

University of KwaZulu-Natal

**Understanding the role of knowledge management on
organisational functionality at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife**

By

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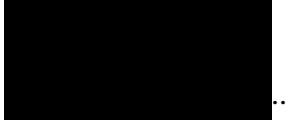
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ABSTRACT

The study explores the role of Knowledge Management (KM) on organisational functionality at EKZNW organisation. The main research questions of the study are establishing if EKZNW has the KM practices, what they are, and if they have been and are of any benefit to the service delivery efficiency and strong competitive advantage of the organisation in the market. The main aim of the study is essentially exploring the role of all the KM practices of the organisation as to how they impact on the overall functionality of the organisation. It can therefore be briefly highlighted that KM translates into how the organisation attracts talent, how it preserves such talent, and how it ensures a smooth diffusion of such talent amongst the employees, which all ideally must result in heightened levels of innovation and efficiency, and sustained customer satisfaction and strong competitive advantage for the organisation.

The data was collected from the employees of this (EKZNW) organisation. The employees that formed the population of the study were exclusively those who occupy management positions within their respective departments. The research methodology the study adopted is the qualitative approach with constructivism as the research paradigm. The researcher's decision opting for the combination of these two elements of research, the qualitative method and the constructivist paradigm, has been motivated by the nature and purpose of the research study.

It was therefore ascertained through the study, inter alia, that the incentive programmes and the reward systems of the organisation, almost invariably, yield positive results in the employees' execution of their work, and heightened levels of motivation to share their knowledge and empower one another. This therefore underpinned the significance for the organisation to establish and institutionalise relevant and likely-to-yield-positive-outcomes KM practices which, inter alia, are exemplified by the training and skills-capacity-enhancing programmes.

The study further reveals the importance of the time that the employees stay with the organisation and how that positively impacts on the overall performance of the staff. It transpires that the longer the employees stay with the organisation, the more knowledge and experience get acquired over time, and that essentially translate into the elevated overall productivity of the staff. This therefore necessitates that establishment of a highly conducive and encouraging working environment by the top management to ensure that the entire staff

relish working for the organisation, and therefore get encouraged to stay longer with the organisation.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

“Knowledge is the fundamental resource that allows us to function intelligently- as individuals and organisations” (Wiig, 1995: 1). Subsequent to this assertion, considerable academic attention has always been dedicated towards further exploration of the knowledge and its importance, in the daily human and organisational lives. Alavi and Leidner (2001) accentuate the importance of knowledge and its management, as well as how significant it is for better and efficient functionality of both human beings and organisations. Wiig (1995) further postulated that if such knowledge is managed, organised and stored appropriately, in the form of books, technology, and effectively put into practice, it contributes significantly towards efficient functionality of the individuals and organisations.

The relevance and impact of knowledge management, as articulated by Wiig (1995), therefore serves as the foundation on which the works of all the recent scholarly publications such as Dalkir (2017), who iterated that value creation for organisations is largely dependent on the availability of KM practices, are based. North and Kumtar (2018) also postulated that if organisations are to achieve elevated levels of efficiency and effectiveness in their functionality, KM is one of the most indispensable elements. The KM practices refer to the manner in which an organisation acquires, creates, stores, protects and applies knowledge, as well as the channels through which the knowledge gets shared, distributed or transferred amongst the employees of the organisation (Inkinen, 2016). KM practices further translate into how the organisation organises, develops, retains and utilises the skills and expertise of its workforce (Omotayo, 2015).

It therefore emanates from these scholarly assertions that a multitude of academic projects always and increasingly get undertaken and published on the subject of KM. Stemming from this interest, this study also investigates this subject of knowledge and how it is managed at organisational level, for effective functioning of the organisation. For this particular purpose, EKZNW was opted for in order to explore the subject of knowledge and how it is managed at organisational level. Motivating the decision to choose EKZNW was the fact that the management of knowledge at organisational level can only be explored and understood with

the use of a real life, practical example of an organisation. Here the organisation is used as a case study in order to establish what KM practices are in place, and how they are helping the organisation in terms of its functionality.

Furthermore, to be able to achieve the effective and efficient functionality, the organisation must always strive to elevate the skills and capabilities possessed by its employees (Kianto, Vanhala and Heilmann, 2016). The efficient levels of employees' skills can only be achieved through the adoption and employment of KM practices by the organisation, which mainly involves employee training (Valmohammadi and Ahmadi, 2015), and how the organisation attracts, acquires, and retains talent. Also central to the management of knowledge is how the knowledge is shared or transferred amongst the staff, essentially converting tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, which all translates into KM practices of the organisation (Donate and de Pablo, 2015). Through the use of the organisation, as a case study, the role of KM on the functionality of the organisation is articulated. The accomplishment of such an understanding, ultimately, is given rise to by the vast structure of the organisation as well as both the economic and nature conservation-related responsibilities of the organisation, which both demand a high levels of talent to possessed by the organisation's employees. Over and above this, being tasked with the responsibility of preserving the KwaZulu Natal province's biodiversity at large, the organisation is required to be present virtually in all parts of the province.

With the hospitality being another aspect of the organisation's responsibilities, the organisation also attracts a significant volume of visitors to the province, in many cases, who visit the province exclusively to experience and enjoy the organisation's products and services. This is extremely demanding on the organisation as it is required to ensure that all its products and services are of incomparably high quality in order to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage in the market. The KM's significance for EKZNW can therefore not be overemphasised if the organisation is to remain relevant and appealing to the market, and most importantly, successfully discharge its aforementioned organisational mandate, which is conservation of biodiversity.

In exploring the role of KM on organisational functionality, the data was collected from the employees of the organisation, EKZNW, as the case study in this particular research study. The employees that formed the population of the study were exclusively those who occupy the senior management positions within their respective departments of the organisation. The

interviews held with each of the respondents were the method of data collection that was employed to collect the research data for the study. The kind of questions that were asked were therefore seeking to explore the types of KM practices the organisation has in place, and how these KM practices have impacted on the organisation, and whether they yield any benefits for the organisation and its functionality.

1.2. Background

EKZNW is an organisation whose headquarters are situated in Pietermaritzburg, at the Queen Elizabeth Park, in KwaZulu Natal. The organisation's responsibility is ensuring the conservation of the province's wildlife and the biodiversity at large, through its established game parks and a myriad of other protected wilderness areas (Dube, 2011).

The organisation also plays a very important role in the development and operation of eco-tourism and hospitality in the province. A significant percentage of the organisation's revenue is therefore generated through eco-tourism and the hospitality aspects of its business, and these include among others camping, tourist accommodation, boating (Dube, 2011).

Such a critical task for the organisation therefore has prompted the undertaking of the current study to inquire if the organisation does have KM practices in place, how they are implemented, and how they assist in achieving the functional efficiency and the livelihood of the organisation. The mandate of the EKZNW is derived from the KwaZulu Natal Nature Conservation Management Act (Act No. 9 of 1997), which is to direct the management of nature conservation within the province of KwaZulu Natal, including the protected areas. This includes the development and promotion of ecotourism facilities within the protected areas.

1.3. Problem Statement

Many companies in South Africa, particularly the country's State Owned Enterprises and in the construction sector, generally (Shikweni, Schurink and van Wyk, 2019), are struggling when it comes to attracting people with the pre-existing necessary qualifications, skills and experience on the job (Sanders, Miller, Bhagwat and Rogers, 2019; Windapo, 2016). It is therefore essential that organisations have the programmes in place aimed at equipping their employees with the necessary skills. This is to ensure that they are able to perform their

respective duties efficiently and to the benefit of the organisation as a whole and its stakeholders.

EKZNW is assigned with fulfilling two normally very conflicting mandates. As has been stated above, on the one hand, the organisation is tasked with ensuring that the province's biodiversity is conserved, on the other, it must execute a role of being a hospitality services provider to the visitors (Arbieu, Grunewald, Schleuning and Bohning-Gaese, 2017; Dube, 2016). Under normal circumstances the preservation of the natural resources translates into ensuring that all the protected natural and wilderness areas bear no human footprint, or that the human interference is kept at its absolute minimum (McGarigal, Compton, Plunkett, DeLuca, Grand, Ene and Jackson, 2018). The organisation is therefore essentially tasked with a very demanding responsibility of striking a delicate balance between nature and wildlife conservation, and the growth and development of its, and in general, the province's hospitality economic sector. Striking such a delicate balance therefore is so demanding that for the organisation, EKZNW, to fulfil it, the concept of KM becomes one of the fundamentals for the organisation's operations, decision-making and the functionality as a whole (Mantymaki and Riemer, 2016; Nisar, Prabhakar and Strakova, 2019).

It is also worth pointing out that with the prevailing climate change problems, and the “save the planet” initiatives, it has become even more demanding for the organisations such as EKZNW to intensify their nature conservation efforts (Wu, Cui, Tseng, Hu and Huy, 2017), but at the same time, considering the value the hospitality sector adds for the respective organisations and their states (Kim, Lee and Fairhurst, 2017; Teare, 2019), and the current trying economic challenges, the hospitality organisations are also required to intensify their efforts to encourage the travellers to visit their destinations and experience their products and services (Lim, 2016; Taheri, Coelho, Sousa and Evanschitzky, 2017). It is a very skills-, prudent management- and foresight-demanding situation for organisations such as the EKZNW.

The literature, through its reviewing, was therefore expected to reveal a variety of KM practices types, the significance and the impact such practices have had on the organisations that have employed them. It would also be established through the literature as to how organisations have embraced, executed and benefitted from the KM practices.

1.4. Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to understand the kind of KM practices at EKZNW, and to understand whether they are beneficial to the organisation in terms of its effective and efficient functionality.

1.5. Study Objectives

- To ascertain the kind of KM practices the organisation has in place.
- To explore the kind of role the existing organisation's KM practices play on the overall functionality of the organisation.
- To establish if these KM practices do help improve the efficiency with which the employees execute their work.
- To understand the overall significance of KM systems being institutionalised by companies.

1.6. Research Questions

- What kind of KM practices does the organisation have in place?
- What role do these organisational KM practices play on the overall functionality of the organisation?
- Do these KM practices help improve the efficiency with which the employees execute their work?
- What is the overall significance of KM systems being institutionalised by companies?

1.7. Research Methodology

The study employs qualitative research which, according to Flick (2018), is the kind of research that seeks to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons, opinions and motivations on a specific social phenomenon, a viewpoint supported by Saunders et al (2016) making mention of the fact that qualitative studies are known for their chief focus on extracting or constructing the meaning and making sense of the socially constructed phenomena, and establishing the core reasons for their existence, and gauging their impact. This research study therefore adopted the qualities of a qualitative study given the fact that the main aim of the study was to ascertain the impact of KM on the functionality of the organisation. The context in which the study was conducted can be described as typifying the

natural setting, as the actual context of this research would be the organisational environment, the very setting where such KM business practices naturally take place (Saunders et al., 2016).

1.7.1. Research design

The research design used was a combination of exploratory, explanatory and evaluative designs of research. This was attributed to the fact that a series of questions were going to be asked to the research population, to establish insight and in-depth analysis as to whether or not KM has been institutionalised by EKZNW, and the impact it has had on the organisation in terms of its product and service effectiveness, efficiency, and the entire organisation's competitive advantage in the market (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). This was characteristic of an exploratory study.

The study would also exhibit the characteristics of an explanatory kind of research. As articulated by Saunders et al (2016), this is the kind of a study where the research seeks to unearth the relationship between the two variables, and how they relate to each other. The study in question therefore sought to explain the relationship between the organisation's KM practices and its overall functionality (Donate and de Pablo, 2015).

The study would further exhibit the traits of an evaluative study as it also sought to assess the effectiveness of the organisation's practices and processes of KM having been institutionalised by the organisation. These are characteristic qualities of evaluative research as highlighted, *inter alia*, by Saunders et al (2016).

1.7.2. Research Site

Given the fact that the study in question followed the method of a case study, EKZNW was chosen as the site where the research would be conducted and data collected.

The Headquarters of EKZNW, in Pietermaritzburg, served as the site where research was conducted. This is in line with the academic assertions made by Takahashi and Araujo (2019) where they articulate that the research site ought to be chosen by the researcher on the basis that the data to be extracted and obtained from such a research site could only and uniquely be acquired from such a site, and nowhere else. Therefore, given the fact that the study was on EKZNW as an organisation, and whether there are KM practices in the organisation, and

how they impact on the organisational functionality, it therefore stood to reason that the organisation, EKZNW, particularly where its Headquarters are situated, was indeed the convenient location from where such data could be obtained.

1.7.3. Sampling Strategy

The purposive strategy of sampling was used, because the researcher was interested in a specific population (the senior management), for purposes of obtaining a specific data from them, the position with which Rosenthal (2016) also concurs as he highlights the fact that with the purposive approach to sampling, the researcher is only interested in the relevant population, and that is the population equipped enough with the study's aim- and objectives-related information, knowledge and experience. This therefore translates into the fact that this is the population from whom the researcher would be able to obtain the data that would ultimately help answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives. This is mainly why the researcher in the current study opted for a purposive approach to sampling because, as the management of the organisation would exclusively form the research population, the researcher would almost be sure to extract the relevant and accurate data from them pertaining to the KM practices and policies of the organisation because such aspects of the organisation are largely managed and administered by the organisation's management teams.

Moser and Korstjens (2018) further attest to these assertions, they make mention of the fact that for the qualitative types of studies, the sampling strategy is aimed at recruiting the participants who have the rich and needed data to contribute to the furtherance of the research study. They therefore refer to this kind of sampling as the deliberate one, as opposed to a random kind of sampling.

1.7.4. Sample Size

Each division of EKZNW (Marketing, Human Resources, Operations and Logistics, Customer Relations, Reservations and Sales, Finance, Legal, Public Relations, Maintenance, Hospitality, Restaurants, Research, Planning and Strategy, Communications and Wildlife Conservation and Ecology) would be represented by one manager who would form the population of the study. Therefore, at most, 15 managers of the organisation were expected to be interviewed. It is however worth pointing out that due to work pressure and unavailability

of the top management of the organisation, some of the managers could not be accessed and therefore ultimately, eight top managers of the organisation were able to partake in the study.

This sample size was also consistent with the appropriate sample size suitable for phenomenological studies, and is said to be generally and acceptably more or less than seven participants and interviews, as articulated by Moser and Korstjens (2018). It is therefore worth pointing out that the phenomenological character of the study in question was attributed to the fact that the study sought to inquire into the existence of KM practices in the organisation, and how they impact on the organisation's functionality.

1.7.5. Population

The top managers responsible for different departments of the organisation which included Marketing, Human Resources, Operations and Logistics, Customer Relations, Reservations and Sales, Finance, Legal, Public Relations, Maintenance, Hospitality, Restaurants, Research, Planning and Strategy, Communications and Wildlife Conservation and Ecology, were earmarked to constitute the population of the study. As stated above, eight top managers were able to participate in the study, a number which was still sufficient according to Moser and Korstjens (2018). The data collected from these eight managers is therefore representative enough of how the existence and application of KM practices impact on organisational functionality.

1.7.6. Collection Method

The structured interviews were used as the sole method of data collection. The interviews were set up with the management of the organisation where the author posed prepared questions to the management, in an effort to establish the existing KM practices within the organisation, how they are carried out, and their effects on the functionality, efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness of the organisation.

1.7.7. Data analysis

The thematic method of analysis was used in the analysis of the current research data. This, according to Ganapathy (2016), is the kind of data analysis where the researcher, in anticipation of the responses to be given by the research population during data collection, comes up with the potential themes. As the respondents give their responses during the

interviews, those responses are then put under their relevant categories, the themes, to be extensively analysed. These themes, therefore, are the ones the researcher in the current study used, as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), Ganapathy (2016) and Keast, Koliba and Voets (2020), as the major findings of the study, and were therefore used as headings in the findings section of the study. These themes are putting to the fore the perspectives of the participants, and these perspectives are then substantiated by the quotations of what was said or uttered by the participants during the interviews.

1.8. Organisation of chapters

It has been made clear in this chapter that the subject of KM is a very important subject, particularly for the business organisations. The necessity to conduct research on KM practices of a business organisation has therefore been highlighted, together with why it has to be conducted, as well as the importance of conducting such a study.

The research problem statement, objectives of the study, method of research, research design, research type, the site where the research was conducted and data obtained, the sampling strategy, sample size, the method employed in the collection of the data, as well as data analysis, have therefore all been discussed in the chapter.

The indispensable role of KM in any organisation is even underpinned by how extensively and robustly many academic scholars and authors have dedicated the focus of their research projects on the importance of the adoption of KM practices for the success of an organisation. The next chapter, chapter two, dissects a wide spectrum of the viewpoints of various authors with respect to the significance and impact of KM on the performance of an organisation.

Chapter three focuses on the research methodology which has been adopted and utilised in the conducting of the research and collecting of the data from the aforementioned research site. This has been given rise to by the fact that this area of study still needs further exploration and to be developed further with more contributions in terms of research and writing.

Chapter four was preceded by the administration of the interviews which took place at EKZNW, as the elected site of research for this particular study. This therefore means that the writing of this chapter was guided by the content of the data having been collected through

the interviews. The collected data (also findings) is basically outlining what the interviewees' responses were.

The fifth chapter is the last chapter, and it is where the researcher is comparing and contrasting the data (findings) collected through the interviews, and the results arrived at in chapter four, as well as the data emanating from the second chapter. In the fifth chapter, the researcher is essentially putting forth his views and explicating why he is saying what he is saying. This is also the chapter where the researcher is basically summarising the whole study. The researcher gets to organise the findings in the manner that is answering the research questions and addressing the objectives. This is also where the researcher comes up with the recommendations for the management of the organisation in terms of how to address any gaps that may have emerged between what the literature review has asserted and what the organisation actually has in terms of the KM practices.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The importance of KM in organisations cannot be stressed enough, and is applicable across the board, for all organisations, in any sector or industry (Wiig, 1995). Such a degree of importance is further underpinned by the attention and the amount of interest such a subject (KM) has drawn and continues to draw from the academic scholars' writings and publications. KM can also be illustrated by the use of British Airways (BA) as an example of the company that has incorporated KM in its business model and from which enormous benefits have been reaped. According to Xue (2017), BA is one of the biggest organisations in the transportation industry and enjoys presence in many countries around the world through the existence and the activeness of the routes it flies to reach different parts of the world. This has been one of the most compelling reasons why BA has resolved to embrace and significantly leverage a vast array of KM practices in its business model, inclusive of which are knowledge sharing, strategic planning and operational research (Xue, 2017). This has therefore seen BA being one of the most reputable organisations in the world of aviation, and able to enjoy growth, success and a very strong and sustainable competitive advantage in the market (Xue, 2017).

This chapter is therefore dedicated to the comprehensive exploration of various aspects of KM. It begins with outlining the world-view, a global perspective of the subject of KM, as to how it has been adopted and carried out in different parts of the world, as well as the impact on the functioning of different organisations around the world that KM has.

The chapter then explores the fundamental essence of the subject of KM as to what it translates into and the organisational practices that constitute it. It then discusses how KM helps improve the capacity, efficiency and skills of the staff in an organisation. The essential resources and infrastructure which serve as the antecedents of the successful adoption and implementation of KM practices also explored. The culture of the organisation is then dissected as to how it relates to the successful implementation of KM practices and how it could be adjusted to accommodate the organisation's KM practices. The chapter then finally discusses the benefits of KM, overall, that an organisation can achieve.

2.2.KM at global level

In most of the first-world countries, such as in Europe, it transpires that many organisations have realised that generously investing in technology and telecommunication infrastructure and facilities is the way to go in these contemporary times (Kaoud, 2017; Poór, Juhasz, Machová, Bencsik and Bilan, 2018). This has helped a lot in ensuring the enhanced levels of innovation by these companies, and as a result, there are many of these organisations that have adopted the practice of working from home (Poór et al., 2018). This has become even more essential during the COVID-19 trying period, but mainly it is the economic strengths, and the development in general that have enabled the organisations in these countries to reap so much benefits from the technological innovations (Poór et al., 2018).

In many countries around the world, such as in Germany, many companies are characterised by almost insurmountable difficulties of ensuring that their KM efforts are successful, thereby stay ahead of the competition, and maintain a strong competitive advantage in the market (Friedrich, Becker, Kramer, Wirth and Schneider, 2020). It transpires that in many instances what stifles the KM efforts and mechanisms in some organisations is the lack of time set aside for such activities of KM, such as the time in which the employees are allowed to interact with each other by the organisation being too limited (Friedrich et al., 2020). This makes it difficult for the employees to share knowledge in such instances. The culture of the organisation being very key to the successful KM implementation by the organisation, an organisational culture that does not regard KM practices as critically important can therefore be extremely hindering to successful KM by the organisation. Friedrich et al (2020) and Prado-Gasco, Pardo and Perez-Campos (2017) therefore articulates that many companies around the world, whether in developing or developed countries, struggle with trying to establish efficient service and be able to keep ahead of the competition, a situation which, in many cases, is attributed to the organisational culture that does not regard KM as worth prioritising.

The KM efforts and mechanisms in many organisations on the African continent struggle to triumph in business. Most of the failure of the KM efforts in these organisations is levelled at the stifling lack of support from the top management of the organisation towards the KM activities (Okeke, 2017). It transpires that the top management of these organisations is not well informed and lack the crucial awareness about the significant role that KM practices can play in advancing the organisation's initiatives and sales and marketing efforts, and ensuring

the success and sustained competitive advantage in the market (Okeke, 2017). Another challenge to which the stagnation of KM activities could be attributed is the general lack of understanding as to the benefits and the significance of KM for the organisation and its accomplishment of success and growth (Okeke, 2017).

It has however transpired that KM is of vital importance for the success of any organisation. This therefore translates into the fact that the sooner all the African organisations embrace the KM practices, inclusive of which are the creation and protection of intangible assets, the better (Ode and Ayavoo, 2019). This is further expected to contribute significantly towards the success and growth of many organisations in the African continent (Ode and Ayavoo, 2019).

It is further worth highlighting that there are so many factors that impede the success and growth, and the successful implementation of KM practices by the firms on the African continent (Almeida, Miranda and Falcao, 2019). These factors include the deep-rooted, and difficult-to-loosen, resistance harboured by a sizeable volume of the workforce in many organisations on the African continent. The time factor is another issue. Many firms, because of the resistance to change, have been found completely unwilling to invest time in the KM practices for their organisational success (Almeida et al., 2019). They perceive these activities and initiatives as an unwelcomed waste of time, an attitude mainly associated with the lack of understanding with respect to the positive impact of KM practices on the success of the organisation, and the sustained competitive advantage of the organisation in the market.

Aghimien, Aigbavboa, Gomes and Thwala (2019) highlight that one of the major challenges that face organisations, particularly in the developing world, such as in South Africa, is the inhibiting amounts of financial resources which are essential for the adequate, efficient and successful adoption and implementation of KM practices. This therefore equates to the extremely difficult, if not impossible, challenge of attracting and hiring the highly qualified and knowledgeable staff. It also becomes very difficult for such organisations to not only have recognition and incentive programmes in place, but to also implement them, in order to motivate the highly qualified and knowledgeable employees to share their knowledge with the rest of the staff (Aghimien et al., 2019).

The degree of sustainability of the organisations, small to medium sized, particularly in the developing countries and in South Africa leaves a lot to be desired according to Naicker, Suzaan, Bruwer and Bruwer (2017). This is largely attributed to the financial predicaments faced by these organisations, a situation also stemming from and exacerbated by the weak economic outlook of their respective countries. These countries are characterised by extremely high rate of unemployment, extremely slow economic growth, and the very high interest rates resulting in too high the costs of maintaining many of these businesses, and adopting and implementing KM practices, particularly the sharing of knowledge and the acquiring of technological equipment essential for KM practices implementation (Naicker et al., 2017).

According to Fombad and Onyancha (2017), KM challenges experienced by many small-scale businesses, in South Africa emanate not only from within these firms, but from well beyond the confines of these firms, from the governments of the countries with their policies and decisions. The lack of foresight-full and prudent leadership on the side of the governments translates into the gloomy and inhibiting economic landscape, particularly for small-scale organisations. The ultimate effect of such problems which emanate from the lack of governance adequacy on the side of the governments is the negative economic outlook of the country which is typified by the firms' lack of access to adequate financial assistance (Fombad and Onyancha, 2017). This then results in the inability to have measures in place to hone their employees' skills and expertise, which negatively contributes to the KM practices efforts. Fombad and Onyancha (2017) make mention of the fact that in response to these economic challenges, in most cases, experienced by the previously disadvantaged groups in South Africa, the government then established the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA). This was aimed at minimising the level of unemployment in the country. The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003 (BBBEE), which was also another mechanism through which the government intended to racially select the black people of South Africa, as the previously disadvantaged group, when it comes to the small and up-coming business owners jostling for governmental aid and small business upliftment programmes, to rightfully enjoy that preferential treatment from the government (Fombad and Onyancha, 2017).

2.3.The essence of KM practices

The success of any organisation, particularly in these contemporary times, hinges on how well the knowledge is managed by the organisation (Wiig, 1995). The efficient and sound management of knowledge has become even more essential in the contemporary business landscape of the knowledge-demanding nature of the fourth industrial revolution. Knowledge has therefore become an indispensable source of a sustainable competitive advantage that any organisation can exploit, and be able to outdo the competition in the market (Barley, Treemand Kuhn, 2018; Donate and de Pablo, 2015). Further attesting to the significance of KM in every organisation, Nielsen (2018) articulates that it is extremely important for organisations to have KM well incorporated in their business models if they are to succeed in the market. There are therefore numerous organisations that have done so and typify the dominant players in their respective markets, and have been able to grow considerably to being one of the household names and brands globally. Some of the most prominent organisations whose value drivers have always been KM and intellectual capital are Google and Facebook (Nielsen, 2018).

2.3.1. KM practices

(a) *Knowledge generation*

The element of Knowledge Generation entails an organisation creating new content of knowledge or updating the pre-existing content. This process could be exemplified by converting the organisation's tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, or vice versa (Abualoush et al., 2018). The social and collaborative processes are the mechanisms through which the generation of new knowledge could be induced, and which is to culminate in the creation, sharing, amplification, enlargement, and the justification of organisational settings, as articulated by Abualoush et al (2018).

(b) *Knowledge storage*

Knowledge Storage is another element of the KM practices. This dictate, according to Abualoush et al (2018), that it is futile for the organisation to acquire knowledge and then lose it down the line. They assert therefore that mechanisms are needed to be engineered and put in place through which knowledge, after having been acquired, could be stored and easily retrieved as and when the organisation needs to (Tseng, 2016). Properly Indexed

Repositories, and Data-Bases are some of the methods through which the proper storing and easy retrieval of knowledge or information could successfully take place, benefiting the organisations (Tseng, 2016).

(c) Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge Sharing, on the other hand, entails the organisation's employees, the entire workforce, sharing and transferring their knowledge and experiences amongst themselves (Abualoush et al., 2018; Al Saifi, 2015). This is transferring the knowledge and experiences from one employee to another. According to Abualoush et al (2018), new knowledge also gets generated through this process, and it also results in the equipping and enriching of other employees who need to have their knowledge capacity enhanced. The time spent, therefore, on trial and error, with respect to new projects and tasks is significantly reduced when employees are able to transfer knowledge from one to another. This could only add to the abundance of knowledge and information at the organisation's disposal, according to Abualoush et al (2018). Volvo car-manufacturing company makes a very good example of an organisation whose activities have demonstrated the significance of knowledge sharing amongst the employees of the organisation. Dal Ponte, CharterinaAbando and Basterretxea (2017) therefore postulate that knowledge sharing is one of the major elements of KM and is very key to the success and growth of the organisation. It has therefore been one of the ingredients of the Volvo's recipe for success. To also demonstrate that technological innovation and KM go hand-in-hand, Volvo has adopted technology in hosting and holding knowledge sharing forums via video conferencing where as many as about three hundred participants, representing Volvo plants scattered across the globe are able to interact and share ideas and knowledge pertaining to their product offering development and efficiency (Dal Ponte et al., 2017).

(d) Knowledge Application

Finally, the KM Practices feature the aspect of Knowledge Application by the organisation (Abualoush et al., 2018). The storing and sharing of knowledge therefore is not an end in itself, but are a means to an end, and the end actually comes in the form of the eventual application of the already stored and shared knowledge. This is the stage at which, as postulated by Abualoush et al (2018), the organisation's top management can conclusively determine either the fruitfulness or the futility of the knowledge acquired and stored. The

quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the knowledge can ultimately be assessed through the success rate achieved in resolving business problems and answering business questions through the application of the knowledge (Donate and de Pablo, 2015).

2.3.2. Tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge

The tacit knowledge can then be distinguished from explicit knowledge in that tacit knowledge is the kind of knowledge which resides or is embedded in the minds of the employees, and therefore is intangible in nature (Chuang, Jackson and Jiang, 2016; Omotayo, 2015). This then explains the difficulty with respect to the sharing or transferring of such knowledge amongst the employees, as well as among the different divisions of the organisation (Scurtu and Neamtu, 2015).

Mohajan (2017) further elaborates on the difficulty of sharing tacit knowledge within an organisation as compared to the sharing of explicit knowledge. He highlights one of the most critical and effective mechanisms through which the sharing of tacit knowledge could be executed seamlessly and efficiently, the ICT infrastructure. Mohajan (2017) makes mention of the fact that a multitude of components constitute this ICT infrastructure, and they include, among other things, intranet, extranet, e-mail, video-conferencing, teleconferencing, social media, facebook, and blogs.

Omotayo (2015), on the other hand, describes explicit knowledge as the easier of the two kinds of knowledge, that form the knowledge base of the organisation, to share amongst the employees, or among different departments of the organisation, thereby being able to store and preserve the knowledge, such that even if the people, the employees may leave the organisation at some point, but the knowledge will always remain the asset of the organisation. This is the kind of knowledge which, according to Scurtu and Neamtu (2015), is easily accessible and can easily be shared amongst the employees. Such ease is attributable to the manner in which this kind of knowledge is stored and packaged by the organisation. They state that this kind of knowledge can be stored or archived in tangible forms inclusive of which are books, manuals, and databases. This therefore explains why such knowledge can be easily accessible to and shared by the organisation's workforce.

2.3.3. Inbound & outbound knowledge

KM, as highlighted by Santoro, Vrontis, Thrassou and Dezi (2018), also translates into the organisation's capacity to explore both inbound and outbound knowledge flows. They articulate that the organisation's management ought to establish the necessary avenues, open enough for appropriate and relevant knowledge to flow into the organisation's team, and, at the same time, have sufficiently strict measures in place to ensure that the knowledge repositories of the organisation are strictly guarded and managed. This, according to Santoro et al (2018), will result in the organisation's knowledge being protected, and therefore not able to be easily imitated by the competition, while, at the same time, the organisation is able to acquire knowledge from external sources.

Tan and Wong (2015) further state that the sources of external knowledge which can be exploited and explored by the organisation are varied, and they are inclusive of market-based partners, suppliers, customers, and even the competitors. This, in the process, is likely to help broaden the scope of knowledge which is to be accumulated by the organisation.

2.3.4. Facilitating effective sharing of knowledge

The question that arises therefore is, given the significance of the tacit knowledge which is only archived in the minds of the individual employees, and therefore unable to be easily accessed by and shared amid the employees and departments of the organisation, how then can business organisations ensure that, at least, when those knowledgeable employees depart, the knowledge in their minds and experience are retained by the organisations? Twum-Darko and Harker (2017), first and foremost provide a suggestion that, in order to facilitate effective and efficacious sharing of knowledge within an organisation, the necessary processes and procedures need be established by an organisation, which will also need to be in line and consistent with the environment within which the respective organisation, departments and employees operate. This will also require considering the necessary levels of interaction at which the sharing of knowledge will be taking place.

It is however worth pointing out that as much as knowledge sharing is one of the most critical pillars of KM there are still many organisations that experience major shortcomings with respect its successful implementation (Durst and Zieba, 2019). A sizeable number of employees in many organisations has been found to have the tendency of deliberately hiding their valuable information and experience from and not wanting to share it with other

employees, an attitude associated with the fear of being displaced from their superiority by the new members of the organisation that are still striving to move up the ladder of the management of the organisation (Durst and Zieba, 2019).

Makhubela and Ngoepe (2018) postulate that the departure of employees from the organisation is inevitable in many cases. They state that the employees will always come and go, and that leaving the organisation could be attributed to a variety of reasons inclusive of which are which retirement, resignation, career advancement and retrenchment. What the top management of the organisation has to ensure therefore is that the departing employees are not, at least, departing with their knowledge richness and leave the organisation with knowledge scarcity, and therefore it is essential that the sharing of knowledge amongst the employees be regarded as one of the most critical pillars of KM and success of the organisation.

2.3.5. The significance of customer knowledge

Furthermore, Tseng (2016) provides another extremely important aspect which also forms a constituent part of the organisation's KM practices. He postulates that organisations must constantly strive to broaden the depth of their knowledge with respect to their customer-base. He is thereby iterating that KM, *inter alia*, translates into ensuring the richness and abundance of customer-related information and knowledge. This, in the process enables and empowers the organisation and its workforce to be able to meet, and even exceed, customer expectations in terms of product and service quality (Fidel, Schlesinger and Carvera, 2015; Tseng, 2016). Tseng (2016) therefore accentuates the significance of keeping a constant contact with the customers, and ensure that the lines of communication with the organisation's customers are always open. This is therefore the way in which the organisation will be adequately equipped with relevant customer information and knowledge pertaining to their expectations, and eventually be able to satisfy their needs and wants (Fidel et al., 2015).

This also necessitates the organisation's management to craft apt ways in which the collated information and knowledge from the external sources of the organisation (i.e. suppliers, partners, and competitors) and internal sources (i.e. employees and subsidiaries, and archived databases) could be integrated. This would mainly be aimed at ensuring the appropriateness and accuracy of the knowledge to be utilised in the development of new products and

services, to ultimately meet or even exceed customer expectations in satisfying their needs and wants (Fidel et al., 2015; Tseng, 2016).

Furthermore, it is essential for the sophisticated depth of knowledge to be possessed by an organisation and its workforce. For the organisation's workforce to be of any benefit and value to the organisation, it must be as highly equipped with information and knowledge as possible (Tan and Wong, 2015). The depth of knowledge will allow the employees to produce high levels of performance and productivity for the benefit of the organisation and its consumers, which is why Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar (2016) classify knowledge depth as the lifeblood of an organisation, and on which the survival and success of an organisation hinge, and that is one of the most important antecedents of the organisation's constant innovation and successes.

2.3.6. Motivating the employees to support the KM practices

Ajibade (2016) is of the view that some organisations are also constituted by the workforce, although not the entire workforce, that lacks the drive and willingness to learn. This therefore inhibits these employees to equip themselves with the critical tools, skills and craftsmanship necessary for them to perform at their best which would in turn elevate their organisational efficiency and result in more sustained and stronger competitive advantage in the market (Ajibade, 2016; Xue, 2017). This kind of lacklustre behaviour and attitude can therefore be attributed to the urgent desire of some of the employees to make quick money, but at the same time not willing to endure the temporal pain and hardships associated with the learning process (Ajibade, 2016).

In overcoming the organisational problem mentioned above, Inkinen, Kianto and Vanhala (2015) are of the view that when employees see that their efforts of acquiring, utilising and sharing their knowledge with other employees, are recognised, appreciated and rewarded by the organisation, they are likely to do so, which in process grows the entire knowledge repositories of the organisation, and ensure the consolidation of the organisation's competitive advantage. This is owed to the resultant heightened levels of innovation, effectiveness and efficiency punctuating the organisation's KM practices, and attributable to such KM activities. When the employees are being acknowledged and recognised for their contribution to the enrichment of the knowledge base of the organisation through the

transferring of their knowledge to others, they are likely to share their knowledge even more, in the process benefitting the whole organisation.

Furthermore, the impact and significance of the role played by the systems and programmes for recognition and appraisal of the employees who contribute to the knowledge sharing and other KM activities within the organisation cannot be stressed enough (Kianto, Saenz and Aramburu, 2017; Nath, 2015). It can therefore be pointed out that incentives and rewards conferred to these employees who go an extra mile and put significant effort in the furthering of the knowledge base within the organisation can result in substantial impact, in motivating those employees to want to do more of it, and, in the process, motivate others to follow suit, benefitting many other employees and the entire organisation ultimately. Nath (2015) enumerates some of these rewards and incentives to include the potential for career advancement, job security, bonuses and better pay than before. He however asserts that it is not always the case that employees who share tacit knowledge with other employees are doing so because they are after monetary incentives. The passion that some employees have about the subject matter, at times, is the key driver, motivating them to interact and share knowledge with other employees, contributing to their knowledge and the entire organisation's knowledge reserves. It also transpires, according to Nath (2015) that even with the abolishment of incentives, as a motivating factor, some employees would still be prepared to go out of their way to contribute to and share their tacit knowledge with other employees. This therefore means that it is not always advisable for the top management of an organisation to exclusively rely on the organisational incentive programmes to motivate the sharing of tacit knowledge amongst the employees, and that there are other methods that such tacit knowledge sharing can be encouraged such as the organisational culture of status and recognition for employees' contribution to and sharing of tacit knowledge (Kianto et al., 2017; Nath, 2015).

The significance of incentive programmes on the furtherance of the KM practices cannot be overemphasised though, as Li, Lu and Chi (2018) postulate, for example, that the incentive travel that involves the deserving employees being sent to tourist destinations abroad on the all-expenses-paid holidays with their families. This would then signal to the rewarded employee and the entire staff that enormous financial investments are being allocated by the organisation for the recognition and the showing of appreciation for the employees' contribution and dedication towards the furtherance of KM initiatives within the organisation.

The ultimate outcome would then be more elevated and sustained motivation amongst the entire staff, benefitting the entire organisation in the process, in terms of the achievement of goals and objectives.

It is also worth pointing out that in order for the monetary incentives to yield the intended response outcome from the employees, in terms of their dedication and contribution towards the furtherance of the organisation's KM practices, they must be of the category that would set the employee apart from the rest, over and above the ordinary monthly salary and the annual bonuses to which everyone is entitled (Haier, Sleeman and Schafers, 2020). This therefore means that such a bonus would fluctuate on monthly basis, and would depend on the employee's contribution towards the efforts of KM practices in specific months.

2.4.KM practices enhance overall work performance

2.4.1. KM practices elevate staff's innovativeness

A vast array of scholars and literature have accentuated the significance of KM in contemporary business organisations, but the enhanced innovative capacity of an organisation, which is attributed to KM practices having been embraced by an organisation, appears to be one of the most important (Kianto, Vanhala and Heilmann, 2016; Santoro et al., 2018). In order for any organisation to not only survive but thrive in contemporary competitively fierce and dynamic market environment an organisation must be able, through its staff, to constantly innovate (Lee, Foo, Leong and Ooi, 2016; Santoro et al., 2018) in order to keep ahead of the competition. KM is therefore a significant prerequisite for high levels of innovation in organisations (Kianto et al., 2016; Santoro et al., 2018).

2.4.2. Workforce's training and development

It is also very important for the organisation to invest in the training and development of its workforce's skill and performance capacity (Abualoush et al., 2018). These practices could be conducted in different forms inclusive of which are workshops, seminars, and courses, as platforms through which the innovation and skills capacity of the organisation's workforce could be enhanced (Valmohammadi and Ahmadi, 2015). According to Inkkinen et al (2015), this is likely to result in the strengthening of the organisation's competitive advantage in the market.

To ensure that the overall development of knowledge for the organisation's workforce is always facilitated and implemented, the presence of the programme of employee ability and performance appraisal can therefore never be overstated (Chuang et al., 2016). This is the programme through which the performance levels and capacity of the workforce get reviewed and developed accordingly by the employees' respective superiors (Chuang et al., 2016). The focal point of such programmes is the ability of employees to acquire, exhibit, apply and share their knowledge with other employees, and thereby enrich the overall organisation's knowledge-base, and strengthen the organisation's competitive advantage in the market. Such programmes of valuing the employees strengthen the likelihood of employees willingly sharing their knowledge with other employees, as articulated by Inkinen et al (2015).

Durst and Zieba (2019) however contend that a big challenge faced by many organisations, associated with KM, is the poor quality of their KM practices. These organisations tend to be characterised by inadequate levels of training programmes, skills, expertise, experience and capacities which are all essential for productive performance of an organisation. In many instances this would inevitably lead to the organisation's managers unable to manage and lead other employees with the necessary foresight, and unable to make prudent and fruitful decisions, constituting a major setback for the organisation (Durst and Zieba, 2019).

Such training and training would even help address the challenges, particularly with the new recruits, of lack of confidence, uncertainty, in terms of what the organisation stands for and what is expected of them. The efficient administration of such training and development programmes can therefore help in resolving the challenges associated with lack of desire for growth, self-development and learning, as articulated by Sowole, Hogue and Adeyeye (2018). Sowole et al (2018) further assert that the major consequence for lack of desire for growth in the new recruits, which is attributed to lack of adequate training and development, is the severe lack of optimism, which then results in the new recruits being unable to adjust and adapt to the new work environment, and not being motivated to learn, given that the short-, medium-, and long-term goals and objectives of the organisation, at this stage, would still have not been inculcated in them.

Furthermore, Kweon, Lee, Chai and Yoo (2019) postulate that the strategic decision by any organisation to outsource some of the services and activities underpins the indispensability and the significant role of the external organisations in the furtherance of the organisation's goals and objectives. The fostering of the long-term, mutually beneficial relationships and

collaborations with the external organisations can therefore not be overstated. The outsourcing of the training programmes and activities, and having them administered by the reputable external organisations therefore typify one of the essential and beneficial strategic decisions an organisation can make (Kweon et al., 2019). In substantiating the significance of outsourcing the employee training and development programmes, Kweon et al (2019) postulate that a variety of benefits can be realised by the organisation through outsourcing these programmes, for example, in establishing sound and mutually beneficial relationships with the accredited organisations that specialise in employee training and development, high levels of value, in terms of the quality of training and the outcomes of it, in terms of more elevated employee skills and capabilities can be realised. This also saves an organisation ample time that could have been channelled towards employee training and development but instead have it used productively in the provision of customer service, and ensuring the continued satisfaction of the organisation's customers (Kweon et al., 2019).

The constant evolution of the market, and the constantly changing tastes and preferences of the organisation's customers necessitate the regular training and development of the employees as well, to keep abreast, and ensure that the organisation and its products and services remain relevant and appealing in the market (Johnson, Park and Bartlett, 2018). In many cases it is costlier to the organisation to establish an internal, permanent division that will only be responsible for the administering of the regular training and development of employees (Vukonjanski, Vasilijevic, and Mitic, 2018). Concurring with Kweon et al (2019), Vukonjanski et al (2018) therefore postulate that it makes more economic and strategic sense for the organisation to embark on a long-term relationship with the external organisations that specialise in the training and development of employees. Vukonjanski et al (2018) point out that such training and development programmes tend to be more effective and efficient since they are administered by the organisations whose chief focus is on the exact kind of trade. With the organisation's budget allocation being more optimal, and the staff's skills and capabilities developed and refined by an external, expert organisation, the organisation's competitive advantage in the market is more likely to be consolidated (Vukonjanski et al., 2018).

2.4.3. The value of learning by doing

One of the most important and effective ways for employees to learn, acquire work-related knowledge and be able to perform at their best, as postulated by Inkinnen et al (2015), is

learning by doing. By this, they point out that the workforce's learning and the efforts to expose the employees to the tools of the trade all happen through doing, and through practicing. It therefore can never be overemphasised how important it is for the organisation to establish an environment that will be conducive enough for such up-skilling and learning to take place. This then means that over and above learning through doing, the employees must always be prepared to seize any learning opportunity that presents itself to them, such as learning from other employees, on the job (Valmohammadi and Ahmadi, 2015; Tan and Wong, 2015; Jain and Moreno, 2015). These authors accentuate that the learning of employees from one another, through observing one another as they perform on the job, as well as simply interacting, socially, with each other, is also extremely important. By Inkinen et al (2015), this is said to be likely to result in the improvement of the entire workforce's knowledge and competence (Nath, 2015; Sigala and Chalkiti, 2015; Trong Tuan, 2017), resulting in the overall establishment and consolidation of the organisation's effectiveness, efficiency, heightened levels of innovation and the organisation's competitive advantage in the market.

2.4.4. Competency-enhancing human resources (HR) practices

The competency-enhancing HR practices present an alternative avenue through which the knowledge repositories of the teams and the organisation as a whole can be enriched (Chuang et al., 2016). Chuang et al (2016) describes competency-enhancing HR practices as an organisational practice whereby the employees are put in very knowledge-demanding work processes. This is then followed up with programmes that are aimed at enhancing these employees' knowledge, skills and abilities, in order for them to be able to perform optimally in their respective jobs. It is therefore worth stating that these HR practices ensure that all the teams within an organisation are constituted by highly able individuals, well capable of executing their assigned duties with high levels of efficiency. However, over and above that, these HR practices also ensure that the team members exhibit a positive attitude and strong passion for growth (Chuang et al., 2016; Law, Chan and Ozer, 2017; Soo, Tian, Teo and Cordery, 2017). This then means that these individuals are constantly looking for ways to better themselves and their efforts at performing their tasks. They therefore go out of their way to enhance and refine their knowledge, skills and general abilities essential for excellent, productive performance of their tasks (Chuang et al., 2016; Law et al., 2017; Soo et al., 2017).

Chuang et al (2016) emphasise the significance of teamwork skills for every team member and postulate that the teamwork skills are critical in facilitating efficient and productive collaborations amongst the team members. These collaborations are essential for the establishment of meaningful interactions amongst the team members, as well as in the acquisition and sharing of new, invaluable knowledge, critical for the efficient performance of the team (Britton, Simper, Leger and Stephenson, 2017; Chuang et al., 2016; Hastie, 2018). This therefore is the only way that a team is to be able to foster seamless and smooth access to the critical knowledge sources.

It is worth highlighting however that in many organisations the success may not be owed to them being equipped with knowledge and skills that enable them to innovate and produce products and services on their own, and be independent of other external organisations (Son, Kim, Park and Kim, 2018). The Apple high-tech company, with their iPhone, is typical of such organisations. Son et al (2018) make mention that Apple's dominance in the high-tech market is owed, to a large degree, to many external organisations who supply it with cutting-edge technological parts to manufacture and produce its iPhone products. This therefore underpins the fact that it is normal for firms not to have all the KM practices in-house, others may be lacking, but the organisation may still be successful and have a strong and sustainable competitive advantage in the market, thanks to the trade relationships the firm may established with other external organisations (Son et al., 2018).

2.5.The essential resources for KM practices

2.5.1. Collecting and connecting organisational activities through technology

Kaschig, Maier and Sandow (2016) expatiate on the roles and relevance of both the collecting and connecting organisational activities as a key aspect of the entire KM practices of the organisation. They therefore distinguish between the two:

(a) *Collecting organisational activities*

Kaschig et al (2016) postulate that collecting activities translate into the organisational practices of generating and packaging new knowledge of the organisation. In essence, collecting activities explain mechanisms through which, electronically, the organisation's knowledge gets stored, retrieved, applied and shared across the entire workforce of the organisation. This therefore means that the role played by Information Technology (IT), and

technology in general, in ensuring the enrichment of the organisation's knowledge repositories cannot be overemphasised. IT is where the convenience of KM activities and their efficiency can be attributed. Kaschig et al (2016) articulate that through such technological mechanisms, the available knowledge can easily be edited, the entire workforce can interact over it, and share such knowledge quite effectively and efficiently (Kaschig et al., 2016).

(b) Connecting organisational activities

Kaschig et al (2016) iterate that with respect to connecting activities, the organisation is required to adopt an open culture, in order for the collected knowledge to effectively and efficiently be utilised and leveraged. This is the culture, according to Kaschig et al (2016), that is aimed at making the work environment conducive for employees to collaborate, interact and exchange ideas and knowledge, and experiences. They then state that this is the process which is likely to culminate in the creation of new knowledge out of the already-available knowledge. An indispensable element of such collaboration, exchanging of ideas and knowledge and the ultimate creation of new knowledge, according to Kaschig et al (2016), is the technological invention, such as the IT. IT is said to efficiently facilitate and expedite the whole process from the collecting of knowledge to employee collaboration, interacting, idea exchange, and eventually, the creation of new knowledge.

2.5.2. Social networks and media

The availability and the use of social networks and media have proven to be extremely beneficial in contributing towards the furtherance of employees' creativity and innovativeness, and ultimately organisation's sustainable competitive advantage in the market (Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar, 2016; Inkkinen et al., 2015; Sigala and Chalkiti, 2015; Tan and Wong, 2015;). The employees' elevated levels of creativity and innovativeness are inextricably intertwined with their participation in and their use of social media. These authors point out that such use of social media has enabled employees to effectively and efficiently search, acquire, store, retrieve, apply and share their knowledge with other employees with a considerable degree of convenience. This therefore underpins the existence of a relationship between technology (i.e. social media) and the employees' creativity (i.e. KM practices).

Furthermore, Sigala and Chalkiti (2015) expatiate on the significance of knowledge sharing by the organisation's employees. The actual, tangible value of one's knowledge can only be said to be beneficial to the organisation when their knowledge filters down throughout the entire organisation, enriching other employees' knowledge base as well. The enhanced knowledge possessed by one employee therefore ought to be leveraged and should result in the actual learning of other employees as well. The role of social media in this regard can therefore quite significant. Sigala and Chalkiti (2015) are of the view that through social media the employees can communicate and collaborate with one another easily. This is also said to be one of the most effective ways through which trust and good relations amongst the employees can be facilitated and developed, with the ultimate end result of the all essential knowledge generation and sharing amongst the employees materialising (Kaschig et al., 2016). Social media can therefore be viewed as one of the most efficient ways that employees can create, share, and in the process, enrich and deepen the KM practices and efforts for the whole organisation.

2.5.3. The significance of preparing the staff for KM practices

Asiedu (2015) outlines the critical factors that ought to be in place to ensure the efficiency and success of the KM practices within an organisation. The general staff of the organisation must first be prepared for the rolling out and implementation of the KM practices, thereby ensuring the ease and immediate acceptance of such management's efforts of KM practices by the staff (Asiedu, 2015; Valmohammadi and Ahmadi, 2015). Secondly, the organisation's management is also tasked with ensuring the compatibility of the organisation's existing IT infrastructure for the facilitation of the immediate and efficient functionality of the overall KM practices (Al Saifi, 2015; Asiedu, 2015). This therefore translates into the necessity, should the existing IT infrastructure be insufficient for the efficient functionality of the proposed KM practices, for the responsible organisation's management to invest in the necessary development of such technology (Jain and Moreno, 2015).

Asiedu (2015) further postulates that one of the ways in which the organisation's staff can be prepared for the adoption of such new KM practices is through sufficient, rigorous training programmes. It is therefore essential to adequately invest in such programmes if the new knowledge is to be effectively adopted and leveraged by the staff, to the entire organisation's benefit. The organisation's top management, according to Asiedu (2015), is also tasked with ensuring that sufficient amenities to support the KM practices are available. This therefore

means that, should there be a lack of some of the essential infrastructure for the adoption and utilisation of the new KM practices, the management, for example, will then be required to procure all those essential facilities. All this is therefore indicative of the importance of the management's full support for the KM practices and all the related activities. This further necessitates the essential change and the realignment of the top management's attitudes towards such programmes.

Forghani and Tavasoli (2017) contend that as much as technological inventions and tools are essential for the successful implementation of KM practices by the organisation, they cannot entirely substitute the human element's indispensable role and contribution in the organisation's KM practices' furtherance. Forghani and Tavasoli (2017) articulate that when it comes to the crafting of strategies aimed at resolving organisational challenges and coming up with ideas and making decisions impactful enough to elevate the organisational efficiency and strengthen its competitive advantage in the market, the intelligent and expert human touch is and will always be essential. This therefore demonstrates that the organisation can still be an efficient and successful business with some of the technologies lacking, as long as the human element, the workforce, is well equipped, skilled and motivated to execute their work duties.

2.6. Role played by the organisational culture in KM practices

2.6.1. Organisational culture and its modification

The significance of organisational culture, its modification and transforming in order to accurately align with the KM practices of the organisation cannot be overstated (Al Saifi, 2015; Chang and Lin, 2015). It is asserted that the apt modification of organisational culture is key to the effective KM, and that it is one of the major assignments of the organisation's management to, occasionally, and, as and when needed, accordingly shift the culture of the organisation. Over and above the realignment of organisational culture, the commitment to KM practices ought to be entrenched and evident at all levels of the organisation (Al Saifi, 2015; Chang and Lin, 2015). The organisation's management is therefore required to devise a supportive culture, parallel to which, the continuous building of KM systems should also be taking place (Twum-Darko and Harker, 2017; Chang and Lin, 2015). It is worth noting therefore that organisational culture is an indispensable element if an organisation is to leverage its intellectual capacity and knowledge assets in general.

2.6.2. The tightly controlled culture and the loosely controlled culture

Furthermore, the firmness of control exerted by the top management of the organisation, according to Chang and Lin (2015), also plays a role in the KM practices of the organisation. In fact, it can mean the strong potential or lack thereof, for the creation of new knowledge, and high rate of innovation by the organisation's workforce. Chang and Lin (2015) thereby distinguish between the two organisational cultures with respect to the degrees of control by the management, the tightly controlled culture and the loosely controlled culture:

(a) Tightly controlled culture

Organisations that are characterised by tightly controlled culture have in place extremely strict written and unwritten policies, and that everything is done in line with the rule-book. This therefore, according to Chang and Lin (2015), translates into extreme lack of flexibility and freedom to be enjoyed by the employees. It also means extreme lack of fun and jokes, the very essential ingredients for the fuelling of creativity and innovation which could emanate from more frequent interacting and knowledge sharing amongst the employees. Tightly controlled culture therefore tends to have a negative impact on the extent of new knowledge creation by the organisation's workforce.

(b) Loosely controlled culture

Contrariwise though, a loosely controlled culture tends to have a positive impact on the creation of new knowledge by the organisation's workforce (Hussinki, Ritala, Vanhala, and Kianto, 2017). This is the kind of culture punctuated by less formal and less stringent controls on how the employees are expected to conduct themselves in the workplace (Chang and Lin, 2015; Hussinki et al., 2017). Very few written and unwritten rules and policies can be found in a loosely controlled culture organisation (Hussinki et al., 2017). The result of this is very casual and informal, and therefore more frequent interaction and the sharing of new knowledge amongst the employees (Chang and Lin, 2015). This facilitates heightened levels of new knowledge creation and innovation, overall, in the workplace.

2.6.3. Communicating the organisation's vision and objectives

It is worth mentioning that in order for team members to know where the team or organisation is headed and what it wants to achieve, in the form of its vision and objectives,

the transformational team leaders are required to communicate such information to their team members (Chuang et al., 2016; Dong, Bartol, Zhang and Li, 2017; Lee et al., 2016). They view this from the premise that people (team members) are more likely to dedicate themselves and put more effort in ensuring the accomplishment of the ultimate goal and vision of the team when they are aware of it and its significance to them and the entire organisation. The leaders therefore are expected to let their team members know the relevance and significance of their vision and goals, and how important their contribution is towards the achievement of those goals and objectives (Tan and Wong, 2015). This is one of the ways through which the team members will be made to find good reasons to go an extra mile, and put more effort in the achievement of tasks (Hislop, Bosua and Helms, 2018; Omotayo, 2015).

Given the significance of effective and seamless communication amongst the employees and the different departments of the organisation for ensuring the efficient KM practices by the organisation, when there is inadequate and poor levels of communication, or even the lack of communication altogether, the results could be severely detrimental to the optimal and functional operation of the organisation (Campbell, Campbell-Phillips and Phillips, 2020). Campbell et al. (2020) postulate that such a KM related challenge has potential to result in different departments of the organisation unable to share knowledge and ideas, and therefore likely to find different departments not having access to the same kind of information and knowledge. The negative effect of such therefore is lack of the common vision and objectives which are always critical in ensuring that different departments and employees pull in the same direction for the ultimate good of the organisation (Campbell et al., 2020).

It becomes even more negatively impactful when it is the management of the organisation that fails to communicate with the rest of the staff (Campbell et al., 2020). This would translate into crucial information and knowledge that ought to filter down across the entire staff not able to do so, or to happen in a haphazard, uncoordinated manner (Cambell et al., 2020). It is therefore worth pointing out that the consequences of such lack of coordination and communication would be a very unfriendly and unwelcoming work environment, and most importantly, the entire organisation would be unable to operate as one, unified, working system, which would detract from the top management's and organisation's efforts for the achievement of goals and objectives (Aggarwal, 2016; Sudhiir and Sudhiir, 2016). It is also worth mentioning that such lack of communication, more often than not, would result in the

whole functionality of the organisation of the organisation being severely tarnished (Aggarwal, 2016; Sudhiir and Sudhiir, 2016).

2.6.4. Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) and servant style of leadership

Furthermore, Trong Tuan (2017) postulates that the organisation's workforce feels more inclined and motivated to share the knowledge and experiences, in a sense, going beyond their job description, through the establishment of the OCB. OCB is defined by Trong Tuan (2017) as the kind of behaviour punctuating the organisation's workforce which exhibits, *inter alia*, a discretionary dedication by the employees ensuring that they always go an extra mile in fulfilling their day-to-day job-related roles, and the selfless mentality of wanting to uplift and empower other employees and the entire organisation. This, in the process, detaches them from the obsession of self-interests, and enables them, instead, to have the best interests of the organisation, other employees and the entire stakeholder community at heart (Tan and Wong, 2015). It ought to, however, be pointed out that such development of interest for other employees and the organisation at large goes hand in hand, and can also be encouraged through reward and recognition programmes, as previously pointed out (Chuang et al., 2016). Trong Tuan (2017) emphasises the discretionary aspect of OCB, that this kind of behaviour is not embedded in the employees' job descriptions, and hence not required by the organisation. It is however a discretionary election by the employee to work for the greater good of the collective, the organisation and its stakeholders, notwithstanding the fact that there will be no tangible benefits, financial or otherwise, that an organisation will be obliged to give to such an employee.

Servant Leadership, as a result of the importance of OCB, becomes quite important. Servant Leadership is the kind of leadership that substantially enhances the relationship between the leader and his/her followers (Spears and Lawrence, 2016; Trong Tuan, 2017). This is where the leader derives more fulfilment from the empowerment and progress of his followers, and is less possessed by self-glorification, but wants to see his followers, the organisation and its stakeholders flourish and reach greater heights (Spears and Lawrence, 2016; Trong Tuan, 2017).

Trong Tuan (2017) then expatiates on the relationship between Servant Leadership and OCB, with a resultant outcome of the elevated quality, effectiveness and efficiency of knowledge sharing taking place amongst the organisation's employees. By this, he puts forth that

through Servant Leadership, the leader is expected to socially engage and interact with his workforce, and, in a way, put the ranks aside, and become easy, approachable and social with the employees at the same level. It is therefore believed that this, in turn, is likely to persuade the employees to adopt what is referred to as OCB, and behave in a manner beneficial to other employees, stakeholders and the organisation in its entirety without expecting anything in return (Newman, Schwarz, Cooper and Sendjaya, 2017; Trong Tuan, 2017). This will be characteristic of their efforts to return the favour for the social and engaging attitude shown by the leader to his employees. It is therefore further expected that, in the furtherance of their OCB, the employees will also be more encouraged to share their knowledge, expertise and experiences with other employees in need of that knowledge, in the process, empowering the entire workforce of the organisation, and ultimately elevating the organisational performance, efficiency and competitive advantage in the market (Newman et al., 2017; Trong Tuan, 2017).

2.6.5. The organisational culture's role in KM practices

Hwang, Lin and Shin (2018) accentuate the palpable commitment of the entire organisation's workforce to the organisation's adopted and established KM Systems. They are of the view that the success of any KM System mainly depends on the employees' sustained and consistent involvement and participation in those systems. Hwang et al (2018) point out that an elusive part of such commitment by the entire workforce emanates from the fact that such commitment originates in the employees voluntarily, and that it is not obligated or enforced by the organisation's top management. This therefore necessitates the conducive shaping of the employees' attitudes, readying them for committing themselves towards ensuring that the KM Systems in place work efficiently and produce the results they were originally adopted or established with the main aim of producing. Should such commitment be inculcated in the employees' thought processes, according to Hwang et al (2018), such KM Systems are sure to consistently and sustainably add value towards, and benefit the organisation.

It therefore becomes critical for the organisation to have programmes and measures in place aimed at ensuring that the employee turn-over rate is kept at the minimum so that the organisation's knowledge reservoir, after being nurtured and cultivated, could then be preserved through employee retention programmes (Sutanto and Kurniawan, 2016). Sutanto and Kurniawan (2016) therefore assert the significance for the organisation to ensure that its employees are satisfied, and given what they want. This translates into ensuring that the

employees feel a sense of belonging in the organisation, that they are important to the organisation, and that their job security must be accentuated by the organisation's top management. These are some of the most important factors that employees want to see in an organisation to be motivated to stay longer with the organisation, which, in many cases, is even said to surpass the monetary benefits in terms of importance and value attached by the employees (Sutanto and Kurniawan, 2016).

It is further postulated by Rono and Kiptum (2017) that the way in which the training, skills and career development programmes are configured also plays a vital role in attracting and retaining the rich pool of talent. The significance of maintaining an inviting and fulfilling work environment, and the availability of monetary resources to ensure satisfaction and elevated performance levels of the employees could, however, not be overemphasised (Rono and Kiptum, 2017).

The challenge arises when there is lack of continuity and consistency at management level, leading to the constant changes and uncertainties as to the prevailing culture and values of the organisation, which then results in employees not being certain as to what the organisation's expectations, of them, are (Maria Stock, Zacharias and Schnellbaecher, 2017; Zhu, Lyu, Deng and Ye, 2017). In many cases such challenges are given risen to by the practice of the introduction of new business and strategic philosophies by every new top management structure that get introduced within an organisation now and again (Maria Stock et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2017). This then has an extremely detrimental effect on the employee motivation and efficiency in terms of the overall quality of customer service, therefore resulting in a significant fraction of the organisation's customers not being satisfied with the service delivery, many of whom even considering trying the services of the competitors, where they hope the service delivery might be better.

2.7.Benefits for the organisation as a result of KM practices being adopted

2.7.1. Talent and intellectual capital management for the benefit of the organisation

Abualoush et al (2018) postulate that two of the critical aspects of KM in an organisation is talent and intellectual capital management. This involves, inter alia, the crafting of relevant measures, by the organisation, to be utilised in attracting the necessary talent and intellectual

capital into the organisation. This is one of the factors that ought to be in place to enable the organisation to stand out from and set itself apart from the competition. This is attributable to the quality and the rate at which the new ideas, with respect to the generation of excellent quality products and services, are produced by the organisation's workforce (Inkinen et al., 2015). This therefore means that the organisation will always be capable to overcome any challenges the corporate environment might present to it, and be able to come up with apt solutions to any problems faced by the organisation, always ensuring the survival of the organisation.

2.7.2. Importance of efficiently managing intellectual resources

Further giving rise to the impact and significance of knowledge on the success and more strengthened competitive advantage for the organisation, in the market is that the organisation's achievement of its competitive advantage mainly hinges on how well the intellectual resources are managed and administered within an organisation (Chang and Lin, 2015; Ramadan, Dahiyat, Bontis and Al-Dalahmeh, 2017). This therefore necessitates the organisation's top management to be constantly on the quest for better strategies and mechanisms, for example, on the acquisition, storing, protection, retrieving and application of talent and knowledge, for the advancement of the organisation in the market. Chang and Lin (2015) then postulate that there is a whole host of benefits and rewards reaped by those organisations who have dedicated sufficient amount of efforts and resources towards the management of intellectual resources and knowledge. These benefits and rewards include the reduced costs of the organisation's manpower and infrastructure, together with improved organisational effectiveness, efficiency, better level of innovation as well as improved customer service (Chang and Lin, 2015; Jain and Moreno, 2015).

2.7.3. Relationship between sharing of knowledge actual employee performance

Al Saifi (2015) articulates that there is a very strong, direct relationship between the sharing of knowledge amongst the employees, and the actual employee performance. This particular assertion can be attributed to the fact that the more the management encourages the employees to interact and share knowledge, and, indeed, the more employees interact and share their knowledge with other employees, the better and more refined the work performance of the employees (Aksoy, Ayrancı and Gozunkara, 2016; Al Saifi, 2015; Oyemomi, Liu, Neaga and Alkuraiji, 2016). The factors used to measure such performance

include the number of complaints by the customers, the rate of positive comments or compliments from the employee's superiors, and the overall work excellence by the employee (Al Saifi, 2015). These factors therefore show signs of improvement after every exchanging of knowledge and interaction amongst the employees having taken place, indicating the overall improvement in the performance of the organisation (Aksoy et al., 2016; Al Saifi, 2015; Oyemomi et al., 2016).

2.7.4. Significance for organisation to keep abreast with developments in the market

Furthermore, it is very important that the organisation's top management constantly keeps abreast with all the changes taking place in the market (Prajogo, 2016). Some of the factors necessary for the organisation's management to be updated with are the strategic decisions and directions taken by the competitors (Connelly, Tihanyi, Ketchen, Carnes, and Ferrier, 2017; Smith, and Wiggins, 2017), the constantly changing consumers' preferences (Happell and Scholz, 2018; Knittel, Beurer and Berndt, 2016), the technological developments (Prajogo, 2016), etc. This is the only way that organisation's top management can be knowledgeable enough and be able to make the right decisions in terms of how to deploy its human capital resources for the furtherance of the organisation's operations. This will also ensure the achievement of organisation's goals and vision relating to service and product quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and established competitive advantage in the market (Connelly et al., 2017; Happell and Scholz, 2018; Smith and Wiggins, 2017).

It is however worth pointing out that it is almost inevitable in some instances that there will be a fraction of the organisation's customers that will not return to the organisation. It is therefore critical to explore some of the possible reasons to which the decision not to return for the non-returning customers, can be attributed. Pivovarova (2016) points out that the customers are constantly comparing the service providers in terms of the quality of service delivery, the pricing and the different innovative features that different organisations would introduce to their service packages. Pivovarova (2016) then postulates that one of the main reasons why some customers would opt to leave the organisation and choose the competitors instead is the quality of service and the pricing strategies employed by the organisation. Pivovarova (2016) however also iterates that, in spite of the aforementioned aspects that motivate the customers whether to stay with the organisation or to leave, there will be customers that will not easily choose not to return, a decision which is mainly characterised as customer loyalty. It is worth pointing out though that customer loyalty is an ultimate that

does not just present itself to the organisation, and that it should be earned through great deal of hard work and dedication towards the provision of excellent service to the customers and ensuring that a strong relationship and understanding between the organisation and its customers get to be developed and entrenched (EI-Adly, 2019).

Ozturk and Dundar (2020) further state that if the organisation is to retain its existing customers while, at the same time, attracting new ones, it then becomes imperative that the top management does not lose sight of the fact that the market is constantly evolving, and so are the tastes and preferences of the customers. Ozturk and Dundar (2020) state that, for example, the customers nowadays prefer the more efficient, up-to-date, convenient and innovative qualities of the service if they are to remain with an organisation for the long term.

One of the aspects the organisation must ensure is in place is trust (Fornell, Morgeson and Hult, 2016), and this would mean that, for example, the personal details of the customers are kept as confidential as possible by the organisation, the platforms for communicating must also be used and monitored efficiently by the organisation, for example the swift responses to emails and efficient handling of customer queries have become some of the small but critically important details that customers value significantly.

2.8. Conclusion

In conclusion, from all the perspectives and assertions articulated in this chapter by a multitude of academic writers and authors, it transpired that KM ought to be afforded a considerable amount of attention, and needs to be appropriately prioritised and adopted by the top managements of different organisations. The success, growth and sustainable competitive advantage of any organisation are largely dependent on the availability and effective implementation of the KM practices by the respective organisation.

Given the fact that this area of study still needs further exploration and to be developed further with more contributions in terms of research and writing, the researcher in the current study is also set to embark on a study. In this research study, the researcher has opted for EKZNW, as the research site where the relevant data, to contribute to the available academic data on the subject of KM, is going to be sourced through the interviews.

The next chapter, chapter three, of this study, therefore will be focusing on the methods of research the researcher in the current study is going to adopt and utilise in the conducting of the research and collecting of the data from the aforementioned research site.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter essentially looks at the manner in which the study was conducted in terms of how the data was collected, analysed, and the factors that might have served as impediments for the conducting of the study, therefore translating into the limitations of the study. Among other things also, the chapter looks at all the necessary protocols and procedures that needed to be observed and adhered to, during the conducting of the study, by the researcher. To be dissected therefore are the research strategy, data collection method, sample selection, research process, data analysis, ethical considerations, research limitations, research design, and delimitation of the study.

3.2. Research design

The current research adopted the use of a case study, as a suitable research design for the study in question, and where the qualitative kind of a research approach was carried out. The appropriateness of employing a case study was attributed to the fact that the case studies are ideally used in the kind of research, mostly qualitative, where the researcher is seeking to establish an understanding of the relationship between the two phenomena, in real life context (Gaya and Smith, 2016; Harrison, Birks, Franklin and Mills, 2017). A business organisation was elected as a case study for this current study with the main aim of establishing and developing an understanding of the role of KM practices on the organisational functionality, a phenomenon which could only be established within an appropriate context, an organisation. Employing a case as a research design therefore essentially answers the “why” and “how” questions, a characteristic owed to the nature of a case study usage being both “exploratory” and “explanatory” (Harrison et al., 2017). A case study, exemplified by the use of business organisation in many cases, is therefore most suitable for in-depth analysis and understanding of the different phenomena interacting naturally and in the natural setting or context, and ultimately culminating in the resultant occurrence (Gaya and Smith, 2016). This therefore results in the answering of the “why” and “how” questions of the research study, and thereby the understanding of the relationship between different phenomena in an organisational context becomes clearer (Gaya and Smith, 2016). As in the current study therefore, the

existence of various KM practices at EKZNW, and their role on organisational functionality could only be ascertained through the use of the organisation as a case study.

3.3. Research strategy

The qualitative research approach is employed where the main objective of the study is to establish and develop an understanding of a particular prevailing social phenomenon (Wincup, 2017), attitudes, opinions and behaviours (Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey, 2016; Umanailo, Hamid, Hamiru, Assagat, Bula, Nawawi, Pulhehe, Yusuf and Bon, 2019). This is the kind of research which requires a reasonable degree of reflexivity on the side of the researcher (Wincup, 2017). According to Wincup (2017), reflexivity refers to the fact that when embarking on a study, the researcher brings along his history, experiences and beliefs. These are very critical factors to be considered by the researcher, given the fact that these might trigger some degree of bias, and influence the manner in which and the attitude with which the researcher conducts his study, and eventually interprets the findings (Umanailo et al., 2019; Wincup, 2017).

The fact that the researcher in the current study seeks to gather rich and relevant data so as to establish the meaning behind the functionality of the organisation, and also determine as to whether the organisation does have KM practices in place, and how these influence the level of functionality for the organisation, translates into a strong justification for using the qualitative kind of a study (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Wincup, 2017). This is owed to the fact that Wincup (2017) postulates that a qualitative kind of a study necessitates the researcher to gather rich and very detailed data, which, in the process, requires the use of very small-scale studies, which are mainly exemplified by case studies (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Umanailo et al., 2019). This therefore means that the researcher needs, ideally, to consider adopting the use of a particular organisation to play a role of a case study on which the study is then to be conducted (Wincup, 2017). EKZNW has therefore been adopted as the case study in the current research project. Motivating the selection of EKZNW are the KM related challenges the organisation has been fraught with in the recent years, which were mainly attributed to the unstable, and always changing senior management structure of the organisation. EKZNW is also an organisation with vast management and executive structure, which means that first rate quality of coordination and communication becomes essential, an ideal environment for testing the existence of KM practices and how effective those KM practices are on ensuring that the organisation achieves its goals.

3.4. Data collection method and tools

In the collection of data from the respondents the researcher opted for the structured interviews, which, due to the restrictive COVID-19 safety regulations, were held remotely, via an email platform. In opting for the semi-structured interviews, the researcher considered the inherent advantages that punctuate the structured interviews. Kallio, Pietila, Johnson and Kangasniemi (2016) point out that the semi-structured interviews are an ideal kind of data collection method particularly because they facilitate a very important reciprocity between the interviewer and the interviewee. This translates into the fact that a more sound and effective dialogue gets to be established during the interview sessions (Kallio et al., 2016; Pathak, and Intratat, 2016; Lima Holanda, 2017). This kind of interviews further enables the researcher to ask follow-up questions where there is a need to probe and explore a certain point further, while at the same time the interviewees are also at liberty to not confine themselves to a structured response to a question asked, but can elaborate further in pursuit for a clearly articulated response (Kallio et al., 2016).

In ensuring that the credibility of the collected data was maintained the researcher had to devise relevant measures. One of the methods through which the credibility of the findings could be ensured, as postulated by Creswell and Creswell (2018), is through a reasonable protraction of time spent on the field by the researcher. The researcher in the current study has therefore ensured that a sufficient number of questions were put together in preparation for the interviews. This provided for a comprehensive coverage of all the aspects that characterise the study of KM, and these could be explored extensively through questions. Where the emailed responses from the participants needed some clarity, the researcher ensured that such clarity could be provided.

3.5. Sample Selection

The sample selection aspect of this particular study was very key to the achievement of the objectives and the answering of the research questions. It therefore became essential that the researcher in the current study employed the appropriate method of selecting the research population sample, which would be consistent with the researcher's advances of seeking to achieve the objectives of the study and the answering of the research questions (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016).One of the techniques used in sampling is the non-probability sampling

(Etikan et al., 2016), and it is constituted by purposive sampling, as one of the methods for sample selection (Etikan et al., 2016; Setia, 2016).

The purposive sampling method was opted for in the current study as the most appropriate method for the achievement of the objectives and the answering of the research questions. Such an election was motivated by the fact that not the entire workforce of the EKZNW would be sufficiently equipped with the information necessary for this particular study, but it was just a particular fraction of the workforce, the senior management. This then underpinned the decision to opt for a purposive method of sampling. According to Roache and Kelly (2018) and Valerio, Rodriguez, Winkler, Lopez, Dennison, Liang and Turner (2016), the use of purposive sampling entails the researcher deliberately overlooking the rest of the greater population, and only focusing their attention on the fraction of the population that is sufficiently equipped with the knowledge that the researcher is looking for, in the furtherance of the study.

The study participants who were interviewed included the EKZNW employees who occupied the top management positions within their respective departments such as Finance, Human Resources, Marketing, Tourism, Supply Chain Management, Hospitality, and Research and Development, and Strategy and Planning. This therefore translates into a total of eight interviewees that ultimately made the study and contributed in data collection. It also has to be pointed out that the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the instituted and promulgated regulations, in an effort to try and curb the spread of the pandemic, the face-to-face form of interviewing could only be considered as a last resort. This therefore meant that the remote means of communication, in the form of email, had to be opted for in order to conduct the interviews and collect the data.

3.6. Research Process

Amundsen, Msoroka and Findsen (2017) and Stevenson and Josefy (2019) articulate that the Gatekeeper's Letter is one of the most significant milestones of a research project. Such significance is attributed to the fact that this is the letter that gives an indication that the access to the site for the purposes of conducting the proposed research study has been granted (Robertson-Holmes, 2018). A formal request for permission to conduct the current research study at EKZNW was put together in writing, and then emailed to the CEO of the organisation for perusal and the granting of consent. After receipt and studying of the request,

the correspondence communicating the granting of access, through the Gatekeeper's Letter, was then received by the researcher.

A detailed interview schedule was then put together, setting out the list of research questions. Dempsey, Dowling, Larkin and Murphy (2016) and Stewart and Klein (2016) postulate that the Interview Schedule is a very important tool, in the administration of interviews, that the interviewer must possess, however warn against relying and focusing too much on the Interview Schedule when asking questions, as this may compromise the smooth flow and quality of the conversation between the researcher and the respondents. This was however a non-issue in the current study given the fact that the challenges posed by the prevailing COVID-19 situation have dictated that remote methods of communication ought to be prioritised over face-to-face kind of communications. The result of this has therefore been the decision reached by the researcher with the organisation, EKZNW, that the preferred method in which the interviews would be conducted, in keeping with the "flatten the curve" efforts and social distancing COVID-19 promulgated regulations, was going to be an email channel of communication.

3.7. Data analysis

In analysing the data, the researcher employed the coding system. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), Fries (2019) and Elliott (2018), the coding of all the data translates into the aspect of the analysis process where the researcher divides the collected data up, and starts naming, and putting into different, respective brackets, chunks of data, and in most cases, writing the names of different chunks in the margins, making it easy for the researcher to locate and read different strands of data from the whole lot (as labels).

Another very important stage of data analysis, as propounded by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Ganapathy (2016), entails the generation of the description and themes by the researcher. This is where the researcher is required to use the coding process to generate the description of the participants or the setting, and the categories or themes for analysis. With the description, the researcher would be delving into and dissecting all the data collected from the participants, on the participants, the places and events in a setting. This analysis is highly recommended, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), in the full description of case studies, for example. The coding style is also very useful and applicable in the generation of a small number of themes or categories, about 5-7, according to Creswell and

Creswell (2018). These themes, therefore, are the ones the researcher in the current study uses, as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), Ganapathy (2016) and Keast et al (2020) and, as the major findings of the study, and are therefore used as headings in the findings section of the whole study. These themes are putting to the fore the perspectives of the participants, and these perspectives are substantiated by the quotations of what was said or uttered by the participants during the interviews.

The researcher finally needed to, according to Carraway and Burris (2017), Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove (2016), outline how the description and themes were to be represented in the form of a narrative. These scholars postulate that the most popular approach to do this is using a narrative (a discussion or passage) to set out the analysis of the findings, and this could entail the mentioning, by the researcher, of the chronology of events, or a discussion of various themes, complemented with sub-themes and quotations from the participants' responses obtained during the interviews.

3.8. Ethical considerations

In ensuring that the participants in the current study knew about the kind and nature of the study, the objectives were made known to them before the interviews commenced. The significance of this was attributed to the assertion by Ong (2019), that it is extremely essential for the researcher to be as transparent as he can be for the entire length of the research project to all the research participants and interviewees. Such a need for transparency is further substantiated by Adhabi and Anozie (2017), where they articulate that letting the interviewees know about the nature of the study, which would be inclusive of the objectives and reasons as to why the study is being conducted, cannot be stressed enough.

The researcher also reassured all the research participants of the strict maintenance of confidentiality with respect to their identities and positions they occupy within the organisation (Dempsey, Dowling, Larkin and Murphy, 2016). The reassurance was also made pertaining to the accuracy with which the transcription of their responses would be done, and that if need be, transcripts, at a later stage, would be sent to them to confirm the accuracy, and effect any editions if there is some degree of inaccuracy in the transcription of their responses, the procedure on which Lancaster (2017) also puts great emphasis.

In conducting the study at EKZNW, an undertaking was made by the researcher to the effect that no participant in the research study would be subjected to any form of stressful and harmful circumstances by the research process or the proceedings of the interview sessions. This was all-encompassing in terms of the kinds of stressful and harmful circumstances, and would be inclusive of physical, emotional and psychological factors. This is one of the protocols inherent to the conducting and the administration of interviews, which also entail the researcher reassuring the participants that doing good and avoiding harm would consistently be adhered to (Dempsey, Dowling, Larkin and Murphy, 2016).

3.9. Research limitations

One of the limitations that punctuated the current study was the number of participants in the study being relatively small, and which then translates into the findings of the study not being able to be generalised (Coetzee, Ferreira and Potgieter, 2019; Queiros, Faria and Almeida, 2017). Rosenthal (2016) however points out that with reference to the structured interviews involving small samples and happening in the form of case studies, the element of generalisability of the results was not a relevant issue. This was attributed to the fact that the main purpose of such a study was to understand the meaning and the underlying factors that give rise to a prevailing phenomenon, which in the current study, was the KM practices and how they relate to the overall functionality of the organisation.

Other noteworthy limitations for this particular study were the restrictions on movement that needed to be observed and which were attributed to the prevailing pandemic, COVI-19. The contagious nature of and the speed at which this pandemic is spreading across the world have necessitated most countries to enforce ways and measures in which the spreading of this pandemic could be delayed and eventually curbed (Quest, 2020a). Two of these strategies that have been adopted by most countries for this particular purpose are the “lockdown and the compulsory social distancing” (Bundock, 2020). Such measures have therefore resulted in the prioritising of face-to-face communications only in instances where remote communication could not be a workable option (Bundock, 2020; Quest, 2020b). This then necessitated an interaction, to this effect, between the researcher and the EKZNW organisation to discuss a workable solution, as to the manner in which the interviews could take place, and whether it could be possible to hold them remotely. The outcome of such interactions was that it would be a good and COVID-19-regulations-adhering option to conduct the interviews via an email medium.

Although interviews held via email are not the same as face-to-face interviews, and therefore punctuated by some inherent disadvantages, they do have very important advantages as well, particularly for the current study. Some of the disadvantages characterising the email interviews is the absence or lack of the opportunity for the researcher to see and interpret the humanistic cues that cannot be read from the written responses (Hawkins, 2018; Hershberger and Kavangaugh, 2017). The written responses can also be very time-consuming on the side of the participants as compared to just responding orally to questions, on face-to-face basis (Fritz and Vandermause, 2018; Hawkins, 2018; Hershberger and Kavangaugh, 2017). This seemingly dissuaded some of the potential participants from taking part in the study because initially, the target number of participants that had been set was fifteen, but eventually ten were able to partake.

However, some of the advantages of the email interviews, most importantly, is the abundance of time that the participants have to think about and write out their responses (Fritz and Vandermause, 2018; Hawkins, 2018; Hershberger and Kavangaugh, 2017; Linabary and Hamel, 2017). This may, on the contrary, encourage more participants to take part in the study since the responses can be given at their own leisure. The interviews conducted via email are also not confined to timeframes and schedules the same way the scheduled face-to-face interviews would (Hawkins, 2018; Linabary and Hamel, 2017). The back and forth questioning and responding can also take place on numerous occasions, allowing for more explicable and descriptive responses, and the achievement of more clarity on the responses can be established by the researcher (Fritz and Vandermause, 2018; Hawkins, 2018; Hershberger and Kavangaugh, 2017).

3.10. Delimitation of study

The delimitation of the study translates into the limitations of the study which the researcher deliberately and strategically sets, in order to ensure that the study does not become too overwhelming for the achievement of the aims and objectives (Theofanidis and Fountouki, 2018; Markos, 2018; Windom, 2018). It translates into the scope and boundaries ideally elected and set by the researcher just to ensure that the study is ideally manageable and the objectives are realistic to achieve (Markos, 2018; Theofanidis and Fountouki, 2018). When setting the study's delimitations therefore the focus of the researcher must be ideally concentrated on the aims, objectives, research questions, and the background of the study (Theofanidis and Fountouki, 2018; Windom, 2018).

The delimitations of the current study were characterised by the researcher's strategic choice of the workforce at management level of the organisation, a decision which was motivated by the experience, skills and expertise of the organisation's managers of different divisions, enabling them to possess the information and knowledge required for the achievement of the objectives of the current study. This was owed to the fact that the assessment of different organisational systems and processes are mainly assigned to the management of the organisation to carry out, enabling them to be able to have the knowledge and data of the effectiveness of such systems and processes (Hanna and Bethzazi, 2018; Taghavi Moghaddam, Massihabadee, Shorvarzi and Mehrazeen, 2018).

Birhanu (2019) and Negash (2017) make mention of the fact that the use of the delimitation of the study by the researcher translates into him confining his study in only one particular fractional area of the organisation. They are of the view that this helps significantly in ensuring that an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study can be achieved without the volume of the study areas overwhelming the researcher, and rendering the study impossible to achieve. The researcher in the current study therefore opted to explore the KM practices and their role on organisational functionality, as the only specific area of the organisation, and the scope of which would not be too cumbersome for the researcher to carry out successfully.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

To be dissected in this chapter are the findings the researcher was able to obtain from the respondents when the interviews were conducted. This therefore means that the interviews were used as the main source of data for the research project in question. Some of the data to constitute this chapter will be sourced from literature, and it will be used, for example, to substantiate or support the assertions made during the interviews and those made by the researcher. The manner in which the findings will be presented will be aimed at ensuring that the relationship and interlinking are as clear and concise as possible between the research findings and the research objectives.

4.2. Demographics of The Respondents

4.2.1. Categories of the Interviewees

The entire population of the respondents was constituted by the senior management of EKZNW. This is the population from whom the data was obtained, in order to ultimately help answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives. The fact that the management of the organisation exclusively formed part of the research population meant that the researcher was almost certain to extract the relevant and accurate data from them pertaining to the KM practices and policies of the organisation because such aspects of the organisation are largely managed and administered by the organisation's senior management teams (Mansouri, Singh and Khan, 2018).

4.3. Research Findings

4.3.1. Introduction

This section of the chapter sets out and analyses the findings that were obtained from the respondents during the interviews. It therefore dissects the role of KM practices on the overall organisational functionality at EKZNW from the perspective of the employees. The acquired findings were then analysed in relation to the objectives of the study.

4.3.2. To establish if EKZNW has the KM practices in place

Incentives

Different organisations have an assortment of incentive programmes in place, and there has always been a very clear link between the existence of incentives and the overall productivity of the organisation's workforce (El Koussa, Atun, Bowser and Kruk, 2016; Filimonov, 2017). It has been a very common trait in many instances that the employees are always willing and motivated to dedicate themselves more towards the daily execution of their work if they are aware of the potential to earn some kind of an incentive at some point from the organisation (Gerhart, 2017). Interviewee One when interviewed articulated that:

"The potential for the employees to be recognised for promotion opportunities is always there, and, on its own, it serves as a very good incentive, motivating the employees to work harder for the benefit of the organisation".

It therefore becomes clear that when incentive programmes are in place, they bring out a positive reaction from the employees, as they become willing to use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the organisation, as they themselves would stand a good chance to profit from their efforts. However, some of the incentives can be arguable as to whether they are really impactful positively on the employees' work performance, especially when they are commonly available for all the employees to profit from. Interviewees Five and Six mentioned that:

"The only types of incentives we have in place are bonuses and the entitlement for each and every member of our staff to, with their family, visit and enjoy the beauty of the pristine, natural environment at all our camps across the province".

On the contrary, Interviewee Two stated that:

"It is worth noting though that one would also hardly characterise the incentive mentioned above as incentives at all because all the employees are entitled to it, therefore no incentive essentially".

Moreover, some of the respondents were of the view that the availability of the chance to travel, for the employees, with their colleagues, on occasions, is very beneficial for the organisation. Interviewee Three and Four highlighted that:

“Allowing the staff to travel and experience different camps of the organisation across the province has proven over the years to be a very effective mechanism to establish that all essential understanding, relationship and a sense of team-spirit amongst the employees”.

That essentially translates into the establishment of good working relations, and a more fulfilling and vibrant workplace environment when the friendship amongst the employees gets consolidated (Khuong and Yen, 2016). The sharing of knowledge and ideas also get to happen more easily and smoothly amongst the employees, elevating each other's performance and productivity at work.

A conclusion can therefore be made that the employee performance and productivity at work is, to a very large degree, linked to the incentive programmes that are in place. The employees get more motivated to interact with each other and share ideas, and dedicate themselves and their skills more towards the execution of their work. This therefore translates into the need for the introduction and implementation of the kind of incentives that demonstrate the management's willingness and determination to give out considerable amounts of rewards, ideally of unprecedently different stature and category such as the kind of incentives that involve incentive travel where the deserving individuals are sent to tourist destinations abroad, by the organisation, on an all-expenses-paid holiday with their families (Li et al., 2018), and high monetary value (Haier et al., 2020), within an organisation, to instil and maintain the highest levels of motivation, amongst the staff, to evidently and visibly contribute in the growing and managing of knowledge within the organisation. In essence, these incentives, for them to be of ideal effect, ought to be able to make the respective recipients feel valued and make them stand out from the rest. Therefore given the resultant motivation amongst the staff, and the positive outcomes in terms of the quality of service delivery and the potential for the organisation's higher profitability, one could therefore argue that even if these rewards and incentive programmes could be deemed costly for the organisation, the results are sure to outweigh the costs in the long term if taking into account the motivation that these rewards and incentive programmes could trigger in the entire staff population of the organisation.

Training and development programmes

The constant transformation of the market, in any sector, necessitates a great degree of flexibility to change for each organisation (Maxwell, 2019; Sriyakul, Singsa, Sutduean and

Jermsittiparsert, 2019). It is therefore only those organisations able to respond accordingly to change that can establish and maintain dominance in the market (Maxwell, 2019; Sriyakul, Singsa, Sutduean and Jermsittiparsert, 2019). Such flexibility requires that very effective and robust training programmes be in place in an organisation. When asked about the existence and influence of the training programmes for the employees in the organisation, Interviewee Two articulated that:

“We have learnt over the years that the more training and workshops the employees undergo the more efficient, independent and confident they become in carrying out their work duties”.

Interviewee Two further pointed out that the organisation has realised that the fabrics and characteristics of the market keep evolving, a perspective also held by (Jian, Kwong, Kremer and Park, 2019), and this has therefore necessitated EKZNW to ensure that its existing training programmes are developed and refined regularly. Interviewee Two therefore made mention that the organisation has established that there is always room for improvement in the corporate world. As the market dynamics always change, so are the organisation's customers' tastes and preferences. EKZNW therefore conducts training and skills development activities on regular basis.

It therefore transpires that the significance of the organisation generously investing in the establishment and administration of various training and skills capacity enhancing programmes can therefore not be stressed enough as pointed out by Abualoush et al. (2018). The organisation therefore has a vast array of options of skills development programmes to choose from, and these include, for example, workshops, seminars, and courses, which all typify the conventional and yet extremely effective measures for the nurturing and growing of the knowledge base of the organisation, in the process, establishing and maintaining dominance in the market (Inkinen et al., 2015; Valmohammadi and Ahmadi, 2015).

From this it can then be deduced that more robust, efficient, up-to-date, and flexible training programmes are an absolute necessity if an organisation is to remain appealing to the customers, and keep ahead of the competition. This ensures that the skills and knowledge possessed by the organisation's workforce are always relevant and effective (Shinbaum, Crandall and O'Bryan, 2016; Tikhonov, 2020).

4.3.3. To explore the kind of role the existing organisation's KM practices play on the overall functionality of the organisation

On-the-job experience

During the course of conducting the interviews, it transpired that the KM practices become even more important when it comes to the developing and modernising of the employees' knowledge and skills. It is even more essential to have the KM practices in place when the less experienced employees ought to be equipped with the new knowledge and skills, or even to upgrade their pre-existing work-related capabilities (Miskiewicz, 2018). It has therefore been highlighted in a conversation with Interviewee Five that the longer the employees spend with the organisation and in their respective jobs, the more productive and efficient they become in their work performance. They therefore become better than when they were first recruited into the organisation.

This therefore demonstrates the essence and significance of KM practices in an organisation. Over and above the new employees' skills and qualifications, it can be inferred that an opportunity for on-the-job learning and acquisition of job-related experience play a vital role in grooming and developing the employees to get better in the execution of their work (Egloffstein and Ifenthaler, 2017; Exter, Caskurlu and Fernandez, 2018). Such learning and acquisition of experience can only be nurtured through a reasonable passage of time, and therefore, the time factor becomes vital for ensuring that these kinds of KM practices are as effective as possible for the employees and the organisation.

Attesting to the above assertions, some of the interviews cited the significance of the close and complementary relationship of the productivity of the organisation's employees and their continuous learning and development. Interviewee Eight postulated that:

"Employee productivity and continuous learning are inextricably intertwined in our organisation. The longer the employees stay with the organisation, the more learning and experience they also acquire, which therefore culminate in better and higher levels of productivity in our employees".

It can then be concluded that the KM practices that enable employees to learn and acquire the necessary on-the-job experience cannot essentially be separated from the time factor. Therefore the longer the employees work for the organisation, the better they become at their

work, and the more benefits the organisation is able to derive from them (Antony, 2018; Michael, Prince and Chacko, 2016). For example, the significance of learning by doing, which could only be achieved through the sufficient passage of time can be substantiated by the Inkinen et al (2015) perspective which accentuates the positive effect of the learning-by-doing mechanism through which the organisation allows its workforce, over time, to acquire, exhibit, apply and share the knowledge essential for elevated innovativeness and employee capabilities, and therefore organisational profitability and growth. According to Inkinen et al (2015), this is facilitated through exposing the employees to a variety of the tools of the trade and skills-demanding work situations over time, thereby compelling the employees to learn quicker and apply the necessary, appropriate knowledge and skills in a given work situation.

Customer satisfaction

It is worth noting that for any organisation to enjoy a consistently growing volume of customers and profitability, the KM practices of the organisation ought to be of premium quality and level (Yli-Renko, Denoo and Janakiraman, 2020). This enables the organisation's workforce to produce and deliver products and services of superior quality, which then translates into customer satisfaction and loyalty. It was therefore iterated by Interviewees Four and Eight that the constantly growing number of the organisation's customers each year is indicative of the satisfaction their customers have with the organisation's service quality and efficiency.

The organisation's attainment of its vision and goal of growth and development in the market, to a large degree, depends on the availability of excellent KM practices, because these are the factors which enable employees to be as efficient and productive as possible, in turn, satisfying the customers and helping the organisation retain its existing clientele, while, at the same time, being able to entice and attract new customers (Karman, 2020).

Interviewee Eight further highlighted that:

"The growing number of customers is also characteristic of the organisation's growth and development, the elements firmly entrenched in the organisation's vision and goals. Such therefore indicates that our KM practices do yield positive outcomes in enabling the organisation to get closer towards, if not quite attain, its vision and goals, which are inclusive of development and growth in the market".

This essentially accentuates the dependence of customer numbers for the organisation on the availability and effectiveness of the KM practices. It can therefore be concluded that for any organisation to be able to satisfy and retain their customers, incomparable levels of service delivery ought to be established as that is the only way customers can be kept happy and satisfied with the organisation and its services (Karman, 2020). Jeong and Lee (2017) therefore postulate that the higher the level of service delivery, the more satisfied the customers become, and that, in the process, results in more strengthened allegiance and trust which the customers have towards the organisation. This therefore presents a very important precursor for the growth in customer numbers since the customers are likely to remain with the organisation and even tell their family and friends about the organisation and its products and services (Nguyen, Tran and Huynh, 2019).

Coordination amongst different departments

The establishment of sound coordination with respect to the manner in which different divisions and departments of the organisation operate cannot be stressed enough, for the achievement of sustained and efficient organisational functionality (Gol, Stein and Avital, 2019). It is worth pointing out therefore that various KM practices of the organisation could play a vital role in facilitating a seamless understanding and coordination amongst different departments of the organisation. Interviewee Seven articulated that:

“The workshops and training programmes are held by the organisation on regular basis, and this helps strengthen the interrelations amongst different departments as the communication and the sharing of ideas get to be facilitated through such platforms. This helps equip the employees with the necessary skills and expertise, while, at the same time, helps the organisation become more functional and productive”.

There has therefore been a general consensus across the interviews with respect to the role played by KM practices in ensuring that the entire organisation operates as a system, and in a well-coordinated fashion. However other interviewees gave another perspective as to the role of the KM practices in promoting efficient coordination amongst different departments of the organisation, although not in any way detracting from the positive effect that the KM practices have on the organisation's different departments, operating as one unified system.

Interviewees Two and Five pointed out that what also results in efficient operation amongst different departments is how disciplined, motivated and committed the employees are

towards the accomplishment of such, for the good of the organisation. This therefore calls for a very strong emotional connection between the organisation and its workforce, over and above the regular administration of workshops and training programmes.

This therefore accentuates the need that the workshops and training programmes be complemented with various other organisational practices, to enhance that good relationship and emotional connection between the organisation and its employees, for example the promotion, by the management of the organisation, of a culture that values the employees and their input towards the organisation accomplishing efficiency, goals and objectives (Conlon, 2017; Kundu and Lata, 2017).

It can therefore be concluded that the KM practices of an organisation such as the workshops and training programmes have an extremely pivotal role to play in ensuring that the organisation is able to function like a well-coordinated, one unified whole.

Communication

When it comes to the organisation's existing KM practices, the question that always arises is whether or not, the organisation's KM practices do promote and facilitate a seamless and crucial dialogue and understanding between the organisation's general workforce and its superiors (Nyamekye, G. M., 2018; Swain, 2019). Interviewee One shed some light in this regard and stated that:

"In ensuring that regular and smooth communication between the employees and their superiors is established, meetings and briefings are held from time to time. These gatherings have proven very key in ensuring that the employees know who their superiors are".

When the question of whether these gatherings do facilitate and consolidate good, meaningful relationships between the workforce and their superiors, was asked, Interviewees Two and Four ventilated that this is the medium also which has enabled long-term, meaningful relationships to be established between the employees and their superiors, and it also ensures that the management can conveniently communicate their expectations to the staff in terms of work performance.

It has however transpired from one of the interviews that it has proven an insurmountable task, in other cases, to bridge the gap between the employees and their senior management. In

many cases, such difficulty is attributable to the unavailability of the senior managers because of the workload and time pressure which almost never seem to subside. Such a viewpoint is also supported by Ladyshevsky and Taplin (2018), Rafnsdottir and Juliusdottir (2018) and Steenkamp and Roberts (2020): Interviewee Three therefore highlighted that:

“Had it not been for the relentless workload and time pressure on my side, my employees and I would be able to communicate regularly on face-to-face basis and would be able to know one another better”.

It can therefore be concluded that the availability and implementation of KM practices go a long way in facilitating a vibrant and functional working environment and good relations between the workforce and its superiors (Cegarra-Navarro, Soto-Acosta and Wensky, 2016). In other occasions, however, it becomes extremely difficult to achieve such a positive, sound and close relations between the employees and their superiors given the workload and time pressure which the senior managers are faced with on regular basis. The regular and consistent communication between the management and the general workforce is therefore of critical significance if the KM practices of the organisation are to yield the intended results which, *inter alia*, are the regular sharing and transferring of knowledge amongst the entire workforce of the organisation. When such communication happens as effectively as should be, Audenaert, Decramer, George, Verschueren and Van Waeyenberg (2019) therefore point out that the employees' level of efficiency tends to surge as well, indicating that the employees are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills which get distributed amongst the workforce through the management consistently communicating with the staff.

4.3.4. To establish if these KM practices do help improve the efficiency with which the employees execute their work

Employees' skills impact on overall performance

There is a very important relationship between the skills and expertise possessed by the organisation's workforce and the overall work performance of the entire staff, and the overall efficiency of the entire organisation (Khan, Abbasi, Waseem, Ayaz and Ijaz, 2016; Okoro, Washington and Thomas, 2017). This therefore underpins the indispensability of the KM practices of the organisation because the development of the employees' skills can only be achieved through the existence and the administration of various KM practices of the

organisation. This is substantiated by what Interviewees Five and Eight articulated when they were interviewed:

“The organisation owes its growth, success and good reputation to its existing pool of talent and expertise possessed by the workforce. An ideal organisational situation is when its workforce has a diverse range of skills and knowledge to always refer to when need be, and which could then help improve their individual and collective performance”.

This therefore demonstrates the need for any organisation to ensure that various KM practices are established, refined and modernised on regular basis. This would ensure that the organisation's service delivery and products are always of superior quality and appealing to the customers (Khan, Abbasi, Waseem, Ayaz and Ijaz, 2016; Okoro, Washington and Thomas, 2017). It was however articulated in some of the interviews that enhanced employees' skills and expertise are not likely to yield any exciting benefits for the organisation if they are not supported by other aspects of the organisation such as good, efficient managerial capabilities. Interviewee Six iterated that:

“As much as the skills and expertise of the workforce are essential in ensuring their good performance, they are rather futile if the culture of the organisation does not promote innovation and creativity in the employees”.

It therefore became essential to ascertain if the EKZNW's organisational culture does promote such innovation and creativity, and Interviewee Seven therefore stated that:

“Fortunately, at EKZNW, the employees are encouraged by the management to explore new and creative ways of doing their work, and be as innovative as possible, as long as they maintain constant communication with their superiors, and their innovation could help in the organisation's sought-after development and growth”.

It can thus be concluded that the establishment and constant updating of the organisation's KM practices cannot be overemphasised as this is the only way the employees' skills and expertise can regularly be revitalised and developed, which all would then be expected to aid in the organisation's improvement of service delivery efficiency (Ali Taha, Sirkova and Ferencova, 2016; Zafar, Hafeez and Shariff, 2016). It therefore becomes vital for the management of the organisation to encourage and facilitate the interaction amongst the employees because it is through such channels that knowledge and experience get to be

shared amongst the staff, a viewpoint also supported by Aksoy et al (2016). This therefore translates into very effective facilitation, by the management, of skills development across the workforce, which is then to result, in all likelihood, in highly capable and efficient employees and service delivery, and ultimately happy customers, and organisational profitability (Oyemoni et al., 2016).

Staff efficiency and growth in customer numbers

The KM practices of an organisation, and whether they are effective or not, in many cases, can be assessed through the level of service delivery which the organisation's workforce is able to produce and provide to the customers (Hadavi and Rad, 2016). The trend in the customer numbers of the organisation, on the other hand, whether it is growing or declining, has always been used as a barometer for measuring the level of service efficiency in the organisation. When the interviews were conducted with the EKZNW employees, Interviewees Two and Seven pointed out that:

“The customer-base of the organisation is growing every year. We therefore take this to mean that we have been able to retain our existing clientele while, at the same time, been able to attract new customers into the organisation. We owe all this growth to the efficiency of service provided by our staff, to the satisfaction of our customers”.

Such an assertion could only signal that the organisation's customers are satisfied with the services they experience, and that therefore means that the organisation has the KM practices, and these are proving extremely fruitful for both the organisation and its customers. This is because the organisation is able to keep its customer numbers growing, meaning the achievement of growth and market dominance, which are some of the main objectives of the organisation, and which constitute a significant part of the organisation's vision. The customers, on the other hand, being satisfied with organisation's service delivery, are finding the organisation's service good value for money.

On the contrary, it did transpire in some of the interviews that despite the growth in customer numbers, the organisation experiences a significant volume of non-returning customers, which could be linked to the level of organisation's service delivery not meeting their expectations (Hu, Zhang, Gao and Bose, 2019; Jilke, Van Ruzin and Van de Walle, 2016). It therefore becomes essential for the organisation to pay sufficient attention on some of the possible reasons as to why some of the customers never return. Pivovarova (2016), for

example, highlights some of the factors that tend to cause customers to choose to take their business elsewhere, to the competitors. Some of these factors, according to Pivovarova (2016), include the quality of service delivery and the prices charged by the organisation. In order to address such a situation of customers not returning, or at least bring the number of non-returning customers to the minimum, Ozturk and Dundar (2020) postulate the significance for the organisation's top management to constantly pay attention to the developments happening in the market, for example, the latest tastes and preferences of the customers with respect to the quality and numerous other features of the service delivery of the organisation.

Fornell et al (2016) further propound more other aspects for the organisation to pay attention to in order to lower the number of non-returning customers to the minimum. Fornell et al (2016) postulate the significance of the building of trust through ensuring that confidentiality is guaranteed with respect to the personal information of the organisation's customers, and also ensuring that the customer complaints get resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible whenever they crop up.

Interviewee Five pointed out further that as much as the organisation's customer service can be characterised as efficient, there is always room for improvement, and customer complaints do creep in now and again.

This then necessitates the establishment of KM practices of exceptional quality which would enable the organisation to keep track of the non-returning customers, ascertain their main reasons for not returning, and if it is the dissatisfaction with the service they experienced, devise ways to make up and compensate for such a dissatisfaction, for example, special offers like book two nights and get one free, discounts etc (Lee, 2018; Wong, Newton and Newton, 2016). Interviewee Eight therefore made an assertion that the organisation has made possible and convenient for customers to email their complaints to the organisation, or hand them in, in a written form, and drop them in the customer-complaints box available at every EKZNW camps across the province. This has proved very beneficial, overall, in that the organisation gets to know about the dissatisfaction of the customers, therefore able to know exactly where and how to improve.

It can therefore be concluded that there is very clear and direct relationship between the level of customer satisfaction, the efficiency in service delivery, and the quality and effectiveness

of the organisation's existing KM practices. This therefore calls for the organisation to ensure the establishment and regular refining and updating of its KM practices as this would almost automatically yield the organisation elevated quality and efficiency of its service delivery, and more consistent customer satisfaction with the service.

4.4. Research Analysis

4.4.1. Introduction

In the analysis of the research findings, the researcher will highlight the different types of KM practices which EKZNW has in place, and how these have been put into practice by the organisation. The analysis will also highlight any shortcomings the organisation may have with respect to KM, for example, where there is a lack or absence of any KM practices, or awareness thereof by the organisation's management structures. The recommendations as to how these may be addressed by the organisation will be set out in detail in the following chapter.

4.4.2. To establish if EKZNW has the KM practices in place

Incentives

Despite the significance of the role which the incentive programmes could play in ensuring that the employees are motivated to interact and share knowledge with the rest of the staff, the only mechanism serving as an incentive is the potential for recognition of those employees who contribute in growing the wealth of knowledge across the organisation through knowledge sharing. Such recognition would come in the form of promotions up the ranks of management structures of the organisation, as Interviewee One stated:

"The potential for employees to be recognised for promotion opportunities is always there, and on its own, serves as a very good incentive, motivating employees to work harder for the benefit of the organisation".

Other than this, and the annual travel allowance programmes where the organisation's employees are gifted by the organisation with the travel packages to visit some of the organisation's camps across the province with their families, there is essentially no out-and-out incentive programmes to motivate the employees to engage and interact in the space of knowledge sharing. Interviewee Two made mention that:

“There is no mechanism to encourage and motivate the sharing of knowledge by employees with each other. Besides, there is lack of hunger for knowledge by those entering the work environment”.

In substantiating the assertions made by Interviewee Two, Sowole et al (2018) makes mention of the fact that when new recruits are brought into the organisation, in many cases, they lack the knowledge of what is expected of them or what the organisation actually stands for, which talks to the organisational philosophies which are normally located in the vision statement of the organisation. This then results in the new recruits struggling to fully understand as to how they are to fit into the employee population of the organisation. This, in many cases, results in new recruits lacking the necessary confidence that is essentially needed for them to perform optimally in their jobs, and, even worse, lack of desire to learn, particularly because of lack of knowledge for the long-term vision and objectives of the organisation (Sowole et al., 2018).

Therefore, in ensuring that the new recruits get immediately motivated to acquire and even share knowledge with other employees, Sowole et al (2018) postulate the significance of the establishment and efficient administration of a focused and efficacious induction programmes which the new recruits would be put through. These are programmes that ought to ensure that the vision and goals of the organisation are communicated to the newly recruited employees at an early stage to avert any uncertainties that may negatively affect their performance down the line (Norheim, Nakstad, Berg, Borud and Rein, 2020; Rowland, Ruth and Ekot, 2017). The emphasis on the induction programmes is not necessarily to mean that regular training and development programmes would then become obsolete. The regular and long-term focused training and development programmes would always be essential and of strategic significance in ensuring that the skills and capabilities of the entire workforce get rekindled and refined on regular basis to ensure the consistency of efficient and first-rate customer service and the sustained competitive advantage of the organisation in the market (Ashton, 2018; Frost, 2016).

The lack of motivation to interact and share knowledge appears to be a common phenomenon at EKZNW, and it seems to transcend across the entire organisation’s workforce, general employees and the management alike. Such a deep-rooted challenge seems to be attributable to the general lack of mechanisms to induce such motivation, as was articulated by Interviewee Six:

“The organisation seems not to have a structured programme to manage the level of knowledge between those who have abundance of it as well as those with shortage of it”.

Notwithstanding the lack of structured mechanisms to motivate the sharing of knowledge amongst the organisation’s employees, and the general lack of drive and resolve which seem to punctuate the organisation’s workforce, generally, for the sharing of and acquisition of knowledge, the organisation can still be commended for incentive programmes in place to incentivise the knowledge-bearers to stay longer with the organisation. It transpired from an interview with Interviewee Eight that:

“There is no structured retention programme to ensure that employees who possess abundance of knowledge stay longer, however the organisation offers the long-service awards to everyone based on the number of years employees spend with the organisation”.

Sutanto and Kurniawan (2016) therefore assert that being the most important resource in an organisation, the employees ought always take precedence when the budget and allocation of resources decisions are made. It is therefore accentuated that the satisfaction of the employees must be one of the top priorities of the top management. This would play an extremely vital role in ensuring that employees are always motivated to stay longer with the organisation, thereby a long-term preservation of talent and capabilities (Sutanto and Kurniawan, 2016). An exciting and vibrant working environment and job security are some of the most important factors on which the decisions of most employees, as to whether to stay with the organisation or leave, are based. It therefore rests on the shoulders of the top management to ensure that all the necessary aspects are in place to motivate the workforce to stay with the organisation, which, in the process, is certain to lead to better work performance, and the overall market dominance by the organisation (Rono and Kiptum, 2017).

It is therefore worth highlighting that in many cases, the longer the employees stay with the organisation, the more work-related knowledge, experience and efficiency acquired by the employees. It can therefore be deduced that such long-service awards play a critical role in incentivising the employees to stay longer with the organisation, and therefore can be classified as a very important retention programme, encouraging the employees to stay longer (Miskiewicz, 2018).

Training and development programmes

The significance of the role played by various types of training and development programmes in ensuring the elevated levels of efficiency and customer service can never be overstated. It is therefore critical for any organisation that wants to assert its authority and dominance in the market to invest generously in training and development programmes to help re-skill and up-skill the organisation's employees, refining the quality and the level of service (Maxwell, 2019; Sriyakul, Singsa, Sutduean and Jermsittiparsert, 2019). It was therefore pointed by Interviewee Two that the more training and workshops the employees undergo, the more efficient, independent and confident they become in carrying out their work duties.

It however transpired in another interview that as much as the organisation may have training programmes in place, such does not automatically translate into commendable outcomes where the employees' performance and productivity would evidently be elevated.

Interviewee Three therefore expatiated that training and development programmes are now less effective than before and that for these programmes to be of any effect in elevating the employees' confidence and efficiency, they ought to be managed effectively. Pandey (2018) therefore attests to the significance of the efficient management of the organisation's training and development programmes by highlighting that these programmes, *inter alia*, help enhance the employee self-awareness and emotional intelligence, in the process, able to handle the customer requests and queries with elevated innovativeness and efficiency. Pandey (2018) further postulates that proper training of the workforce enables it to make correct, informed decisions with respect to the production and delivering of customer service.

It can thus be deduced that the establishment and development of training programmes, by the management of the organisation, are not an end in themselves, that the constant monitoring and modification of such programmes, when need be, by the management, together with efficient implementation, management of and oversight on such training and development programmes are all essential and must be executed effectively (Jiang, Kwong, Kremer and Park, 2019). It becomes clear therefore that the training and development programmes may be there but only to find that they do not yield the results that they were first developed and institutionalised to yield for the organisation in terms of employee performance and productivity. This then calls for the establishment of competent, robust and efficient management structures to see such programmes to fruition.

In ensuring that the training and development activities yield the positive and intended outcomes, it became very clear in one of the interviews that the organisation will never be able to achieve this or any other targets by working in isolation. This translates into the fact that for the organisation to be able to remain relevant in the market, and for its training and development programmes to yield the intended outcomes, collaboration with other industry players becomes critical. It was therefore articulated by Interviewee Eight that:

“Training and development of the employees are aligned to accredited institutions resulting in the programmes being able to assist employees”.

One can thus conclude that the value and significance attached to the establishment of the long-term, sound and meaningful relationship with other industry players chiefly depends on the quality and competence of the organisation’s management structures. The realisation by the organisation’s management therefore that long-term relationships need to be established with other external organisations that specialise in training and development programmes for employees will therefore be an indispensable step towards the establishment of more efficient management, which would then result in the training and development programmes being more effective in equipping the employees with the essential skills and capabilities (Kweon et al., 2019).

Kweon et al (2019) are of the view that it is more beneficial for the organisation to use the expert services of the external reputable and accredited organisations whose main line of business is employee training and development. This is justified by highlighting the benefits of strategically deciding to forge the sound relationships with such organisations which, for example, are inclusive of the fact the organisation is able to have its budget allocation more sensibly and optimally organised since the disproportionate wasting of time and funds get to be significantly minimised. Kweon et al (2019) are of the view that the exceptional quality of the training programmes provided by the expert external organisation far outweighs the cost if considering the efficiency of customer service and customer satisfaction that are realised. The organisation would also be able to focus more of its attention towards the provision of customer service, and ensuring that the customers are always satisfied, rather than divide its attention between service delivery, and implementing the training and development of its workforce, an area where the organisation does not even have sufficient expertise, thereby avert detracting from the continued provision of customer service.

4.4.3. To explore the kind of role the existing organisation's KM practices play on the overall functionality of the organisation

On-the-job experience

In many cases, organisations attribute the efficiency and productivity of their workforce to the length of time they stay with the organisation. This could also be explained through the fact that the on-the-job learning and acquisition of work-related experience are only able to occur and enrich the knowledge-base of the organisation's workforce over time. This points to the fact that the employees are normally expected to transform and develop as the time progresses in terms of their competences and productivity (Miskiewicz, 2018). It was therefore highlighted Interviewee Five that:

“History has shown us that employee productivity and efficiency in their work performance get better with time. They therefore become better than when they were first recruited into the organisation”.

The question therefore which arises is, other than on-the-job learning and the conventional acquiring of work experience which come with the number of years the employee has been with the organisation, what could such development in employee performance and productivity be attributed to? Most of the interviews conducted cited the existence and effective implementation of training and development, alongside the incentive programmes aimed at encouraging the employees of the organisation to share their knowledge with other employees, whilst, at the same time, developing and updating their own knowledge.

In a conversation with Interviewee Five it transpired that the performance of the employees generally improves significantly year after year, and this is owed to employees being put through different levels of exposure related to different kinds of work.

This therefore translates into the fact that in many cases what the productivity and efficiency of the employees are attributed to is the extent of job experience that has been accumulated over time (Csafordi, Lorincz, Lengyel and Kiss, 2020; Kenny, 2019). The acquisition of such experience is further attributable to the employees being exposed to the relevant kind of work and being afforded an opportunity to grow into those jobs, and, in the process, develop and refine the necessary skills and expertise which then allow them to perform efficiently and productively (Morgan, 2017).

Interviewee Eight therefore pointed that EKZNW is one of those organisations that have incorporated the practice of exposing their employees to different kinds of work where they are expected to discharge various kinds of responsibilities. This has proven extremely beneficial to the organisation over the years, in that the employees evidently show significant level of improvement in the execution of their work. As the conversation went on, it became clearer as to what such level of improvement in the employees' job execution could be characterised by. It was highlighted that an assessment of the employees' performance now against when they first came into the organisation is more favourable. For example, the time it takes to do and complete tasks being significantly reduced, as well as with respect to the compiling of reports, for example, on customer satisfaction or social responsibility programmes of the organisation, as well as the improved level of independence and accuracy in the employees' execution of their task, all these show favourable signs of improvement.

Customer satisfaction

It is worth highlighting that the number of customers the organisation has and the rate at which it is growing or declining can be a very important measuring instrument to gauge the level of customer satisfaction with the organisation's level of service delivery, and the effectiveness of the existing KM practices (Adeinat and Kassim, 2019). It was therefore pointed out in an interview with Interviewee Four and Eight that:

"The constantly growing number of our customers each year is indicative of the satisfaction our customers have with the organisation's service quality and efficiency".

It therefore becomes very important for the organisation to keep track of and to closely monitor the level of satisfaction the customers have with the service delivery quality they experience when using the organisation's facilities. It was stated by Interviewee Seven that:

"The customers are given a questionnaire to complete annually for them to rate our service".

With respect to keeping track of and closely monitoring the growth in customer numbers it was highlighted by Interviewee Two that a very efficient platform has been created to allow the customers to air their dissatisfaction and communicate with the organisation. It was therefore pointed out that customers can email their complaints to the organisation. Although a sizeable number of customers never return, over the years, Interviewee Two stated that this

has proved very beneficial, overall, in that the organisation gets to know about the dissatisfaction of the customers, which then allows it to devise ways to address them.

The effectiveness of such programmes however only becomes evident when decisions are made and efforts are committed towards addressing the concerns and complaints of the customers. It was articulated by Interviewee Six however that what is lacking at EKZNW is decisive actions and follow-up to address the concerns that customers, from time to time lodge with the organisation, a shortfall that can exclusively be levelled at the lack of effective oversight by and constant changes in the organisation's management structures.

It therefore becomes essential that the entire management of the organisation and the general workforce strike a very close relationship which, in the process, will ensure efficient and seamless communication. Such communication will facilitate the situation where every employee in the organisation will be aware of the types of systems the organisation has in place for addressing the complaints of the customers, and it will become unequivocal and clear as to who is responsible for what kind of customer complaints (Campbell, Campbell-Phillips and Phillips, 2020).

In a conversation with Interviewee Five it became clear that not all the employees, especially at management level, have access to the same knowledge and information. When a respondent was asked about the systems the organisation has in place to enable the public and customers to rate the service levels and the levels of satisfaction with respect to the quality of service provided by the organisation's employees, it became clear that not all the employees are aware of any mechanisms for the public and customers to assess and rate the level of service the organisation offers to the public through its employees.

It can therefore be concluded that such a disconnect, as minimal as it may seem, has proven extremely detrimental to the ability of the organisation to maintain a steady and significant growth rate in customer numbers. Yadav, Luthra and Garg (2020) also attest to such negative effect that lack of proper coordination and information sharing across the organisation's divisions and structures is sure to result in different parts of the organisation not having access to the same kind of information and knowledge, and not sharing the common aims and objectives, therefore pulling in different directions, negatively impacting on the quality of customer service.

Paul, Drake and Liang (2016) further postulate that the lack of proper coordination amongst different departments inevitably leads to extremely detrimental conflicts with respect to goals, objectives and values. These would therefore, in all likelihood, detract from the overall organisation's efforts of excellent customer service and dominance in the market. As much as the numbers of the EKZNW's customers have consistently grown, such a growth rate could have been significantly higher, had it not been for the cited lack of management continuity and extremely essential competences. This is a challenge characterised by Maria Stock et al (2017) and Zhu et al (2017) as capable of driving some of the customers away given the fact that when the organisation constantly effects changes at top management of the organisation, in many cases the new senior manager will introduce their own new business and strategic philosophies. As a result, the staff may find itself unsure at the organisation's culture and values, negatively impacting on the overall staff morale, and customer service quality.

Coordination Among Different Departments

In many cases the organisation's implementation of its KM practices, for example training programmes, workshops and general meetings, do facilitate the fostering of coherence amongst different departments and divisions of the organisation (Gol, Stein and Avital, 2019). This was substantiated by a comprehensive assertion which was made by a respondent in one of the interviews where the researcher asked about whether the organisation's KM practices do help establish and consolidate a relationship and understanding amongst different departments of the organisation, and whether they do help strike consistency and uniformity in the level of service provided by different camps of the organisation.

Interviewee Seven articulated therefore that the workshops and training programmes are held by the organisation on regular basis. In many cases these programmes allow employees from different departments of the organisation to converge. This therefore strengthens the interrelations amongst different departments. The more efficient and meaningful communication and the sharing of ideas get to be facilitated through such platforms. This helps equip the employees with the necessary skills and expertise, while, at the same time, helps the organisation become more functional and productive.

Such an establishment of coherence and understanding highlighted above however does not seem to represent the general observation of the entire sample of the research population. For example, despite commendations cited above about the organisation's KM practices, plenty

of room for improvement in this regard is still there. It was therefore stated by Interviewee Four that:

“Standard levels are set out but not monitored effectively and consistently”.

This therefore means that even if all departments of the organisation would have the expected ideal level of services documented, these essentially become futile if there is no consistent monitoring programmes by the management. This then results in lot inconsistencies with respect to the quality of service that organisation's customers can expect to experience across the spectrum of EKZNW camps. Robsin, Plangger, Kietzmann, McCarthy and Pitt (2016) therefore accentuate the significance for the top management of the organisation to consistently monitor the customer service quality levels against the respective documents where the ideal levels of service quality are set out.

Interviewee Two asserted that:

“There is lack of appreciation and awareness, by employees, of the current KM practices, which then results in lack of consistency regarding the levels of service delivery in our camps”.

This therefore underpins the significance of management with the necessary competences, capabilities and efficiencies. Such a situation also necessitates very efficient and seamless communication between the management and the employees, and between different departments and divisions. This is expected to yield positive results in terms of the establishment of awareness across the organisation in terms of the various practices pertaining to KM, how they are to be implemented, by who they are to be implemented, as well as the expected outcomes to be achieved from those practices (Campbell, Campbell-Phillips and Phillips, 2020).

Communication

KM practices, inter alia, facilitate the establishment of a close, meaningful relationship and dialogue between the management and the staff. This is owed to the significance for the management to communicate the existing KM practices to the staff, and how they to be implemented, and the expected results of such practices for the organisation (Campbell, Campbell-Phillips and Phillips, 2020). Interviewee One therefore highlighted that the

seamless and efficient communication between employees and their superiors have always necessitated that regular administration of meetings and briefings from time to time since such gatherings have previously proven very important in ensuring that the employees know who their superiors are, and what their expectations are.

This however can be hindered by lack of consistency and continuity with respect to the management structures, and the lack of effective and efficient communication to the staff by the management whenever there are changes in the management structures, as was pointed out by Interviewee Three where he stated that the employees are aware of the levels of management and who their superiors are but as rapid changes occur in the organisation such levels of awareness may be a bit blurred. Such an understanding helps in ensuring clear accountability. He then further iterated that current KM practices are now less effective compared to the past.

This accentuates the significance of the role of the management in ensuring that clear lines of communication and relationships with the staff get established. It therefore follows that when there is prevalent instability in the management structures and hence the changes happen now and again, with less effective communication with the general workforce, the results cannot be encouraging. This also underpins the dependence of the effectiveness of the KM practices on the close relationship and communication between the management and the employees.

When there is instability and inefficiency in the management structures, failure to communicate with the general workforce can result in even the most basic and yet significant aspects of the organisation, on which productive and profitable staff performance depends, not filtering through, resulting in most of the staff not being aware of even their existence (Campbell, Campbell-Phillips and Phillips, 2020). An example of such aspects that are very key to the excellent and productive performance of staff is their awareness of the organisation's vision and mission statements. Interviewee Eight therefore ventilated his concerns in this regard:

“The employee awareness regarding the organisation’s vision and mission was evident during the previous senior management tenure, but over the past few years it has fallen away”.

When asked about the possible root cause of the problem, he stated that:

“The organisation’s management structure is constantly changing without being communicated to the employees”.

It can be concluded therefore that seamless communication between the organisation’s management and the staff remains indispensable. This would facilitate a consistent dialogue, and would ensure awareness amongst the staff as to who their superiors and their expectations are regarding the level and quality of customer service (Radovic Markovic and Salamzadeh, 2018).

4.4.4. To establish if these KM practices do help improve the efficiency with which the employees execute their work

Employees’ skills impact on overall performance

The skills and expertise possessed by the staff of the organisation play a critical role in the overall performance of the organisation with respect to service delivery and its quality (Khan, Abbasi, Waseem, Ayaz and Ijaz, 2016; Okoro, Washington and Thomas, 2017). This therefore necessitates the need for the establishment of various key KM practices aimed at regularly refining and updating the employees’ capabilities (Khan et al., 2016; Okoro et al., 2017). Interviewees Five and Eight therefore highlighted that the organisation owes its growth, success and good reputation to an assortment of skills and capabilities possessed by the workforce. It was further articulated that ideal organisational situation is when its workforce has a diverse range of skills and knowledge to always refer to when need be, and which could then help improve their individual and collective performance.

Most of the respondents at EKZNW however shared their reservations and misgivings as to the role played by the organisation’s management in ensuring that effective and efficient KM practices get established, constantly monitored, and effectively implemented to equip the entire workforce with the necessary skills and capabilities. Interviewee One and Six aired, when they were asked as to whether their staff’s existing skills and expertise contribute in taking the organisation closer to the achievement of its objectives, that:

“The existing pool of skills and expertise can take departments and the organisation closer to the achievement of objectives if they can be managed effectively”.

When asked to further elaborate on this response, and it was then stated that:

“The existing KM practices are not effectively managed which then impacts negatively on the quality of service offering by the organisation”.

This therefore emphasises the need for robust and efficient levels of management by the organisation's senior management. It also means that even if the employees may possess the skills required to perform their duties with excellence, the required and ideal levels of efficiency by the organisation entirely, in terms of service delivery, cannot be achieved if the top management is unable to manage the organisation's KM practices effectively. This was substantiated Interviewee Three where it was stated that:

“The organisation has a huge pool of skills and expertise, unfortunately poor placement of resources has created a vacuum effect which, among other things, has resulted in our customer complaints not being followed up adequately, which then negatively affects the overall customer satisfaction with the entire organisation's service delivery”.

It can therefore be concluded that notwithstanding the generally accepted and conventional phenomenon with respect to the organisation's pool of skills and expertise, and their positive impact on the overall service delivery, the efficient managerial capabilities are always a prerequisite if the employees, using their skills and capabilities, will ultimately be able to produce and deliver excellent customer service (Shamim, Cang, Yu and Li, 2016).

Staff efficiency and growth in customer numbers

It transpired when the interviews were conducted with the EKZNW employees that there is direct and proportional relationship between the quality of service delivery offered by the organisation's employees, and the rate at which the organisation's number of customers is growing. It was highlighted by Interviewees Two and Seven that:

“The customer-base of the organisation is growing every year. We therefore take this to mean that we have been able to retain our existing clientele while, at the same time, been able to attract new customers into the organisation. We owe all this growth to the efficiency of service provided by our staff, to the satisfaction of our customers”.

Such growth in numbers however, to a significant degree, could have been far greater had it not been for the sheer lack of coordination, capabilities and efficiency at the top management level of the organisation. Such challenges at management level tend to impact negatively on

the overall quality of service delivery, resulting in some of the customers being dissatisfied with and therefore being dissuaded from continuing using and paying for the services of the organisation. This therefore means that a sizeable number of customers keep leaving the organisation to look for where there is better coordination, more capable and prudent management and organisation, and therefore better customer service. Attesting to this, Interviewee Four articulated that:

“The existing KM practices are not effectively managed which then impacts on the quality of service offering by the organisation”.

Most of the respondents however came across very optimistic and had a very positive and encouraging assessment of the KM practices, the administration and management thereof, and the overall service efficiency. It can therefore be pointed that it is such kind of assessment that still sees the customer numbers consistently climbing, though not as exponentially. According to Interviewee Seven, the manner in which the KM practices are managed by the organisation contributes positively towards building a sense of independence, confidence and efficiency in the manner in which the organisation’s employees perform their work and deliver customer service.

This is despite severe lack of adequate follow-up on customer complaints, and therefore poor and inefficient handling thereof by the management, as it transpired above.

It can thus be concluded overall that the extent of efficiency with respect to the existing service delivery by the organisation has always proven more impactful in ensuring that there are more satisfied customers with the organisation’s service delivery, as opposed to those that are not. This has therefore meant that, notwithstanding the existence of plenty of room for improvement on the part of the organisation, with respect to the service quality, the numbers in organisation’s customers consistently keep climbing.

4.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it did transpire in this chapter that the role played by the presence and the administration of the incentive programmes and reward systems is so significant that the organisation is sure to achieve an immediate acceleration of the current KM practice implementation, and a speedy realisation of its fruition. The training and skills capacity enhancing programmes were therefore accentuated as an indispensable precursor for the

successful and profitable acquisition and application of knowledge by the organisation's employees. Various platforms and programmes through which such teaching and transferring of skills and knowledge can take place have therefore been highlighted in this chapter, and they are inclusive of seminars and workshops.

Furthermore, in ensuring the complete acquisition of skills and knowledge by the employees, it was therefore highlighted that the time factor is indeed of the essence. This translates into the fact that the longer the employees stay with the organisation, meaning more on-the-job experience gets acquired, the more efficient the employees become in the execution of their work.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation's KM practices were also expatiated upon, and it transpired that the satisfaction of the customers with the service delivery chiefly depends on the KM practices being administered proficiently. One of the most pronounced benefits of good KM administration was the fostering of sound, working relations between the staff and its superiors. Therefore, if administered properly, the KM practices should be expected to result in both the employees and the management content with their work, which, in turn, will result in excellent customer service, and therefore satisfied customers. For the KM practices to yield such benefits and advantages, it was highlighted that every single aspect of KM ought to be revitalised and updated on regular basis to ensure its relevance, and that the intended results, in terms of improved customer service, also can be attained.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will be mainly constituted by the conclusions which emanate from the findings obtained from the interviewees' responses pertaining to the KM practices at EKZNW. The conclusions will be presented in a manner that will be in alignment with the study's aim, objectives and the research questions. Subsequent to this, the recommendations that flow from the conclusions will then be dissected.

5.2. Overview of the study

The study was punctuated by a qualitative approach, was also exploratory in nature, and it also adopted a constructivist kind of a paradigm. The approach that was employed in the collection of the research data was the semi-structured interviews which, due to the restrictive COVID-19 safety regulations, were held remotely, via an email platform. The study population was comprised of only the employees who occupied senior management positions at EKZNW who were purposively selected to participate in the study, a decision that was motivated by the fact that it was only the senior management employees that could possibly give informed and accurate responses to the research questions given the oversight role and responsibilities assigned to them by the organisation. They would therefore be able to understand and respond better to any question pertaining to the KM practices at EKZNW.

The analysis of the research findings adopted an approach punctuated by the objectives of the study and themes. The researcher therefore took each objective, and under each objective, the potential themes that could be expected to emerge from the interviewees' responses were put together. It is therefore worth noting that it is not every response that was given by every interviewee that would be used in the analysis under the themes, and that it is only the responses that talked to the aim, objectives and the research questions of the study that were considered and employed in the analysis.

The conclusions and recommendations to be discussed below were based on the responses of the study participants, the themes emanating from the responses, the research questions, aim,

objectives, as well as the KM practices-centric literature. The research questions the study sought to answer were:

- What kind of KM practices does the organisation have in place?
- What role do these organisational KM practices play on the overall functionality of the organisation?
- Do these KM practices help improve the efficiency with which the employees execute their work duties?
- What is the overall significance of KM systems being institutionalised by companies?

The answering of the above research questions would then be expected to lead to the achievement of the study objectives which were:

- To ascertain the kind of KM practices the organisation has in place.
- To explore the kind of role the existing organisation's KM practices play on the overall functionality of the organisation.
- To establish if these KM practices do help improve the efficiency with which the employees execute their work duties.
- To understand the overall significance of KM systems being institutionalised by companies.

5.3. Summary of the data

Under each of the four objectives and the gathered data from the respondents, through the interviews, eight themes were identified. The analysis of the research findings was therefore in alignment with the eight themes that emanated from the gathered research data, as set out below:

- Incentives (Theme 1)
- Training programmes (Theme 2)
- They get better with time (Theme 3)
- Customer-base growth (Theme 4)
- Coordination amongst different departments (Theme 5)
- Interaction between employees and their superiors (Theme 6)
- Employees' skills impact on overall performance (Theme 7)

- Staff efficiency and growth in customer numbers (Theme 8)

5.4. Themes and their implications

Incentives

It transpired when the interviews were conducted with the senior management staff of EKZNW that there are incentive programmes in place within the organisation. It was however established that the assortment of such programmes is not vast but quite limited, and that not all the employees of the organisation classify such programmes as incentives, notwithstanding the appreciation and classification of such programmes as welcomed and motivating incentives by some of the interviewees.

It was therefore concluded that the impact of incentive programmes on the organisation is quite positive, but not entirely. The overall effect of the incentive programmes was, however, found to be quite positive and encouraging for the staff to want to acquire, use and share their skills, knowledge and expertise with other employees, and for the ultimate good of the organisation (Antani, Baeten, Perkins, Shaw and Vartiainen, 2017; Robescu and Iancu, 2016).

It is also worth pointing out that most of the incentive programmes which were not regarded as incentives by some of the respondents were those that are in place and available to everyone to profit from such as the annual bonuses and the travel allowances where the employees of the organisation, with their families, are entitled to visit different camps of the organisation across the province.

Training programmes

The training programmes appeared, as articulated by most of the respondents, to be very effective in ensuring that the organisation's workforce is able to execute their tasks with efficiency (Anitha and Kumar, 2016). Most of the respondents also pointed out the significance of ensuring the administration and implementation of the training and development sessions on regular basis. Such an assertion was justified by the fact that since the market environment and the consumer market's tastes and preferences change every now and then, therefore it becomes essential for the staff's skills and expertise to be refreshed and updated from time to time (AI Karim, 2019).

Some of the respondents also shared their apprehension with respect to the organisation's training and development programmes, and the degree of their effectiveness on the overall efficiency and functionality of the organisation. Such reservations and misgivings, to a large degree, were levelled at the rapidly changing management structure, and hence, the inefficiency and less competent management of the entire organisation. It therefore transpired that if there is lack of effective and fully competent management of the organisation, the training and development programmes, despite being in place, are not likely to be effective and beneficial for the organisation and the staff in its entirety (Uma, Hanudin and Shahrullail, 2016).

On-the-job experience

The passage of time plays a very important role in the KM context of the organisation (Pahos, and Galanaki, 2019). The observation and assessment by many of the interviewees was that the longer the employees stay with the organisation the better and more efficient they become in their work performance (Pahos, and Galanaki, 2019). It then transpired that such a development in the employees' performance, as the time progresses, could be attributed to the experience and learning that happen on-the-job as the employees perform their jobs and also interacting with and observing other colleagues performing on their jobs.

As the time progresses and the employees get to experience different levels and kinds of work, their skills and capabilities, needed for them to perform productively and efficiently in their jobs, get refined as well. It is also such an exposure to different kinds of work to which the growing innovativeness and productivity of the organisation's employees could also be attributed (Sjogaard, Christensen, Justesen, Murray, Dalager, Fredslund and Sogaard, 2016).

Some of the interviewees, however, did not seem to share the same kind of excitement, and they pointed out their apprehension and reservations with respect to the consistent learning and development of the organisation's workforce, and their skills and expertise. They articulated that the rapid and inefficiently communicated changes at management level present a deplorable hindrance to the overall staff efficiency (Abu Naser, Al Shaki and Ammar, 2017).

Customer satisfaction

It is worth pointing out that the manner in which the customers' dissatisfactions and complaints get handled and administered by the organisation is a significant aspect of customer service (Jeong and Lee, 2017; Jerger and Wirtz, 2017). It can therefore cause an upsurge or a decline in the number of customers for the organisation. The lack of adequate coordination amongst the various departments of the organisation can also impact negatively on the volumes of customers the organisation is able to attract and retain (Spillan, Mintu-Wimsatt and Kara, 2018). This became evident when the interviews were conducted that some parts of the organisation are not aware of any of the customer complaint-related mechanisms for following up or just basically handling of such complaints. It therefore transpired that such lack of uniformity and coordination, year after year, has resulted in volumes of the organisation's customers not returning.

Most of the interviewees however rated the organisation's handling of customer complaints favourably, which they characterised as the main cause of the substantial number of customers the organisation is still able to attract and retain, year after year, despite those that do not return. Most have cited a questionnaire as a tool that is used by the organisation to seek any service- and satisfaction-related concerns or views the organisation's customers may want to communicate to the organisation (Zhao, Xu and Wang, 2019). Such questionnaire, or comment cards, as they are sometimes referred to, are used across the entire spectrum of the organisation's camps, and, to a large extent, the substantial volumes the organisation is still able to attract and retain can be attributed to the adequate and efficient handling of customer complaints aided by such mechanisms.

Coordination amongst different departments

A considerable number of interviewees articulated that the coordination and coherence that exist amongst different departments and employees of the organisation are mainly facilitated by the meetings, conferences and the workshop programmes that are held from time to time by the organisation (Diatta, Louw-Vaudran, Attah-Asamoah, Woldemichael and Toupane, 2019; Wilson, 2020). This is the platform through which, according to the respondents, the employees are able to foster good relations and understanding amongst themselves and their departments. The sharing of knowledge and ideas can also take place with ease through such

platforms, which all then aid the overall coordination amongst the organisation's different departments (Diatta et al., 2019; Wilson, 2020).

It was highlighted in the significant portion of the interviews, however, that the aforementioned coordination amongst different employees and departments, as cited above, is severely detracted from by the inconsistency with which the organisation's management monitors the set standards regarding the KM practices in terms of productivity and profitability. The lack of adequate coordination amongst different departments of the organisation, according to many of the respondents, could be evidenced by the lack of awareness, by many of the respondents, of the existing KM practices that the organisation has in place.

It therefore becomes highly unlikely for any organisation to function optimally when there is such a severe lack of coordination amongst different employees and different departments (Diatta et al., 2019; Wilson, 2020).

Communication

The KM practices such as meetings and briefing sessions held amongst the employees and their superiors have also transpired to be very instrumental in the fostering of good relations between the employees and their superiors (AI Saifi, Dillon and McQueen, 2016). Most of the interviewees articulated that these platforms have been extremely helpful in the establishment of sound and meaningful communication and interactions which are very important if the KM practices of the organisation are to yield any positive results. These have been characterised by many of the respondents as a very effective media through which the management's expectations, pertaining to the employees' performance and profitability, get communicated (Lee, 2018; Motoi, 2017).

The effectiveness of such platforms have, however, been characterised by also a substantial number of respondents as impeded by the rapid changes of the management structures of the organisation. They are of the view that such problems associated with rapid changes in the management echelons of the organisation, more often than not, are exacerbated by lack of adequate communication between the management and the employees about such changes. These respondents have therefore highlighted that the KM practices such as meetings and briefing sessions have, of late, become less effective than what it used to be like in the past,

thanks to the constant changes of the management structure, and the lack of adequate communication thereof to the entire staff.

Employees' skills impact on overall performance

Most of the respondents articulated that the organisation has a substantial pool of talent and expertise possessed by the staff. They were therefore of the view that EKZNW owes its classification as one of the big, successful organisations, to these skills and expertise which enable the workforce to carry out their day-to-day work activities diligently and productively (Deshpande and Munshi, 2020; Ibrahim, Boerhannoeddin and Bakare, 2017). Such a pool of talent and expertise, according to many of the respondents, has, over the years, seen the organisation grow significantly, and getting closer to the achievement of its vision and objectives, which mainly are profitability, growth and dominance in the market.

It has also transpired, on the contrary, that the degree to which the growth, profitability and dominance in the market have been achieved could have been more significant had the management's capabilities and competences of the organisation been of adequate level (Amin, 2018). This has therefore prompted some of the respondents to ventilate their displeasure about the quality of the organisation's management when it comes to management and monitoring of the organisation's array of talent and how it impacts on the overall service delivery. They have therefore pointed out that, indeed, there is a pool of talent and expertise at the disposal of the organisation however these are not able to yield noticeable positive outcomes in terms of service delivery. They attributed such a shortfall to the lack of efficient and diligent management of the organisation.

Characteristic of such lack of adequate, competent management within the organisation, according to some of the respondents has been poor allocation and placement of the organisation's available resources. This has therefore resulted in very serious, negatively impactful business decisions being made by the management, such as inadequately and indecisively following up on the dissatisfaction and complaints of the customers. This has therefore resulted in many unhappy customers, and has prompted other customers to seek better service delivery elsewhere (Pakurar, Haddad, Nagy, Popp and Olah, 2019).

Staff efficiency and growth in customer numbers

Considering the steady growth in the number of EKZNW's customers, most of the respondents appeared to take this to mean that the organisation has been able, to some degree, to retain most of its existing customers, while, at the same time, been able to consistently attract new ones. Most of the respondents attributed such growth to the sufficient level of efficiency in terms of the quality of service delivery by the organisation's staff (Darzi and Bhat, 2018) which, in turn, has seen most of the organisation's customers reasonably satisfied with the organisation's service quality.

Most of the respondents attributed the abovementioned customer satisfaction and growth in customer numbers to the effectiveness of the organisation's KM practices. They articulated that the organisation's KM practices have seen the level of confidence, independence and efficiency, in the manner in which the employees provide the service to the customers, get better. They were therefore of the view that, as per their observation and assessment, the skills and capabilities of each employee get significantly better in comparison to when they first came into the organisation. This, according to the respondents, can only be attributed to the organisation's effective KM practices which ensure that all the employees are equipped with skills necessary to optimally perform in their jobs (Caruso, 2017).

The lack of effective management of the organisation's KM practices has however been highlighted by some of the respondents as the major hindrance to the employees' ability to offer an unparalleled kind and quality of service to the customers. This has therefore, according to these respondents, been a major impediment to the organisation's achievement of exponential and unequalled growth in its customer numbers (Darzi and Bhat, 2018). It is therefore worth pointing out that the growth in customer numbers, highlighted above, can be characterised as restricted, thanks to the lack of effective management of the KM practices by the organisation's top management.

Summary

The study has shown that EKZNW has a number of KM practices that are in place and being used to enable and equip the organisation's workforce with the necessary skills to perform productively in their jobs. One of the major impediments to an uninterrupted development of the employees' skills and abilities, which ought to be realised through the optimal employment of the KM practices, was said, by the respondents, to be the severe lack of

effective, efficient and competent management of such KM practices, a challenge which is levelled against the top management of the organisation.

As much as some of the respondents highlighted that incentives, to motivate the employees to share the knowledge and ideas with other employees, were in place, an assessment that showed lack of such, by other respondents, was made. Most of the respondents who stated that the organisation does have the incentives further share their apprehension about the ability of the organisation's management to effectively manage, monitor and ultimately see these incentives to fruition, in terms of encouraging the interacting and sharing of knowledge and skills amongst the employees.

It has also transpired that as much as the different programmes, aimed at equipping the employees with skills, such as training and workshops, exist, many of the respondents cited their reservations about the effectiveness of such programmes on the overall functionality of the organisation. Many highlighted the rapid changes that get effected on the organisation's management structure now and again, which, according to them, happen too frequently, and in many cases with less or inadequate communication with the staff. The lack of adequate management at EKZNW has been blamed for lacklustre effectiveness of some of the KM practices. For example, the on-the-job learning and acquisition of work-related experience has been said to be very ineffective by some of the respondents, a challenge also levelled at the lack of adequate management and inefficient communication between the management and the entire workforce.

It also appeared that the number of customers, overall, is growing, meaning that most of the customers are happy and satisfied with the service quality. It also however transpired that many customers never return, causing a declining growth in the number of the organisation's customers. Such a challenge was also said to be a result of inadequate and inefficient handling of customer complaints by the management such as lack of follow-ups.

The management has also been said to lack the ability to ensure coordination amongst the different departments of the organisation. This has therefore caused a significant amount of KM practices by the organisation to be ineffective. For example, it was highlighted that the performance standards are set and put place by the management, and to which all the departments ought to adhere, however the lack of effective monitoring by the management has caused such standards to be futile.

The lack of capabilities at management level has also been characterised as the major hindrance to the growth in the organisation's customer numbers and the growth of the organisation in its entirety. Such a managerial challenge appeared to be very negatively impactful, and therefore negate the positive effects of the available skills and talent, and the overall performance.

It therefore transpired that although the number of customers is growing, there is still plenty of room for improvement, particularly in relation to the top management. The management inefficiencies such as lack of efficient communication with the rest of the workforce have been said to be the major drawbacks causing a severe decline in the growth of customer numbers for the organisation.

The study objectives have then been considered and examined again by the researcher, in order to assess and ascertain if they have been achieved through the conducting of the study and the acquisition of the findings. After having looked back at the findings in chapter four, and having taken into account the conclusions in this chapter, an evaluation has indicated that the study objectives have indeed been achieved.

5.5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore made by the researcher for the facilitation of the better management of knowledge at EKZNW.

The more elevated and efficient management of knowledge by the organisation requires dedication and support at all levels and departments of the organisation. This therefore means that as much as the top management ought not only be at the forefront, but must also be seen to be the key driver of all the KM practices, the entire workforce of the organisation is also required to be as supportive and cooperative as possible to make the KM initiatives of the organisation a success.

The following recommendations are therefore made:

- The organisation ought to introduce a variety of categories of incentives aimed at encouraging the employees to participate in the creation, development and sharing of knowledge.

- Instead of having the benefits which are for all the employees to profit from, such as bonuses and trips to different camps of the organisation around the province, the more out-and-out, and more exclusive kinds of incentives ought to be instituted. For example, more lucrative awards, annually, can be held where individuals who visibly contributed more in the development and sharing of knowledge, ideas and skills, which relate to work, with other less developed and less experienced employees, could be introduced. Each department, for example, would therefore be required to bring forth its own nominees.
- The levels of employees' work ethics and productivity also need to be recognised and appreciated through rewards. This will encourage other less experienced employees to want to acquire as much knowledge, skills and experience as possible, as quickly as possible. This would again require the introduction of the more prominent and visibly prestigious ceremonies where such awards, attractively packaged to include a variety of goodies such as the all-expenses-paid-holiday-packages for the employee and their family, and monetary rewards other than the already existing statutory annual bonuses. Such rewards would be quite expensive for the organisation in the short-term, but the benefits of such rewards for the organisation, in the long-term, are likely to substantially outweigh the costs. The entire workforce is likely to be highly motivated to be as active as possible, and contribute towards the creation, development and sharing of knowledge with other more knowledge-needy employees, benefitting the entire organisation in the long run in terms of more efficient management of knowledge and service delivery.
- The significant development of knowledge, the management of such knowledge, and therefore the achievement of a more sustained and efficient service delivery would necessitate the introduction of a more robust and highly focused workshops and training programmes by the organisation.
- Given the fact that each and every department would need to have its own programmes and plans for the implementation of the training programmes, the coordination of such programmes across the entire organisation has proved a very difficult exercise at EKZNW. Such a challenge has resulted in other departments implementing their training programmes but unable to derive any rewards for the organisation, because the management and monitoring of such programmes has been quite uncoordinated and disjointed from department to department. To aid and facilitate the smooth, well-coordinated and more likely beneficial training programmes for the entire organisation,

outsourcing of such services, and have them administered, on regular basis, by the external organisations that are exclusively specialising in organisational training programmes, would be a more sensible route to consider.

- These external consulting organisations can play a vital role in also ensuring that the entire management of the organisation is put through rigorous KM-related training, just to ensure that the management is sufficiently educated in terms of what the KM practices are, their significance to their departments and the entire organisation, and how they are to be administered and implemented. This would basically talk to their role in the broader scheme of things, so that they know what they are expected to do as the management.
- Even if the external consulting organisation has been outsourced in terms of its services pertaining to KM training, there ought to be specifically and carefully selected management team of the organisation assigned to work hand-in-hand with the consulting organisation. This will ensure, smooth and seamless transmission of knowledge with respect to KM practices the organisation must embark on and how these are to be carried out.
- The use of technology (e.g. Information and Communication System) can help enhance coordination amongst different departments. This could be facilitated through the system ensuring the uniformity of information across the organisation. The vision and objectives of the organisation could therefore be easily made available and known to everyone.
- KM champions would also need to be appointed and be known to the entire staff. Ideally each department to have its own champion. This will allow for easy access to these champions by the employees and easy access to information regarding all the organisation's KM practices. Coordination could be facilitated through ensuring that these champions interact regularly. This will, in turn, allow for everyone to have access to the same kind of information, ensuring uniformity and coordination amongst different departments of the organisation.
- Any structural changes effected on the management by the top management ought to be consistently and timely communicated to the staff. This will enable those close, meaningful relationships to be established between the employees and their superiors. This could also serve as a platform through which the objectives and vision of the

organisation, and the potential mechanisms to be employed to facilitate the achievement of such, could easily be communicated.

- Debriefing sessions would need to be held regularly where the KM champions would be reporting back to the entire organisation as to the progress on KM practice implementation. This could be made possible through consistent monitoring of the KM practice implementation programmes by the champions and the management.
- The ownership culture can also be adopted. This is the kind of organisational culture where the employees are entitled to a share of the profits generated by the organisation annually. The relevance of this kind of a culture is attributable to the fact that when the employees know that the achievements of the organisation are also their achievements, it equates to a very sound and efficacious motivation tool. It is therefore likely to impel the employees to dedicate themselves, their talents and expertise to the furtherance of the organisation's vision and objectives. This, in the process, is expected to result in more efficient and elevated levels of customer service, hence the achievement of customer satisfaction and more sustained dominance in the market.
- To supplement the training programmes and workshops, introducing scholarships aimed at enhancing various skills essential for the more efficient work performance, for example, in customer service. Funds could be set aside to send the employees to universities or colleges to enrol, on part-time basis, for the essential skills-enhancing-oriented programmes.

The following recommendations for further research are therefore provided:

- The impact of incentive and reward programmes on the effectiveness of KM practices.
- Understanding the role of the communication aspect of the organisation on the administration of KM practices.
- The role of the senior management of the organisation in the administration and implementation of KM practices.
- The influence of organisational culture on the success of KM practices.
- The relationship between KM, and organisational profitability.
- The impact of the styles of leadership by the top management on the furtherance of KM practices of the organisation.
- The impact of KM practices on customer satisfaction.

5.6. Limitations

Some limitations were identified in the study, and they are set out below:

- The respondents, because of the workload they are faced with, as senior managers, most of them could not adhere to the timeframe that had originally been agreed upon between them and the researcher. This therefore resulted in protracted delays in the writing of all the findings and analysis.
- The study being qualitative in nature, and the data collection method being the interviews would mean that the interviewees' responses were required to be as sufficiently detailed and elaborate as possible. The need to observe the COVID-19 safety regulations however had dictated that the interviews had to be conducted remotely, via an email platform. This meant that the respondents were required to write out their responses. Many of the respondents could not provide sufficient details in their responses, which then necessitated further email questions where further clarity on the responses had to be sought. This proved very cumbersome and time-consuming.
- Prior to the commencement of the interviews, the respondents were allowed to choose between the two options of providing their responses. They could either print out the questions, and handwrite the responses, and then email a scanned answered list of questions back. Another option was to complete the interviews electronically where the interviewee would just type out their responses on the questions sheet, and email back. Most opted for the former. The challenge was the difficulty of trying to decipher some of the hand-writings, which were very difficult to see. This caused delays as well, given the need for the researcher to engage in further email communication with some of the interviewees, and even finding that many of them would take a day or two to respond to the email.
- Another challenge that was experienced by the researcher, as the data collection process unfolded, was the difficulty of proving the veracity of the respondents' responses, particularly when it came to the assessment of the top management's level of competence. Some of the respondent would paint a very rosy picture about the management's capabilities, for example, when it came to ensuring that there is sufficient levels of communication between the employees and their superiors, while other respondents painted a less encouraging picture about the top management in that respect. It therefore became a matter of going with the position of the majority.

- Given the significance of the data that was required for the completion of the study, and the fact that it is only the employees at senior management that would be well positioned to respond to the researcher's questions because of their rank and responsibilities, purposive sampling is the method that was used to select who could participate in the study. The resultant drawback therefore was the inability to generalise the results and findings of the study.

5.7. Conclusion

This study established that EKZNW does have various KM practices in place as articulated by a significant number of respondents who participated in the study. It however transpired that many challenges and shortfalls pertaining to the organisation's KM practices could mainly be levelled at the top management of the organisation. The lack of capabilities, competencies and the overall managerial efficiency were cited as the chief cause of the lacklustre, inadequate administration and implementation of the organisation's KM practices.

One of the most glaring resultant challenges of the lack of adequate management of the organisation's KM practices is the almost non-existent coordination amongst the different departments of the organisation, which, according to many of the respondents, emanates from the lack of efficient and consistent communication between the organisation's top management and the rest of the staff. This then leads to the inconsistencies in knowledge distribution across the entire staff. As a result of this, many of the respondents have highlighted that they are not aware of any KM practices within the organisation, let alone taking part in and contributing to their implementation.

Over and above the lack of communication by the top management to the entire staff, many of the respondents stated that the recent years and even the incumbent top management of the organisation, has been consistently unable to implement various KM policies which, as they pointed out, have been shelved by the top management. This is one of the main reasons most of the respondents ventilated their misgivings about the incumbent top management of the organisation in terms of its managerial acumen and prowess. They therefore stated that the organisation's KM practices used to be efficiently managed in the past, but not anymore, and therefore there is very little positive impact that the current KM practices are able to yield for the organisation and its customers in terms of service quality.

This study therefore established that the management of the organisation is required to assume the key driver's role in the administration and implementation of the KM practices, and that all the specifications of the various KM practices, in terms of how they are to be implemented, and what they are aimed at achieving, ought to be adequately communicated by the top management, and must filter down, seamlessly, across the entire staff, to ensure their success. There is therefore a need for rigorous training of the top management of the organisation exclusively aimed at equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge as to the role they need to play in the KM practices of the organisation, to ensure their successful administration and implementation. Only then, it is hoped, at least, can the top management be able to facilitate the successful and effective involvement and contribution of the entire staff in the successful administration and implementation of KM practices.

It has therefore been ascertained, overall, that the KM practices at EKZNW do play a very effective role, though not flawlessly, on the overall functionality of the organisation.

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APPENDIX A: FIRST PAGE OF TURNITIN REPORT

The screenshot shows a Turnitin report in a web browser window titled "Feedback Studio - Google Chrome". The URL is "ev.turnitin.com/app/carta/en_us/?student_user=1&u=1030948742&lang=en_us&o=1464791115&s=1". The report is titled "Mlungisi Ndlovu | MBA Dissertation". On the right side, there is a vertical toolbar with icons for download, print, and other report options. The main content area contains the title of the dissertation:

**UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE
MANAGEMENT ON ORGANISATIONAL FUNCTIONALITY
AT EZEMVELO KZN WILDLIFE**

By

Mlungisi Ndlovu

At the bottom of the page, there are status indicators: "Page: 1 of 119", "Word Count: 41930", "Text-only Report", "High Resolution", and a zoom slider.

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Ndlovu+MC+201294852+HSSREC+00001660+2020++Full+App.pdf (SECURED) - Adobe Reader

File Edit View Document Tools Window Help

1 / 1 100% Find

 UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATALTM
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

31 July 2020

Mr Mlungisi Cyprian Ndlovu (201294852)
Grad School Of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Ndlovu,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001660/2020
Project title: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT ON ORGANISATIONAL
FUNCTIONALITY AT EZEMVELO KZN WILDLIFE
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 16 July 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.