

Newsletter of Knowledge Management South Africa  
**January - March 2022**

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## FROM THE CHAIR

### Welcome to the KMSA Newsletter **IN THE KNOW**.

This Newsletter aims to keep members informed of programmes, the latest news, and upcoming events, academic and research studies. In this edition, we feature the study by Dr. Malefetjane Benny Phaladi titled “Framework for Integrating Knowledge Management and Human Resource Management for the Reduction of Organisational Knowledge Loss in Selected South African State-Owned Enterprises.

This study makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in the field of Information and Knowledge Management in South Africa. The study and the framework will enable Knowledge Management practitioners to enhance their understanding of organizational knowledge loss and strengthen retention strategies and processes to manage knowledge loss. This edition also shares the journal article and book chapter on the study by Dr. Phaladi.

We are excited to share with you that the planning for the KMSA Virtual e-Imbizo 2022 is underway. The e-Imbizo, with a theme, Knowledge Collaboration and Networks is scheduled for 23 – 26 August 2022. The purpose of the KMSA e-Imbizo 2022 is to exchange ideas, advice, connections, knowledge, and experience regarding collaboration and connections. We are also sharing the event the well-established and informative MILE Knowledge Management Learning Exchange to be hosted on 25 – 27 May 2022. We look forward to your active participation and support.

## REFILOE MABASO | KMSA CHAIRPERSON

“The mind is guarded by its defense system:  
knowledge” - **Ernest Agyemang Yeboah**



# KMSA PROGRAMME UPDATE



We have a full programme for 2022. We have already kicked off the year with an overview of KM frameworks for implementing computer-based KM systems presented by Dr. George Maramba.

In the run-up to our e-Imbizo in August, we have a Masterclass in May on conducting a knowledge audit. This session will provide practical steps and lessons learned for doing a knowledge audit, irrespective of the size of your organisation. We are looking forward to learning from this session. In June, we are planning a Webinar on “KM and 4IR: key considerations”. In this webinar, we will share critical success factors and practical suggestions for

dealing with KM in the context of 4IR – both from an organisational KM and KM technology enablement perspective.

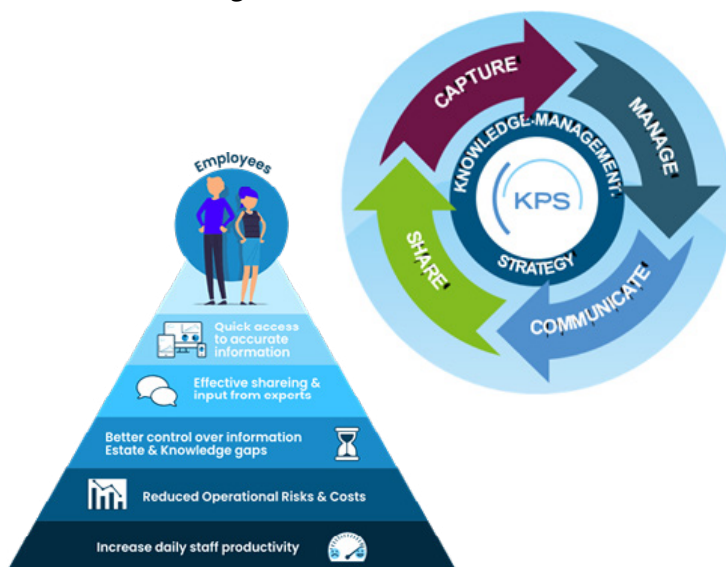
A highlight of our program in June is a panel discussion where board members will discuss the value, steps, and focus of professionalization of the KM practitioner. In August is e-Imbizo time – register now to secure your place for this excellent event.

In September, we have another Masterclass where “Practical application of KM harvesting tools” will be shared, including practical tools, techniques, and tips for harvesting knowledge. In October, an expert panel will discuss, “When you get stuck with KM, how do you move forward?”. This promises to be an excellent discussion on addressing barriers and challenges and how to continue to add that KM value to teams and organisations. In November, we end the year with a Webinar / Masterclass on how to write a business case for a KM project. This session will share practical tools, techniques, and tips for writing a solid business case.

We are looking forward to your attendance, support, and participation. I would like to invite you to share any other topics with me ([hanlie.smuts@up.ac.za](mailto:hanlie.smuts@up.ac.za)) that you may want to present or learn about.

**PROF HANLIE SMUTS | DEPUTY CHAIR**

## Universal Knowledge New Release



Boost business efficiency through collaborative knowledge sharing. A knowledge sharing platform promotes internal knowledge sharing with team members, by creating an easy way of distributing, sharing and searching information across multiple departments or business divisions. Universal Knowledge v6 now makes this management and sharing of knowledge much easier. For more information on the new release please view the following video clip or follow the [RQTech page](#) for more video clips and information.

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## FEATURE ARTICLE



Phaladi M & Ngulube P. 2022. **Mitigating risks of tacit knowledge loss in state-owned enterprises in South Africa through knowledge management practices**, South African Journal of Information Management, 24(1), 1-9.

Background: State-owned enterprises (SOEs) in South Africa face a serious challenge of knowledge loss primarily caused by resignations, the aging workforce, and a lack of knowledge management (KM) practices. This article explores KM practices in the South African SOEs to mitigate the risks inherent in tacit knowledge loss. The study adopted a mixed-methods research strategy using an exploratory sequential design to identify KM practices and their effectiveness in addressing the issue of tacit knowledge loss. The qualitative data was collected through the interviews and document analysis of 2018 annual reports in nine SOEs across five market sectors. A survey questionnaire was distributed to 585 respondents, with a 25% response rate (145) for quantitative data in three SOEs. The results revealed that the majority of the SOEs lacked KM practices in their structures. The lack of KM practices implies that the SOEs are lagging in knowledge protective capacities to mitigate the

risks inherent in the organisational tacit knowledge loss. With many South African SOEs, facing all these sorts of knowledge loss risks and a lack of KM practices to mitigate them, achieving the objectives of a developmental state remains a far-fetched idea. The absence of KM practices negatively affected knowledge transfer and retention in most of the SOEs. A lack of KM practices will negatively affect their performance and their sustainability to deliver on their developmental mandate. Investment in KM practices will assist SOEs in mitigating the risks associated with loss of organisational tacit knowledge. The full text of this journal article can be accessed at the following [here](#).



## BOOK CHAPTER

Dr. Malefetjane Benny Phaladi has a single-authored book chapter titled “**Studying Knowledge Management and Human Resource Management Practices in the State-Owned Entities Using Mixed Methods Research Design**” published in the Handbook of Research on Mixed Methods Research in Information Science edited by Patrick Ngulube and published by USA-based IGI Global 2021, Copyright ©2022.

This book chapter demonstrates the lessons learned from the application of exploratory sequential design in a mixed methods research project to investigate the integration of knowledge management and human resource management practices for the reduction of knowledge loss in public-owned entities. Knowledge loss is a complex phenomenon posing risks and threatens the sustainability of state-owned entities. The loss of organisational knowledge is not a research phenomenon that could be left scientifically to the whims of either knowledge management or human resource management. In this study, exploratory sequential mixed methods research design was the chosen design best suited for studying complex research problems from different perspectives due to its ability to offer complementarity, completeness, development, diversity in the data collection and analysis processes. The chapter revealed that qualitative data need to be complemented with the statistical or quantitative data to make an informed and complete analysis, conclusions, and recommendations of the research findings.

For more information about the publication [follow this link](#).

“All knowledge is connected to all other knowledge.  
The fun is in making the connections” - **Arthur C. Aufderheide**

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Are you studying towards a Masters or Doctoral Degree in Knowledge and Information Management? We would love to hear from you. Please share your journey with us, the highs and lows!

Have you recently completed Masters or Doctoral studies in Knowledge and Information Management? We also would love to hear from you, share your work and lessons with us.

Are you conducting research on Knowledge Management you wish to share with us, also get in touch with us using this email address [kmsaservices@vdw.co.za](mailto:kmsaservices@vdw.co.za).

## PhD and Masters Studies



### Dr. Malefetjane Benny Phaladi

University of South Africa

**Thesis Title:** Framework for Integrating Knowledge Management and Human Resource Management for the Reduction of Organisational Knowledge Loss in Selected South African State-Owned Enterprises.

**Abstract:** State-owned enterprises (SOEs) play a significant role in the South African economy and are the key drivers for delivering on the country's developmental mandate. Nevertheless, many SOEs are facing a phenomenon of organisational knowledge loss caused largely by attrition of their much-needed firm-specific human resources through voluntary and involuntary turnover and a lack of retention strategies. Human resource management (HRM) departments in state-owned enterprises are failing to play their role in the knowledge management (KM) agenda despite being the custodians of firm-specific human resources. In any company, organisational tacit knowledge, as a source of sustained competitive advantage, is contingent on human resources. In SOEs, employees are sources of such knowledge. In many SOEs, this problem of organisational knowledge

loss is exacerbated by a lack of knowledge management practices, the absence of organisational structures and roles dedicated to knowledge management, a silo mentality, and red tape.

The purpose of the study was to develop a framework on knowledge loss reduction that integrates knowledge management and human resource management practices in the South African state-owned enterprises. This study followed a mixed-methods research approach by using an exploratory sequential design. A qualitative phase was conducted first (through the interviews and document analysis of annual reports), while in the second, and quantitative phase, a survey questionnaire was used to test the knowledge and research findings revealed by the qualitative phase.

The qualitative data were collected from nine SOEs in five market sectors through the use of interviews with twenty purposively selected HR managers. The data collection phase also included the analysis of annual reports. The research findings of the qualitative phase were used to develop a survey questionnaire for testing in the quantitative phase. The survey questionnaire that was used to collect data in the second phase of the study, was distributed to 585 employees and KM practitioners in the SOE sector and had a response rate of 25%.

“The more extensive a man’s knowledge of what has been done, the greater will be his power of knowing what to do” - **Benjamin Disraeli**

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The study revealed that the majority of the SOEs lacked dedicated KM functions and roles in their organisational structures.

The study also established a serious lack of synergy between the HRM and KM practices of the few SOEs that had dedicated knowledge management functions and roles in the structures. A lack of key strategies for managing and reducing organisational knowledge loss contributed to knowledge stickiness and reduced knowledge protective capacity. However, on a positive note, recruitment and training practices were found to be effective in the sourcing and development of firm-specific human and knowledge resources. Despite their shortcomings, these two practices played an important role in capacitating knowledge creation and acquisition, thus boosting knowledge-absorptive capacity in the SOEs. Nonetheless, the same cannot be said of human resource retention practices.

The study recommends that HRM practices be aligned and integrated into KM for effective management and reduction of organisational knowledge loss. Furthermore, HRM practitioners should develop and lead strategies aimed at embedding a knowledge-centric organisational culture, structures, and processes to ensure that knowledge management is fully institutionalised. In this regard, knowledge-oriented leadership is required across all levels of organisations. The study offers a framework for knowledge loss reduction as a baseline to assist SOEs with integrating their HRM and KM practices to reduce the dire risks associated with losing much-needed, firm-specific human and knowledge resources.

### **Why did you decide to study towards a Ph.D. in Knowledge Management?**

State-owned enterprises (SOEs) are crucial instruments for driving the developmental mandate and transforming socio-economic conditions in the country. The fact that SOEs are facing all sorts of these knowledge loss risks is what motivated me to engage in knowledge management research at a Ph.D. level to find solutions to those problems. Knowledge management is often misunderstood in many organisations. I wanted a research topic that would make the business executives and knowledge management practitioners find it easy to sell a business case for pushing the knowledge management agenda in their organisations. So, for me, it was about making an impactful contribution to knowledge management practice and research, using the latest research thinking in the field to solve societal and organisational problems.

### **Why did you choose the topic you chose?**

The fact that so many SOEs locally and globally are struggling with the phenomenon of tacit knowledge loss was motivation enough for me to seek solutions. I chose this topic because I wanted to apply the latest research thinking to address pertinent issues about organisational knowledge loss in state-owned enterprises. Knowledge loss means loss of power and productivity. Similarly, in organisational terms, loss of organisational tacit knowledge would translate into the loss of competitive advantage, superior performance, and sustainability for the South African state-owned enterprises. As researchers and practitioners in the knowledge management field, it is of paramount importance that we elevate these issues through research to get the attention of decision-makers, policymakers, and executives. In a nutshell, this is what motivated me to look for solutions through research in knowledge management.

### **What was your contribution to the new knowledge on Knowledge Management?**

My research findings go a long way in influencing theory, policies and strategies on human resource management and knowledge management praxis in organisations. Furthermore, my research project brings a compelling value to practice and policymaking and contributes to the existing body of knowledge while filling the gaps in the literature. If the recommendations of my study are taken seriously, they could assist South African SOEs in reducing tacit knowledge loss risks. The framework that I developed calls for the integration of Human Resource Management and Knowledge Management practices in mitigating the inherent risks associated with tacit knowledge loss. It is therefore expected that such a framework will aid SOEs in South Africa to reduce tacit knowledge loss. It is for this reason that I would therefore encourage South African state-owned enterprises to consider implementing strategies and recommendations suggested in the knowledge loss reduction framework that I developed and proposed.


### **What challenges did you experience during your studies?**

A Ph.D. is a flagship qualification of the higher education system and, at times, can prove to be such a lonely journey. Pursuing studies at this level comes with its challenges and compromises of course. For me, one of the challenges was to strike a balance between work requirements, family time, and my research project. However, a Ph.D. needs to be treated like a project which has a beginning and an end. Sacrifices are only temporal. So obviously, one had to make some compromises along the way to achieve this goal. The benefits of having a Ph.D. completed far outweigh the frustrations and all these challenges.

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## What is your advice to others on this journey?

For me is all about what you want to achieve in life. “First things first principle” is my advice to other fellow brothers and sisters seeking to pursue their studies at the Ph.D. level. You would need to develop new habits and the thick skin, of course, developing positive self-talk, self-esteem, and positive thinking because Ph.D. can be such a lonely journey. Believing in yourself that you can make it regardless of your background helps you build positive self-talk and a positive self-image, all that fuels the power of positive thinking in yourself and would go a long way in assisting you to unleash your potential to the fullest. You can’t face the new battles using old habits and tactics, so to survive at the Ph.D. level, you are expected to unlearn old habits and develop and learn new ones. You need to make sure that you have the proper structural support system to survive at this level. They would need to prioritise. Once you have a Ph.D. the sky is the limit.



“Knowledge has power. It controls access to opportunity and advancement” - ***Peter Drucker***

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## EVENTS

MILE Knowledge Management Learning Exchange  
25 – 27 May 2022

<http://www.mile.org.za/>

**M I L E**  
MUNICIPAL INSTITUTE OF LEARNING

**Knowledge Management**  
Learning Exchange

**MAY 25-27 2022**

**"Knowledge Management influencing operational efficiency and service delivery in the public sector"**

Enquiries: Deshini Pillay on Deshini.Pillay@durban.gov.za | Visit: [mile.org.za](http://mile.org.za)  
Follow: @eThekwinMILE on

APQC'S Process and Knowledge Management Conference  
11 – 12 May 2022, Houston Texas (US)

<https://www.apqc.org/events/annual-knowledge-management-conference>

Knowledge Management Conference  
29 June – 2 July 2022  
Ljubljana, Slovenia

<https://kmeducationhub.de/knowledge-management-conference-km-conference/>

23rd European Conference on Knowledge Management  
1-2 September 2022  
Naples, Italy

<https://www.academic-conferences.org/conferences/eckm/>

14th International Conference on Knowledge Management and Information Systems  
24 – 26 October 2022  
Valleta, Malta

<https://kmis.scitevents.org/>

KM World 2022,  
November 7 – 10, 2022,  
JW Marriott | Washington, DC (US)

<https://www.kmworld.com/Conference/2021>

KMSA Virtual e-Imbizo 2022  
**KNOWLEDGE COLLABORATION CONNECTION**  
23 - 26 August 2022

KMSA Virtual e-Imbizo 2022: Knowledge Collaboration & Connection  
23 to 26 August 2022

<https://www.kmsa.org.za/convention-2022>

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