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Knowledge sharing in selected municipalities of Limpopo Province

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge is regarded as an important resource for the survival of every organisation. Sharing of such knowledge is even more crucial and an important task for the survival of organisations. Despite its importance, it appears that knowledge sharing is the most neglected task in the South African local government sector. This study used the quantitative research approach. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 23 software. The results of the study revealed that although knowledge sharing is viewed as important by the respondents, this task is not encouraged among employees, and appears to be the least supported task selected by most municipalities. There is insufficient information technology infrastructure to support knowledge sharing; there is no reward system to encourage employees to engage in knowledge sharing; and there is lack of support from the municipal management to facilitate knowledge sharing among employees and across the municipalities. Therefore, the municipalities need to implement the reward system and to acquire relevant ICT infrastructure to motivate and stimulate the culture of knowledge sharing.

KEYWORDS: knowledge sharing, knowledge management, municipal governance, service delivery, Limpopo municipalities, Local government.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has ushered in the information and knowledge revolution that is of the same magnitude as that of the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries (Ondari-Okemwa and Smith, 2009:31). Today knowledge is regarded as the most essential economic resource surpassing the traditional resources of capital, labour and land in every organisation (Drucker, 1993). Thus, the success of an organisation depends on how well the organisational knowledge is shared and managed. Knowledge management (KM) involves providing the right knowledge to the right people at the right time. Most knowledge management practices depend on how knowledge is effectively and efficiently shared within the organisation. It may be argued that knowledge sharing is a critical component of knowledge management. Hence Botha (2007:35) postulates that knowledge means very little unless it is shared with other people. Therefore, knowledge sharing denotes the provision of sharing job information and knowledge to support colleagues and to collaborate with them to develop new ideas, solve problems and implement policies and procedures (Cummings, 2004). It encompasses the “process of converting knowledge and creating new knowledge as well as the process of sharing relevant information, ideas, suggestions, and expertise with others” (Van den Hooff and De Ridder, 2004:117). Knowledge sharing facilitates the flow of knowledge among and between individuals, groups and organisations (Yeh, Huang and Yeh, 2011). Mesmer-Magnus and De Church (2009) assert that knowledge sharing can assist organisations to improve service delivery. Employees who share knowledge with one another increase the resources of an organisation and reduce time wasted in trial-and-error (Lin, 2007). Similarly, knowledge sharing improves customer response times, saves costs through process improvements, reduces work load, increases staff retention, and further improves innovations and developments (Van der Meer, 2014).

Knowledge sharing bears relevance to Limpopo municipalities in the sense that they need to provide quality service to citizens. It can enable Limpopo municipalities to speedily deploy knowledge to sections that can significantly benefit from it (Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland, 2004). Limpopo municipalities need to engage in knowledge sharing because no employee or section have knowledge and capacity to complete a task without the involvement of other employees (Riley, 2003:11). Local government employees tend to be individualistic and autonomous by choosing not to share their knowledge with others (Tan and Noor, 2013).

“Without knowledge sharing, employees and other stakeholders in organisations tend to remain fixed in silos, poorly knitted together, prone to duplication of work and repetition of mistakes, wastage of resources, forgetful of good ideas, and without the harnessing of strengths” (Gaffoor and Cloete, 2010:1). This can have negative impact on service delivery.

Local government in Limpopo Province, which is predominantly rural, comprises five district municipalities and 25 local municipalities (South African Local Government Association (SALGA, 2012:1). Local municipalities serve as the third and most local tier of local government (Education and Training Unit, 2015). They are an arm of government in as far as service delivery is concerned because they serve and represent a subdivision of district municipalities. They are directly mandated by the Constitution of the Republic of South African (1996) to render basic municipal services within their areas of jurisdiction and to ensure sustainability of services such as electricity reticulation, sanitation, water, waste management, roads, land use planning and control, storm-water drainage (Education and Training Unit, 2015). However, many tasks in municipalities have been privatised or are rendered through consultancy. On the other hand, district municipalities are on the second level of administrative division and consist of several local municipalities with which they share the tasks of local government (SALGA, 2012:1). However, district municipalities do not form part of this study because they fall outside the scope of local municipalities. According to the Local Government Turn-around Strategy (2009), challenges facing the Local Government sector in South Africa include, among others:

- “Limited resources – requiring that risk and cost must be managed effectively to provide the best development impact.
- High turnover of technical and professional staff.
- In some cases, strong dependence on consultants, who often leave the municipalities in a position of having to consistently “re-purchase” advice and intellectual property.
- Inability in some municipalities to deliver on the core set of critical municipal services.
- Poor financial management such as negative audit outcomes”.

2. Problem statement

Governments are starting to adopt knowledge management practices and to encourage knowledge sharing (Cong, Li-Hua and Stonehouse 2007: 250). Through knowledge sharing, municipalities could improve service delivery and governance. However, some employees in many organisations are not ready and willing to share knowledge with other employees, and this causes fatalities for organisational survival and poor service delivery (Zhou, 2004:18). The low level of information and knowledge sharing among government employees contributes towards poor service delivery in the public sector (Yusof and Ismail, 2009:1). This includes Limpopo municipalities. The organisational knowledge available in these municipalities is not optimally shared among employees, many of whom do not understand why they need to share knowledge and others believe that this wastes time, while in fact it saves them from costs of re-inventing the wheel (Gorelick, Milton and April 2004:53). Research on "knowledge management applications is mainly found in the private sector, which utilises the KM process to attain a competitive edge" (Fowler and Pryke, 2003:255).

3. Purpose and objectives of the study.

The aim of this study was to examine knowledge sharing in selected Limpopo municipalities. The study was guided by the following three objectives:

- To investigate the role of knowledge sharing in improving service delivery in Limpopo municipalities.
- To establish the level at which knowledge sharing is encouraged among employees and across Limpopo municipalities.
- To identify factors stimulating or inhibiting knowledge sharing in Limpopo Provincial municipalities.

According to Gaffoor and Cloete, (2010:1) "there is an urgent need for efficient and effective local government services in South Africa". Otherwise, the provision of basic services to citizens will remain inefficient and thus, damage the reputation of the government (Marutha and Ngoepe 2017:3). Although the relevance of knowledge in government is clear, the influence of knowledge sharing has been hardly investigated in Limpopo municipalities. Therefore, the study will contribute to literature on knowledge sharing in Limpopo

municipalities. The study bears significant value for Limpopo municipalities because they are centred on knowledge management processes such as retrieval, sharing and dissemination of knowledge. There is dearth of studies on knowledge sharing initiatives in South African local government (Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland, 2004). Some of the studies conducted in South African local government include *e-Thekwini Municipality's intranet for augmenting knowledge-sharing in the organisation* by Averweg (2012), and *Knowledge management in local government: The case of Stellenbosch Municipality* by Gaffoor and Cloete (2010). Therefore, this study seeks to fill this knowledge gap by examining knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities.

4 LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge sharing refers to a “social interaction culture involving the exchange of employee knowledge, experiences, and skills through the whole organisation and how an organisation obtains access to its own and other organisations’ knowledge” (Abdul Rahman, 2011:212). Knowledge sharing enhances the quality of service delivery of service-oriented organisations such as municipalities (Ismail and Yusof, 2010:1). It is necessary for employees to share knowledge among themselves and different sections in municipalities in order to deliver effective and efficient service to citizens. Effective and efficient service in government depends on how government employees at various levels effectively share and use knowledge (Bevan, Kipka, Sita Nirmala Kumaraswamy and Chital, 2012:309). As scholars would attest, knowledge sharing helps organisations to transfer new ideas or solutions (Islam, 2010; Yeh, *et al.*, 2011). Knowledge sharing is therefore, an important ingredient in the work of municipalities. If knowledge is effectively and efficiently shared among employees and across municipalities, possibilities are that municipal governance may improve, leading to improvement in service delivery. This study is anchored on the Critical Success Factors Model of Knowledge Management. According to Sedighi, Van Splunter, Zand and Brazier (2015), knowledge sharing in any organisation is dependent on some critical success factors (CSFs). CSFs are those areas in an organisation which if practised and addressed effectively, will ensure successful knowledge management and sharing in an organisation (Yaghoubi and Maleki 2012: 12024). Several authors have identified factors such as information technology, knowledge management strategy, knowledge management project budgets, physical environment and layout of work areas, as well as organisational culture variables such as

management support, rewards and recognition systems, staff retention policies and identification of knowledgeable workers, among others. Helm, Meckl and Sodeick (2007, in Stropkova 2014) categorise CSFs into three main areas: human beings, organisations and technology. CSFs in the form of human beings include leadership in the form of motivational support, which encourages workers to manage and share knowledge; the provision of training for employees; and sufficient funding for knowledge management projects. Organisational success factors cover aspects relating to organisational structure, physical environment and communication channels in an organisation, and knowledge management processes and procedures. Technology takes into consideration technological infrastructure to support knowledge management initiatives. In summary, CSFs include support in the form of the provision of the necessary infrastructure, rewards, training, and the creation of a conducive environment for individuals to share knowledge in an organisation. According to Sandhu, Jain and Kalthom bte Ahmad, (2011:209), factors such as the right culture, rewards and incentives should be present for successful knowledge sharing in organisations.

With regards to technology, Bopape (2010) states that information and knowledge management activities require ICT infrastructure for capturing, storing, organising, retrieving, processing and transmitting data. Therefore, one of the CSFs in the application of knowledge sharing in municipalities is information technology. According to Chong *et al.* (2010), information technology refers to the infrastructure of tools, systems, platforms and automated solutions that improve the development, application and dissemination of knowledge.

Ndlela and du Toit (2001:3-4) accentuate organisational culture as a key factor of a successful information and KM programme. The authors maintain that people are the key constituent of KM because the culture that exists within an organisation is critical to the success of KM and sharing initiatives. Lyu and Zhang (2016), who investigated the effects of organisational incentives and the level of information technology on the motivation to knowledge sharing, state that organisational culture dynamically improves with knowledge sharing and learning in organisations. While information technology facilitates learning and sharing of knowledge in organisations, incentive systems help to align organisational and individual goals. Therefore, building a well-balanced incentive system that would attract and retain, and at the same time encourage employees to share their expertise with other employees, remains the responsibility of those in leadership positions (Stropkova, 2014).

Contrary to critical success factors, there are barriers to knowledge sharing in municipalities. Most municipalities today operate in a high political terrain. Political influence may pose serious barriers to the effectiveness of inter-organisational knowledge sharing. It has been observed that political climate in Limpopo municipalities is such that everyone is suspicious of the next person, particularly if one's political affiliation is not known. Thus, the culture of knowledge hoarding reigns. There are cultural expressions that exacerbate knowledge hoarding. For example the adage, "*Kgomo ga entšhe boloko ka moka*," is a Northern Sotho expression meaning that a person should not share his or her entire knowledge with others. Therefore, organisations that are thoughtful about knowledge create a conducive environment and culture that continuously support knowledge sharing. Lin, Hung and Chen (2009) emphasise that knowledge sharing is typically voluntary, and as such employees cannot be compelled to share their knowledge. Knowledge is not shared within an organisation because of its stickiness which, according to Szulanski (1996), refers to the recipient's lack of absorptive capacity (the ability to exploit outside resources of knowledge), and causal ambiguity (the lack of transparency about what the factors of production are and how they interact during production). This explains the situation whereby

knowledge often adheres to particular people and is hard to move to another location without a great deal of effort. Knowledge is sticky because the person who holds the knowledge may be unmotivated to do the work to transfer it to someone he or she does not know well or may explicitly decide not to transfer it for fear of losing power or status (Brown and Duguid, 2001).

As such, knowledge becomes stagnant in one section, or with a specific employee, even when it is in the best interest of the organisation to have knowledge flow. Competition may also lead to devaluing or refusal of knowledge coming from other sections of the organisation. Schepers and Van den Berg (2007) argue that an organisational environment that emphasises competition among employees inhibits knowledge sharing while teamwork perceptions aid create trust, a CSFs for knowledge sharing.

Knowledge can also be leaky (Brown and Duguid 2001:199). "Leakiness" "focus[es] on the external and undesirable flow of knowledge, in particular the loss of knowledge across the boundaries of the organisation to competitors". For municipalities to render effective and efficient service, they should guard knowledge from leaking. Dyer and Nobeoka (2000) refer to this unwanted flow as "knowledge spillovers". This refers to the unauthorised flow of ideas,

insights, inventions and practices to other organisations. Therefore, it should be clear that knowledge sharing is not an obvious and simple process. Despite these challenges, employees should be encouraged to share knowledge that they have in their heads with others by making it explicit.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study used the quantitative research approach to solicit the perspectives of municipal workers in Limpopo Province about the extent to which knowledge sharing is encouraged and supported in their municipalities. The population of this study was 2189 employees from seven selected municipalities that allowed the researcher to conduct the study. The target population of the study was experienced employees of the selected municipalities. Three hundred and five respondents agreed to participate in the questionnaire survey, which involved senior experienced staff and managers from the following departments: Records Management, Library, Human Resource Management and Information Technology. Municipalities were stratified, and a proportional sampling of respondents was drawn from each municipality in order to ensure that members of the same stratum were as similar as possible in terms of characteristics of interest (Crossman, 2016). Likert scaling was used to measure the extent to which municipal workers in Limpopo Province perceive knowledge sharing initiatives in their municipalities. The respondents were requested to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with statements that were formulated about knowledge sharing encouragement and support in their municipalities, so that they should show their positive or negative response to the statement. A three point-scale, where 1= To no extent at all, 2 = To a less extent, and 3 = To a large extent, was used to measure the extent to which knowledge sharing was encouraged among employees in the municipalities and among municipalities in the provinces. A five-point scale was also used to measure the extent to which the respondents agree or disagree with some negative statement that was formulated about critical or key success factors or variables that influence knowledge sharing initiatives in municipalities. The following scale was used: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The respondents were also permitted to tick on "uncertain" if they were not sure about knowledge sharing activities in their municipalities. Data were analysed using SPSS version 23, and presented in bar graphs and tables form.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study based on its objectives. The first question sought to solicit the respondents' views about the significance of knowledge sharing in their organisations. Table 1 below summarises the respondents' responses in terms of how they agreed or disagreed to general statements on the role and relevance of knowledge sharing in municipalities to which they are attached.

Table 1: The role of knowledge sharing in improving service delivery (N=305)

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	U
Knowledge is the most important factor for a service delivery	5(2%)	11(4%)	136(45)	131(43%)	20(7%)
Knowledge sharing in a municipality results in increased performance	6(2%)	11(4)	131(43%)	123(40%)	34(11%)
Knowledge sharing will enable municipality to save time and financial costs.	9(3%)	28(9%)	118(39%)	107(35%)	43(14%)
Knowledge sharing is important to only private sector.	144(47%)	96(32%)	25(8%)	14(5%)	25(8%)
The importance of knowledge sharing is clearly communicated.	135(44%)	63(21%)	50(16%)	31(10%)	26(9%)
There is growing knowledge awareness of the benefit of knowledge sharing.	138(45%)	76(25%)	44(14)	20(7%)	27(9%)
Knowledge sharing can ensure continuity and consistency in service delivery.	17(6%)	29(9.5%)	148(49%)	78(26%)	33(11%)
Knowledge sharing can ensure transparency and accountability in service delivery.	7(2%)	29(10%)	129(42%)	83(27%)	57(19)

The statements that received a considerable support were that knowledge is the key factor for service delivery with 138 (45%) who agreed and 131 (43%) who strongly agreed; that knowledge sharing in municipality results in increased performance with 131 (43%) who agreed and 123 (40%) who strongly agreed; knowledge sharing can ensure continuity and consistency in service delivery with 148 (49%) who agreed and 78 (26%) who strongly agreed; and that knowledge sharing can ensure transparency and accountability in service delivery with 129 (42%) who agreed and 78 (26%) who strongly agreed with the statements. On the other side, 138 (45%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that there is a growing awareness of the benefit of knowledge sharing in the municipality, while 144 (47%) respondents strongly disagreed that knowledge sharing is vital to the private sector only. Many organisations have realised the importance of knowledge sharing among organisational members. Ibragimova (2006) posits that knowledge sharing activities may promote transparency in public administration through the provision of information to the public. They can also contribute to improved employee performance that translates into improved productivity levels and quality of work for local government (Van der Meer, 2014).

In the second question, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which municipalities encourage knowledge sharing among municipal employees.

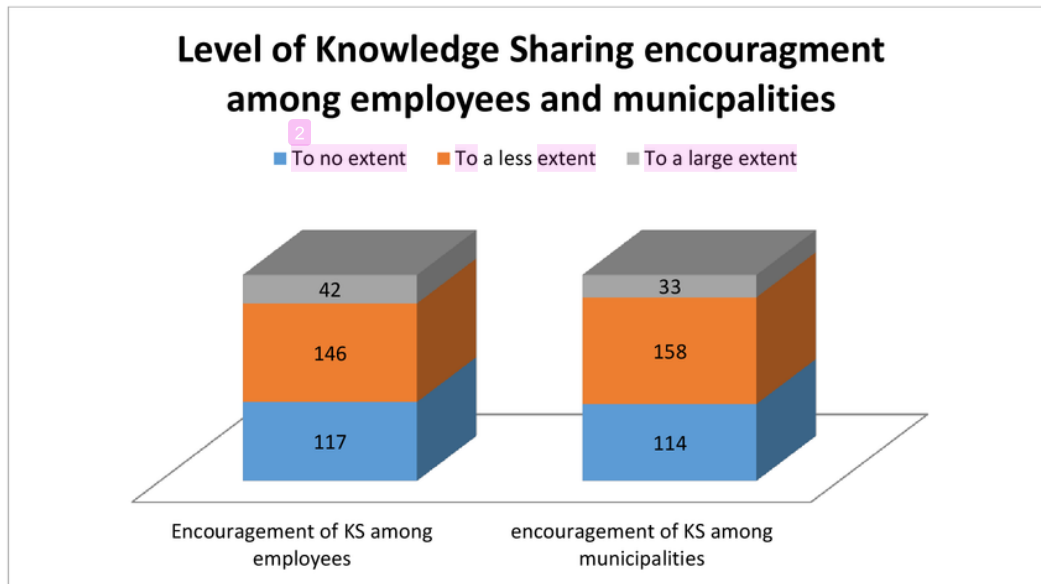


Figure 1 Level of knowledge sharing encouragement among employees and municipalities (N=305).

Figure 1 above reveals that the highest number of 146(48%) respondents indicated that knowledge sharing was encouraged to a lesser extent, a minority of 42(14%) respondents stated that knowledge sharing among employees in their municipalities was encouraged to great extent, while 117(38%) respondents indicated knowledge sharing was not encouraged at all. This means that there are no activities or strategies that encourage knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities.

The respondents were further asked to specify the extent to which their municipalities encouraged knowledge sharing with other municipalities within the local government sector. Since service delivery in South Africa is the mandate of the local government sector, it is important that different municipalities should learn good practices from each other. Hence this question sought to find out efforts to share knowledge among the municipalities.

Figure 1 further shows that a large number of 158(52%) respondents argued that their municipalities encouraged knowledge sharing within the local government sector to a less extent. On the other hand, 114(37%) respondents stated that their municipalities did not encourage knowledge sharing within the local government sector at all, while only 33(1%) respondents indicated that their municipalities encouraged knowledge sharing within the local government sector to great extent. A picture portrayed by these results is that within the local government sector of Limpopo Province, municipalities work in silos, thus fail to leverage other municipalities' experience. In a similar study, Ondari-Okemwa (2006) found that Kenyan government organisations practise and apply knowledge management practices to a limited extent due to various factors such as lack of knowledge management policies, inadequate financial resources, lack of explicit value for money from knowledge management, and little understanding of knowledge management.

Factors stimulating or inhibiting knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities

To identify stimulating or inhibiting knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities, in the third question, the respondents were asked about the variables that affect knowledge sharing activities in an organisation. Those variables were information technology, rewards and recognition systems, systems for identifying knowledgeable colleagues, organisational culture, staff retention, budget and support from management. These challenges are discussed in the next section. The results are depicted in figure 2 below and are analysed descriptively.

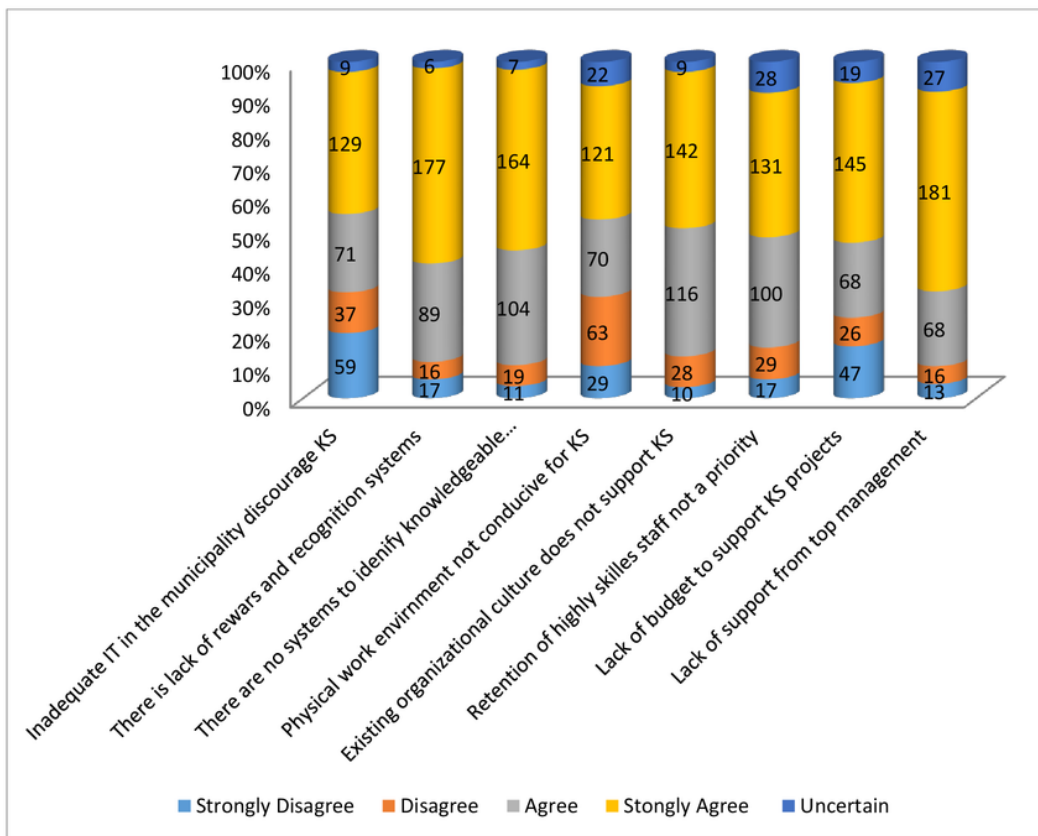


Figure 2 Information Technology in Limpopo municipalities

The results show that 129(42%) respondents strongly agreed that inadequate information technology systems in Limpopo municipalities discouraged knowledge sharing, 71(23%) agreed, 59(19%) strongly disagreed and 37(12%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Technology infrastructure is regarded as an important enabler of knowledge sharing. According to Gorry (2008), inadequate and underdeveloped information communication technology is a major barrier of knowledge sharing in many organisations. It is clear from the results that the same barrier prevails in Limpopo municipalities. Organisations use technological infrastructure to create and disseminate knowledge within in organisations (Ryan *et al.*, 2010). The effective use of IT guarantees well-timed access and sharing of knowledge for decision-making processes (Ho, *et al.*, 2012).

Reward and recognition system

Regarding the reward and recognition system, Figure 2 shows that the majority of 177(58%) respondents strongly agreed, and 89(29%) agreed, that participating municipalities lacked the reward and recognition system to stimulate staff to share knowledge. Some 17 respondents (6%) strongly disagreed that their municipalities lacked the reward and recognition system to stimulate staff to share knowledge, 16(5%) disagreed, while 6(2%) respondents were uncertain with the statement that their municipalities lacked the reward and recognition system to stimulate staff to share knowledge. The results indicate that lack of rewards has undesirable impact on knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities. Weddell (2008) observed that the presence or absence of rewards or incentive system can encourage or discourage employees to be involved in knowledge sharing. In line with this observation, the study concluded that there are minimal efforts and less interest on the part of Limpopo municipalities to encourage knowledge sharing. Lack of the reward and recognition system leads to low level of knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities. Essentially, the reward system should be present for successful knowledge sharing in organisations (Sandhu, *et al.* 2011:209). Jahani, *et al.* (2013) confirm that there is a link between the reward system and knowledge sharing in organisations.

System to identify knowledgeable colleagues

When asked whether they disagreed or agreed with the statement that there was no system to identify knowledgeable colleagues to share knowledge with, figure 2 above further reveals the responses regarding the statement. The aim of this question was to identify whether the municipalities were able to track knowledgeable colleagues in terms of the type of knowledge that they possessed. The results show that over half, or 164 (54%) respondents strongly agreed that their municipalities did not have such system, 104(34.1%) agreed to not having the system, 19(6%) disagreed and 11 (4%) strongly disagreed that their municipalities had no system to identify knowledgeable colleagues to share knowledge. Few, that is, 7(2%) respondents reported uncertainty about the availability and non-availability of systems used to identify knowledgeable colleagues to share knowledge. There is no clear way of accessing and exploiting existing knowledge in Limpopo municipalities. Therefore, these municipalities may not be in a position to know what they know and what they do not know. In addition, they may not be able to locate and use the knowledge that they already have to improve service delivery.

Physical environment and layout of work areas

The physical environment and layout of work areas play a major role in knowledge sharing. The respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed with the statement that the physical work environment and layout of work areas restrict knowledge sharing. This meant understanding if municipalities had physical space conducive to knowledge sharing. Figure 2 above shows that generally, the respondents agreed that the physical environment and work area layout restrict effective knowledge sharing. Hundred and twenty-one (40%) respondents strongly agreed that the physical work environment and layout of work areas in their municipalities restrict effective knowledge sharing. Seventy (23%) respondents agreed, 63 (21%) disagreed, while 29 (10%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Figure 2 above also reveals that 22(7%) respondents were uncertain on whether the physical work environment and layout of work areas restrict effective knowledge sharing. Many organisations are moving towards a more open, shared environment in order to increase knowledge flow and to work collaboratively (Pinder, *et al.*, 2009). In Limpopo municipalities, the office space is arranged in such a way that managers are assigned single occupancy plan while the general staff were assigned multi-occupancy plan. The physical work environment and layout of this nature may infringe on the privacy of employees. Lack of privacy may have negative effects on knowledge sharing (Pinder, *et al.*, 2009). This explains why employees feel that the physical work environment and layout of work areas restrict effective knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities.

Municipal culture to support knowledge sharing

The respondents were also asked if the existing municipal culture supports knowledge sharing. The results showed that 142(47%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 116(38%) agreed, while 9(3%) were uncertain. Again, the results revealed that 28(9%) respondents disagreed and 10 (3%) strongly disagreed with the statement that the existing municipal culture did not support knowledge sharing sufficiently. The findings reveal that there is no culture of knowledge sharing in the selected municipalities. This may be attributed to trust among the employees. If there is no trust within an organisation, knowledge sharing cannot, and will not, be successful because where there is fear, employees will not share knowledge and will be doubtful about their organisation's true intentions (Davenport and

Prusak, 2000). Lindner and Wald (2010) affirm that culture is by far, the most important factor of success for knowledge sharing.

Retention of highly skilled and experienced staff

The respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that the retention of highly skilled and experienced staff was not a priority in Limpopo municipalities. The aim of this question was to identify if municipalities value the tacit knowledge held by skilled and experienced staff. Figure 2 above further shows that 131(43%) respondents strongly agreed, 100 (33%) agreed, 29(10%) disagreed, 28(10%) were uncertain, while 17(6%) respondents strongly disagreed that the “retention of highly skilled and experienced staff was not a priority” in their municipalities. Knowledge retention involves all systems and activities that preserve knowledge and let it to remain in the system once introduced (Chigada, 2014). The absence or poor knowledge retention strategies is not peculiar to Limpopo municipalities alone, but cuts across all industries. Wamundila and Ngulube (2011) found the existence of knowledge retention challenges at the University of Zambia. According to these authors, retention challenges took the form of retirements, resignations and deaths. In a related study, Dewah (2011) revealed that the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) lose skills, expertise and knowledge because of staff attrition. According to Chigada (2014), loss of knowledge can prove to be costly when organisations recruit experts and acquire knowledge.

Budget to support knowledge sharing projects

The respondents were asked about lack of budget to support knowledge sharing projects. If budgeted for, factors such as rewards and incentives for those involved in knowledge sharing would be addressed. Enablers such as information communication technology tools would be made available and maintained. It was important for this study to check out if municipalities had budgets for knowledge sharing to show their commitment to knowledge sharing activities. The results revealed that 145 (48%) respondents strongly disagreed that their municipalities lacked budget to support knowledge sharing practices, 68(22%) agreed, 47(16%) strongly disagreed, while 26(9%) disagreed with the statement and 19(6%) respondents stated that they were uncertain about the statement. The findings showed that knowledge sharing is not a funded mandate or activity in the selected municipalities. This means that employees are not accountable to anybody if they decide to share or not to share knowledge. Ondari-

Okemwa (2006) established that lack of explicit value for money from knowledge management makes it difficult for organisations to fund KM practices.

Lack of support from top management

Lastly, the respondents were asked to point out the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement that there was lack of support from to management regarding knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities. This question was meant to understand the role of management in shaping the culture of human thought and behaviour in terms of knowledge sharing (Niranjana and Pattanayak, 2005). Support from top management is necessary to ensure that knowledge sharing harmonises with organisational culture (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). The results, as shown in figure 2, reveal that the majority of 181 (60 %) respondents strongly agreed and 68 (22%) agreed that knowledge sharing in the selected municipalities did not get support from top management, 27 (9%) were uncertain, 16(5%) disagreed with the statement and 13(4%) respondents strongly disagreed that their municipalities lack support from top management. The results show that there was lack of support from top management of Limpopo municipalities. Lack of support and budget from top management were found to be in accordance with previous studies (Kathiravelu, *et al.*, 2014; Riege, 2005; Chigada, 2014).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that Limpopo municipal employees understand that knowledge sharing plays a vital role in the improvement of service delivery. However, the role of knowledge sharing in the improvement of service delivery in Limpopo municipalities is not clearly communicated to everyone, and there is little effort to raise awareness about the role of knowledge sharing in these municipalities. In order to ameliorate the situation, there is a need for an inclusive province-wide knowledge sharing workshop comprising representatives of all levels of staff to be trained about the importance of knowledge sharing. The entire personnel in Limpopo municipalities need to be trained on KM so that they can have common understanding as well as appreciation for knowledge sharing among the employees and across the municipalities. Communities of practice or knowledge fora should be formed at each work level for employees to share challenges, problems, solutions and best practices among themselves and across the municipalities.

The level of knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities is poor. Simply, there is no proper means of encouraging it. These municipalities need to realise that the “presence of rewards and motivation facilitates knowledge sharing and transfer, while the absence of rewards and motivation hinders the sharing and transfer of knowledge” (Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar, 2016:8). Therefore, the reward system may be used to encourage knowledge sharing. In this regard, Limpopo municipalities should consider knowledge sharing as an important factor that should be integrated in their work plans/performance contracts and performance appraisals of their employees. The study also revealed some major challenges that affect knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities. For instance, it found that the information technology system is inadequate. As such it affects and discourages knowledge sharing in the municipalities. Top management has a role to play in providing budget for IT infrastructure and training thereof. Therefore, support from top management is necessary.

There is no clear way of accessing and exploiting existing knowledge in Limpopo municipalities. As a result, the municipalities may not be able to determine what they know and what they do not know. The situation calls for knowledge mapping. According to Joseph and Dieter (2013:17), "Knowledge mapping is about facilitating the discovery of sources of knowledge, tracing its flow, mapping its existence and its changes, and identifying relationships with other sources of knowledge". Without knowledge mapping, the selected municipalities may not be able to know, locate and use the knowledge that they already have to improve service delivery. In order to retain highly skilled and experienced staff, Limpopo municipalities should consider documenting and integrating knowledge into the municipalities in order to retain the best practices. To achieve this knowledge should be captured and stored in documents, databases, products and services, software and processes (Ngulube, 2011; Levy, 2011). Support from top management and political buy-in are the key factors for knowledge sharing in Limpopo municipalities. Without management support and political will, knowledge sharing will not succeed. Therefore, it is important for Limpopo municipalities to solicit support from the municipal manager and the mayor to empower the employees to value, and to create a knowledge sharing culture. The involvement of top management and political buy-in will ensure that the necessary time, infrastructure and budget are allocated to knowledge sharing practices.

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