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Factors that influence knowledge management systems to improve knowledge transfer in local government: A case study of Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality

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Outline

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Introduction

- Main contributors to poor service delivery in the public services:
 - Lack of knowledge management;
 - Low level of information and knowledge transfer
- Demand for improved service delivery requires new approaches
 - Focus on continuous improvement by driving innovation and lessons learnt from past successes and failures
 - Find better ways to share information assets, business processes and staff expertise
- Knowledge transfer by means of knowledge management systems will enable local government to acquire and understand suitable knowledge that will influence the quality of service delivery
- Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM) became a member of Knowledge Management Reference Group (KRMG) in 2005:
- Other members include:
 - All South Africa municipalities
 - South Africa Local Government Association (SALGA)
 - South African Cities Network (SACN)

Knowledge Management Systems (KMSs)

- KMSs are “**technology-supported information systems that help document, distribute, and transfer between employees explicit and tacit knowledge to increase organisational effectiveness**”
- It is planned to set organisational members in contact with recognized experts in a variety of topic areas
- In KM, the use of technology plays a supporting role to manage knowledge
- KMSs are established to enhance and support the organisational processes of:
 - knowledge creation,
 - knowledge storage,
 - **knowledge transfer**, and
 - knowledge application

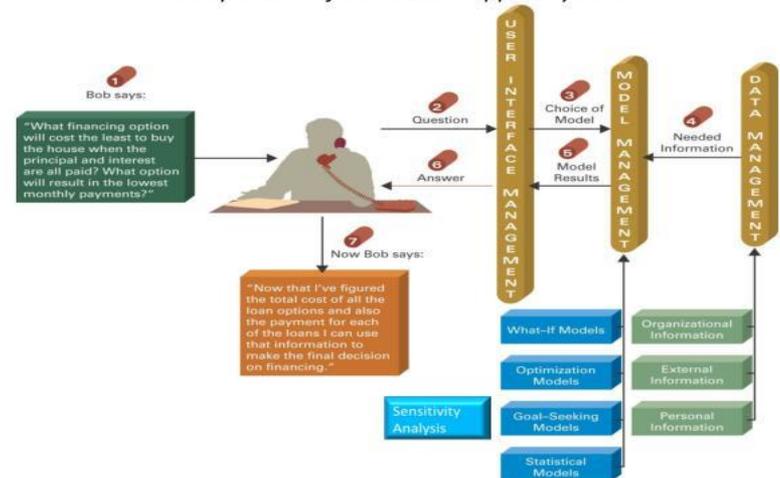


Examples of KMSs



Decision Support Systems

Components of a Decision Support System



Knowledge transfer

- Knowledge transfer involves knowledge being transferred or disseminated throughout the organisation
- As a process, KT involves the contribution of knowledge by the organisation and the collection, application and assimilation of knowledge by employees
- **Value of knowledge grows and increases as it is shared** within an organisation
- When employees use knowledge, **they add more insights to** it and **refine it further**, thereby adding more value
- Knowledge transfer requires the preparedness of an individual or a group to work with others and share knowledge to their mutual benefit
- When knowledge is not shared within an organisation, it is nearly impossible for it to be transferred to other employees
- This indicates that KT will not happen in an organisation except the employees and teams exhibit a high level of co-operative behaviour



Research problem

- In 2013 Kitchin and others conducted an overview of the KM status within the KRMG members
- The study indicated that BCMM conducted a knowledge audit process in 2010:
 - Audit revealed a **lack of central data repository** and data sharing which hampered the data capturing processes within the Municipal directorates
 - Data collection efforts were **duplicated** and **access to vital information was limited** to certain individuals
 - **Information Technology** infrastructure found not **integrated, limiting the flow of information** within the Municipality
 - Document sharing was found to be limited and only the staff directly responsible for the documents knew about their existence
 - This led to poor content management
- **The problem is that while there is evidence of KMS being introduced and implemented to improve knowledge transfer in the BCCM, there is, however, no tangible evidence**



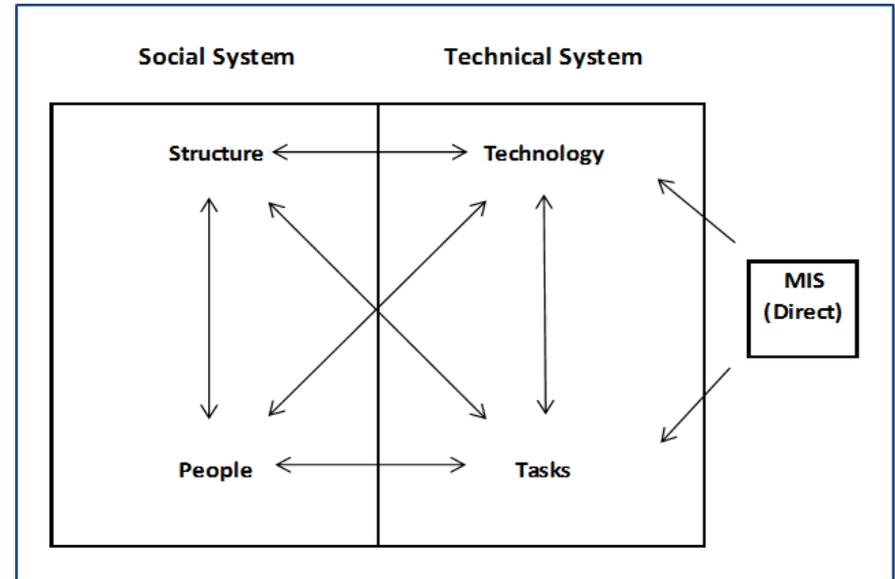
Research objective

- To produce **Critical Success Factors** (CSFs) that will improve KMSs and knowledge transfer among employees at BCMM, which will ultimately improve service delivery



- The study adopted the **Socio-Technical Systems Theory**
- was first produced and used in literature in 1951 by **Trist and Bramforth** to highlight the interrelationship between technological and social factors in understanding an organisation
- The motivation behind examining information system problems making use of both the social and technical dimensions was to describe organisational aspects that are a combination of social and technological sub-systems in the operational activities

Theory



Source: Cartelli, 2007



Methodology

- The primary data was collected by means of interviews
- Secondary data was collected by means of conducting desktop research which involved the reviewing of literature from previous studies
- Municipal documents were also obtained from the relevant departments and analysed

- Population: employees of BCMM in East London
- Convenience sampling technique was used
- Eight participants were identified for the interviews

- Interviews were analysed by means of Thematic Analysis
- An electronic qualitative data management system called NVivo was also used to analyse the data



Findings

- Eight themes emerged as factors influencing knowledge management systems
- These eight themes were guided by the research question:

“What factors will impact on knowledge management systems to improve knowledge transfer in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality?”

- The eight identified themes include:
 - (a) organisational efficiency,
 - (b) motivation,
 - (c) trust,
 - (d) norm of reciprocity,
 - (e) organisational culture,
 - (f) organisational structure,
 - (g) top management support and
 - (h) information technology



Example of quotes linked to main themes

Theme	Meaning of the theme	Quotes
Organisational efficiency	Knowledge transfer improves organisational efficiency	<p>“Knowledge transfer can improve service delivery. The Municipality is in the process of implementing applications that will increase communication with its community.”</p> <p>“KM can improve competitive advantage through enhanced skills and the ability to solve problems quickly and as they arise.”</p> <p>“Knowledge transfer creates new opportunities for the Municipality. New opportunities can arise from KM by employees sharing innovative ideas to solve the problems of communities.”</p>
Motivation	Knowledge cannot be transferred effectively if employees are not motivated to share it	<p>“At the moment, sharing of knowledge does not contribute to positive performance appraisals. It is not included in the key performance areas, but it should be there. We have been calling for that to be part of the appraisals.”</p> <p>“Staff are encouraged to pursue their studies which are fully paid by the Municipality.”</p>



Findings cont.

- The study found that the Municipality's bureaucratic organisational structure hinders knowledge transfer process
- Information is not seamlessly transferred between managers and their subordinates – **knowledge hoarding**
- The culture of knowledge sharing has improved ever since the KM unit was placed under the Office of the City Manager
- Structural position of the KM unit in an organisation is crucial for knowledge transfer
- Employees were starting to understand the KM concept and beginning to comply
- Municipality in the process of replacing Electronic Document Management System with SharePoint
- Poor user uptake, lack of IT skills and cost led to cancellation of the EDMS
- No rewards allocated for KM



Critical success factors

STS Theory Four Quadrants

Critical Success Factors

	Structure	People	Technology	Tasks
▪ CSF 1: Develop a culture to promote knowledge transfer	X	X		
▪ CSF 2: Support and promotion of KT concept by top management		X		
▪ CSF 3: Alignment of knowledge management with organisational strategy	X	X		X
▪ CSF 4: Ensure flexible and informal organisational structures to facilitate KT	X			X
▪ CSF 5: Motivate employees to contribute knowledge		X		
▪ CSF 6: Ensure availability of an effective information technology infrastructure			X	X
▪ CSF 7: Provision of training for all employees		X	X	



Conclusion

- The study recommends that BCMM must ensure that KT practices and initiatives are fully supported and promoted by top management
- This will ensure that sufficient resources to support KT are allocated
- To solve the KT problems, knowledge management must be aligned with organisational strategy
- Official KM strategies must be developed and aligned to the organisational strategy to ensure that top management make and share a vision on KT and continually plan on realizing the agreed upon KT objectives
- The Municipality must ensure that the organisational structure is flexible so that distribution of knowledge and cooperation can be increased





**Thank you
for your attention**



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