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Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing Practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State

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Abstract

The researchers examined factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State. The study used a survey design with two research questions. The population of the study consists of 38 Business Education Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State. A census study of all the 38 lecturers was involved for the study since their number can be reached. The instrument for data collection in this study is a researcher made rating scale named "Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing Practices of Business Educators Scale (FAKSPBES)" with 10 items based on a four-point scale. The face validity of the instrument was established by three experts in Business Education and Educational Measurement and Evaluation while internal consistency was established on a one-shot method of administration using Cronbach alpha statistics with an index of 0.79 indicating high reliability of the research instrument. The rating scale was administered by hand and was retrieved personally by the researchers with the help of two trained research assistants to ensure a high percentage return rate. In analysing the data that were collected, mean score was used to answer the research questions. For instance, mean score below the criterion mean of 2.5 is regarded as disagreed to the items while mean score of 2.5 and above is seen as agreed among the respondents. It was found among others that positive factors affect knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions among which are motivation to share knowledge, management support, trust, spirit of teamwork and good leadership. In the same vein, the negative factors that affect knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators are poor technical infrastructure, ill behaviour of some lecturers, politicking, poor technical skills, and poor reward system. It was recommended that school administrators should ensure that technical infrastructure that could affect knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators is improved upon.

Key Words: Knowledge, Knowledge sharing, Business Educators, Lecturers, Tertiary Institutions

Introduction

Tertiary institutions are knowledge-based environments with a crucial role in the development and management of that knowledge for both public and private organizations. Tertiary institutions before now only concentrated on delivering and sharing knowledge with the students, a relatively straightforward process. Much of the research conducted about factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators reflected on the ways in which tertiary institutions differ from other working environments and the consequences for how certain factors could affect knowledge sharing practices of Business educators (Fullwood, Rowley & Delbridge, 2013).

Knowledge is viewed by Rajalakshmi and Banu (2012) as an integration of experiences, values, information and individual understandings. Knowledge is defined as human understanding of a specialized field of interest that has been acquired through study and experience (Folorunso, Vincent, Ogunde & Agboola, 2012).

Knowledge sharing of lecturers with one another fosters continuous professional development among lecturers since it is exchange of experiences, thoughts, or understandings with an expectation of gaining further knowledge. This implies reciprocity among people wanting to increase their knowledge base. Knowledge sharing can also be seen as a communication of the "know-how" and "know who" (Hou, Sung & Chang, 2009). At a fundamental level, knowledge-sharing takes place between at least two parties, or actors and it occurs when an individual is willing to assist as well as to learn from others in the development of competences.

One of the key factors of knowledge management is knowledge sharing. It helps to facilitate the access and use of knowledge in any organization. Knowledge sharing practice according to Bello and Oyekunle (2014) consists of a set of behavioural activities containing knowledge and information exchange and helping others in this respect. In addition, Knowledge sharing is the process where individuals mutually exchange their implicit and explicit knowledge and jointly create new knowledge. To Wan, Wan and Seyed (2014), knowledge sharing practice is the social interaction culture, involving the exchange of knowledge, experience and skills through individuals or the organization as a whole. The goal of knowledge sharing is to convey the knowledge and experiences of people and keep them as organizational resources and wealth in order to increase and materialize the organizational effectiveness.

Knowledge sharing practice is the dissemination or exchange of explicit or tacit knowledge, ideas, experiences or even skills from one individual to another individual or group of knowledge seekers. In contrast, knowledge hoarding is the deliberate withholding of knowledge that would benefit others. In addition, Oosterlinck (2004) found that knowledge sharing assists academics to receive additional feedback and improves their further research initiatives, thus, enabling them to enhance their credibility to change the traditional culture of an organization, which will ultimately assist them to be successful in their work place. Sharing knowledge occurs through a process of exchanging experience, expertise, events and thoughts that are agreed by the giver and the receiver.

Knowledge sharing could be formal or informal. Formal knowledge sharing which is known as prescribed practice are composed of a set of formally specified relationships between superiors and subordinates and among functionally differentiated groups that must interact to accomplish an organizational defined task in knowledge management. Examples of how formal knowledge sharing is disseminated are courses, seminars, workshops, cluster training, conferences among others. Formal knowledge sharing initiatives could be considered as a top-down approach (Jewels, Underwood & de

Pablos, 2008). Formal knowledge sharing can take an active form, where the learning was planned but still recognized by the learner retrospectively. Formal knowledge sharing can be non-incidental and integrated into daily activity. It is intentional, and potentially structured. Informal knowledge sharing is the communication outside the formal organizational structure that fills the organizational gaps, maintains the linkages, and handles the one-time situations (Jewels, Underwood & de Pablos, 2008). Informal knowledge sharing also takes place through daily social interactions such as participation in group activities, working alongside others, tackling challenging tasks, and working with clients; the success of these forms of informal learning is highly dependent upon the quality of human relationships in the workplace (Steinlin, 2005).

Tertiary institutions are knowledge-based environments responsible for creating, managing, exchanging, and disseminating knowledge within societies. They grow and prosper from the knowledge of their human capital, particularly the academics (Singer & Hurley, 2005). In the knowledge-based age, universities seek to ensure success and permanence, achieve organizational goals (Sharma, 2010), and have constant performance improvements. Moreover, in the academic environment, the role of knowledge sharing is becoming quite significant to achieve maximum results for academic institutions (Babaihaveji & Kermani, 2011) due to the important role academics play in providing education, conducting research, and publishing scholarly works.

There are many factors that influence knowledge sharing. These factors can be divided into positive and negative factors. The negative factors are also referred to as 'barriers' in past research on knowledge sharing. A study done in Singapore found that knowledge sharing is influenced by cultural factors, motivation to share knowledge, management support, trust, teamwork spirit, and the degree to which knowledge is considered as a source of power (Neo cited in Chaudhry, 2006). The success of knowledge sharing may also be influenced by the need to have a reward mechanism, good leadership, trust, and corporate culture that promotes knowledge sharing (Lee & Hong, 2014). Katambara (2014) on her research on knowledge sharing among Multinational Corporations also found that perceived interpersonal trust and shared cognitive ground are important determinants of cross border knowledge sharing. Onifade (2005) on the other hand found that knowledge sharing behaviours are strongly influenced by work practices that are borne by the respective organizational behaviours.

Shaari, Rahman and Rajab (2014) found that knowledge sharing is influenced by the organizational structure (centralized and decentralized), technical infrastructure, trust, motivation and sense of community. Flexible organizations usually are better prepared to implement knowledge sharing strategies as compared to more bureaucratic organizational structures. Willem (2013) in her doctorate dissertation found that knowledge sharing is highly influenced by trust, opportunistic behaviour and politicking. Some employees also see knowledge sharing as a threat to future career advancement. This is not surprising, especially when the knowledge concerned is highly specialized, particularly with technical skills, which are viewed as a source of power. The three major factors (University factor, individual factor and technology factor) that influence knowledge sharing in Universities are discussed in detail below. Other factors that influence knowledge sharing among academics in Universities are strategic planning, reward system, trust, awareness and openness.

The issue of poor knowledge sharing and dissemination has continued to affect the educational sector over the years. The effect is seen on the level of students' dissatisfaction and poor learning research procedure which also manifest in their poor engagement in academics, resulting to low achievement in cognitive, affective and psychomotor areas. This unsatisfying situation has been blamed on the lecturers who may not have been active in sharing knowledge to solve the problem. The study posed as a question

is: what are the factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain the: -

1. positive factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions, and

2. negative factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the positive factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions?

2. What are the negative factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions?

Method

The design of this study is a survey research, carried out in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State. The population of the study consists of 38 Business Education Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State. A census study of all the 38 lecturers was involved for the study since their number can be reached. The instrument for data collection in this study is a researcher made rating scale named "Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing Practices of Business Educators Scale (FAKSPBES)" with 10 items based on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighed as 4, 3, 2, and 1 point respectively. The face validity of the instrument was established by three experts in Business Education and Educational Measurement and Evaluation while internal consistency was established on a one-shot method of administration using Cronbach alpha statistics with an index of 0.79 indicating high reliability of the research instrument. The rating scale was administered by hand and was retrieved personally by the researcher with the help of two trained research assistants to ensure a high percentage return rate. In analysing the data that were collected, mean score was used to answer the research questions. For instance, mean score below the criterion mean of 2.5 is regarded as disagreed to the items while mean score of 2.5 and above is seen as agreed among the respondents.

Results

Table 1: Positive factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Item Statement: The following affects knowledge sharing practice;	Lecturers' n=270		
		$\overline{X}$	S	Decision
1	Motivation to share knowledge	3.31	.63	Agreed
2	Management support	3.03	.87	Agreed
3	Trust	3.24	.88	Agreed
4	Spirit of teamwork	2.97	.82	Agreed
5	Good leadership	3.06	.81	Agreed
	Mean of Means	**3.12**		

The result in table 1 shows the mean ratings of lecturers on positive factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions. It was discovered that items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were agreed upon by the lecturers because their mean scores were above the criterion mean of 2.50. The mean of means is seen to be 3.12. The conclusion is that motivation to share knowledge, management support, trust, spirit of teamwork and good leadership are the positive factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions.

Table 2: Negative factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Item Statement: The following affects knowledge sharing practice;	Lecturers' n=270		
		$\overline{X}$	S	Decision
6	Poor technical infrastructure	2.96	1.18	Agreed
7	Ill behaviour of some lecturers	3.05	.84	Agreed
8	Politicking	3.05	.85	Agreed
9	Poor technical skills	3.13	.81	Agreed
10	Poor reward system	3.02	.90	Agreed
	Mean of Means	**3.04**		

The result in table 2 shows the mean ratings of lecturers on negative factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions. It was discovered that items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were agreed upon by lecturers because their mean scores were above the criterion mean of 2.50. The mean of means is seen to be 3.04. The conclusion is that poor technical infrastructure, ill behaviour of some lecturers, politicking, poor technical skills, and poor reward system affect knowledge sharing in these institutions.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the study revealed that motivation to share knowledge, management support, trust, spirit of teamwork and good leadership are the positive factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions. This indicates that the level of knowledge sharing among

Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State is dependent upon these factors. This finding is in consonance with that of Neo cited in Chaudhry (2006) who found that knowledge sharing is influenced by cultural factors, motivation to share knowledge, management support, trust, teamwork spirit, and the degree to which knowledge is considered as a source of power. The success of knowledge sharing may also be influenced by the need to have a reward mechanism, good leadership, trust, and corporate culture that promotes knowledge sharing (Lee & Hong, 2014). Perceived interpersonal trust and shared cognitive ground are important determinants of cross border knowledge sharing.

It was also revealed in this study that poor technical infrastructure, ill behaviour of some lecturers, politicking, poor technical skills, and poor reward system are the negative factors affecting knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions. That is to say that some behaviour negates the practice of knowledge sharing among Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions. This finding is in line with Shaari, Rahman and Rajab (2014) who found that knowledge sharing is influenced by the organizational structure (centralized and decentralized), technical infrastructure, trust, motivation and sense of community. Willem (2013) in her doctorate dissertation found that knowledge sharing is highly influenced by trust, opportunistic behavior and politicking. Some employees also see knowledge sharing as a threat to future career advancement. Flexible organizations usually are better prepared to implement knowledge sharing strategies as compared to more bureaucratic organizational structures.

Conclusion

It is hereby concluded in this study that positive factors affect knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators in Tertiary Institutions among which are motivation to share knowledge, management support, trust, spirit of teamwork and good leadership. In the same vein, the negative factors that affect knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators are poor technical infrastructure, ill behaviour of some lecturers, politicking, poor technical skills, and poor reward system.

Recommendations

1. The school administrators should ensure that technical infrastructure that could affect knowledge sharing practices of Business Educators is improved upon.

2. The lecturers should ensure that their ill behaviour to knowledge sharing is discouraged.

3. The reward system in tertiary institutions should be improved by their governing councils.

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