Developing a knowledge management strategy for a South African civil society organisation: A case study

EJ Brink

orcid.org/0000-0001-7574-5937

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Supervisor: Dr Nelda Mouton

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Student number: 37773089

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the KM practices at the civil society organisation (CSO) Afriforum and make recommendations to devise a knowledge management strategy (KMS). CSOs are multiplying in South Africa and around the globe and fulfilling many varied functions, such as holding governments accountable and providing vital services to the public. Unlike manufacturing firms, these organisations' biggest assets are their employees and the knowledge they possess. From a qualitative point of view, their monetary and human resources are typically much less advanced and comprehensive than those of the private and public sectors, which rely on profit and taxes, respectively, to operate. Therefore, the civil society sector must take cost-effective and innovative steps to bolster its intellectual capital (IC) in innovative ways to fulfil its core functions better and attract donors. One way of doing is this is by applying knowledge management (KM) techniques. This study is qualitative. 15 semi-structured interviews (in person and via online tools such as Microsoft Teams) were conducted with full-time personnel at AfriForum. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Although the organisation possesses and executes certain KM practices, it is not yet a fully-fledged KMS and could only be considered a rudimentary form of KM.

Key terms: Knowledge management, AfriForum, intellectual capital, civil society, Knowledge Management Tools, strategy

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Eugene Brink
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CKO	Chief Knowledge Officer
COP	Community of practice
CSO	Civil society organisation
EK	Explicit knowledge
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
IC	Intellectual capital
IC	Intellectual capital
ICT	Information and communication technologies
KM	Knowledge management
KMS	Knowledge management strategy
KMT	Knowledge Management Tools
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KS	Knowledge sharing
LO	Learning organisation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
OL	Organisational learning
R&D	Research and Development
TK	Tacit Knowledge

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As the service industry grows in scope and numbers, knowledge or intellectual (human) capital (IC) has shifted to the forefront of business and management. Many organisations' greatest asset in the knowledge economy is their employees and their ability to harness their knowledge. Vrba (2021:70) describes IC as "the sum and synergy of the knowledge, relationships, experience, discoveries, processes, innovations, market presence, and influence of an organisation on the community". Successful contemporary organisations are focused on developing, measuring and managing their IC, and the term employed for this process is KM (Vrba, 2021:70). This process is associated with the concept of the learning organisation (LO) and the process of organisational learning (OL). "OL describes learning within and across organisations, whereas learning organisation seeks to prescribe how it ideally occurs" (Crossan cited in Mishra & Reddy, 2021:541).

This, in turn, is conducive to innovation, something no organisation can afford to ignore in light of the rapid changes that beset the business world and its attendant technologies and exigencies in the knowledge economy. As Du Plessis (2007:20) argues: "In the fast-changing business world of today, innovation has become the mainstay of every organisation."

CSOs entities typically have unique business needs, mandates and resources that set them apart from profit-driven businesses and governments. Some fulfil watchdog and activist roles, while others are driven by altruistic motives such as caring for the less fortunate. They are often not as resourced as private and public sector organisations and rely on institutional and individual donors for funding. These donations can be erratic and often depend on an organisation's achievements and operational efficiencies. This means that every saving and improvement must be made to husband and optimise resources. Civil society struggles to draw and retain top human capital due to these realities. This is why they are forced to invest in their personnel's capabilities and improve their knowledge.

Although there are local and global needs for focussing on KM within CSOs, there are limited research to devise a KMS for such a type of organisation in South Africa. This study, therefore, endeavours to analyse the KM practices at AfriForum and develop subsequent recommendations as part of a KMS for the organisation.

This chapter provides the background to the problem, the problem statement, the conceptualisation of key terms, and the research objectives and questions. It will cover the scope and field of the study, the research methodology, the trustworthiness of the research, and the ethical considerations.

1.2 BACKGROUND

De Koker and Du Plessis (2020:1) argue that it would greatly benefit professional business firms, especially entrepreneurs and small businesses, to proactively grasp what it means for a business to remain competitive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The growth of an increasingly digital world is swiftly changing how people and organisations create, use and share data, information and knowledge (North *et al.*, 2018:1). “Various economies and organisations have realised the need for upskilling for the 4IR and have started to invest in such efforts” (De Koker & Du Plessis, 2020:1). To this end, knowledge about the contemporary world and economies are essential (Ansari, Youshanlouei, & Mood cited in Ncoyini & Cilliers, 2020:1). “We are witnessing a development towards digitised knowledge societies on a global scale. What does this mean? Knowledge societies are dominated by professional experts and their scientific methods” (North *et al.*, 2018:2). Knowledge economies are characterised by the growth of knowledge-producing or knowledge-disseminating occupations (Burke cited in North *et al.*, 2018:2).

Hence, organisations that focus on their knowledge assets rather than their physical ones will be more sustainable in the future, as they view and utilise knowledge as a strategic resource that is indispensable for their competency and stability within a competitive environment. Just as physical assets and money provide capital to a company, so does knowledge in people’s minds provide the company with IC. “With globalisation and digitalisation, firms, public institutions and non-governmental organisations realise that sustaining competitive advantage or reaching goals requires

tapping the full creative potential and knowledge of all members of the organisation. The business environment is transforming from one dominated largely by physical resources to one dominated by knowledge" (North & Kumta, 2018:i). Knowledge is the fundamental input to wealth generation in the business. While physical assets' value relies on knowledge, most organisations are not geared to utilise knowledge optimally (Van der Westhuizen, 2005:1). "Knowledge can be a valuable asset, but organisations have to manage it appropriately by prioritising systems for creating, storing, transferring and employing knowledge within the organisation" (Ansari *et al.* in Mcoyini & Cilliers, 2012:1).

KM has also been tied to the advent and rise of the so-called "learning organisation" (LO). Papademetriou and Masouras (2015:42) outline this fusion as follows: "On the one hand, LOs aim to create, improve and maximise the learning of the organisation while on the other hand, KM is focused on how the knowledge is distributed and transferred within the organisation. Both deal with learning, knowledge and skills."

In the Industrial Age, capital, labour and services were the building blocks to create wealth. Since the rise of computer technology and the information age, the way people work has changed dramatically. Knowledge as a commodity has become increasingly popular and was why the knowledge economy emerged (Van der Westhuizen, 2005:7-8). The knowledge-based perspective prescribes that the services rendered by tangible resources are contingent upon how they are combined and applied, which is, in turn, a function of the firm's know-how (i.e., knowledge) (Alavi & Leidner, 2001:108). This knowledge is embedded in and conveyed through a plenitude of entities such as organisational culture and identity, routines, policies, systems, documents, and individual employees (Grant cited in Alavi & Leidner, 2001:108). Corso *et al*. (2003:397) argue: "First of all, knowledge now plays an important role in determining a firm's capability to innovate and hence, its long-run effectiveness and survival. Secondly, a growing percentage of the workforce is composed of knowledge workers asking for new and more adequate organisational forms and supporting tools." Figure 1.1 illustrates and analyses the three drivers of knowledge as a pivotal business and managerial resource, to whit structural change, globalisation, and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

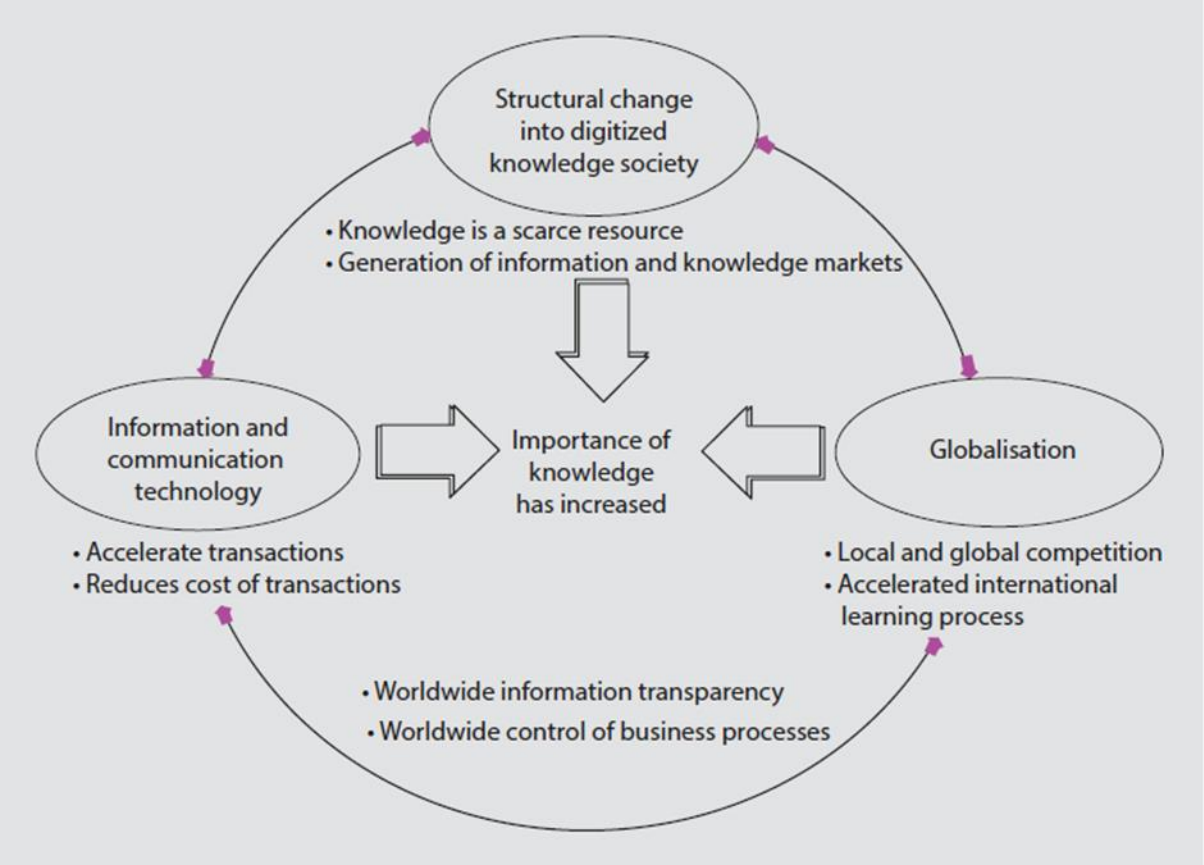

Figure 1.1: Knowledge importance

Source: North and Kumta (2018:3)

Concomitantly, not only has the knowledge and its management become vital in business and the economy-at-large, but the technology to facilitate these assets and processes has also grown in prominence and importance. “Another essential factor to consider is time. In fact, digital transformation acts as a time accelerator. Information and knowledge flow faster and can accelerate all IC management processes” (Matos *et al.*, 2020:3). Kok (2007:183) posits that combining IC, KM and enabling technologies is a prerequisite for creating an information age institution. Also, to grasp KM, relationships between essential types of knowledge and critical “gateway” knowledge must be comprehended (Gillette cited in Bellaver & Lusa, 2001:1).

These facets are even more relevant to CSOs. Civil society (also known as the “third sector” and including the non-governmental, non-profit sector) is currently at the forefront of developing the knowledge economy (Nugroho & Amalia, 2010:2). Due to their broad spectrum of activities and interests, CSOs are regarded as knowledge-

intensive organisations, even though this fact is not regularly recognised (Nugroho & Amalia, 2010:1). Their primary assets are their employees or people who perform certain visible yet intangible tasks. Therefore, people and the knowledge they possess are, the prime assets of CSOs, and they must be managed efficiently and cost-effectively.

The latter-day civil society environment is rapidly changing and could be volatile. CSOs' programmes and projects increasingly depend on high-quality information and knowledge to face their challenges (Amarakoon & Amarakoon, 2013:2).
This will ensure that they fashion and implement appropriate strategies to achieve high performance, competitive advantages, innovation and other development processes using collaborative practices.

Despite this ubiquity and importance of knowledge in CSOs, scholarly research on this nexus between KM and civil society has been relatively rare compared to studies in the private and public sectors (Nugroho & Amalia, 2010:1). This is unsurprising for at least two reasons. Firstly, the knowledge in these organisations is highly eclectic and comprehensive but unstable. At the same time, knowledge is not viewed as an important resource for the organisation (Lettieri *et al.* in Nugroho & Amalia, 2010:2). Secondly, managing knowledge is not a priority for CSOs and this has resulted in vast deficiencies in management practices in this sector. "This, in turn, has created a vicious circle, resulting in more and more knowledge in civil society left unmanaged – a condition that needs to be remedied" (Nugroho & Amalia, 2010:2).

Moreover, Covid-19 has wrought havoc in South Africa and elsewhere, and the challenges related to the pandemic and political and economic issues require agility and swift responses. This means that people staffing and assisting CSOs must be able to make quicker and better decisions while employing fewer resources. They will also have to deal with increasingly complex and novel problems. For instance, CSOs provide answers about citizens' rights, influence official political structures' decision-making, mobilise experts and monitor the impact of policies on the populace (Gumede, 2018).

At the same time, they need to remain competitive to secure financing from members and donors. This means retaining staff, cutting costs, innovating, outperforming their competitors and fulfilling their core duties. This is where KM comes into play. “An organisation needs to know its business environment (its activities, resources, markets, customers, products, services, and costs) to plan for its current and future success. This knowledge, which could allow for the organisation’s successful functioning, needs to be disseminated organisation-wide” (Pellisier & Kruger, 2011: 3). After all, being responsive to the needs of customers is not the sole preserve of profit-driven companies (Siachou *et al.*, 2019:216). To overcome resource scarcity and provide high-quality service, non-governmental organisations utilise processes which “are marked by learning and knowledge” (Neague, 2013:568).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Some local studies (Ncoyini & Cilliers, 2020) have measured KM practices in the public sector, while others have assessed KM practices in the private sector (Labuschagne, 2020; Tobin & Volavsek, 2006). Some studies (De Vasconcelos *et al.*, 2006; Nugroho & Amalia, 2008; Smith & Lumba, 2008) have examined KM's role in global non-governmental organisations.

Hence, there is a complete absence of research on KM in South African CSOs. Although being knowledge-intensive organisations, civil society entities do not seem to bother with managing knowledge (Nugroho & Amalia, 2008). In light of the increasingly vital role that civil society plays in various spheres of society, their unique functions and needs as opposed to the private and public sectors, and the financial and capacity constraints they face, KM should be a lynchpin of their success. The problem this research addresses is the deficient state of KM strategies in civil society.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 Primary objective

The primary research objective in this study is to devise a KMS for the CSO, viz., Afriforum.

1.4.2 Secondary objectives

In attaining the primary objective, the following secondary objectives will be addressed:

SO1: Determining the degree to which KM is already being practised in Afriforum;
SO2: Investigating the KM needs/gaps and opportunities at Afriforum;
SO3: Determining the internal and external sources of TK and EK;
SO4: Establishing which challenges about KM and a LO exist at Afriforum;
SO5: Recommending which tools and methods best suit a KMS at AfriForum.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Primary question

How is a KMS devised for a CSO?

1.5.2 Secondary questions

Q1: What KM practices are being incorporated in AfriForum?
Q2: What competencies and skills will be needed to incorporate KM practices at AfriForum?
Q3: How are you gaining and sharing knowledge at work and outside the organisation?
Q4: What resources are needed to improve or implement KM practices?
Q5: Are there specific tools you will need to improve or implement management practices?
Q6: What knowledge do you still need to gain in your job?
Q7: What gaps do you see within the KM structure?
Q8: What opportunities do you see within the KM structure?
Q9: Explain the internal sources you can identify within the KM structure.
Q10: Explain the external sources you can identify within the KM structure.
Q11: When considering the above, can you mention possible challenges you foresee within the KM structure for AfriForum?
Q12: Are there any further suggestions you would like to make to assist decision-making about the KM structure for AfriForum?

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is confined to full-time employees and managers at Afriforum. Most participants are located at its head office in Centurion, Gauteng, but some are at the Cape Town regional office. These employees are all involved in rendering services and are considered knowledge workers. Although the present study will be exclusively applicable to the unique exigencies and structure of AfriForum, there will undoubtedly be overlapping features with other CSOs. The findings could serve as a basis for further examination of the application of KM strategies at these organisations.

1.7 FIELD OF STUDY

The study straddles several fields of study and could be considered a multidisciplinary topic. It covers human resources, as well as operational and strategic management.

1.7.1 Sector under investigation

This research focuses specifically on AfriForum as a CSO without a profit motive. It was established in 2006 and has grown to over 300 000 paying members. It is currently the largest CSO in South Africa and so too in the Southern Hemisphere in terms of membership and arguably also influence (Afriforum, 2022a). Despite its successes in being a civil watchdog, it has no current strategy to manage its knowledge – arguably its most precious asset – as a non-profit service organisation. It can achieve exponentially more if knowledge is better infused and shared among its workforce. Thus, the applicable sector to be probed is civil society.

1.7.2 Geographical demarcation

AfriForum has employees and offices of various sizes across South Africa, but the participants mainly work at its head office in Centurion, Gauteng, and its secondary regional office in Cape Town. The head office is the organisation's major decision-making centre, housing most top- and mid-level managers.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study followed a qualitative and inductive approach. No theory was tested because a case study is deductive in nature. It was also be the most feasible method as participants across the organisation were available for interviews, and participation will be robust. A thorough but succinct literature review have been conducted to outline the most important concepts and terms and provide an overview of scholarly research

on the research question. Employees (some being managers) from most departments at Afriforum were the study population designated for analysis. There are roughly 180 employees at Afriforum, and approximately 10% of all employees (15 in total) were interviewed.

The data were manually analysed by extracting themes and using Excel to group emergent themes as per the thematic analysis method. The amount of gathered data in this study was not large and the researcher is more conversant with Excel than other software programmes. Brookfield (2021) argues that Excel can be effectively used in noth qualitative and quantitative research, it is more accessible than specialised software, and its recognisable interface renders it more intuitive to navigate. The study possessed internal and external reliability due to the ability to replicate it in organisational settings – albeit not with the same results – and the researcher was be assisted by his study leader. An audit trail was be established by way of audio recordings being kept for verification purposes.

The North-West University's Business School granted the researcher ethical clearance to conduct the study. The topic of the research was both worthy and non-intrusive. The interviews had been once-off, brief and scheduled, and participants were not bothered at work or home. The participants were given an informed consent form to sign before the research commenced, and they could withdraw at any time during the interview and refuse that their utterances be used in the study.

1.9 STUDY LAYOUT

The study is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 deals with aspects such as the background to the study, the problem statement, the primary and secondary research objectives and questions, conceptual definitions of important terms such as knowledge, IC and KM, and the scope and field of study. A brief overview of the research methodology is provided.

Chapter 2 contains a literature review of relevant terms for the study. This includes the scholarly exploration and analysis of terms and concepts such as knowledge, KM,

KMSs and KS, TK and EK, and civil society and AfriForum. The importance and benefits of KM are also examined in this chapter.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, research framework, data sampling and collection, as well as ethical considerations. Qualitative research techniques and their attendant concepts and methods, such as interpretivism and thematic analysis, are discussed because they are the philosophical lodestars for this study.

Chapter 4 comprises the data analysis. The data extracted from the 15 interviews were divided into themes and sub-themes and analysed conducted.

Chapter 5 summarises the findings and is linked to the relevant literature while recommendations are formulated.

1.10 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 outlined the study's background and its problem statement. The next chapter contains a review of relevant literature for the study. The respective research questions and objectives, conceptual definitions, research methodology, scope and field of study were also examined.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 addressed the background of the study, and this chapter will cover the literature about KM. Aspects such as knowledge, KM, KMSs, TK and EK, KM's success and failure factors, its importance, and civil society are examined in the chapter.

2.2 KNOWLEDGE, KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

It is apt to start a discussion on KM with a brief explanation of what "knowledge" comprises. After all, it is the commodity that is managed, provided, created and consumed during this process. As Semertzaki (2017:572) argues: "Data, information, knowledge and wisdom are the pivotal assets for the functioning of organisations. The process of knowledge creation flows though a continuum where data transforms into information and information transforms into knowledge." Elsewhere, knowledge is described as a high-value type of information fused with experience, context, interpretation, intuition and ingenuity (Fombad, 2018:197). A corollary to this is using this knowledge to innovate and use it in subsequent decisions and actions.

With this clarification and distinction, KM can be defined and elucidated. It must be borne in mind, though, that as is the case with the concept of knowledge, KM is beset by different perspectives, which reflect the heterogeneity of the concept (Fombad, 2016:197). Nevertheless, some broad themes and terms emerge from the abundance of definitions of this concept. Hume and Hume (2008:129) provide a concise but helpful definition: "Knowledge is the process that 'manages' (collection, categorisation, analysis and distribution) information across the organisation's value chain to support operational and strategic decision-making." Semertzaki (2018:574) describes KM as "the practices of generating, capturing, collecting, disseminating, and reusing know-how people create in organisations".

The Gartner Group (2022) describes it as follows: “KM is a business process that formalises the management and use of an enterprise’s intellectual assets. KM promotes a collaborative and integrative approach to creating, capturing, organising, accessing and using information assets.” Kaur (2022) clarifies it with the following definition: “KM is the process of creating, identifying, and managing knowledge of an organisation and structuring it for effective and efficient usage by employees and teams.” Finally, Hamid (2021:3) posits that KM is defined as “the systematic management of an organisation’s knowledge assets for creating value and meeting tactical and strategic requirements”.

In essence, all these definitions have some threads and similarities in common. By surveying their content, it is clear that KM is about creating, finding and managing knowledge within organisations to achieve business success. Organisational knowledge includes “revenue expansion strategies, recruitment best practices, winning bids to special employee skills in certain tasks, internal IT disciplines, and legal team strategies, among others” (Kaur, 2022).

Now that a more lucid picture of KM has emerged, KMSs as a structured extension of this phenomenon can be explored. As Kaur (2022) asserts: “A KMS is a well-documented source of direction for the company. Essentially, it is the blueprint of the organisation's goals in terms of identification, storage, and sharing of existing and new knowledge, which include the business challenges that need to be solved across departments.” Hill (2021) gives a similar description: “A KMS is a plan of action that outlines how your organisation will manage and centralise company information, data, and knowledge to improve productivity and efficiencies. The most successful strategies are aligned closely with individual department and company-wide objectives.”

A KMS could also be defined as transforming the intellectual assets of the organisation represented in the recorded information and the talents of its members into greater productivity, new values and increased competition (Murray cited in Hamid *et al.*, 2014:3). The KMS is also integral in formulating the overall business strategy of the general organisation. Thus, the KMS includes assigning valuable and sizeable

resources to KM (Hamid *et al.*, 2014:3). Figure 2.2. briefly outlines the processes and aspects involved in KM.

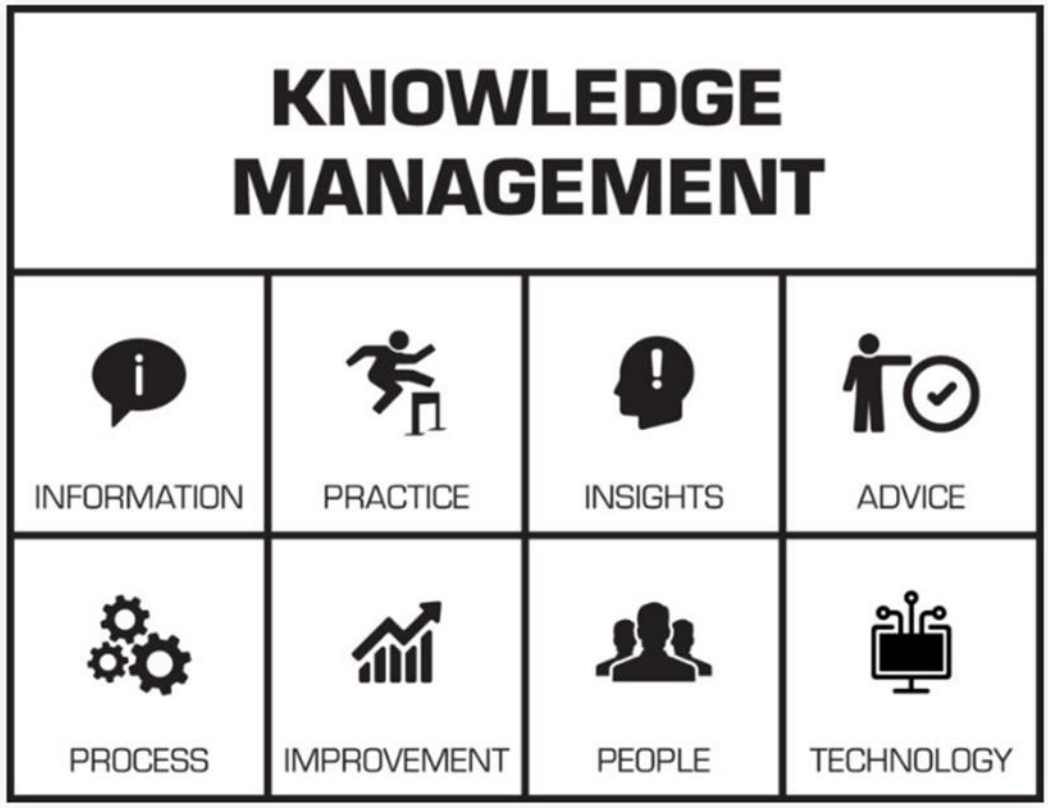

Figure 2.1: Knowledge management

Source: KMS Lighthouse (2022)

2.3 TACIT AND EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE

Therefore, KM comprises a method employed by organisations to manage (such as its gathering, diffusion, exploitation and creation) codified and TK assets to gain a competitive advantage (Davenport & Prusak cited in Sanzogni *et al.*, 2017:38). “TK (or know-how) is knowledge ‘in the heads of the people’, while EK is articulated, documented and stored” (Fombad, 2018:197). EK is easily captured, codified and stored. It is disseminated in various data formats using formal and systematic language (Nonaka *et al.* cited in Huang *et al.*, 2016:493). EK is usually stored using documents, files and computer systems for easy and swift reference and retrieval purposes. However, TK is personal and difficult to formalise and convey (Huang *et al.*, 2016:493).

TK is created and acquired through people's interactions during training, education, workshops, seminars, storytelling, mentoring and apprenticeships (Nonaka & Takeuchi cited in Fombad, 2018:197). According to Sanzogni *et al.* (2017:42), there are three types of TK. First, relational (or weak) knowledge is kept secret because of certain social conventions, power and politics. Some examples are not telling your boss in advance if you are planning to resign or refraining from asking your boss for a raise if they are in a foul mood (Sanzogni *et al.*, 2017:42). Somatic TK is concealed due to human beings' inability to rationally explain how we give cognitive direction to certain complex physical movements, although they can be generalised. Finally, collective TK is only relevant and learnable in a social environment (Sanzogni *et al.*, 2017:42). Speaking a familiar language or dancing at a social event are among collective TK's references.

Jasimuddin and Zhang (2014:1491) propose two very different strategies for managing knowledge. The personalisation strategy revolves around storing TK in people's heads and conveying such knowledge through a personal interface. The codifications strategy focuses on EK that is easily articulated and stored in computers or a relevant artefact (Jasimuddin and Zhang, 2014:1491).

2.4 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TOOLS

KMTs are varied and comprise technological and interpersonal means. Covid-19 resulted in a rapid rise in remote working. Technological tools are more prominent, and the line between interpersonal and technological tools is blurred. ICTs have advanced KM in organisations. Many firms now use ICTs to interact with colleagues and foster the spread of knowledge (Rizk & Kamel, cited in Enakrire & Onyancha, 2020:2). Interpersonal tools have also moved online and continue to facilitate the spread of knowledge over distances in real time – only in a digital setting.

A digital repository comprises a network of systems and services used for ingesting, storing, managing, displaying, retrieving and reusing digital objects (Pinfield *et al.* as cited in Kruesi *et al.*, 2019:2554). Leibowitz (cited in Mazorodze & Buckley, 2020:5) describes knowledge repositories as "online storehouses of expertise and documentation about a specific domain and discipline". These repositories enable organisations to connect knowledgeable people through discussion forums and online

libraries while cutting the time for training recruits due to their self-help attributes (Mazorodze & Buckley, 2020:5). Repositories have evolved in structure and content from being largely geared towards specialist use to Web-based platforms designed for end-users (Kruesi *et al.*, 2019:2554). “Web 2.0-based applications with their flexible, multimedia and use-driven nature could allow more rapid accumulation, storage and dissemination of knowledge and achieve richer levels of intra-organisational interaction and collaboration beyond the boundaries of traditional KM” (Murphy & Salomone cited in Huang *et al.*, 2016:497).

The modern technological tools to disseminate and manage knowledge include cloud computing, cognitive computing, artificial intelligence (AI), analytic tools, enterprise management systems (i.e. supply chain management and customer relationship management), intranets, extranets, social media for the workplace, messaging and video conferencing tools (Weed-Schertzer, 2020:84; Knowledge Management Tools, 2018; Ncoyini & Cilliers, 2020:1). More specifically, current KM programmes and applications include collaborative visual reviewing through Google Drive, document sharing through Wikis and SharePoint, social content generation through blogs and RSS feeds, and knowledge mapping using cognitive and mind mapping software (Agarwal & Islam cited in Huang *et al.*, 2016:497; Sanzogni *et al.*, 2017:48). Intranets and extranets serve as content management systems (Knowledge Management Tools, 2018).

It is noteworthy that technology is merely a distribution instrument, and the emphasis is on the quality, integrity and useability of disseminated knowledge (Weed-Schertzer, 2020:84). “Who is paying attention to quality and validation methods for content being shared in KM environment? To ensure sourced content stored in the knowledge environment contains only the highest quality knowledge will require stringent validation processes” (Weed-Schertzer, 2020:84).

One of the chief personal means to manage knowledge is communities of practice (COP). “This idea, which developed in the ‘OL’ movement, posits that knowledge flows best through networks of people who may not be in the same part of the organisation, but have the same work interests” (Brown & Duguid cited in Grové & Davenport, 2001:8). COPs comprise groups of people who share knowledge, concerns or

interests in a specific field of interest through their continuing interaction and by generally using ICTs (Chakravarthy, 2015:45).

Sachania (2021) notes that storytelling is the most effective and oldest medium to transfer messages. The value of stories is the eliciting of TK and allowing people to vicariously view the world through the eyes of people that are very different from themselves (Petrick, 2014:54). Humans memorise stories better than raw facts and easily relate them to their personal experiences. “In an organisation people often come together as teams, groups, and communities. Narrative techniques during these sessions help people collaborate and learn from each other’s experiences as they have a context missing in the traditional form of meetings” (Sachania, 2021).

Other personal (or non-IT) forms include mentoring – more personal in a one-on-one setting – and cross-functional project teams (Knowledge Management Tools, 2015a). The latter, in essence, denotes the assembly of project teams from members performing different functions of the organisation. The custom would be to select several specialists under a generalist project manager (Knowledge Management Tools, 2015c).

2.5 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS

Although challenging to characterise, KM yields many advantages to organisations – permitted that it is well-planned and optimally performed. Johannessen (2018:1-2) contends that knowledge is now the strategically most important resource for companies, and as a result, there is renewed interest in OL and innovation. Yee *et al.* (2019:1) declare that employees are now viewed as organisational assets and that these intellectual assets and competencies now trump the more tangible variety in delivering economic prowess. Contemporary novel inventions, especially in the technological sphere, are – more than anything else – the fruits of intellectual labour and effort.

“From a strategic management perspective, firms manage knowledge to sustain their competitiveness, and knowledge becomes the driver for the firm’s competitive advantage” (Kogut & Zander, cited in Bettiol *et al.*, 2020:1-2). According to Yee *et al.* (2019:1), an organisation with a KM system can use strategic expertise effectively for

competitive advantage in the global knowledge economy. “Additionally, an organisation can capitalise on knowledge flows generated through systematic approaches of managing know-how, best practices, and standard operating procedures” (Yee *et al.*, 2019:1). By the same token, Guo (2019:304) asserts that knowledge is regarded widely as the foundation for the improvement companies’ core competitiveness. This process corresponds with a managerial style that is in line with the expectations of employees and which exploits IC (Mirela & Dalia, cited in Guo, 2019:304). Franke and Felfe (2012:138) similarly argue that the effective management of a business’ knowledge has become instrumental in acquiring competitive advantages in the knowledge economy.

These assertions agree that managing knowledge – and not only appointing knowledgeable individuals – raises the quantum of individual and collective knowledge within an organisation. In an epoch of paid change and innovation, teamwork and innovation are some of the most pivotal cogs in the business wheel. “KM enhances the organisation’s performance and leads to the creation of new products bringing them profit” (Semertzaki, 2018:575). This is the essence of gaining a competitive advantage. By properly managing knowledge, individual knowledge can be translated into collective and organisational knowledge with a larger multiplier effect.

This is not to say that the older means of production – namely labour, land, capital and entrepreneurship – have become obsolete. Renowned management expert Peter Drucker contends these factors now require knowledge and ingenuity as an overlay to enhance them and bolster productivity and competitiveness (Jasimuddin & Zhang, 2014:1490). The best use of capital, productivity and outcomes of labour, land optimisation, and entrepreneurship's success is now largely contingent upon knowledge and its management. Yang and Ying (2015:169) explain: “A business should devote itself to constructing, integrating, and reallocating business knowledge. Knowledge needs to be constantly exchanged, shared, and updated, requiring a business to apply dynamic capabilities to improve existing knowledge constantly.” With the emphasis on creating value and espousing excellence and quality for customers, innovation and KM can no longer be ignored (Yang & Ying, 2015:160).

Mohamed (cited in Ncoyini & Celliers, 2020:2) notes that KM in the local government context can potentially improve OL and officials' decision-making. This has a spill-over effect on service delivery and the attainment of business objectives through knowledge sharing between the municipality and its residents. Also, municipalities can improve innovation by crafting their own knowledge bases through trading knowledge with external organisations (Van der Meer, cited in Ncoyini & Cilliers, 2020:2-3). In this way, municipalities can obtain expertise and capabilities cost-efficiently.

KM furthermore strengthens collaboration, which may result in more benefits, such as better decision-making and innovation. "As per a study conducted by the College of Business, Gachon University and College of Global Business, Korea University in January 2020, KS was significantly and positively related to team trust and the perception of collaborative technology moderated the relationship" (Kaur, 2022). Hill (2021) argues that many business challenges emanate from departmental silos fragmenting workplaces. He says that by investing in a KMS, businesses can empower their respective teams to draw from shared knowledge. This leads to decreased duplicated work and errors, faster and better-informed decision-making, increased employee self-sufficiency and confidence, customer service improvements, and improved cross-functional collaboration on new ideas and information (Hill, 2021). Eventually, this fosters efficiency and increased individual and collective productivity. "It helps firms to enhance operational efficiency and save time and effort. A crucial benefit of KM is the elimination of replication of efforts" (Kaur, 2022).

Lastly, KM prepares companies for a crisis and enables digital transformation. As Kaur (2022) asserts, organisations that possess a structured and formalised KM program learn from crises and are hence better prepared to face challenges. Thus, organisations increase in their digitalisation, a well-crafted KM programme enables them to use their structured and unstructured data for their growth and benefit.

In contrast, not sharing or managing knowledge is detrimental to companies' continued success and resilience. The individual-level KS is of utmost importance because it is the basis for all higher-level KS in creating value within an organisation (De Long & Fahey cited in Muhammed & Zaim, 2020:2456). It then follows that employees' inability

or unwillingness to share their knowledge with colleagues harms the most fundamental interests of an organisation (Bavik *et al.* cited in Muhammed & Zaim, 2020:2456).

2.6 REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESS AND FAILURE FACTORS

2.6.1. Success factors

Although KM is ultimately an altruistic and collective function, individuals must be appropriately and creatively incentivised and empowered to share and manage knowledge.

Incentivising KM and the sharing and informing people of others' knowledge exigencies are two factors that improve the chances for KM success. Monetary rewards and including this function in employees' key performance indicators (KPIs) could motivate participation in the process. Bonus systems tied to knowledge provision are but one example of this (Cress *et al.* cited in Matschke *et al.*, 2012:163). In a study on KM at international consulting firms, Ambos and Schlegelmilch (2009:498) found that nearly all the companies that were surveyed did indeed include surveyed included KS and management in their appraisal schemes. Moreover, Matschke *et al.* (2012:163) argue: "People's readiness to invest time and effort in passing on knowledge will be greater if they know who the others are, what the others know and which information they really need."

Leadership styles also have a significant bearing on the implementation of KM strategies. KM research suggests combining many leadership styles (such as transformational, charismatic and transactional) is necessary for KM success (Hall in Hume & Hume, 2008:132). Over and above the requisite styles and leadership support for KM, "KM champions" are required at every level or functional area of the organisation to drive the process forward and ameliorate the difficulties that frequently arise (Jones *et al.* in Hume & Hume, 2008:132).

Ambos and Schlegelmilch (2009:495) found that there needs to be an alignment between people, systems and business processes to integrate KM in organisations. "Naturally, IT systems alone cannot create value for the firm. They have to be used by people and aligned with business processes" (Ambos and Schlegelmilch, 2009:495)The inference is that the overall strategy and operational processes that

support it must be heeded and followed when KM strategies are fashioned and executed. In addition, it is argued that knowledge integration and management are products and causal factors of high-level internal connectivity (Johannessen, 2018:13). Internal connectivity could be seen as a common value system, shared visions and mental models, and knowledge shaped by experience (Johannessen, 2018:13). External ties are indispensable, too. “To get access to this knowledge, companies need relations to its customers and other external actors” (Johannessen, 2018:13). These other actors may include suppliers and other links in the supply chain, as well as industry experts. This will determine present and future market trends, customer desires and industry trends. Therefore, open communication between various stakeholders in a rather complex business ecosystem is vital.

4.2.1 Failure factors

Several barriers exist that could complicate or thwart the institution of KMSs. These include organisational, human, technical, financial and political factors (Abidi cited in Mohajan, 2009:13). Many of these are simply the converse of the prerequisites for successful KM implementation.

Among the organisational factors are poor management support, poor organisational structures, deficient leadership and organisational structure, a lack of proper planning, a paucity of awareness regarding KM, and a lack of KS.

The human obstacles are intertwined with the organisational barriers, which include the additional staff and time required to attain success, resistance from employees, experienced employees that retire, and a failure to take ownership. These factors lead to poor employee motivation and commitment to making KM thrive (Abidi cited in Mohajan, 2009:13).

“A vast body of extant literature highlights the importance of leadership support and its positive impact on desirable individual behaviours within organisations, and specifically, on individual behaviours oriented toward KS” (Muhammed & Zaim, 2020:2460). These facets signify how important the human component and its attendant skills, such as leadership and teamwork, are in the success or failure of KM initiatives. The type of support they provide and the signals they emit signify the

organisation's values and significantly shape employee attitudes to sharing knowledge with their peers (Muhammed & Zaim, 2020:2460; Riege cited in Tan, 2016:527). Another barrier at the individual level is a lack of trust (Azudin *et al.* cited in Tan, 2016:526). Staff apprehension towards KS, inadequate trust and resistance to change are some of the most significant barriers to overcome when managing knowledge (Fong & Chu cited in Tan, 2016:526).

Business and work revolve around priorities and time. If the value and costs of something novel and esoteric, such as KM, are not properly conveyed to employees and management, it is practically an exercise in futility. People, and managers, in particular, must be cognisant of KM's benefits and value as it relates to their specific area of expertise and responsibility. This could include company-wide strategy, operational matters, innovation, enhanced expertise, and team cohesion. In this sense, having practical hands-on training sessions to explain how KM contributes to the work performance of each employee and the entire company is valuable and necessary (Yee *et al.*, 2019:2). Vested interests exist within an organisation. Therefore, many people perceive KM as a threat to their position of power because of internal tension and competition. Therefore, KM practitioners should incorporate political barriers because it denotes the challenges in crafting a meritocracy of ideas and knowledge markets (Abidi cited in Mohajan, 2017:13). The egalitarian nature and dissemination of knowledge associated with KM certainly have the potential to raise the ire of some parties within companies. It is for this reason that buy-in from top management is the first-order of business when it comes to crafting and implementing KM strategies and practices. This ensures that it becomes a necessary and strategic priority and receives subsequent assistance from lower management levels. This might not excise all political hurdles, but it is an integral step in ensuring a degree of throughput and accountability.

The last two barriers constitute the technical and financial components. These are equally important, as, without these resources, a KMS will likely come to nought eventually. The technical obstacles encompass inadequate infrastructure, substandard IT design and planning, deficient networking, unmet training needs, and a dearth of maintenance (Abidi cited in Mohajan, 2017:13). People work hand-in-glove with technology to glean and impart knowledge. Suppose the technical tools are faulty,

arcane, and complex in terms of operation. In that case, it is probable and even inevitable that knowledge will not be shared, received and leveraged for its intended purposes. It will remain static and unused and forfeit its dynamic qualities.

Tied to this are financial challenges, such as a lack of investment in KM and IT infrastructure to support it. Moreover, personnel training will be necessary too. It is an accomplished fact that adding a new business function and accompanying activities to an organisation will require monetary resources raised or diverted from other business functions. Although perhaps not as expensive as other functions, and depending on the extent of their scope, it is also safe to assume that KMS's will not be rendered on the cheap. Economic downturns, low business confidence and weak performance, are likely to affect the allocation of money to KM as a business function.

The rule of scarcity and the possible reallocation of resources from other departments and divisions to KM will certainly induce political and human obstacles, such as resistance to KM and a lack of participation. Besides being a direct implementation stumbling block, the financial aspect is a possible trigger factor for other obstacles, such as a lack of collaboration and cooperation.

As with many other business processes, the lack of an appropriate culture within any unit that serves as a setting for KM is a principal barrier (Hume & Hume, 2008:131). Culture is the "river" along which knowledge flows and everything else to do with business. The right culture breeds goodwill and voluntary compliance and supersedes political disputes. This emphasis on culture is corroborated by Tan (2016:529) in terms of KM at universities. Based on the research by various authors and researchers, two categories of KM failure factors, to whit causal and resultant, are delineated (Knowledge Management Tools, 2014). Casual failure factors stem from the fundamental problems of organisations, and these, in turn, give rise to ill-suited conditions for KM to flourish. These factors are not always visible and result in several symptoms, dubbed the resultant factors.

The causal factors echo many of the human and organisational factors that have already been discussed and which stymie KM: Lack of performance indicators and measurable benefits, inadequate management support, improper planning, design,

coordination, and evaluation, the insufficient skill of knowledge managers and workers, problems with organisational culture, and the wrong organisational structure. The resultant failure factors include the following: Lack of widespread contribution; lack of relevance, quality, and useability; overemphasis on formal learning, systematisation, and determinant needs; improper implementation of technology; improper budgeting and high costs; lack of responsibility and ownership; loss of knowledge from staff defection and retirement (Knowledge Management Tools, 2014).

Hence, without a suitable culture and structure and robust leadership to facilitate KM, the process falls short regarding relevance, quality and costs. The danger is that it could drift into irrelevance and waste money and resources by incorporating extraneous activities and knowledge that are ill-suited to the business processes. However, top-level buy-in is insufficient and could serve as a promising starting point. If KM is to succeed, it must be less discursive and haphazard and possess dedicated personnel tasked with its operational aspects, strategy and objectives.

2.7 CIVIL SOCIETY AND AFRIFORUM

The World Bank (2021) defines civil society as follows: “Civil society... refers to a wide array of organisations: community groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and foundations.” Contemporary South African CSOs have a significant bearing on the country's social, political and economic development (Human Sciences Research Council as cited by National Development Agency, 2020:5). Simultaneously, they face many challenges, such as the lack of capacity, funding and knowledge. Hence, KM in these organisations is limited and very informal (Lettieri *et al.,* as cited by Hume *et al.*, 2012:83).

AfriForum is a non-profit civil rights organisation that came into existence on 26 March 2006 (Afriforum, 2022a). “The organisation was created to call up Afrikaners to participate in public debate and actions outside party politics. AfriForum is not an ordinary organisation, but a tool for us and our descendants to create a better future” (Afriforum, 2022a). Functions of the organisation encompass 1) neighbourhood watches and branches (run by member-volunteers with the help of full-time staff) in various locations around South Africa, 2) community services (i.e. municipal

regeneration), 3) a Pretoria-based theatre, 4) AfriForum TV (a new Afrikaans streaming service), 5) projects and campaigns, 6) intercultural cooperation, 7) a focus on heritage and culture, 8) the promotion of mother-tongue and quality education, 9) research on relevant matters, 10) safety, and 11) sport for the youth (Afriforum, 2022b).

Some local studies (Ncoyini & Cilliers, 2020) have measured KM practices in the public sector, while others have assessed KM practices in the private sector (Tobin & Volavsek, 2006; Labuschagne, 2020). Some studies (De Vasconcelos *et al.*, 2006; Nugroho & Amalia, 2008; Smith & Lumba, 2008) have examined KM's role in global NGOs.

Although being knowledge-intensive organisations, CSOs do not seem to bother with managing knowledge (Nugroho & Amalia, 2008). Hence, there is a complete dearth of research on KM in South African CSOs. In light of the increasingly vital role that civil society has to play in various spheres of society, their unique functions and needs as opposed to the private and public sectors, and the financial and capacity challenges they face, KM should be a lynchpin of their success.

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined and examined the literature on the relevant concepts relating to this study. The next chapter investigates the methodology employed to achieve the research objectives.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to provide a thorough analysis of the research methodology that was employed in this study. Aspects such as the research framework, data collection methods, research methodology, data analysis approach and ethical considerations will be scrutinised.

3.2 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

According to Godfrey (2019), the research framework provides the underlying structure or model that guides our research efforts. “A framework helps us determine the right approach and methods to apply in a given situation based on what we're trying to learn. It also helps to structure and plan our research activities according to the breadth and scope of what we are trying to learn” (Godfrey, 2019).

As such, this study departed from an epistemological viewpoint that is interpretivist in nature. “Interpretive researchers believe that reality consists of people’s subjective experiences of the external world; thus, they may adopt an inter-subjective epistemology and the ontological belief that reality is socially constructed…” Furthermore, “The interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals” (Unisa, 2022). As such, researchers employing this framework or paradigm focus on meaning (versus measurement) oriented methodologies – such as interviewing or participant observation – that centre on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects. In fact, interpretivism encompasses views that are sceptical and critical of the scientific methods of the social world and hence contrasts with positivism (Bryman *et al.*, 2011:14).

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methods associated with the interpretivist paradigm were utilised to achieve and answer the research objectives and questions. Teherani *et al.* (2015:669) describe qualitative research as follows: “Qualitative research is the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. These phenomena include, but are not

limited to, how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals and/or groups behave, how organisations function, and how interactions shape relationships. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main data collection instrument." As far as interpretivism goes, this phenomenon has its roots in hermeneutics, which revolves around the theory and practice of *interpretation* (Intgrty, 2016). "Interpretivism is a softer and more subjective way to interpret data. This perspective holds that individuals, in their reasoning, do not have access to the real world, suggesting that their knowledge of the perceived world is meaningful in its own terms and can be understood through careful use of interpretivist procedures" (Intgrty, 2016).

Quantitative methods were preferred over qualitative methods in order to develop rich ideas about KM at Afriforum. The expected low response rate of questionnaires and the inability to ask follow-up questions to gain a better understanding of certain practices, also played a role in this preference.

Because the study examined one organisation in a single setting and sought to unearth the finer details of KM at AfriForum, it will be a case study. "Case study design involves the detailed and intensive analysis of one or more cases which the researcher aims to study in-depth" (Bryman *et al.*, 2011:43). The "case" may, *inter alia*, refer to a person (e.g. an employee), a group (e.g. a department), an organisation (e.g. a business), or an event (e.g. an annual general meeting) (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:196). Also, interpretivist researchers are seeking to generate rich, detailed and nuanced descriptions of their case studies (Ridder cited in Saunders *et al.*, 2019:196).

3.3.1 Research design

The study followeda qualitative and inductive approach. It was also the most feasible method as participants across the organisation were available for interviews, and participation will be robust. This would prove most valuable in an inductive study that aims to make new findings and identify inherent patterns (Bryman *et al.*, 2011:43). No theory was tested because a case study is a deductive study.

A thorough but succinct literature review was conducted to outline the most important concepts and terms and provide an overview of scholarly research on the research question. The study will employed empirical and non-empirical techniques. Interviews

were conducted with participants in the organisation, and their responses were interpreted. This comprised the empirical part. One-on-one interviews with semi-structured and open-ended questions were conducted with the participants. Probing questions were also used where more information was needed.

3.4.2 Research paradigm

Seeing as the study was be qualitative, the interpretivist approach was used. Interpretivism borrows views from various intellectual traditions and regards the application of scientific methods to study the social world as invalid (Bryman *et al.*, 2011:14).

As such, the paradigm departs from the premise that the social world (people and their institutions) differs markedly from the natural world and requires a different research model that incorporates the subjective meaning of social action. Grint (as cited in Bryman *et al.*, 2011:14) contends that effective leadership depends on managing subjective meaning. According to him, it is impossible to define, identify and measure "good" leadership based solely on the leader's attributes. In contrast, leadership is, first and foremost, a social phenomenon viewed through the subjective eyes of followers rather than the specific action of individual leaders.

3.4.3 Study population and sampling

The participantswere chosen based on their respective roles within the organisation and their relative knowledge of KM. Some participants are in managerial roles and have a firm grasp of the concepts that pertain to KM. However, they were not overly cognisant of, or familiar with, the official discipline. The rest were non-managerial employees also familiar with various KM concepts and tools. They were chosen for this basic (but essential) knowledge, availability and willingness to be interviewed, and the fact that they hail from various departments within the organisation. Therefore, they ostensibly hold different views on many aspects that were discussed. However, the participants are culturally relatively homogenous, and although they may work in different departments, they are part of one organisation and, therefore, familiar with the available systems and aspects of Afriforum as a whole. They numbered 15 in total. Most participants were interviewed in person or otherwise contacted via Microsoft Teams.

In this sense, the sampling technique employed in this research could be described as purposeful sampling. “Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources” (Patton cited in Palinkas *et al.*, 2015:534). Furthermore, this entails identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially conversant with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark cited in Palinkas *et al.*, 2015:534), while their availability, willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions clearly and compellingly were also noteworthy considerations (Bernard cited in Palinkas *et al.*, 2015:534).

These criteria generate an understanding of each department’s functions, knowledge base and needs with a view to crafting a KMS. This was done to study the gaps between knowledge and business needs, as well as between knowledge expectations and existing knowledge. It must be noted that the researcher and the participants are co-workers, but Afriforum in no way funded the research.

Employees, especially managers from most departments at AfriForum, were the study population designated for analysis. There are roughly 180 employees at Afriforum, and approximately 10% of all employees (15 in total) were interviewed. The participants are culturally relatively homogenous, and although they might work in different departments, they are part of one organisation and are relatively familiar with the Afriforum. This should increase precision and the streamlining of answers and findings. Most participants were interviewed in person or otherwise contacted via Microsoft Teams.

Since training and skills development are essential priorities at Afriforum and skills and knowledge needs are regularly expressed, there were no physical or organisational hindrances to conducting this research. The sample size allows for relative depth and width in the study, and travel costs did not matter because the participants were nearby, readily available, and willing to participate.

All participants signed informed consent forms to indicate their willingness to participate. Participants can also view the findings after the information was gleaned from them, while anonymity and voluntary participation were guaranteed.

3.4.4 Data collection

The researcher personally contacted the participants and requested them to participate in the study. The participants were contacted via email to inform them of the intention to interview them and the nature of the research. They were asked whether online or in-person real-time interviews were suited to their needs. A date, time and place/method were then agreed upon and most interviews were conducted in person while some were conducted via online means through Microsoft Teams. The interviews lasted roughly 30 to 40 minutes each, and the participants were free to withdraw at any time, but none did. All interviews were recorded on the researcher's cellphone.

Before the process commenced, permission to perform the research was granted in writing by the chief executive officer (CEO) of AfriForum. Before he gave permission, the operational forum discussed the research request and duly approved its execution. In the written request to the CEO, it was stated that the participants would be probed on, among other matters, their knowledge needs and their desired means for KM. The researcher explained the purpose of the research, how it would be conducted and that all interviews and information arising from it, the purpose of the research, how it will be conducted, and that all interviews and information from it will be confidential. It was also made abundantly clear that the participant's involvement in the interviews was voluntary and that they could, at any time, refuse the use of their contributions to the research.

Following the granting of this permission, the selected participants were contacted via email containing a summary of the purpose and process of the research, the approved proposal for the mini-dissertation containing the questions that would be posed, and the permission letter from the CEO.

One-on-one interviews with semi-structured and open-ended questions were conducted with full-time employees of AfriForum, in person at the organisation's head office but some via Microsoft Teams. These employees included managers and rank-and-file members from various departments, such as community affairs, community safety, human resources, trauma and disaster relief units, media relations, and the research division. Follow-up questions were often asked to probe certain matters in

greater detail. This was done to elicit rich insights into the business and IC needs of the organisation. The interviews were all conducted in Afrikaans and transcribed by the researcher when analysing the data. The participants' and researcher's mother tongue is Afrikaans and this simply made it easier for the participants in particular to express themselves. Some interviewees expressed their discomfort about doing it in any other language upfront. Their answers were unambiguous and could easily be translated into English. All 15 interviews were recorded on a recording app on the researcher's cellphone, to which only the researcher has access. The individual interviews lasted between 30 and 40 minutes, and some participants allowed the researcher to pose further questions via email or WhatsApp if the need arose. However, this was unnecessary, as all the required information was acquired during the interviews.

There are stark and apparent differences between the interviewing process during qualitative and quantitative studies. "The qualitative approach tends to be less structured, and the initial research ideas are formulated more broadly. In contrast, quantitative research interviews are structured to answer a clearly specified set of research questions and to maximise reliability and validity" (Bryman *et al.*, 2011). Qualitative research interviews are open-ended, meaning that interviewees are not limited to a particular set of answers (such as "yes or no", or a set of possible options) but have free rein to answer the questions as per their interpretation and opinion. Moreover, unstructured interviews differ from semi-structured ones. Whereas the researcher will perhaps begin with only a single question and allow the interviewee to speak freely, the semi-structured interview is guided by a set of predetermined questions. Thereafter, follow-up questions may be posed depending on the provided answers (Bryman *et al.*, 2011). This permits the researcher and participants to discuss the topic of interest in greater depth and entails the deep exploration of participants' beliefs, experiences and thoughts (Delve, 2022).

3.4.5 Data analysis

The data were manually analysed by extracting themes and using Excel to group emergent themes as per the thematic analysis method.

This study wa an interpretivist and qualitative study. It employed data analysis methods such as coding, qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. Coding means that the original data will be partly retained as is, while other parts will be "coded" or interpreted by the researcher (Bryman *et al.*, 2011:336). Also, categories are created from the emerging data, and the secondary research questions guide this. Transcripts and recordings are read and reread to identify patterns, categories or themes to generate theoretical ideas.

According to Bryman *et al.* (2011:354), qualitative content analysis is a core component of the coding methods frequently used in the analysis of coding techniques, and it starts with the researcher reading the texts – which could be in printed, electronic or verbal form – to grasp the data as a whole. Words are then highlighted to capture key concepts, which are grouped into further categories and subcategories. These techniques will be employed throughout the present study by analysing the statements during the interviews.

Lastly, thematic analysis entails identifying, analysing and describing patterns, or themes, in a mass of data (Bryman *et al.*, 2011:350). As with the abovementioned methods, this involves transcribing the data, familiarising yourself with it, repeatedly poring over it, generating and naming themes, and producing the final report. The thematic analysis method was employed to parse the data. This method is used for analysing qualitative data that involves searching across a data set to identify, analyse, and report patterns that repeat themselves (Braun & Clarke cited in Kiger & Varpio, 2020:2; Bryman *et al.*, 2011:350). "It is a method for describing data, but it also involves interpretation in selecting codes and constructing themes. A distinguishing feature of thematic analysis is its flexibility to be used within a wide range of theoretical and epistemological frameworks and to be applied to a wide range of study questions, designs, and sample sizes" (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:2).

Also, in thematic analysis, the informed judgement of the researcher is vital in establishing what qualifies as a theme and determining the theme's relative importance.

3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The study will possess external reliability as it can be repeated in other organisational settings, albeit not with the same results and in a different social setting. For instance, the methodology and research problem are all perfectly replicable within other environments.

Moreover, the researcher conducted medium-length interviews with participants but a saturation point was never quite reached and the respective questions' answers were quite wide-ranging. The researcher received ample assistance from his study leader in processing the responses, and internal reliability will therefore not be problematic. Internal validity was ensured by interviewing a representative cross-section of people from various departments in the organisation with open-ended questions. Because KM is not a topic most people are conversant with, concepts sometimes had to be explained and examples provided. This is why interviews with predetermined questions were selected as the means to extract data and follow-up questions were also posed to gain a deeper understanding or further clarity. Firm conclusions could ultimately be drawn and the research objectives sufficiently achieved. The questions, findings and recommendations in this study are of a general nature and could conceivably also be applicable to research about KM in other CSOs to varying degrees – thus enhancing external validity (transferability).

Participants were provided with the researcher's transcriptions of their interviews to verify their accuracy to ensure rigour and trustworthiness. This was called respondent validation (Bryman *et al.*, 2011:44). Another issue is dependability. This means that the degree of dependability of a study depends on the ability of other researchers to follow the initial researcher's decision trail (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011:153). In doing so, the researcher established an audit trail by meticulously documenting the entire research process and methods and describing the purpose of the study. The audio recordings of the interviews were also kept and readily available for verification.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The North-West University's Business School has granted the researcher ethical clearance to conduct the study. There are several reasons why ethics is vital in research. Broadly speaking, Resnik (2020) notes that the most common way of

defining "ethics" is to describe them as norms that distinguish between acceptable from unacceptable behaviour. Norms promote the research objectives and virtues, such as knowledge generation, truth and avoiding errors; ethical standards promote collaborative work by building trust and ensuring accountability and fairness; they ensure that the researcher is held accountable to the public and build public confidence in research; and lastly, they provide succour to other ethical objectives, such as complying with the law and promoting human rights (Resnik, 2020). Moreover, Diener and Crandall (cited in Bryman *et al.*, 2011:120) submit that there are four chief considerations as far as ethics in business goes:

- Whether participants are harmed;
- Whether informed consent is lacking;
- Whether privacy is invaded;
- Whether deception is involved.

The topic of the research is both worthy and non-intrusive. The interviews have been once-off, brief and scheduled, and participants have not been bothered at work or home. The topic and findings address the business needs of management, employees, and the organisation.

The participants' participation remained voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time. Anonymity was ensured through a numeric labelling system as pseudonyms (i.e., Participant 1) and by leaving out actual names. However, no rewards or incentives had been offered as this might influence answers and outcomes, bear a further monetary cost and present potential unethical and organisational challenges in future.

The findings and analyses of interviews could have been provided to the participants upon their request. Regarding POPI legislation, the participants and organisation will have complete assurance that the data collected is private and exclusively aimed at the research undertaken. The data and analysis havealso been stored securely in various electronic and paper formats.

All participants participated in the study voluntarily, agreed to their answers being used in the study and signed consent forms approved by the North-West University's ethics

committee. The purpose of the consent forms was to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The informed consent form is an honest appraisal of the anodyne nature and purpose of the research, and no confidential and sensitive information was required from them. No deception or subterfuge was necessary as the research will focus on widely discussed topics within the organisation and its human resource planning. The researcher verbally apprised them before the interview commenced that they may withdraw from the interview at any time or refuse to answer a question they deemed to be sensitive, but none of them did.

Furthermore, the researcher provided a verbal five-minute background description of the topic before the questioning started to inform the participants at least somewhat of what KM entails. The confidentiality of the content of the interviews was subsequently emphasised. They were then requested to raise any objections or questions regarding the topic or process before the formal interview began. All prevailing Covid-19 protocols were adhered to. Lastly, the participants were availed that they have full access to the final document, and some had expressed an interest therein.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the research methodology employed to achieve the desired outcomes of the study. The research framework and methodology, such as the qualitative and interpretivist approaches, were examined, along with the data sampling, collection and analysis methods. The next chapter will subsequently deal with the analysis of the collected data.

CHAPTER 4: DATA REPORTING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The collected data are analysed in this chapter. Thematic analysis was used to craft five main themes, which were divided into several sub-themes (see Table 4.1).

The first main theme is termed “resources and tools”, and it was divided into sub-themes such as the prevailing KM practices at AfriForum and the resources and tools needed for KM. The second main theme encompasses knowledgeability and needs. It includes the desired knowledge to be gained by the participants and the required skills and competencies for KM at AfriForum as sub-themes. The third theme is entitled “structural issues” and addresses the current gaps in KM at the organisation, the opportunities for improvement or implementation of KM practices, and the challenges or barriers for KM at AfriForum. Lastly, the sub-themes of internal and external sources and distribution of knowledge will be examined under the “sources and distribution of knowledge” theme.

Table 4.1: Themes and sub-themes

THEMES	**SUB-THEMES**
RESOURCES AND TOOLS	Prevailing practices
	Resources
	Tools
KNOWLEDGE ABILITY AND NEEDS	Desired knowledge
	Skills and competencies
STRUCTURAL ISSUES	Gaps
	Opportunities
	Challenges

SOURCES AND DISTRIBUTION OF KNOWLEDGE	Internal
	External

4.2 THEME 1: RESOURCES AND TOOLS

4.2.1 Prevailing practices

Technology has enabled organisations to have shared project files where multiple team members can collaborate to manage KS effectively (Sharma & Bajaj, 2020). Many participants indicated that WhatsApp is widely used within the organisation and by them personally to receive and disseminate knowledge. Other technological means and more personal practices, were also broached to varying degrees. Johnson *et al.* (cited in Pimmer *et al*. 2018:336) note in a study on WhatsApp as a knowledge tool in the health sector that this platform, for instance, affords junior employees the chance to converse with more experienced ones and this promotes support and supervision. "The use of this platform could be viewed as an online COP that connected spatially distributed health care professionals in a clinical site" (Pimmer *et al.*, 2018:336).

Participant 1, a client service employee, said that "the most salient ones are Yammer and the WhatsApp channels". Participant 2, a manager in the community safety department, said, "there has been a huge move towards technology, and that KM is being approached more dynamically now". According to Participant 3, a trauma councillor at AfriForum, "WhatsApp is very good for staying in touch with each other". Participant 9, a manager at the language bureau, said, "that the platform where I can acquire knowledge if there is a query about my work and where I can interact with my colleagues about it is WhatsApp, and it is an unbelievable source of knowledge". Participant 6, a media relations practitioner, said he "collects, processes and distributes online media content, as well significant content on Facebook and Twitter to the rest of the organisation, and I have my own databases on Slack where I store relevant stories". He added: "If I think something is important, I will put it on a WhatsApp group and the processing of knowledge entails compiling a news agenda document each day that is distributed via WhatsApp." Participant 11, a manager at the private prosecution unit, stressed that "WhatsApp is definitely important, because it is

easy for me to send a message to verify something and if I am giving the correct advice to a member".

Participant 3 said, "our information is conveyed via email communication, and it creates a complete view of what different departments do, but you would have to make time to consume it". Participant 3 also said that Sharepoint is "very useful, especially within our department". Participant 8, a researcher, said, "the most obvious ways of KM at AfriForum are Sharepoint, Microsoft Teams, Yammer, WhatsApp and the different apps and systems that were implemented over the years". He added, "although I am in favour of decentralisation, there are just so many platforms to keep track of, and it seems like a full-time job to keep abreast of everything". Lastly, he said, "the content on Sharepoint and Yammer are more notifications than knowledge, you do not get any insights from it, and it is a superficial, one-way street and system". Participant 9 agreed: "There is Yammer, there is Sharepoint, but I will be honest and say that I do not really use it that much... I have only really used it to order stationary, and I do not know what people use it for". Participant 11 admitted, "I do not really use Sharepoint for my work because it is easier to simply find that knowledge on the Internet and Sharepoint is confusing". Participant 13, a manager in the operational division, said, "Sharepoint is a nice-to-have and does not really add value (in its current form)". This corresponds with findings from a research study by Dulipovici and Vieru (2015:668-669) on project managers' use of Sharepoint: "Few people really use it, especially one of its main functions: managing project resources and budgets. Hence, required data are missing from the system, and several reports cannot be generated automatically, as planned. After six months, Project/SharePoint is still not the main collaboration tool."

However, Participant 10, a district coordinator at the Cape Town office, said, "Sharepoint is something we all use. It is quick and simple to find information... community safety prefers Telegram, and the other departments all use WhatsApp, but I do not really use Yammer because the content on there is not really applicable to me".

Contact sessions between different and within departments, as well as training (especially practical), were also mentioned. Participant 1 said that she "had been

organising contact sessions with all the (district coordinators)… to do a needs assessment". Participant 5, a district manager within the community affairs department, said the best knowledge practices involve leadership and showing new employees the ropes by setting the example of how to work with people". He admits that "new employees are essentially thrown in at the deep end, and they must quickly learn to swim and learn to work with different people, but documents are available to them on how the processes within the organisation work". Participant 2 held the view that "we now have a holistic training committee that looks at the training needs of different departments". Participant 10 said, "we drink coffee together in the mornings and catch up, while on Fridays we chat about how the week went".

Participant 7, a trauma counsellor, noted, "we have training groups with people in specialist areas who then impart their knowledge through certain projects, but the intranet is insufficient for KM". This contrasts with views that intranets are some of the most efficacious means of managing organisational information and knowledge (Mphidi & Snyman, 2004:395).

Participant 12, a manager at the community safety department, asserted that "training is a crucial aspect (of KM)". He says instead of Sharepoint, "we only use Microsoft Teams and email". Efficient, natural and intuitive knowledge work regularly occurs through email (Lichtenstein & Swatman, 2003:804). Avolio (cited in Fotso, 2021:574) posits that the rapid development of telecommuting and increased usage of virtual teams stem from the development of advanced information technologies, such as emails, message boards, KM systems and information systems.

Participant 13 said, "a process that has worked well for me. in the past is the induction where the head of every department tries to impart knowledge to new employees, but this is now insufficient". He agreed that "there is a certain degree of overlapping (between platforms and initiatives), and this could lead to duplication". He lamented that "people do not tend to search for knowledge, and we need to find a channel to force it upon them because people do not understand each others' roles".

The human component as the basis for KM was also emphasised. Participant 4, a human resource practitioner, stated, "AfriForum is very informal regarding KM –

especially when compared with the corporate world". She said, "knowledge is basically your talent, which people personify" and "that there is no formal system for (managing knowledge) and there is no dedicated person taking ownership of it (at AfriForum)". According to her, "KM and human resource management must go hand in hand, and it is not the sole responsibility of only one person, but every manager's duty". Accordingly, it is posited that a flourishing KM programme relies heavily on involving competent and motivated people in the process (Kalkan cited in Zaim *et al.*, 2018:311). "While an organisation is aiming to use knowledge capabilities, focussing on the human capital resource is also essential... The creation, management and utilisation of knowledge is influenced directly by several practices and strategies of human resource management (HRM)" (Zaim *et al.*, 2018:311).

Participant 9 echoed this sentiment: "The knowledge I receive from my colleagues is my main source, and you remember a solution better if you spoke to someone about it". Participant 14, a disaster relief specialist in the community affairs department, said, "at AfriForum, there are many people with ample knowledge, but it needs to be leveraged". According to her, "the best way of tapping someone's knowledge is to speak to them personally because they tend to say much more when they talk than when they type, and you can ask follow-up questions". Participant 15, a district manager at the Cape Town office, says, "what works well is the reflecting we do among ourselves after a project is completed". According to Dixon (2020), the creation of knowledge entails bringing together diverse perspectives in conversation and when people can build on each other's ideas. "Learning from others is also best done in conversation. If you need help from others about a problem you are facing, you get the best help if you pick up the phone so you can explain your situation, and they can respond, not in generalities, but to your specific situation. You might start with an email, but if it is difficult, it probably needs to move to a phone or Zoom call" (Dixon, 2020).

Participants 8, 9 and 10 mentioned the online library at the research department. For instance, Participant 9 said: "At this stage, it is a few books, reports and commentaries that we have written. There is also an app through which to access the sources. It could be so much more, but you will have to have more people to manage it and add to it." Poignantly, Troll (cited in Parker *et al.*, 2005:176) argues: "The freely accessible information on the Web, in conjunction with the escalating costs of library materials,

threatens the traditional mission of libraries to create and sustain large, self-sufficient collections for their patrons."

4.2.2 Resources

Participant 1 stated that "you need a certain job description (sic) whose job it is to do KM, and some departments will have to make budgetary sacrifices to have such a person appointed". Participants 2, 3 and 9 agreed with this. Participant 4 agreed that a dedicated person should take the lead but said it "is more complex than simply one person; it must be a group of people, and they must receive training and mentorship". Participant 5 added, "in AfriForum, we have quite a few people to provide the necessary leadership on this". According to Jones *et al.* (2003:49), the development of the Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) is suggestive of a growing recognition that many organisations' products, services, processes and customers are impacted by IC – the knowledge, experience and ideas of employees. "We have found in our customer base that there are natural knowledge champions that emerge organically, and they have been instrumental in keeping up the momentum of the knowledge programs at their companies" (Yelsky, 2022). These people must share knowledge and communicate effectively, be well-respected by the employees, be proactive and helpful problem-solver, produce useful knowledge and be culturally sensitive.

The need for the right appointments was also emphasised. Participant 2 said in this regard: "You should not simply assume that someone knows everything. An evaluation must be done to determine whether the necessary boxes are ticked with somebody. It is important to do a knowledge audit."

Participant 3 argued that "there needs to be a monetary investment, but people's buy-in must be obtained". Participant 10 said, "personnel and a budget would be a good starting point". To this end, Yaghooti (2020) contends: "KM, like many organisational changes, requires adequate budgeting. Many KM activities, such as training and hiring a teacher, purchasing new software and its infrastructure, hiring people to develop KM strategies and processes, etc., have costs for the organisation. However, it should be noted that this is not just a cost but an investment, with millions of dollars in return on investment." Akhavan and Pezeshkan (2014:23) note that a high level of involvement and resources are required for effective KM.

4.2.3 Tools

Knowledge management is varied and comes in–many technological and non-technological guises. The technological side includes computers, systems, the Internet, AI, data mining, big data, the Internet of Things, cloud computing, and learning machines, are promoting business management and, more specifically, knowledge management (Dennis *et al.* cited in Oliva & Kotabe, 2019:1841). Live digital interactive tools such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom have, in no small thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic, become immensely popular and indispensable. At the same time, blogs and wikis have also gained traction. In addition, storytelling, COPs, cross-functional teams and case studies are more interpersonal means of KM – although these could also have technological tools as conduits. “Telling stories is as old as human being’s history. It has been used as an important technique of knowledge propagation” (Borges & Santoro, 2004).

Participant 1 made it abundantly clear that “technology is important to get the channels established... but you learn much faster if someone shows you how to do something than if you have to read a book”. Internalisation is using practical situations to convert the employee’s TK into explicit, and an example of this is when organisations provide on-the-job training or practical training for employees by making use of simulation or experiments (Sharma & Bajaj, 2022). However, Ioi *et al.* (2012:251) caution that practical training must be accompanied by the capability to convey practical skills to learners accurately.

Participant 2 favours “an open platform or blog to which people can add, and it must never be removed”. He also says, “cross-pollination is extremely important, and we can all do so much more for others (outside our own departments), and our experiences must be shared, but it must be monitored for accuracy by someone”. Participant 8 argued that “although short videos are useful, sometimes I need the depth that is contained within a blog, and I do not mind reading... but I accept that one needs to show something visually to most people generally”. Razmerita (2009:1026) similarly argues that companies attempt to enrich knowledge assets by leveraging blogs, wikis and social networks and unlocking the social and collaborative potential of Web 2.0.

Participant 3 said, “there is new software that we do not always capitalise on, and I would like to see some of it tested… this could make people so much more productive that it won’t be necessary to appoint more people to do the work”. Moreover, Participant 4 contended, “Excel could be of immense value and software such as Survey Monkey, as well as focus groups and structured interviews, play a very important role in data generation. Human resource systems have profiles of employees who have been analysed and are experts in certain areas. Then you have a dashboard with keywords and categories for finding knowledge.” In this regard, Giraldo *et al.* (2019:1370) reasons that some of the most effective techniques for knowledge elicitation include conversations (interview, questionnaire, brainstorming, focus group, workshops), observation techniques (social analysis, protocol analysis, ethnography) and analytical techniques (document analysis, requirements reuse). “It is no longer difficult to implement the KM process across your business, especially with the presence of knowledge-based software and automation tools with features such as document management, content management, databases, data warehouses, social networking, etc. For example, Document360 and HubSpot are popular KM solutions that help businesses manage various steps of the KM process on a single platform” (Sharma & Bajaj, 2022).

Participant 7 mentioned an external facilitator “who gave training on Excel and Powerpoint and people tend to underestimate the power of Powerpoint” and “we have drawn up manuals on how to assist victims of crime”. Participant 9 also said “all the most important available knowledge must be captured on a single platform with categories that works with a search function because knowledge is hard to retrieve on WhatsApp”.

Participants 8 and 10 said, "I would learn more from a personal half-hour conversation with someone than I would on Facebook”.

4.3 KNOWLEDGEABILITY AND NEEDS

4.3.1 Desired knowledge

Participant 9 felt that “I was never given the opportunity to be trained as a manager and nobody ever helped me, and it is something that should actually be a continuous process”. Participant 6 also said, “I would definitely want to gain leadership and management knowledge because I feel that, as a young person, I need to be better equipped”. Participant 15 noted: “I would like to learn more management skills and how to get the best out of people.” According to Singh (2008:3-4), organisational growth is made possible by managing and creating knowledge through various mechanisms, of which leadership is the most important.

Participants 1 and 12 said, “I would want to learn more about strategy”. Participant 3 said he “would like to know how to deal with situations that are not ‘black-and-white’ and where you would have to take bits and pieces of knowledge and put it into the gaps”.

Participant 13 asserted that “I want to know more about our (target) market and be a step ahead of it... because I want to develop the best products and services for them, and I want to improve their experience”.

Participant 14 said, “I would want to network more widely because there are so many institutions out there with knowledge on what I specialise in”. Participant 5 stated, "I am interested in knowing more about negotiations and how to do intercultural exchanges”. Participant 8 posited: “I do not always know where to find the right information about a particular subject. For instance, which TV news channel is the best for what information?” and “I am interested in community safety and would like to know more about how their structures function”.

4.3.2 Skills and competencies

Leadership is something that featured prominently among the elicited responses in this regard. Participants 1, 3 and 4 stressed this point. Participant 1 averred that “someone who should take the lead is Frik (the Chief Operations Officer), but his capacity is very constricted at the moment, and he is simply too busy”. She added that

“everybody wants to hold onto their own knowledge, and people should be willing to share it; there are people here with the knowledge that other people simply do not possess, but they are not willing to share it with colleagues who are lazy and do not do their work”. Participant 3 said there must certainly be a knowledge manager/champion within the organisation and “such a leader must be someone who surrounds himself with people who can assist him with the work”. Participant 4 combined leadership with organisational knowledge: “Leadership is about knowing your employees so well that if there is a campaign, you know exactly who to use (to impart knowledge).”

Participant 10 said, “listening skills are important to package knowledge in the right way”. Communication was also raised as a required skill for KM to succeed. Participants 1, 4 and 12 felt particularly strongly about this facet. Despite these admissions, some thought that not enough is being done to improve communication and hence, KM is one of its by-products. For instance, Participant 1 said “everybody in AfriForum tends to say communication is a problem, but nobody does anything about it”. Discussing the skills needed by knowledge managers and workers, Semertzaki (2018:595) emphatically states: “Communication skills related to the professionals’ ability to communicate effectively and efficiently... These interpersonal and behavioural skills are sought highly after by information professionals and knowledge managers. Part of the communication process is the art of listening to the person who needs information. Listening is part of the exchange mechanism of communication.”

Some participants highlighted the need for practical skills and the use and demonstration thereof. Participant 2 said: “The practice is very important, and we see this in our own department. It is fine to learn the theory online through a course, but the requests are still there to approach it more practical and not bombard them with documents and reading.” Participant 4 felt that it is vital “to be able to do something with knowledge and herein critical thinking is foremost”.

The necessary knowledge, experience and qualifications for a person (or persons) to facilitate knowledge management were also accentuated. Participant 3 stressed that “it is important for anyone involved in in-depth training to possess the necessary

qualifications... so that you have a knack for learning material work, to do facilitation and assessments". He continued: "You would much rather listen to someone who facilitates these things if he is an expert, and you are much more likely to cooperate (with their proposals)." Specialist knowledge was stressed by Participant 12: "You need a relatively well-developed background knowledge of what you are trying to teach other because people are not stupid." According to a study among 41 knowledge managers by Mckeen and Staples (cited in Knowledge Management Tools, 2015b), these people are typically highly educated and seasoned organisational performers.

Some participants emphasised social skills. "People skills as one of the competencies are one of the most important ones," said Participant 4. Participant 5 said, "you need high emotional intelligence to be able to work here, and leaders need sound people skills". For KM to succeed, a blend of technical, soft skills and local or business knowledge is needed (Johnston & Williams, cited in Semertzaki, 2018:602).

Enthusiasm and trust were also mentioned. Participant 10 said, "if the knowledge is in the right format and the passion and will exist to use it, then the development of knowledge should be minimal; if you really want to know how something works, then you will make an effort to find out how it works". Participant 11 stated that "trust is very important and we have to make time for mentorships... maybe organise workshops". Dixon (2020) argues that a trust relationship with others is crucial for people to share their knowledge and expose their thinking. Moreover, knowledge managers like being part of something exciting and are risk-takers and motivated more by a challenge than formal power (Mckeen and Staples cited in Knowledge Management Tools, 2015b).

4.4 STRUCTURAL ISSUES

4.4.1 Gaps

In their research, Israilidis *et al.* (2021:1521-1525) found that time constraints, an averseness to share knowledge, task ambiguity, unclear knowledge-sharing objectives, inadequate encouragement to share knowledge, ill-formalised knowledge-sharing processes, and low-quality training, were regarded as gaps in KM structures. Many of these manifested in the responses at AfriForum.

A lack of leadership and training for it was mentioned by participants 4, 5, 7 and 9. Participant 7 said, “young people are put in leadership positions, but there is no leadership training to equip them, and this manifests in our work” and “there are overlapping functions and responsibilities and no coordination regarding training”.

Moreover, Participant 5 stated that “we share a lot of information but not knowledge, and we need a system with preferably short videos to do that”.

Participant 1 noted: “We should not still be in a place where if a member phones in and have a query about a neighbourhood watch, for instance, you would have to tell them to hold on to be transferred to someone else. And I would personally like to know more about the campaigns and court cases because those are the types of queries I regularly deal with. Strategic plans must also be shared in plain language. The higher-ups throw terms around that we don’t understand, and this kills enthusiasm.” She also opined that “we have to look at drastically expanding the human resource department because currently there are only two people to do the work”.

Mentoring is the most effective informal or formal tool for transferring tacit know-how from an expert to an aspiring expert. It revolves around practical learning whereby the mentor gives the mentee practical tasks and provides guidance and supervision (Knowledge Management Tools, 2015a). However, Participant 5 said he “does not know of any formal programme within AfriForum that provides mentorship, and this is perhaps something we need to look at” and “We do not have a system where knowledge is shared. It is more than just information”. Participant 2 also stated, "we received some mentorship training, but it never got off the ground”. Participant 3 said people “who offer themselves as mentors do it too quickly and do not know what it really entails, and this could cause more harm than good”. Participants 4, 9 and 11 said, “there is ample knowledge available within the organisation that is not being optimised”.

Participant 8 said: “Money is not really a big gap (with managing knowledge), but rather that the idea (of KM) needs to take root first. There isn’t a flow of ideas across the whole organisation.” Participant 3 agreed: “KM is only now growing within the organisation, and people need time to get used to it. However, they are inundated with

different documents and knowledge, which needs to be simplified." Akhavan and Pezeshkan (2014:30) found in their research that a lack of motivation among employees and their inability to use KMTs, undermine KM programmes.

Participant 15 complained that "the Excel training we received a while ago was useful, but we had to make notes and do the exercises simultaneously; we need a complete manual or document that we can keep for future reference".

4.4.2 Opportunities

According to Andreev (2022), there are various ways to manage knowledge, such as:

- Tutoring, training, and COP: "This could be through in-person tutoring, company-wide training sessions, online chats, and group discussions – or a mix of these options and others."
- Documentations, guides, guidelines, frequently asked questions (FAQ's) and tutorials.
- Forums, intranets and collaboration environments: "Threads, subforums, and groups can be divided by topic, level of expertise, or any other classifications."
- Learning and development environments: "Creating an environment where learning is considered an asset will continuously drive employees to educate themselves."
- Case studies: "Looking at the actions taken, the results they produce, and any lessons learnt are extremely valuable."

Participant 4 is opposed to assigning limiting job titles and advocates for more open job titles to reflect their knowledge better, "The realisation has been taking root that you cannot give people traditional job titles and box them in because their skills have become so comprehensive. This is why job titles such as content manager or coordinator have gained so much popularity. People are much more complex." She adds: "I do not think we should get rid of KPI discussions. Managers must have regular discussions with their employees about what they know and what energises them. I know we don't use KPIs here because measuring outputs is difficult, but they are relative and shouldn't be applied uniformly across the organisation." This proposal was unique and is not reflected in any noteworthy literature on KM.

Participant 5 stressed that “it is very important for different departments to share their knowledge to understand their respective problems and challenges”. Participant 8 added: “For instance, I do not understand blockchain and how it works. It would be nice if someone would organise a workshop or talk about something like this. A monthly think tank on a certain topic could be arranged.” Participant 15 suggested pairing: “People with diverse and supplementary skill sets should be allowed to collaborate because they complement one another. I have tried this, and it works great.”

Participant 2 argued: “There is definitely a need to have more personal conversations, but it needs to be documented and be a ‘safe space’. It is about communication. Some people are also scared to ask people’s opinion on something because they don’t know what the repercussions would be for them.” Participant 3 advocates that “we can do something simple such as have a regular braai, because trust and familiarity are developed in such social environments, and this could translate to the professional setting where this elicited knowledge could be later formalised”. Dixon (2020) agrees: “Small talk is not really small at all, it is how we acknowledge the value of our relationship to the other. When a group has come together many times, the period of connecting can be brief, but not neglected altogether.”

Participants 3 and 9 said it would “definitely” be a good idea to institute mentorships. Still, the latter participant added a caveat: “I have been going through life changes in 2022, and I had an external mentor that really meant a lot to me… but in the workplace, it would be someone I could trust completely.”

A knowledge audit’s purpose is to establish the state of your organisation’s knowledge economy and assets, and it assists in finding out what types of knowledge exist and what knowledge is helpful for which business processes (Kaila, 2020). It involves identifying knowledge needs, drawing up a knowledge inventory, analysing knowledge flows, devising knowledge maps, and reviewing and improving. Participant 14 contended that “a knowledge audit should definitely be done because we do not know what everybody in the organisation knows”. Participant 11 echoed this sentiment: “We do not really know what other people do within the organisation, and we need to understand each other’s roles, maybe through internal training”. Participant 13

advocated for “a knowledge champion – at least in the beginning – to foster awareness, and then people may come forward and willingly share their knowledge”. Participant 11 also felt that “there should be a dedicated person for KM with this as their sole duty”. He also SAID: “KM is non-negotiable and is such an important aspect of our business that it needs to be imposed on everybody within the organisation on an urgent basis”.

Participant 1 said, “top-level should intervene (to bolster a KM function) because they look strategically at things and towards the future, as opposed to mid-level management who tend to the day-to-day matters” and “create a panel consisting of top-level management where delegates from each department are also represented”.

Participant 9 argued, “it is a very good idea to have something internal that is similar to Quora (a social question-and-answer website to share knowledge and ask questions)” and “to know more about, for instance, court cases beyond the obvious and known information contained in media releases and articles”. There has indeed been a paradigm shift from KM (KM) approaches from mere repositories to a more conversational and dynamic approach by utilising knowledge networks facilitated by Web 2.0 technologies such as wikis and discussion forums (Lee & Lan cited in Kiniti & Standing, 2013:190).

Finally, Participant 14 contended that “written and practical case studies and storytelling are great learning tools… they create a context to what you otherwise read”. Participant 15 said, “conversations and reflections on completed projects should be documented so that it can be remembered and referenced later, but documents are not sufficient, and practical knowledge transfer is a challenge for us”. As Dixon (2020) posits that reflection is useful for KS and development in individuals (self-development), teams (improvement and collaboration), organisations (culture and strategy formulation), and between organisations (enhancing relationships with partners and clients). Reamy (cited in Whyte & Classen, 2012:951) argues that storytelling is arguably the most suitable tool to elicit and transfer TK, as it adds context in a way that is easy to comprehend.

4.4.3 Challenges

In a study on why KM programmes failed, Akhavan and Pezeshkan (2014:29) found that top managers' inconsistent support, poor communication and coordination, a lack of understanding of the relationship between business objectives and KM, a lack of a united KM culture, and insufficient resources were root causes of such failures at a multinational company. At a transportation company, using the knowledge of colleagues made some individuals feel weak. At the same time, there was also a dearth of individuals with appropriate KM skills and experience and a lack of management support. In terms of KS in general, resistance to change, behavioural and managerial issues such as a KM culture, as well as an insufficient reward system and conflict management, are prime failure factors (Akhavan and Pezeshkan, 2014:35). In another multi-case study, Chua and Lam (2005:11-12) found that organisational silos hampered KM programmes and thus a lack of cross-departmental sharing, KMTs being too cumbersome and complicated to use, politics, and a paucity of management support. These challenges have all been direct or tangentially mentioned by the participants at AfriForum.

Hierarchy, division and internal politics appear to be major stumbling blocks. Participant 15 stated that "many people think they know better and refuse to listen to new ideas and other opinions" and "some do not want to give knowledge, and others do not want to receive it". Participant 1 said, "pride and obstinance hamper the sharing of knowledge, but you need to think about what is best for the organisation". Participant 8 mentioned that "the silos within the organisation are the biggest challenge" and "the organisation is slow to capitalise on new ideas".

Participant 3 noted that "if a decision is made on KM, it must be implemented with complete unity and purpose" and "oftentimes decisions about certain projects create friction among top management, and that friction then filters down to everyone else". Participant 9 said: "Jealousy cuts both ways: On the one hand, people may not want to share their knowledge, and on the other hand, some people feel like they don't need other people's knowledge and inputs." According to Participant 11, "people fear that other departments co-opt their work and achievements" and Participant 13 said "it is not that people do not want to communicate but that they're afraid to; a culture of trust needs to be fostered". Dixon (2020) confirms that "whether it is through an email or in

person, asking is a little risky; we are often fearful that others will think we are less competent".

Participant 2 mentioned that "costs will probably be the primary challenge, as well as persuading the organisation to implement it and people to share their knowledge". Participant 9 said, "due to constraints on people's time and as far as buy-in goes, it will be a challenge to make KM a priority at AfriForum".

Participant 12 said, "KM is everybody's responsibility and not just one person's burden… and a culture must be cultivated among managers and heads of departments to make knowledge transfer everybody's duty".

4.5 SOURCES AND DISTRIBUTION OF KNOWLEDGE

4.5.1 Internal

As far as internal sources of knowledge are concerned, Svetina and Prodan (2008:277-278) note that internal knowledge sources are, in the main, embodied by in-house research and development (R&D) efforts, internal education efforts and training programmes. "Employee skills represent another important source of new knowledge, and firms often organise internal education and training programs to build further and improve the internal knowledge base" (Svetina and Prodan, 2008:280). Tayaran and Schiffauerova (2012) corroborate this view: "An organisation's own R&D creates the new knowledge with internal sources based on the experience gained from its in-house research and the information gathered by OL throughout its research projects."

Participant 7 said: "We receive in-house training, such as how to analyse crime victims, and this is practical because the theory in books and the praxis do not always correspond with each other. Monthly reports and internal specialists are also available and valuable."

In this vein, AfriForum employees with the relevant skills and knowledge are important sources. Participant 11 said, "I am in the fortunate position of having a boss that knows everything about my field, and he plays that mentor role because he is not stingy with

his knowledge". Participant 8 said, "when I want to know what is going on in the organisation, I do not have to speak to the CEO or his deputy. I consult the language editors because all the news flows through them". Participants 3 and 4 averred: "Every single person in the organisation can convey something. You just need to be willing to search for it and be open to learning." Participant 9 said, "everybody here is a source of knowledge, depending on what you want to know… and cross-functional sessions will apprise people of what everybody is busy with". This is corroborated by Dixon (2020): "Dividing members into small mixed groups that are made up of multiple levels, different disciplines, or mixing customers with employees, legitimises having different views and makes possible giving voice to a diversity of views."

Participant 5 said personal knowledge and lessons learnt from experience are conveyed: "People may think that something is the right thing to do, but out of the personal experience, and as a leader, I would tell them I've tried it before and we need to find a different way to do it." This view was corroborated by Participant 8.

Lastly, Participant 15 said, "the value of manuals should not be underestimated, but they must be available and be living documents open to revision".

4.5.2 External

Customers, suppliers, competitors and partners are all entities in a reciprocal external knowledge network (Knowledge Management Tools, 2010). Simao and Franco (2018:242) list several external sources of knowledge: Suppliers of equipment, material, components or software; clients or consumers; competitors or other firms in the same sector of activity; consultants; universities or other higher education institutions; the State and public and private research institutes. In a similar vein, Nguyen Duong *et al.* (2021:2) distinguish between market-based sources (customers and suppliers) and science-based sources (universities, government and public research institutes). External knowledge sources and targets for KS are thus considered to be institutional and integrative while mainly involving an organisation's business partners.

By this token, Participant 13 said, "I know what is going on in the market because I consult our software developers and collection partners". At the same time, Participant

14 strongly asserted that “conferences are so important, especially when there are international speakers because the world and knowledge is so much bigger than AfriForum”. As far as external KS is concerned, Participant 12 said, “We ensure that our branch members are trained properly through standardised procedures for them to train members of their local communities.”

It was noticeable that not many participants shared knowledge externally, although they consulted various external sources. Training and technology’s role therein came out strongly. Regarding sharing knowledge with external parties, Participant 7 mentioned, “training being provided… in accordance with a needs assessment we did among our volunteers... and webinars and newsletters where we share our information and knowledge”. Participants 2, 3 and 14 echoed this sentiment. She added, “during Covid-19, we had Zoom and Teams sessions to provide training, but you cannot ignore in-person one-on-one or group sessions”. Participant 2 said, “we can present an hour-long webinar, and someone can perhaps pick up something in three minutes that are of importance to them”. Huda & Ihsan (2019:119) state that training is a management function that must be exercised continuously to support organisations. These programmes provide for individuals, institutions, organisations and human relations in working groups.

Participant 11 said, “I am currently lecturing part-time, and this affords me the opportunity to impart my knowledge to the students”. She opines that “at AfriForum we get the opportunity to build many networks”. Participant 3 said, “I am in a position where I deal with a lot of queries from the public, and by answering and researching these, you discover in which areas they need more knowledge. This forces me to stay abreast, and I would also write a comprehensive opinion piece that we can distribute”.

Participant 14 said, “reading (relevant material) is very important even though people do not like to read, and you could watch YouTube videos”. Participant 10 said, “I like watching political news videos on YouTube because they contain analysis and opinion, which is basically knowledge”. Participant 3 confirmed that “you need to read as widely as possible, and you can’t afford to fall behind on staying informed because not having and imparting old knowledge could harm the organisation’s reputation”.

Participant 4 said: “I have a great love for information. If I see an interesting short article, I would immediately read it. I love TedTalks and short videos.”

Participant 2 said, “I have mentors, and I use qualified people as a sounding board”. Participant 4 said, “I love speaking to various people informally... but I do not have a mentor at work; I also want to empower people to not only have specialised mentors in their own organisation because it will limit you to what the organisation has to offer”. Participant 8 noted that he “exchanges ideas with other people in the research field”. Participant 10 is “on various WhatsApp groups with retired experts that I can quickly consult”. Participant 15 said, “people like consultants with specialised knowledge could be of great value”.

Technology and, more specifically, the Internet and academic sources were also discussed. Participant 10 complained that “we do not have access to online legal journals and books, and it is something we need to look at”. Participant 12 said, “Google is very useful, but you need to know what you’re looking for”, and Participant 14 said, “the Internet is my go-to place”.

Regarding receiving external knowledge, Participant 7 said, “we do further courses as well, and we will be studying next year to sharpen our counselling skills”. Participant 5 agrees that “the organisation offer opportunities for staff to further their education in their specific field”.

4.6 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

4.6.1 Resources and tools

All the responses showed that KM is still being practised at an elementary, discursive and facile level at AfriForum. Although some of the technological KM instruments are in place, they are not yet leveraged to their full potential for promoting KM and OL. The internal and external sources and dissemination of knowledge and general knowledge generation are not advanced.

Sharepoint and Yammer, as the sophisticated online tools for KM are not widely utilised at the organisation and do not provide evident KM value. Email

communication, WhatsApp, personal conversations and training were often mentioned as KM tools and channels. However, the participants generally grasp the need for KM and are aware of some of the existing KM gaps and opportunities.

Many participants felt that personal interaction is superior to less personal tools and technology (such as databases and intranets). They prefer it due to its interactive nature and as a possible source of rich knowledge.

4.6.2 Knowledgeability and needs

There was a relatively large schism in opinions over whether more funding would bolster KM. Some participants believe funding is a first-order priority for KM success, while others believe it to be secondary to promoting KM within the organisation. Some participants indicated they required knowledge about leadership and management and were proverbially “thrown in at the deep end” without adequate training.

Most participants opined that a specialist knowledge manager must be appointed to drive KM, while a need for a knowledge audit, mentorships and interdepartmental KS was expressed saliently. These concepts are, in fact, interrelated: A knowledge manager could commence a knowledge audit, which leads to sensible mentoring and improved collaboration and communication.

4.6.3 Structural issues

Challenges such as internal politics, a culture that is not necessarily conducive to KM and communication, a paucity of knowledge champions, and siloed functioning were among the chief challenges and gaps mentioned by the participants. There is also an abject shortage of KS outside the organisation, except for certain types of training. Top management’s buy-in would also have to be obtained for KM to succeed.

A lack of mentoring opportunities was repeatedly mentioned by many of the participants. Including KM into a KPI, criteria were discussed in the context of opportunities. More personal interaction, especially at social gatherings, was also advocated as an informal source of knowledge that can be converted later into more formal knowledge. In this vein, case studies and storytelling were confirmed by some participants as possible useful KM opportunities.

4.6.4 Sources and distribution of knowledge

A widespread belief among the participants is that AfriForum possesses a vast amount of individual and collective knowledge in its employees but is not being effectively managed and exploited. There is also an abject shortage of KS outside the organisation. Except for certain types of training and answering queries from members and the public. This process could be developed further and intensified, while external sources, such as customers and suppliers, could be leveraged better to acquire knowledge. A small consensus emerged that technology should not entirely replace face-to-face interaction internally and externally.

4.7 SUMMARY

The collected data were analysed in this chapter by employing thematic analysis. Four themes and 11 sub-themes that agreed with the research objectives were extracted, and relevant sub-themes were formulated and discussed. The last chapter will subsequently deal with the discussion of the results, recommendations and conclusion.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter analysed and compared the collected data to some relevant literature. This chapter discusses these results, the recommendations for a relevant KMS for AfriForum, the study's limitations, and suggestions for further research.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A KMS

The purpose of this study is to devise a KMS for a South African CSO. The strategy proposed for Afriforum includes, *inter alia*, conducting a knowledge audit to determine the knowledge assets and needs of the organisation, appointing a knowledge manager and designating knowledge champions to drive KM, obtaining top-level buy-in, and enhancing the spread of knowledge through improved technology as well as establishing internal and external mentorships.

5.2.1 Resources and tools

A recurring theme in the responses was that someone needs to take charge of KM at AfriForum. If left to everybody, it is likely to become desultory and haphazard. Nobody else currently employed by AfriForum has the necessary dexterity and time to fulfil this function. It is, therefore, proposed that a knowledge manager be appointed. This person will typically have a relevant qualification and/or experience in KM, operational capabilities, superb social skills, assertiveness, self-confidence, enthusiasm for KM, and tremendous analytical abilities.

However, one person cannot perform this function on their own. Knowledge champions must be identified across the organisation and receive the proper training, which they can, in turn, impart to others. They need not be designated as “knowledge champions”; it could merely be an informal designation. These people will then be able to identify, collect and disseminate knowledge from numerous sources, such as books, sales data, internal and external people, suppliers, contractors and the like. Some could also be specialists in a single source or many sources.

AfriForum has various platforms for sharing information and keeping employees abreast of what is happening within the organisation, such as Yammer, the Afriforum website and Sharepoint. Much of the information is duplicated on these respective platforms. The understanding from the responses, however, is that these platforms are not widely used and not used for KM per se.

For internal KM, it is apt that Sharepoint must be broadened to include veritable knowledge management functions. Yammer could conceivably be eliminated, and KM could be centralised on an amended Sharepoint geared towards greater KM. A taxonomy could be devised where all manner of knowledge on various topics – such as in-house experts, documents, case studies, in-depth documents, short videos, blogs and wikis – could be found using a simple search function. Furthermore, people will have a personal profile where they can indicate their interests, and newly loaded germane knowledge will reach them via an RSS feed. Employees will subsequently receive wide-ranging training in the use of this platform.

Many responses were aimed at mentoring, training, and in-person interaction. These must be deftly but carefully incorporated into the KMS and streamlined if they already exist.

Willing mentors must be identified and comprehensively trained before being assigned to mentees. They must possess the correct knowledge and temperament to mentor mentees properly. Progress of this process and each case should be tracked and evaluated by the knowledge manager and human resource specialists. Pairing people with complementary skill sets could also be considered in light of augmenting people's knowledge and extending their viewpoints. A list of external mentors could also be compiled and paired with mentees in Afriforum – especially if internal mentors are unavailable.

5.2.2 Knowledgeability and needs

The desire was repeatedly expressed that "something" approximating a knowledge audit must be conducted. Presently, the organisation is mainly unaware of the

magnitude of knowledge it possesses in its personnel and their knowledge needs – except for their formal qualifications and the type of work they perform. It has also never conducted such as audit to analyse the aspects relating to KM. This will assist in, among other elements, determining the knowledge needs of individuals and the organisation as a whole, the exact internal and external sources of knowledge, and the knowledge flows at Afriforum.

The first priority must be that managers conduct in-depth interviews with their subordinates to establish their knowledge about topics. SurveyMonkey surveys could precede this to extract basic information that guides the interviews. Monthly reports will also be a rich source of feedback and serve as a basis for continuous knowledge measurement and identification. This information can then be compiled into reports and submitted to the knowledge manager and human resource department for further analysis. This can then be used to establish an online knowledge taxonomy (perhaps on Sharepoint) where employees can find the right knowledgeable individuals when they seek certain types of knowledge. Formal (i.e. qualifications and technical knowledge) and informal (i.e. persuasion and organisation skills) knowledge must be elicited during these processes and could become a rich source of TK and EK. The knowledge audit will also reveal whether suitable people are in the right jobs and where knowledge gaps and opportunities exist for new appointments and personnel moves.

A knowledge audit will also reveal the various types of training currently being provided. In conjunction with the human resource department, the knowledge manager could examine whether it is conducive to KM and how it could be streamlined and improved. Duplication and a lack of coordination seem to be a challenge. It is best to evaluate the current training and probe for gaps and opportunities for new training before exclusive training roles are assigned to instructors. The validity and accuracy of training material (such as videos and manuals) and the reliability and soundness of instructors' knowledge must be assessed and augmented, if necessary.

5.2.3 Structural issues

The current organisational structure at AfriForum is not entirely conducive to KM. To an extent, knowledge is indeed being shared across departments, but this could be

formalised better with official cross-functional teams working together on certain projects and campaigns where knowledge about different aspects is shared and received.

Executive-level buy-in must be obtained for KM to have any chance of success at AfriForum, as indeed anywhere. Resources such as funding and official support for KM are instrumental herein. Therefore, top management should be persuaded to support and ensure organisation-wide participation in KM. It is proposed that the knowledge manager reports to the CEO and COO about the functioning, successes, evaluation and challenges of the KMS.

KM will fail to flourish or even survive at AfriForum if it is not mandated and/or heavily incentivised. To this end, it would be prudent to include KPIs in employees' performance evaluation, and one of these should be email measuring KM. This would elevate KM from an aside and occasional task to a first-order priority that deserves resources and attention.

Further, various ingenious incentives could be devised to entice employees to share their knowledge, assist in its spread, and assist management. This could range from official recognition to small prizes. However, caution should be taken not to incentivise this too much, as KM success could be subjective and detract from other core functions fulfilled by employees.

5.3.4 Sources and distribution of knowledge

Ultimately, extracting and documenting much of the relevant available knowledge and then documenting and imparting it will be paramount. This happens across the organisation, and although the initial existing knowledge should be captured, this will be a dynamic process that must be pursued relentlessly and maintained. For instance, a knowledge champion should capture knowledge from debriefing sessions. The knowledge manager should then decide in which format (for instance, a blog, video or short story) it should be converted and where it belongs. New types of knowledge beyond the known and typical categories must be identified and capitalised upon. Most notably, knowledge must also become multidisciplinary by combining various types of

knowledge from different fields without specialist knowledge being abandoned or neglected.

Moreover, external sources must be consulted and analysed for their KS potential. Members, especially volunteers, must be surveyed through online means and personal contact to establish their levels of knowledge. This information could then be leveraged to establish which member knowledge could flow to the organisation and what knowledge is required. The same process applies to suppliers and other contractors. The knowledge manager and champions should scan the environment for possible learning opportunities, such as industry conferences where AfriForum could gather and present knowledge. This would also be beneficial from a networking and publicity standpoint.

5.3 ACHIEVEMENT OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following primary and secondary research objectives were formulated in Chapter 1:

PO: The primary research objective in this report is to devise a KMS for the CSO, viz., Afriforum.

SO1: Determining the degree to which KM is already being practised in Afriforum;

SO2: Investigating the KM needs/gaps and opportunities at Afriforum;

SO3: Determining the internal and external sources of TK and EK;

SO4: Establishing which challenges about KM and a LO exist at Afriforum; and

SO5: Examining which tools and methods best suit a KMS at AfriForum.

The objectives of the research were achieved. The participants' responses informed the primary objective of devising a KMS for AfriForum in the semi-structured qualitative interviews. Their responses to the posed questions in the interviews were often comprehensive and rich but surprisingly diverse, with patterns emerging regarding certain themes. Their comments often corresponded with the literature on KM, while some new insights on the tools, methods, challenges, sources, needs, gaps and opportunities were proffered. The chief aspects that emerged were that AfriForum is still in a rudimentary state of KM, communication remains a challenge for KM, the need for knowledge champions and a knowledge audit to determine the level of knowledge in the organisation, and organisational failures in facilitating KM.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study examinedone CSO, and caution must be taken to extrapolate the results to other or similar organisations indiscriminately. Afriforum's business functions are unique and may differ markedly from other civil society role-players. Although many of the tools for KM may be universal, the types of knowledge to be managed will consequently also be idiosyncratic.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

KM within CSOs is a worthy research topic, as they are knowledge-intensive and service-oriented organisations with limited resources. Their employees and volunteers are their greatest assets and should be optimally utilised and employed. Also, they are multiplying in South Africa and across the globe as governments fail to deliver services and fulfil their part of the so-called social contract. For resources to be used sparingly and wisely while still being effective at fulfilling their core functions, KM must become a priority for CSOs. Unlike other well-defined sectors, these organisations frequently differ in their mandates, functioning and visions, while there are assured similarities as far as organisational structure is concerned. Other researchers could therefore examine KM at different CSOs by exploring if, how and where these organisations practice KM and how they could implement and improve on them.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Knowledge is the lifeblood of organisations in the knowledge economy. Service companies and their human capital hold increasing sway in national economies. Therefore, talent and knowledge are the principal financial commodities, growing in importance as the business fulcrum shifts to tertiary industries, such as IT and financial services. Nevertheless, no sector is left untouched by this phenomenon.

At the same time, CSOs are increasing in number, influence and scope in South Africa and worldwide. Inadequate infrastructure and social services are two of the many vital governance aspects often left in abeyance by rulers. Governments, especially in developing countries, do not possess the money and the will to perform their many duties due to a lack of funding and deficient IC. CSOs and their individual and institutional donors are increasingly filling this gap. And yet, their means are often meagre and erratic. Thus, the bolstering of their knowledge and capacity should

receive top priority as it saves money in the long-term and buttresses abilities and operational efficiencies.

This study sought to devise a KMS for the CSO AfriForum. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with 15 full-time employees. The questions encompassed the current KM practices at AfriForum, the competencies and skills needed for KM at the organisation, the internal and external distribution and sources of KM, the gaps and opportunities for KM, the individual knowledge needs, and the challenges or barriers inhibiting KM. Clearly, a specific form of KM already occurs at the organisation, yet it is still not well-developed, and various factors vital to its success are absent. Some of these include but are not limited to a transparent and viable KM culture, a lack of knowledge champions, and technology unsuitable for purpose. Nevertheless, a consensus emerged surrounding a need and enthusiasm for KM, permitting that it is implemented with the necessary skill and care.

The KMS proposals subsequently included proposals such as conducting a knowledge audit to establish the flows and assets of knowledge inside and outside the organisation, appointing a knowledge manager and auxiliary knowledge champions, obtaining top management's buy-in for resources and support to be obtained, streamlining the online KM platforms, instituting well-crafted mentorship programmes, refining and centralising training plans, and offering incentives.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

Dynamic Language & Translation Specialists

Antoinette Bisschoff
71 Esselen Street,
Potchefstroom
Tel: 018 293 3046
Cell: 082 878 5183
Language@dlts.co.za
CC No: 1995/017794/23

Friday, 02 December 2022

To whom it may concern

Re: Confirmation of language edit, typography and technical precision

The MBA mini-dissertation "**Developing a knowledge management strategy for South African civil society organisation: A case study**" by **EJ Brink (37773089)** was edited for language and technical precision. The referencing and sources were checked, and it complies with the Harvard guidelines specified by the 2020 NWU Reference guide.

Final, last-minute corrections remain the responsibility of the author.

Antoinette Bisschoff

BA Languages (UPE – now NMU); MBA (PU for CHE – now NWU); Translation and Linguistic Studies (NWU)

Officially approved language editor of the NWU since 1998
Member of SA Translators Institute (no. 100181)