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Improving Library Service Delivery by the Instrumentality of Knowledge Management Practices: A Critical Review

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Abstract. **Purpose**: The paper critically examines the nexus between Knowledge Management Practices (KMP) and service delivery in libraries through a detailed review of relevant literature. Special attention was placed on university libraries given their relatively robust system and structures for KMP. The paper also explores how the Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization (SECI) model of Knowledge Management (KM) serves as a tool for the improvement of service delivery in libraries.

Method: The approach employed in this study is the critical review of literature.

Result: The effective management of knowledge reflected in its creation, organization, sharing and use significantly influences service delivery in libraries. Also, the paper revealed that the SECI model serves as an effective guide in adopting KMP for the improvement of service delivery in libraries.

Conclusion: KMP is an influencing factor in the improvement of service delivery in libraries regardless of their type and size.

Introduction

Libraries across all types, sizes, geographical locations, and parenting bodies are commonly tasked with the fundamental requirement of ensuring quality in their service delivery. This makes service delivery central to the operations of libraries while their resources are geared toward delivering services that are adjudged to be of high quality. The need for quality service delivery in libraries stems from the service-centric nature of libraries where users' satisfaction is the gauge to measuring how well the library is fulfilling its objectives. Such users' satisfaction according to Agrawal (2011) is considered to be supreme and capable of sustaining the future of libraries. Consequently, the sustainability of libraries is to a significant measure dependent on the satisfaction of the users, which according to Gyau, Liu and Kwakye (2021) is predicted by the quality of services delivered in the library.

The concept of service delivery in libraries entails the act of providing library users with the necessary professional assistance required to meet their information needs. This assistance is fragmented into different direct and indirect services which constantly need to be improved upon to catch up with the ever-changing information needs of the 21st century library users. In a collaboration of the aforementioned, Akpokodje and Lawal (2015) called on libraries to constantly seek ways to deliver enhanced services to the users. Enhancing library services for the users aims to provide them with a quality service. Service quality in libraries at its most basic level connotes library users' comparison of their service expectation and perception of the actual service received (Parasuraman et al. in Alzaydi, Al-Hajla, Nguyen & Jayawardhena, 2018). The authors further affirmed that the quality of service has become the top priority to service-oriented institutions like libraries, and its assessment has become imperative. It is, therefore, pertinent to have a glimpse at the importance of improving service delivery in libraries.

A substantial amount of effort in scholarship has been placed on unraveling how an improved, enhanced or quality service delivery in libraries significantly influences their outcome. Service quality has been revealed to influence library users' satisfaction (Amanullah, Hasan & Hafez, 2021), increase use of library resources (Khaola & Mabilikoane, 2015), boost users' loyalty towards the library (Oh, 2020) and is extremely beneficial to both the library and the user community (Reddy, 2017). Thus, libraries are taking measures to improve their service delivery to achieve and sustain quality. In improving quality of service delivery in libraries, Partap (2019) suggested an increase in fund/budget allocation, training programs, raising the qualification of the staff and better library facilities. Not much exists in literature on explicitly improving the quality of service delivery in libraries through the management of knowledge which is the core and operational resource of every library.

Thus, the management of knowledge otherwise termed Knowledge Management (KM) can be explored as a strategy towards improving service delivery in libraries.

Knowledge management (KM) is defined by Nonaka and Takeuchi in Ugwu and Ekere (2018) as an organization's capacity to create and share new knowledge across the organization, and integrate it into the service and product flow/structure of the organization. Therefore, KM is considered as the effective management of knowledge for organizational gain. This management of knowledge cuts across knowledge creation, capturing, organization, sharing, storage and use, which are referred to as knowledge management practices (KMP).

In libraries, KM is required to accomplish high quality service delivery and generation of new and innovative services. The correlation between KM and service delivery was shown by Mayekiso (2013) who posited that the application of KMP by librarians within the library could greatly improve the quality of service delivered in the library. Therefore, proper KMP reflected in knowledge acquisition, organization, sharing, use and storage by library personnel will positively influence and improve the quality of service delivery and subsequently, enhance the ability of the library to meet its objective.

The concept of KM has been explained by several theories and models which can be applied to understand the principles behind KM's capacity and possible strategies for improving library's service delivery. Library is a knowledge-based institution. This indicates that knowledge is the basic element for its operations and service transactions. Consequently, the "Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization (SECI) model" which emphasizes organizational knowledge creation using four dimensions situates itself as the most relevant model for a study of this kind. In addition, the SECI model is considered as one of the most widely accepted and applicable theory of KM (Adesina & Ocholla, 2019) and the most pertinent and comprehensive KM proposal (Farnese, Barbieri, Chirumbolo & Patriotta, 2019). Therefore, for the libraries to achieve their aims and objectives, it is necessary to explore the SECI model of KM as it relates to the quality of the delivery of library services.

Purpose of the Study

The paper critically examines the nexus between KMP and the service delivery in libraries through a detailed review of relevant literature. Special attention was placed on university libraries given their relatively robust system and structures for KMP. It also explores how the SECI model of KM serves as a tool for the improvement of service delivery in libraries.

Knowledge management practices and service delivery in libraries

Libraries are adopting several management approaches including KM, in a bid to ensure they deliver services more effectively, invariably meeting their

objectives and maintaining their place of relevance as information providers in the 21st century. This is why Tasmin, Rusuli, Takala and Norazlin (2012) opined that university libraries should 'think outside of the box' in exploring better strategies that improve the quality of services delivered, by discovering best practices for knowledge internalization and externalization within the library. They added that the application of KM in university libraries will ensure that services are delivered in the most appropriate and timely manner.

Kumara and Narasimhaiah (2016) averred that KM in libraries is focused on delivering high-quality services to patrons in an effort to enhance the production, dissemination, and application of knowledge. This corroborates the assertion of Roknuzzaman and Umemoto (2009) that one of the major drivers of KM in academic libraries is the improvement of library practices and the provision of quality services to the clientele. Therefore, the application of KM activities like knowledge acquisition, organization, sharing, use and storage by information professionals in university libraries enhances their improvement of information products and services delivery in an economy driven majorly by knowledge (Uzohue & Yaya, 2016). Therefore, KMP are considered as strong determinants of effective and innovative service delivery in university libraries.

Ogola (2012) carried out a study on KMP using the personnel of eight university libraries in Kenya. It was revealed that none of the university libraries had formal KM programs except for some informal KM programs or activities like staff rotation in managing know-how. However, from the informal KM programs, the result showed that KM is thought to help information professionals do their jobs better and provide better information services. Also, Jain (2012) investigated KM in university libraries of Southern African Development Communities (SADC). The results revealed that 100% of the respondents indicated KM as a tool for improving library services while 92% said they used KM to increase service productivity by consistently providing time and cost-effective services around the clock that centered on library users. This implies that KM could sustain the consistency at which productive and user-centered services are delivered in libraries.

Ismail and Yusof (2009) carried out a study to ascertain the "relationship between knowledge sharing, performance and service delivery in Malaysian public library". The study revealed that knowledge sharing among personnel helps to improve their performance which invariably causes them to provide quality services to the clientele across all levels. In the same Malaysian context, Tasmin et. al. (2012) empirically investigated "KMP and users' satisfaction at Malaysian university libraries" and their results indicate that the understudied university libraries need to enhance their services through KMP to achieve a higher level of usage. Thus, KM is a significant factor in stimulating library patronage. Jain (2015 p.3) in a study carried out using academic libraries in South Africa posited that "KM provides academic libraries numerous opportunities to rise from stereotype status and change their service delivery approach by establishing new alliances with

students, academic staff and researchers in new creative and dynamic spaces to create a customer-centered environment". These aforementioned studies imply that KMP is capable of endearing the library to the users. In other words, it increases the patronage of libraries regardless of alternative information sources.

Nazim and Mukherjee (2013) examined the perception of librarians toward KM using thirty out of the forty-two central university libraries in India. The authors combined qualitative and quantitative methods, while the questionnaire was adopted as an instrument of data collection analyzed using descriptive statistics. According to the results of the analysis, most of the respondents (constituting 53.3%) believed that KMP should be incorporated into reference and information services. Also, KMP was considered as an influencing factor in technical services and library administration. It was also discovered that the majority of the respondents (93.3%) opined that KM will add value to academic library service delivery. This is because KM equips library personnel with tools to capture, store, organize and disseminate information and information resources to library users at the right time. Also, 47% of the respondents indicated that knowledge management will help academic libraries be more relevant to their parent institutions. This study revealed the application of KM in two critical aspects of library operations which are administration and technical services. A meticulous glance at a library shows that knowledge is a common denominator in all its housekeeping operations. As such, KM applies to all operations and services of libraries regardless of their type and size.

Ugwu and Ekere (2018) investigated KM for improving library services in Nigerian Federal Universities. Their studies revealed that librarians at Nigerian university libraries were highly engaged in the creation, acquisition, identification, and dissemination of knowledge. The study also showed that KMP influenced library service delivery depicted by quality services, user centered services and innovative services. Furthermore, the study revealed that knowledge creation, sharing and use all positively influenced innovation in library services. The study also found that KMP is generally a strong predictor of innovative service delivery in university libraries. It is, however, necessary to investigate the various knowledge management processes, dimensions, or practices as they relate to service delivery in university libraries. These practices cut across knowledge creation, capturing, organization, sharing, use and storage.

Regarding knowledge creation and service delivery in libraries, Islam, Argarwal and Ikeda (2017) in their study of library adoption of knowledge management found that knowledge creation and its application have a strong correlation with service innovation and delivery in academic libraries. Thus, knowledge creation is an essential and initial step in KM that focuses on developing new skill sets and product designs, better ideas, and more efficient ways of doing things (Asogwa, 2012) and for better service delivery in university libraries where knowledge is a vital ingredient for their operations. When knowledge is acquired in the library, there

is a need for organization, which as a process of KM could also influence service delivery in university libraries.

Knowledge organization is important in ensuring that information resources in the library are not lost on the shelf, i.e., these materials can be easily accessible and retrieved. Saumure and Shiri (2008) defined knowledge organization as the field of study that deals with "cataloguing, classifying, indexing, abstracting, thesauri, and authority lists." Lekay (2012) carried out a mini-thesis where it was discovered that in the library, when collection or information resources are not properly catalogued (which is an aspect of knowledge organization), it adversely affects the smooth delivery of library services. Daneshgar and Bosanquet (2010) carried out a study on organizing customer knowledge in academic libraries in Australia. The study showed that librarians work with an enormous amount of knowledge that is organized and systematically accessed by customers (library users) and librarians themselves. For librarians, this helps in the knowledge application that births innovative idea which can be used for designing new and better services for library users.

Orbih and Aina (2014) inferred a correlation between knowledge organization and the delivery of library service in Lagos State University, Nigeria. The authors stated that the application of information technologies in cataloguing (an aspect of knowledge organization) has stimulated the delivery of quality services in libraries. According to Abdulsalami, Okezie, and Agbo (2013), the feature of libraries hinges on the collection, organization and dissemination of information which serve as means of offering specialized services to a specialized clientele. The implication of this is that knowledge organization as a part of the KMP would influence library service delivery to the users. There are, however, very few investigations that examined the connection between knowledge organization and library service delivery.

After the organization of knowledge in libraries, there is a need for sharing. Knowledge sharing has been considered as a strong correlate of service delivery by several researchers. For instance, Okonedo and Popoola (2012) affirmed that knowledge sharing allows librarians to exchange their knowledge and experiences in order to provide their users with quality information services. This corroborates the assertion of Ismail and Yusof (2009) that the quality of service delivery within an organization is improved through knowledge sharing. Anasi, Akpan and Adedokun (2014) carried out an investigation on the knowledge sharing among academic library personnel in South-west Nigeria and discovered that 88% of the respondents which constitutes the majority, do share knowledge mainly through e-mails, Facebook, personal interactions and intercom. It was also discovered that effective service delivery in libraries is facilitated by knowledge sharing. This finding is supported by the study of Tahleho (2016) on how library service delivery can be improved in the National University of Lesotho, through knowledge sharing. The findings showed that knowledge sharing does occur at the understudied library. Also, it was discovered that 60% of the participating librarians affirmed that knowledge sharing is instrumental to the delivery of services adjudged to be of good quality.

It can be extrapolated that knowledge sharing among the personnel in university libraries will enhance their service delivery, hence the need to develop a knowledge sharing culture.

Parirokh, Daneshgar and Fattahi (2008) opined that building an organizational culture where knowledge sharing is emphasized is the bedrock of KM's success and the knowledge sharing skills of the university libraries' personnel are a vital success component of this endeavor. The implication of this is that university libraries that wish to be successful in obtaining their goals and objectives must embrace knowledge sharing as a practice of KM. When knowledge is shared, use naturally follows, which makes use of knowledge the next KMP for consideration vis-à-vis service delivery. Davenport and Punsakand in Bello (2018) averred that one of the objectives of KM is to enhance knowledge environment that is conducive for knowledge use in order to promote innovation for effective service delivery. Thus, in the view of Raja, Ahmad, and Sinha (2009), librarians in university libraries use KM to provide better services to users, invariably achieving the objectives of the university libraries. This paper in this section has shown that while KMP will generally improve library service delivery, each of the dimensions in the KMP also has the capacity to stimulate the quality of service delivery in libraries.

The SECI Model and Library Service Delivery

This model was initially developed by Nonaka in 1990 and thereafter modified by Nonaka and Takeuchi in 1995. The SECI model argues that knowledge creation which is the most important element of the knowledge management process (Natek & Zwilling, 2016) is a spiral process of continuous interplay between tacit and explicit knowledge by which new knowledge is created (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). The model presents four dimensions of "Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization (SECI)" which in the opinion of Nonaka, Toyama and Hirata (2008) functions as a hub for the transformation of implicit and explicit knowledge.

The SECI model shows that "new knowledge is created by the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge, allows for the postulation of four modes of knowledge conversion which are socialization (from tacit knowledge to tacit knowledge), externalization (from tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge), combination (from explicit knowledge to explicit knowledge) and internalization (from explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge). An upward spiral process, based on social interactions amongst individuals, groups and organizations, constitutes the knowledge creation process" (Nonaka et al., 1994). This was further buttressed by Dlamini (2017) when he asserted that by combination, exiting knowledge can be put together to create new knowledge, through socialization, tacit knowledge is combined via interactions, while externalization and internalization ensure knowledge capturing.

Though the SECI model tends to cater more to knowledge creation (externalisation and internalisation) and knowledge transfer (combination and socialisation), the model technically covers all aspects of knowledge processes or practices. This is in

line with Easa (2012) who affirmed that the SECI model is a well interconnected KM approach that brings together a diverse set of KMP of generating, codifying, storing, sharing and use. The author went further to state that knowledge generation takes place by different socialization (tacit to tacit) mechanism. Knowledge codification (tacit to explicit) is the essence of the externalization process of SECI. Knowledge storage is the combination (explicit to explicit) aspect of the model as it converts explicit knowledge into more complicated sets of explicit knowledge. Knowledge sharing through face-to-face communication is socialization, and sharing through the networks is combination.

The SECI model of knowledge creation has received a great scholarly attention and is widely applicable as seen from the previous literature. Easa (2012) investigated the use of the SECI model in the Banking Industry and how it affects innovation in Egypt. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to administer two hundred and ten copies of questionnaire and twnety-six semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The study revealed that SECI processes infused into the banking operations positively enhanced innovation through the generation of novel concepts for improved banking services. Also, Kassem, Hammami and Alhousary (2015) carried out a study on the SECI model's application for knowledge creation in the e-learning environment in Syria. The study used the descriptive survey approach to gather responses from students at the Syrian Virtual University. The study discovered a link between the e-learning environment and the SECI Model, with the e-learning environment accounting for 59% of the variation in the SECI model.

In Saudi Arabia, Almuayqil and Sharp (2017) also applied the SECI model for self-management and education. The authors ascertained the possibility of applying the four modes of SECI in a web-based environment. The study found that the SECI model through web tools provides a mechanism that supports people with diabetes. In the library domain, Muchaonyerwa and Mutula (2017) applied the SCEI model for investigating the knowledge sharing strategies among the personnel at selected university libraries in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The lack of trust, lack of knowledge sharing culture and policies were discovered to be some of the factors impeding knowledge sharing in the university libraries.

This model has an implication for university libraries by ensuring that they strive to become a knowledge-creating institution by consciously promoting the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. This continuous interaction is depicted in KMP of knowledge creation, capturing, organization, sharing, use and storage. All of which are achieved by the four different modes of the SECI model. It should be stated that all KMP in university libraries are catered for by one or two modes of the SECI model. Consequently, the SECI model depicts the sharing of knowledge, capturing and codifying of tacit knowledge, improvement on already existing knowledge via combination and internalizing available explicit knowledge to increase the knowledge base of the library and library personnel's capacity for effective service delivery.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The delivery of quality service is at the heart of service-oriented institutions like libraries and as such the need to constantly improve service delivery should be at the core of library operations. This paper has shown that KMP is an influencing factor in the improvement of service delivery in libraries of all types. It also increases users' loyalty to the library and sustains the consistency at which quality services are delivered. The effective management of knowledge, reflected in its creation, organization, sharing and use, significantly influences service delivery in libraries. However, there seem to be a dearth of studies linking knowledge capturing and storage to the quality of service delivery in libraries, thus opening up an area for further investigation in this regard. Furthermore, the SECI model presents a working guide for libraries for adopting knowledge management practices to improve their service delivery and ultimately fulfill their goals and objectives.

Based on the aforementioned, the following recommendations are made:

1. Libraries management should treat their personnel as knowledge asset through capacity building and reward for exceptional practice of KM within the library.
2. Libraries should consciously set up structures, strategies and systems that manage their knowledge, and periodically monitor the success of these structures in order to make adjustments where necessary, for the desired outcome.
3. Knowledge sharing culture should be stimulated by library management and every formal/informal means of socialization should be adopted in making the library a social space.
4. Library management and personnel should constantly seek to address the challenges in service delivery from the perspective of KM.

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Poprawa świadczenia usług bibliotecznych dzięki instrumentarium praktyk zarządzania wiedzą: krytyczny przegląd

Magnus Osahon Igbinovia jest obecnie bibliotekarzem zasobów elektronicznych na Uniwersytecie Ambrose Alli w Ekpomie. Jest również adiunktem na Wydziale Biblioteki i Nauk Informacyjnych Uniwersytetu Ambrose Alli. Obecnie odbywa studia doktoranckie na Uniwersytecie Ibadan w Nigerii. Autor napisał ponad 25 artykułów naukowych opublikowanych w renomowanych czasopismach międzynarodowych i lokalnych. Wygłaszał również referaty na konferencjach związanych z bibliotekoznawstwem i informacją naukową. Jest członkiem niektórych organizacji zawodowych, takich jak Nigeryjskie Stowarzyszenie Bibliotek (NLA), Grupa Adwokatów Bibliotek (LAG) i jest certyfikowany przez Radę Rejestracji Bibliotekarzy Nigerii (LRCN). Igbinovia jest laureatem nagrody 2016 Young Library and Information Professionals (yLIPs) nadawanej przez NLA.

Słowa kluczowe: biblioteki; zarządzanie wiedzą; praktyki zarządzania wiedzą; dostarczanie usług; model SECI

Streszczenie. **Cel**: Artykuł krytycznie analizuje związek między praktykami zarządzania wiedzą *(Knowledge Management Practices* – KMP) a dostarczaniem usług w bibliotekach poprzez szczegółowy przegląd odpowiedniej literatury. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na biblioteki uniwersyteckie ze względu na ich stosunkowo solidny system i struktury dla KMP. Artykuł analizuje również, w jaki sposób model zarządzania wiedzą (KM), socjalizacji, eksternalizacji, łączenia i internalizacji (*Socialisation*, *Externalisation*, *Combination and Internalisation* – SECI) służy jako narzędzie poprawy świadczenia usług w bibliotekach.

Metoda: Zastosowanym podejściem w niniejszym opracowaniu jest krytyczny przegląd literatury.

Wynik: Efektywne zarządzanie wiedzą, przekładające się na jej tworzenie, organizację, udostępnianie i wykorzystywanie, znacząco wpływa na dostarczanie usług w bibliotekach. Artykuł ujawnił również, że model SECI służy jako skuteczny przewodnik w adaptacji KMP do poprawy świadczenia usług w bibliotekach.

Wniosek: KMP jest czynnikiem wpływającym na poprawę świadczenia usług w bibliotekach niezależnie od ich rodzaju i wielkości.

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Die Verbesserung der Bibliotheksdienste mithilfe der Instrumente zum praktischen Wissensmanagement: Eine kritische Übersicht

Magnus Osahon Igbinovia ist zurzeit Bibliothekar der E-Ressources an der Ambrose Alli Universität in Ekpoma, wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter an der Fakultät für Bibliotheks- und Informationswissenschaften derselben Universität und Doktorand der Ibadan Universität in Nigeria. Autor von über 25 wissenschaftlichen Beiträgen, die in den bekannten internationalen und regionalen Zeitschriften erschienen. Er hielt auch Vorträge auf den Tagungen zum Bibliothekswesen und zur Wissenschaftsinformation, ist Mitglied einiger Berufsorganisationen wie etwa des Nigerianischen Bibliotheksverbands (NLA), der Gruppe der Bibliotheksrechtsanwälte (LAG) und Diplombibliothekar in der Registrierungsstelle für Nigerianische Bibliothekare (LRCN). 2016 war er Preisträger von Young Library and Information Professionals (yLIPs) im Bereich des NLA.

Stichworte: Bibliotheken; Wissensmanagement; Wissensmanagement-Praktiken; Lieferung von Diensten; SECI-Modell

Zusammenfassung. These/Ziel: Der Beitrag analysiert den Zusammenhang zwischen den Wissensmanagement-Praktiken (Knowledge Management Practices – KMP) und der Lieferung von Bibliotheksdiensten aufgrund einer kritischen Übersicht über die entsprechende Fachliteratur. Eine besondere Aufmerksamkeit wurde auf die Universitätsbibliotheken gelegt, und zwar wegen ihres relativ soliden Systems und ihrer für die Wissensmanagement-Praktiken notwendigen Strukturen. Im Beitrag wird untersucht, wie das Wissensmanagement im Bereich der Sozialisation, Externalisierung, Kombination und Internalisierung (Socialisation, Externalisation, Combination and Internalisation – SECI) als Werkzeug zur Verbesserung der Lieferung von Bibliotheksdiensten fungiert.

Forschungsmethode: Die angewandte Methode ist im Falle dieses Beitrags eine kritische Literaturübersicht.

Ergebnisse: Das effektive Wissensmanagement, das sich in der Gestaltung, Organisierung, Erschließung und Nutzung vom Wissen widerspiegelt, beeinflusst wesentlich die Lieferung von Bibliotheksdiensten. Der Beitrag bestätigt, dass das SECI-Modell als ein effizienter Führer in der Einführung von Wissensmanagement-Praktiken im Bereich der Verbesserung der Lieferung von Bibliotheksdiensten gelten kann.

Schlussfolgerungen: Die Wissensmanagement-Praktiken üben Einfluss auf die Verbesserung der Lieferung von Bibliotheksdiensten unabhängig von der Art und Größe aus.