Original Article

Knowledge Sharing and Efficiency in the Rivers State Local Government Service

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Abstract: This study focused on a few chosen local government areas in Rivers State to evaluate the connection between efficiency and information sharing. It adopted the system theory, which espouses a network of input observers, processors and output operators in the system comprising independent variables, including individuals, groups, attitudes, motives formal structures as holistic environment. The qualitative and descriptive design was employed and data was collected using a likert type questionnaire instrument. Data was analysed using the mean and standard deviation. The result indicated that knowledge sharing enhances organizational innovativeness with a mean score of 3.23 and .483 standard deviation. For efficiency, it showed a mean of 3.64 and standard deviation of .483. the study therefore, argued that knowledge sharing is required for the local government system to effectively and efficiently deliver on its mandates to the rural populace. It thus, recommended, among others, that knowledge sharing should be encouraged while managers of the system should promote the culture of free flow of ideas to enhance innovativeness.

Keywords: Knowledge, Knowledge Sharing, Local Government Service, System Theory and Efficiency.

I. INTRODUCTION

Achieving efficiency in the public sector has been one of concern to practitioners and indeed, the public because of the widespread view that efficiency is more attained in a private than the public sector. Undoubtedly, the unified local government service of Rivers state is a public sector where activities are carried out to ensure effectiveness and of course, efficiency in service delivery to the rural populace. Bearing in mind that the unified local government service is poised to provide the needed services to the local populace, it has been argued that the system has derailed or failed in its responsibility of service delivery to the people at the grassroots. It is also argued that there is no improvements in their efforts to meet their target, notwithstanding available information and knowledge that is evolving by each passing day. This paper is therefore, aimed at providing the link between knowledge sharing and organizational efficiency in meeting the needs or providing the services required by the people.

The following research queries serve as the direction for this essay: (1) how do knowledge sharing and organisational effectiveness relate to one another? (2) To what extent does knowledge sharing influence organizational efficiency in the Rivers State Unified Local Government Service?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A) Theoretical Underpinning

The foundation upon which this paper is laid is the system theory. Having its roots in the biological sciences in the 1920s, it evolved out of the desire to explain the inter-relatedness of organisms and their ecosystem. The theory is associated with scholars like Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, Ross Ashby, Margret Mead, Gregory Bateson, among others. Along with these philosophers, David Easton embraced the idea that a political system is made up of interdependent parts that collectively determine a society's ideals. According to Easton, the system comprises certain common features, which involve structural interdependence or interrelatedness. Therefore, a slight change in one part affects the performance of the other parts functionally (Easton, 1953).

Furthermore, the system theory is a patterned relationship between the units, which enable the system to form a related whole. For Onyeonu (2002), the system assumes interrelatedness, interdependence, reciprocity, a network of roles and interactive relationships. Nna (2004) has described a system network as input observers, processors and output operators and envisioned in a system consisting or comprising of interdependent variables, including individuals, groups, attitudes, motives, formal structure as holistic environment. Thus, organizational survival, performance, or effectiveness would be judged or determined by the survival of the entire system.

The idea applies to this study since the local government service in the Rivers State has structures and interdependent units that work together to provide services to the general populace. Thus, there is a focus on the complexity and interdependence of these units and or structures.

B) Concept of Knowledge

One term that may be argued to have multiple definitions is knowledge. According to Ikenwe and Ibinovia (2015), knowledge is a combination of experience, reading, imagination, and information that has been refined. People's minds develop it through the mix of data, information, and experience. According to scholars like Kucza (2001), knowledge is information that has through some sort of distillation process, making it practical to handling real-world situations and context-based. It is information that has been analysed and processed in order to prepare the recipient for the proper response. According to Liew (2007), knowledge is in fact organised information that has substantial meaning, applications, or input for decision-making and/or action. It's also significant to note that knowledge includes cognition (know-what), actionability (know-how), and understanding (know-why), all of which are faculties of the mind or brain.

Within the discipline of knowledge management, tacit and explicit knowledge are the two most frequently recognised categories of knowledge. It is personal, context-specific, and challenging to formalise, even if tacit knowledge is challenging to encode and transmit (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Expertise, technical know-how, skills, and experience are examples of uncodified, tacit information that people possess. These can be imparted and shared through a variety of methods, including group project or task execution, face-to-face communication, training, and mentoring. Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is typically rooted in physical layout, including books, memoranda, electronic media, and data bases, among others, that is simple to acquire, capture, transmit, share, use, or store.

C) Knowledge Sharing

Understanding the concept of knowledge allows one to recognise the importance of knowledge sharing in achieving efficiency in any organisation. Ikenwe and Igbinovia (2015) defined knowledge sharing as the act of exchanging and sharing gained information, ideas, skills, knowledge, and experiences among individuals, institutions, and organisations. They regarded knowledge sharing as a core priority of knowledge management. According to Algbeye (2010), information sharing enables an organisation to make the most of the knowledge it has amassed. To prevent the loss of such knowledge if the person [employee] departs the organisation is the main argument put out by Dhamdhere (2015b) for disseminating individual knowledge to the entire organisation. Importantly, an organisation must have specific policies to guarantee information sharing and deter knowledge hoarding.

Consequently, the need to apply knowledge gained is paramount. Once knowledge is shared among employees of an organization, the shared knowledge should be applied to solve problems, without which knowledge gathered will be useless. Thus, knowledge shared should be applied appropriately for the good of the organization.

The process of imparting explicit or implicit knowledge to others is known as knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing does, in fact, primarily involve the transfer and sharing of knowledge among the people in an organisation. Because it concentrates on the influx of knowledge among individuals, knowledge sharing is seen as a fundamental process of knowledge management (Chua, 2004; Shin, 2004). Sun and Gang (2006) assert that knowledge sharing is carried out by dispersing and utilising knowledge that has been chosen from both inside and outside the organisation. When knowledge is shared, it is combined with outside knowledge to form a new body of knowledge (Davenport & Mcetray, 2000). According to Hung et al. (2007), information sharing can take place via workshops, focus groups, expert training sessions, on-the-job training, training centres, and knowledge sharing councils.

Intranets and extranets are the appropriate platforms for information transfer, according to Parikh (2001). The user profiles can be used to customise display and access knowledge. Therefore, a combination of cooperative and incentive structures of behaviour are needed within the organisational culture to enable information sharing initiatives. The consequence is that an organization's workforce should have a culture of cooperation and encouragement for successful information exchange. This is necessary in order that knowledge sharing can freely take place and be accepted without hitch. With such culture in place, such knowledge shared will be useful and therefore, enhance productivity and of course, efficiency. The processes involved in knowledge sharing have been highlighted by Sun and Gang 2008), as knowledge distribution, knowledge representation and knowledge utilization. For them, knowledge representation aims to make knowledge more understandable and storable while knowledge distribution facilitates the dissemination of knowledge across the organisation. On the other hand, knowledge application is supported by knowledge utilisation.

D) The Unified Local Government Service

It is important to understand the concept of local government before diving into the unified local government system. This idea has been examined and defined by academics. Arowolo (2008) claims that it has to do with the administrative and

legal decentralisation of authority, power, and personnel from a higher level [federal] of government to a community with its own will performing certain tasks within the national framework. According to Agagu (1997), such a government is focused on addressing the demands of the populace at large. Essentially, the local government is for service delivery to cater for the needs of those at the rural areas. More so, its creation is necessitated by the fact that the people are well aware of the challenges facing them as a people and can better handle them. In the light of this Laski (1982) had stated that all problems are not central and therefore requires decisions at the place, and by the person, where and whom the incidence is most deeply felt. The import of this is that the people have an in-depth knowledge of the problems within their vicinity and have better ways of handling them accordingly. Local government, according to the United Nations Office for Public Administration (UNO: 1960:11), is a "sub-division of national (in a federal system), regional, or state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes, or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. Such an entity's governing body is elected or otherwise locally chosen".

The unified local government service is one charged with the responsibility of employing, promoting, supervising, monitoring, staff discipline and assessing the duties of the local government. Beyond this, it is the government at the local levels established to deliver certain critical services to the people such that they will feel the presence of government at that level. Suffice it to say, its major responsibility is to provide social and other services to the rural dwellers, including infrastructure for the development in Nigeria. The service is described as unified because it has same pattern or line of duties. There is a unified personnel system adopted in the management of local government staff. This system is where a local government service commission or board (Orewa, 1991) administers the personnel matters wholly or partially.

III. METHODOLOGY

The design employed here is the mix of qualitative and descriptive research design. Both designs are employed to reinforce each other in our attempt to draw or establish the relationship between knowledge sharing and efficiency in the unified local government service, particularly in Rivers State, as an organization that exercises certain functions to meet the needs of the people. The concern is how these activities are effectively carried out to efficiently deliver on its mandates to the rural populace. The population for this study was selected using the purposive sampling approach. As shown in the table below, the leadership and administrative personnel of a few chosen local government areas from Rivers State's three senatorial districts made up the population.

Table 1: Showing The Number of Local Government Areas (Four Per Senatorial District) and Selected Staff.

S/No	Rivers South/East	No. of officials selected	Rivers East	No. of officials selected	Rivers West	No. of officials selected
1.	Khana	33	Obio/Akpor	33	Degema	33
2.	Gokana	33	Emohua	33	Akuku-Toru	33
3.	Eleme	33	Port Harcourt	33	Ahoada East	33
4.	Andoni	33	Okrika	33	Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni	33
		132		132		132
Total = 396						

A) Field work

The purposive and random sampling techniques were adopted to select the twelve (12) local government areas, as well as the number of officials per local government. This was done to allow all the senatorial districts to be represented in the sample.

The sample size used was drawn from the population of a total managerial staff of some selected local government from the three senatorial districts in Rivers State.

The sample size was established using the Taro Yamen formula, as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)2}$$

Where n= sample size
N=Population
E = level of error allowed 5%
Therefore, n=396/1+396 (0.05)^2

$$n = \frac{N}{1+396(0.05)2} = 199$$

Thus, the sample size used was one hundred and Ninety nine (199).

The instrument for gathering data was a four-point Likert style questionnaire. ANOVA and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used in its study.

B) Data Analysis and Results

Table 2: Showing the Distribution and Retrieval of Copies of Questionnaire

	Frequency	Percentage (s)
Distributed copies	199	100
Retrieved copies	19	9.5
Not retrieved	180	90.4
Useful responses & used	173	96.1
Discarded copies	7	3.8

C) Fieldwork

The table above indicates that 199 (100%) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in the selected local government areas while 180 (90.4%) copies were returned. Out of this retrieved number however, 7 (3.8%0 copies were discarded and only 173 (96.1%) copies were correctly filled and used for the analysis.

173 respondents were engaged, 130 male and 43 female representing 75.1% and 24.9% respectively.

The respondents were categorized based on position/rank. Chairmen of councils were 12 (6.9%), Vice Chairmen 12 (6.9%), Secretary to LGAs 11(6.3%), Head of Administration 12 (6.9%), leaders of councils 11(6.3%), Directors 95 (54.9%), head of departments 11 (6.3%) and senior staff 9(5.2%). The respondents were principal officers in position of authority and who understood the rules and general workings of the Rivers State Local Government system.

Table 3: The Knowledge Sharing Response Rate Was Analysed Using The Descriptive Statistics.

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Information always made available to staff of the local government to enhance their performance	173	3.34	.878
Knowledge sharing helsp to transfer knowledge to organized members that need them for better performance (efficiency)	173	3.68	.469
Knowledge sharing enables my organization to prevent loss of organizational knowledge even when employees retire or go on transfer	173	3.67	.471
Knowledge sharing among organizational members through brainstorming enhances the level of innovativeness.	173	3.23	.845
Valid N (listwise)	173		

Source: SPSS 22 Output (2018)

In the above table, the respondents affirmed that knowledge sharing helps to transfer knowledge to members of an organization with a high mean score of 3.68 as contained in item 2. For item 3, the respondents affirmed knowledge sharing enables the organization to prevent loss of organizational knowledge even when the employees retire with a mean score of 3.67. it was also confirmed that information made available to staff of the local government enhanced performance with a mean score of 3.34 followed by a moderate mean score of 3.23 affirming that knowledge sharing among the organizational members through brainstorming enhances the level of innovativeness. Indeed, the response rates showed that knowledge sharing among workers was considered high and knowledge was moderately stored, communicated and transferred among workers in the selected local government areas for better service delivery and performance (innovativeness and efficiency).

Table 4: Showing Response Rate of Organizational Efficiency

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Knowledge management processes improve my organization's (local Govt.) performance and increase efficiency in service delivery	173	3.73	.443
Local government management relies on the knowledge provided in the public service rules and local government administrative handbook for efficient decision making	173	3.57	.496
The local government that best manages her knowledge (people, process and technology) will record better sustainable growth and development	173	3.63	.484
Transfer of knowledge to members at the right place and at the right time enhances organization's efficiency in service delivery	173	3.64	.483
Valid (listwise)	173		

Source: Source: SPSS 22 Output (2018)

From the above, responses to the first item showed that knowledge management processes improve an organization's performance and increase efficiency in service delivery with a mean score of 3.73 (SD.0.443). This is followed by the mean score 3.64 (SD.0.483) that affirmed transfer of knowledge to members at the right place and time required for the enhancement of organization's efficiency and service delivery. Responses to the third item confirmed that organization that best manages her knowledge (People, process and technology) will record better sustainable growth and development with a mean score of 3.63 (SD. 0.484). For item 2, it was affirmed that management relies on the knowledge provided in the public service rules and local government administrative handbook for efficient decision making with a mean score of 3.57 (SD. 0.496).

Table 5: Showing Response Rate of Organization's Degree of Innovation

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Knowledge management processes in my organization support innovation and free flow of ideas among organization members	173	2.94	.794
Knowledge management in my organization reduces cost, increase efficiency through innovation	173	3.22	.868
Knowledge management processes through brainstorming is crucial to the process of the local government in terms of the degree of innovation and service delivery	173	3.14	.861
Knowledge management processes promote and encourage knowledge-driven culture that stimulates innovation in my local government	173	3.55	.498
Valid (listwise)	173		

Source: Source: SPSS 22 Output (2018)

The responses above, taking from the fourth 4th item showed that knowledge management processes promote and encourage knowledge-driven culture, which stimulates innovation in the local government with a high mean score of 3.55 (Standard Deviation of 0.498). In order of ranking, the second item affirmed that knowledge management in organization reduces cost and increases efficiency through innovation with a moderate score of 3.22 (SD. 0.868). The third item showed an affirmation that brainstorming is essential to the progress of local government in terms of the degree of innovation and service delivery with a mean score of 3.14 (SD. 0.861). Item one above, indicated that knowledge management processes in organization support innovation and free flow of ideas among organization members with mean score of 2.94 (SD.0.794). Consequently, the response rate showed that knowledge management processes were considered moderate in support of innovation and free flow of ideas among organization members in the selected local government areas studied.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study, which looked at efficiency and information sharing in a few chosen local government areas of Rivers State, found that knowledge sharing is crucial to achieving service delivery at the local levels. It showed that knowledge management supports innovation, service delivery and the free flow of ideas. It also encourages and promotes the culture driven by knowledge, that boost innovation, hence service delivery in the local government.

It is recommended that knowledge sharing should encouraged within the local government service system to ensure a proper knowledge of work to be done in order to bring about effective and efficient deli very of services to the rural people. Again, a better management of knowledge and its sharing produces new innovations and therefore, managers of the system promote the free flow of ideas that will cause rapid innovations.

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