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Effect of Knowledge Management Practices on Organisational Performance of Selected State Corporations in Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose/Aim: The purpose of this paper is to explore the effect of knowledge management practices on organizational performance on selected state corporations in Kenya.

Design/Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive research design to undertake this research. A target population of 179 State corporations in Kenya were considered. Data were collected by use of a questionnaire that had a five-point Likert scale. To test reliability, Cronbach alpha was undertaken with a threshold of 0.7 and above is acceptable to ensure that the instrument collected reliable and valid data. Regression analysis was conducted to find the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

Findings: The findings show the coefficient of correlation R was 0.866, indicating a strong correlation between the variables.

Conclusion: The study found out that state corporations utilized their knowledge to departmentalize the operations, reused knowledge to strengthen its operations, used knowledge to influence the kind of culture it wants to prevail and collaborated with other stakeholders in ensuring competitiveness.

Limitations: This study is limited in scope and coverage. It will be important to undertake a comparative study between developing and developed nations to understand how they institutionalize, and the management of knowledge by organizations in those countries.

Implications: This study has implications for organization management practices; there is need for parastatals to understand knowledge management practices and embrace them for sustainability purpose.

Originality: This paper sets out the framework for academics in Kenya to engage in research on knowledge management and the importance of knowledge management to state parastatals and other institutions.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Knowledge Accumulation, Knowledge Utilization, Knowledge Sharing, Knowledge Ownership

Introduction

A substantial body of evidence suggests that organizations that will stand the test of time are those that will be able to manage their knowledge. Unique knowledge possessed by an organization is important in ensuring the achievement of any set objectives in this highly competitive business environment. The internal procedures and the thinking of organizations are important in ensuring a smooth flow of tasks (Kianto et al, 2018). The creation and dissemination of information and knowledge within an organization, enhance efficient and effective operations which leads to the achievement of strategic advantage to the firm (Darroch & McNaughton, 2001). Darroch & McNaughton (2003) noted that knowledge management involves three main activities: acquisition, dissemination and, responsiveness. It refers to the collection of data, processing, storing, managing and, finally sharing for use. Through this chain, value is added thus transforming the raw data into information that can be used as knowledge to improve organizational processes. Thus, knowledge becomes the ultimate output (Lee &Wong, 2015).

Knowledge resides in the individual employee's mind and may not be worthwhile until it is articulated, captured and shared. Proper documentation is needed so that knowledge can be captured in internal operational processes and in situations where an employee separates with the organizations that knowledge can be retrieved and applied to maintain operational efficiencies. Through knowledge creation, the organization promotes learning and innovative abilities (Tseng, 2016). Developing new knowledge to replace obsolete ones is important in ensuring that the organization improves its efficiency. Through knowledge acquisition, organizations search for ways of recognition and assimilation of knowledge that bears the potential to benefit the organization from an external perspective (Lee et al., 2016).

Knowledge management is important for organizations to sustain their competitive advantage as it contributes persistent innovations and discovery of new and more efficient ways of performing tasks (Abas & Jali, 2015). For the knowledge created to benefit future generation of employees, organizations should ensure they put in place enough mechanisms that would facilitate storage. Knowledge needs to be stored in a manner that it can easily be retrieved and disseminated whenever need arises. It is, therefore, important that organization build a knowledge sharing culture (Lee et all., 2016). A good sharing culture promotes organizational efficiency and effectiveness which are key ingredients in organizational productivity. Organizations need to accumulate adequate knowledge, utilize it, share it and protect ownership (Tseng, 2016). Knowledge management practices are mechanism devised by organizations to help them draw tacit knowledge that people have, observe and learn from their experience and turn it into explicit knowledge that can be formally documented, stored and shared (Kianto et al., 2018). The practices simply explain knowledge management processes which ensure that organizations get information to inform decision-making process. Singh (2001) identified key knowledge management practices that play an important role in most organizations today. They are, Acquisition, Creation, Accumulation, Packaging, Utilization, Application, Reuse and, Ownership. Successful knowledge management practices demand that information within the organization has to be shared, new skills learned, and performance reviews undertaken.

This study sought to understand the ramifications of knowledge management practices on organization performance of selected State Corporations. More specifically this paper focuses on trying to ascertain the effect of knowledge accumulation, knowledge utilization, knowledge sharing and knowledge ownership on the performance of selected government owned organizations in Kenya.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on several theories which include the Knowledge Based View theory of the Firm initiated by Wernerfelt (1984) who stated that knowledge is the most strategically significant resource of a firm. Learning Organizational Theory pioneered by Easterby-Smith et al. (2000) which proposes that an organization that assists in learning its members and constantly improves itself is called a learning organization. The third was Organizational Knowledge Conversion Theory which can be traced to Nonaka & Takeuchi (2011) theory of organizational knowledge conversion that analyzes the interaction of explicit and tacit knowledge to bring about internal processes efficiency. Lastly, Knowledge Spiral Theory formulated by Nonaka & Takeuch (1995). The theory expounds on knowledge spirals that explains the transformation tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge based on the individuals of the organization, group of the organization and the organizational learning and innovation**.**

Empirical Review

Knowledge Accumulation Practices and Organization Performance

In acquiring new markets and adapting to changes in existing market places and industries, organizations are trying to improve their employees' competencies by using knowledge management practices. Organizational leadership are setting research and development departments to acquire new knowledge that would improve their performance and gain competitiveness (Madeira et al., 2013). Accumulating knowledge through research and development makes organizations to be effective in discharging their duties because it forms a basis for innovation by utilizing technology and knowledge. This forms a basis of future development of the industry. From the perspectives of innovation era and knowledge economy, accumulating knowledge is important but disseminating technologies is key to leveraging research and development innovation abilities of industry.

Ly & Lai (2017) carried out a study on fuzzy AHP analysis of firm-level knowledge accumulation. A descriptive design was adopted where primary data was collected using questionnaires. From the findings, it was revealed that knowledge is a useful tool for a firm's competitiveness and sustainability. There is considerable evidence confirming that Firm-Level Knowledge (FLK) accumulation provides a competitive advantage for firms through innovation. Therefore, most knowledge-intensive firms accumulate FLK via exploitative practices to prevent deterioration of their innovation performance. Knowledge accumulation is enforced through integration, absorption and sharing of information either from internal and external sources. Additionally, the external environment and organizational culture have significant interaction effect with knowledge accumulation capability on organizational innovation. Closely related to this study, Sandström et al. (2017) shared that leaders in organizations should encourage face to face interactions in knowledge dissemination, and the use of mobile phones and radio to transfer the knowledge has increased.

Knowledge Utilization Practices and Organization Performance

Organizations seek for information to solve everyday challenges and problems facing them in production, service delivery and processing units, according to Githua (2013). The knowledge accumulated is used in forecasting on challenges in market needs and customer preferences to create products and service lines that best serve the market and as such gain competitiveness (Kinyua et al., 2015). Madeira et al. (2013) carried out a study on how knowledge management in the form of scientific knowledge or literature arises from innovations and the way information technology is managed by organizations through desktop review methodology. The findings indicated that

knowledge is only useful when it changes operational lines, improves the quality of products made and increasing the income earning of an enterprise. In a similar study Kinyua et al. (2015) examined how conversion and application of knowledge affected the performance results reported by commercial banks in Kenya. From the findings, it was established that knowledge conversion positively influences performance in banking and it is the first step to knowledge application.

Assouroko et al. (2014) examined the relationship between reuse of knowledge in product improvement and knowledge management using semantic approach of management. The study noted that in the global industry where there is high competitiveness among companies, advancing technologies allow for storage and reuse of information. Owen et al. (2004) investigated on knowledge reuse and transfer in a project management environment, and it was revealed that the project management companies adopted KM practices which included creation, transfer, reuse and management.

Knowledge Sharing Practices and Organization Performance

The purpose of knowledge sharing is to help a whole organization reach its set organizational goals. The only way for the entire organization to benefit from the acquired knowledge is sharing of information with all members, both internal and external stakeholders. With advanced technological systems, it is possible that knowledge is either within the organization or outside the organization can effectively be shared to all stakeholders. According to Bilgihan et al. (2016) on consumer perception of knowledge-sharing in travel-related online social networks they opine that to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and attain high performance, each organization must develop systems, linkages and pathways to source for knowledge. These linkages are very useful in knowledge sharing since they act as conduits for knowledge transfer. There are three main important instruments that create conduits to sources of knowledge. These include the forming of alliances, mobility of people, and the appropriation of informal networks (Bilgihan et al., 2016). Leaders in organizations play a key role in enabling sharing of knowledge through inculcation of the right culture that promotes the spirit of knowledge sharing through mentorship programs, training, peer education programs and apprenticeships (Masa'deh et al., 2016).

Knowledge sharing is an important part in the knowledge management and practices that yield higher returns in terms of productivity, effective operations and returns. According to Matin & Sabagh (2015) in their investigation on KM and performance of Iranian export companies, to gain competitive advantage it is necessary but insufficient for organizations to rely on staffing and training systems that focus on selecting employees who have specific knowledge, skills, abilities, or competencies or helping employees acquire them; but a shift in focus would be teamwork and cohesiveness with sharing of information at the workplace. Both tacit and explicit knowledge needs to be passed on to all employees of a company to increase their performance. In essence, these export companies and indeed any organizations must look for measures for sharing expertise knowledge from the experts who have it to novices who need to know. Adopting knowledge management practices would help facilitate sharing of knowledge that will improve organizational performance.

Knowledge Ownership Practices and Organization Performance

Knowledge management has become an important concept in the business world. There is no business or economic issue that is more important to organizational long-term competitiveness and standard of living than making the knowledge worker more productive since knowledge is a source of lasting competitive advantage. In commercial environment, knowledge must be put into work in three primary areas; customer needs, concern processes and body of knowledge. Li et al. (2015) studied knowledge sharing and affective commitment: the mediating role of psychological ownership, the

commercial entities take a lot of time, financial and human resources to gain this knowledge. Many big corporations and multinational companies invest heavily in their research and development departments in quest for sourcing for new information on markets, consumers, product enhancements and new channels of service delivery. Knowledge has been a source of competitive advantage hence companies protect their information by paying for special licensing, patenting their innovations and inventions and copy-writing their works. This is to avoid competitors from stealing their information and gaining an upper hand in the industry and at the market place. Everyone has their own knowledge and expertise which they are protective of as there are no clear mechanisms to motivate and encourage them to share and reuse knowledge as well as generate new knowledge that could add value to the individual performance and overall organizational output (Massingham, 2014).

The owner of the knowledge has the right to hoard or share the knowledge that they have (Rechberg & Syed, 2013). The rapid evolution of technology has accelerated the emergence of knowledge ownership. As both employers and employees have realized the value of knowledge and intellectual property, arguments over ownership have increased and become the most important issue in the field of employment law. Attempts to claim and protect the rights over intellectual property have resulted in the widespread use of legal force using intellectual property rights. This legal force has raised disputes particularly with the concerns over human rights such as privacy rights.

Research Hypothesis

The study adopted this null hypothesis

> *H_{01}: Knowledge Management practices (accumulation, utilization, sharing, and ownership) has no significant effect on organization performance in selected state corporations in Kenya*

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design since the information is collected without changing the environment. The design was deemed appropriate because of the observational nature of data that was collected from respondents who are employees working in the state corporations as they give their insight on knowledge management practices and its impact on organizational performance

The target population was the one hundred and seventy-nine (179) State Corporations in Kenya whereby heads of Department responsible for Knowledge management in each of the State Corporations were considered. This translated to a sample of one hundred and fifty-five Heads of Department responsible for Knowledge management in each of the state corporations. The respondents were Knowledge Management manager, Talent Management manager or Human Resource manager as the position may be in the targeted organizations.

Five-point Likert scale was used where: 1= Not at all; 2 = Little Extent; 3= Moderate Extent; 4= Large Extent and 5= Very Large Extent.

To test reliability, Cronbach alpha was used with threshold of 0.7 and above being acceptable in order to ensured that the instrument collected reliable and valid data.

In analysing the data, Pearson's correlations analysis was conducted at 95% confidence interval and 5% confidence level 2-tailed to determine the extent to which the knowledge management practices affect organizational performance in state corporations. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the relationship between the independent variables (Knowledge Accumulation, Knowledge Utilization, Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Ownership) and the dependent variable of (Organizational performance). using the model below:

$$\mathbf{Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon_i}$$

Where **Y** = Organizational Performance, $\mathbf{X_1}$ = Knowledge Accumulation, X_2= Knowledge Utilization, $\mathbf{X_3}$= Knowledge Sharing, $\mathbf{X_4}$= Knowledge Ownership, $\boldsymbol{\varepsilon}$ = Error Term

Diagnostic Tests

The researcher conducted diagnostic tests to determine the suitability of data set for regressing. The diagnostics were used to test the general information about the respondents and how it affected the main objective of the study in knowledge management and organizational performance. The three diagnostic tests that were conducted included; Normality, to test how likely it is for a random variable underlying the data set to be normally distributed through Shapiro-Wilk Test. Data analysis proceeded if the kurtosis and Skewness is between +2 and -2. Multicollinearity was checked using the Variance Inflation Factor VIF, to show how the variables are correlated. If VIF is between 1-10, the variables are not correlated and hence the test deems it valid to proceed and analyze the data and Heterokedasticity was checked through Test Glejser where the researcher regressed the absolute residual value of the independent variable with the regression equation. If the significance is greater than 0.05, then there is no heteroscedasticity.

Data Analysis

Response Rate

The researcher distributed 155 questionnaires on State Corporations in Kenya, 117 questionnaires were dully filled and returned to the questionnaires. This gave a response rate of 75%, which was an indication that the response rate was sufficient for the study. The findings show that knowledge accumulation practices had a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.895, knowledge utilization practices had a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.827, knowledge sharing practices had a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.869 and knowledge ownership practices had a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.823. All variables had a Cronbach alpha of above 0.7, an indication that questionnaires were sufficient and reliable. This is supported by Cronbach (1951) who indicates that Cronbach Coefficients of above 0.7 indicates reliable scale.

Diagnostic Tests

The researcher conducted normality test using Shapiro-Wilk Test. The findings are as shows show that significance levels of all the study variables were less than 0.05. This indicates that the data set was a normal distribution. Kurtosis and skewness also that all the statistic values lied between +2 and -2, this shows that all the variables were normally distributed.

On multicollinearity knowledge accumulation practices had a VIF of 7.897, knowledge utilization practices had a VIF of 2.179, knowledge sharing practices had a VIF of 4.714 and knowledge ownership practices had a VIF of 3.339. Since all the VIF coefficients values ranged between 1-10, the variables were not correlated and hence the test was deemed valid to proceed and analyze the data, heteroscedasticity also show that the p value was 1.000>0.05, an indication that there was no heteroscedasticity. This indicated that there was a relationship between Knowledge management and organization performance. This conclusion enabled the researcher to proceed into the inquiry of the nature of the relational between the variables.

Inferential Statistics

The researcher conducted correlation analysis to establish the effect and relationship of knowledge management practices on organization performance in the selected state corporations in Kenya. The findings are indicated in the subsequent sections.

Correlation Analysis

The findings of correlation analysis are as shown in Table 1

Table 1. Correlation Analysis

	Organizational performance	**Knowledge Accumulation**	**Knowledge Utilization**	**Knowledge Sharing**	**Knowledge Ownership**	
Organizational performance	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	117				
Knowledge Accumulation	Pearson Correlation	.238**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010				
	N	117	117			
Knowledge Utilization	Pearson Correlation	.610**	.710**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	
	N	117	117	117	117	
Knowledge Sharing	Pearson Correlation	.366**	.885**	.627**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	117	117	117	117	
Knowledge Ownership	Pearson Correlation	.026	.817**	.691**	.682**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.781	.000	.000	.000	
	N	117	117	117	117	117

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

Huber (2004) states that in the interpretation of results for the linear relationships in the study, for a weak correlation, "r" ranges from ± 0.10 to± 0.29; in a moderate correlation, "r" ranges between ±0.30 and ±0.49; while in a strong correlation, "r" ranges from ±0.5 and ± 0.9. The findings in Table 1 pointed out that knowledge accumulation had a Pearson Correlation to organization performance of 0.238 an indication of weak correlation, knowledge utilization had a Pearson Correlation to organization performance of 0.610 an indication of strong correlation, knowledge sharing had a Pearson Correlation to organization performance of 0.366 an indication of moderate correlation and knowledge ownership had a Pearson Correlation to organization performance of 0.026 an indication of a weak correlation.

Regression Analysis

The researcher conducted regression analysis to establish the effect of knowledge management practices on organization performance in the selected state corporations in Kenya. The findings of Model Summary, ANOVA and Regression Coefficients are shown in the subsequent sections.

Model Summary

The findings of coefficient of correlation R and coefficient of adjusted determination R^2 is as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.866[a]	.749	.740	.98504

a. Predictors: (Constant), accumulation, ownership, sharing, utilization
b. Dependent Variable: performance

The findings show that that coefficient of correlation R was 0.866, an indication of a strong correlation between the variables. The coefficient of adjusted determination R^2 was 0.740 which translates to 74.0%, this shows changes in organizational performance can be explained by the four independent variables (accumulation, sharing, utilization and ownership,). The remaining 26% is explained by other factors beyond the scope of current study.

ANOVA

An ANOVA was carried out at 95% level of significance. The findings of F calculated and F critical are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
	Regression	325.018	4	81.254	83.741	.000[b]
	Residual	108.675	112	.970		
	Total	433.692	116			

a. Predictors: (Constant), accumulation, ownership, sharing, utilization
b. Dependent Variable: performance

An F test was carried out in a bid to establish if the means of regression and residual were significantly different. This was done by comparing the findings of $F_{Calculated}$ as per the computed table above and the $F_{Critical}$ as informed by the F distribution table. The findings show that $F_{Calculated}$83.254 > $F_{Critical}$2.452. This served as an indication that the overall regression model was significant in predicting the effect of knowledge management practices on organization performance in the selected state corporations. This was further supported by significance result of 0.000. The p value was 0.00<0.05, an indication that at least one variable significantly influenced organizational performance.

Regression Coefficients

The findings of regression coefficients are as distributed in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients	**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**	
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	-2.239	1.140		-1.964	.052
Knowledge Utilization	-.119	.042	-.375	-2.820	.006
Knowledge Sharing	.587	.038	1.067	15.273	.000
Knowledge Ownership	.160	.029	.569	5.543	.000
Knowledge Accumulation	-.333	.036	-.792	-9.167	.000

a. Dependent Variable: performance

The regression analysis formula further indicated the extent to which the independent variables affected the dependent variable.

$$\mathbf{Y = -2.239-0.119X_1 + 0.587X_2+0.160X_3-0.333\ X_4}$$

By holding other factors constant, organizational performance would be at -2.239. A unit decrease in knowledge utilization when holding other factors constant, organizational performance would be at 0.119.A unit increase in knowledge sharing while holding other factors constant, organization performance would be at 0.587. A unit increase in knowledge ownership while holding other factors constant, organizational performance would be at 0.160. A unit decrease in knowledge accumulation while holding other factors constant, organization performance would be at 0.333.

Knowledge accumulation had a significant influence on organization performance. This agrees with Madeira, Vick and Nagano (2013) who stated that organiza-

tional leadership set research and development departments so as to acquire new knowledge that would improve their performance and gain competitiveness. Kinyua *et al.* (2015) revealed that knowledge conversion positively influences performance in banking and it is the first step to knowledge application.

The findings pointed out that knowledge utilization had a significant effect on organization performance. This concurs with Njagi (2017) who stated that experienced staff needed to apply available knowledge more effectively and apply the right skills and knowledge on the right task for the organization to attain organizational goals.

The findings pointed out that knowledge sharing had a significant influence on organization performance. This is supported by Matin & Sabagh (2015) who stated that knowledge sharing is an important part in the knowledge management and practices that yield higher returns in terms of productivity, effective operations and returns.

The findings show that knowledge ownership had a significant influence on organization performance. This is supported by Massingham (2014) who stated that generation and utilization of new knowledge that could add value to the individual performance as well the overall organizational output.

Hypothesis Testing

Shairo-Wilk test a carried to test the null hypothesis.

Table 5. Shapiro-Wilk Test

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**
Organization performance	.899	117	.000
Knowledge Utilization Practices	.914	117	.000
Knowledge Sharing Practices	.866	117	.000
Knowledge Ownership Practices	.947	117	.000
Knowledge Accumulation Practices	.952	117	.000

The significance level of all the independent variables (accumulation, utilization, sharing and ownership) were reported as 0.00 less than the 0.05 threshold. Thus, the results did not support the null hypotheses. A Regression Coefficient test run further attested to the significant effect that the independent variables had on the dependent variable. The significant value of all the independent variables were 0.00<0.05 threshold as depicted in the table below. This was in support of the rejection of the null hypotheses. The null hypotheses were thus restated in support of the below findings.

Table 6. Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-2.239	1.140		-1.964	.052
Knowledge Utilization	-.119	.042	-.375	-2.820	.006
Knowledge Sharing	.587	.038	1.067	15.273	.000
Knowledge Ownership	.160	.029	.569	5.543	.000
Knowledge Accumulation	-.333	.036	-.792	-9.167	.000

The study pointed out knowledge accumulation significantly influenced organizational performance. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and fail to reject the alternative hypothesis that states that knowledge accumulation has a significant effect on organization performance in selected state corporations in Kenya.

The study established that knowledge utilization had a significant effect on organizational performance. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and unable to reject the alternative hypothesis that state that knowledge utilization has a significant effect on organization performance in selected state corporations in Kenya.

The study found that knowledge sharing had a significant influence on organizational performance. This shows that we reject the null hypothesis and fail to reject the alternative hypothesis that states that knowledge sharing has a significant effect on organization performance in selected state corporations in Kenya.

The study further showed that knowledge ownership had a significant influence on organizational performance of state corporations in Kenya. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that states that knowledge ownership has a significant effect on organization performance in selected state corporations in Kenya.

Conclusion

The study found that state corporations engaged in research to generate new knowledge, organized forums with research institutions for exchange of knowledge and had diverse channels of collecting key information on its processes. This is supported by Van Long et al. (2014) who revealed that knowledge accumulation follows a cycle where it increases at the start within an organization, peaks and starts to fall over a certain time frame. Further it was found out that state corporations utilized their knowledge to departmentalize the operations, reused knowledge to strengthen its operations, used knowledge to influence the kind of culture it wants to prevail and collabo-

rated with other stakeholders in ensuring competitiveness. Madeira et al. (2013) revealed that knowledge is only useful when it changes operational lines, improves the quality of products made and increasing the income earning of an enterprise. On knowledge ownership, state corporations had patented their knowledge, the employees were bound by a signed agreement while still working and after they leave the organization and signed disclosure agreements that prevented them from sharing key information on the organization. State Corporation had stored adequate stock of knowledge, always had a clear audit trail of individuals accessing stored knowledge and had classified access to its accumulated knowledge**.**

Study Implications

This study has implications for organization management practices; but what is important is for parastatals to understand knowledge management practices and embrace them for sustainability purpose.

Limitations of Study

This study is limited in scope and coverage. It will be important to undertake a comparative study between developing and developed nations to understand how they institutionalize, and the management of knowledge by organizations in those countries.

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