

Assessing the adoption of knowledge acquisition practices in selected Northwestern Nigerian federal university libraries

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Abstract

Knowledge acquisition practices entails acquiring knowledge from documents, training, mentoring, conferences, interactions, experts and the use of information and communication technology facilities among others There is limited evidence of the adoption of knowledge acquisition practice in Northwestern Nigerian federal university libraries. The purpose of this study was to establish whether Northwestern Nigerian federal university libraries have adopted knowledge acquisition practices (KAP). This study applied descriptive research and had a target population of three hundred and ninety-three (393) librarians and the sample size of the study was 191. Both questionnaire and interview schedule were used for data collection. Descriptive statistics were used in analyzing the data collected while tables, and charts were used for tabulation and presentation. The study found out that tacit knowledge was acquired from seminars, conferences, workshops, research collaborations among others while explicit knowledge was acquired through documents and ICT tools. The study recommends the acquisition of tacit knowledge through sponsorship to enable librarians acquire tacit knowledge in research collaboration and formal training.

Keywords: Knowledge acquisition, librarians, university libraries, Northwestern Nigeria

Introduction

Knowledge management (KM) practice is the systematic management of organisation's knowledge asset which consists of processes, strategies and initiatives to enhance the creation, acquisition, organisation, sharing, and storage of the knowledge for the purpose of meeting tactical and strategic requirements (Odetta, 2015). One of the basics of knowledge management practice is knowledge acquisition practices. According to Uriarte (2008), knowledge acquisition involves acquiring different types of knowledge in an organisation through various sources such as documents, training, mentoring, conferences, interactions, experts and the use of information and communication technology facilities among others.

Globally, the potential of knowledge management in transforming business has led to the adoption of knowledge acquisition in the public, private and governmental organizations. A study by Maingi (2007) in Kenya established that

international organizations in the energy sector such as Chevron and Shell were using knowledge management to leverage their competitive advantage in providing quality services and acquisition of knowledge was given more priority in these organisations. Maingi (2007) also acknowledged that many of the United Nation bodies had taken up knowledge management as a method of streamlining their worldwide operations. Ever since the 1990s, transformative value of knowledge management has motivated the business world to invest heavily in human development and infrastructure through knowledge acquisition.

Gichuhi (2014) in a study on determinant for successful knowledge management practices in selected Kenya university libraries described that formal processes of acquiring/capturing knowledge to include collating internal profiles of academic librarians, data mining, text mining and standardizing routine information update report, bulletin, discussion forum and feedback tools

among others. This therefore, serves as an encouragement because the above scholars established positive facts about knowledge acquisition. As such, knowledge can be acquired using various methods or strategies and depending on the parent organization. The rationale for acquiring knowledge is gaining more experience and skills to enable employees provide better services to the customer.

In Nigeria, the available studies on knowledge management deal with a specific aspect of knowledge management not knowledge acquisition on service delivery. For example, a study by Ugwu and Ifeanyi (2010) was based on competencies needed for successful knowledge management (KM) application in Nigerian academic libraries and the study revealed that the competences needed for successful knowledge management include knowledge management culture, leadership, strategic and restructuring skills. Study by Kassim (2011) on knowledge management strategies implementation in academic libraries in Nigeria established that ineffective knowledge acquisition by librarians through poor mobility of labour, lack of research collaboration and lack of mentorship affected knowledge management implementation in academic libraries. The study recommended adequate sponsorship by library management in research and the introduction of incentives to librarians as methods to encourage knowledge acquisition practices. This therefore means that it is imperative to establish the current state of adoption of knowledge acquisition practices in university libraries for service delivery in supporting the main objectives of the university.

Statement of the problem

University libraries in Nigerian are facing a series of knowledge acquisition challenges ranging from poor mobility of labour, lack of mentorship services,

inadequate training, conferences and seminars among others as shown in the background which is likely to impact on librarians' professional development and henceforth affecting their performance. However, the cause of these challenges in Northwestern Nigerian federal university libraries is not known.

Knowledge acquisition as presented in the forgoing literature points to one fact; that is, highly regarded in the business world as a strategic tool to their competitive advantage. With the adoption of knowledge acquisition that enhances performance, libraries will remain relevant in provision of services for the support of their parent organizations. This study aimed at establishing how the Northwestern Nigerian federal university libraries acquire knowledge as well sources of acquiring knowledge to enhance knowledge services delivery.

Objectives of the study

The study set out to:

1. establish the types of knowledge acquired in Northwestern Nigerian university libraries,
2. assess the sources of acquiring tacit knowledge in Northwestern Nigerian university libraries, and
3. assess the sources of acquiring explicit knowledge in Northwestern Nigerian university libraries.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the types of knowledge acquired in Northwestern Nigerian university libraries?
2. What are the sources of acquiring tacit knowledge in Northwestern Nigerian university libraries?
3. What are the sources of acquiring explicit knowledge in Northwestern Nigerian university libraries?

Literature review

Knowledge acquisition involves acquiring different types of knowledge in an organisation through various sources such as documents, training, mentoring, conferences, interactions, experts and the use of information and communication technology facilities among others (Uriarte, 2008). Knowledge acquisition is an important aspect of knowledge management practices. Ofori-Duamfuo and Kommey (2013) observed that knowledge identification, capturing, or acquisition includes writing and recording knowledge while refining it has to do with verifying, correcting, updating, augmenting, clarifying and generalizing knowledge. Knowledge acquisition is a common practice in libraries and other organizations. This practice is considered as the starting point of knowledge management practice.

According to Nnadozie (2006), research and publication remain one way of acquiring knowledge within an establishment. Adopting knowledge acquisition is an important component of knowledge management. In organizations, acquisition can be achieved through social interaction and networking in the workplace. This knowledge lasts for a certain period in the form of experience while other parts of the knowledge remain formalized as code of conduct, rules, job specification or description, flow chart among others. Knowledge of this nature serves as the institutional memory over time.

Knowledge acquisition plays vital role in actualization of adoption of knowledge management. William, John and Peter (2011) developed a theory of knowledge identification effectiveness in knowledge management. The study established that four factors (knowledge needs identification; knowledge recording, knowledge identification methods effectiveness and knowledge identification

operationalization. are responsible for the knowledge identification effectiveness. They observed that knowledge acquisition practice was successful in situations where knowledge identification (KI) was appropriately initiated. However, their findings show that while organizations do perceive knowledge identification to be important, the practice of knowledge identification has not reached mainstream adoption yet. Knowledge acquisition is a critical stage of the knowledge management processes as it enables an organization to procure knowledge held within and outside the organization. It is the first stage where knowledge is properly acquired for further processing such as organization, sharing repacking and preserving knowledge.

A study by Fadia and Kamel (2014) on the influence of knowledge management on organization business processes and employees' benefits indicated that knowledge acquisition had positive association with business processes efficiency and innovation. This therefore means that the above study show that knowledge acquisition played a significant role in organizations. However, the above studies only produced an outcome from the business point of view while other aspects such as education, research and information services and libraries among others were not covered.

Maponya (2004) in a study by observed that KM focuses on people and urges libraries to develop mechanisms of acquiring the experts' knowledge to avoid collective loss of organization memory held by the professionals. He further advised university libraries on the need to come out with strategic method of sharing knowledge among individuals. Kolawole et.al (2015) stressed that knowledge acquisition presupposed that knowledge already exist and that there is a desire to capture that knowledge because of some perceived benefits for the acquisition. This

therefore justifies the institutions perspectives on acquisition.

A study by Muhamad (2014) on linkage between knowledge management practices and library users' satisfaction at Malaysian university libraries showed that adoption of knowledge management practices at the six (6) Malaysian university libraries are in the high level. The findings also revealed that knowledge acquisition and creation are not supported in terms of the knowledge management practices in the Malaysian university libraries compared to knowledge recording, sharing and preserving. This therefore is a worrying situation. Some organizations and institutions are yet to know the impacts of adopting knowledge acquisition practice. This prompted the need to assess importance of acquiring both tacit and explicit knowledge in university libraries.

One of the key strategic organizational resources for enhancing organizational service delivery is effective knowledge acquisition. However, the methods of acquiring knowledge in industries and other organizations are quite different from research institutes and libraries. Wamundila and Ngulube (2011) posited that brainstorming, training and development, recruitment, subject matter experts among others are knowledge acquisition mechanism for tacit knowledge. They serve as tools to speed up knowledge acquisition for employees.

A study by Aming'a (2015) on knowledge capturing and acquisition mechanisms at Kisii University revealed that knowledge acquisition mechanism was identified in area of research collaboration, teaching, conference and seminars among others in the university. The study established that knowledge capturing faced some challenges such lack of encouragement from the management on training, lack of interest by staff among others and as such the study proposed a guideline that may be adopted by the

university to enhance memory and performance. Resource constrain is one of the challenges in higher education institutions in developing countries. They do not have adequate resource to funding knowledge acquisition mechanism due to cost. In support of this assertion, Mohammad and Al Saiyd (2012) were of the view that retrieving knowledge (tacit knowledge) from human minds is an expensive method that is time consuming and involves skilled people. This means that the studies from above failed to clearly identify the mechanism and technique for knowledge acquisition. This study embarked on shedding light on the mechanism/technique's libraries put in place to acquire knowledge.

According to Maponya (2004), the use of ICT is gaining popularity in knowledge management and is mainly used in linking workers to knowledge sources. Information and communication technology (ICT) enable the adoption of knowledge management practices. Gandhi (2004) identified information technology (IT) as a powerful enabler that provides effective tools for the practices of KM including acquisition, sharing, organizing and application of knowledge. Roknuzzaman et al. (2009) moted that new technology that can transform the library world today and support knowledge acquisition by facilitating people to locate and communicated with each other is information and communication technology (ICT). This therefore means that information, and communication technology (ICT) is a reliable source for organizations to acquire knowledge. The above studies have shown that the application and used of ICT facilities in the adoption of knowledge management practice is paramount important in providing effective library services. Accuracy, efficiency, effectiveness and time saving are among some of the advantages of ICT facilities application in libraries.

Methods

This study applied descriptive research and had a target population of three hundred and ninety-three (393) librarians from the selected Northwestern Nigerian university libraries. The sample size of the study was 191 and each university library sample was calculated proportionately by using a formula recommended by Krejcie and Morgan. Both questionnaires and interview schedule were used for data collection. Pilot study was conducted in Gusau University Library and data analyzed to ensure validity and reliability of the instruments. Descriptive statistic methods were used in analyzing the data collected into tables, frequencies, percentages and charts were used for tabulation and presentation.

Findings

The study sampled a total of 191 respondents from the selected university libraries. A total of 175 (91.6%) out of 191 copies of questionnaire were filled and returned. This comprised 85 copies of questionnaire out of 93 distributed from

Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Library, Zaria reflecting 91.4% response rate, 51 copies out of 55 distributed from Bayero University, Kano (BUK) Library reflecting 91.0% response rate, 30 out of 34 distributed from Usmanu Danfodiyo University (UDU) Library, Sokoto reflecting 88.2% response rate and 9 out of 9 distributed from Federal University Dutsima (FUD) Library, Katsina reflecting 100% response rate respectively. According to Baruch and Holtom (2008), this response rate is fair considering the overall response rate exceeding the recommended 52.7% response rate. The response rate for each of the selected university is shown in Table 1.

Four (4) university librarians from the selected Northwestern federal university libraries were interviewed. The four university librarians participated in the interview reflecting 100% response rate. The four university librarians who were interviewed have been assigned code UL1, UL2, UL3 and UL4 respectively. A total of 16 (8.4%) questionnaires were not returned by the respondents and therefore not used. See Table 4.1 for response rate.

Table 1: Response rate by university library

University Library	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned	Percent (%) of total
ABU Zaria Library	93	85	91.4%
BUK Library	55	51	93.0%
UDU Sokoto Library	34	30	88.2%
FUD Library.	9	9	100%
Total	191	175	91.6%

In order to establish the types of knowledge acquired in the university library, respondents were asked to indicate the type of knowledge acquired for their libraries. The findings indicate that twenty-two 22(13%) respondents indicated that the library acquire tacit knowledge. Forty-one 41(23%) respondents indicated that the library acquires explicit knowledge while seventeen 17(10%) respondents indicated that their libraries did not acquired either tacit or explicit knowledge.

Ninety-five 95(54%) respondents indicated that they acquired both tacit and explicit knowledge.

The implication of acquiring one types of knowledge (tacit knowledge) in libraries might lead to insufficient availability of knowledge for librarian to access. Acquiring one type of knowledge (explicit knowledge) in libraries will lead to low utilization of resources by librarians and users. It can also lead low service

delivery. See Table 4.2 for summary of findings on types of knowledge acquired.

Table 2: Types of knowledge acquired

University library	Tacit knowledge	Explicit knowledge	Tacit and Explicit knowledge	None of the above	Total percentage %
	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	
ABU	12 (14%)	20 (24%)	44 (51%)	9 (11%)	85 (100%)
BUK	6 (11%)	10 (20%)	31 (61%)	4 (8%)	51(100%)
FUD	0 (0%)	5 (56%)	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	9 (100%)
UDUS	4 (13%)	6 (20%)	17 (57%)	3 (10%)	30 (100%)
Total	22 (13%)	41 (23%)	95 (54%)	17(10%)	175(100%)

Respondents from ABU Library acquired tacit and explicit knowledge more than other university libraries with a majority of respondents while the federal university library does not acquire tacit knowledge in the library as indicated in Table 2. The implication of acquiring one type of knowledge (tacit knowledge) in libraries might lead to providing poor service by librarian.

As shown in Table 2, a majority of the respondents indicated that their libraries acquired both tacit and explicit knowledge. However, explicit knowledge was more acquired while acquisition of tacit knowledge is low. The low acquisition of tacit knowledge by librarians may pose a challenge in providing effective services in the library. This is because both tacit and explicit knowledge is needed in the library for librarian competence. This result corroborates Igwe, Nnadodie, and Unagha (2015) research findings that established that tacit and explicit are two major types of knowledge that are usually acquired and used in organizations namely for improve job performance

In order to establish the techniques/mechanisms for acquiring tacit

knowledge, respondents were asked to indicate the sources they used to acquire knowledge. The finding show that thirty-four 34(19.4%) respondents indicated that meetings are used; forty 40(22.9%) respondents indicated that formal training and education are used; fifty-eight 58(33.1%) respondents indicated that conferences, seminars/workshops are used to acquired tacit knowledge; nineteen 19(10.9%) respondents indicated that personal face – to – face is used; four 4(2.3%) respondents indicated that mentoring is used to acquire tacit knowledge; eleven 11(6.3%) respondents indicated that brainstorming is used to acquire tacit knowledge; while nine 9(5.1%) respondents indicated that staff transfer is used.

Overall, all libraries acquire tacit knowledge and used variety of sources such as conferences, seminar/workshop interactions, brainstorming, mentoring among others to acquired tacit knowledge in the selected university libraries. From the findings, it becomes obvious that knowledge can be acquired using different sources. See table 4.3 for summary of findings on technique/mechanism for acquiring tacit knowledge in the library.

Table 3: Sources of acquiring tacit knowledge

Library	Conference, seminars and workshops	Formal training & Education	Meetings	Personal interactions	Brain storming	Staff transfer	Mentoring	Total percentage %
	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	
ABU	28 (33%)	21 (25%)	12 (14%)	11 (13%)	7 (8%)	4 (5%)	2 (2%)	85 (100%)
BUK	18(35%)	14 (27%)	9 (18%)	4 (8%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	51(100%)
FUD	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	0(0%)	1(11%)	0(0%)	9 (100%)
UDUS	9 (30%)	4 (13%)	10 (33%)	3 (10%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	0(0%)	30 (100%)
Total	58 (33.1%)	40 (22.9%)	34(19.4%)	19 (10.9%)	11(6.3%)	9 (5.1%)	4 (2.3%)	175 (100%)

The findings in Table 3 corroborated Umoh and Amah (2013) on knowledge acquisition and organizational resilience in Nigerian manufacturing organization which revealed that the major methods used to acquire knowledge by employees are seminars, conferences and training. Adoption of knowledge management practice requires staff with competence and skills to be able to provide quality service in the library. These can be achieved through attending staff trainings, conferences, workshops and seminars. To validate this findings, similar question was asked to the university librarians during the interview and one of them asserted that "on the job training, workshops and seminars, and meetings constituted the methods used in acquiring knowledge in the library" (University librarian 4 UDUS, 12th march, 2018).

However, acquiring tacit knowledge through mentoring is low as shown in the findings and this means there is poor mentoring service in the libraries. This can affect the performance of librarians in providing effective knowledge services.

In order to establish the sources, use in acquiring explicit knowledge, respondents were asked to indicate the

type of sources used in terms of documents, patents, intranet, social media and ICT mediated apparatus.

Findings on sources library used to acquire explicit knowledge in the table 4.8 shows that fifty-six 56(32.0%) respondents indicated that documents are used as the sources to acquire explicit knowledge; seven 7(4.0%) respondents indicated that patents are used as the sources to acquire explicit knowledge; thirty 30(17.1%) respondents indicated that internet is used as the sources to acquire explicit knowledge; seventeen 17(9.7%) respondents indicated that social media are used as the sources to acquire explicit knowledge; while sixty-five 65(37.2%) respondents indicated that ICT mediated apparatus are used as the sources to acquire explicit knowledge. This shows that majority of the respondents with 65 (37.2%) respondents indicated that ICT mediated apparatus was used as sources to acquire explicit knowledge in university libraries. There is no a standard for source of acquiring explicit knowledge. Knowledge can be acquired using different sources depending on the capability of the parent organization, organizational structure and internal arrangement.

Table 4: Sources of acquiring explicit knowledge

Library	Percentage of respondents confirming the sources for acquiring explicit knowledge					
	ICT mediated apparatus	Documents	Intranet	Social media	Patent	Total percentage %
	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	
ABU	36 (42%)	20(24%)	13(15%)	10(12%)	6(7%)	85 (100%)
BUK	17 (33%)	22(43%)	9(18%)	2(4%)	1(2%)	51(100%)
FUD	4(44%)	2(22%)	2(22%)	1(11%)	0(0%)	9 (100%)
UDUS	8(27%)	12(40%)	6(20%)	4(13%)	0(0%)	30 (100%)
Total	65 (37.2%)	56 (32.0%)	30(17.1%)	17 (9.7%)	7 (4.0%)	175 (100%)

Information and communication technology tools facilitate knowledge acquisition as recognized globally. The result presented in Table 4 collaborated Wamundila and Ngulube (2011) findings from study on enhancing knowledge retention in higher education in Zambia universities. The findings revealed that ICT apparatus, ICT facilities, subject matter experts among others are knowledge acquisition mechanism that served as tools to speed up knowledge acquisition for employees. Under the interview conducted, similar question was asked and one of the university librarian maintained that information and communication technology facilities enhance the acquisition of explicit knowledge in the library (university librarian 2 BUK, 7th March, 2018). He further stressed that with ICT facilities, the adoption of knowledge management in university libraries will be effective, efficient, time saving and quality service delivery.

Conclusion

This study sought to assess the adoption of knowledge management practices in selected federal university libraries in Northwestern Nigeria as a tool for service delivery. In assessing knowledge acquisition practices, university libraries

were found to be acquiring the two major types of knowledge (tacit and explicit). However, explicit knowledge was more acquired while the acquisition of tacit knowledge was low. The low acquisition of tacit knowledge by librarians may pose a challenge in the adoption of knowledge management and in providing effective services in the university libraries.

The mechanism of acquiring tacit knowledge in the university libraries include seminars, conference, workshops, staff meetings, brainstorming, training, and mentoring among others. However, acquiring tacit knowledge through mentoring is a low as shown in the findings and this means there is poor mentoring service in the university libraries. Poor mentoring services in the library can affect librarians experience, skills, and performance in providing effective knowledge services. The study also established that the mechanism of acquiring explicit knowledge in the university libraries include the use of documents, internet, the patent, and generally ICT mediated apparatus. Although, the patent remains the least acquired mechanism for acquiring explicit knowledge.

In order to improve on the low acquisition of tacit knowledge, the university libraries should introduce a

motivational scheme that would improve the acquisition of tacit knowledge in order to improve on staff experience, skills, and to provide effective service delivery. For instance, presentation of incentives, promotion, and letter of appreciation to librarians that acquired and apply tacit knowledge.

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