

Leveraging on organizational culture for innovative services: a case study of Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary, Awka

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Abstract

The accepted way duties are performed, processes are patterned and problems are solved make up the organizational culture of a workplace. A healthy organizational culture provides opportunities for realization of full potentials of staff, moves leaders in the workplace to develop strong strength of purpose and direction in performing their duties, also encourages enthusiasm about new ideas and adaptation to change. The 21st century public library needs to embrace changes in order to remain relevant in its community by leveraging on its organizational culture which could be adapted to promote innovative services. Non-traditional SMS information services to People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), offering library services as well as telling the Library's story through the social media, Job search corner, Idea Exchange and collaborations for promotion of literacy and teaching of digital literacy skills which were all introduced in Anambra State Library Board were driven by tapping into three specific aspects of its organizational culture –modes of communication and interactions, adjustment of the bureaucratic structure to embrace teamwork and the reward/support systems. Descriptive survey design was used. The population of the study was made up of seventy seven (77) employees of the Anambra State Library Board. Frequencies, percentages and mean were used to analyze data. Findings indicate that communications/interactions amongst staff and adjusting the bureaucratic structure of the organization to embrace teamwork both yielded positive significant mean values of 3.c and 2.99 respectively showing that the two factors of organizational culture encourage innovations more than the reward/support systems which yielded a significant mean value of 2.44.

Keywords – organizational culture, innovative services, public libraries

INTRODUCTION

Repositioning the public library in Africa so as to increase its visibility, highlight its relevance to the man on the street, to entire communities, the educational system at all levels and

governance in the continent requires a closer look at the institution's structural and procedural systems. This necessitates an examination of the organizational culture of public libraries so as to identify and strengthen where feasible the various aspects that encourage and foster innovative services that would reinforce the importance of libraries in an information accelerated world. The culture of an organization is made up of early experiences, the influence of past Heads, shared assumptions and understanding of how things are and should be done. These established norms, values, attitudes, beliefs and definitions of practices and goals of an organization are not found written anywhere however, new members come to learn and adopt them seamlessly through processes, official communications, organizational structure and the general environment of the organization (Shepstone and Currie, 2008).

These known and familiar ways of doing things in the workplace though intangible, permeate the thought processes of all staff from the Head to the staff on the lowest rung of the organizational structure and affects job performance, relationships and interactions in the workplace. This leads to an organization developing certain patterns and array of characteristics which distinguishes it from others because of its acknowledged way of doing things. Thus, the organizational culture of every workplace emanates from the organization itself and colours job definitions, performance of duties and acceptable levels of dynamism, creativity and competitiveness (Igo and Skitmore, 2006).

For organizations to thrive in the 21st century, change birthed through innovations must be a constant feature. How a worker behaves in the workplace is a function both of the worker's personal characteristics and the workplace settings which include the promptings and barriers of his or her environment (Patterson, Warr and West, 2004). The culture of an organization can promote innovations yet on the other hand it could also raise barriers towards introduction of new ways of doing things. Thus, the culture of an organization can be regarded as a strategic resource that helps raise its innovation capability.

Public libraries are learning and cultural centres, social hubs and economic enablers that inspire and equip communities to reach their potentials. Sustaining these functions in a changing world requires the creation of a workable framework in which new ideas and innovations are

acceptable as basic norms of public libraries. Also as knowledge based institutions whose thriving and continued relevance depend largely on developing services in response to the changing needs of their user communities, it is essential for public libraries of today to operate in workplace settings that support and welcome growth, creativity and innovations. This can help them to adapt to the continuously evolving 21st century environment of information creation, storage and dissemination without compromising their core values and identity as democratic spaces for accessing information (Kaarst-Brown, Nicolson, von Dran and Stanton, 2004).

The increase in changes and developments in the field of information provision has made public libraries to look seriously at innovative services (Osuigwe, Jiagbogu, Udeze and Anyaoku 2015). Prof Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary is the flagship of Anambra State Library Board, Awka. A service targeted at People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), as a vulnerable section of the community was created in 2014 (Osuigwe, 2014). PLWHA face real and imagined stigma due to widely held erroneous beliefs in Africa that those afflicted with the virus are mainly bisexuals and homosexuals who must have flouted the traditional sexual norms, standards and values (Herek, Capitanion and Widaman, 2002). Also, the negative attitudes of people towards PLWHA can lead to denial and delayed commencement of HIV treatment thus making it easier for the disease to spread. Taking into cognizance that PLWHA might not easily approach the reference desk of public libraries to make enquiries on matters concerning their health status, Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary introduced Short Messaging Service (SMS) for delivery of information services to PLWHA. A databank of phone numbers was built up with due permission from one of the hubs where PLWHA receive medications. SMS sent to them contain health related information, inspirational messages that promote positive mindsets, information on the health nutrients of local foods and caution/appeal on the need to avoid behavioral patterns that would help in spreading the disease (Osuigwe and Jiagbogu, 2015).

In the bid to reach more users especially the youths and to tell the Library's story, Prof Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary created accounts in the social media. The Twitter page of the Library was used to start a 'Selfie service' whereby library users are encouraged to take pictures of

themselves in any Section of the Library with their mobile devices, follow the Library on Twitter, upload their pictures on the Library's account and get rewarded with free internet hours. Young users are excited with the service. A job search corner was also set up. Another new service - The Idea Exchange was also introduced. This consists of white boards and markers where library users can write their thoughts about just anything, ideas, suggestions and counter-suggestions - an information commons and knowledge sharing point for intellectual, political and social discourses. Digital literacy skills training and promotion of literacy were introduced in the Library through collaborations with local and international partners (Osuigwe, 2015).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Considering that Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central Library has a bureaucratic set-up being part of the Civil Service system of Anambra State, it becomes pertinent to determine the various aspects of the organizational culture of the establishment which enabled these innovations to see the light of day. Did communication and the manner of interactions amongst staff in Prof. Kenneth Dike play any role in unleashing these innovations? Did the support/reward system in the establishment encourage innovative library services? Did the adjusting of the bureaucratic organizational structure to embrace teamwork aid the birth of innovations in Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Every organization has its own peculiar set of shared beliefs, standards, values and meanings that defines its identity, acts as a unifying force and distinguishes it from other workplaces (Robbin, Odendaal and Roodt, 2004). These then become the culture – the accepted way of behaving, interacting, communicating, the prevailing ideology and the unwritten/unspoken guidelines of operations in the organization; it's identity (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2010). Generally, the organizational culture of a workplace could be focused on bureaucracy, policies, structures and processes with a strong sense of internal cohesion, stability and control. This is in contrast with organizations that emphasize external relationships, trends, innovations, satisfactory service to clientele and are easily adaptable to change (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). Organizations where little or no value is placed on service and customer satisfaction, where

conflicts engendered by turf 'wars' and personality clashes are rampant and where there are no opportunities to express new ideas could be regarded as having a toxic culture. This is in direct contrast to an organizational culture that accepts and appreciates diversity of skills and attributes, where communication between the managerial staff and other levels of employees are open and strong thus allowing easy transmission of policies and issues. This type of organization also invests in training and retraining of employees so as to foster new ideas. An organization in which the employees show a shared high level of understanding and commitment to the core values standards could be regarded as having a strong culture unlike an organization where employees perform their duties based on their personal vision and goals (Adedoyin, 2006).

There is much delineation of the parameters that differentiate one workplace's organizational culture from the other. According to Troompenaars and Hampton-Turner (2003), there are four types of organizational culture. First, an organization that focuses on people, has a hierarchical system with a strong leader, employees that are committed and have a long-term relationship with the organization and that promotes employees based on seniority has a 'family' organizational culture. Second, is the 'Eiffel Tower' organizational culture which is also based on hierarchies but is task-oriented and places much emphasis on the organizational structure more than job performance and outputs. Third, is the 'guided missile' culture which is solely propelled by the need to achieve the objectives and goals of the workplace with no stress on hierarchy and job roles. Fourth is the 'incubator' culture which has little structure but places high premium on employee development and innovations.

However, according to Deal and Kennedy (2000) organizational culture could be boxed into another four different categories depending on the risk and feedback mechanisms in various types of workplaces. The 'tough-guy' culture is found in organizations which are very demanding and encourage employees to take high risks and obtain fast results from such as found mainly in Stock broking firms. The 'work hard/ play hard' culture is mainly found in organizations that sell their products where employees are mostly required to be active, positive and take risks with attendant rewards. Development and construction companies

usually have the 'bet-your-company' organizational culture where high risk decisions are taken but it takes awhile to know if the decisions are right or wrong and this shapes the way work is done in those organizations. Fourth is the process organizational culture found mainly in Government offices with high levels of bureaucracy. Risks are hardly ever taken, there is minimal feedback and employees are more concerned with how the work is done rather than the outcomes.

Nevertheless, Cacciattolo (2014), opines that despite the interpretive and structural approaches to defining organizational culture and its different classifications, no organization corresponds totally and specifically to any of the descriptions though they could be meshed to promote job performance. It could then be asserted that no organization can be said to have a completely homogeneous culture, instead there are normally subcultures within any organization and this enables the leadership to emphasize aspects which would aid the accomplishment of determined goals. Leadership plays an important role in creating and sustaining an organizational culture that encourages innovations. This is because implementing innovations is not simple as it requires a combination of creative ideas and a listening and interested management to drive the ideas through to realization (Ahmed, 1998). Thus, a leader could be positive towards innovation and help to create a suitable framework within the organizational culture that would align creative ideas, managerial control, flexibility, support mechanisms such as reward systems with organizational objectives (Soltani, Damirchi and Darban, 2011).

Innovation ought to be regarded as a core value that permeates the whole organization, rank notwithstanding. According to Martins and Terblanche (2003), the amount of innovations found in an organization is proportionately equal to the degree of support provided by the organizational culture. Trust is created in an organization where openness and communication are ingrained in its culture. This makes such a workplace a breeding ground for innovations as employees feel emotionally safe to express and share their ideas. Furthermore, as employees communicate and interact formally and informally in such an organization, they share ideas and bounce thoughts off one another that might come together into doable processes that birth a new service or even a better way of doing old things as innovations must not all be about

technology (Greenwalt, 2014; Anderson, de Dreu and Nijstad, 2004; Martins and Martins, 2002).

Bureaucracy is embedded in the organizational culture of government offices as work gets done through hierarchical structure, rigid rules, policies, maintenance of status quo, procedures, performance evaluations guidelines and manuals that need to be totally adhered to thus stifling and giving no room to flexibility, creative thinking, new ideas, spontaneity and innovations (Romero, 2012; Kirk, 2012). According to Styhre and Borjesson (2006), bureaucratic organizations could adjust their corporate culture by changing the emphasis on extrinsic reward system that stimulates and entrenches conformity as creativity is mostly prompted by an internal commitment that values intrinsic rewards. Going further, they also point out that the adjustment would include welcoming of new information and ideas from junior employees, creation of avenues through which communications and interactions amongst employees would increase would and encouraging teamwork. However, Power (2013) asserts that bureaucratic organizations can only prod their corporate culture into being innovative when there are strong leaders to take the lead. For public libraries, adjusting the organizational culture could be adjudged to be necessary for their survival as innovation is not only the gateway to growth but is also an avenue through which they can successfully handle changes in their operating environment (Dreschler and Natter, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study is ninety seven (97) staff made up of sixty three (63) Library Board's employees who work in Prof Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary and thirty four (34) others who work in other libraries of the Board. Purposive sampling was used in choosing the thirty four (34) employees who work in other libraries of the Board. Participation in the innovative services was the main prerequisite for their being included in the study. Structured interviews conducted over a period of four (4) weeks in August and September 2015 was used to collect data. At the end of the data collection process, it was discovered that only 77 staff were interviewed showing a response rate of 79.3%. Frequencies, percentages and Mean were used to analyze the collected data. The value

of 2.50 was regarded as a positive score while all points below 2.50 were rated as negative in the analysis of the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic distribution of the respondents (Table 1) shows that there is only 1(1.2%) library professional that is male, 3(3.89%) library assistants of the same gender while 6 males can be found amongst other staff. The Library appears to be dominated by the feminine gender as there are 23 female library professionals representing 29.87% of the respondents and 40 (51.94%) library assistants of the same gender.

Table 1 - Demographic profile of the Respondents

Gender	Library Professionals		Library Assistants		Others	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Male	1	1.2	3	3.89	6	7.7
Female	23	29.87	40	51.94	4	5.19
Total	24	31.07	43	55.83	10	12.89

Research Question 1 - Did the institutional approach to communication and interactions amongst staff of Prof. Kenneth Dike play any role in unleashing these innovations?

With a significant mean value of 3.20, data collected do indicate that the way staff communicate and interact help in bringing in innovations to the Library. Communication and interactions amongst library professionals, library assistants and other staff yielded a mean score of 3.36 as a total of 89.5% gave positive responses while only 10.2% disagreed with the notion. However, data collected also show that the highest areas of communication were among staff excluding the Management with mean scores of 3.16, 3.41 and 3.36. Communication of staff with Management recorded a lower mean score of 2.96 than Management's communication and interaction with staff in introducing of new services – 3.11. The details are in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Role of approach to communication and interactions amongst staff in Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary in fostering innovative library services

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
The way Library professionals communicate & interact here help in bringing in innovations	46 (59.7%)	9 (11.6%)	11 (14.2%)	11 (14.2%)	3.16
Library assistants & Library professionals communicate/interact well	52 (67.5%)	11 (14.2%)	8 (10.3%)	6 (7.7%)	3.41
Library professionals, library assistants and other staff all communicate & this helps build cooperation	37 (48%)	32 (41.5%)	7 (9%)	1 (1.2%)	3.36
Management always communicates with staff in introducing new services	28 (36.3%)	31 (40.2%)	17 (22%)	1 (1.2%)	3.11
All staff can easily communicate their ideas to Management for creating new services	29 (37.6%)	27 (35%)	10 (12.9%)	11 (14.2%)	2.96

Significant mean value = 3.20

Research Question 2 - Did the support/reward system in the establishment encourage innovative library services?

Reward/Support system in Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary does not play such a big role in fostering of innovative library services as shown by the data collected. With a significant mean value of 2.44 which is below the accepted mean score of 2.50, data collected show that though staff believe that helping to foster innovative services should be rewarded (53.2% strongly agreed while 36.3% agreed), 41(53.2%) disagree that support is given to staff involved in new library services while 15 (19.4%) also strongly disagree with the notion. Also with a mean of 2.00, 59 respondents representing 76.5% of the population of the study also disagree with the view that recognition/acknowledgement of the staff for ideas that birth new services is always done. This points to the fact that extrinsic and intrinsic rewards/support are not yet a part of the innovation process in Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary. This could be adduced to be evidence that the bureaucratic organizational culture that rewards according to performance and evaluation manuals and not for productivity still exists in the library. Details are aptly presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Support/Reward system in Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary as encouragement for introducing of innovative library services

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Helping to foster innovative services should be rewarded	41 (53.2%)	28 (36.3%)	5 (6.49%)	3(3.8%)	3.38
We are rewarded when we help in rendering innovative library services	3 (3.8%)	7 (9%)	37 (48%)	30 (38.9%)	1.77
Support is given to staff involved in new library services	10 (12.9%)	11 (14.2%)	41 (53.2%)	15 (19.4%)	2.20
Recognition/acknowledgement of staff for ideas for new services is done always	7 (9%)	11 (14.2%)	34 (44.1%)	25 (32.4%)	2.00
Management sponsors staff to conferences/seminars/workshops to learn about new services	21 (27.2%)	35 (45.4%)	13 (16.8%)	8 (10.3%)	2.89

Significant mean value = 2.44

Research Question 3 - Did the adjusting of the bureaucratic organizational structure to embrace teamwork aid the birth of innovations in Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary?

With a significant mean value of 2.99, the data collected point to the fact adjusting the bureaucratic organizational structure helped in birthing innovations in Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central eLibrary. Yielding a mean value of 3.11, 56 respondents which represent 72.6% of the population of the study agreed that officialdom is put aside when innovative library services are being set up. Again, yielding a mean value of 3.06, 57 respondents which represent 73.9% of the population studied positively indicate that seniority is not an issue as all staff need to work together in delivering of non-traditional library services. Details are in Table 4 below.

Table 4 – Adjusting the bureaucratic organizational structure to embrace teamwork

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Officialdom is put aside when we are working towards innovative library services	36 (46.7%)	20 (25.9%)	15 (19.4%)	6 (7.7%)	3.11
Seniority is not a big issue as we all need to work together for new library services	34 (44.1%)	23 (29.8%)	11 (14.2%)	9 (11.6%)	3.06
Ideas of new/better library services are welcome from all cadres of staff	29 (37.6%)	26 (33.7%)	6 (7.7%)	16 (20.7%)	2.96
Everyone works together despite rank in setting up and running new services	27 (35%)	23 (29.8%)	16 (20.7%)	11 (14.2%)	2.85

Significant mean value = 2.99

CONCLUSION

The organizational culture of public libraries can be leveraged on for innovative services. This requires strong leadership that can tweak bureaucracy in order to build trust and confidence amongst staff for creative and strategic thinking. In this Age of competitive and dynamic information provision environment, public libraries need to innovate despite their bureaucratic organizational culture by adjusting their modes of communication and interactions, support and reward mechanisms and going beyond their hierarchical structures to shed officialdom and embrace teamwork. This is most essential when the unlimited information needs of today's user communities and the way these communities continue to change are considered.

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