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Mauritius
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SOCIAL SCIENCES INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



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PROSPECTS FOR, AND CHALLENGES OF, KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SECTOR: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Today's rapid pace of globalization has driven the current business environment into a permanent state of dynamic change. In the process, organizations have realised that, to ensure their survival, they need to efficiently manage the knowledge and skills available to them. Central to such a management practice is knowledge sharing which has come to play an important role in the building of sustainable competitiveness in a turbulent business climate. In a knowledge culture, it is the sharing of information that promotes innovative thinking. If government departments fail to adopt knowledge sharing practices, the preservation of their organizational memories is put at risk, also in view of the regular transfer of experienced workforces. The lack of a fruitful implementation of knowledge sharing practices diminishes the capacity to sustain government departments and this impacts negatively on the country's economic growth. The current study reviews the prospects for, and the challenges posed by, knowledge sharing practices in the South African public sector. The objective of the study is to describe what possibilities the 21st century holds for improved knowledge sharing in the South African public sector. The collected data is analysed using a thematic content approach. The results outline that organizational structures in government departments are hierarchical and this hampers information sharing. The prevailing organizational culture does not support and encourage the creation and sharing of knowledge among staff members. The skills needed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge are insufficient, while there is no clearly defined responsibility for initiatives concerned with knowledge management. The study recommends the public sector organizations of South Africa to clearly formulate precise processes, policy frameworks and responsibilities that ensure the effective identification, capturing, managing, transferring and sharing of knowledge within the organizations.

Keywords: Knowledge management; knowledge sharing; government departments; South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of a massively evolving information field, knowledge has come to be recognized as the main source of wealth production. As new methods for the creation and practising of knowledge are introduced, the application of such knowledge offers organizations a crucial resource for achieving sustainable competitive advantages (Hongmei, Chai & James, 2013). Basic is the notion that an organization can be strengthened by using the wealth of knowledge in the possession of the organization and its members. That knowledge is today considered as the lifeblood of organizations is confirmed by Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar (2016). Ramohlale (2014)

defines knowledge as “fluid or framed experience, values, contextual information and expert insight that provide a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information in organizations.”

As knowledge is considered a crucial resource for attaining competitive advantage and as fundamental for long-term success and sustainability of public sector organizations. Kase et al. (2009) argue that in today’s economic setting, public sector organizations need to be inventive and innovative and create new knowledge, incorporating this into their existing body of knowledge, thus acquiring new capabilities to suit the requirements of various patrons. In support, Argote and Miron-Spektor (2011) stress the critical status of knowledge as a resource that enhances organizations by enabling them to be creative, learn, and adopt the use of other organizational resources. Therefore, Dei and Van der Walt (2020) state that any public sector organization trading in the present economy needs to develop a strong and continuously evolving knowledge-base in order to solidify the fundamental attributes of innovation and flexibility. The loss of such intellectual capital may, for some obvious reasons, threaten organizational performance, since knowledge, skills and experience provide organizations with sources of sustainable competitive advantage (Phaladi, 2021).

Mamabolo (2021) notes that knowledge management continues to remain relevant even in the fourth industrial revolution era across all organizations in the sense that, its main objective is to evolve over time in order to sustain and preserve vital knowledge that is critical in sustaining operations in the organizations. Knowledge management plays an important function as it provides organizations with the capabilities to sustain the process of transferring, sharing, disseminating and retaining knowledge that is vital to organizations to sustain the integrity of service delivery to the general public (Mamabolo, 2021). According to Alhawari, Nehari-Talet, Mansour, Alryalat and Musa-Hadi (2010), many organizations recognize the need to establish effective provision platforms for creating, managing and leveraging knowledge in order to grow profitability, become more competitive in global contexts and be responsive to current dynamically changing settings. Literature points at well-managed knowledge as the most significant antecedent for continuing successful innovation. If not properly managed and shared, knowledge will easily corrode. Particularly, the tacit knowledge accrued over time and residing in the minds of people, must be shared (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016).

The strength of an organization lies in its ability to manage its human capital. Ideally, organizations that wish to remain service-oriented in this Fourth Industrial Revolution need to comprehend the importance of tacit knowledge and ensure that is shared at all levels. Many organizations fail to capitalise on the value within their tacit knowledge reserves until when employees leave their jobs (Nkomo, Maluleka & Ngulube, 2021). It is evident from the literature that, the management of knowledge in the South African public sector plays a critical role to the functioning of the organizations for a better service delivery through the creation and sharing of knowledge. It is through the organizational culture and teamwork that instil and infuse the belief of knowledge sharing and management in the departments. However, the management of knowledge in the public sector can be improved through the establishment of policy frameworks nor strategies aligned to the organizational goals (Maphoto & Matlala, 2021).

Knowledge management is as significant as other fundamental requirements for the successful survival of an organization. Rachele and Krishna (2013) state that knowledge management

encapsulates the methodologies and processes used by an organization in order to produce; effective knowledge acquisition. According to Shah and Kant (2018), knowledge management has been widely defined as a set of processes involving the identification, creation, acquisition, capturing, storage, organization, evaluation, socialization, dissemination and distribution of knowledge and the associated application activities supported by the employees, structure, culture, procedures and technology of the organization. In the present knowledge-based economy, it is evident that knowledge management and its processes should be the foci of organizational departments (Blankenship & Ruona, 2009). Witherspoon, Jason, Cam, and Dan (2013) describe knowledge sharing as a building block for the success of an organization and recognize it as a survival strategy. Furthermore, Park, Saplan-Catchapero and Jaegal (2012:96) state that the “ability to share knowledge, thoughts, perspectives and solutions among collaborators represents possibly the greatest advantage any organization can achieve.”

Mosala-Bryant (2015) cites Amayah (2013), who points out that knowledge sharing in public sector organizations is inadequately practised. This has in the past 20 years led to drastic changes in government organizations aiming to move from traditional bureaucratic systems to a more managerial approach and to become what is termed a knowledge-based organization. The worldwide increasing recognition of the importance of knowledge management in public sector organizations has given rise to the establishment of knowledge-based organizations. Abili (2010) remarks that these knowledge-based organizations are searching for ways to make effective use of existing knowledge as well as seeking ways of creating new knowledge. Against this background, Abili (2010) mentions that knowledge-based organizations have realized that there is more benefit in sharing knowledge than in hoarding it. Therefore, they align their knowledge management processes with their organizational strategies in order to achieve a maximum of success.

The review of relevant literature reveals that, in spite of the expanding number of studies on knowledge sharing in general, limited attention has been paid to public sector organizations and their knowledge sharing practices. In developing countries, however, several studies have been carried out focusing on public and private organizations (Ngcobo, 2020). In this context, the current study seeks to investigate the prospects for, and the challenges posed by, knowledge sharing in the South African public sector. As knowledge sharing is still an emerging concept, many of its aspects remain to be studied in depth. Although numerous scholars have discussed knowledge sharing, there is little evidence of research concerning knowledge sharing in the public sector. The dearth of empirical studies on knowledge sharing in the public sector exacerbates the broader problems of service delivery. The current study reviews the prospects for, and the challenges posed by, knowledge sharing practices in the South African public sector.

Problem statement

Today’s rapid pace of globalization has driven the current business environment into a permanent state of dynamic change leading the public sector organizations to function in a dynamic, competitive environment. To achieve performance excellence and sustain the higher position, it is not enough to only focus on the quality output aspects, intellectual knowledge is one of the critical and vital elements that has proven beyond doubt for organizational success (Maphoto & Matlala, 2021). Therefore, keeping up with the rapidly changing organizational

landscape, government organizations are shifting perceptions and, for example, moving from a product-centred to a knowledge-centred approach (Mahilda, 2007). In the process, organizations have realised that, to ensure their survival, they need to efficiently manage the knowledge and skills available to them.

Jain (2017) notes that the contemporary economy is characterized by being knowledge-based. Knowledge has thus become a strategic force, promoting corporate survival and giving an organization a sustainable, competitive edge over rivals in the global market. In today's environment, "successful and thriving organizations are those which create or gain new knowledge and convert it into applicable methods for improving their activities and performance" (Akhavan, Ramezan & Moghaddam, 2013). Central to such a management practice is knowledge sharing which has come to play an important role in the building of sustainable competitiveness in a turbulent business climate. Organizations of today face many waves of change in their organizational life cycle. The environment in which organizations function is paved with many difficulties and obstacles.

The effective implementation of suitable knowledge management practices is both a key challenge and a critical tool for organizations, making them more adaptive and responsive to changing circumstances and ultimately enabling them to achieve a strategic and competitive position (Juma & Mzera, 2017). Unfortunately, in government departments there is only limited or no internal sharing of expertise, regarding knowledge management practices and their effectiveness. Knowledge in public sector organizations is mostly shared in an unstructured, informal manner without being linked to the strategic goals of the organizations (Boltman & Bankole, 2017). Hence, if knowledge is not shared, it is meaningless to manage knowledge. There has been no baseline review of prospects for, and challenges of, knowledge sharing in the South African public sector.

Key objectives of the study

-T
o examine the extent to which knowledge sharing in the 21st century has shaped the South African public sector, as apparent from a literature review.
-T
o determine challenges posed to knowledge sharing in the South African public sector today.
-T
o make recommendations and suggest strategies for South African public sector organizations to optimize knowledge sharing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In view of today's eventful economic climate, the knowledge base of an organization is rapidly becoming its only sustainable, competitive tool (Mphahlele, 2010). Consequently, knowledge management increases an organization's competitive abilities and may seriously contribute to the attainment of organizational objectives (Qi & Chau, 2018). Public sector organizations are basically about the creation of knowledge, and about its usage, transmission, and communication in their daily operations. The knowledge available in organizations depends on the employees who constitute a particular organization, and it exists to achieve collective outcomes. For

instance, serving the public citizenry is achieved by competent members of staff who have various skills and relevant knowledge, and who work together, following prescribed rules and organizational procedures, generating knowledge in the process (Moahi, Rathapo & Sebina, 2017).

Knowledge can be generated and utilized in various ways for example by collaborating teams, during meetings, in one-on-one sessions, by training workshops, and through recording human interactions (Moahi, Rathapo & Sebina, 2017). Knowledge management focuses on people and processes which are expected to enhance the organizations concerned as a result of the proper implementation of knowledge management practices. Staff members are of importance in knowledge management, because most of the knowledge available in an organization rests with individual employees. Oliva (2014) notes, that the lack of knowledge management in organizations does often lead to the degeneration of learning and, subsequently, to the diminished effectiveness of organizational processes. It is therefore understood that, for organizations to be effective and competitive, knowledge must reign supreme and flow unhindered.

Hu, Ou, Chiou and Lin (2012: 785) conceptualized knowledge sharing as “activities involving transferring or disseminating knowledge from one person, group, or organization to another.” Lin (2007) regards knowledge management as the process of “capturing, organizing, reusing and transferring experience-based knowledge that resides within the organization and making that knowledge available to others.” It is a mechanism through which information is transmitted among individuals within the organization. It is therefore imperative that the government departments put in place mechanisms that would strengthen and better support daily management of knowledge and ensure service delivery activities (Matlala, Ncube, & Parbanath, 2022). Mothamaha and Govender (2014) are of the opinion that knowledge management improves the processes followed in an organization and the processes determine how work will be carried out. If the processes are improved, performance and output are expected to follow suit. Thus, as Mphahlele (2010) notes, knowledge management does enhance knowledge sharing by improving service delivery and maximizing the prospects of the organization and its individual members of staff. Foss, Husted and Michailova (2010) report, that most organizations engaged in knowledge sharing practices aim to transform individual knowledge into organizational knowledge and to enhance the sharing of such knowledge.

Nazim and Mukherjee (2016) consider knowledge sharing as an essential element of knowledge management and stress that it is through the sharing of knowledge that organizations can expand. Knowledge sharing as the exchange or dissemination of expressed or implicit facts, thoughts, suggestions, expertise and scientific know-how among individuals or groups of staff members. Similarly, Buckova (2015) states that knowledge sharing is the systematically capturing and organizing of the vast amount of knowledge and experience of staff members, stakeholders, patrons, beneficiaries and partners, by documenting the knowledge and making it readily available and accessible, internally as well as externally. The involvement of interest groups and knowledge communities that work together on similar initiatives and projects should be encouraged, with a view to intensifying and growing knowledge and improving its effectiveness. Additionally, Turban, Mclean and Wetherbe (2004, p.412) define knowledge sharing as “the wilful application and transfer of one or more persons’ ideas, insights, solutions and knowledge

to another person(s), either directly or via an intermediary”. Witherspoon et al. (2013, p.252) consider knowledge sharing as the “intention or expectation to exchange information, skills, or expertise with others for the benefit of the sharer.”

Because knowledge sharing assists in the building of human capital, it is guaranteed to give public sector organizations a competitive advantage for their survival (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005). Wang, Noe and Wang (2014) add, that knowledge sharing is crucial in public sector governments because it contributes to knowledge acquisition. It helps organizations to deal with problems as it offers solutions to these through the sharing of ideas and experience (Mosha, 2014). It creates opportunities to maximize organizational abilities to meet needs and offers solutions that give an organization an advantage over rivals (Dikotla 2016, cited Reid, 2003).

Through the implementation of knowledge management practices, such as knowledge sharing, the public sector could be in a position to deliver the best possible services, function effectively and operate an environment characterized by transparency and accountability (Makhanya 2018). Knowledge-sharing practices rely on the willingness and the habits of the knowledge worker to seek out knowledge sources. Knowledge sharing in an organization is essential, as it creates awareness and acceptance of new ideas, increases coordination and improves response times (Sandhu and Goh 2015). The growth of knowledge, therefore, requires sharing within the organization between management and staff. Therefore, in this study, the researchers’ operationalized knowledge sharing as practices that are fully concerned with the exchange of valuable information, with the know-how processes possessed by the organizational members, and with the distribution of critical information for the use and mutual benefit of members. This knowledge sharing is the transference of knowledge among individuals, groups, teams, departments and organizations.

Knowledge sharing is a very important activity in any organization on which the daily operations of organizations depend. This is because the organizational knowledge in the form of information, skills or know-how is exchanged amongst staff in the organization during knowledge sharing (Nkomo, Maluleka & Ngulube, 2021). It is worth noting that the practice of knowledge sharing may be ineffective, if there are staff members who resist sharing their knowledge and experiences with the organization in its entirety (Kamatula, 2017). It is thus clear that a knowledge sharing culture is of vital importance within any organization, and its absence could lead to employees not taking any real interest in management’s objectives. It is imperative that organizational employees share problems, experiences, insights, templates, tools and best practices with the management (Nkomo, Maluleka & Ngulube, 2021). The rationale of knowledge sharing is to use available and accessible knowledge to enhance the group’s performance. Thus, knowledge sharing takes place during the induction process of new employees. However, experienced, knowledgeable staff members have to be willing to share their knowledge in order to enhance the performance of new employees which in turn benefits the organization.

Knowledge sharing is one of the knowledge management processes, which is also central to the success of all knowledge management strategies. Effective knowledge sharing practices enable reuse and regeneration of knowledge at an individual and organizational level (Makhanya, 2018). The staff knowledge sharing attitudes improve when they realise that knowledge sharing contributes to the organization’s successful operations. Clearly, knowledge sharing is an

important management tool that can be used to bring new service innovations for organizations. However, sharing such knowledge and how it is shared crucially depends on a number of individual attitudes and organizational variables (Molose & Ezeuduji 2015). In a nutshell, knowledge sharing has been widely considered as an important response to change.

According to Mphahlele (2010), there are enough indications that knowledge sharing has been implemented and developed in the public sector in South Africa although there is little evidence of progress and benefits achieved. However, the literature on knowledge sharing in the South African public sector reviewed by the present researchers, indicates that organizations need intellectual capital to expedite the acquisition, maintenance, and depositing of intellectual assets in the organizational knowledge storage, and to share it so that it may leverage the organizational competitive edge (Dewah & Mutula, 2014; Martins & Martins, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

The present researchers use a literature review to consider empirical studies on knowledge sharing prospects and challenges in the public sector. Nwone and Mutula (2019) state that this approach involves a search on various databases that host empirical studies on knowledge sharing and that cover a wide range of resources. For this paper the search covered scholarly journals in a number of electronic databases and search engines like ProQuest, ERIC, Google Scholar, Goole and Social Science Citation Index.

This study applies a qualitative research approach based on document content analysis extracted from a variety of information sources. According to Monyela (2020), a qualitative research approach implies that literature can be formulated based on the search of the researchers' key concepts of the chosen topic. The key concepts used in this study consist in knowledge management, knowledge sharing, and the challenges posed by knowledge sharing. This approach provides a better insight in the state of knowledge sharing in the South African public sector. The researchers performed content analysis on research studies published between 2000 and 2020. Krippendorff (2013, p.24) notes that following the content analysis technique results in "*scrutiny of the manifest of a body of the communicated material/text through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning and make valid inferences*". The technique was considered adequate for addressing the objectives of this study.

A review of the literature was performed to acquire information about the prospects of, and the challenges posed by, knowledge sharing in the South African public sector. The variables are further discussed in different segments in the findings of this paper. An integrative review procedure was followed as per the guidelines of Torraco (2005, cited by Snyder, 2019). The aim was to assess, critique, and synthesize the literature on knowledge sharing and to identify new perspectives. The specific body of materials was identified and scrutinized, using the evaluation criteria. The raw content of various sources was organized into categories or themes, as informed by the research objectives. The researchers carefully examined themes emerging from the literature. Conventional content analysis is normally used in a study design that aims to describe phenomena and where the availability of relevant literature is limited (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

RESULTS

This section provides the findings on the prospects for, and challenges of, knowledge sharing in the South African public sector. The reviewed literature involved numerous articles, conference proceedings, and thesis. Hence the following summarised results are classified in the below themes.

Knowledge sharing today in the South African public sector

In a dynamic economy, knowledge sharing is vital for the survival of organizations. Ngei (2011) notes that the digital age, characterized by widespread communication and collaboration through websites, email, social media and other web applications to which their employees are exposed, affects many organizations. Dikotla (2016) states that the significance of knowledge sharing has become especially apparent with the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) applications in service delivery. ICT facilitates knowledge sharing in an organization. It is in that context necessary that organizations create a secure environment for the dissemination of knowledge amongst its employees (Ngei, 2011).

The procedures through which knowledge is shared, determine the success of the organizational learning. This means that, for public sector entities to use knowledge assets, their exchange in the organizations must be a smooth process. Munyua (2011) remarks that the sharing of knowledge allows for the learning and re-examination of created knowledge which is needed for the organization to attain a competitive advantage. Indeed, shared knowledge keeps the organization alive. It can serve as a reference for future use by staff members of the organization. Hence, knowledge sharing is thus a very important knowledge management process within organizations. It is a process of interchanging knowledge, skills, information, expertise, experience, intelligence and understanding (Nkomo, Maluleka & Ngulube, 2021).

Knowledge sharing among employees contributes to the creation of new knowledge in a public sector organization. This critical activity promotes the success of an organization; as new knowledge becomes available of which every employee can take advantage. This may inspire innovative initiatives, giving the organization an advantage over the competition. Employees thus get activated and the organization can respond quickly to new situations (Munyua, 2011). As knowledge is shared, people no longer merely receive it, but become innovative actors, using the new knowledge and making it context-specific. Wan Fakeh, Shahibi and Hussin (2015) accentuate that knowledge management is the most significant and effective instrument for organizations to remain competitive. Through the creation, identification, storing, organizing, utilizing and disseminating of knowledge, an institutional memory is built, so that critical knowledge is not lost when experienced staff members leave (Ngcobo, 2020). However, even though public sector organizations highly regard knowledge creation, it's capturing and acquisition, very few have introduced and implemented a formal knowledge management application system as a tool for knowledge sharing (Mpofu, 2011).

Dikotla (2016) researched “the role of knowledge sharing in improving the municipal governance in the local government sector of South Africa.” The study focused on determining what kind of knowledge management programmes are in place in the municipalities of Limpopo Province and to establish the extent to which Limpopo municipalities encourage knowledge

sharing for the improvement of municipal governance. The study also examined factors that affect knowledge sharing among municipal workers in Limpopo Province, and made recommendations for strategies to affect the optimal sharing of knowledge. The study sampled 438 employees and 21 managers from selected municipalities and its key findings are that knowledge management programmes in Limpopo municipalities are poor and that knowledge sharing among employees and across municipalities is not encouraged. The knowledge sharing is hindered by both individual and organizational barriers, while the information communication technology tools that support knowledge management programmes are insufficiently utilized. Notably, the findings of Dikotla (2016)'s study confirm to a large extent what has been reported in relevant literature.

Knowledge sharing challenges in the South African public sector

Although knowledge sharing is of critical importance for the functioning of public service organizations, efforts to introduce the practice in the South African public sector have met with challenges (Gaffoor & Cloette, 2010). Chipeta (2018) notes for instance, that staff members in public sector organizations are still battling to integrate a knowledge sharing culture into their work processes, because there is no strategy for knowledge management and inadequate collaboration, while levels of skills and capabilities for knowledge sharing are low. Adeinat and Abdulfatah (2018) note that knowledge sharing practices are rendered ineffective by insufficient organization communications, an absence of organizational training, a lack of staff development, and the non-existence of trust in the organization.

The lack of a knowledge-driven organizational culture remains a challenge for the public sector across globe. Phaladi (2021) notes that organizational cultures in the public sector are not shaping and reinforcing the required knowledge management behaviours and activities. Furthermore, Phaladi (2021) indicated that organizational cultural issues remain problem areas in many of the state enterprises. For instance, a silo mentality, a lack of recognition and rewards, a lack of awareness and KM education, organizational red tape and a lack of knowledge leadership all impacted negatively on knowledge management. The widely held view that knowledge is a powerful source for competition does not help to promote a knowledge-driven culture and behaviour (Phaladi, 2021). Furthermore, organizational culture is not supporting knowledge management behaviour and initiatives in many of the state organizations. Their organizational culture does not exhibit a knowledge-driven culture and behaviour.

Knowledge sharing in majority of South African organizations face hindrances. For instance, lack of clear integration of knowledge management strategies and policies into organizational management, no clear leadership or direction, lack of facilities and resources that promote knowledge sharing, no transparency or clarity in how recognition and reward systems are implemented, no unsupportive corporate culture, stiff competitiveness between individuals, business units or functional areas of the same organization (e.g. not invented here syndrome), Communication and knowledge flow channels restricted, The physical work environment restrictive (Nkomo, Maluleka & Ngulube, 2021).

Most government departments are hindered by the lack of succession plans where knowledge sharing and transfer of older workers is concerned. Succession planning links positively with knowledge management and can serve as an effective knowledge transfer strategy to ensure

business continuity for companies (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012). The knowledge and wisdom of older experts and other key staff members in the organizations remains a key resource for ensuring a business competitive advantage. Their departure could therefore result in a lack of mission-critical know-how that is important for the success of their organizations, thus hampering their sustainability (Phaladi, 2021). The findings indicate that it takes longer to replace a person or skills in mission-critical competence areas in the state-owned organizations. The absence of succession planning strategies creates serious challenges for retiring experts to share their knowledge and experience to the younger generations of workers. The transfer of the incumbents' knowledge is problematic if the successors are not identified and mentored into the identified positions in advance (Phaladi, 2021).

Mutula and Jacobs (2010) studied the challenges faced by the higher institution knowledge systems in South Africa and found that these institutions have not assimilated knowledge management practices in their operations and strategic processes. Mutula and Jacobs (2010) mention the challenges posed by insufficient skills, a low morale, a high staff turnover and little incorporation of a knowledge sharing culture in institutions. In addition, top management made limited efforts to permeate institutions with a culture of knowledge sharing.

Chipeta (2018) notes that the biggest challenge for many organizations today is to encourage their staff to share knowledge. The importance of sharing knowledge has to be constantly communicated to employees. The majority of studies conducted in developing countries found that organizations have not documented or preserved the knowledge of trained and experienced employees (Chipeta, 2018). Notwithstanding the positive prospects of knowledge management practices as described in the relevant literature, little effort, if any, is made to develop knowledge sharing strategies in the organizations.

Chigada (2014) notes that several employees get a sense of power from hoarding knowledge. Their perception that "knowledge is power" becomes a serious hindrance to the sharing of knowledge with other employees. Some staff members feel that divulging knowledge and information on experience to their counterparts, leads to the erosion of individual power and therefore prefer to withhold knowledge. Chigada (2014) notes, that in most organizations there is a measure of unhealthy competition and rivalry between organizational departments. This competitive streak hinders the sharing of knowledge. Mistrust between employees is acknowledged as a critical factor impeding knowledge sharing in organizations (Chigada, 2014). Cong and Pandya (2003) mention that, to enhance awareness of the benefits of knowledge sharing, there has to be an atmosphere of trust inspiring employees to share their knowledge. Of the obstacles to knowledge sharing, a non-existence of trust has proven to be the most critical. Mistrust impedes inter- and intra-organizational knowledge sharing. Ramirez (2007), for instance, argues that some staff members are reluctant to be passed knowledge by colleagues for fear of being perceived as ignorant and depending on others. Therefore, such a sense of inferiority acts as a barrier to knowledge sharing.

A review of literature reveals that managing organizational knowledge is proving to be extremely difficult without first dealing effectively and efficiently with organizational climate issues (Phaladi, 2021). A lack of awareness about the knowledge sharing culture in South Africa's public sector organizations hinge on organizational cultural issues underpinning knowledge management strategies or processes (Phaladi, 2021). The researchers opine that the

reason for this lies in the way South African public sector organizations are run and in the absence of a clear definition of the political process required for the implementation of knowledge sharing practices. Contributing factors are insufficient resources and the lack of incentives to encourage a knowledge sharing culture. The culture of knowledge sharing has not been properly introduced and established in the organizations and therefore employees view it as something extra for which they feel they should be compensated.

Dewah (2011) established, that the lack of knowledge sharing in most organizations is due to the notion that employees are not free to exchange and share their knowledge because of various government regulations, prevalent to political contexts, mistrust and the non-existence of rewards for sharing knowledge. The absence of a culture of knowledge sharing in the organizations means that departments function in silos which negatively impacts on the opportunities for creating, sharing and transferring significant knowledge among workers. Dikotla (2016) cited Gaffoor and Cloete (2010), who argue that, without knowledge sharing, staff members and other stake holders in organizations tend to remain stuck in silos, poorly cooperating, repeating mistakes, prone to duplication of duties and responsibilities, the wasting of resources, and an incapacity of strengths to harness good ideas.

A review of the literature showed that there are barriers to knowledge sharing. Barriers are factors that obstruct the sharing of implicit knowledge. The lack of motivation and compensation act as impediments to knowledge sharing. This makes employees not eager to share knowledge as they don't see how sharing information will benefit them as individuals. People won't share their knowledge without being inspired to do so, they will always offer it with apprehension, thinking of what they could achieve or lose by such an act. The lack of a reward system affects knowledge sharing because incentives play a major role for the employee who participates in knowledge sharing (Gururajan & Fink, 2010).

Jacobs and Roodt (2011) confirm that recognition in the form of praise and financial rewards, encourages the person who possesses knowledge to share it with colleagues (Gururajan & Fink, 2010). Organizational employees share knowledge for various reasons, including a desire to gain recognition, rewards and self-actualisation. However, workers who regard themselves as possessed of much expertise may prefer not to collaborate with their colleagues. According to Phaladi (2021), a lack of recognition and rewards systems, a lack of awareness and education on knowledge management have a huge effect on the status of knowledge sharing in the organizations. This reluctance is more decisive if no rewards are accrued to motivate staff members to be more cooperative. Lack of monetary resources and poor IT infrastructure to ensure efficient collaboration in knowledge management further endanger a culture of knowledge sharing.

Evidence shows, as Moahi, Rathapo and Sebina (2017) confirm, that in government there is internally as well as externally, a lack of collaborative working and knowledge sharing, while these are claimed to provide an impetus to the strategic implementation of knowledge management programmes in South African public sector organizations. Hence, to internalize knowledge sharing, Jacobs and Roodt (2011) recommend that an organization and its employees should build and maintain trust across the entire organization. The public sector organizations must emphasize the culture of sharing in order to capacitate their full development.

Phaladi (2021) conducted a study on the framework for integrating knowledge management and human resource management for the reduction of organizational knowledge loss in selected South African state-owned enterprises. The research findings conclusively revealed that several barriers existed in the state-owned enterprises that restricted effective knowledge sharing system. These barriers were: a silo mentality, organizational red tape, knowledge as source of power, a lack of rewards and recognition systems, a lack of awareness and education on knowledge management, human resource management practices, employment equity, fixed-term employment contracts, competing priorities for leadership, a lack of leadership, knowledge hoarding, and a lack of proper systems to support knowledge management. A lack of knowledge-oriented leadership was evident because knowledge management was not institutionalised in most of the state-owned enterprises. It is therefore equated that a lack of a culture of knowledge sharing hinders knowledge flow within the public sector. The results show that knowledge sharing in government meets with some unique challenges, such as the fact that government agencies are typically hierarchical and bureaucratic organizations which makes the sharing of knowledge difficult.

Chipeta (2018) cited Dewah and Mutula (2014), mention that government-owned enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa - among these South African public sector government activities - experience many challenges in the establishment of a culture of knowledge sharing. The challenges include a limited understanding of knowledge management returns, a scarcity of skills, an absence of rewards to encourage the exchange of facts, information and skills, a scarcity of applicable technologies, an inadequate support from the executive, a dearth of necessary implementation strategies to study from, and an exodus of highly trained personnel.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review, it is evident that knowledge sharing is progressively seen as a valuable and even vital resource for organizational effectiveness and survival. The necessity of developing knowledge sharing in government departments is emphasized. Knowledge sharing among staff members or groups allows public sector organizations to exploit and capitalize on knowledge-based resources. Thus, knowledge sharing serves as an invaluable mechanism in public organizations, enabling them to respond to the dynamics of the current knowledge-based intensive economy in which knowledge sharing is progressively seen as critical to the success of organizations. Knowledge sharing plays an important role in the broader perspective of knowledge management and has been demonstrated as being positively related to a number of desirable organizational variables, including overall organizational performance. Logically therefore, it may be stated that knowledge sharing by employees has a significant impact on the performance of public sector organizations in South Africa. The current study identifies some challenges facing government departments concerning knowledge sharing. The study has established that knowledge sharing is a core process of dissemination and use of knowledge throughout organizations and helps in the creating of innovation and sustained competitive advantage.

Recommendations

The study recommends that there must be measures taken, procedures followed and mechanisms applied, for capturing significant information and experience gained, so that the public sector may implement knowledge sharing. This is of critical importance, because employees in the public sector organizations tend to be on the move, being transferred from one section or department to another, or leaving for early retirement or to profit from opportunities elsewhere. Therefore, the public sector needs to implement mechanisms that ensure the capturing and preservation of explicit knowledge.

To deal with the challenges of organizational tacit knowledge loss resulting from the ageing workers in the competence areas of the operations, it is equally important that the organizations devise strategies to retain their much-needed knowledge, expertise and skills. Potential successors need to be identified well in advance to ensure a smooth transfer of knowledge in the transition period. Knowledge transfer and retention should start five years prior to their leaving, to this end, employees should be contracted and be rewarded for their knowledge transfer and retention efforts (Phaladi, 2021).

It is clear that government departments need to share knowledge to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations. Experience sharing networks should be set up holding regular meetings of executive officers and government ministries in order to brief and share experience and knowledge with each another.

Flexible organizational structures have to be created to enhance the distribution of knowledge and to establish a strong culture of knowledge sharing based on the values of openness, trustworthiness and sociability. Thus, knowledge sharing will flourish, and an information infrastructure will be developed to support the distribution of knowledge and the acquisition of essential competencies and skills to effectively implement knowledge sharing and ensure the sustainability of organizations.

Public sector organizations must pay urgent attention to the adoption of strategies to develop and implant knowledge-based sharing activities as the sharing of knowledge is the solution, recognized by organizations, as leading to a superior organizational performance and as providing competitive strength to survive in the current global business environment. It is up to public sector organizations to formulate clear processes, policies, and responsibilities that ensure knowledge is effectively identified, captured, managed, transferred and shared within the organizations.

The organizations must develop programmes for retiring knowledge workers to ensure that their knowledge, expertise and skills are retained and preserved.

The organizations must introduce expert forums whereby specialists are encouraged to take the lead in knowledge sharing activities in their expertise domain.

The organizations must create job rotations for employees to gain experience across corporate processes. This will ensure that tacit knowledge is spread, rooted and integrated across corporate process units.

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