Chapter 17

Knowledge Management and Reverse Mentoring in the Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The effective management of knowledge is now believed to be the main core competence in order for an organization to survive within the competitive business environment in Nigeria. However, the current implementation of KM within the Nigerian tertiary institution is still in its developmental phase. The Nigerian tertiary institution is resource-oriented, and as such, the most important assets to the universities within the educational sector are their knowledge assets. Therefore, Nigerian tertiary institutions need to understand and appreciate that knowledge is a valuable asset that can help sustain their competitive advantage within this sector. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the relationship between knowledge management and reverse mentoring within the Nigerian tertiary sector. It also focuses on the challenges of reverse mentoring and how value can be derived when knowledge is shared as a result of the mentoring relationship being established between the participants involved (mentor and the mentee).

INTRODUCTION

The interests in knowledge management have grown due to the fact that there is an element of trust and certainty that knowledge creation and transfer is of significance to an organization's effectiveness on a long term basis (Hurley & Green, 2005). Knowledge management tries to make maximum use of the knowledge made available to an organization and at the same time creating new knowledge in the process. Knowledge man-agement is about understanding, appreciating and making use of the knowledge of individuals and also developing an organizational culture where knowledge sharing can flourish. As a result of this process, the organization creates value from their intellectual and knowledge based assets; hence the organization would continually develop as a result from the knowledge of the employees throughout the organization. The implementation of Knowledge Management in the Nigerian edu-

cational sector is still in its development phase, and as such it is an interesting area to focus on.

Reverse mentoring is a concept that is being used in organizations today as a tool for effective knowledge sharing. However, the challenge it poses sometimes outweighs its benefits. This paper therefore focuses on the relationship between knowledge management and reverse mentoring within the Nigerian tertiary sector. It also focuses on the challenges of reverse mentoring and how value can be derived when knowledge is shared as a result of the mentoring relationship being established between the participants involved (mentor and the mentee).

In the area of Knowledge Management, there have been several efforts carried out on how to define, categorize and classify knowledge; and some of these definitions have been changed, widened and have been subject to query. As such, there is not a particular definition of knowledge and as such many authors have their views and perception of the phenomenon. The definitions of knowledge are as follows:

- Webster dictionary describes knowledge as "the application to facts or ideas acquired by study, investigation, observation or experience"(Merriam-Webster, 2010). This definition stresses the fact that knowledge goes beyond information. It also involves facts and ideas that have been somehow got through experience.
- Knowledge can also be defined as "actionable information"(Tiwana, 2001).This also means information used for a purpose. The term actionable is a concept that signifies importance, and to be available at the right place at the right time so as to enable decision making (Tiwana, 2001).
- Davenport and Prusak (1998) describes Knowledge as a blend of values, experiences, contextual information, and grounded intuition that gives an environment for evaluation and a framework for incorpo-

rating new experiences and information. Knowledge is initiated and is functional in the minds of the people who possess the knowledge.
- Zand (1997) defines knowledge as "organised information applicable to problem solving."
- "Knowledge consists of truths and beliefs, perspectives and concepts, judgements and expectations, methodologies and know-how" (Wiig, 1997).
- Polanyi (1975) defines knowledge as "information that has been organised and analysed to make it understandable and applicable to problem solving and decision making."
- Gamble and Blackwell (2001) defines knowledge as "information connected in relationships."

For the purpose of this paper, knowledge would be defined as a blend of values, experiences, contextual information, and grounded intuition that gives an environment for evaluation and a framework for incorporating new experiences and information (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). This definition combines all the definitions of all the authors above in a systematic way. This definition shows that knowledge is initiated and is functional in the minds of the people who possess the knowledge. It also shows that knowledge emerges through conversation and exchange of ideas. This definition also stresses that fact that the path to knowledge is through people and relationships. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), there is a clear definition between information and knowledge. The Table 1 below shows the comparison between information and knowledge.

For better understanding, knowledge is described from the perspective of its hierarchical view which involves the data, information and knowledge (Gupter & Sharma, 2004). From this standpoint, data involves numbers or characters, information can imply clear and simple processed

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