

Organisational Learning and Knowledge Sharing Culture in Township Schools: An Exploration of Effective and Ineffective Practices

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Abstract

Literature underscores that the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) promises to bring with it a host of technical and socially oriented innovations and changes that will pressure educational institutions to incorporate the concept of knowledge management (KM) in their educational, human resource, curricular and co-curricular administrative functions. In light of the many challenges confronting township schools such as the lack of proper infrastructure, the lack of learning and technological equipment and insufficient budget, the primary objective of this qualitative study (involving a sample of 20 participants), was to draw parallels between the effective and ineffective knowledge sharing practices in three township schools in the city of Emalahleni in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The study found that of the three schools under study, only one school practiced effective knowledge sharing, while the other two schools were found to be ineffective in their practise of knowledge sharing. Thematic analysis indicated that, in both schools, ineffective knowledge sharing was precipitated by a counter collaborative culture, top down communication and decision making, absence of Ubuntu (i.e., humanity, tolerance and mutual respect) among staff, the principals' inaccessibility to non-managerial staff, and chronic teacher absenteeism. Based on these findings, the study proposes that best practices from the school that was found to have practiced effective knowledge sharing be emulated throughout the landscape of township schools in South Africa.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing; Knowledge management; School management teams; Organisational culture

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INTRODUCTION

Across the globe almost all professional sectors are hard at work in preparation for the dawning of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) promises to usher in significant changes that will impact how every industrial sector in every country (Schwab, 2016) operates. Naturally, these changes will also apply to education systems across both developed and developing countries, including South Africa. As such, schools are under duress to acclimatise to these changes in a relatively short period of time. At the heart of these changes, lies the need for schools to develop an appreciation for the abundance of knowledge that abides throughout their ecologies by institutionalising the concept of knowledge management (KM) (Arimi et al., 2022; Arunima & Pakkeerappa, 2018; Edikpa et al., 2018; Nkambule, 2020, 2022; Osborn et

al., 2021; Romm & Nkambule, 2022). When KM is supported by a conducive climate the organisation greatly minimises forfeiture of a wealth of knowledge assets. Because ground-breaking knowledge is a commodity whose habitat is a human mind, Antunes and Pinheiro (2020) identify the need for it to be managed so that it is deposited into the repositories (also known as organisational memories) of the organisation and is engraved into its norms and operational processes. Nkambule (2020) defines KM as a process that entails the preservation of internally created knowledge and the incorporation of knowledge acquired from external sources into organisational knowledge. In the context of education, King (2009) points out that KM has to do with “the planning, organising, motivating and controlling of people, processes and systems in the organisation to ensure that its knowledge related assets are improved and effectively employed”. Generally speaking, KM comprises of the processes of knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge acquisition, knowledge capture and knowledge application. KM processes give a meaning and practical value to tacit knowledge (i.e., an intangible knowledge that lies in people’s minds) and explicit knowledge (i.e., a tangible form of knowledge that has been recoded).

Whilst all these KM processes are important in their own unique ways, knowledge sharing reigns supreme as it is a precursor to the externalisation of tacit knowledge (Bukowitz & Williams, 2000; Dalkir, 2017; Nazim & Mukherjee, 2016; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Konno, 1998; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995, 2001; Nonaka & Toyama, 2003), by making it possible for people’s internally embedded technical skills, experience and information to be recorded and converted into an organisational asset. The fact that tacit knowledge is housed in an individual’s mental infrastructure (Fullan, 2002) and gets synthesised, rationalised and memorised by them, is the reason why its sharing has become a prerequisite for an organisation’s survival in constantly evolving, unpredictable and fiercely competitive climates (Pellegrini et al., 2020).

The second type of knowledge is called explicit knowledge and it is borne from the codification or conversion of tacit knowledge from an intangible form into a tangible one. This allows it to become incorporated into the knowledge assets of an organisation. Policy documents, minutes of meetings and websites are some examples of explicit knowledge. Informed by years of experience in the field of KM, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) singled out the management of the externalisation of tacit knowledge as a priority because it is a very intricate undertaking. Accordingly, Nazim and Mukharjee (2016) add that effective management of tacit knowledge affords the organisation the opportunity to facilitate its codification into explicit knowledge which can be retrieved at any given time should a need for it arise. This study surmises that the personal, context-specific and subjective nature of tacit knowledge, might be the reason why Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) are insistent on the need for it to be closely monitored. Be that as it may, Jackson et al. (2010) argue that it is misleading to prioritise one knowledge over the other, therefore equal preference should be given to the management of tacit and explicit knowledge, as they, respectively and in their own unique ways propel organisational innovation, knowledge management proficiency and knowledge exchange culture. Based on these accounts, it can be concluded that effective knowledge sharing culture injects positive energy into the organisation by improving employee’s attitudes towards organisational learning, personal growth and development; and building and sustaining an ongoing learning culture, while also ensuring that critical tacit knowledge is being absorbed into organisational knowledge.

While the concept of KM and its processes are adequately researched in the world's developed schooling contexts, there is a consensus that little is known about knowledge sharing (Kalema et al., 2016) and the applicability of KM processes in a South African schooling system (Gxwati, 2011). This warrants the need for developing an understanding on how effective or ineffective KM processes are in the South African schooling contexts. As such, the study was informed by the following research questions:

- What are the causes of ineffective knowledge sharing practices at selected South African?
- Which factors contribute to effective knowledge sharing practices at selected South African schools?

Recent literature proves that KM and its processes have a positive effect on school effectiveness. For example, in Nigerian secondary schools, Edikpa et al. (2018) found that KM improved the teachers' curriculum knowledge sharing and planning processes. Also, in Nigerian schools, Idhalama and Echedom (2021) found that systematisation of KM ameliorated teachers' knowledge sharing commitment. While the cited studies were primarily focused on unearthing the positive or effective practices, this study shines a spotlight on both effective and ineffective knowledge sharing and organisational learning practices.

Literature Review

Synchronising Knowledge Sharing, Organisational Culture and Learning

Organisational culture (OC) has been defined in many ways by multiple authors. In a bid to synthesize these into a comprehensive definition, Cameron and Quinn (2011) examined more than 150 research papers and concluded that OC refers to the impression that comes across about an organisation's values, moral campus, relational dynamics, operational paradigm and motivational and attitudinal patterns as exuded by its employees and its leadership. Robbins (2005) further define OC as the dynamics in the behaviour, reaction and working relationships of employees coming from different social orientations, who are situated in different hierarchal positions and command varying degrees of positional influence within the organisation. Ultimately, how these individuals work together determines the effectiveness or lack thereof of the knowledge sharing culture in an organisation (Argote, 2011; Attar, 2020; Ferdinandus et al., 2015; Kalema et al., 2016).

Robbins (2005) argue that in an organisational setting the soundness or lack thereof of the culture tends to show itself. Organisations that have a sound knowledge sharing culture can be recognised through their employees' willingness to share what they know with their fellow colleagues rather than hoarding their knowledge. Against this backdrop, it must be noted that achieving a sound or effective knowledge sharing culture is less dependent on the allocation of resources and technologies and is primarily dependent on how processes of employee collaborations and social engagements are being managed. Locally produced literature, specifically by Kalema et al. (2016); Author (2020); Authors (2022), note that due to ineffective leadership practices, the sharing of knowledge often presents a huge challenge in many South African schools, as some employees tend to shy away from externalising their tacit knowledge. This is mainly because more often than not, school leadership does not value the input of teaching and administrative personnel and other stakeholders in knowledge sharing activities (Min, 2017; Perez-Soltero et al., 2019). Due to the human-

centredness of the process of the manifestation of knowledge, Nuruzzaman et al. (2019) opine that participation beyond school leadership in KM processes should not be undervalued as this facilitates organisational innovation.

In their study, Daud et al. (2015) ascertain that in a school, not only does knowledge sharing affect the integrity of its administrative activities but also that of its instructional programmes and its relations with broader stakeholders. Therefore, by not taking cognisance of the unique value that each of these stakeholders (i.e., teachers, administrative clerks and so forth) contribute to the improvement of KM processes, schools continue to be ranked poorly amongst knowledge sharing organisations (Fullan, 2002; OECD, 2010). This is despite them being regarded as safe havens for the creation and sharing of “innovative knowledge” and “intangible knowledge assets” (Omigie et al., 2019). Much of this ineffectual sharing appears to be exacerbated by ineffective leadership practices and bottom-up undertakings to knowledge sharing. Hence, Schwab (2016) argues that for public entities (of which schools are no exception), to function in line with the demands set forth by 4IR, and for their leadership practices to be complementary to both vertical and horizontal communication, they must begin to value the democratisation of knowledge sharing and the management thereof.

What Schwab (2016) discusses pertains to the need for organisations to embrace learning as one of the key propellants for surviving the tide of 4IR. It is within line of thinking that, Moloi (1999) defines organisational learning as an effort by the organisation to cultivate a culture of knowledge sharing among all levels of staff in order to develop best practices that will strengthen the ability of the organisation to adapt to different challenges. She further states that organisational learning prevails through “creating cultures where acquisition of skills and knowledge are seen as an investment in tomorrow”. This implies that schools must leverage their human capabilities, systems and processes to create, share, innovate, consolidate the nuggets of knowledge that pervade their space, and apply it to yield positive outcomes in so far as their performance and productivity are concerned. Fundamentally, as pointed out by Kools and Stoll (2016), to be characterised as a learning organisation, schools need to: 1) have a shared vision on their role as catalysts for learners’ acquisition of context specific knowledge; 2) embrace ongoing professional development across all spheres of the workforce throughout the school operational ecology; 3) value “collaboration, culture of inquiry, innovation and exploration”; 4) formalise processes and systems for gathering and exchanging field experience on an ongoing basis among members of staff; and, 5) have leaders who are not afraid to learn from others (including learning from those coming from ranks other than the management of the school). It is therefore envisaged that by functioning in this way, schools are sure to handsomely benefit from an organisational culture that nurtures knowledge sharing practices, as further detailed in the next section which discusses at length, how in theoretical terms, organisational learning interfaces with knowledge sharing, organisational culture and knowledge management.

Theoretical Framework

In terms of theoretical orientation, the study resonates with the Organisational Learning Theory (OLT). OLT is premised on the need for organisations to consider mutual learning as a source of productivity, innovation and acclimatisation in changing operational environments. This view is consistent with that of Antunes and

Pinheiro (2020) who underscore that for organisations to grow their knowledge assets and adapt to the changing times, knowledge processes ought to exude organisational learning as a part of their longevity and operational stability. This may require that the creation, acquisition, storing and application of knowledge in these organisations be mounted on meaningful and continuous dialogical engagements, clear cut procedures of personnel engagement, feedback channels and leadership practises that precipitate a cohesive learning culture (Garvin et al., 2008).

The crux of this study was to outline the fundamental differences between effective and ineffective learning organisations hence its adoption of the OLT as a theoretical framework. Garvin et al. (2008) indicate that the distinguishable features between effective and ineffective learning organisations can be assessed from the vantage point of the wellbeing or the lack thereof of employees' democratic participation in knowledge sharing transactions, decision making platforms, experimentations, problem-based undertakings, non-hierarchal exploration of peer suggestions and in leaders' and managers' attitudes towards lifelong learning. In simple terms, organisational learning is demonstrated by the meaningfulness of the changes that happen when organisations know how to handle their knowledge assets after having gone through a series of learning curves (Nkambule, 2020). The author of this study opted for OLT as the theoretical framework as it encapsulates the aspects that KM literature depicts as having a bearing on the effectiveness of a knowledge sharing culture and its management thereof. These aspects include and are dependent on the state of social interactions, openness in communication, trust, perception of knowledge, senior management support and involvement, freedom versus control, and rewards systems. Hence, it is surmised that OLT is fit for the purpose, for explicating the parallels between effective and ineffective knowledge sharing practices.

METHOD

The prevalent paucity of literature on organisational learning and knowledge sharing culture in South Africa's primary and secondary education precipitated this investigation. To understand participants' lived experiences of organisational learning and knowledge sharing culture in their respective schools, the researcher had to devise a strategy for gathering data. This strategy is referred to as research methodology. Howell (2013) defines research methodology as an embodiment of strategies that are to be used to shape the study towards achieving its intended objectives. It outlines exactly how the researcher has handled several stages of the research process leading to the findings of the study and its reporting processes (Howell, 2013). The following steps provide comprehensive methodological steps taken to make this research a reality.

Research Design, Approach and Paradigm

According to Bhattacharyya (2006) cited in Asenahabi (2019), conducting research requires the researcher to carefully and systematically solve research and gaining new knowledge. Research design therefore become the architecture of this endeavour. Research design can be defined as a coordinated way of drawing out data that can be used to address the research questions (Asenahabi, 2019). It facilitated the accumulation of data that was needed to understand the factors that constituted effective and ineffective knowledge sharing practices in the three studied schools and

among participants. Designed as a multiple case study, this qualitative study is built on the interpretive research paradigm. Basing the study on qualitative and interpretive paradigm implies that the researcher is more interested in drawing out thick layers of verbal and non-verbal data from participants' first-hand experience with the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Multiple case study research allowed the researcher to understand similarities and differences across two or more cases to come to generalised conclusions over themes and patterns (Gustafsson, 2017). The interpretive element of qualitative research extended an invitation to the researcher to curate participants' lived experiences as close to reality as possible in so far as the organisational learning and knowledge sharing culture is concerned.

Sample Procedure and Sample Size

Typically, almost all qualitative studies apply purposive sampling (White, 2004). Alongside purposive sampling, convenience sampling also took effect when the researcher considered the distance between his locality and those of the studied schools. In line with recommended best research practices, the participants were interviewed in a comfortable environment, which in this study was their school.

Doing so saved time for arranging interview sessions with participants in different locations. This was also to engage them in a setting that would allow them to show the researcher some of the evidence that was available on site. This implies that the study employed purposive and convenience sampling techniques. In terms of the sample size, 20 participants were drawn from a pool of teachers, administrative clerks, heads of department and principals across three township schools in Emalahleni, South Africa. In terms of gender breakdown, 10 of the participants were female, while the other 10 were male. Age also became another inclusion criterion that the researcher considered. Since different age groups vary in work experience and world views, the researcher was of the view that by featuring different age groups would expose a broader view in relation to knowledge sharing practices. The capping of the sample size at 20 participants was informed by the researcher's recognition that rather than a soft-ware based coding exercise, which is known for its flexibility in accommodating a slightly larger sample size, manual coding requires a manageable sample size.

Data Collection Methods and Procedure

Data collection entailed the gathering of information through semi-structured individual interviews and document analysis. Using more than one data collection technique ensured that the findings were triangulated, which means that they were verified and enhanced through other methods of data. The findings that emanated from interviews were either compared with documentary data. In some instances, documentary data confirmed or refuted participants' responses to questions asked to them by the researcher concerning their lived experiences of knowledge sharing culture and practices in their respective schools. According to Denzin (2017), triangulation enhances the credibility of the research by reducing intrinsic bias and eliminating reliance on a single method of data collection. Throughout the interviews, an audio tape was used to record discussions between the researcher and participants, these lasted between 20 and 45 minutes for each interview. In addition, an interview guide containing a set of questions was used to focus the discussion on the knowledge

sharing culture in the participants' schools. Initially, the researcher read the transcript repeatedly and used a highlighter pen to highlight sections of the text that sought to come up with answers to participants' experience of knowledge sharing culture in their respective schools. After the scrutinisation of data, it was subsequently arranged and reported upon according to themes (Braun et al., 2019).

To enhance research credibility, the researcher revisited the schools to present the transcribed interview content to each participant, during which participants were given the opportunity to amend some of their statements if they so wished. This way of doing things is consistent with Braun et al. (2019), who refer to this stage of the research process where the researcher liaises with the participants post interview, as member checking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

No study is without some limitation; hence it is incumbent upon researchers to disclose what they consider to be limitations of their research (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). The researcher acknowledges that the qualitative method bearing a sample size (of 20 participants and three schools) limited the extension or generalisability of the findings and conclusions of the study to populations of schools and participants across all three studied circuits. Nonetheless the findings of the study do bear some elements of transferability and are deemed to be of value to current understandings on KM practices in similar schooling contexts. Also, data analysis for the study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, a factor which the researcher observed to have sometimes made participants keeping the interview sessions shorter to avoid spending longer period of time with the researcher.

Because the study aimed to draw parallels between ineffective and effective knowledge sharing practices among staff at three selected schools, the presentation of the findings is two-fold. The first finding pertains to the two schools which were found to have some elements of ineffective knowledge sharing practices and a lack of knowledge sharing culture; and the second finding relates to the school that was found to be facilitating effective knowledge sharing practices and has an enabling knowledge sharing culture. The themes that emerged during content analysis are as follows.

Schools 1 and 2: A Case of Ineffective Knowledge Sharing Practices and Culture

Theme 1: Counter Collaborative Culture, Top-down Communication and Decision Making

Collaboration plays a pivotal role in school development, staff development, curriculum delivery and school effectiveness (Ghazzoul, 2018). However, it emerged that teachers in Schools 1 and 2 often work in silos and refrain from collaborative arrangements. The only time they collaborate is when they have been instructed to do so. One teacher said:

The organisational culture does not allow one to develop and to even share knowledge. Instead, it's quite the opposite, whenever you feel that you want to impart a certain knowledge to your colleagues, it makes you feel like you are doing something wrong. This really started with the top management and now it is affecting the entire staff.

This anti-collaborative culture has been further fostered by staff members who do not find any pleasure in working as a collective. The culture has led to an environment where teachers do not recognise the value of collaboration and teamwork as part of problem solving. Teachers in both schools also reported that the power struggles among HODs have created situations where contradictory messages are communicated by different HODs to teachers, which lead to confusion. To clarify this point, one teacher said:

Communication gets lost in that pyramid of communication. When it gets to you, it's no longer what it was initially meant to come out.

Theme 2: Principal's Inaccessibility to Staff

Participants in both schools remarked that their respective principals' absence from the realities that happen at the operational level challenges the stability of their performance. They indicated that they were vulnerable to exploitation due to principals' preference for handing over oversight matters to deputy principals who in turn have to report back to him. One teacher commented:

[The] Principal is open to talk with outsiders anytime but when you go to his office to lodge a complaint, he tells you to follow the procedures and talk to the deputy principal. I do not understand why I should be talking to his deputy when he is there. Anyway, my grievance will go to him eventually (mos), so I do not get it. Why I should take a long road?

Meanwhile, an administrative clerk at the same school added that they often do not understand the logic behind the principal's preference for handing over key functions to HODs instead of deputy principals whenever he must be away from the school premises. She commented:

We cringe when we hear that the principal will be away for a few days because we know that [the] HODs will bully us. They will force you to do things for them now and [make you] leave your work. Their approach is never nice.

Apparently, the principal's absence for a specified period away from the school, made it easy for HODs to unfairly order them around. These findings are not unique to this study, several South African studies (Bayat, 2012, 2014; Bayat et al., 2015) have also documented unfair management practices towards administrative clerks at the hands of HODs in schools.

Theme 3: Absence of Ubuntu among Staff

In the context of South Africa, Ubuntu (as an ancient indigenous philosophy which puts an emphasis on social cohesion, interdependence, non-discriminatory undertakings, empathy and mutual respect among people) represents the values which the National, Provincial and Municipal governments encourage its public servants to uphold. However, in the case of both schools there was not enough effort made to consciously apply the principles Ubuntu, for example, one participant commented:

Honestly, we are not really practicing Ubuntu towards one another. We talk behind each other's back instead of being confrontational and civil about things. Some days the management would ask for your opinion about something, and the other they just completely ignore your suggestions. Sir...I am not convinced if Ubuntu exists in this school at all.

Metz (2012) attributes lower than desirable levels “of respect among many people in the workplace” and the conscious disregard of the principles of Ubuntu as factors that compromise the harmony, mutual respect and collaborative arrangements in schools. Pietersen (2014) notes that the education sector generally does not pay attention to the benefit that Ubuntu has towards the development of context specific solutions to problems and healthy human relations among workers.

Theme 4: Teacher Absenteeism

Some teachers in Schools 1 and 2 were reportedly frequently absent from work. When asked about their absenteeism, some of these participants commented that they (and their peers) feel under-valued by HODs, which is why they sometimes do not have the motivation that is needed to sustain the spirit of commitment to their job. This lack of motivation has had a negative impact on curriculum delivery and knowledge sharing. One participant who is an HOD noted:

Teacher absenteeism makes life difficult for us as HODs, because now we have to supervise their classes and leave our paperwork. Learners get affected because the teacher would come back and try to fast-track their teaching of the curriculum at a pace that is too fast for learners to absorb it.

Judging by the narrative and the other statements that emerged from the interviews, one can determine that there is more to teacher absenteeism than what is being presented. Bipath and Naidoo (2020) argue that the rampancy of teacher absenteeism in South African schools stems from teacher related stress due to leadership practices that make it unbearable for teachers to be productive, and from the management styles practiced by members of School Management Teams (i.e., HODs, deputies and principals).

School 3: A Case of Effective Knowledge Practices and Sharing Culture

Theme 1: Inclusive Knowledge Sharing, Engagements and Decision Making

Rezaei et al. (2018) argue that an agile organisational culture does not discriminate against any valuable knowledge contributed by members coming from different ranks within the organisation; as it regards members' knowledge as a direct manifestation and an opportunity to reap the dividends of organisational learning processes that have been happening within the organisation. Participants from this school remarked that communication is not monopolised by the principal, HODs and deputy principals (Obama et al., 2015) (in their capacity as members of the school management team [SMT]), as it is inclusive of their views as subordinate staff. This sentiment was drawn from a remark by one participant who is not part of the SMT:

Meetings occur on a regular basis to engage on matters relating to school infrastructure, hiring of employees and things like that. Now you can see [that] the

building of new classrooms, [the] paving [of] the school yard, [and the] installation of JoJo tanks happens because there are discussions to find a way to make things happen. It is clear through these projects that we meet and plan ahead for things to come, and these are some of the benefits from KM [knowledge management] in our school.

What came across quite expressively was that all occupational levels within the school are motivated to aspire for positive performance outcomes. One of the HODs in the school commented:

For the mere fact that we are still considered a performing school despite having challenges here and there, confirms that we are doing something right and we are truly doing our best to apply KM in [the] class and in the office. Because we believe that together we can achieve more, when we have problems, we sit down as a team and work through the solutions.

This finding is indicative of what was meant by Min (2017) in stating that the more committed the educational institution is towards reconciling human oriented dynamics such as communication, information sharing, and the co-ordination and provision of space for collaboration; the better their proficiency in knowledge practices, knowledge sharing culture, knowledge management and organisational productivity.

Theme 2: Principal's Accessibility and Approachability

Hall (2021) characterised an effective school principal as a person armed with relationship management skills, who has awareness about the happenings across all spheres of the school. A participant who is part of the SMT remarked on how they strove to resolve problems which when left unabated could potentially become barriers to knowledge sharing practices, knowledge sharing culture and ultimately knowledge management in the school.

We communicate effectively, and we have an open-door policy which makes it easy for the SMT to be engaged. We meet regularly as staff to discuss a range of issues with all members of staff because to us communication is the key to success.

This comment is a clear demonstration of how principal's leadership practices can make the democratisation of the sharing of knowledge a reality and a success. His value for communication and broad-based consultation has made it tenable for staff to be content with the functioning of the school, its organisational culture and curriculum programmes (Rasebotsa, 2017).

Theme 3: Presence of Ubuntu and Collegiality

In their respective interviews, participants unanimously presented a view that they consciously applied Ubuntu as a means of brokering cordial, meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships. However, they pointed out that in instances where staff may have been offended in group settings, ways to reconcile their differences and move on from past offences were often found. This behaviour ensured that elements of "*mistrust, frustration, confusion and rivalry*" (Nyembe-Kganye, 2005) did not reign above the wellbeing of staff interactions, the organisational culture, knowledge sharing, knowledge management and school effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of the study was to draw parallels between ineffective and effective knowledge management practices. Two scenarios were tabled, of which one involved two schools who were used to illustrate a case for an ineffective knowledge sharing culture and its overall impact on the proficiency of knowledge sharing and organisational learning. The other case was illustrated by one school where effective knowledge sharing practices have precipitated a culture that is conducive to meaningful organisational learning. Based on the findings it is clear that schools which practice ineffective knowledge sharing grapple with an anti-collaborative culture and the absence of principal-led leadership where it matters the most – at the grassroots level of the school. In the school that practiced effective knowledge sharing practices, there was a climate of collectivism and organisational learning in terms of which teachers were encouraged by the leadership to engage one another exhaustively and courteously through dialogical means in meetings and communities of practice that are organised by the school to develop best practices.

Most importantly, the leadership embraced bottom up initiatives and had an open-door policy for subordinate staff to engage them on matters pertinent to the success of the school. The study is a demonstration of how pragmatically co-ordinated organisational learning is process that cannot be removed from effective knowledge sharing culture, participative school leadership and management and school effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATION

This study views collaboration from its vantage point of encouraging inclusive participation in decision making processes, especially in those that affect the roles of staff members (Woo et al., 2022). As such, it is apparent that collaboration not only stimulates levels of commitment among staff but also their sense of worth and belonging (Woo et al., 2022). It also fosters a knowledge sharing culture in the school. Therefore, as a measure to improve the status quo in South African schools, the study surmises that ineffective KM practices can be obliterated through applying the following measures:

- Integrating top-down communication with bottom-up initiatives to diminish unilateral decision making and to introduce elements of inclusion in the facilitation of knowledge management and its sharing culture;
- Infusion of non-discriminatory and non-hierarchical relationship building initiatives and social interactions in principals' leadership approaches; and
- Having a renewed sense of appreciation for Ubuntu as a panacea for ineffective knowledge sharing culture, counter collaborative facilitation of KM, antagonistic relationships and social interactions.

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Declaration of interests

The researchers declare no conflict of interests.

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