Enhancing insights on the knowledge management competency for South African Senior Public Service Managers

Conceptual and practice perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century knowledge-based reality poses daunting challenges for the senior public service managers of the South African Public Service. Enhancing insights on and understanding of critical concepts and practices are becoming increasingly vital for senior public service managers to engage in impact-driven and effective knowledge management. Knowledge management is one of the core management competencies required by the performance management and development framework as stipulated in the 2003 Public Service Handbook *(**Senior Management Service**). This article is a value-adding attempt to describe and explain critical concepts and practices that underpin, support, and enable knowledge management which is a prerequisite for high quality performance and effective public service delivery. Understanding the types of knowledge and the distinguishing terms of the hierarchical building blocks for relationship enables conceptual clarity and concise application. The importance of knowledge sharing as a key process in knowledge activities is emphasised. Enabling and promoting communities in supporting knowledge interactions are vital. Knowledge management as a human-centric activity requires insights into the elements of intellectual capital. A human-centric process also requires the nurturing of the human values as an important enabler. Leadership action is necessary to create a supportive and an influencing environment for knowledge management.*

The wise see knowledge and action as one (from the Bhagaved Gita quoted in Cortada and Woods (eds.) (2000:1).

Knowledge management is a living discipline – it is about people, emotion and mental models (Haricharan and Fawkes 2004:208).

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management is a complex phenomenon and the various concepts and practices underpinning it are many. This article focuses on a selected few. For a systematic treatment of the subject the article opens with a description of the knowledge management competency and proficiency levels followed by a discussion of the nature, meaning and types of knowledge. Thereafter, knowledge sharing is described followed by a discussion of enabling and promoting communities of practice, understanding intellectual capital, and nurturing human values. In the final part of the article attention is focussed on the leadership requirement for ensuring and influencing effective knowledge management.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: COMPETENCY DEFINITION AND PROFICIENCY LEVELS

Organised activity's lifeblood in both the public and private sectors in a traditional sense was information. However, it is asserted that in the 21st century it will become knowledge (Minnaar and Bekker 2005:95). In the context of the South African public service, it is argued that for the public service to render sustainable high levels of quality service delivery more focus and emphasis must be placed on knowledge management which is an effective tool to promote continuous learning and service delivery improvement for deserving South Africans (Chaba 2003:36).

Chapter 5 of the *Public Service Handbook* (Senior Management Service, 2003) sets out a competency framework for senior public service managers who comprise the leadership cadre of the public service. Senior managers of the South African public service are employees serving on the level of director (level 13), chief director (level 14), deputy director-general (level 15) and director-general (level 16) (DPSA Annexure D to Circular 2 of 2008:3). Knowledge management is one of the eleven core competencies. Each competency is measured by four proficiency levels. The knowledge management competency requires proficiency in twenty five categories under the criteria basic, competent, advanced and expert. Table 1 outlines the knowledge management proficiency levels (*Public Service Handbook* (Senior Management Service) 2003: Chapter 5).

Senior public service managers are evaluated in terms of the extent to which they have mastered each proficiency criterion. The competency definition describes behaviour and activities that need to be demonstrated by senior public service managers *(Public Service Handbook* (Senior Management Service) 2003: Chapter 5). This article aims at highlighting critical concepts and practices that will enhance the insights of senior public service managers.

Table 1 Competency definition and proficiency levels

COMPETENCY NAME	KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
COMPETENCY DEFINITON	Must be able to promote the generation of knowledge and learning in order to enhance the collective knowledge of the organisation

PROFICIENCY LEVELS			
BASIC	**COMPETENT**	**ADVANCED**	**EXPERT**
• Collects, categorises and tracks relevant information required for specific tasks and projects; • Seeks new sources of information to increase own knowledge base; and • Shares information and knowledge with co-workers.	• Uses appropriate information systems to manage organisational knowledge; • Uses modern technology to stay abreast of world trends and information; • Evaluates information from multiple sources and uses information to influence decisions; • Creates mechanisms and structures for sharing of knowledge specialists and other knowledge bases appropriately to improve organisational efficiency; • Promotes the importance of knowledge sharing within own areas and • Natures a knowledge-enabling environment.	• Anticipates future knowledge management requirements and systems; • Develops standards and processes to meet future knowledge management requirements; • Shares and promotes best practices across the organisation; • Coaches others on knowledge management techniques; • Monitors and measures knowledge management capacity in organization. • Creates a culture of a learning organisation; and • Holds motivational sessions with colleagues to share information and new ideas.	• Consulted by others for expert knowledge management capability; • Creates and supports a vision and culture where staff feel empowered to seek and share knowledge; • Establishes partnership across organizational boundaries to facilitate knowledge management; • Recognises and exploits knowledge nodes in interactions with clients; • Strives to endure that there is a correlation between the organisational and knowledge strategies; and • Works across organisations to identify and share critical knowledge.

DESCRIPTION OF PROFICIENCY LEVELS

Basic: Applies basic concepts and methods but requires supervision and coaching.

Competent: Independently develops and applies more advanced concepts and methods. Plans and guides the work of others. Performs analysis.

Advanced: Understands and applies more complex concepts and methods. Leads and directs people or groups of recognised specialists. Able to perform in-depth analysis.

Expert: Sought out for deep, specialised expertise. Leads the direction of the organisation. Defines model/theory.

KNOWLEDGE COMPLEXITY

The nature of knowledge is complex and it is difficult to conceptualise an exact description and explanation. Statements describing and explaining the nature and meaning of knowledge range from basic to deep (Christensen and Bukh 2005:16). Basic definitions refer to the state of knowing, being aware of facts as well as recognising or apprehending facts (Nickols 2000:13). Deeper descriptions and explanations focus on knowledge as justified true belief, perception and true judgement (Chakravathy *et al.* 2005:306 and Jashapara 2004:35). Perspectives provided by Housel and Bell (2001:2-3) reflect on the factors that should not constrain the definition of knowledge. These factors include relative usefulness, logic or proof, moral philosophies, relative distribution, focus or form of ideas, and the ability of conceiving or perceiving of knowledge by the human mind. The human-centric approach to understanding the nature and meaning of knowledge is best captured in the following statement by Calhoun and Starbuck (2005:473):

> Knowledge is what people say it is. It is people, individually and collectively, that determine what is or is not classified as knowledge… human understanding of facts or truths is moulded by human bodies and human social systems.

This assertion by Calhoun and Starbuck underscores the role of human understanding, interpretation, judgement, and perception in knowledge management within an individual, interpersonal and social interaction context.

The literature, however, is quite clear that mainly two types of knowledge namely, tacit and explicit can be distinguished, but these types are described and explained differently by various authors. For example, April and Izadi (2004:22-24) refer to tacit organisational knowledge and explicit organisational knowledge. Tsoukas (2005:410) asks the question, in a chapter heading, *Do We Really Understand Tacit Knowledge*? Tacit knowledge is explained as knowledge that cannot be easily shared and articulated and is based on individualised experience and learning as well as being deeply personalised in terms of beliefs, values, principles, assumptions, and world view (Debowski 2006:36). It is intelligence and therefore, an essential component of the unspoken knowing and knowing why (April and Izadi 2004:24 and Jashapara 2004:311). Explicit knowledge is explained as articulated knowledge that can be documented, shared and transferred as well as being captured, demonstrated, and explained through texts, diagrams, service specifications, stories, metaphors, and special advice (Horvath 2000:36 and Debowski 2006:247). It is shared and diffused intelligence focusing on, *knowing that* and is facilitated through advanced information and telecommunication technologies (Jashapara 2004:308 and April and Izadi 2004:22).

For senior public service managers to have an understanding and appreciation of the difference between tacit and explicit knowledge is of strategic importance. It will enable them to enhance, sustain and improve these two types of knowledge, and also how to convert, operationalise and transfer tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and *vice-versa*. Hence, it implies creating a difference and mix of both types of knowledge in the best interest of high quality service delivery.

It is often argued that senior public service managers functioning in a knowledge-based environment fail to understand some of the fundamentals of knowledge complexity

Figure 1 Hierarchical building blocks relationship approach
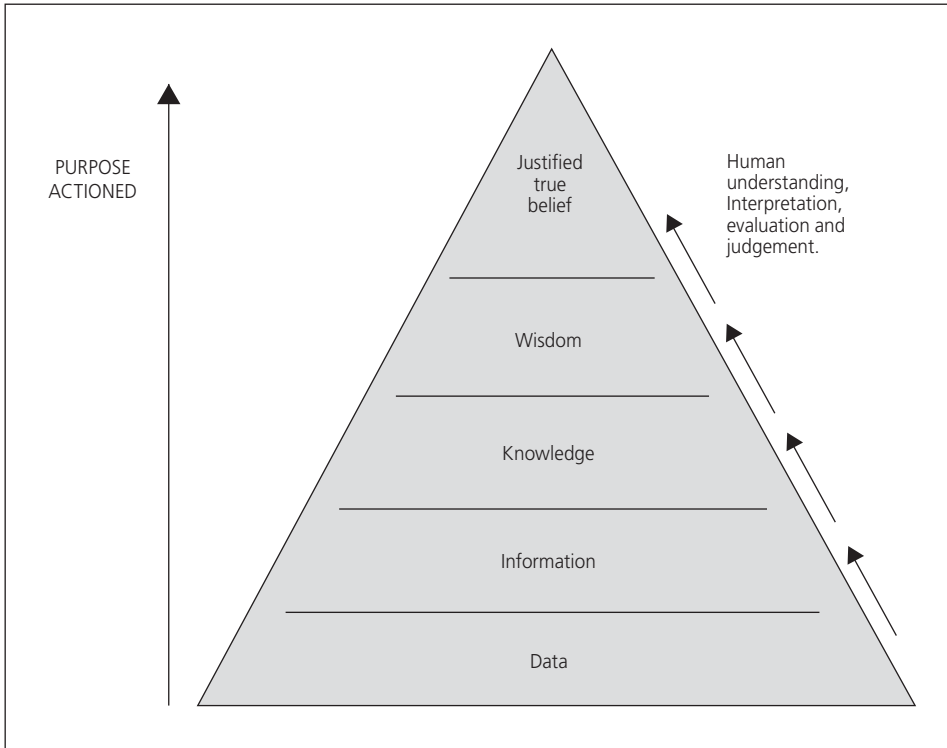
(April and Izadi 2004:3). One way to describe and explain the fundamentals is through the hierarchical building blocks relationship approach (De Cronjé *et al.* 2004:587). In this approach, data and information are regarded as the basic building blocks of knowledge which lead to other blocks namely, wisdom and justified true belief which are regarded as having higher qualities than knowledge (Jashapara 2004:17). Each level in the hierarchy requires the lower levels as building blocks (foundations). However, it is asserted that each foundation is a different phenomenon in its own right because of differences in human understanding, interpretation, evaluation, and judgement (Zorn and Taylor 2004:96). Figure 1 captures this relationship.

Data is explained as a set and collection of discrete raw numbers and facts, images and sound which have no value in themselves, but constitute an important foundation for inference and reckoning for example, population statistics. Human intervention, understanding and interpretation are essential to produce information from data (Keyes 2006:14, April and Izadi 2004:3 and Jashapara 2004:307).

Data becomes information when it is organised, summarised and interpreted in a logical manner within a particular context indicating patterns and trends. A distinguishing feature of information is that it comprises units of measures and indicators in the form of time, distance and magnitude. An example would be, the population increased by ten per cent over the past five years and therefore the housing shortage is ten percent (Keyes 2006:14 and De Cronjé *et al.* 2004:587).

Knowledge results when the human intellect does purposeful and impact-driven work using data and information. Intuition, contextual reasoning, experience, and expertise provide the intellectual stimulation (April and Izadi 2004:8 and Keyes 2006:14). An example of a knowledge statement would be, if the population continues to increase and the housing shortage continues to increase, there will be country-wide protests. The distinguishing features of knowledge include, action-and content-specificity, commitment-and intention-based, founded on a particular stance as well as, openness to creative and innovative ideas (De Cronjé *et al.* 2004:587 and Davenport and Prusak (1998) in Gamble and Blackwell 2001:3).

Wisdom which is a step higher in the hierarchy is explained as the result of knowledge which is applied repeatedly, producing reliable, valid, and consistent beneficial results to the individual and organisation (Gamble and Blackwell 2001:43). Wisdom is founded on ethical judgement linked to the individual's principles, values and belief system, experience, instincts, insights, and prior learning (Jashapara 2004:17-18 and April and Izadi 2004:11). An example of a wisdom statement would be that country-wide housing protests may be avoided through country-wide izimbizo facilitated by government and civil society.

Justified true belief as the highest level of the hierarchical building blocks relationship approach, is based on the principle that knowledge activities such as knowledge discovery, knowledge generation and knowledge sharing are continuous learning processes. Therefore, all learning processes must eventually seek and lead to justified true belief (Chakaravarthy *et al.* 2005:30). Jashapara (2004:18) cautions that there could be multiple truths and no absolute truth because the nature of truth is affected by individual experiences and different contexts. An example of a true belief statement would be izimbizo are effective mechanisms for dealing with social issues.

Insights on the hierarchical building blocks relationship approach could be invaluable to senior public service managers as leaders, strategists, policy formulators, and policy implementers. The reason is that data, information, knowledge, wisdom, and justified true belief can conscientise senior public service managers on the nature of each phenomenon and alert them on the financial and human resources they require as they weigh up different policy options and priorities.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Knowledge sharing (sometimes referred to as diffusing) is a key process in many knowledge activities such as discovery, generating, converting, and evaluating (Von Krogh 2005:384). It is also described as a critical human behaviour and a core competency (Ives *et al.* 2002:99 and Debowski 2006:69). The importance and significance of knowledge sharing (diffusing) is aptly captured by Makentosh (in Bukowitz and Williams 1999:165) in the statement: *Diffused knowledge immortalizes itself.* Effective sharing of knowledge is created when people voluntarily and effortlessly share with and across various people their individual mental models which are fundamental for dialogue and conversation (Junnarkar 2002:137 and Wheatley 2002:7). Mental models comprise past learning, experiences, education, expertise, and insights as well as perceptions, values, biases and prejudices (Junnarkar

2002:137). Another perspective of a mental model is that it captures and holds knowledge and helps to make sense of how the world works (for example, how public services are delivered and received) (Taylor and Osland 2005:214).

Based on the fact that knowledge sharing is a human-centric interaction process at individual, group and organisational levels, various platforms and techniques for facilitating knowledge sharing have been suggested (Kermally 2002:61 and Keyes 2006:33-40). They include mentoring and coaching, informal meetings, customer (public) interaction, after-action reviews, exit interviews, lessons-learned debriefings, and storytelling.

Whilst knowledge sharing through socialisation, collaboration, and exchange of best practice enable creative and innovative service delivery, senior public service managers, have to be acutely aware of possible barriers to knowledge sharing. Intense and strong sociability expressed in the willingness and ability to engage in collaborative, collective action as well as intrinsic interaction, best supports knowledge sharing (Van der Walt 2003:65 and Ives *et al.* 2002:124). However, lack of willingness to engage in knowledge sharing could be a barrier and therefore, may prompt senior public service managers to question whether reward-sharing can inspire positive bahaviour. Even more challenging is the concern whether rewards are given to individuals rather than to groups. Senior public service managers have to be aware of paying lip-service to knowledge sharing and providing limited encouragement for knowledge sharing to actually take place (Bukowitz and Williams 1999:167 and Debowski 2006:49). For knowledge sharing to take hold through rewards, senior public service managers will be confronted with challenges such as to what extent people will be rewarded for independent achievement, collaborative achievement, active and visible sharing as well as for empowering and developing others (Willet 2002:259). An enabling social environment that promotes certainty and is purpose-focused supports knowledge sharing. Senior public service managers have to be aware of the fact that no sharing can occur due to isolation, alienation, negative feelings, distrust, and the absence of mental and emotional stimulation (Van der Walt 2003:66).

ENABLING AND PROMOTING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (COP)

The concept and content of *communities of practice* (COP) has been described under different themes. It is important to understand that the term, *community,* can be conceptualised in different categories. Von Krogh (2005:379) presents seven categories of communities which are rural/peasant, occupational, virtual, interests-based, imagined, micro-focused and practice-based (COP). The unique characteristics of COP are that they are based on shared identity, and that knowledge sharing is facilitated through narration and storytelling in a practice-based context (Von Krogh 2005:379).

Keyes (2006:24) discusses COP as a knowledge management transfer strategy. A more advanced discussion of COP is presented by Plashoff (2005:161) in a chapter entitled, *Inter subjectivity and Community Building: Learning to Learn.* Gamble and Blackwell (2001:73) explain COP in the context of c*ommunities of practice and knowledge conversion.* Another advanced perspective is provided by Wenger (2000:205) in a chapter entitled, *Communities of Practice*: *The Structure of Knowledge Stewarding.*

There are various ways in which the purpose, nature and characteristics of COP may be explained. A basic description is that COPs are voluntary groups of highly motivated people with common interests, who meet to share their insights, knowledge, wisdom, and expertise in a genuine effort to solve problems, and develop creative and innovative solutions to address various challenges that ultimately impact on the effectiveness of organisations (Wheatley 2000:7 and Debowski 2006:45). A hallmark of COP is that they are not constrained by geographic, organisational and functional boundaries. The practice dimension focuses on how work is done rather than on formal policies and processes that reflect the way work should be done (Lesser and Prusaki 2000:25).

Effective learning and knowledge sharing (shared practice) is generated by COP through meaningful social interactions within and with related communities. COPs ensure and sustain the creation and maintenance of, what Vendelø (2005:43) refers to as: *mental models to understand the tasks in the communities*. The fundamental aim of COP that is, knowledge sharing and supporting individual and collective continuous learning, is aptly captured by Wenger (1996) (in Lesser and Prusak 2000:252) as follows:

> *Learning reflects our participation in communities of practice. If learning is a matter of engagement in socially defined practices, the communities that share these practices play an important part in shaping learning.*

Wenger's statement asserts that COPs are created by continuous learning as well as facilitating continuous learning to occur. Supporting and promoting COP will continue to challenge senior public service managers as the South African public service continues to operate in a 21st century knowledge-based reality. In a 2003 edition of the *Service Delivery Review* (a publication of the Department of Public Service and Administration), Thuli Radebe in an article entitled, "The Public Service as a Learning Organization" acknowledges that (Radebe 2003:40):

> *We operate in a knowledge economy where new knowledge is developing and growing at an exponential rate and where information and communication technologies (ICTs) are changing people's demands. These factors combined with the fact that we have become an increasingly knowledge-and information-based society, compels us to learn continuously.*

Radebe's concern about new knowledge and people's changing demands enabled through advanced information technology strengthens the need for continuous learning. COP can play an invaluable foundational role in this regard. In realising the value of and promoting COP, senior public service managers can adopt the inquiring mode. This mode focuses on what is the purpose, who comprises them, what factors hold them together, and what is the duration of their existence (Jashapara 2004:204). To further add value, senior public service managers can establish mechanisms and opportunities that will create an enabling environment to meet face-to-face. Another valuable action will be for senior public service managers to offer information technology tools that will enable COPs to maintain contact with each other and identify interested new members. Identifying experts to support the larger group could also add value (Lesser and Prusak 2000:257). A cogent facilitating and enabling factor could be what Bukowitz and Williams (2004:184) refer to as: *Allow employees time and space to contribute their best work.*

UNDERSTANDING INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

Dictionary meanings of intellect focus on aspects such as knowing and understanding as well as the capacity for knowledge. Deeper level meanings cover capacity for rationality as well as highly developed intellectual application (Quinn *et al.* 1999:275). It could therefore be stated that intellect resides in the organisation's human brains and is a form of wealth, which can be categorised in order of importance namely, cognitive knowledge, advanced expertise, insights into knowledge systems, and developed intuition through self-motivated creativity and innovation (Quinn *et al.* 1999:275 and April and Izadi 2004:10). Table 2 depicts the relationship between the levels of intellect importance and forms of knowledge.

Being acutely aware of the relationships between the types of intellect and their relative importance as well as with their linkage with different knowledge forms will strengthen the conceptual foundations of senior public service managers as they endeavour to leverage and influence intellectual capital to become a more explicit value-driven knowledge sharing activity.

Intellectual capital has been discussed under different themes by various authors. An entire book entitled, *Knowledge Management and Intellectual Capital: Establishing a field of Practice,* edited by Bukh *et al.* (2005) is dedicated to the subject. Quinn *et al.* (1999:275)

Table 2 Relationship between levels of intellect and forms of knowledge

LEVELS	KNOWLEDGE FORMS
1. Cognitive Knowledge	**Know what:** • Focus is on features value and usefulness of systems, processes and procedures (Debowski 2006:31). Demands clear and unambiguous analysis of the different types of locating and setting data information, knowledge, and experience (Savage (1996) in April and Izadi 2004:10).
2. Advanced Expertise	**Know how:** • Involves the application of highly developed expertise in the execution of complex focused tasks which require analytical, integrative and reflect-approaches and strategies. (Debowski 2006:31). • Requires demonstrable and incisive understanding of both formal and informal processes, procedures and activities that enable an organisation's data, information and knowledge to be created, generated, transferred and shared (Savage (1996) in April and Izadi 2004:10).
3. Insights into Knowledge Systems	**Know why:** • Requires the ability to monitor, evaluate, review and assess options for appropriate solutions (Debowski 2006:31). • Demands visible and unambiguous understanding of human, personal and structural interactions. Concomitant to this demand is the understanding of cross-over points that underpin the creation, development, and use as well as the anxieties. Focus is also on insights into interplay of an organisation's knowledge with internal and external stakeholders (Savage 1996 in (April and Izadi 2004:10).
4. Developed Intuition through Self-Motivated Creativity and Innovation	**Care why:** • Demonstrates enthusiastic and deep reflection to find new and novel ways to deal and cope with organisational challenges as well as expressing love, trust, commitment and loyalty in social interactions (Jashapara 2004: 201).

have written a chapter referred to as, *Leveraging Intellect.* A similar theme is explored by Jashpara (2004:238) in his book *Leveraging knowledge.* In a publication (*The Knowledge Management Yearbook 2000-2001*) edited by Cortatada and Woods (2000) reference is made to *Building the Ultimate Resource* (Miller 2000:300). Another theme in the Yearbook is discussed in the chapter *Maximising Intellectual Assets* (Tanler 2000:387).

Despite these different contextualisations there are common elements running through the attempt to define intellectual capital. These elements include human capital, customer capital and organisational capital (Sveiby 2002:350 and Jashapara 2004:276). Intellectual capital is defined as (Bukowitz and Williams 2000:266):

> (T)he relationship (an interaction) among human, customer and organizational capital that maximizes the organization's potential to create value which is ultimately realized in some form of wealth (high quality public goods and services)

The three elements of intellectual capital in the definition by Bukowitz and Williams have unique meanings and requirements, but, interact in a holistic manner to ensure public value. Table 3 encompasses the meanings and requirements of these elements.

What senior public service managers have to be aware of is that the three elements of intellectual capital are interdependent and impact on each other as knowledge flows from them to create public value in terms of high quality goods and services (Seeman *et al.* 2002:89). This interdependence is cogently captured by Thorhjørnsen and Mauritsen 2005:97 as follows:

Table 3 Elements of intellectual capital: their meanings and requirments

ELEMENTS	MEANINGS AND REQUIREMENTS
Human Capital	Emphasises the cognitive and reflective ability to identify and determine sources for knowledge and skills that individuals have namely, intuitive, creative, innovative and entrepreneurial abilities (Spender 2000:150). Requires the abilities of individual teams and groups to be applied to solutions to customer's needs, problems and concerns (Bukowitz and Williams 1999:266).
Customer Capital	April and Izadi (2004:57) stress that customer capital (also referred to as external relational capital or public capital) focuses on the continuous creation and sustaining of mutually beneficial relationships. Superior quality and the strength of mutual relationships as well as intangible customer loyalty are important ingredients of customer capital (Bukowitz and Williams 1999:266 and Jashapara 2004:307).
Organisational Capital	Organisational Capital comprises policies, processes, technology, best practices and effective administrative systems (Bukowitz and Williams 1999:266 and April and Izadi 2004:57) It enables and provides support and capability for effective approaches and learning as well as development opportunities (Debowski 2006:283). Another explanation is that it constitutes the value of knowledge assets which remain or what is left behind when people leave the workplace or organisation (Jashapara 2004:310 and Minnaar and Bekker 2005:108).

Figure 2 Interdependence and knowledge flows

HUMAN
CAPITAL

ORGANSATIONAL
CAPITAL

Public
Value

CUSTOMER
CAPITAL

...KNOWLEDGE
FLOWS
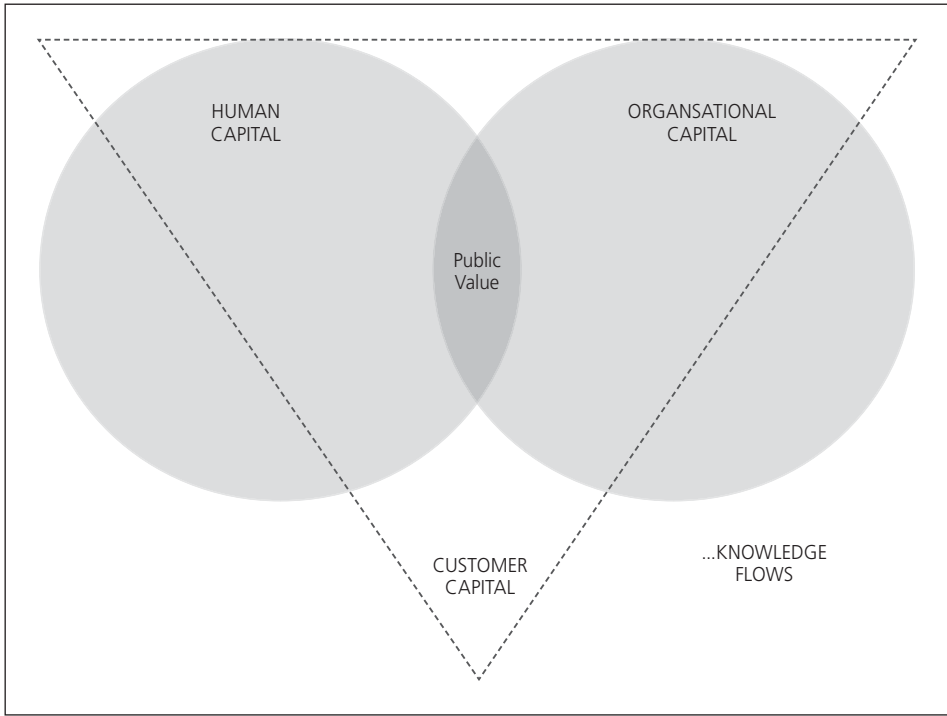
Source Bukowitz and Williams (1999:266) (Minor adaptation)

Employees (human capital) can act only if they are provided with relevant technologies (organisational capital) and with relevant customers (customer capital). They may not act on their own, because they have objects towards which to orient themselves.

This notion of interdependence advocated by Thorhjørnsen and Mauritsen suggests the importance of unifying integration and interaction to ensure combined efforts in achieving and promoting value-adding aims. Figure 2 captures the relationship, interaction and knowledge flows embedded in the three components of intellectual capital.

Senior public service managers have to be conscious of the assertion that meaningful interaction and interrelationship among these elements of intellectual capital facilitate harmony and effective positioning to create public value. The potential of creating sustainable public value can be destroyed, if these components are managed in a fragmented and not in an integrated manner (Bukowitz and Williams 1999:223).

NURTURING HUMAN VALUES

Knowledge management activities are about people and human values such as caring, trusting, and understanding and managing one's own emotions as well as that of others. It is asserted that knowledge management is not only about advanced information and telecommunication technologies, but also a creation by human beings. The creation and

sharing of knowledge is driven by human needs and motivation (Haricharan and Fawkes 2004:208 and Wheately 2002:9). Human values constitute powerful driving forces in human experience and shape principles and practices as individuals experience the world (Cooper 1990:73). It is, therefore, imperative that senior public service managers be aware of caring, trusting, and human emotions as they engage in knowledge activities because all these values support and inspire these activities in an integrated way.

Human relationships and interactions are underpinned by caring which is a social norm demanding empathetic and lenient behaviour in situations requiring judgement as well as being accessible for help and support (Von Krogh 2005:382). Debowski (2006:354) cogently describes trust as, *the degree to which a person feels willing to act on the basis of another's words, behaviours and judgements.* It is argued that social interaction, solidarity and loyalty are powerful drivers of mutual trust and collaborative behaviour among organisation members (Gamble and Blackwell 2001: 93-95). However, Willett (2002:258) cautions on three factors that can impact on the extent of trust. The first factor is whether the individual is really trusted to engage in independent thought and action. The second factor concerns whether individuals are willing to stake their professional knowledge and reputation on inputs provided by other professionals, colleagues and peers. The third factor focuses on the assumption, whether everyone engages in trustworthy behaviour (Willet 2002:258).

The human value of understanding and managing one's own emotions as well as those of others is regarded as internal emotional capital that is embedded in the hearts, minds and spirit of individuals (Minnaar and Bekker 2005:111 and Jashapara 2004:301). Knowledge activities involve interpersonal interactions and emotions which originate in the interpersonal milieu. Humans have the inherent capacity and capability of projecting, expressing as well as experiencing a vast range of emotions (Härtel *et al.* 2004:132). Fineman (2005:557) aptly remarks that:

> (a)ccounts of fear, joy, excitement, ambivalence, gloom, tedium, apprehension, joy, shame and pride are not hard to locate as people …respond to re-formed organizational cultures, adjust to crisis, (and) learn to adapt to new roles and demands.

Dealing and coping with Fineman's array of emotions can be obtained through emotional intelligence which is regarded as one approach to understand and promote the human value of understanding and managing emotions. The five skills that underpin emotional intelligence are, self-awareness, handling feelings, marshalling and nurturing positive emotions towards a purpose, recognising emotions of others, and social competence (Goleman in Clutterbuck and Megginson 1999:18).

It is incumbent on senior public service managers as leaders and role-models to acutely grasp the interaction among the dimensions of human values. The level of emotional intelligence for example, can instil high degrees of trust and care in knowledge activities. Most importantly, these human values will enable senior public service managers to have deference to the South African Constitution's Bill of Rights which stipulates that (Section 10 of *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996): *Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected.*

EMPHASISING THE LEADERSHIP REQUIREMENT

The holistic importance and significance of leadership is explained as the single factor in human existence that has moved and shaped the world (Minnaar and Bekker 2005:141). It is argued that works on knowledge management focus more on processes, systems and technology rather than on leadership issues (Debowski 2006:23). The visionary and strategic roles of senior public service managers as leaders are to consciously and effectively ensure that at the individual, team, and organisational level, all types and forms of knowledge create optimum public value (Verwey and Verwey 2002:76 and Kermally 2002:93). This requires creating and sustaining an influencing environment that commits and inspires knowledge users to excel in impact-driven performance (Jashapara 2006:268-269 and Jones and George 2003:443). The ultimate aim ought to be for a knowledge-enhanced community to create its own future as a provider of public value (Senge 2002:54 and Skyrme 2002:61).

CONCLUSION

Knowledge management is a complex phenomenon. In fact, it is difficult to define knowledge itself. However, a distinction between the types of knowledge and a grasp of the hierarchical building blocks relationship approach can contribute to conceptual clarification and concise application. Enhancement of the insights of senior public service managers of the South African public service can receive impetus through the understanding and appreciation of knowledge sharing, the elements of intellectual capital as well as the promotion of communities of practice. Nurturing human values and stressing the importance and practice of leadership can enable senior public service managers to establish, influence, and sustain a supportive environment for people-centred knowledge management.

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