

Efficacy of Knowledge Management Practices in Selected Public Libraries in the Province of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa

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Abstract : Knowledge management practices are very important in public libraries, especial in the era of the information society. The success of public libraries depends on the recognition and application of knowledge management practices. The study investigates the value and challenges of knowledge management practices in public libraries. Three research objectives informed the study: to identify knowledge management practices in public libraries, understand the value of knowledge management practices in public libraries, and determine the factors hampering knowledge management practices in public libraries. The study was informed by the interpretivism research paradigm, which is associated with qualitative studies. In that light, the study collected data from eight librarians and or library heads, who were purposively selected from public libraries. The study adopted a social anthropological approach, which thoroughly evaluated each participant's response. Data was collected from the respondents through telephonic semi-structured interviews and assessed accordingly. Furthermore, the study used the latest content concept for data interpretation. The chosen data analysis method allowed the study to achieve its main purpose with concrete and valid information. The study's findings showed that all six (100%) selected public libraries apply knowledge management practices. The findings of the study revealed that public libraries have knowledge sharing as the main knowledge management practice. It was noted that public libraries employ many practices, but each library employed its practices of choice depending on their knowledge management practices structure. The findings further showed that knowledge management practices in public libraries are employed through meetings, training, information sessions, and awareness, to mention a few. The findings revealed that knowledge management practices make the libraries usable. Furthermore, it has been asserted that knowledge management practices in public libraries meet users' needs and expectations and equip them with skills. It was discovered that all participating public libraries from Umkhanyakude district municipality valued their knowledge management practices as the pillar and foundation of services. Noticeably, knowledge management practices improve users' standard of living and build an information society. The findings of the study showed that librarians should be responsible for the value of knowledge management practices as they are qualified personnel. The results also showed that 83.35% of public libraries had factors hampering knowledge management practices. The factors are not limited to shortage of funds, resources and space, and political interference. Several suggestions were made to improve knowledge management practices in public libraries. These suggestions include improving the library budget, increasing libraries' building sizes, and conducting more staff training.

Keywords : knowledge management, knowledge management practices, storage, dissemination

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