

Knowledge Management: Impact of Job Performance, Organisational Performance, Efficiency, and Employees' Development in 21st Century Organisations

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Abstract

This paper looks at knowledge management as an essential managerial tool in advancing job performances, knowledge acquisition, and stability in Nigeria organisations and the continent-Africa. The Nigeria government, and or organisations has over the years been given less attention to knowledge acquisition and knowledge management to pave way for an effective human capital management. Knowledge management, however, is based on the premise that, just as human beings are unable to draw on the full potentials of their brains, organisations are generally not able to fully utilise the knowledge that they possess. And, over the past few years, there has been growing research interest in knowledge acquisition, capture, storage, and subsequent dissemination of knowledge that has been rendered explicit-particularly lessons learned and best practices, but much need to be done in order to meet with the 21st century business challenges. However, the author suggests an effective and standardised knowledge management plans for these organisation's managers, which are often face with the complex issue of how to develop and validate the competencies required for these complex roles. In analysing this knowledge management trend, therefore, the researcher concludes that since human beings are not able to utilise fully their knowledge box, that total synergy, teamwork and balanced approaches by management will efficiently enhance organisational growth, competitive advantages in this 21st century competitive business world.

Keywords: Knowledge management, job performance, organisational performance, effectiveness, efficiency, and employees' development.

Introduction

"Knowledge is power".

"But mere knowledge is not power; it is only possibility".

"Action is power; and its highest manifestation is when it is directed by knowledge." Francis Bacon

A research work of this nature is primarily a journey towards new knowledge and understanding of the world and of ourselves as part of it. The desire to learning and knowing things around us is a fundamental part of human existence since we are naturally curious of knowing things; both within us and outside us. From birth, however, human development and knowledge acquisitions are a learning process through which we explore and come to terms with our environment, workplace, and we soon discover that we are not alone, and in the paradox of human existence both compete with others for scarce resources and

cooperate to find and share them. Human beings have to be curious, competitive and cooperative; both individually and as social groups, we ensure our survival either by attempts to dominate others, or by seeking knowledge wherever it resides for mutual benefit. Millions of years ago, human beings have been wanting to dominate others, either for economic, political, social, or selfish reasons, etc.

Over the years, scientists, philosophers and intelligent laymen have been concerned about creating, acquiring, and communicating knowledge and improving the re-utilisation of knowledge. It is only some decades or so that a distinct field called “knowledge management” has emerged as a result of the role of knowledge in leadership management, and its influence in the affairs of mankind.

Knowledge management (KM) is the systematic management of an organisation's knowledge assets for the purpose of creating value and meeting tactical and strategic requirements. It consists of the initiatives, processes, strategies, and systems that sustain and enhance the storage, assessment, sharing, refinement, and creation of knowledge. Knowledge management (KM) therefore implies a strong tie to organisational goals and strategy, and it also involves the management of knowledge that is useful for some purposes and which creates value for the organisation.

Knowledge management is based on the premise that, just as human beings are unable to draw on the full potential of their brains, organisations are generally not able to fully utilise the knowledge that they possess. Though, through knowledge management, organisations seek to acquire or create potentially useful knowledge and to make it available to those who can use it at a time and place that is appropriate for them to achieve maximum effective usage in order to positively influence organisational performance. It is generally believed in many quarters in Nigeria, that, if an organisation can increase its effective knowledge utilisation by only a small percentage, great benefits will result. The ability to manage knowledge is crucial in today's knowledge economy. The creation and diffusion of knowledge have become increasingly important factors in competitiveness today. More and more, knowledge is being thought of as a valuable commodity that is embedded in products (especially high-technology products) and also embedded in the tacit knowledge of highly mobile employees. While knowledge is increasingly being viewed as a commodity or intellectual asset, there are some paradox characteristics of knowledge that are radically different from other valuable commodities.

Knowledge Management Defined

From the earliest time, human beings have been curious, competitive and cooperative-both as individuals and as social groups. We ensure our survival either by attempts to dominate others or by seeking knowledge wherever it resides for mutual benefit. Today, scholars have been researching and working to ensure constant flow of knowledge to ease organisational performances. Knowledge management (KM) in this century has taken a centre stage in many business communities. Although, the term Knowledge Management

might suggest a rather simple definition; there are several opinions and write-ups on what exactly it is and how it should be used, if used at all. However, because of the ever-increasing pace of business development, the task of effective and competitive management of organisations becomes essential, and knowledge management, if understood and implemented properly, may be a useful tool for business transformation as well as the key to competitive advantage.

In this paradigm therefore, the definitions of knowledge management thus, come from the intellectual or knowledge asset perspective: Knowledge management consists of "leveraging intellectual assets to enhance organisational performance (Stankosky 2008)

Knowledge management is also defined as the process of applying a systematic approach to the capture, structuring, management, and dissemination of knowledge throughout an organisation to work faster, reuse best practices, and reduce costly rework from project to project (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Pasternack and Viscio 1998; Pfeffer and Sutton, 1999; Ruggles and Holtshouse, 1999). Knowledge management is often characterised by a pack rat approach to content: "save it, it may prove useful sometime in the future". Knowledge management solutions have proven to be most successful in the capture, storage, and subsequent dissemination of knowledge that has been rendered explicit-particularly lessons learned and best practices.

Knowledge management is the planning, organising, motivating, and controlling of people, processes and systems in the organisation to ensure that its knowledge-related assets are improved and effectively employed. Knowledge-related assets include knowledge in the form of printed documents such as patents and manuals, knowledge stored in electronic repositories such as a "best-practices" database, employees' knowledge about the best way to do their jobs, knowledge that is held by teams who have been working on focused problems and knowledge that is embedded in the organisation's products, processes and relationships.

In the same token, however, the focus of intellectual capital management (ICM) on the other hand, is on those pieces of knowledge that are of business value to the organisation referred to as intellectual capital or assets. While some of these assets are more visible (e.g., patents, intellectual property), the majority consists of know-how, know-why, experience, and expertise that tends to reside within the head of one or a few employees (Klein 1998; Stewart 1997). This is why 21st century organisations should adapt the philosophy of making proper use of its employees; referred to as "most valuable assets" in any organisation to achieve its corporate objectives.

And, at this point however, we can at best see knowledge management as an organisation's knowledge assets for the purpose of creating value and meeting tactical and strategic requirements. It consists of the initiatives, processes, strategies, and systems that sustain and enhance the storage, assessment, sharing, refinement, and creation of knowledge. Knowledge management therefore implies a strong tie to organisational goals and strategy, and it involves the management of knowledge that is useful for some purposes

and which creates value for the organisation. Expanding upon the previous knowledge management definition, KM involves the understanding of: Where and in what forms knowledge exists; what the organisation needs to know; how to promote a culture conducive for learning, sharing, and knowledge creation; how to make the right knowledge available to the right people at the right time; how best to generate or acquire new relevant knowledge; how to manage all of these factors so as to enhance performance in light of the organisation's strategic goals and short-term opportunities and threats .

The processes of knowledge management involve knowledge acquisition, creation, refinement, storage, transfer, sharing, and utilisation. Thus, knowledge management function in the organisation operates these processes, develops methodologies and systems to support them, and motivates people to participate in them. The goals of knowledge management are the leveraging and improvement of the organisation's knowledge assets to effectuate better knowledge practices, improved organisational behaviours, better decisions and improved organisational performance. Although, individuals certainly can personally perform each of the knowledge management processes, knowledge management is largely an organisational activity that focuses on what managers can do to enable knowledge management's goals to be achieved, how they can motivate individuals to participate in achieving them and how they can create social processes that will facilitate knowledge management success.

Further, social processes therefore, include communities of practice----self-organising groups of people who share a common interest----and expert networks---networks that are established to allow with less expertise to contact those with greater expertise. Such social processes are necessary because while knowledge initially exists in the mind of an individual, and for knowledge management to be successful, knowledge must usually be transmitted through social groups, teams and networks. Thus, knowledge management processes are quite people-intensive and less technology-intensive than most people might believe, although a modern knowledge-enabled enterprise must support knowledge management with appropriate information and communications technology (Nwafor S, (2017). The utilisation of knowledge depends on the calibre of managers that manages the affairs of the organisation or institution.

As an organisation-wide policy, the purpose of knowledge management is to capture a company's collective expertise and distribute it to "wherever it can to achieve the biggest payoff". This is in accordance with the resource- based view of the organisation, which suggests that the source of competitive advantage lies within the organisation, not on how it positions itself in the market.

Michael Armstrong (2006) in his analysis stated that 'the capability to gather, lever and use knowledge effectively will become a major source of competitive advantage in many businesses over the next few years. In fact, a successful company, for example, is knowledge-creating company. However, the focus of intellectual capital management

(ICM) on the other hand, is on those pieces of knowledge that are of business value to the organisation referred to as intellectual capital or assets.

According to Ulrich (1998), 'Knowledge has become a direct competitive advantage for companies selling ideas and relationships.' It is linked to the concepts of:

- the resource-based-view-the concept that it is the range of resources in an organisation, including its human resources, that produces its unique character and creates competitive advantage.
- intellectual capital-the stocks and flows of knowledge available to an organisation, that is, the intangible resources associated with people.
- the learning organisation-defined by Garvin et al (2008) as a place where employees excel at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge.

Knowledge management is about getting knowledge from those who have it to those who need it in order to improve organisational effectiveness. In this information age, as we are today, knowledge rather than physical assets or financial resources is the key to competitiveness. And as noted by Mecklenburg et al (1999), that knowledge management allows companies to capture, apply and generate value from their employee's creativity and expertise. In all these factors indicated above, therefore, it takes a knowledgeable manager to harness the knowledge or information stored in the knowledge box to disseminate the wealth-created knowledge to others in the organisation to effect productivity.

At the same time, the knowledge characteristics include the following;

- Using knowledge does not consume it.
- Transferring knowledge does not result in losing it.
- Knowledge is abundant, but the ability to use it is scarce.
- Much of an organisation's valuable knowledge walks out the door at the end of the day.

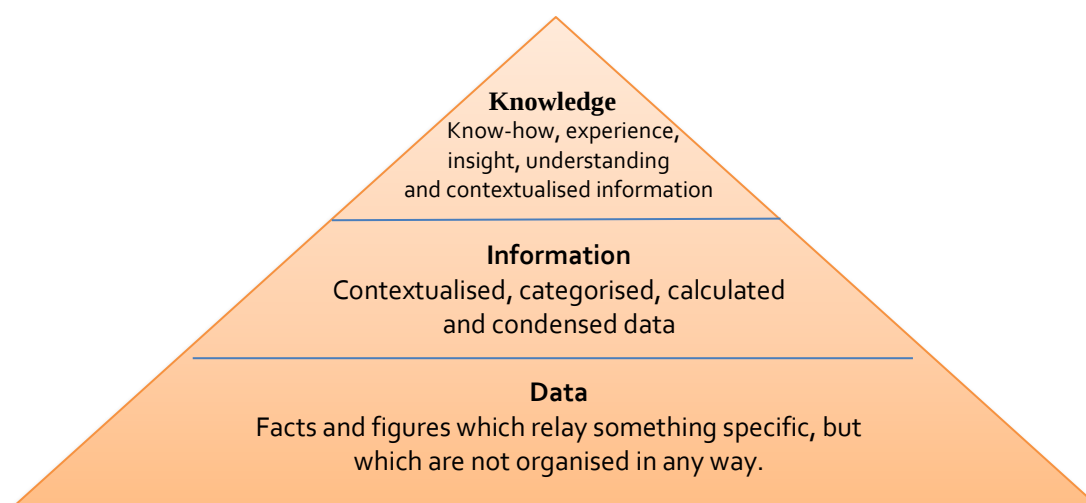
In the spectrum, therefore, knowledge management implies a strong tie to organisational goals and strategy, and it involves the management of knowledge that is useful for some purpose and which creates value for the organisation.

Data, Information and Knowledge

Further to our discussion and, as an introductory step however, it is useful to distinguish between raw data, information and knowledge. Raw information may be widely available to a number of agencies, which of course, is being commissioned by leaders, but only some organisations will be able to convert the information into relevant knowledge and to use this to achieve their aims.

The process by which organisations do this is known as knowledge management strategies. In this platform, however, a further distinction will be made between first and second generation knowledge management strategies used by organisations. While the first generation focused on systematising and controlling existing knowledge and knowledge

sharing within an organisation, the second generation knowledge management strategies have shifted towards enhancing the conditions for innovation and knowledge creation. Knowledge is often defined as a “justified personal belief.” “And, an intellectual understanding is the state of appreciating truth or information”. Knowledge generally is based on information. This raises the question of how the upgrading of information to knowledge has been achieved in organisations. Knowledge management is the planning, organising, motivating, and controlling of people, processes and systems in the organisation to ensure that its knowledge-related assets are improved and effectively employed. Knowledge-related assets include knowledge in the form of printed documents such as patents and manuals, knowledge stored in electronic repositories such as a “best practices” database, employees’ knowledge about the best way to do their jobs, knowledge that is held by teams who have been working on focused problems and knowledge that is embedded in the organisation’s products, processes and relationships (Nwafor S, 2022). Knowledge management was initially defined as the process of applying a systematic approach to the capture, structuring, management, and dissemination of knowledge throughout an organisation to work faster, re-use best practices, and reduce costly re-work from project to project (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).



Source: Researcher’s construct

As noted by Nonaka (1991), “information is a flow of messages, while knowledge is created and organised by the very flow of information anchored on the commitment and beliefs of its holder”. He stresses further that knowledge within the company has to be used to contribute to the decision-making process by the stakeholders.

Data are facts and figures which relay something specific, but which are not organised in any way and which provide no further information regarding patterns, context, etc.

Definitions of Knowledge

Knowledge is closely linked to doing and implies know-how and understanding. The

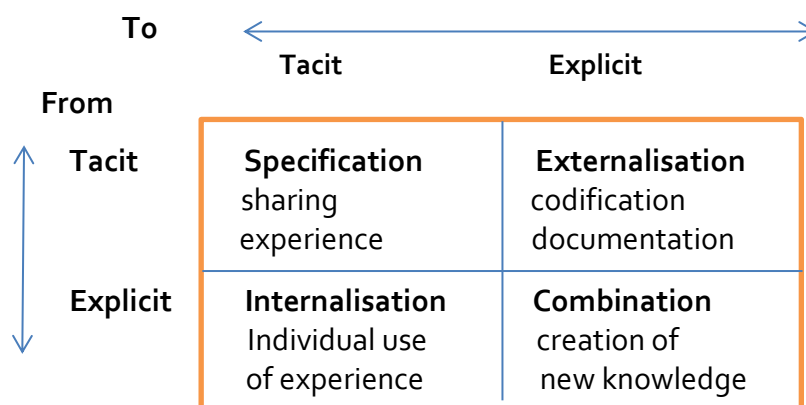
knowledge possessed by each individual is a product of his experience and encompasses the norms by which he evaluates new inputs from his surroundings. Gamel Gerda and Ritter, is defined knowledge as a fluid mixed of regular experiences, values, conceptual information and expert insight that provides framework for assessment and incorporate new information and experiences. Knowledge is formed in experts mind and expands. Knowledge in organisations in addition to documents rather there are in experience, effort, process and organisation routine. According to Gammelgaard (2004), "Knowledge is a fluid 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 organisations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories, but also in organisational routines, practices and norms."

In order for knowledge management to succeed, one needs a deep understanding of what constitutes knowledge. Now that we have set clear boundaries between knowledge, information, and data, it is possible to go one step further and look at the forms in which knowledge exists and the different ways that it can be accessed, shared, and combined.

Types of knowledge

Knowledge can be defined as a belief which is held to be justifiable and true. Some authors define knowledge as the application of information (Bouthillier & Shearer, 2002). Knowledge however, is intangible, dynamic, and difficult to measure, but without it no organisation can survive.

- **Tacit:** or unarticulated knowledge is more personal, experiential, context specific, and hard to formalise is difficult to communicate or share with others; and is generally in the heads of individuals and teams.
- **Explicit:** explicit knowledge can easily be written down and codified: we can at best, transfer tacit knowledge through mechanisms of socialisation, mentor ships, apprenticeships, face-to-face communication, and since knowledge may be an organisation's only sustainable competitive advantage, it is very important to capture tacit knowledge.



Source: Researcher's Construct

Strategic benefits of knowledge management to an Organisation

Knowledge management can add value to an organisation in the following ways:

- **Faster Decision Making:** KM helps to improve the effectiveness of an organisation by reducing decision making time and improving quality of decisions made. According to Verma (2012), KM and KM technologies help provide:
- Lesser time will be spent gathering knowledge resource (this is because KM provides a medium for storing knowledge resources), and more time can be invested in creation and dissemination of knowledge.
- **Competitive advantage:** Due to the high competition in the business environment, many organisations are harnessing their knowledge assets to provide unique competitive advantages. Companies are constantly capturing, analysing, disseminating knowledge resources to guide their decision making process.
- By adapting such insights and making more informed decision faster, organisations can outwit their competitor and provide better quality service to their customers
- **Innovation:** The unique organisational knowledge derived from managing and analysing knowledge resources can help organisation deliver innovative products and services to the customers. This will help foster:
 - More informed and quality decision making.
 - Better customer satisfaction.
 - Eventually improving sales and revenue generated from that good/service.

Knowledge management develops systems and processes to acquire and share intellectual assets. It increases the generation of useful, actionable, and meaningful information, and seeks to increase both individual and team learning. In addition, it can maximise the value of an organisation's intellectual base across diverse functions and disparate locations. Knowledge management maintains that successful businesses are a collection not of products but of distinctive knowledge bases. This intellectual capital is the key that will give the company a competitive advantage with its targeted customers. Knowledge management seeks to accumulate intellectual capital that will create unique core competencies and lead to superior results.

The usefulness of knowledge management in 21st century organisations

- It helps firms learn from past mistakes and successes.
- It better exploits existing knowledge assets by re-deploying them in such areas as where the firm stands to gain something, e.g. using knowledge from one or some departments to improve or create a product in another department, modifying knowledge from past processes to create a new solution, etc.
- It promotes a long-term focus on developing the right competencies and skills and removing obsolete knowledge.
- It enhances the firm's ability to innovate-particularly this information-driven business community.

- It enhances the organisation's ability to protect its key knowledge and competencies from being lost or copied.

In order for knowledge management to succeed, organisations need a deeper and clear understanding of what constitutes knowledge.

Summary and conclusion

Knowledge management is a collaborative and integrated approach to the creation, capture, organisation, access, and use of an enterprise's intellectual assets. Knowledge Management is therefore a conscious strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people, at the right time and helping people share and put information into action in ways that strive to improve organisational performance. One of the major reasons for knowledge acquisition is the ability of the management to fully disseminate and utilise the information and knowledge gathered during the exercise. Here, knowledge management is geared towards achieving organisational goals through the strategy-driven motivation and facilitation of (knowledge-) workers to develop, enhance and use their capability to interpret data and information (by using available sources of information, experience, skills, culture, character, personality, feelings, etc.) through a process of giving meaning to these data and information.

According to Davenport and Prusak (1998), knowledge management draws from existing resources that your organisation may already have in place—good information systems management, organisational change management, and human resource management practices. Knowledge management is the practice of ensuring insights, results and learning within an organisation is captured and made available for staff to find, use, update, adopt and integrate into

company processes. Knowledge management often aligns with training and learning, as well as

innovation and research initiatives. Knowledge management is a process that must take account of the mechanisms and structures needed to handle knowledge while, at the same time, paying regard to the processes and players influencing the knowledge one is seeking to manage.

In essence, knowledge management is predominantly the process by which organisations manage human-centered assets . . . the function of knowledge management therefore, is to guard and grow knowledge owned by individuals, and where possible, transfer the asset into a form where it can be more readily shared by other employees in the company.

Knowledge management must, however, relate to personal and unit goals as well as institutional goals. Knowledge management must be seen as a priority which will enhance academic activity, and at the same time, knowledge sharing must be fostered.

Knowledge management (KM) therefore implies a strong tie to organisational goals and strategy, and it involves the management of knowledge that is useful for some purpose and which creates value for the organisation. KM must therefore create and/or provide the right

tools, people, knowledge, structures (teams, etc.), culture, etc. so as to enhance learning; it must understand the value and applications of the new knowledge created; it must store this knowledge and make it readily available for the right people at the right time; and it must continuously assess, apply, refine, and remove organisational knowledge in conjunction with concrete long and short-term factors.

Conclusively, we can say here that knowledge management is the systematic management of an organisation's knowledge assets for the purpose of creating value and meeting tactical & strategic requirements; it consists of the initiatives, processes, strategies, and systems that sustain and enhance the storage, assessment, sharing, refinement, and creation of knowledge.

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