and value, they must strive to improve their services and provide the right amount of information and services to the right users at the right time, with a right expense of financial and human resources. All these will never be possible without knowledge, knowledge here, depends on the ability of the library to utilize information and knowledge of its staff to better serve the needs of the academic community. Chua and Lam (2005) knowledge management is essentially about getting the right knowledge to the right person at a right time.

This implies a strong tie to corporate strategy, with the understanding of where and in what forms knowledge exists, creating processes that span organizational functions, and ensuring that initiatives are accepted and supported by the organizational members. Knowledge management also include creation and solely focus on the on the refinement, storage and sharing of knowledge. Choo (1998) explained that the mainstream of knowledge management indicates that the application of knowledge management contributes to the improvement in organizational performance, economic success in the market place, organizational creativity, and operational effectiveness, quality of products and services and economic sustainability.

While the value of knowledge management in library and information science profession according to Sarrafzadeh (2005) is the survival factor for libraries to overcome the challenges of information delivery, it organization for global visibility a problem which is facing the third world countries librarians in the changing and competitive environment of the information society, as a result of escalation of information. Roknuzzaman and Umemoto (2009) described the value of knowledge management library and information professionals as the solution for the improvement of future prospects of libraries. In his contribution Shanhung (2000) viewed it as a method for improving knowledge – based services for internal and external users through creating an organizational culture of sharing knowledge and expertise within the library and its community members.

Statement of the Problem

Knowledge management is the systematic management of any organization's knowledge assets for the purpose of creating value and meeting the overall mission and vision of the organization. More often than not, the main objective of the academic library is to enhance all round improvement of its library capacity, promotion of relationship between the library and the library users, promotion of knowledge innovation, strengthening knowledge inter-networking and quicken knowledge flow. All these activities are for a better information resource management and information services delivery for users' satisfaction.

It is observed, for any academic library to undertake these functions for a effective and efficient service delivery, to meet with it vision and mission as academic library, must have well trained, competence, experience and skillful academic librarians. For academic librarians to acquire such virtues must be engaged and re-engaged in training and practice of their routine activities, as a means of knowledge acquisition, sharing and retention among themselves.

Ahmadu Bello University is one of the first-generation University in the country, and as such, it was observed in each and every year a number of experienced, skillful and competence academic librarians are retiring from service, talk less of those passing away as result of natural death. This scenario is really affecting the all-round service delivery in academic libraries, and this problem is also coupled with the poor attitude and behavior of some irrelevant and incompetent academic librarians found in most of our academic libraries.

It is based on these, that this study is set to identify the knowledge management practice among the academic librarians of the Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex, Zaria.

Research Questions

1. What are the strategies adopted by Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex, Zaria in retaining knowledge from it academic Librarians?
2. What are the sources used by the Librarians in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex, Zaria, in acquiring knowledge about their profession?
3. What are the constraints for effective knowledge management practice in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex, Zaria?

Objective of the Study

1. To ascertain the strategies that Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex, Zaria is adopting in retaining knowledge of it academic Librarians.
2. To find out the channels used by the Librarians in Kashim Ibrahim Library Complex, Zaria, in acquiring knowledge on their profession.
3. To discover the constraints for effective knowledge management practice in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex, Zaria.

Literature Review

Knowledge represents an intellectual currency of issues that produces the most value when circulated. Dalkir (2005) knowledge in organizational setting is nothing either than that knowledge, which will make individual in the organization to be stronger and broader in his skills, competencies, thought innovation and ideas, which will enable the organization to compete more effectively in the future. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) knowledge is defined as justified personal belief that increases an individual's capability to take effective action. Knowledge is exceptionally and purely intellectual product of man, it includes man's own personal experiences, skills, understanding within and in different context and in environments in which he operate his activities.

In organizations knowledge is classified and distinguished into two classes, the explicit and the tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is defined as formal and systematic type of knowledge, which can be expressed in words or in numbers and can be documented or stored as a repository or databases electronically. Examples of explicit knowledge can be seen on instruction manuals, report of research findings, directories, and minutes of meetings etc. explicit knowledge can be expressed in language, data, instruction manuals, and other documents and records. It is easier to share and transmit from individual to individual, as well as from organization to organization (Salmador and Bueno, 2007).

On the other hand, the tacit knowledge is the type of knowledge that is with subjective bearing and experience-based knowledge, which is difficult to be articulated or write down. This type of knowledge can be shared between people through discussions, stories and personal interactions. Tacit knowledge in its nature includes: skills, experiences, insight, intuition and judgment within an individual.

Relatively, in the libraries and with the academic librarians, explicit knowledge can be described as the knowledge generated or created within the library. This type of knowledge includes; reports, memos, proposals, minutes of meeting etc. Apart from this range of documented knowledge from external sources, which includes; books, journal articles, research findings, reports, documents, government information etc. Duffy (2000) explained that 'explicit knowledge is that knowledge that is documented and public; structured with fixed content, externalized, and conscious.'

Servin (2005) in his analysis, further divides explicit knowledge into two; structured and unstructured, the structured explicit knowledge (such as documents, databases and spreadsheets etc.) and the unstructured explicit knowledge (such as emails, images, training courses, and audio and video archives).The tacit knowledge is also refers to as know – how and also refers to intuitive, hard to define knowledge, which is largely based on experience. In most cases tacit knowledge depends on context and is personal in nature. As such is hard to be formalized, difficult to be communicated and is deeply rooted in action, commitment and

involvement in activities. Zhou, Zijlstra and Lu (2018) affirmed that in the tacit knowledge, subjective insights, intuitions, and hunches are deeply rooted in it.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) tacit knowledge is deeply rooted in an individual's action and experience, as well as in the ideals, values, or emotions he or she embraces. Tacit knowledge is knowledge embedded in people's heads and is "spoken understanding" rather than written down in a document or recorded in database (Servin, 2005).Going by the assertions and understanding of different authorities in the field of knowledge management it could be induced that tacit knowledge consists of the hands – on skills, bests practices, special know-how, heuristic and intuition etc. It transfers to others is by traditions and shared experience in the course of apprenticeship or in job training.

The importance of tacit knowledge in organization is to ensure task effectiveness doing the right things at a right time and get the right things done to attain to objectives. In a nutshell, knowledge management prospers best practices in the organizations. Kim (2000) tacit knowledge provides a kind of creative robustness- intuition and heuristic which often tackles tough problems that would be otherwise difficult to solved. The explicit knowledge is rule – based knowledge that is used to match actions to situation by invoking appropriate rules.

Wijetunge (2002) is definite to say, the tacit knowledge in libraries resides in the senior and experienced employees with the sound knowledge of working procedures, rules and regulations of the organization etc. The explicit knowledge in the libraries is generated within the organization, such as reports, memos, guidelines, theses, minutes of meeting or the explicit knowledge acquired from external sources, such as books, journal articles, external reports, government information etc. (Hussain and Nazim, 2013). Both the two types of knowledge are considered as the key sources of knowledge to the library which should be properly managed (Nonaka and Tekeuchi, 1995).

The importance of academic librarians, skills and competences in the information environment is great to the promotion of an integrated approach to the identification, organizing and sharing of organization's assets. These include all unarticulated expertise and experience residing in individual workers. Knowledge management in all of it ramifications is taking advantage of what you know. Kim (2000) knowledge management involves the identification and analysis of available required knowledge, and subsequent planning and control of actions to develop knowledge assets so as to fulfill organizational objectives. In the library and information profession, the libraries are squarely representing an important link to knowledge innovation and management.

This is with the cognizance of the fact of the practice of the libraries for collection and maintenance of knowledge, a practice that is recognized as old as civilization. For obvious reasons, knowledge management brings about opportunity for best practice in the libraries, and it can improve the libraries knowledge-based services for their internal and external users.

The purpose of knowledge management is to deliver value to the organization, to draw out tacit knowledge the people have in the organization and foster best practices within the organization. Zhou at el (2018) affirmed that libraries and knowledge management are natural partners, the librarians have a strong tie with the broader information science field and also throughout their training and career are in contact with the principles of knowledge management. In clear perspective, let refer to the five principles of knowledge management which encompasses: knowledge acquisition, knowledge organization, knowledge retention, and knowledge sharing and knowledge generation. With these five principles, it becomes clear and with cognizance to the cardinal activities in the libraries and the activities carried out by

academic librarians, the libraries have involvement in knowledge management consciously or unconscious. This can be seen from it activities that have bearing with the explicit knowledge management, the activities that are common to the organization of information, data and knowledge.

While from the perspective of tacit knowledge management, the libraries have specific activities, such as organizing workshops, seminars, symposium and other educational activities. And also, at the point of need they facilitate exchange of ideas and knowledge through brainstorming, information literacy programmes etc. Davenport (1998) explains that knowledge management process is about acquisition, creation, packing and application or reuse of knowledge.

It is worth to know that libraries, organize knowledge as they acquired information resources to enable their retrieval, access and use by the intended users. It is also the responsibility of the libraries and librarians for creating awareness of new information resource, organizing the promotion and awareness of the knowledge created within it mother institute or university, this done through management of the institutional repository of the institute. On the knowledge sharing, Arlitsch and Grant (2018) open access platform, the libraries are responsible for sharing of research output and making provision for advice and guidance on open access journals and other means of open access publication.

On knowledge generation, libraries, most especially the Academic Libraries facilitate multi- disciplinary activities making link between researchers and library-users that are not aware of each other's existence, but encounter through, online repository of the host institution, or through scholarly communication, or training events. Florence and matheson (1993) stated that all these activities demonstrated are already activities that the librarians as knowledge workers are contributing to the core knowledge management in organizations.

In summary, we have seen that the two different types of knowledge, the explicit and tacit knowledge and constitute the importance attached to their knowledge management in organizations. The review was able to reveal the connection between management, the libraries and the academic librarians. It was also learnt from the review that the essence of knowledge management to all organizations, business or educational, is to deliver value to the organization, and be able to adapt to changes environment and compete among others.

Research Methodology

A quantitative research method was adopted for the study and survey research design approach in the process of understanding knowledge management practice among the academic librarians of Kashim Ibrahim Library Complex, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Quantitative method is used because it is having the capability to assist researcher systematically to have an accurate data of his study. While descriptive design is used describe and justify current practice and make judgment out of a phenomenon and also develop theories. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting all the forty 40 academic librarians, as a result of their small number. A closed ended questionnaire was designed and personally administrated to the participants in their different sections in the library. Simple frequency and percentages were used for the analysis of data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of forty (40) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, and total of thirty-five (35) copies of questionnaire were dully filled and returned, which gave 88% of the total population of the study.

Strategies for Knowledge Retention with the Academic Librarians of Kashim Ibrahim Library, Complex, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

In this section, the study is with the objective of ascertaining the strategies adopted by Kashim Ibrahim Library Complex in retaining knowledge from the librarians. Table 1 below presented the response of the respondents on the objective of the study.

Table 1: The strategies adopted by Kashim Ibrahim library, Ahmadu Bello University Complex Zaria, in retaining knowledge from it academic librarians.

S/N	Strategies	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Involvement into specific institutional tasks	11	31.9
2	Rotation of librarians to various division/ selections and unit	7	20
3	Mentoring and coaching of librarians on lower cadre	8	22.7
4	Meeting with librarians and library management on current problems and ways of solving the problems	9	25.4
5	Exit interviews of staff	0	0
	Total	**35**	**100**

Table 1 provides different strategies adopted by the Kashim Ibrahim Library Complex in retaining knowledge of academic librarians. The table revealed that as a strategy Kashim Ibrahim Library is used to retained knowledge of the academic librarians into involvement of the librarians into specific institutional task which is having 11 (31.9%). Meeting with Librarians and Library Management on current problems and way, of solving the problems is having 9(25.4%), mentoring and coaching of lower cadre Librarians goes with 8(22.7%), while rotation of librarians from one division, section or unit to another become the least with 7(20%) of the total participants in the study. The implication of this finding is that Kashim Ibrahim Library complex of Ahmadu Bello University, are adopting some strategies for knowledge retention of it librarians either unconsciously or otherwise.

Channels used by Librarians of Kashim Ibrahim Library for acquiring knowledge on their profession.

In this section, the object of the study is to find out the channels of communication used by the Librarians' in Kashim Ibrahim Library in acquiring professional knowledge. Table 2 below presented the response of the respondents on the objective of the study.

Table 2: The Channels of Professional Knowledge Acquisition by the Librarians of Kashim Ibrahim library Complex, ABU, Zaria.

S/N	Channels	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Symposium /Workshops	12	34.2
2	Conference/Seminars	13	27.3
3	In-House training	10	28.5
4	Staff Training	0	0
5	Field trips/execution	0	0
	Total	**35**	**100**

Table 2 provides the different channels through which the librarians in Kashim Ibrahim Library Complex are using to acquire knowledge on their profession. Conference/seminars as channel is having the highest respondents with 13(37.3%) of the total respondents in the study, symposium/workshops are with 12(34.2%) while in-house training goes with 10(28.5%). The implication of this finding is that the Library complex is by whichever way, is enhancing it organizational knowledge by either organizing or allowing its Librarians to go for knowledge acquisition on how to enhance their performance in the Library.

The Constraints for effective Knowledge Management in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

In this section, it is the objective of the study to discover the constraints that are affecting knowledge management practice in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Table 3 below presented the response of the respondents on the objective of the study.

Table 3: The Constraints for Effective Knowledge Management Practice in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

S/N	Constraints	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Poor Perception of Knowledge Management	17	48.5
2	Nonchalant attitude	3	8.5
3	Lack of Funds	9	25.7
4	Lukewarm Attitude	6	17.3
5	**Total**	**35**	**100**

Table 3 provides some of the constraints that are affecting implementation of knowledge management practice in Kashim Ibrahim Library Complex of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Poor perception of the concept of knowledge management among the librarians is indicated to be the highest with 17(48.5%) of the total respondents in the study, lack of funds is the second with 9(25.7%), the lukewarm attitude of the library management which the third goes with 6(17.3%), while nonchalant attitudes of the librarians is the least with 3(8.5%). It could be

deduced by the implication of this finding apart from lack of funding; the nonchalant attitude of the librarians and lukewarm attitude of the library management are all anchored on the poor perception of the concept of knowledge management. This is a long overdue problem that supposed to have been addressed by the professional in Library and Information Science.

Summary of the major findings

1. The study discovered that the strategies adopted by the Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex in retaining knowledge of it academic librarians include; involving the librarians in to specific institutional tasks, rotation of the librarians from division to division, section to section and units of the library, mentoring and coaching of the lower cadre librarians.
2. Channels used by the academic librarians in acquiring their professional knowledge include; conferences, seminars, symposiums, workshops, in- house training, and staff training.
3. The study discovered that the constraints for effective knowledge management in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex are: poor perception of the concept of knowledge management by some of the academic librarians, nonchalant attitude, lack of funding, and lukewarm attitude.

Conclusion

Knowledge management practice is all about managing the employees knowledge, know –how and know-what for the purposes of achieving the organizational set aims and objectives in the process of executing operations and services. It has been observed, in the process of conducting this study that Kashim Ibrahim Library A.B.U., Library Complex has unconsciously or consciously engaged in knowledge management practice. For the academic libraries to actively engage in knowledge management practices must set to redefined their employees knowledge-based principles which include knowledge acquisition, organization, retention, sharing and generation among their librarians. This is with the understanding that knowledge management is the foundations of industrialized economies which have been shifted from natural resources to intellectual assets.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

1. The management of Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Complex should put their heads together and enlighten their employees on the importance of knowledge management as a means that would enhance their services and become more relevant to the overall mission and vision of their mother institution
2. The management of the Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex should also collaborate with the University management for a better funding of staff training with explicit and articulated policies and guidelines for the sake of knowledge development for good services.
3. The library management should try as much as possible to enlighten it employees on the importance of knowledge management and it practice among the library and information professionals.

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