

Influence of Community Knowledge Management towards the Implementation of Community Based Projects in Njoro Sub-County

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Abstract: *In today's knowledge based economy, knowledge management plays a significant role in organizations management and performance. For community projects to have desired impact there is need for knowledge management yet this is never present in community projects. This study purposed to determine the influence of community knowledge management towards implementation of community based projects. The study was carried out in Njoro Sub County targeting 375 project staff working for community based projects. The sample size for the study was 79 using simple random sampling technique. Descriptive research design was employed. Data was collected using structured questionnaire. Analysis entailed descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviation. Regression analysis was also used to analyze the relationship between community knowledge and implementation of community based projects. The findings of the study revealed that community knowledge plays a significant role towards implementation of community based projects. The study concluded that community knowledge management positively influences implementation of community projects. It was recommended that community projects should place knowledge management initiatives with clearly defined channels for knowledge sharing throughout the implementation process. The results of the study are hoped to add knowledge to the body of project management and further contribute to how community based projects are successfully implemented in Kenya*

Keywords: Knowledge management, Community knowledge, Community based projects

1. Introduction

Knowledge management and intellectual capital (KM/IC) is considered among the youngest management disciplines that has gained acceptance in the scientific community. The overall direction of KM/IC is encouraging. Evidence suggests that it is a very attractive domain welcoming contributions from both academics and practitioners. Its body of knowledge has been continuously growing [1] Knowledge can be defined as the set of skills, experiences, information and capabilities individuals apply to solve problems[2]. Knowledge management (KM) is the set of practices an organization applies to create, store, use and share knowledge [3]. On a more general level, not only knowledge within projects is part of Project Knowledge Management (PKM) but also knowledge between different projects and knowledge about project

Knowledge management (KM) is the process of capturing, developing, sharing, and effectively using organizational knowledge. It refers to a multi-disciplined approach to achieving organizational objectives by making the best use of knowledge. Knowledge management efforts typically focus on organizational objectives such as improved performance, competitive advantage, innovation, the sharing of lessons learned, integration and continuous improvement of the organization. KM efforts overlap with organizational learning and may be distinguished from that by a greater focus on the management of knowledge as a strategic asset and a focus on encouraging the sharing of knowledge [4].

Africa is endowed with Indigenous Knowledge that is needed to capture, share and transfer. Indigenous knowledge (IK) is defined as the local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society and forms the basis for decision making within communities [5]. The drive to manage knowledge in African culture is instrumented in its oral traditions. By this, there is need in Africa to capture indigenous knowledge, share and transfer it by networking between countries. An electronic network has been created to foster connections across varying boundaries to create a knowledge bank 'that links expertise with demand. Among the knowledge bank is Knowledge Management Africa (KMA) which has become knowledge engine that drives appropriate development solutions for Africa [6].

The mission of KMA is to promote the use of Africa's collective knowledge as a key development resource and establish KM platforms that will create access to existing networks and facilitate the sharing and utilization of knowledge across all sectors. Kenya has 5,929 registered nonprofit organizations as indicated in a report of –National validation survey of NGOs of 2009 Business Directory and this offers the need to study whether knowledge management is implemented. 2029 of the above mentioned NGOs are actively carrying out projects of different nature. 233 of 2029 are operating in Rift valley and about 112 based in Nakuru County.

The paper provided information that would help actors in organizations particularly the policy makers to actively facilitate the creation, appreciation and acknowledgement of knowledge management concept as an indispensable

approach to modern management. Secondly the paper hopes to establish why knowledge management concept has not been fully embraced by most organization in Kenya yet most Kenyan organizations must compete globally where the concept is fast gaining traction.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Most Organizations have embraced knowledge management (KM) concept as a way of sharpening skills, experiences, information and capabilities individuals apply to solve problems [6]. As a result there is growth in knowledge management strategies, systems and processes designed to improve overall performance in organizations. These knowledge management approaches have greatly impacted on most organizations performance.

There is need for knowledge creation and management for developing the body of actions and directives that allow the portfolio of strategic decisions [7]. This discussion has greatly helped to explore the role on Kenyan community based projects. Even though most organizations in Kenya have high quality human resource, there is little documented evidence on attempts to facilitate systematic creation of knowledge based management initiatives and how these impact on community based projects performance. Community projects concentrates on results yet they fail to appreciate that for these projects to have the desired impact there is need for managing knowledge gathered over time, storing, using and sharing for successful project implementation. More often community based projects are faced with the dilemma of developing and managing their own skills, experiences, capacities, capabilities and information that would form the bedrock their future branding as unique projects while tapping into individual knowledge, community and social knowledge and project knowledge. This study therefore sought to establish the influence of community knowledge management towards the implementation of community based projects in Njoro Sub-County.

1.3 Research Question

How does community knowledge management influence on community the implementation of community based projects in Njoro Sub-County?

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study was carried out in Njoro Sub County. It mainly targeted project community personnel who were drawn from Faith based organizations (FBO), Non-governmental organization (NGO) and Community based organizations (CBO). The scope of the study narrowed its self on community knowledge management. The study was carried out in duration of three months with a total budget of 40,000.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

Knowledge management tends to be associated as a complex area of the project management discipline and mostly is left to those who craft strategies, who are mostly top managers.

This study thus was limited to the fact that the researcher needed to explain knowledge management in-depth for the respondents to understand and be able to produce information as required by the study. This further could be attributed to the levels of education of the project personnel

2. Literature Review

In the recent decade has seen a proliferation of knowledge management (KM) projects in many organizations. Correspondingly, corporate spending on KM projects has increased substantially over the years [8]. This phenomenon is fuelled by the escalating popularity of the knowledge-based view of the firm in which knowledge is recognized as the key sustainable competitive resource [9]. As a result, organizations are implementing various KM initiatives to identify, share and exploit their knowledge assets.

Invariably, KM has been presented as a compelling strategy for organizations to improve their business processes and gain competitiveness. Furthermore, the outcome of implementing KM has been reported to be remarkably successful either in terms of financial savings, revenues generated or the level of user acceptance. Through the communities of practice, Hill's Pet Nutrition enjoyed significant reductions in pet food wastage due to packaging improvements while Hewlett-Packard succeeded in standardizing sales processes and establishing a consistent pricing scheme [10].

Argument advanced is that KM initiatives are more organic in nature vis-à-vis IT projects and may not even fit into the traditional notion of a project. Even so, most KM projects characteristically involve the use of resources, have specific deliverables and are measurable. There are several indicators of KM project success: growth in the resources attached to the project, including people and budget; growth in the volume of knowledge content and usage (that is, the number of documents or accesses for repositories or participants for discussion-oriented projects); the likelihood that the project would survive without the support of a particular individual or two, that is, the project is an organizational initiative, not an individual effort; and evidence of financial return either for the knowledge management activity itself or for the larger organization [11].

While I web infrastructure was fully operational, it was unable to change the users' basic attitudes towards knowledge-sharing behaviour. When it was launched, there was no impetus for individuals to share their knowledge or access the knowledge of others. Marsden usefully characterizes the recent history of the concept of community, as 'lost' in the discourse of globalization and 'found' in more recent work on communitarianism and social capital [12]. Indeed, in discourses of globalization, community is assumed to be harking back to the past, and these new perspectives re-emphasize the value of community as a locus or agent of change in the post-modern world.

A co-governance approach inherently recognizes that community and government parties bring different interests to the table, and that as a result they might benefit from

recognition of those interests in the way power is shared around partnership projects. Characterizing community governance as a 'partnership' is a rather positive take on government's involvement in community, and a more critical perspective, seen frequently in the literature in this area, portrays government's use of community as instrumental. Here, community is conceived of as an instrument for government policy [13].

Arguably, instrumentalism runs counter to the core values of community development which aims to act as a liberating force for the poorest in society [13]. Instrumentalism also fails to value community participation as important in its own right, not just as a vehicle for delivering government objectives [14]. In addition, challenging and adventurous projects are believed to lose out as a result of funding being attached to governmental targets [15] there are also likely to be differences in governmental and community group views of community function and indeed the motivation for involvement in activities in the first place.

Currently the community sector is under strong pressure from the corporate capitalist state to collaborate with it in its strategy of achieving similar welfare, and other social, outcomes with considerably less funding and support. An instrumental viewpoint on the community sector inherently exploits the sector by expecting outcomes to be delivered cheaply and independently of government. In a connected debate on the treatment of citizenship by New Labour, Clarke talks of four phases of engagement: activation, empowerment, responsabilization (transfer of responsibility to citizens) and abandonment (withdrawal of support)[16].

These arguments are rarely applied to understandings of sustainability and community. The framing of community as an agent or locus for social change might be imagined to imply a particular political perspective, but a wide range of perspectives are shown in discussions of these issues. In work on social capital, Champlin proposes a spectrum of views between: privatizing everything so that social capital can emerge and replace the state (which is seen to have destroyed social capital in the first place) to the idea that the government should provide all services to individuals without relying on community involvement.

3. Methodology

Descriptive research design was used for the study. Descriptive research determines and reports things the way they are and is intended to produce statistical information about aspects of interest to policy makers and educators. The target population for the study comprised the staff of community projects in Njoro Sub-County. These included non-governmental organizations, faith based organizations and Community based organizations. The sample size for the study was 79. Simple random sampling technique was used for the study. Validity for the study was reached through expert consultation and additionally through using Cronbach alpha test where a value of .732 was obtained indicating the questionnaires were very reliable. Both descriptive and regression analysis were used. Descriptive statistics looked at the mean, frequencies and percentages while regression

analysis was used to establish the Influence of Community Knowledge Management towards the Implementation of Community Based Projects in Njoro Sub-County.

4. Results

The questionnaire return rate was 93.7% with more female respondents (66.2%) than male. Further majority of the staff had attained a post-secondary education. Most of the respondents had worked in the organization for more than five years. 81.1% of project staff had already completed projects in their organizations. Most of the organizations under the study had initiatives that had been put in place for managing knowledge.

4.1 Community Knowledge Management Initiatives

The objective sought to determine community knowledge management initiatives applied in community projects and their role in success of implementation of community projects. To achieve this objective the study first sought to determine whether community projects considered incorporating project knowledge. The findings asserted that community knowledge was factored in implementing most community projects as supported by 94.6% of project staff.

The findings community knowledge management initiatives indicate that community information sharing forums where members of the community share views was the most common initiative (Mean = 4.08, SD = 0.79). Partnerships with existing community projects in project implementation was also common equally applied as community outreach activities (Mean = 3.94) although with different variances (SD = 1.03, 1.29) respectively. Community leaders were also involved in project management boards as strategy to ensure that community's indigenous knowledge was factored in projects, this was rated third at (Mean = 3.84, SD = 1.18). Holding farm demonstration forums where communities show case their indigenous products and technologies was also a common initiative in projects for sharing knowledge (Mean = 3.74, SD = 1.16).

The least applied initiatives include funding project proposals raised by the community (Mean = 2.96, SD = 1.33) and participation in trade fairs (Mean = 3.12, SD = 1.31). Other initiatives applied in management and sharing of community knowledge in community projects include: Hiring project staff from the local community in which the project is implemented, holding farm demonstration forums, holding farmers days, including indigenous knowledge in project design and implementation. The findings on the rating on the extent to which these initiatives were applied in community projects are shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Community Knowledge Management Initiatives

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|------|----------------|
| 1) Including community leaders in the project management boards | 3.84 | 1.18 |
| 2) Hiring project staff from the local community in which the project is implemented | 3.54 | 1.02 |
| 3) Having community information sharing forums where the local community give views | 4.08 | 0.79 |
| 4) Partnerships with existing community projects in project implementation | 3.96 | 1.03 |
| 5) Funding community project proposals | 2.96 | 1.33 |
| 6) Holding farm demonstration forums | 3.74 | 1.16 |
| 7) Holding farmers days | 3.76 | 1.12 |
| 8) Trade fairs | 3.12 | 1.31 |
| 9) Community outreach activities | 3.96 | 1.29 |
| 10) Including indigenous knowledge in project design and implementation | 3.34 | 1.15 |

Table 2: ANOVA on Community Knowledge Management and implementation of community based projects

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 8.027 | 3 | 2.676 | 11.982 | .000 ^a |
| | Residual | 15.631 | 70 | .223 | | |
| | Total | 23.658 | 73 | | | |

a. Predictors: (Constant) community knowledge
b. Dependent Variable: Success in project implementation

The ANOVA test results on Table 2 revealed $F(3, 70) = 11.982$, $p = 0.000$ which implies that the model was significant (p -value < 0.05) at 0.05. This is an indication that the model was significant in explaining the relationship between community knowledge management and success in project implementation.

Table 3: Model Coefficients

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.404 | .396 | | 3.549 | .001 |
| | Community knowledge | .228 | .100 | .280 | 2.272 | .026 |

a. Dependent Variable: Success in project implementation

Based on the model coefficients on Table 3, the relationship between community knowledge management and success in project implementation can be expressed as:

$$y_i = 0.011x_1 + 0.228x_2 + 1.404$$

This shows that community knowledge management played a role in the in implementation of community projects.

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Author Profile

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