

EXTERNALIZATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE OF PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between externalization and organizational resilience of private secondary schools in Rivers State. The cross-sectional explanatory survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 494 Government-approved private secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 221 schools was obtained using the Taro Yamene formula. Through the selection of 3 administrative heads (principal and two vice principals) across sampled schools, a total of 663 school administrators served as respondents to the questionnaire administered. Out of 663 copies of the questionnaire administered, a total 570 copies were retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used for univariate analysis; Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for bivariate analysis, while Partial Correlation was used for the multivariate analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between externalization and organizational resilience of Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The study concluded that tacit knowledge harnessing strategies are instrumental to organizational resilience of Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State. It was therefore, recommended among other things that Management of private secondary schools should provide a policy environment that will support the choice of unbiased and charismatic deputies as part of succession planning as well upgrade the technological capacity of their school and staff.

Keywords: Externalization, Tacit Knowledge, Organisational Resilience, Private Schools

INTRODUCTION

The term tacit knowledge was first introduced into philosophy by the Hungarian philosopher; physician and chemist Michael Polanyi (1891–1976) in 1958 in his magnum opus *Personal Knowledge*. He was born in Budapest into an upper class Jewish family (Haradhan, 2016). He conducted research in Germany, England, the USA and Canada. He famously summarizes the idea of tacit knowledge with the assertion that we can know more than we can tell in his book *The Tacit Dimension*. He strongly believes that creative acts are shot through with strong personal feelings and commitments. He was interested in the layers of knowledge which he called the tacit dimension of knowledge. His concept of tacit knowledge is an important contribution to the field of epistemology and cognitive psychology. Haradhan (2016) also expressed that it is the 'knowledge of untold portions which supports what is told.'

Tacit knowledge is externalizable and untransmutable body knowledge, experience knowledge, subjective knowledge or personal knowledge that a living person, not a machine or a computer, has acquired inside the body (Masaru, 2004). It consists of a range of conceptual and sensory information and images that can be brought to bear in an attempt to make sense of something. For example, how to drive a car well is usually unconscious and quite hard to explain in detail. Physicians can identify diseases by tacit knowledge. Workplace knowledge that we do not get from being taught, or from books, paper, magazine, etc. but get from personal experience (Smith, 2014).

Accordingly, Nonaka in Haradhan (2016) subdivided tacit knowledge into two categories: expressible tacit knowledge, and inexpressible tacit knowledge. Expressible tacit knowledge can be documented, but certain factors commonly prevent documentation from happening. Collins (2010) asserts that tacit knowledge plays an important role in knowledge-oriented research in management; as it is connected with terms such as skills, know-how, know-why, working knowledge, and high level of

expertise. Private secondary schools seek to stabilize and perpetuate themselves in business continuity against the backdrop of vulnerable, fragile and precarious circumstances that militate against their organizational resilience. The private educational sector of the economy in Rivers State is fazed with stiff competition and incessant government regulation, among other constraints. Operating along with these inhibitive challenges pose a serious survival risk to these private secondary schools. Therefore, private secondary schools have to continuously draw upon the institutional resources of tacit knowledge to enhance their chances of sustainability.

Organizational resilience is predicated upon a firm's ability to optimize its experiences in the organization. Hence, realizing organizational resilience in private secondary schools requires far more than nominal transference and management of tacit knowledge. In conformity to the perspective of Lemos and Nascimento (2017), it is compelling upon private secondary schools to cultivate, develop and deploy effective harnessing and utilization strategies through situational awareness, adaptability and flexibility in order to navigate through vulnerable and precarious circumstances of tough business competition and incessant government regulations. It is crucial that private secondary schools have a strong, effective and organized business continuity plan in place to help them sustain their schools (Rampton, 2015).

The importance of the development of future education leaders, the handing over of leadership responsibilities and the impact on the long-term sustainability of private secondary schools are widely recognised (Bush, 2011; Russell & Sabina, 2014 in Thorpe et al. 2018), as are the specific challenges these pose for private secondary schools (Halsey in Thorpe et al. 2018). As the demographic statistics predict significant numbers of current senior school leaders retiring in the near future in private secondary education systems (Bennett, et al. 2011; Doneley, et al. 2018), there is a call for strategic responses being made to avoid instability across private secondary educational organisations (Macpherson, 2010; Marks, 2013; Peters-Hawkins, et al. 2018). Upon that premise, scholars (Ogundele, et al., 2012; Adedayo, et al., 2016) are interested in finding what factors are responsible for the sustainability of private school business. Besides, Fox (2021) postulates that school leaders should develop situational awareness, adaptability and flexibility in their quest to achieve organizational resilience. Against this context, this study sets out to investigate tacit knowledge harnessing strategies, categorized into the dimensions of strategic deputization, externalization and mentoring, as an aspect of organizational resilience of private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypotheses

- Ho₁: Externalization does not have any significant relationship with situation awareness of private secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Ho₂: Externalization does not have any significant relationship with adaptability of private secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Ho₃: Externalization does not have any significant relationship with flexibility of private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Externalization

This construct happens to be one of Nonaka's four knowledge conversion processes, being part of his spiral model of knowledge creation (Nonaka, 2015). It is the process of turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. However, it is not commonly accepted that the articulation of tacit knowledge is possible at all. There are two conflicting positions: the no-access versus the possible-access position (Buseni et al., 2002). The no-access position claims that tacit knowledge is not accessible to consciousness. For example, Cook and Brown (2004) state that tacit knowledge cannot be transformed into explicit knowledge, it might help to create explicit knowledge. The possible-access position claims that at least parts of tacit knowledge can become conscious (Nonaka, 2015; Buseni et al., 2002). In line with the latter position, they assume that it is possible to make parts of

tacit knowledge conscious, in the sense that some parts of tacit knowledge become focal points of (conscious) attention (Tuomi, 2013). This consciousness enables articulation and, thus, externalization of tacit knowledge.

It has to be clarified which dimension of tacit knowledge can become a focal point. Nanka and Konor (1998) distinguish two dimensions of tacit knowledge: the technical dimension, i.e. the know-how, and the cognitive dimension, i.e. beliefs, ideals, values, mental models, schemata. "While difficult to articulate, this cognitive dimension of tacit knowledge shapes the way we perceive the world" (Nanka & Konor, 1998, 112). The cognitive dimension is termed mental models by Seji (1996). These models shape people's actions and are shaped by them, vice versa. Since knowing the way a person thinks about the world helps to understand that person's actions, focusing on the cognitive dimension allows us to specify the process of externalization as a means for the flow of knowledge between communities.

The results of the externalization process enable people with different backgrounds to share the former tacit knowledge. Due to the social embodiment of tacit knowledge the social, cultural, and historical context of knowledge is important, otherwise externalization can lead to ontological ills and fallacies (Nonaka & Toyama, 2016). Consequently, they argue that individual, social, cultural and historical context must be considered in the process of externalization. Nonaka and Taseudhi (2017) consider metaphors, analogies, and dialogue as methods for externalization. The authors refer to some cases, where metaphors and analogies were helpful to transform tacit ideas into explicit concepts. Nevertheless, in these cases, the use of metaphors or analogies just happened, i.e. they occurred without intervention. It remains open how an organization can help stakeholders actively to externalize concepts drawn from their collection of tacit knowledge repository.

Externalization and Organizational Resilience

Externalization (tacit to explicit knowledge) is a process of formalization of tacit knowledge in explicit concepts or understandable for organization or any individual, through their own articulation (Nonaka & Toyama, 2016). Dialogue, deductive and inductive techniques such as metaphors, analogies, or construction of archetypes and stories shared (Nonaka, 2017; Nonaka & Taseudhi, 2017) facilitate the expression of ideas or images in words, concepts, figurative and visual language. These are basic tools that support externalization. The belief of the people would not have been expressed. However, externalization of tacit knowledge boosted private school organizations to compete favourably and profitably in the educational market. Nonaka (2017) indicates that externalization in the organization is a harbinger of situation awareness. For situation awareness is a resultant consequence of organizational resilient organizations that strive for survival in the educational market. Filley (2019) avers that tacit knowledge externalization brings about situation awareness, adaptability and flexibility which position organizations profitably in the educational market. Kikoski (2004) describes externalization as the organizational vigour which transforms the experience of others to action especially in inventing new services that will meet the demand of the market. By the way, Thomas et al. (2014) and Sushil (2012) hold a contrary opinion that externalization of tacit knowledge does not bring about product innovation rather the driving force for organizational resilience is the force of human demand and the organizational vision embedded in her mission and vision statement.

Innovation Diffusion Theory

Innovation diffusion theory is a hypothetical model in the communications literature that explains how innovations are adopted within a population of potential adopters. The concept was first studied by French sociologist Gabriel Tarde, but the theory was developed by Everett Rogers in 1962 based on observations of 508 diffusion studies (Ichijo & Nonaka, 2007; Komolafe & Young, 2008). The theory holds that people and organizations do not adopt innovations at the same pace but maintains

that the speed or how early a person or organization adopts new technology is better for them. The four key elements in this theory are: innovation, communication channels, time, and social system. Innovation: Rogers (2003) in Komolafe & Young (2008, p. 107) defined innovation as "an idea, practice, or project that is perceived new by an individual or other unit of adoption." What is considered an innovation in the educational sector might have been invented, practiced and used some years ago in the technological sector but it constitutes an innovation in the educational sector because of the newness or novelty of the concept, tool, or technique in the educational sector (Kendra & Wachtendorf, 2003). Although the use of some tacit knowledge harnessing strategies _for instance, strategic deputization, externalization, mentoring _is still new and not fully adopted by private secondary schools in Rivers State. These tools have been used for succession planning purposes and firm's productivity in the past years in developed countries of the world such as United States of America, Canada, Germany, etc.

Communication: The theory recognizes networking tools application, mass media, and interpersonal communication networking tools as three major communications. Today rapport and communication have become the other of the day in the workplace as long there will tacit knowledge. So, we cannot talk of communication culture as an ample tool for administration.

Time: The time component of Innovation Diffusion Theory holds that everybody does not just jump into accepting new technologies such as tacit knowledge harnessing strategies rather it is a gradual process. Therefore, it is hoped that with time, manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt in charge of harnessing tacit knowledge strategies will adopt the tacit knowledge practices in positioning the firms to have organizational resilience advantage in the educational market.

Social System: Kolb (2018) defines social system as a set of interrelated units engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal. Application of networking tools in the strategic deputization, externalization, mentoring, etc. as communication tools in private secondary schools in Rivers State in particular is a function of the social structure and attitude of administrative heads. In addition, corporate technology infrastructure can be used to enhance resilience resulting to strategic deputization and fosters organizational resilience among private secondary schools in Rivers State.

The justification for adopting this theory as one of the theoretical foundations of this work lies in its relevance to the independent variable (tacit knowledge harnessing strategies). The theory identifies the indispensable and undeniable place of tacit knowledge harnessing strategies such as strategic deputization, externalization, mentoring in private secondary schools in Rivers State as a veritable tool for achieving organizational resilience in the educational industry in the 21st century. This is a century where organizational resilience in the educational industry is a driving force for survival. Hence, the application of the tacit knowledge harnessing strategies will have private secondary schools in resilience advantage.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the explanatory cross-sectional survey research design. The population of this study consisted of four hundred and ninety-four (494) approved private secondary schools duly recognized by Rivers State Ministry of Education. The sample of the study consisted of two hundred and twenty-one (221) private secondary schools in Rivers State. The sample was using The Taro Yamen formula as a sampling technique. A total of six hundred and sixty-three (663) copies of the questionnaire were administered and five hundred and seventy (570) copies retrieved through the assistance of three independent research assistants. Frequency table, mean and standard deviation were used for the univariate analysis. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient used for the bivariate analysis while Partial Correlation was used for the multivariate analysis. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation formula.

Externalization and Organizational Resilience

- Ho₁: Externalization does not have any significant relationship with situation awareness of private secondary schools in Rivers State.
 Ho₂: Externalization does not have any significant relationship with adaptability of private secondary schools in Rivers State.
 Ho₃: Externalization does not have any significant relationship with flexibility of private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 1: Correlations between Externalization and Organizational Resilience

		Externalization	Situation Awareness	Adaptability	Flexibility	
Pearson	Externalization	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.234**	.645**	.212**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	570	570	570	570
	Situation Awareness	Correlation Coefficient	.234**	1.000	.234	.234
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	570	570	570	570
	Adaptability	Correlation Coefficient	.645**	.645	1.000	.645
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	570	570	570	570
	Flexibility	Correlation Coefficient	.212**	.212	.212	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	570	570	570	570

** . Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output

Column two of table 1 above shows r value of 0.234 at a significant level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating to externalization and situation awareness. Since the significant level is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho₁) which states that externalization does not have any significant relationship with situation awareness of private secondary schools in Rivers State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a1}) was accepted. The correlation value of 0.234 implies that there is a weak positive relationship between externalization and organizational resilience of private secondary schools in Rivers State in terms of situation awareness.

Column three of table 1 above shows r value of 0.645 at a significant level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating to externalization and adaptability. Since the significant level is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho₂) which states that externalization does not have any significant relationship with adaptability of private secondary schools in Rivers State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a2}) was accepted. This implies

that there is a high positive relationship between externalization and organizational resilience of private secondary schools in Rivers State in terms of adaptability.

Column four of table 1 above shows r value of 0.214 at a significant level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating to externalization and flexibility. Since the significant level is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) which states that externalization does not have any significant relationship with flexibility of private secondary schools in Rivers State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a3}) was accepted. This implies that there is a weak positive relationship between externalization and organizational resilience of private secondary schools in Rivers State in terms of flexibility. The results above show that there is a significant positive relationship between externalization and organizational resilience of private secondary schools in Rivers State in terms of situation awareness, adaptability and flexibility respectively.

Externalization and Organizational Resilience

The test of hypotheses four, five and six revealed that externalization is significantly and positively correlated with organizational resilience of private secondary schools in Rivers State. This finding implies that when school management is able to extract, capture and document the skills, knowledge and experiences of its staff, the school will continue to tap into the knowledge bank which will help the school to gain environmental insight, adapt to changes and operate flexibly in the ever-changing educational environment. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Amos et al. (2016) that there is a significant positive correlation between knowledge management and competitiveness of small and medium enterprises in Kenya. Externalization (tacit to explicit knowledge) is a process of formalization of tacit knowledge in explicit concepts or understandable for organization or any individual, through their own articulation (Nonaka & Toyama, 2016).

Documentation of organizational policies and making sure that such documents are accessed by designated staff helps them to operate with higher level of adaptability (Nonaka, 2017; Nonaka & Taseudhi, 2017). With the proliferation of workplace social media platforms, working out loud is another way of externalizing the tacit knowledge of organizational members. Working out loud entails the practice of teaching and non-teaching staff of a school sharing their work challenges and how they are tackling them as a way of building and tapping from the pool of opinions of colleagues. The belief of the people would not have been expressed. However, externalization of tacit knowledge boosted private school organizations to compete favourably and profitably in the educational market. Nonaka (2017) indicates that externalization in the organization is a harbinger of situation awareness. For situation awareness is a resultant consequence of organizational resilient organizations that strive for survival in the educational market. Filley (2019) avers that tacit knowledge externalization brings about situation awareness, adaptability and flexibility which position organizations profitably in the educational market. Kikoski (2004) describes externalization as the organizational vigour which transforms the experience of others to action especially in inventing new services that will meet the demand of the market. By the way, Thomas et al. (2014) and Sushil (2012) hold a contrary opinion that externalization of tacit knowledge does not bring about product innovation rather the driving force for organizational resilience is the force of human demand and the organizational vision embedded in her mission and vision statement.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that tacit knowledge harnessing strategies is a major determinant of organizational resilience of Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study concluded that tacit knowledge harnessing strategies such as strategic deputization, externalization and mentoring enhances organizational resilience of private secondary schools in Rivers State in terms of situation awareness, adaptability and flexibility. When private schools succeed in harnessing its tacit knowledge through strategic deputization, externalization and mentoring, the school becomes toughen to continue succeeding in spite of challenges like the

Covid-19 pandemic. Strategic deputization enhances organizational resilience by ensuring that there exists situational awareness through steady flow of competent workforce. Externalization enhances organizational resilience by making sure that management adapts to structural changes when necessary. Mentoring brings about organizational resilience by improving the organizational flexibility and ensuring that the organizational operation, structure and human resources are readily sustainable in Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study also concluded that corporate technological infrastructure significantly moderates the relationship between tacit knowledge harnessing strategies and organizational resilience of private secondary schools in Rivers State. The study also concluded that private secondary schools that fail to harness their tacit knowledge may not be able to attain resilience in the face disruptions and challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Management should create a secured storage platform that is accessible to staff to enable them read and internalize corporate policies and plans of the school. This help staff have a better understanding of organizational policies and goals as well as what their role in building a resilient school.
2. Management should create an accessible online platform where records of previous trainings and workshops can be documented to serve as a reference point this will enhance organizational adaptability.
3. Management should create a policy environment that will allow staff to share work challenges, trends and solutions with colleagues on a secure workplace social media platform. This will boost information and knowledge sharing among staff and help the school to become more adaptive and flexible.
4. Management should formulate policy that will support career development of its staff as this will keep the beneficiaries up to date in running the affairs of the organization as this will bring about flexibility.

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