

Knowledge Management and Learning Organisation Interrelationship Towards Organisational Productivity: University of Technology, South Africa

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Abstract

The purpose of this theoretical paper is to expose the interrelationship between knowledge management and the learning organisation towards organisational productivity: A theoretical perspective on one department at a university of technology in South Africa. The paper seeks to contribute to recent theorising about the interplay between knowledge management and learning organisation, towards organisational productivity, in the context of the education department. The paper provides added value both for university management and academics interested in applying knowledge management and learning organisation strategies to achieve their strategic goals and objectives. The researchers thus believe that the two constructs, that is, knowledge management and learning organisation are relevant for guiding and achieving university, faculty, and departmental strategies, goals, and objectives. The study recommends that the university's strategic direction must include knowledge management processes and the guiding principles of creating a learning organisation to achieve organisational productivity.

Keywords: Knowledge management, learning organisation, organisational productivity, deconstruct power hierarchies, critical reflection.

Introduction and background

The purpose of the theoretical paper is to contribute to theorising about the interplay between knowledge management and learning organisation, towards organisational productivity, in the context of the education department in one university of technology in South Africa. The interrelationship between knowledge management and the learning organisation are useful theories for providing a framework for the current study. Research by CloudTutorial (2023:1); Sahibzaha, Jiangfen, Khalif, and Afshan (2021:793); Ahmed, Dhahi, and Muhesi (2022:1); Sahibzada, Cai, Latif, and Sahibzada (2020:112) indicates that there is a strong interrelationship between knowledge management (KM) and the learning organisation (LO). The interrelationship between the two constructs is fostered primarily through motivating the creation, dissemination of knowledge, and participation in training courses and conferences to develop skills and capabilities among organisational members. For Sahibzaha *et.al*, 2020:113) KM initiatives pay off by helping the organisation embed knowledge into organisational processes and procedures to continuously improve its practices and behaviors and pursue the achievement of its strategic goals and objectives. Korma, Kolloju, Reddy, and Kareem (2022:138; Bratianu (2018:547); Bejinaru and Prelipcean (2017:350) offer that successful universities are world-class universities made great transformations in becoming learning organisations by developing new dynamic capabilities, strategic governance, and leadership through knowledge management.

The department that is being studied, resides within the faculty of human sciences, where academic productivity is measured against effective teaching (good student throughput rates), production of research outputs (articles, book chapters, and books), and community engagement projects. These are three key performance areas (KPA's) for academics, measured through key performance indicators (KPIs) at the university to realise the mission, vision, strategic goals, objectives, competitiveness, and high-ranking positions. The three key performance areas are applied differently at different universities based on the nature of the university, for example, (i) a research university, (ii) a comprehensive university, or (iii) a university of technology. Thus, within the University of Technology and the department studied, professors are required to publish a minimum of three articles per year, senior lecturers two and lecturers one.

Knowledge management theories have been proposed to increase the knowledge intensity of organisations as a prerequisite for coping with difficult, complex environmental trends, increased individual, team, and organisational productivity, in both the private sector and public institutions such as universities (Bratianu, 2013:207; Korma *et.al*, 2022:138; Kenny & Mnandi, 2019:1). Sahibzada, *et.al*, (2020); Sudhindra, Ganesh, and Arshinder (2017). Extensive research on the concepts of knowledge management and learning organisation has been undertaken in business and public institutions (Moloi, Isabirye, Etbaigha and Bayat, 2023; Okhawere 2023; Adaeze, Gloria, and Abel 2020; Ode and Ayavoo 2020; Sahibzada, *et.al*, 2020; García-Holgado, García-Peñalvo, Hernández-García & Llorens-Largo (2015:1).

This is because to survive fierce competition brought about by the knowledge revolution era, technology, globalisation, knowledge economy, the business, and public worlds require agile, knowledge workers whose talent can be harnessed to produce sustainable results (Ode & Ayavoo, 2020; Sahibzada, *et.al*, 2020; Raudeliūnienė, Davidavičienė, & Jakubavičius, 2018; Sudhindra, *et.al*, 2017). Thus, knowledge management, according to García-Holgado, *et.al*, 2015:1) is a strategic process of planning, organising, motivating, and controlling people, processes, and systems in the organisation, to ensure that its knowledge-related assets are improved and effectively employed for organisational productivity.

companies create the dynamics of innovation. London: Oxford University Press.

For Bui and Baruch (2010:228), the concept of a learning organisation focuses on learning as a tool, a lever, a philosophy for sustainable change and innovation in organisational productivity in a fast-changing world. Francis (2014:1) offers that universities seeking to enhance efficiencies against ongoing funding shortfalls, the need to expand teaching, research, and community engagement mandates, have considered the lean methodology based on results. According to Bratianu (2018:546) and CloudTutorial (2023:1), the lean methodology is about a high level of organisational investment, that includes investment in a learning culture, to ensure success, innovation, and sustainability. Consequently, Bratianu (2015:207) offers that organisational renewal can become strategic if the process encompasses the whole organisation, not just some groups or individuals, operating as an open system through four premises to create a learning organisation:

- *Premise 1:* Organisational learning assumes a tension between knowledge exploitation and knowledge exploration.
- *Premise 2:* Organisational learning is a multi-level process: (individual, group, organisation), the ontological dimension of organisational learning.
- *Premise 3:* The three levels of organisational learning are linked through psychological and social processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, integrating, and institutionalising (4I's). These learning levels define the structure through which organisational learning takes place. The 4I's are related to feed-forward and feedback processes across the levels. Feed-forward reflects knowledge exploration, and it promotes learning from individuals and groups to the organisation, where new knowledge becomes embedded into routines, procedures, and strategies.
- *Premise 4:* Cognition influences action, and action influences cognition.

In line with the premises outlined above, Bratianu (2013:210); Bolisani and Bratianu, (2018:5) accentuate the importance of going beyond the paradigm of tacit-explicit knowledge, by considering the multifold framework of organisational knowledge in understanding the complexity of organisational learning. Thus, Bratianu (2013:207) argues that it is critical to integrate cognitive knowledge with emotional knowledge and spiritual knowledge towards building a learning organisation. Talbot (2023:633) offers that educational policy and teaching practice have been shaped by the so-called “knowledge turn” in educational discourse. Thus, Bratianu (2018:1)

conclude that universities can increase their competitiveness and their ranking positions in this turbulent economic environment by transforming into learning organisations.

Context of the study

The South African government spends R160.7 billion for higher education and training institutions, intended to build a high-quality, demographically represented higher education sector that provides staff and students with access and success (Republic of South Africa, 2023:273). According to the Department of Higher Education (Republic of South Africa, 2023:273), over the medium term, the Department of Higher Education will continue providing access to and enhancing performance at higher education institutions and increasing their capacity (Republic of South Africa, 2023:273). The funding provided by the Department of Higher Education is expected to benefit 1.3 million universities and 1,1 million TVET college students from poor and working-class backgrounds (Republic of South Africa, 2023:274). Furthermore, the department's efforts to expand access to higher education, transfers to the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NFSAS) account for student loans and bursaries account for an estimated 37.8 percent (R143.3 billion) of total expenditure over the medium term, including an additional R32.6 billion to sustain the current levels of support for qualifying students (Republic of South Africa, 2023:274). Thus, based on the amount of money spent on higher education, organisational and academic productivity are key essential strategic goals and objectives within the university. However, Kanyemaba, *e* Iwu and Allen-ILE (2015:177) argue that human resource practitioners do not appropriately follow recruitment and selection processes.

The University of Technology, like all other public universities in South Africa, is subsidized by the Department of Higher Education and Training. The university is thus obliged to achieve the standards of teaching, research, and community engagement set out in the national educational policies that guide higher education in the country. The department being studied is in the Faculty of Human Sciences at the University of Technology. The faculty comprises five departments, namely, (i) education (ii) tourism and integrated communication, (iii) legal studies, (iv) visual arts and design, and (v) communication. The education department is the youngest and smallest of all five departments within the faculty and was established in 2013 with a full-time staff component of four members and two part-time lecturers. All six lecturers hold relevant qualifications, that is, doctoral degrees, to teach in the department. The department offers four qualifications: (i) Bachelor of Education, a four-year degree with a specialisation in science, mathematics, electrical and mechanical technology; (ii) the advanced diploma for Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) lecturers, drawn from various parts of South Africa; (iii) the postgraduate diploma in higher education, and (iv) the master's degree in higher education. As of 2020, the staff component has grown to 20 members, comprising four full-time staff members, including the Head of Department (HOD), the administrator, and 15 part-time staff members. Although the department contributes to the financial health of the institution through two qualifications, the advanced diploma, and the Bachelor of Education degree, which are subsidized by the Department of Higher Education in the form of bursaries, the department is not fully supported by the university. For

example, since its establishment in 2018, there have been no lecture rooms for over 600 students enrolled in the various programmes; no laboratories for the science, electrical, and mechanical technology subjects for practicals; no laboratories for science, no teaching practice facilities for practicals and simulations. The students are accommodated in facilities that do not belong to the department and in most cases access to these is not possible.

A greater portion of the staff members is made up of black academics, predominantly male. These staff members come from education, science, mathematics, engineering, Information Communication, and Technology (ICT) fields. There are two professors, one full professor and the other an associate professor, several doctors, and a few staff members with a master's degree. The full professor specializes in education, learning organisations, leadership, and management, while the assistant professor specializes in mathematics, science, and engineering. The full professor left the department at the University in 2019 and was seconded to another higher education institution. The full professor has, however, continued publishing research articles with the associate professor. Most of the lecturers in the department do not have previous experience regarding employment at a higher education institution and this has a negative impact in terms of expected publications, per staff member, per year. Most of the published peer-reviewed articles are generated by the two professors and occasionally one or two articles with a few other staff members.

Problem statement

As a result of the social, economic, and educational inequalities, inherited from the apartheid regime (segregationist policies), education in South Africa has always been a terrain of competing political, economic, and ideological interests and contestations. Most of the lecturers in the education department are black and they are products of the previous regime in South Africa, which entrenched the apartheid ideology (segregationist) whose main manifestations were unequal provision and development of education in the country largely based on race. The resultant inequalities in education provisioning and segregation based on race contributed to unequal access to education, poor quality educational resources, and inefficient preparation of academics who are responsible for facilitating student learning, conducting research, and in community engagement projects, in the education department at the University of Technology. Today the effects of the segregationist tendencies manifest particularly in how most of the black academics are hindered in terms of scholarly research outputs, as compared to their white counterparts in the faculty. Furthermore, the political engagement and struggle mostly among black students within the department, due to lack of sufficient educational resources has resulted in many hours of effective teaching and learning being lost, due to unplanned breaks from class during the semester. Against this background, the researchers beg the questions: are knowledge management and learning organisation concepts relevant models of initiating, probing, and maintaining academic staff productivity in the context of the education department within the university? Could the current discourse practices within the university and faculty hinder academic staff productivity in the department?

Theoretical underpinning of knowledge management

Knowledge management and learning organisation theories are used to foreground the current study. The exposition includes a considerable amount of literature covered in previous studies on knowledge management, the learning organisation, as well as the interrelationship between these concepts to achieve organisational productivity (CloudTutorial, 2023; Okhawere, 2023; Talbot, 2023; Al Dari, *et.al*, 2021; Vinney, 2019; Bolisani and Bratianu, 2018; Sidani and Reese, 2018; Sudhindra, *et.al*, 2017; Luhn, 2016; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Senge, 1990). Furthermore, knowledge management and the learning organisation constructs are used to explain the ruptures of the socio-politico-economic, and ideological constraints that must be overcome to ensure organisational productivity within the context of the education department at the individual, team, and organisational levels. The researchers are concerned with a fundamental and contentious question: Can universal concepts such as knowledge management and learning organisation be extrapolated from postmodern and postindustrial societies to the study of a department at one university of technology in South Africa? In the researchers' schema, a post-modern discourse of knowledge management and learning organisation becomes critical if power hierarchies that negate transformative, critical, and reflective learning at the individual, team, and departmental levels within the University of Technology are to be constructed. The researchers' standpoint is that within the department being studied, knowledge and power are inextricably linked (Talbot, 2023:633). Thus, any critical reading of knowledge management and organisational learning in the education department should be able to explicate the process of de-constructing power hierarchies. Consequently, Larsen and Adu, (2021:1) argue that given much of the debate around the concept of knowledge, it hinges on varying conceptions of power and the understanding of it concerning educational knowledge.

Ontologically, the researchers adopt an approach that enables them to study and view educational phenomena (knowledge management and learning organisation), and their meanings as a continuous social construction by actors who were once marginalised from policymaking and implementation during the Apartheid (segregationist) regime. These employees are now confronted with making policy, producing research outputs, teaching responsibilities, and community engagement activities within the education department, at the University of Technology. According to (Vinney (2019:1) social construction is concerned primarily with how we know what we know. Grounded in phenomenology, the researchers' theoretical perspective encouraged them to examine how human meaning is both created and maintained in what is a historical, philosophical, and inherently political process (Larsen & Adu, 2021:1).

From an epistemological perspective, the researchers adopted a method that enabled them to have detailed knowledge and identify structures that generate knowledge, a learning culture as played out in the education department. This is important because construction considers the social resources that provide the context for meaning. Such a critical realist epistemology enabled the researchers to acknowledge, interpret, privilege, and accentuate the continuities and discontinuities in the provision of educational resources for teaching, learning, research and how this provision

enabled or disenabled academics in the education department to construct the meaning and essence of knowledge management, learning organisation and organisational productivity.

Furthermore, the researchers argue that the concepts of knowledge management and learning organisation lend themselves to their view of critical discourse as enunciated by Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) who argue that critical, makes problematic how the objects of the world are historically and socially constructed and change over time and that the effect is to disturb narratives of progress and reconciliation, finding questions where others had located answers. Consequently, researchers problematise knowledge management, learning organization, and academic productivity as complex processes that require strategic thinking, collective intelligence, agile leadership, sustained communication, and commitment to fundamental change. For Luhn (2016:1) the core issue lies in questioning how the learning processes of individuals and the organisation are working.

Thus, in the researchers' schema, the post-modern discourse of knowledge management and learning organisation becomes critical if power hierarchies that negate transformative, critical, and reflective learning at the individual and departmental levels within the university, are to be de-construct. Within the education department studied knowledge and power are inextricably linked (Vinney, 2019:1; Centobelli, Cerchione & Esposito, 2018:107). Thus, any critical reading of knowledge management and organisational learning in the department should be able to explicate this process (of de-constructing power hierarchies) as well. The researchers also briefly venture into critical theory by borrowing from Foucault (1980) the concept of power in organisations such as universities. In this representation, the concept of critical borrows heavily from the Frankfurt School of Thought championed by Habermas (1981) and Foucault (1976) and it is closely linked to conceptions of power in societies and at universities. It is worth quoting Foucault (1976:23) when he remarks that:

Power functions. Power is exercised through networks, and individuals do not simply circulate in those networks; they are able to both submit to and exercise this power. They are never the inert or consenting targets of power; they are always its relays. In other words, power passes through individuals. It is not applied to them.

Borrowing from Popkewitz and Brennan (1998:4) the researchers use the term critical to refer to a broad band of disciplined questioning of how power works through the discursive practices and performances of organisational behaviour in organisations such as universities. In the university of technology context, it is important to discuss the notion of knowledge and power by locating it in its history, politics, economy, power, and the present juncture if we are to fully understand the continuities and discontinuities that make it possible or impossible for effective management of knowledge and organisational learning. Presently, the learning organisation or what constitutes learning organisations, issues of power, ideology, and knowledge are not considered within the education department and in the university. Thus, for (Sudhindra, *et.al*, (2017); Bui and Baruch (2010) in the context of the new knowledge economy or the knowledge revolution, it is necessary to extract value from people's intellect and their ideas. However, within the context of the University of Technology, and in particular, the education department, a glaring gap regarding the

grasp of the concepts of knowledge management and learning organisation and how these can be applied to enhance academic productivity exists.

Knowledge management

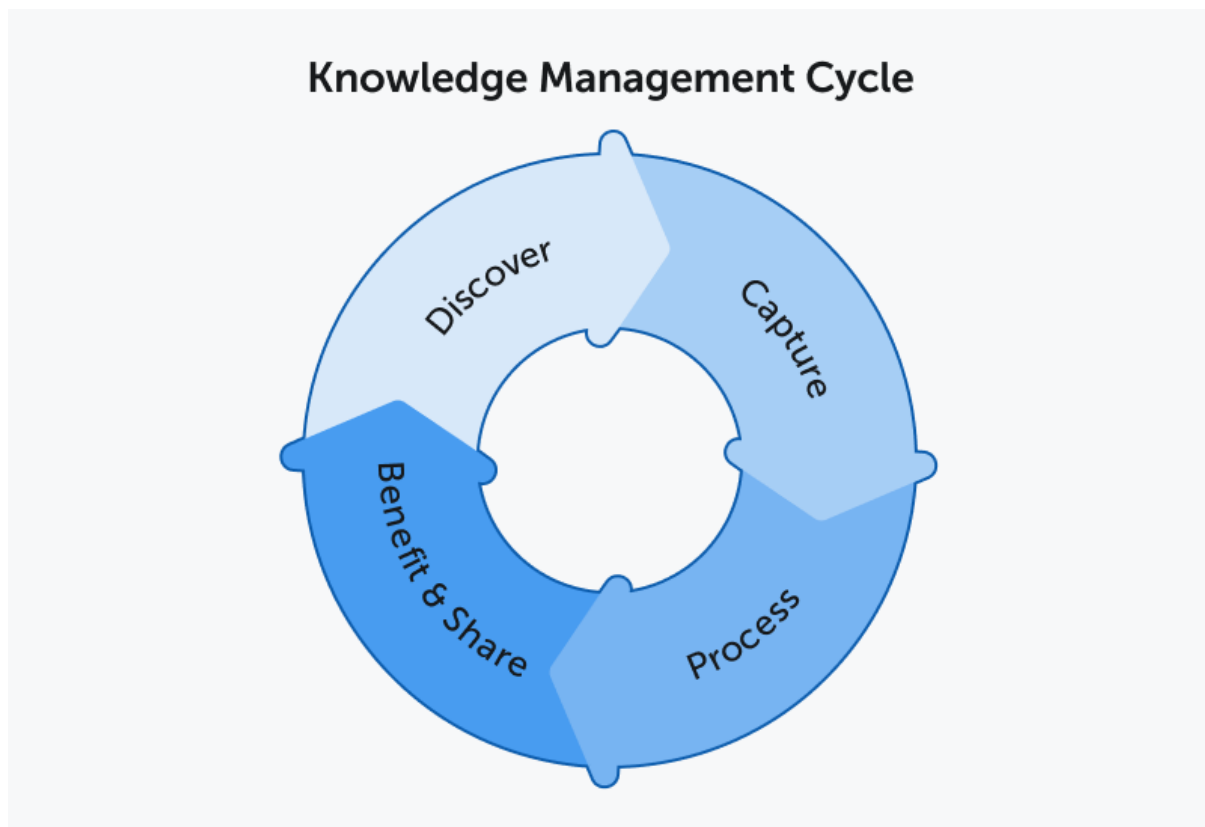
In defining knowledge, Bolisani and Bratianu (2018:1); Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995:87) assert that it is justified true belief that incorporates three basic conditions (a tripartite account of knowledge) expressed as follows:

- The *truth condition*. It requires that if one knows a proposition then that proposition must be true. If the proposition is not true, then that person does not know what he claims to know. The truth condition makes the difference between opinion and knowledge.
- The *belief condition*. That condition demands that if one knows a proposition then he/she believes that proposition.
- The *justification condition*. That condition requires a practical way of justifying that the belief one has is true.

In line with the three conditions stated above Valamis (2023); Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995:175) offer that knowledge management is about creating new knowledge and re-creating the organisation quite literally with every member of the organisation, in a non-stop process of personal and organisational renewal. Relatedly, Okhawere (2023:254); Ogiela (2015:154) point out that in today's organisations, the management of knowledge-related assets is a combination of knowledge residing within each organisational member and the organisation as an entity that extends beyond the use of documents to include electronic regulated systems. For Okhawere (2023: 254); Sahibzada et.al, (2020), and Sudhindra et.al, (2017) knowledge management is about acknowledging knowledge as a resource as well as managing all other processes that directly or indirectly use that resource. In line with the foregoing thought, Al Dari, et.al, (2021:437); Bolisani and Bratianu (2018:1) suggest that despite the size, nature, or purpose of an organisation, knowledge management remains relevant for survival and growth in today's unprecedented change accelerated amongst others, by new emerging technologies, the knowledge revolution, globalisation, new methods of teaching and learning as well as the knowledge energy.

However, Rwafa, Goudge, and Christofides (2021:46) argue that many organisations, such as universities, favour structures at the expense of human agency because of the way power is integral to social practices. Consequently, the need to privilege human action over structures in knowledge management and organisational learning is critical. For Bratianu (2018:199) knowledge is often defined as a justified personal belief and many taxonomies specify various kinds of knowledge. Moreover, MasterClass (2022) Tacit knowledge is described as a form of implicit knowledge not easy to express in ways that are tangible. As opposed to more explicit types of knowledge, tacit knowledge is intuitive, experiential, and easier to put into practice than explain. Mahroeian and Foroza (2012:303) argue that most knowledge is initially tacit in nature, laboriously developed over a long period through trial and error, and it is underutilised because the organisation does not know what it knows. Wilkins (2021:1) asserts that the most fundamental distinction is between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is in someone's head, and the challenge

is to make that knowledge explicit, or codified in recorded form so that it can be shared. In other words, tacit knowledge inhabits the minds of people, and it is either impossible, or difficult, to articulate. Tacit knowledge can be made more explicit by incentivizing sharing from recognition to monetary or other tangible rewards, choosing the right tools, to get the tool "out of the way" of daily processes (Wilkins, 2021:1). The knowledge cycle below shows the cycle of how knowledge must be managed to ensure organisational productivity.



Knowledge management process. Credit: Valamis. (CC BY 4.0). Available: [Knowledge Management: Importance, Benefits, Examples \[2023\] \(valamis.com\)](https://valamis.com). Accessed: 29 November 2023.

For Attour and Barbaroux (2021: 238) knowledge processes are involved in the birth, expansion, leadership, and renewal phases of a business ecosystem, and these processes linked together to shape its lifecycle. According to Ceptureanu (2016:173) the knowledge cycle model is important in relation to knowledge management within the organisation. Valamis (2023) suggests that the knowledge cycle is created through discovery, capturing, organisational processes, benefits and sharing of knowledge. Considering the foregoing thought, Bolisani and Bratianu (2018:1) suggest that metaphorical thinking based on the knowledge energy opens new opportunities for understanding knowledge as a multi-field paradigm composed of the rational, emotional, and spiritual. However, Nonaka (1994); Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995, 1998) argue that despite all the

talk about brain power and intellectual capital few business and educational managers grasp the true nature of the knowledge creating organisation, let alone the ability to manage it. This is so, because managers misunderstand what knowledge is and what organisations must do to exploit it (Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995:175). Furthermore, Okhawere (2023: 254) asserts that organisations report a less than required understanding of knowledge, a narrow approach to knowledge management and a conflict between meeting immediate targets and building systems and processes for sustainability. The findings of a study by Attour and Barbaroux (2021: 256) reveal three knowledge processes: generation, application, and valorization. Together, these knowledge processes enable the performance of a variety of tasks and activities associated with the distinctive phases of a business ecosystem's lifecycle.

Knowledge creation

For CloudTutorial (2023:1) knowledge creation is an essential aspect of decision-making and a driver of innovation and progress in various organisations through different types of knowledge creation, which include:

- **Exploration:** This process of creating knowledge entails obtaining information and data through a variety of techniques, including experimentation, analysis, and observation.
- **Innovation:** The innovation process of knowledge creation involves utilizing existing knowledge in an innovative way to develop new products, processes, or services. Innovation requires methods, processes, high ambitions, and hours of collaboration across disciplines.
- **Combination:** This knowledge creation involves combining previously acquired information or ideas from several sources to create new insights or understanding.

According to Team Capacity (2021:1), and Cloud Tutorial (2023:1) knowledge creation is the process of creating new knowledge and acts as the heart of an organisation's competitive advantage. Ceptureanu (2016:173) suggests that increasing concerns about the way organisations meet with the exponential growth of knowledge availability and organisational processes incorporating knowledge is critical because Knowledge creation serves as a building block in problem-solving. The competitive advantage is nothing but the technique a company must have over the edge of its competitors concerning their specific products or service offerings. Attour and Barbaroux (2015:1) offer that some knowledge is embedded in business processes, activities, and relationships that have been created over time through the implementation of a continuing series of improvements.

The learning organisation

Sidani and Reese (2018:199) argue that the learning organisation debate has many foundations that today have led to differing perspectives. In line with this thought, Sidani and Reese (2018) argue that the learning organisation debate has many foundations that today have led to differing perspectives. Sidani and Reese (2018) further point out that they developed their learning organisation concepts from their background, considering cultural aspects, and critical focus to the

notion of the learning organisation. Braitanu (2018:546) advances the argument that although universities have been created as places dedicated to teaching and learning, they are not learning organisations by default. Yadav and Agarwal (2019:18) suggest that four constructs are integrally linked to organisational learning: knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, and organisational memory. Consequently, Chandell (2023:1) and CloudTutorial (2023:1) argue that organisations need to be aware of the learning organisation metaphor to achieve their primary strategic goals and objectives. Korma *et.al*, (2022:138); Alsabbagh and Khalil (2017:579); Bejinaru and Prelipcean (2017:350); Bratianu (2018:547) argue that for an organisation to become a learning organisation its leadership must develop and implement adequate strategies for stimulating and amplifying organisational learning. There is widespread confusion between the process of individual learning, which is specific to students learning, and organisational learning, which is an organisational process developing at the university level. It may be an adaptive process based on single-loop learning or a generative process based on double-loop learning. An organisation that can transform organisational learning into the engine of knowledge creation aiming at building up a competitive advantage may become a learning organisation (Islam, Furuoka & Idris 2020:735; Kenny & Mnandi, 2019:1).

In this conceptual schema, the researchers see the importance of a constructivist approach to a learning organisation that views social object categories as socially constructed. Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2005) for example, assert that any organisation that wants to become a learning organisation will depend upon the entire leadership to create the context and necessary conditions for that kind of learning to emerge, sustain and thrive. Al-Ali *et.al*, (2017:723) claim that developing a field that encourages learning is the primary task of leadership. For Bratianu (2018:546) a university can become a learning organisation if and only if its leadership creates strategies for transforming local and spontaneous organisational learning into a generic and organisation-wide process based on clearly defined strategies. According to Yadav and Agarwal (2019:18), organisational learning involves individual learning, and those who make the shift from traditional organisation thinking to learning organizations develop the ability to think critically and creatively. The researchers believe that embedding knowledge management processes and the learning organisation principles and practices will help managers and employees meet their challenges by pursuing a creative vision, learning, working together effectively, and the ability to adapt to internal and external change forces.

Organisational learning is one of the important ways in which the organisation can sustainably improve its utilisation of knowledge. Indeed, in describing an organisational learning cycle, HRWorld (2023:1) suggests that it is a process to create a broad base of knowledge and transfer the knowledge in the organisation. An organisational learning cycle is a continual process of improving an organisation. It comprises three actions: gaining experience, creating knowledge through experience, and transferring the knowledge to the organisation. It was also suggested that accumulated knowledge is of less significance than the processes needed to continuously revise or create knowledge.

In their quantitative study on the role of knowledge processes in enhancing the building of the learning organisation, Ahmed, *et.al*, (2022:1) indicate that the results of the statistical analysis proved the existence of a strong positive relationship with statistical significance between the knowledge management processes and the learning organisation and the ability of knowledge management processes in building a learning organisation. Lynch and Corbett (2021:80) postulate, is the need for an entrepreneurial mindset among academics and leadership to substitute obsolete assumptions and mental models, processes, and structures with new productive operational behaviours. By adopting what Newbury and Paterson (2015:1) refer to as gales of creative destruction, in the researchers' conceptual schema, creativity is, to organisational learning what conception is to reproduction, i.e., the moment that makes something original and unprecedented. Consequently, in a university of technology, it is crucial that such themes enter the discourse since we are dealing with a department that is constrained by existing bureaucratic faculty and institutional structures. For the researchers, the kind of learning accentuated here is reflective, critical, and transformative and moves away from consensus theory which is the basis of normative approaches to organisational learning. As argued by Giroux (1983:154-155), critical reflection is essential because it lays bare the historical and social sediment values at work in the construction of knowledge, social relations, and material practices, especially in universities. Inherently, transformative learning is a commitment to organisational learning. Jorgensen, *et.al*, (2020:445) argue that the political view of the learning organisation is seen as part of power relations that produce particular types of knowledge.

However, Fullan (1997:49) asserts that the hardest core to crack is the learning core – changes in instructional practices and the culture of teaching, team research activities toward greater collaborative relationships among academics within the department. This involves changing norms, habits, skills, competencies, and beliefs which requires a personal commitment to learn, played out in a community of learners in which all members continually reinforce the expectations and conditions conducive to productive student learning. Thus, university lecturers are expected to foster dialogue, encourage regenerative thinking, be open to multiple possibilities, encourage creativity, self-reliance, and interdependence, engender personal transformation, and amplify human potential to unfold the future. The researchers wonder whether these arguments can be applied to a department that is deprived of material, financial, and human resources to foster effective teaching and learning, including the expected research outputs from academics.

An initial critique is that the concept of the learning organisation itself is quite vague and has many different definitions (Yadav and Agarwal (2019:22); Jorgensen, *et.al*, (2020:445). Yadav and Agarwal (2019:22) argue that there are many reasons why an organisation may have trouble in transforming itself into a learning organisation. The first is that an organisation does not have enough time. Every learning step is mostly time-consuming steps. For example, valuable time is invested and then the result will come and after some time this step will also be outdated. Thus, the new learning framework has a lot of risks, it may succeed or may not. Jorgensen, *et.al*, (2020:445) provide three fundamental criticisms of the learning organisation as follows: 1st Generation LO is characterised by learning models that are consistent with the rationalities of the classical

bureaucratic model. 2nd generation LO is characterized by learning models that emphasize reflection, self-management, and self-directed learning according to corporate performance goals. 3rd generation LO focuses on reflexivity, creativity, and co-creation in groups and teams and across silos supported by the design of collective spaces where such actions and collaborative learning processes unfold. Coopey (1995) advances the argument that the potentially most damning criticism of a learning organisation is that it is expressed in ways that provide the raw material for managerial ideology, potentially constraining the meanings and actions of other employees so that they support the interest of the dominant coalition. However, despite criticisms of the learning organisation, the researchers emphasize the importance of developing a learning organisation if the education department at the University of Technology intends to be relevant in a fast-change global higher education environment.

Organisational productivity

Organisational productivity is about assessing and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of academic staff members within a university by providing training to enhance their capabilities, skills and acquire updated knowledge and learning with the support of the employer (Korma, *et.al*, 2022:138; Kenny & Mnandi, 2019:1). In line with foregoing, Kanyemba, *et.al*, (2015:177); Kenny and Mnandi (2019:1) offer that productivity can be enhanced by a suitable work environment, effective recruitment, and selection process to ensure that an institution hires the right candidate for a particular job or role. In their study of the impact of organisational culture on organisational performance, Korma *et. al*, (2022:8) found that the culture of creating change can enable organisations to achieve their strategic goals and objectives and that academics must adopt technological assistance and other types of knowledge of value to encourage innovative practices in the teaching-learning, research, and community engagement processes. Furthermore, McCoy (2023:1) suggests that automation and competitive pressure accelerate the pace of organisational change, and thus to be productive, successful organisations must embrace change as a way of life. The new changes are completely altering the way we work. Considering the foregoing, Korma, *et. al*, (2022:138); Ababneh (2021:1387); Al-Ali, *et.al*, (2017:723) posit to achieve organisational productivity, what is required is the establishment of an organisational culture that will contribute to organisational performance. Consideration should be given to how organisational learning can be enhanced, how team orientation can be encouraged, and technical assistance and innovation can be promoted to enhance organisational productivity.

Gallup (2023:1) offers that to be productive, organisations such as universities must first have the right purpose, which answers the question: Why do we exist? The organisation's strategy and culture must flow from this purpose. Together, they answer the question: How will our organisation fulfill its purpose? The strategy and culture are operationalised through the organisation's operating model: its people, processes, and structure. Taking a holistic approach to organisational productivity through a seamless operating model in the process of strategy or structure creation, the following must happen (i) strategy review and alignment, (ii) barriers to productivity analysis, (iii) talent optimisation, (iv) team structures and performance, (v)

innovation and agility enhancement, (vi) business and decision-making process evaluation and modeling and (vii) organisational restructuring or realignment. Without effort being exerted in these areas, it will be difficult to achieve organisational productivity in the education department within the University of Technology.

Thus, according to Cuel's (2020:455) contribution to the emerging area of practice-based theorising of knowledge management and learning in organisations must be based on the following practices: (i) behaviour or experience by exploring participants' actions and experiences. (ii) Opinion or belief through probing employees' beliefs, attitudes, and opinions. (iii) Feelings by delving into the emotional aspects of employees' experiences. (iv) Knowledge by assessing employees' understanding and awareness of knowledge management and the learning organisation (iv) Sensory by investigating how employees perceive and interact with their environment. (v) Background or demographic issues by collecting information about employees' personal characteristics and histories concerning how they view their department, their roles, and responsibilities to achieve organisational productivity through knowledge and continuous improvement and development.

Recommendations

The recommendation of the current study is the necessity of the university's strategic direction in adopting knowledge management processes and the guiding principles of creating a learning organisation to achieve organisational productivity.

Conclusion

The paper sought to expose the interrelationship between knowledge management and the learning organisation towards organisational productivity: To enunciate the complex and nuanced concepts of knowledge management and learning organisation the researchers found it appropriate to adopt a meta-theoretical approach to explicate the theoretical underpinnings of these concepts. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to draw from the experiences of academic staff what meanings they assigned to knowledge management, learning organisation and academic productivity. The researchers conclude if the concepts knowledge management and learning organisation are part of the discourse within the department, the leadership could foster a learning culture that could enhance academic staff productivity. It is essential that each academic staff member knows their strengths and limitations and engages in continuous improvement to achieve strategic goals and objectives set by the university, faculty, and the department.

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