

**THE INTEGRATION OF TALENT MANAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE  
MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE**

by

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## DECLARATION

I, Themba Sibusiso Shabane, student number 36908002, declare that this dissertation, entitled “**The integration of talent management and knowledge management in the South African public service**”, is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Date:

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## **ABSTRACT**

The South African public service is experiencing a high staff turnover and difficulties to retain staff. These will result in the loss of talented and knowledgeable employees and consequently a loss of institutional memory, and will create a knowledge gap. The purpose of the study was to explore whether talent management and knowledge management are integrated and whether they support staff retention in the South African public service.

The qualitative data were collected through document analysis and semi-structured individual interviews with seven senior managers and six middle managers who were selected purposefully. Three main themes and ten sub-themes were identified and discussed. The findings indicated that talent management and knowledge management were applied in an ad hoc manner and that there were no approved policies. However, it was found that performance management formed the basis for talent management and that the current talent management approach failed to retain talented employees.

## **KEY WORDS**

Talent management, retention, human resource management, knowledge management, qualitative research and integration.

## ACRONYMS

AR	- Annual Report
CIPD	- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CSRI	- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
DG	- Director-General
DPME	- Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluations
DPSA	- Department of Public Service and Administration
DST	- Department of Science and Technology
GEPA	- Government Employee Pension Agency
HR	- Human Resources
HRD	- Human Resource Development
HRM	- Human Resource Management
HRP	- Human Resource Plan
KeMU	- Kenya Methodist University
KM	- Knowledge Management
MM	- Middle Management/Manager
PMDS	- Performance Management and Development System
PSC	- Public Service Commission
SECI	- Socialisation, Externalisation, Internalisation and Combination
SM	- Senior Management/Manager
SHRM	- Strategic Human Resource Management
TM	- Talent Management
UNISA	- University of South Africa

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## **CHAPTER 1: SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the knowledge-based economy and highly competitive environment, recruiting skilled and knowledgeable human resources (HR) is seen as an important input for creating and sustaining competitiveness (Baporikar, 2014; Lengnick-Hall & Andrade, 2008). However, such employees are scarce and mobile, as they have unlimited job opportunities in the labour market (Turner & Kalman, 2014).

Therefore, organisations that fail to take appropriate measures to manage and retain their employees are at risk of losing the critical skills and knowledge that are key for innovation and for the production of quality services and products (Grobler & Diedericks, 2009; Schmitt, Borzillo & Probst, 2011). Likewise, failure to retain talented employees can interrupt production and working processes, as the organisation will be suffering from the loss of key talent who hold the know-how of production (Velso, Da Silva, Dutra, Fischer & Trevisan, 2014).

Accordingly, organisations should make an effort to effectively manage and retain their employees and to retain the knowledge that has accumulated in the organisation (Schmitt et al., 2011), as they rely heavily on the employees' expertise, skills and knowledge to successfully compete in the labour market (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2012). Vance and Vaiman (2008) assert that talented employees can be managed effectively by integrating talent management (TM) with knowledge management (KM). TM should build the capability to manage talent while capturing and retaining the knowledge held by talented employees (Rothwell, 2011).

In this context, the study explores and describes the integration or linking of TM and KM to support staff retention in the South African public service. This chapter provides a background and overview, problem statement, the research questions and objectives and the significance of the study. It also outlines the scope or delineations of this study. Lastly, it will discuss the research design, target population and sampling, data analysis and ethical considerations, along with the chapter layout of the study.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

"Human talent is a wasted asset, because people die, become disabled, resign from their job, or retire from the workforce" (Rothwell, 2011, p. 119). Bolo and Yako (2013) similarly mention that there are various reasons that cause employees to resign, namely retirement, death and dismissal due to restructuring or poor performance.

Researchers such as Werner, Schuler and Jackson (2012) and Theron, Barkhuizen and Du Plessis (2014) assert that even the best organisations are unable to prevent employee resignations. Accordingly, employees' resignation will challenge any system used to retain talented employees (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013). In a similar vein, Velso et al. (2014) conclude that investing in talent retention does not guarantee that all employees will stay, as some employee will resign. Therefore, retention is a difficult task faced by HR practitioners (Mokoka, Oosthuizen & Ehlers, 2010). The ManpowerGroup (2015) survey report reveals that 30% of employers surveyed were expecting an increase in staff turnover.

Resignations affect both private and public sector organisations. For example, the study of Khoele and Daya (2014) conducted in the pharmaceutical industry in South Africa revealed that, between 2007 and 2010, staff turnover was recorded to be 22% for middle and senior managers. Equally, the report from the South African Public Service Commission (PSC) uncovered that 68% of senior managers had resigned from the South African public service and that the public service has difficulties to attract and retain employees (Public Service Commission [PSC], 2010). Equally, according to Gernetzky (2013), the resignation of directors-general (DGs) in the South African public service is high in the sense that, on average, a department will have ten DGs within ten years. Van Onselen (2013) reported that the tenure of DGs is approximately 300 working days in the national departments of the South African public service.

This problem is echoed in the survey conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the results of which indicated that senior managers in the public sectors have the highest level of resignation (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CIPD], 2013).

Staff resignations have a drastic effect, as they lead to a skills and knowledge gap in an organisation (Kerr-Phillips & Thomas, 2009), including the loss of or reduction in production and a drop in morale among the remaining employees, as they will have to take over additional tasks left by the departing employees (Khoza & Kanjere, 2014). Similarly, Gernetzky (2013), citing former President K. Motlanthe, states that staff resignation will result in instability, and lead to incompetence and the loss of institutional memory. On the other hand, organisations that succeed in retaining their employees are reported to have increased their productivity and reduced labour costs (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013; Strydom, Schultz & Bezuidenhout, 2014; Werner et al., 2012).

According to Vermeulen (2008), the impact of staff turnover and the desire to retain the best-performing and most talented employees have elevated the importance of TM. Chitsaz-Isfahani and Boustani (2014) assert that the recruitment and retention rate can be improved by implementing TM. Likewise, for Vivas-López (2014), the key aim of TM is to retain staff. However, Armstrong (2009) argues that, because implementing TM is not easy, organisations are struggling to get it right. Vlădescu (2012) asserts that TM requires a specialised set of skills and knowledge in order to manage talent effectively. Equally, for Truss, Mankin and Kelliher (2012), organisations must develop effective processes and practices in order to benefit from TM.

Vermeulen (2008) mentions that the South African public service does not embrace the TM concept and proposes that TM practices should be adopted by the public service to support staff retention. High staff turnover may undermine the implementation of mentoring and coaching programmes, which are an important part of skills transfer (CIPD, 2013).

Accordingly, TM is a contemporary management approach for managing talent (Pillay, Subban & Qwabe, 2008). In the study conducted by Roman (2011) in the Western Cape Provincial Treasury, the findings reveal that the treasury department does not have an approved TM strategy, that salaries are not competitive and that there is a lack of training and development, including career progression.

The use of TM should be inclusive, aiming to identify and develop employees' talents and to create a pool of expertise (Tansley & Tietze, 2013). This will help an

organisation to retain skills and knowledge, thereby enabling it to have access to the knowledge and skills of the employees (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013). Peiker (2010) mentions that organisations should consider broadening the scope of skills and talents they are targeting.

Accordingly, "losing [the] knowledge anchor to [employee] is a loss to the organisation, but losing their knowledge before it has been transferred is a tragedy" (Nel & Beudeker, 2011, p. 110). Sparrow and Makram (2015) argue that, if an organisation perceives skills and knowledge as important and it needs to protect them, then the TM architecture must have the capability to capture and store the know-how and be able to recall and understand the information.

Ortlieb and Sieben (2012) suggest that organisations should not rely only on targeting to retain the actual person, but should also consider retaining the person's knowledge. Rothwell (2011) argues that TM effort currently does not aim to capture, collect and preserve special knowledge created by talented employees. Therefore, TM should create the capability to enable organisations not only to attract and retain employees, but should also create the capability to preserve knowledge from vanishing (Hartmann, Feisel & Schober, 2010).

Svetlik and Stavrou-Costea (2007) assert that knowledge is the most valuable resource held by people, and organisations should consider using KM in their human resource management (HRM) practices, as they seem to be interrelated. Researchers claim that complementing HR strategies with KM can minimise the risk of knowledge loss (Jafari, Akhavan & Nourizadeh, 2013; Svetlik & Stavrou-Costea, 2007).

Ishak, Eze and Ling (2010) emphasise the importance of reshaping the function of HRM to create a culture of not only focusing on attracting and retaining talent, but to proactively capture employees' knowledge before they resign. Yet Whelan, Collings and Donnellan (2010) explain that there is a lack of literature that explains how talented employees as knowledge carriers can be harnessed through KM.

Whelan et al. (2010) state that TM and KM will provide organisations with the capability to successfully manage talent and to capture, store, create and transfer knowledge. Similarly, Vance and Vaiman (2008) mention that human resources can

be effectively managed by integrating talent and KM to enable the organisation to have the capacity to acquire, capture and share knowledge. Integration is defined by Egerová (2013) as an interrelationship amongst processes or systems whereby an output of one process became an input of the other.

Researchers in the field of TM, to be more specific in the South African context, have not yet explored the integration of TM and KM. Yumei and Xiantao (2009) assert that combining TM and KM is an ideal, but there is no empirical result of such integration. Whelan et al. (2010) assert that the field of KM has traditionally been viewed as the function of information technology, not HRM, hence there is a disconnect between TM and KM. Scaringella and Malaeb (2014) advocate the need for conducting further studies to build a clear understanding of the relationship between the fields of TM and KM.

The above assertion gives an opportunity for this study to contribute to the literature gap and to explore the integration of TM and KM so that employees can be retained in the South African public service.

### **1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The South African public service is the largest employer in South Africa and also creates more jobs better than the private sector (Writer, 2016). Accordingly, as at the end of February 2016, a total of 1.2 million employees were employed in the country's national and provincial departments. Of these, a total of 352 000 employees were employed in the national departments (Department of Public Service and Administration [DPSA], 2016). Although the South African public service is regarded as a large employer and has qualified and skilled employees, it faces the problem of ageing, as the average age of employees is 41 years (Writer, 2016).

The second challenge is that the South African public service is faced with the challenge of attracting, recruiting and retaining talented employees. Wang-Cowham (2011) explains that talent retention is important yet difficult to manage, due to talent shortages and skills competition. As explained by Diane Birch in Lourenço (2013, p. 33), "it is very tough recruiting when there is a skill shortage and those who are skilled are now at retirement age". This shows the importance of the

retention of knowledge and talented employees in an organisation. As suggested by Masibiri and Nienaber (2011), talented employees are the key drivers for creating and sustaining competitive advantage and they are deemed to be the knowledge repositories of the organisation. Likewise, Kim and Kotchegura (2017) stated that governments can only build their ability to deliver by creating a strong ability to attract, retain and develop talented employees, but it is public institutions that are having difficulties attracting and retaining talent.

Furthermore, researchers such as Masibigiri and Nienaber (2011) and Whelan and Carcary (2011) propose that knowledge loss as a result of employee resignation puts an organisation at risk. This will prevent the organisation from competing effectively and may hamper innovation. Dube and Ngulube (2013) explain that, if organisations fail to retain employees who hold critical skills, knowledge and experience, these organisations will have to continuously reinvent the wheel. Organisations need to think about the approach that they can use to manage and retain knowledge for future usage (Juliano, 2006).

Given the critical nature of talent and the value of knowledge, this gives rise to considering the use of TM and KM to effectively manage and retain staff in the public service. As noted by Vermeulen (2008) and Iqbal, Qureshi, Khan and Hijazi (2011), TM is an engine for the management of HR. Kim and Kotchegura (2017) view it as a HR strategy to address the problem of attracting and retaining talent. Desouza and Paquette (2012), on the other hand, state that KM begins with people and ends with people, meaning people are the creators and users of knowledge. Hence KM provides a systematic approach for organisations to create, capture, acquire, share and use knowledge (Chivu & Popescu, 2008).

Not much has been written on the integration of talent and KM. More than a decade ago, Yumei and Xiantao (2009) found that the integration of talent and KM can assist during organisational transformation, and thereby improve competitiveness and increase the knowledge stock within organisations. Whelan and Carcary (2011) found that using KM and TM can help organisations to develop competence and be able to retain knowledge. Similarly, for Chadee and Raman (2012), the linking of talent and KM will increase productivity and profit. Despite all these positive findings, no study has been conducted in this regard within South Africa. Again, the KM

literature is silent on the importance of retention and, as such, very few studies have examined the topic of KM and employees' retention (Hislop, 2013). Hence it is not known how KM can support staff retention.

Therefore, there was a need for a study to explore the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention in the South African public service to fill the gap. This will provide the public service with an understanding of and knowledge to create effective retention strategies for staff. It will also lead to the development of policies, processes and strategies (approaches) that will not only facilitate talent attraction, recruitment and retention, but will enable the preservation of organisational knowledge. Dube and Ngulube (2013) explain that organisations must have processes in place to capture, manage and retain critical knowledge before it is lost.

#### **1.4 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

This study was triggered by the observations and reports of the increasing number of employees who are resigning from the South African public service and the impact it has on service delivery (Manuel, 2013; Matshediso, 2015; Mkokeli, 2013; Motlanthe, 2013; PSC, 2008; Van Onselen, 2013).

According to the PSC (2008) and Dewan and Myatt (2010), the South African public service continued to lose skilled, experienced and knowledgeable employees and experienced senior managers who occupied critical positions. On average, a department had four (4) directors-general in less than ten years (Van Onselen, 2013). Likewise, according to Manuel (2013), the South African public service has a high staff turnover, especially at senior managers and technical staff level. The staff turnover of senior managers in the South African public service was recorded to be at 68% (PSC, 2010).

According to Matshediso (2015), the Government Employee Pension Agency (GEPA) received an average of 26 824 cases annually of employees who were resigning from the South African public sectors. The continuous loss of key talent and knowledgeable employees will result in the loss of organisational memory and knowledge (PSC, 2008). During the Leadership Summit, held at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSRI) in Pretoria, South Africa, the former Presidency urged government to take steps to preserve the institutional memory from vanishing (Motlanthe, 2013). Knowledge loss will lead to failure by the

government to implement its policies, programmes and strategies in order to deliver effective services to the citizens (Olaopa, 2012). Equally, failure to retain knowledge already accumulated in the public service will slow down productivity, and lead to performance errors (Cormican, Coppola & Farina, 2012).

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that the South African public service is faced with a huge challenge of staff resignation and retaining talent and knowledge in the organisations. Therefore, it is deemed important for the public service to find an integrated approach to the management and retention of talent and knowledge in order to protect and build intuitional knowledge. To address this challenge, the following research question was formulated: Is there an integration between TM and KM and does it support staff retention in the South African public service?

### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES**

In the light of the forgoing discussion on the problem statement, the primary objective of the study is to establish whether TM and KM are integrated and whether they support staff retention in the South African public service. In order to achieve this main objective, the following research questions and research objectives were developed for the empirical study.

#### **Empirical study**

<b>Secondary research questions</b>	<b>Secondary research objectives</b>
1. What is TM?	1. Describe TM.
2. How is TM applied in the South African public service?	2. Describe how TM is applied in the South African public service.
3. What is KM?	3. Describe KM.
4. How is KM applied in the South African public service?	4. Describe how KM is applied in the South African public service.
5. How can TM and KM be integrated in the South African public service?	5. Explore and describe how TM and KM can be integrated in the South African public service.
6. How can an integrated TM and KM support employee retention in the South African public service?	6. Explore and describe how an integrated TM and KM can support employee retention in the South African public service.

In terms of the literature study, the subsequent research questions and research objectives were addressed:

### Literature study

Research questions	Research objectives
1. How is TM conceptualised in the literature?	1. Conceptualise TM as depicted in the literature.
2. How is KM conceptualised in the literature?	2. Conceptualise KM as depicted in the literature.

## 1.6 DISCIPLINARY CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study is conducted within the field of HRM, focusing on the sub-field of TM and knowledge management. Two different interdisciplinary fields are investigated to determine how they can be fused together in order to support the challenge of staff resignation and turnover.

According to Wiig (2011), staff resignation can be disruptive and may require innovation and improvising of processes, including integrations of functions, such as interdisciplinary functions between different departments in order to understand how they can assist to solve staff attrition and thereby achieve organisational goals.

### 1.6.1 Human resource management as discipline

“Financial resources may be the lifeblood of a company, but human resources are the brains” (Silzer & Dowell, 2010, p. 4). HRM is meant to supply an organisation with the required HR to effectively achieve its strategic goals.

Armstrong (2009) defines HRM as a deliberate effort of the organisation to manage employees. Schenk, Tshilongamulenzhe, Swanepoel and Erasmus (2014) share a similar view to Armstrong. They explain that HRM is concerned with the holistic management of employees in an organisation. However, Schenk et al. (2014) note that there is no consistent definition of the term HRM.

HRM activities are to ensure that the required skills, knowledge and capabilities are sourced and recruited. Schenk et al. (2014) argue that, without human resources, organisations will not be able to realise their vision, mission and strategic objectives.

Thus, the core activities of HRM are: recruitment, motivating employees and an interpersonal relationship within an organisation (Svetlik & Stavrou-Costea, 2007). Furthermore, for Chivu and Popescu (2008) and Schenk et al. (2014), the HRM function includes recruitment, selection, development, employee relationships and reward.

### **1.6.2 Talent management as discipline**

The discipline of TM is frequently confused with HRM. This may be due to the fact that TM activities hinge on HR theories. Equally, TM comes from the philosophy of HRM (Egerová, 2013). Thus, TM tends to be a famous concept amongst practitioners in the field of HRM (Sripirom, Jhundra-indra & Raksong, 2015). TM has been recognised as a function of an HR department (Boichenko, 2015).

Although TM uses HRM functions, there are some HR activities that are not included in TM, such as labour relations, the HR information system and employer and labour negotiations, which are all part of HRM functions (Dowell & Silzer, 2010). Egerová (2013) argues that TM is complex and that the implementation of TM is influenced by the manner in which the organisation defines the concept talent.

The purpose of TM is to try to attract, develop, deploy and retain top-performing employees by using an integrated set of processes and programs (Dowell & Silzer, 2010). TM therefore is concerned with the management of talent, producing a pool of talented employees and retaining them in organisations (Dowell & Silzer, 2010; Hatum, 2010). Sripirom et al. (2015) assert that TM is key for preserving the skills of employees, thereby creating the organisation's competitiveness. Hatum (2010) argues that recruitment, development and employee retention are the main functions of TM.

Despite this, researchers hold that the field of TM is under-researched (Sripirom et al., 2015), especially in the African context. Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016) assert that the field of TM has been researched the most in Europe. However, there is growing interest in the study of TM in South Africa (Barkhuizen 2014; Barkhuizen, Welby-Cooke, Schutte & Stanz, 2014b; Koketso & Rust, 2012; Samuel & Chipunza, 2013). However, it seems that most of these studies were conducted in

municipalities and not in the public service, and were predominately conducted using a quantitative approach rather than a qualitative approach.

### **1.6.3 Knowledge management as discipline**

Knowledge is created by humans. Yet human resources are not made to work forever in an organisation. At a certain stage they will exit the organisation. It is important for retiring employees to share the knowledge they have (Liebowitz, 2012). Stam (2009) holds the view that KM can be seen as a tool for risk management to reduce the risk of losing critical knowledge.

Rudawska (2013) and Thomas and Underwood (2015) mention that KM serves as a strategy to organise, facilitate and manage knowledge within the organisation by providing systematic processes and techniques to capture, transfer and retain knowledge and to reduce the impact of knowledge loss caused by departing employees. Accordingly, organisations that are not applying KM and experience a high staff turnover will fail to compete and to produce a product or service of high quality (Ahmed, Fiaz & Shoaib, 2015). KM enables organisations not to reinvent solutions and keeps the organisation focused on producing high-quality products and good service (Sołtysik-Piorunkiewicz, 2015).

Historically, KM has been perceived as belonging to the field of information technology (Whelan et al., 2010). However, Sołtysik-Piorunkiewicz (2015) argues that KM has established itself as a discipline and uses various approaches, ranging from human-centric to information technology. The goal is to create, share, transfer and retain knowledge within the organisation for future use. Furthermore, Ahmed et al. (2015, knowledge management section) state that KM deals with "connecting people to people and people and people to information". However, they emphasise that KM is more on the human administrative side when compared to other fields such as engineering and information technology.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Given the challenges faced by the South African public service, and organisations in general, regarding the effective attraction, management and retention of talent and knowledge, this study is important for two reasons. Firstly, it explores the use of TM as well as KM, as there currently is no empirical study of the integration of TM

and KM in the South African public service context. Secondly, it provides an understanding and outlines the potential benefit of an integrated approach for staff retention.

Thirdly, owing to the lack of sufficient literature on the integration of TM and KM, this study contributes to the body of knowledge. Therefore, the findings of the study will broaden understanding of and insight into staff retention through the integration of TM and KM.

It is the researcher's belief that the fusing of these two concepts will provide a systematic approach that will strengthen the development of effective retention strategies and policies, and thereby provide awareness for HR managers to utilise KM to complement their TM programmes. In so doing, they will forge a strategic alliance between TM practitioners and KM practitioners and minimise staff turnover.

## **1.8 SCOPE OR DELINEATION OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted in two national departments in the South African public service in Pretoria, Gauteng. The target population was senior managers employed at salary levels 13 to 14 and middle managers on salary levels 9 to 12. The national departments play a major role in the policy development, monitoring and evaluation of HRM policies.

The study was not extended to public service departments that are located in other provinces or to local government due to budget and time constraints to finalise this research project. Senior managers above salary level 15 and employees below middle management (i.e. salary level 9) were not targeted for this study and were excluded. The reasons for excluding senior managers above salary level 15 is due to the fact that, in most cases, they are busy and might not be readily available to attend interviews. Employees below middle management may not be familiar with the challenges associated with the management of talent and may not have sufficient exposure to issues of people management.

## **1.9 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS**

Researchers describe a paradigm as a collection of assumptions held by individuals about the world, and such beliefs lack scientific evidence (Nieuwenhuis, 2011;

Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2014; Tracy, 2013). Tracy (2013) holds the view that these paradigms influence the way in which research is designed and the collection of data takes place. Other researchers used the term paradigm and philosophy interchangeably to refer to personal beliefs in the manner in which they view the world, which informs the methodology to be adopted for a research study (Creswell, 2014). Generally, there are three common assumptions, namely ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (David & Sutton, 2011), and they are discussed below.

### **1.9.1 Ontological assumptions**

The ontological assumption focuses on the nature of reality, which can be learned and interpreted. The interpretation is based on the individual's view or opinion about the reality in the world in which he/she lives (Basit, 2010; David & Sutton, 2011; Ormston et al., 2014). It was the researcher's conviction that, by interacting with senior and middle managers employed in the South African public service, it would be possible to establish whether TM and KM are integrated and whether they support staff retention in the South African public service. Thus, it was assumed that these employees have sufficient experience to enable them to identify certain barriers that may inhibit the integration and implementation of TM and KM.

### **1.9.2 Epistemological assumptions**

The epistemological assumption is concerned with the way of knowing and learning about the reality of the world (Ormston et al., 2014). In short, it is concerned with exploring the reality of people's beliefs and assumptions and how they construct and interpret the phenomenon under study (Basit, 2010; Nieuwenhuis, 2011).

The epistemological assumption of this study was to interpret the beliefs held by the participants regarding the concepts of TM and KM and whether integrating them will support staff retention in the South African public service. Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm was adopted. Tracy (2013) says the interpretivism paradigm assumes that reality and knowledge are the results of the individual's perception, and that they can be constructed and reproduced through communication and interaction. It was the researcher's belief that, through personal interaction by means of individual interviews with senior managers and middle managers employed in the fields of TM,

KM and HRM, they will provide valuable information that can be analysed and interpreted to understand whether TM and KM are integrated in the South African public service to support staff retention.

### **1.9.3 Methodological assumptions**

The methodological assumption focuses on the speculation on the suitability of the research method, data collection and analysis techniques that are used in a study (Creswell, 2014; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The methodological assumption of this study was based on qualitative, explorative and descriptive research. The assumptions for this research study were:

- That the qualitative research approach would enable the researcher to gain deeper understanding from multiple viewpoints, to establish how TM and KM can be integrated and to establish why employees are resigning from the public service (Jennings, 2012). A document analysis was used to establish the reasons for staff resignations.
- That, since not much is known about the integration of TM and KM in relation to the retention of staff, an exploratory research approach would be the most appropriate.
- That face-to-face interviews and document analysis would enable the researcher to collect sufficient evidence of the application of TM and KM and the possible integration thereof. The researcher conducted a literature control and compared the findings with the viewpoints of other authors in the literature study in Chapter 2.

## **1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

The plan or strategy used to explain the processes for the selection of participants, the method of data collection and the technique of data analysis is commonly known as the research design (Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Yin, 2016). In this study, a qualitative research, based on a descriptive, exploratory and contextual research design, was used.

According to Williams (2007) and Yin (2016), qualitative research is undertaken by a researcher to purposefully explore, describe, explain and interpret the collected data within a specific context. Similarly, Ritchie and Ormston (2014) argue that qualitative

research is based on descriptive, exploratory research, which are both key features of contextual research. These research methodology and designs are elaborated in detail in sections 3.2 and 3.3 of Chapter 3. The next section discusses the population and sampling, as well as the data collection and data analysis method.

### **1.11 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The population is defined as a group of individual people or organisations that the researcher is interested in studying to draw conclusions (Babbie, 2013). David and Sutton (2011) assert that, in the enquiry, the population comprises targeted populations, which are usually defined by the research objectives of the study.

In this study, the targeted population constituted two (2) national departments of the 46 national departments in the South African public service, situated in Pretoria, Gauteng province. When this study was conducted, the total population of the targeted participants in the two departments was 998 (viz. 347 senior managers and 651 middle managers). Department A had 91 senior managers and 109 middle managers, while Department B had 256 senior managers and 541 middle managers. Considering that this study was based on qualitative research, Rapley (2014) says the sampling decision is targeted at specific people or a specific organisation in order to address or investigate a specific problem. Therefore, a purposive sampling technique was deemed appropriate as it permits the researcher to use his own judgment when selecting the thirteen participants. Accordingly, purposive sampling allows researchers to use discretion, knowledge or experience when choosing the sample (Basit, 2010; Yin, 2016). It is for this reason that purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for selecting participants for this study. Population and sampling are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, sections 3.4.1 to 3.4.3 of this study.

### **1.12 DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

In this study, interviews and a document review/analysis were used to collect the qualitative data. Accordingly, qualitative researchers tend to utilise multiple methods for data collection, such as interviews, observations and documents (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Gray, 2009; Srivasta & Thomson, 2009; Yin, 2016). Suter (2012) asserts that using multiple sources of information improves the trustworthiness of the research results.

It was the researcher's conviction that semi-structured interviews would permit him to elicit factual information from the participants which could be used for analysis to establish the benefit of integrating TM and KM. Rowley (2012) states that interviews allow for the collections of facts, and to gain understanding of the participants' opinions and experiences, and to establish the practical processes of the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher first collected information through a document analysis, followed by individual semi-structured interviews. The information elicited through the interviews was compared or verified with the information collected through document review/analysis in order to enhance the credibility of the findings.

### **1.13 DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative content analysis was used in this study to explore and analyse the information elicited from the participants and the two departments' documents. The aim was to systematically reduce the collected data into themes and sub-themes (Schreier, 2014), therefore permitting the researcher to describe the participants' opinions and views on the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention.

The reason for choosing content analysis was that it is systematic, flexible and has the ability to reduce data into manageable categories and subcategories. This was achieved by examining every single part of the interview transcript. This method requires researchers in general to maintain a focus on the phenomenon being investigated, guided by the participants' meanings and the overall research question of the study (Schreier, 2014).

### **1.14 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

In qualitative research, the term trustworthiness is used to represent validity and reliability (Suter, 2012). The aim of trustworthiness is to augment the findings of the study to ensure that they are credible (Elo et al., 2014).

Elo et al. (2014), citing the work of Lincoln and Guban (1994), identify five criteria for attaining trustworthiness, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability and authenticity. These aspects are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, section 3.11 of this study.

## 1.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Babbie (2013, p. 32), citing the definition from *Webster's New World Dictionary*, defines ethical as "conforming to the standard of conduct of a given profession or group". Researchers therefore are required to adhere to the ethical code when conducting research (Maree, 2011). Therefore, students are required to obtain ethical clearance from the university at which they are registered before commencing with their research (David & Sutton, 2011).

In this study, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of South Africa (UNISA), approved by the Department of HRM Research and Ethics Committee. Therefore this study was governed by the ethical code as defined by UNISA's Ethics Committee.

The ethical principles of obtaining consent from the organisation, respect for privacy and maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, as described by David and Sutton (2011), were adhered to during the process of this study (these principles are elaborated on in detail in Chapter 3, section 3.12).

## 1.16 THESIS STATEMENT

The loss of talent and knowledge experienced in the South African public service due to the resignation of employees and the impact this may have on service delivery require an integrated management approach that will not only attract and recruit employees, but effectively support the retention of talent and knowledge. This can be achieved by integrating TM and KM.

## 1.17 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The following key terms are used in this study:

**Integration:** Egerová (2013) describes integration as interrelation amongst processes or systems whereby an output of one process became an input of the other.

**Knowledge management:** Dikotla, Mahlatji and Makgahlela (2014) explain that KM is a process of creating, retaining and sharing knowledge in an organisation. Therefore, KM is regarded as a combination of processes and practices that are

used to identify, create, acquire, capture and share knowledge in an organisation for the purpose of enhancing learning and performance (Armstrong, 2009; Mullins & Christy, 2013).

**Knowledge:** According to Sharma (2013), knowledge consists of a combination of experience, values, textual information and the ability of a person to evaluate and incorporate new experiences and information. McIver, Lengnick-Hall and Ramachandran (2013) explain that knowledge is the know-how of individuals.

**Retention:** James and Mathew (2012) define retention as a deliberate effort made by organisations to encourage employees to stay longer in an organisation, thereby preventing the loss of skill and knowledge.

**Retention rate:** Mathis, Jackson and Valentine (2016) say the retention rate refers to the total percentage of employees who remain in the organisation at the end of the financial year.

**Talent management:** Jain, Sharma and Sharma (2012) describe TM as a deliberate effort to create processes in order to attract, develop and retain talented employees in an organisation.

**Talent:** Schiemann (2014) explains that talent is a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, value, habits and behaviours of all employees. Kaewsaeng-on, Kane and Vundla, (2015) assert that talent is a mixture of natural ability and skills that can be developed or learnt by means of experience, training and education.

**Turnover:** Turnover is the rapidity at which employees voluntarily leave an organisation (Dessler, 2014). Voluntary turnover is initiated by employees and is caused by many factors, ranging from job dissatisfaction, pay and benefits, supervision and distance to work. Involuntary turnover, on the other hand, is considered as less disruptive to organisational performance, as it is normally triggered by the employer due to the employee's poor performance or a disciplinary process due to the violation of rules (Mathis et al., 2016).

## 1.18 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Table 1.1 outlines the chapter layout of the study.

Table 1.1: Chapter layout

CHAPTER	TITLE OF CHAPTER	CONTENT
Chapter 1	Scientific orientation to the study	This chapter provides the introduction, the rationale for the research, the background, a statement of the research problem, the disciplinary context, the significance of the study, the scope of the study, the research paradigm and research design, the population and sample, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, the thesis statement, a definition of key terms, and the chapter layout and summary.
Chapter 2	Talent management and knowledge management	This chapter reviews library books, journals and peer-reviewed articles sourced from databases such as ABI/Inform Complete SABinet, EBSCO – Academic Search Premier, EBSCO – Africa-Wide Information, ProQuest and Google Scholar.
Chapter 3	Research methodology and design	This chapter outlines the research methodology, including the population, sample and overview of the sample, data collection and data analysis techniques, as well as the ethical considerations for this study.
Chapter 4	Conclusions, limitations and recommendations	This chapter provides an introduction, a discussion of the findings from the document analysis and interview analysis, as well as three main themes and ten sub-themes.
Chapter 5	Conclusions, limitations and recommendations	This chapter starts by providing a summary of each chapter of the study, followed by a summarised discussion of the findings of both the document analysis and the empirical study. It provides a contextual framework based on the findings in Figure 5.1. It also explains the strengths and limitations of the study and makes recommendations for the South African public service on how to integrate TM and KM to support staff retention.

## **1.19 SUMMARY**

This chapter has provided the introduction and background to and an overview of the study; the problem statement; and the research questions and objectives of the study. This includes the scope, research assumptions and research design and methodology, as well as ethical considerations.

The next chapter, namely Chapter 2, provides a literature review on the concepts of retention, TM and KM and how these concepts are implemented in organisations. Furthermore, it will explore how TM and KM are integrated and what the benefits are of integrating these concepts.

## CHAPTER 2: TALENT MANAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, the background and overview of the study were discussed. The chapter highlighted the research questions and objectives, the scope of the study, the research assumptions as well as the research design and methodology. Furthermore, it provided a preliminary review and introduced the concepts of talent management (TM) and knowledge management (KM). The former was briefly highlighted as a significant management approach for managing and retaining employees, while the latter is regarded as a new management approach for sharing and retaining knowledge. The impact of employee resignations on production, including the loss of knowledge when key staff members resign from the organisation, was mentioned.

The literature review contextualises the study. This chapter provides a literature study/review of the key concepts of retention, TM and KM, including a discussion of the processes that can be used to apply TM and KM. Figure 2.1 illustrates the literature review map for this study.

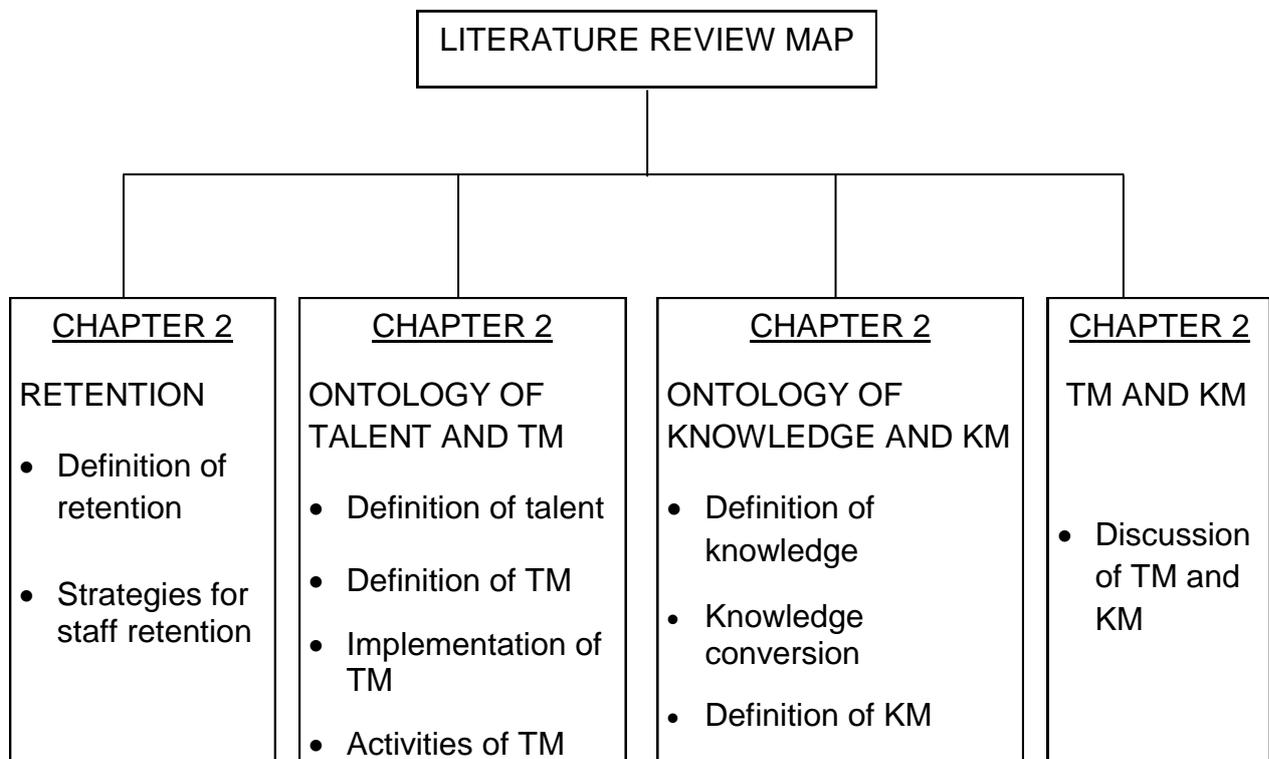


Figure 2.1: Literature review map

The literature review is regarded as the systematic review and analysis of previous work on a particular topic to provide a researcher with a theoretical background to and understanding of the subject under investigation (Card, 2010; David & Sutton, 2011). The subsequent sections will discuss the concept of retention, and will then proceed to talent, TM, knowledge and KM.

## **2.2 RETENTION**

Retention is described by Rothwell (2011) as the organisation's ability to retain a competent workforce over a period of time. James and Mathew (2012) hold a similar view to Rothwell, as they define retention as a deliberate effort to encourage employees to stay with the organisation for a long time, thereby to prevent the loss of valuable skills and knowledge.

According to Stam (2009), both public and private organisations are concerned with the loss of skills, talent and knowledge that is caused by staff resignations, either as a result of retirement or voluntary resignation. Likewise, the study conducted by Vlădescu (2012) revealed that public sectors are also experiencing the issue of talent loss with resignation, which creates a skills gap and gives rise to difficulties to replace talent. The impact of staff resignation on public sector organisations is exacerbated by the fact that they are struggling to recruit, retain, reward and develop a pool of talented employees (Poocharoen & Lee, 2013). Yet Theron et al. (2014) explain that even highly rated organisations are challenged to retain talented employees.

The study conducted by Poocharoena and Lee (2013) on the public sector in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand found that all three countries utilise various talent-retention initiatives, ranging from the payment of performance-based bonuses, market-related pay structures, performance-based promotion and a high pay structure for talented staff to opportunities for further studies, health care and a pension scheme. However, the researchers neglected to report on the effectiveness of these initiatives in terms of staff retention.

Furthermore, given the fact that talented people are in demand and that employees will exit the organisation at some point of time, either through death, resignation, retirement or poor health (Bolo & Yako, 2013; Rothwell, 2011). The quantitative

study of Barkhuizen (2014), conducted in South African local government organisations, found that there is no talent retention strategy and that talent retention is done poorly. According to Masibigiri and Nienaber (2011), failure to retain staff does not only create a skills and knowledge gap, but also results in a huge cost associated with recruiting replacements, training costs and the development of new employees to meet the demands of the new job.

Additionally, researchers have mentioned that the loss of key employees also slows down productivity, consequently demoralised the remaining staff (Khoza & Kanjere, 2014; Oladapo, 2014; Theron et al., 2014). The three-year cross-sectional quantitative survey study conducted by Knight, Becan and Flynn (2012) in Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin in the United States, with 353 participants (312 counsellors and 41 clinical directors), revealed that high numbers of staff resignations affect employees' collaboration, which may lead to performance errors as there is no immediate support from colleagues.

According to Vlădescu (2012) there are various interventions that can be used to manage and retain knowledge and talented employees in an organisation. These include encouraging employees to share ideas, knowledge and skills among themselves. This approach will ensure that employees cultivate a strong working relationship amongst themselves when they collaborate and share knowledge and ideas (Strydom et al., 2014). Another approach for the management and retention of talent cited by researchers is the implementation of TM, which will also ensure that talented employees are given developmental opportunities. In fact, researchers have claimed that key focus areas for TM are talent retention and development (Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011; Oladapo, 2014; Strydom et al., 2014).

For example, the study of Rana, Goel and Rastogi (2013) found that TM can help an organisation retain talent. This finding is similar to that of the study conducted by Oladapo (2014), who found that employee retention depends on the implementation of TM. This may suggest that organisations that do not implement TM will not be able to sustain their competitive advantage and will soon lose the skills and knowledge held by their employees (Strydom et al., 2014). In addition, Boichenko (2015) found that universities in Britain, America and Canada implement TM for

various reasons, amongst others to address recruitment and retention, and to define talent. Boichenko (2015) claims that, by implementing TM, organisations will be able to reduce the costs associated with staff turnover and will have an effective KM and knowledge transfer system.

### **2.3 TALENT**

The term "talent" is defined differently, despite the fact that the term is mostly used by researchers, writers and in organisations (Vlădescu, 2012). Likewise, Dries (2013) argues that it will not be possible to be convinced of the importance of TM if researchers fail to provide a uniform definition of the term talent, which is a central concept in TM.

Researchers such as Tansley et al. (2007) have emphasised the importance of having a clear definition of what talent is, as this will enable an organisation to make an informed decision on how to approach TM and who the people are that need to be included in the programmes. Similarly, Sonnenberg, Van Zijderveld and Brinks (2014) state that the lack of having a clear definition of talent may create a misperception in the organisation amongst HR managers, line managers and talent managers in terms of agreeing on and determining those employees who may be considered talented. Accordingly, the success of having an effective talent strategy hinges on having a common understanding in the organisation of what talent and TM are (Latukha, 2015; Tansley et al., 2007). In contrast, Boudreau (2013) argues that defining talent will not help in the management of talent, nor will it enhance the development of employees.

Ross (2013) conducted a study reviewing the literature and doctoral research focusing on the different explanations and definitions of the term talent. The findings reveal that the definition of talent is complex and difficult. Ross (2013) argues that organisations should be able to recognise this ambiguity and coin their own definition that fits the organisational context. Similarly, Turner and Kalman (2014) assert that organisations have different needs, priorities and requirements. Therefore they ideally should define talent in terms of their organisational context. For example, the study conducted by Bright (2012) in China found that organisations have difficulties defining talent and as such define the term differently. Some of the participants perceived talent to be competence and potential. Turner and Kalman (2014) claim

that this will make it easy to develop an appropriate strategy for the management of talent.

The recent study conducted by Kaewsaeng-on (2016) in 29 hotels in Thailand with 38 participants (chief executive officers, general managers, line managers and HR professionals) presents a different perspective to the findings of Ross (2013) and Turner and Kalman (2014). Kaewsaeng-on (2016) found that, even though the participants were from different hotels, they shared a common understanding of the definition of the term talent.

The term talent is defined by researchers as a combination of skills, knowledge, competence and ability (Lengnick-Hall & Andrade, 2008; Schiemann, 2014; Thunnissen, Boselie & Fruytier, 2013). Schiemann (2014, p. 282) views talent as "the collective knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, values, habits and [behaviour] of all [employees] that is brought to bear on the organization's mission". Poocharoen and Lee (2013), on the other hand, define talent as consisting of a mixture of the employees' abilities, intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence and attitudes. Sarkar (2013) says that competence consists of skills, knowledge and experience.

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) (2008) makes reference to people who have critical skills, scarce skills and competence and do not use the term talent. Critical skills are defined as generic skills required to perform a job, while scarce skills are rare and it is difficult to find qualified and experienced people to perform the job in specific job categories, while competence is explained as encompassing a combination of skills, knowledge, behaviour and ability to do work (DPSA, 2008). The study of Kraai (2015), conducted in the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in Pretoria, South Africa, reveals that the department is trying to make an effort to retain managers who have critical skills. Therefore, it can be assumed that the term critical or scarce skills is the terminology used by the South African public service to define talent.

Some researchers, such as Lengnick-Hall and Andrade (2008), Vlădescu (2012) and Latukha (2015), argue that talent is an inborn or natural ability, intelligence, and ability, skills and experience inherent in an individual employee. Although these researchers mentioned that talent is an "inborn" ability, the fact that they are

mentioning knowledge and experience leads to the assumption that talent can be learnt, developed or acquired through learning and experience. For instance, Kaewsaeng-on et al. (2015) assert that talent is a mixture of natural ability and can be developed or learnt by means of experience, training and education. The quantitative study conducted by Lathuka (2015) among HR managers and chief executive officers (CEOs) in Russia defined talent as a natural ability obtained at birth, while the foreign organisations viewed it as high potential and performance consisting of high knowledge.

Other researchers view talent as an aspect of those employees who are high performers or who have high potential to perform, and they normally hold top or critical positions in an organisation (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016). According to the literature, these employees are few, as critical or high positions also may be few. They apparently comprise 10% to 20% of the total population of employees in an organisation (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries & González-Cruz, 2013; Garavan, Carbery & Rock, 2012; Kaewsaeng-on et al., 2015). This implies that not all employees can be regarded as talented.

These foregoing assertions provide evidence that the term talent is conceptualised differently by different scholars and organisations. It thus becomes difficult to adopt just any concept without considering the unique circumstance of the organisation. This will inform the manner in which TM strategies and processes are developed to maximise the management of talent (Blackman & Kennedy, 2008; Lewis & Heckman, 2016; Pillay et al., 2008; Thunnissen et al., 2013). The following section looks at how the literature conceptualises and implements TM.

## **2.4 TALENT MANAGEMENT**

TM is seen as a strategy to maximise an organisation's competence to manage talent (Kim & Kotchegura, 2017; Thunnissen et al., 2013). In fact, TM has been recognised as an effective tool for the recruitment and retention of talented employees (Hejase, Hejase, Mikdashi & Bazeih, 2016; Majeed, 2013). Despite this, the literature reveals that there is no agreed definition of the term TM amongst scholars and writers (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; Majeed, 2013).

According to Majeed (2013), the lack of a clear definition weakens the implementation of TM, the creation of a talent pool and talent retention. For instance, Bright (2012) conducted a study on three organisations in China and found that there were different understandings and perceptions of the definition of TM in the organisations. Likewise, Poocharoen and Lee (2013), in their study in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, found that TM in the public sectors has different focuses and scope. The study of Boicheko (2015) provides empirical evidence that TM is implemented differently by different universities.

In spite of this, the literature reveals that the term TM is associated with the attraction, recruitment, development and retention of talent in an organisation. For instance, Jain et al. (2012) and Kim and Kotchegura (2017) explain that TM is a process used to attract, develop and retain talented employees in an organisation. Equally, Rabbi, Ahad, Kousar and Ali (2015) describe TM as a holistic approach to attract, acquire, develop and retain talent in an organisation.

On the other hand, Sonnenberg et al. (2014) hold the view that TM is concerned with the management of those employees who are deemed talented by an organisation. Thus, TM is regarded as a strategy to identify, develop and retain talented employees (Poocharoen & Lee, 2013; Saadat & Eskandari, 2016). The empirical studies conducted by Cooke, Saini, and Wang (2014) in China and India provide evidence that TM is defined as an effective tool for the recruitment, identification, development, management and retention of key employees. Kaliannan, Abraham and Ponnusamy (2016a) offer a different viewpoint to that of Poocharoen and Lee (2013), Cooke et al. (2014) and Saadat and Eskandari (2016) in that they claim that TM is concerned with the maintenance of HR policies that are key for the achievement of the strategic goals of the organisation.

Lastly, some researchers view TM as a new approach to the management of HR (Cooke et al., 2014; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). This perspective has resulted in TM being defined as an effective strategy for the systematic grouping of HRM activities to facilitate the filling of key strategic positions in organisations (Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014; Collings & Mellahi, 2013; Vivas-López, 2014; Whelan et al., 2010). Saadat and Eskandari (2016) argue that TM is not necessarily an element of HRM, as HR hinges more on tasks while TM focuses on people. The study conducted by Iles, Chuai and Preece (2010) provide empirical evidence that TM is not the

rebranding of HRM. They found that HRM has a narrow focus and that it emphasises function, while TM focuses on the attraction, development and retention of selected talented people.

Furthermore, the literature reveals that TM has been researched most in Europe and that little has been done in Africa, especially in the South African public service (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016). Most of the studies conducted in South Africa have used a quantitative research design and were based in municipalities rather than the public service (Barkhuizen 2014; Barkhuizen et al., 2014b; Koketso & Rust, 2012; Samuel & Chipunza, 2013). This means that TM as a field of study is underdeveloped (Sripirom et al., 2015) and researchers argue that there is a lack of theory and scope (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Dries, 2013). In contrast, Sparrow and Makram (2015) claim that TM has already reached maturity, while Gallardo-Gallardo, Nijs, Dries and Gallo (2015) assert that the field of TM has moved from a developing to a growing field.

Dries (2013) asserts that it is difficult to weigh up which meaning of TM is more valid or comprehensive than the other. This could confuse managers in an organisation regarding what exactly TM is. For example, the study conducted by Latukha (2015) found that, in Russian and foreign organisations operating in Russia, HR managers lack an understanding of the concept of TM and do not have an agreed definition of the term. The researcher concluded that having a clear understanding will enhance the management and retention of talented employees. Similarly, Valverde, Scullion and Ryan (2013) found that human resource managers of small organisations in Spain have little understanding and knowledge of the term TM, and employees were reported to have no knowledge of what TM is. As a result, the organisations do not have a TM policy.

The above discussion has proved that defining TM is complex. For this reason, TM is being implemented differently in different organisations (Dries, 2013). Hughes and Rog (2008) argue that, before TM can be implemented, top leadership needs to first have a common understanding of and agree on the appropriate definition of TM for the organisation. Therefore it was important for this study to examine how TM should be implemented in order to support staff retention.

## 2.5 THE APPLICATION OF TALENT MANAGEMENT

According to the literature, the application or implementation of TM requires a well thought-through approach that needs to take into consideration the vision, mission and strategic objectives of the organisation. Likewise, Grobler and Diedericks (2009) advocated that the implementation of TM requires a well thought-out plan that aligns the TM strategy with the vision and strategic goals of the organisation.

Therefore, if the TM strategy is well aligned and integrated with other human resource functions it will enhance recruitment, development and retention processes and it will keep talented employee engaged (Hejase et al., 2016). Thus, the management of talent makes TM irresistible even for public sector organisations. The case studies conducted by Rana et al. (2013) in the Indian public sector reveals that the public sector is succeeding in using TM as a strategy to retain talented employees. Competence development, learning (including sharing experience, in-house conferencing) and improving employees' engagement are key focuses of the Indian public sector, which is the major reason for employees to stay in the organisation. Furthermore, TM is regarded as a key business priority and both line managers and HR managers are involved in driving TM (Rana et al., 2013). Likewise, Saadat and Eskandari (2016) say that, if TM is correctly aligned to the strategic objectives, the organisation will be able to effectively manage and retain its talented employees and gain competitive advantage.

In contrast, the studies conducted by both Koketso and Rust (2012) and Barkhuizen (2014) in two different municipalities (North West and Western Cape) in South Africa reveal that TM is poorly implemented by the municipalities and results in the loss of talented employees. Koketso and Rust (2012) found that the poor implementation of TM was caused by various reasons, ranging from job misplacement, political interference, union and management not agreeing on the employees to be promoted, and the size of the Western Cape municipality made it difficult to implement and monitor TM. However, it was observed that job security was the most important reason that attract employees to the municipality. A lack of management support, career management and career planning, however, repels employees from staying in the municipality for longer.

The quantitative study done by Barkhuizen, Mogwere and Schutte (2014a) in Gauteng, South Africa found that poor implementation of TM lowered the level of employee engagement in government higher education institutions. According to Kibui, Gachunga and Namusonge (2014), if TM is poorly implemented it can result in high staff turnover. Furthermore, Hejase et al. (2016) found that 33% of the participants in their study indicated that there was no TM, while 67% agreed that they did have TM initiatives and prioritise them for implementation.

Recently, Tafti, Mahmoudsalehi and Amiri (2017) conducted a qualitative study in Iranian automotive organisations with 15 human resource managers and found that there are 32 issues that make TM fail. These issues were grouped into four perspectives, namely structural challenges and barriers (lack of integrated HR systems, lack of a competence model in organisational strategies, lack of strategic alignment between HR strategies and business strategies, lack of an integrated TM approach, lack of HR departments' competence to address TM challenges and focus on administrative processes rather than HR development processes, and poorly implemented performance management systems); environmental challenges and barriers (governance of politics and external pressures on hiring managerial positions, lack of stability in management, governmental support and the absence of serious competition, economic sanctions, and the supply and demand gap); behavioural challenges and barriers (mental and cognitive prejudices, cultural barriers and resistance to change among managers); and managerial challenges and barriers (nepotism, lack of commitment, support and belief of top managers, lack of strategic perspectives on human resources, lack of positive outlook on HR among managers, lack of involvement and cooperation among managers in implementing TM processes, lack of understanding about the importance and significance of TM, and lack of commitment to the development of employees' capabilities and careers).

In order to optimise the alignment between TM and organisational strategy, researchers emphasise that the TM strategy should be aligned vertically and horizontally with other business processes, strategies and policies. This approach will enable the organisation to realise the benefit of utilising TM and to optimally manage and retain talent. Jackson, Schuler and Werner (2009), Werner et al. (2012) and Stahl et al. (2012) explain that vertical alignment is achieved when the TM strategy is aligned with the vision, mission and strategic goal of the organisation, and

horizontal alignment is achieved when the TM strategy is in line with other HRM strategies and functions. Figure 2.2 depicts the integration and importance of aligning TM with organisational strategy (Tansley et al., 2007).

The study conducted by Stahl et al. (2012) with 33 multinational organisations in 11 countries (America, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East and Africa) found that successful organisations utilise six key principles, namely alignment with strategy, internal consistence, cultural embeddedness, management involvement, a balance of local and international needs and branding through differentiation. They outline that corporate strategy is the first step required in TM to help in attracting, recruiting and retaining the right employees.

The second level of importance in the development and implementation of TM strategies is to ensure that there is a strong alignment between TM and the organisational structure and culture (Tansley et al., 2007).

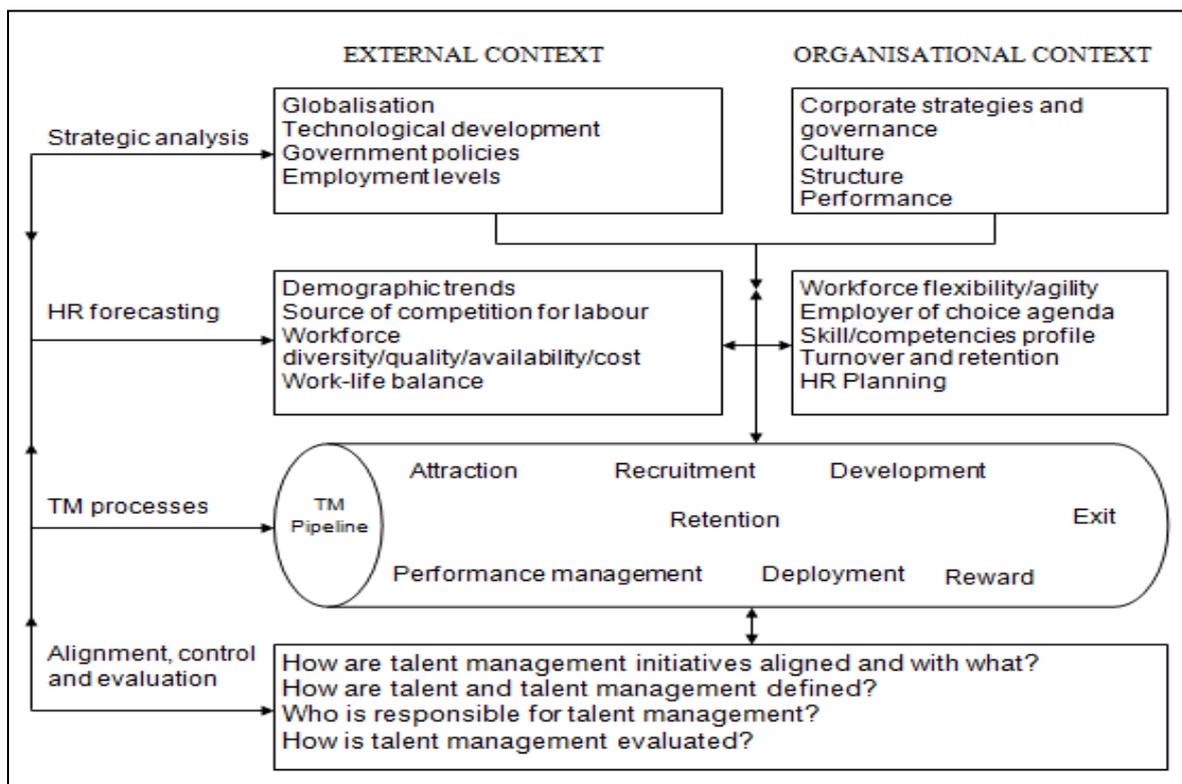


Figure 2.2: Linking organisational strategy with TM strategy

Source: Tansley et al. (2007, p. 14)

The culture of an organisation is key to the implementation of TM strategies (Martins & Meyer, 2012; Nejatian, Nejati, Zarei & Soltani, 2013). Likewise, Alhamoudi (2014)

mentions that it is important to have a correct organisational structure and that a lack of one will hinder the successful implementation of TM.

In fact, researchers identify organisational culture, structure, HR planning, and the involvement and support of top leadership as very critical in the implementation of TM (Hughes & Rog, 2008; Lutukha, 2015; Tansley et al., 2007).

Hejase et al. (2016) indicate that organisations should have a clear understanding of why TM is required and be able to identify those employees who are viewed as talented and who can deliver on the strategic objectives. The findings of the study conducted by Bright (2012) in China reveal that the TM of each of the organisations studied had different focus areas. The first organisation used TM as a strategy to develop a talent pool by targeting top performing employees with high potential to fill top positions. The other organisation used TM to retain talented employees, as it was experiencing high staff turnover.

TM is a concept used in HRM, thus it has been regarded as a rebranding of HRM (Boichenko, 2015). This is caused by the fact that TM uses HR philosophy (Egerová, 2013). As a result, it has become a famous concept amongst HR practitioners (Sripirom et al., 2015). The following section looks at the differences between TM and HRM.

### **2.5.1 Talent management and human resource management**

Table 2.1 compares and summarises the differences between TM and HRM as explained by Latukha (2015). Kim and Choi (2014) explain that HRM is concerned with the management of people in order to create organisational competitiveness. According to Šiaučiūnaitė and Vizgirdaitė (2015), TM and HRM are concerned with people management.

Table 2.1 shows that TM is concerned with the management of special employees – those employees who are commonly regarded as talented or high-performing employees. HRM, on the other hand, focuses on managing all employees in the organisation (Latukha, 2015; Schenk et al., 2014).

Table 2.1: Talent management and human resource management

Dimensions	TM	HRM
Focus	Special workers	All workers
Place right people in right job	Yes	Yes
Emphasis	Segmentation	Egalitarianism
Practices	Several functional areas of people management	All functional areas of people management
HR role in company	Partner	Support
Top management	Active for a special category of employees	Active for all groups of employees, but sometimes low attention
Work environment	Flexible in most cases	Formal or flexible
Integration with business strategy	Yes	Yes

Source: Latukha (2015, p. 1056)

Accordingly, both TM and HRM are integrated with the business strategy of the organisation. However, TM consists of selected functions for TM, while HRM uses all functions of people management. This is not limited only to recruitment, selection, appointment, human resource planning (HRP) and performance appraisal (Kim & Choi, 2014; Schenk et al., 2014), but includes labour relations, employee wellness, HR information system, and employer and labour negotiations, which are all part of HRM functions (Dowell & Silzer, 2010). The following sections concentrate on the approach that is used in TM, followed by a review of the activities of TM.

### 2.5.2 Talent management approaches

The literature reveals two prominent approaches for TM in the world of work. These are the exclusive and inclusive approach (Dries, 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; Tansley, Kirk & Tietze, 2013). Accordingly, Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016) postulate that an exclusive approach is sometimes referred to as the differentiation approach, which assumes that TM is focusing only on those employees who are regarded as top performers and high potential. The inclusive or generic approach views all employees as talented, and they are all included in TM.

Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016) assert that organisations need to decide on how their TM will be approached and implemented.

Vermeulen (2008) advocates that the South African public sector should adopt an inclusive approach for its TM programmes in order to avoid focusing only on a few employees who are regarded as high performers. Researchers such as Dries (2013) and Tansley et al. (2013) hold a similar view to Vermeulen (2008), as they support the idea of adopting an inclusive approach to the management of talent in an organisation. Meyers and Van Woerkom (2014) explain that there is a belief that inclusive TM is more appropriate for retaining employees and may make it easier for organisations to attract employees, as it is believed that employees prefer to work for organisations that permit them to utilise their talents. Therefore, TM is said to focus on identifying talent and encouraging employees to use their talent, as they may not be aware that they are talented (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014).

However, Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) caution that investing in all employees may be costly and organisations may fail to sustain this in the long term. In addition, Meyers and Van Woerkom (2014) argue that, within the inclusive TM philosophy, when employees underperform they tend to associate their failure with a lack of competence and they normally avoid taking on challenging task. Thus, most organisations adopt an exclusive approach to their TM initiatives (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). Employees who are part of a TM programme that has adopted an exclusive approach are regarded as highly performing and are very scarce, and they normally receive preferential treatment such as being provided with a high salary, as well as training and development opportunities (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014). However, the study conducted by Gelens, Hofmans, Dries and Pepermans (2014) in a large financial organisation in Brussels, Belgium found that even though the organisation employed a differentiation TM strategy, it treated junior talent differently from talented employees who hold senior positions. The study revealed that senior talented employees get more recognition and training opportunities than junior highly talented employees.

Furthermore, Meyers and Van Woerkom (2014) argue that an inclusive approach is normally used to improve the performance of all employees and that it provides an opportunity for all employees to display their potential. Additionally, they dispute the

use of performance assessment as a criterion to identify and differentiate employees by saying that some are talented and others are not talented, as performance normally reflects experience with the work, and not talent. Despite the type of approach adopted, organisations should clearly communicate their TM philosophy (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014).

## 2.6 TALENT MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

TM activities are customised and applied differently amongst organisations, and the reasons for this are associated with the fact that organisations have different strategies and goals that they pursue (Šiaučiūnaitė & Vizgirdaitė, 2015; Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Various researchers and writers, such as Aibieyi and Henry (2015), Barkhuizen et al. (2014b), Jain et al. (2012) and Šiaučiūnaitė and Vizgirdaitė (2015), have mentioned different activities of TM, ranging from remuneration, training and development, and performance management to retention, promotion, HRP, culture, recruitment and succession planning. HRP, recruitment, performance management, training and development, succession planning and retention are discussed in the next sections.

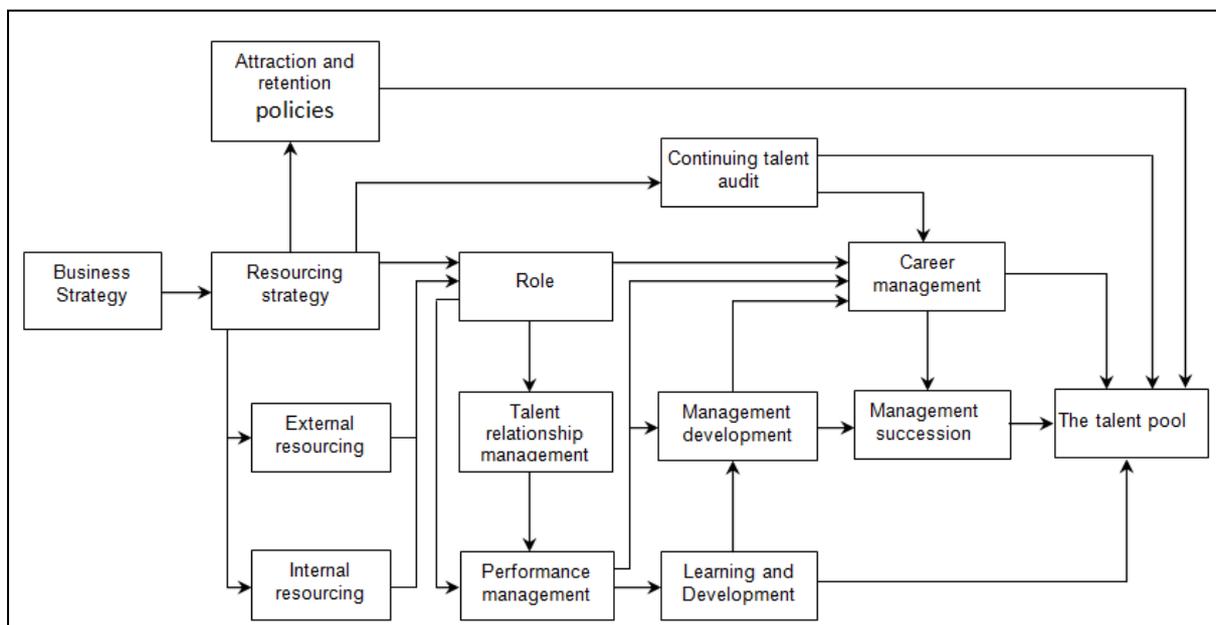


Figure 2.3: The elements of talent management

Source: Armstrong (2009, p. 172)

### **2.6.1 Recruitment**

Werner et al. (2012) define recruitment as a process of searching for and acquiring suitably qualified candidates to fill opening vacancies. It is an activity that is commonly performed by HR practitioners to source and locate those employees who possess the required skills and knowledge to perform a job effectively (Armstrong, 2009). However, there is a shortage of highly talented and skilled employees in the labour market, which makes it difficult to recruit and retain talented employees (Hejase et al., 2016).

Thus, TM is seen as holistically appropriate for managing the recruitment value chain, starting from attraction, interviews and appointment to retirement (Majeed, 2013). According to Hughes and Rog (2008) and Vnoučková, Urbancová and Smolová (2016), TM is regarded as systemic to improve recruitment practices and retention rate, as well as keeping employees engaged. Bish and Jorgensen (2016) studied the perception of employees of TM communication, with special reference to nine small medium enterprises (SMEs) in Denmark. It was found that the TM message communicated by the organisations in the advertisement enabled potential candidates to apply for the opening vacancies and the message created a positive attitude and made employees want to stay longer in the organisation.

Two recruitment approaches are cited by Jackson et al. (2009) and Werner et al. (2012), namely internal and external recruitment. Internal recruitment provides opportunities for the internal staff to be promoted to higher positions (Majeed, 2013). Normally, external recruitment is used when the organisation is unable to fill the post with an internal candidate (Jackson et al., 2009; Werner et al., 2012).

Accordingly, when recruitment is done correctly, it will attract the right candidate to fill the position (Peiker, 2010; Vnoučková et al., 2016). Organisations should make an effort to match the skills, experience and attitudes with the demands of the job to minimise burnout and possible earlier resignation (Schiemann, 2014). By failing to do this, organisations will end up recruiting incompetent employees. For example, the PSC (2015) found that the South African public service appoints incompetent and underqualified employees to critical positions such as senior management. More recently, the PSC (2016) reported that, from 2011 to 2015, the public service consistently appointed people who did not meet the minimum requirements and

competence assessments were not conducted, as required. Such recruitment practices will end up demotivating employees and result in staff turnover, and therefore a shortage of appropriate skills. Accordingly, Jackson et al. (2009) say that effective recruitment planning decreases the risk of having a shortage of skills.

## **2.6.2 Human resource planning**

HRP is regarded as a tool for TM to effectively plan for the attraction and retention of the required number of employees who possess the right set of skills, knowledge and competence to execute the strategic and operational goals of the organisation, both currently and in the future (Armstrong, 2009; Hughes & Rog, 2008; Jackson et al., 2009; Werner et al., 2012).

On the other hand, Hughes and Rog (2008) claim that TM can be used as a tool for predicting and managing the inflow and outflow of human resources. In Figure 2.4, Wu, Nurhadi and Zahro (2016) provide a four-point approach to HRP in TM. These four processes are, firstly, the determination of the type of talent that is needed in the organisation. This will include planning for the total number of employees that will be required to perform the day-to-day tasks of the current and future operation. Secondly, the skill gaps that may exist between the number of employees in terms of skills, knowledge and experience need to be assessed. Figure 2.4 schematically illustrates the HRP process for TM.

Thirdly, Grobler and Diedericks (2009) assert that developmental requirements must be determined during selection and appointment processes. Lastly, an action plan has to be developed and finances need to be made available for the funding of TM initiatives, including career progression (Wu et al., 2016). The study conducted by Grobler and Diedericks (2009) found that, although the organisation concerned developed its employees, they were not provided any promotional opportunities. This situation may have had a negative impact on the creation of a talent pool.

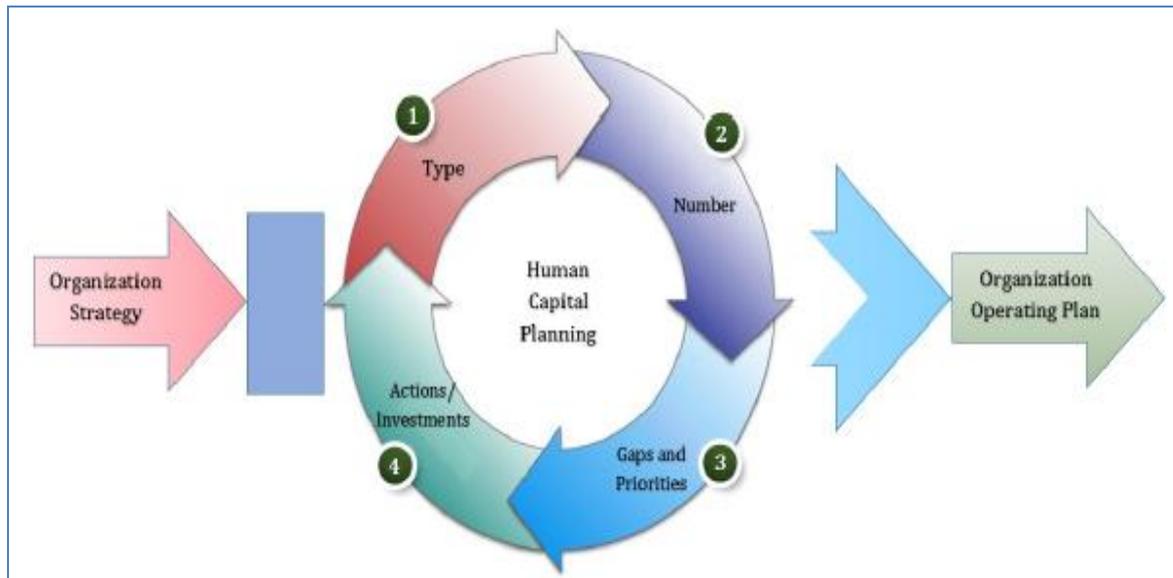


Figure 2.4: Human resource planning processes for talent management

Source: Wu et al. (2016, p. 151)

### 2.6.3 Training and development

Training and development are important initiatives for TM, as they are used to enhance an employee's skill to successfully perform the current job and to develop skills for future needs and promotion (Šiaučiūnaitė & Vizgirdaitė, 2015). One of the many goals of TM is to nurture or develop the skills of employees in order for them to perform better (Strydom et al., 2014). Yet organisations tend to use an informal or ad hoc approach to talent identification and development. Therefore it is significant for organisations to formalise talent development, including knowledge sharing practices (Wang-Cowham, 2011).

The study conducted by Wang-Cowham (2011) found that HR managers working for different organisations in China reported that on-the-job training was one of the key initiatives to increase learning. More recently, Hejase et al. (2016) found that organisations are investing heavily in training and development for their staff, and that the employees are satisfied with the provision of training and development opportunities. Even so, the study conducted by Haines, Jalette and Larose (2010) in Canadian non-governmental organisations found that training may actually increase the voluntary resignation rate, as the employees become more skilled and employable.

#### **2.6.4 Performance management**

According to Turner and Kalman (2014), performance management is concerned with the clarification of the employee's performance expectations and standards and providing tools for measuring performance. Vlădescu (2012) holds the view that top leadership must not neglect the element of performance management, as it is closely related to TM. In fact, performance management is a foundation for TM initiatives (Kulick, 2010; Saadat & Eskandari, 2016).

Performance assessment is one of the sub-processes for performance management. The system hinges on assessing and evaluating the performance of employees against a predetermined performance standard (Altinöz, Çakiroğlu & Çöp, 2013). Poocharoen and Lee (2013) advocate that such a practice allows the organisation to identify, reward and develop talent. Kulick (2010) asserts that performance management should aim at differentiating between performance and potential, including the development of a talent pool. Likewise, performance management is built on the premise of building relationship, spotting talent, planned learning and developmental requirements for the successful execution in a given task (Armstrong, 2009; Kibui et al., 2014; Vlădescu, 2012).

The developmental element received great attention in performance management systems. For instance, the Tansley et al. (2013) survey shows that 58% of the participants stated that their performance management process was based on employee development opportunities. However, in order for TM to flourish, organisations must have a strong performance management culture (Aibieyi & Henry, 2015). For example, Kulick (2010) says the performance management of the McDonald Corporation was not enabling the organisation to implement its succession plan due to the culture of "entitlement" that was created by the system; this culture was changed to one of "earning" your reward based on performance.

Performance management does not create an unnecessary administrative burden, and the contracting and assessment process should be as simple as possible. For instance, Avon Products had a complicated 10-page performance management template (forms) and, as a result, most employees had not conducted performance assessment for more than four years. This prompted the organisation to restructure its performance management system and the final output was a simplified, one-page

template with which they achieve 100% compliance and managers appreciate the efforts of the TM team (Effron, 2010).

Furthermore, Schiemann (2014) mentions poor implementation of performance management may also strain the relationship between supervisor and employees, disengage employees and lower employee morale. The report on the roundtable discussion on the implementation of performance management in the South African public service conducted by the PSC (2014) reveals that performance is not properly managed, which lead to grievances. The report indicates that performance review is done haphazardly and incentive overshadows the management of actual performance. Makhuzeni and Barkhuizen (2015) conducted a study in municipalities in the North West province in South Africa and found that performance management is poorly applied and participants are totally unhappy about it. This may result in employees looking for jobs outside the organisation and the employer may not have enough employees to fill opening vacancies.

### **2.6.5 Succession planning**

Succession planning has been explained as an organisation's effort to identify key positions, and to plan developmental activities to ensure that their qualified employees are available to occupy leadership or management positions (Patidar, 2016; Pritchard & Becker, 2009; Varhegyi & Jepsen, 2017). Yet the application and benefit of succession planning is not well understood by organisations, especially in non-profitable organisations (Varhegyi & Jepsen, 2017).

Succession planning improves the organisation's image, thereby attracting, retaining and creating a continuity of leadership. This implies that succession creates promotional opportunities for internal staff. Patidar (2016) asserts that organisations have two options to fill opening vacancies – they can either recruit from outside or promote internal employees. For example, the study conducted by Hejase et al. (2016), with HR professionals and senior managers from 35 private and non-profit organisations in Lebanon, found that 70% of the participants indicated that their organisations were using formal structures to identify potential leaders. The authors assumed that this was a sign that the organisations promoted their employees. However, the findings show that succession planning is not formalised.

In addition, Pritchard and Becker (2009) claim that, if an organisation is able to attract and retain skilled employees, it means that the organisation can successfully capture and share knowledge. They assert that coaching and mentorship can be used to share knowledge, thereby preventing knowledge loss. Hence succession planning is seen as a key HR strategy to retain and build a pool of talent by formally identifying and providing training, mentoring and coaching to employees who show potential to occupy leadership or critical positions (Patidar, 2016).

#### **2.6.6 Retention strategies**

Altinöz et al. (2013) postulate that organisations need to clearly define the strategies and targets to be addressed by TM initiatives. According to James and Mathew (2012) and Mathis et al. (2016), organisations will need to understand the reasons for an employee's resignation by engaging in an ongoing diagnosis to establish the cause of attrition and in order to formulate effective retention strategies.

The literature reveals that, in general, the reasons for employees resigning range from a lack of career advancement, poor salaries, lack of training and development, and a poor management style and work environment, including organisational policies (Anantharaja, 2009; James & Mathew, 2012; Mathis et al., 2016; Turner & Kalman, 2014). The qualitative study of van Rooyen, Du Toit, Botha and Rothmann (2010) conducted with 14 artisans in South Africa found that there are 13 factors that cause staff to resign, with the top five being remuneration, developmental opportunities, equality, recognition and management. Dessler (2014) argues that employee retention is a TM issue and can be addressed by employing the following retention processes:

##### **(a) Identify the extent of staff turnover**

Organisations should monitor and track the total number of employees who are resigning, especially for the identification of top and potential high performers, and including the reasons for leaving the organisation (Dessler, 2014). This can be achieved by conducting an attitude survey or employee satisfaction survey, having an open-door policy and introducing an anonymous hotline (Dessler, 2014). Hejase et al. (2016) mention an exit interview as one of the diagnostic tools that can be used by organisations to collect valuable information about the factors that cause staff

turnover. Likewise, Anantharaja (2009) advocate that exit interviews are the best way to manage the attrition rate, while Dessler (2014) mentions that exit interviews help to inform the employee of the development of the retention strategy. Furthermore, organisations should also measure both retention and turnover to build a complete picture of employee movement in the organisation (Mathis at al., 2016).

### **(b) Compensation of employees**

Key positions should be well funded to enable the proper compensation of those employees who occupy them, as well budgeting for the compensation of top-performing employees (Dessler, 2014). The study conducted by Anantharaja (2009) found that the most compelling reasons for employees' resignation were poor pay compare to the workload, lack of development and limited career developmental opportunities. Similarly, the survey report conducted by WorldatWork (2012) on the retention of key talent and the role of reward revealed that key employees are resigning because they are not well paid, lack promotion, the job is not fulfilling and they perceive that their counterparts are paid better in other organisations. James and Mathew (2014) found that reward and recognition are significant for staff retention, followed by compensation, personal growth and development.

In contrast, the survey conducted by Nelson (2013) among engineers in the Pacific region revealed that most of the engineers received salary increases, but there were those who got a decrease in salary but still were happy with their work. This was due to the fact that the organisation provided knowledge sharing, mentorship and coaching opportunities.

Recently, the qualitative study conducted by Khoele and Daya (2014) among 28 senior and middle managers in a pharmaceutical organisation in South Africa found that career growth, career progression, remuneration, poor relationship with manager and long distance to work are the contribution factors to staff resignation. However, during poor economic conditions, using finance or paying employees more as a means for retention may be too costly and organisations may not be able to afford to implement such a retention strategy (WorldatWork, 2012).

### **(c) Professional growth and development**

According to Dessler (2014), a lack of career growth and development can cause employees to leave an organisation, therefore organisations should make an effort to provide employees with training and career development opportunities. Similarly, Turner and Kalman (2014) say that providing employees with challenging work, a work-life balance, career progression, recognition, good management style or support, and a conducive working environment will facilitate the retention of key employees in an organisation.

### **(d) Clear career direction**

There should be constant discussion on the career path and preferences between supervisors and employees (Dessler, 2014). The web-based study conducted by Kerr-Phillips and Thomas (2009) in two financial service sectors in New Zealand revealed that 80% of the white participants indicated uncertainties with their career growth as the reason that caused them to resign and emigrate from South Africa to New Zealand. In contrast, WorldatWork (2012) found that approximately 84% of participants indicated that their organisation discussed future career opportunities with employees as a strategy for retention. Similarly, the study of Peterson (2010) outlines that, if employees are not able to identify their career path in the organisation, they are likely to resign.

### **(e) Meaningful expectations**

Employees need to understand what is expected from them and how their contribution affects the overall business goals. According to Bussin (2013), clarity of goal is very important for motivating employees and it also helps them to understand what is expected of them. Thus, Dessler (2014) says that performance management is regarded as a strategic tool to communicate the strategic goals to all employees, translate them into departmental, unit, team and individual performance goals. Furthermore, it can be used as a tool to motivate employees, help individual employees to develop their skills, build a performance culture and assist in identifying those employees who can be promoted or rewarded, as well as those who are poor performers (Bussin, 2013).

#### **(f) Work-life balance and recognition and reward**

Work-life balance is regarded as a strategy to propel employees to be engaged and ultimately to be satisfied. Work-life balance makes provision for attending to issues of personal life (individual and family) and work-life (flexible working schedule, part-time job, job sharing) (Kaliannan, Perumal & Dorasamy, 2016b). To put it simply, a work-life balance tries to maintain a positive balance between work and personal issues such as family matters (Michel & Michel, 2015).

According to Kim and Kotcheegura (2017), work-life balance and considering individual differences are very important to successfully attract and retain talent. The quantitative study conducted by Close (2015) with all employees at all levels of a South African subsidiary of a global corporate organisation found that different generations prefer different types of rewards and working environments. Generation Y prefers a more flexible working environment and more developmental opportunities than do baby boomers. However, generations X and Y are generally motivated by recognition, career management, learning and development.

Interestingly, Kim and Kotcheegura (2017) noted that the Russian federal government has a high remuneration structure and has introduced a performance-related pay system and performance bonuses as TM initiatives. However, when measured, these elements did not add any value to the attraction and retention of talented public service workers. This was due to the poor coordination, lack of consistent application and lack of a standardised TM strategy.

#### **(h) Creating a high-performance work system**

A high-performance work system is regarded as an integrated set of HRM policies and practices that together produce superior employee performance (Dessler, 2014). It commonly focuses on using a selection test to recruit employees and providing more training and developmental opportunities. Furthermore, employees are self-managed, and there is sharing of operational information and strong teamwork (Dessler, 2014). Developing a high performance culture has been identified as a strategy used by organisations to attract and retain talented employees. For example, in their study, Kerr-Phillips and Thomas (2009) found that, by creating a

strong organisational brand and a high performance culture, organisations are able to retain their talented employees.

According to James and Mathew (2012), before implementing any retention strategies the organisation must have a clear understanding of the needs or concerns of its employees. Sparrow and Makram (2015) argue that, if an organisation perceives skills and knowledge as important, there is a need to protect and retain the knowledge and talent. This will require the TM architecture to build the capability to capture and store the know-how, and will call for the inclusion of KM in TM programmes. Kim and Kotchegura (2017) state that the resignation of talented employees takes away their skills, knowledge and expertise and consequently demoralises the remaining employees.

## **2.7 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

KM has been cited by researchers as having the potential to improve an organisation's competitive advantage. According to Zhang, Wang, Cao, Wang and Zhao (2012), a well-organised KM initiative has the potential to maximise organisational performance, creativity, operational effectiveness and quality of products and services. Desouza and Paquette (2012) argue that without knowledge to manage there would be no KM.

Before exploring the concept of KM in detail, it is important to first understand and explore the term knowledge. Likewise, Wiig (2011) states that before considering how knowledge can be managed, it is essential to understand how the term knowledge is defined. Therefore, the subsequent section will investigate how the literature defines knowledge.

### **2.7.1 Knowledge**

According to Schiuma, Carlucci and Lerro (2012), organisations are realising that the acquisition and utilisation of new knowledge is the only viable approach to gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. Van Riemsdijk (2013) explains that knowledge is a significant driver of a growing economy and the development of staff. Sarkar (2013) argues that without knowledge there will be no economic growth.

This knowledge is attained by recruiting employees who possess the required set of knowledge, skills and experience to perform the job in order to meet the customers' expectations, thereby creating wealth. Therefore, when employees decide to exit the organisation they walk away with all the knowledge and experience (Baguma, Ragsdell & Murray, 2014). If this is true then employees are creators of wealth (Rechberg & Syed, 2014) and there is a need to divulge effective means to manage not only the knowledge creators, but also to manage and retain the knowledge they have. However, Wiig (2011) concludes that, before knowledge can be managed, organisations need to have a clear understanding of what knowledge is.

Researchers advocate that defining knowledge is difficult, and various definitions are found in the KM literature (Kokt & Le Roux, 2012; Singh, 2007). It has been reported that most people often confuse knowledge with data and information (Singh, 2007). Data are regarded as facts represented by figures, images, text or voice and data converted into information that is relevant in a specific context, while information is seen as the seat of structured data (Gaffoor & Cloete, 2010; Rizvi, 2016; Singh, 2007).

Sharma (2013) explains that knowledge is a combination of expertise, experience and information held by individual employees in an organisation. McIver et al. (2013) regard knowledge as information, or know-how. Orlova, Afonin and Voronin (2015), on the other hand, view knowledge as any information within a specific organisational context held by employees. The common phrase in these definitions is "information held by employees". What is evident in these explanations is that the source of knowledge is people (McInerney & Koenig, 2011). Researchers claim that you cannot separate knowledge from the people who hold it (Patel & Gorvadiya, 2014; Sarkar, 2013).

### **2.7.2 Types of knowledge**

Two types of knowledge are commonly mentioned in the literature, namely explicit and tacit knowledge. The former is described as the knowledge that can be codified and stored in documents (e.g. books, minutes and reports), or filed in libraries and electronic databases (Doan, Rosenthal-Sabroux & Grundstein, 2011; Joia & Lemos, 2010; Mullins & Christy, 2013; Nyaude & Dewah, 2014; O'Toole, 2011). Rechberg and Syed (2014) explain that explicit knowledge is not held in a human's mind, and

as such it has been freed from the holder. Such knowledge is stored in databases or repositories as a means to protect it from vanishing (Johnson, 2009). Explicit knowledge is common knowledge and can be easily managed by organisations.

However, tacit knowledge is regarded as more private, belonging to an individual employee, and is more important for creating innovation and competitiveness compared to explicit knowledge (Kokt & Le Roux, 2012; Rechberg & Syed, 2014). Likewise, Kokt and Le Roux (2012) mention that tacit knowledge is individual knowledge, the competence and experience and information that exists in people's heads, and is important for creating and sustaining a competitive advantage. Baguma et al. (2014) claim that tacit knowledge is the main competence required for performance.

Researchers emphasise that tacit knowledge can be attained through years of experience, and employees holding can share it through personal interactions, such as networking, mentoring and coaching (Armstrong, 2009; Rechberg & Syed, 2014). In addition, Figure 2.5 illustrates the flow of knowledge from the knowledge creator or holder, the four types of knowledge produced by people, the creation of relationship amongst employees, and the creation and capturing of knowledge that will be stored in KM databases (Rechberg & Syed, 2014). According to Rechberg and Syed (2014), consultation is important for the creation of knowledge and development of effective KM.

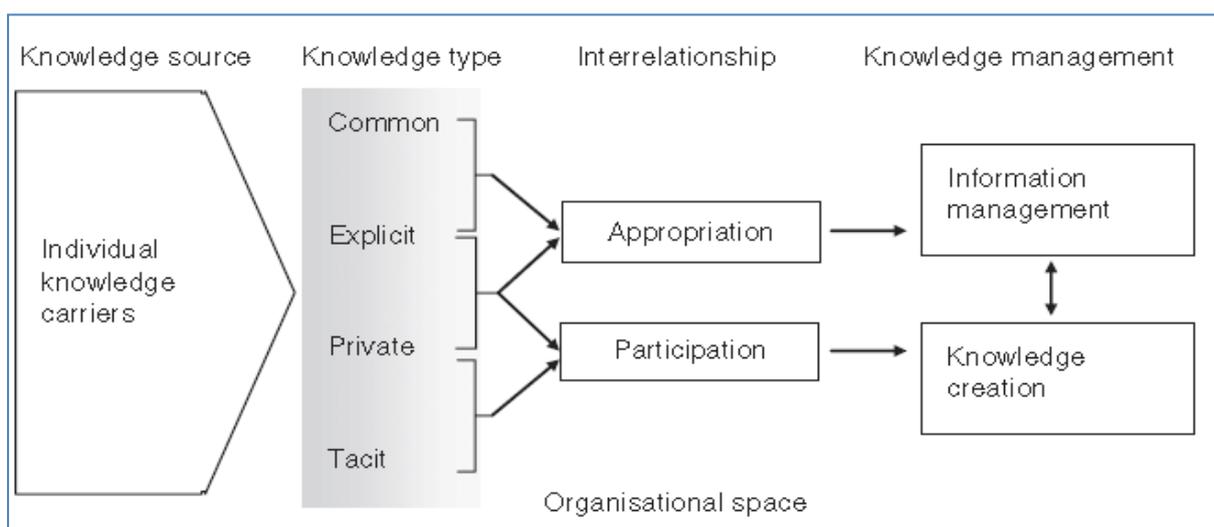


Figure 2.5: Source of knowledge

Source: Rechberg and Syed (2014, p. 438)

Furthermore, Castrogiovanni, Ribeiro-Soriano, Mas-Tur and Roig-Tierno (2016) examined four sources of knowledge, namely human resources, organisational management, technology adoption and the business environment. Their study shows that human resources (people) are the core creators of knowledge, followed by technology, the business environment and organisational management. In conclusion, they state that organisations should invest more in HR and give it exposure so that they can have more knowledge. Schiuma et al. (2012) state that knowledge can be regarded as a basis for the development of employees' capabilities in order to deliver on the strategic objectives of the organisation and to meet customers' expectations.

Patel and Gorvadiya (2014) explain that all employees have both tacit and explicit knowledge. They add that explicit knowledge has three critical elements. The first one is the "know what", which means a person has basic knowledge that is obtained either through training or experience. The second element is "know-how", which refers to the employee's ability to apply the roles and what was learned in order to solve a particular problem. The lastly element is the "know why", representing a deep understanding of the systems in an organisation. These phases of explicit knowledge seem to be progressive and move from what you learn, to applying it and to internalisation. Tacit knowledge can be converted into explicit knowledge and, vice versa, explicit knowledge can be transformed into tacit knowledge (Scully, Buttigieg, Fullard, Shaw & Gregson, 2013). However, Schiuma et al. (2012) mention that to successfully convert knowledge requires an organisation to have effective systems to managed knowledge workers, such as HR policies and processes for employee retention.

### **2.7.3 Knowledge conversion tacit and explicit knowledge**

Schiuma et al. (2012) assert that organisations should strive to convert the knowledge, skills and experience into objects that can be stored and retrieved by employees when they are developing products or services. Baguma, et al. (2014) argue that, if an organisation is not ready to convert, it will see the knowledge, skills and experience walking out of the door, resulting in a knowledge drain and institutional memory loss.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995, as cited in Scully et al., 2013), present the knowledge conversion framework known as Social, Externalisation, Combination and Internalisation (SECI). This SECI model has received great attention from researchers (Luethge, 2008; McInerney & Koenig, 2011; Naicker, 2010; Rai, 2011; Scully et al., 2013). It emphasises that, if organisations follows the model, they will be able to convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, allowing the organisation to create, reuse and store knowledge. This will enable individual employees to develop and increase their knowledge (Nejatian at el., 2013).

The key elements required for the conversion of this knowledge is trust, willingness and to involve employees in the processes, including the creation of a working environment that will promote personal interaction and knowledge sharing (Rechberg & Syed, 2014; Schwaer, Biemann & Voelpel, 2012). In fact, socialisation is seen as a key factor in knowledge conversion. It requires personal interaction amongst people (Luethge, 2008). Schwaer et al. (2012) state that socialisation normally takes place informally in an organisation, with employees volunteering to share their knowledge by using platforms such as collaboration and networking. Again, organisations can also decide to have formalised structures, which may include meetings, workshops and the creation of a database where employees will have access to and share knowledge or information.

Externalisation refers to the attainment of new knowledge through the conversion of tacit knowledge into an object (explicit knowledge) by trying to understand it through the usage of metaphors, dialogue or analogies. Internalisation is a strategy used by employees to take ownership of what has been learned, and to store it in their minds so that it becomes personal knowledge (tacit). Combination integrates the new knowledge with existing knowledge in the mind of employees, thereby creating new knowledge (Naicker, 2010; Scully et al., 2013).

The qualitative empirical study conducted by Scully et al. (2013) in the United Kingdom on two organisations that were enjoying a high level of staff retention reveals that knowledge sharing is used as a mechanism to convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge by using various strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices, such as on-the-job training, succession planning, HRP and creating new management structures. Meetings are also mentioned as a platform for

knowledge sharing. The study reported that the participants were becoming more engaged in, committed to and satisfied with their jobs. Johnson (2009) refers to commitment as the employee's strong belief in and acceptance of the organisation's goals and values, in the sense that employees are motivated and willing to go the extra mile.

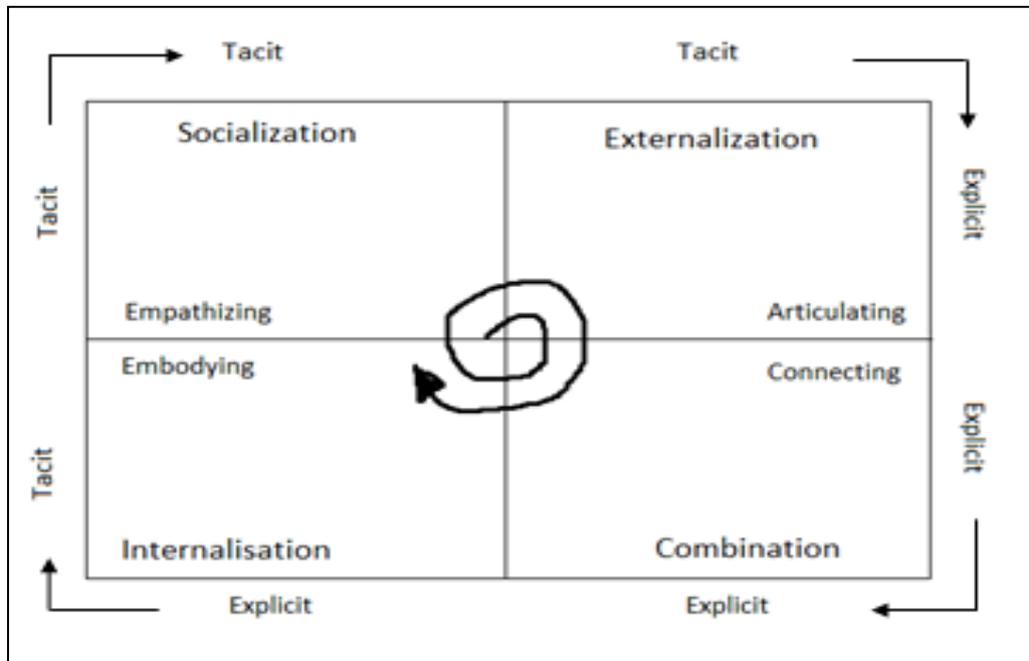


Figure 2.6 Knowledge conversion process using the SECI model

Source: Scully et al. (2013, p. 2302)

The transferability of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge implies that knowledge can be managed and retained in the organisations (Ondari-Okemwa & Smith, 2009) using strategies such as KM, which will facilitate the recycling and sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge. Accordingly, Wiig (2011) says that KM must be people focused and not technologically focused, and that practices such as the community of practice and social networking are regarded as important facilitators for transferring knowledge to other employees. This will minimise the impact of unpredicted staff resignations, and improve learning and innovation (Baguma et al., 2014). Bairi, Manohar and Kundu (2013) found that documenting lessons learnt and best practices in a KM system helps employees to quickly understand the organisational operations and improve service delivery.

This being said, Schiuma et al. (2012) report that the successful conversion of knowledge will require an organisation to develop HR policies and processes to

manage and retain these employees. According to Mohamed and Arisha (2013), an organisation will need to have a clear understanding of the definition of KM, otherwise it may not be able to effectively develop and implement KM. The following section provides an understanding of how KM is defined in the literature.

#### **2.7.4 Definition and discussion of knowledge management**

According to Sarkar (2013), KM is regarded as a tool to gather and manage information and experience and to develop employees' knowledge. Similarly, Dikotla et al. (2014) explain that KM is more concerned with the creation, retention and sharing of knowledge in an organisation.

On the other hand, researchers view KM as an appropriate strategy for the management and utilisation of knowledge, skills and expertise of employees (Afiouni, 2009; Dalkir, 2011; Salleh, Alam, Ahmad & Ikhsan, 2012). Likewise, according to Massingham (2014), KM can assist organisations in the management of knowledge resources and the flow of information, and thereby enhance decision making regarding the planning of the information and knowledge to be retained.

However, researchers such as Kazemi and Allahyari (2010) assert that the term KM is difficult to define and that most researchers and writers define it differently. Furthermore, researchers have found that, within organisations, managers are not familiar with the concept of KM. For example, Stovel and Bontis (2002) conducted a study in a Canadian financial service institute and the findings reveal that almost 70% of the participants indicated that they were not familiar with the term KM, and only a few participants (21%) indicated that they were familiar with it. In contrast, the quantitative study conducted by Sharma (2013) in India found that 70% of the participants indicated that they were familiar with the concept, while 30% stated that they were not familiar with the concept of KM. There was no KM policy in the organisations and KM was not practised or was happening on an ad hoc basis.

Some organisations, however, are taking KM seriously and include it in their competence assessment framework for the recruitment of senior managers. For instance, the quantitative study conducted by Khwinana (2010) in one of the public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa reveals that KM is one of the 11 competencies senior managers need to have. The study shows that senior

managers in the department are creating platforms to create and share knowledge, ideas and new information in order to learn and enhance their knowledge. It was also found that the department uses an information management system to store organisational knowledge.

The literature shows that the term KM is defined as processes and practices used to identify, create, acquire, capture and share knowledge for the purpose of enhancing individual learning and organisational performance (Armstrong, 2009; Mullins & Christy, 2013). Patel and Gorvadiya (2014) define KM as a process for creating, sharing and using knowledge in order to gain and sustain competitiveness. In addition, Sarkar (2013) asserts that KM is an enabler for organisations to store information and knowledge and to permit employees to gain access to it, thereby obtaining critical information and best practices.

Kokt and Le Roux (2012) argue that providing employees with knowledge will increase their knowledge, skills and abilities. Johnson (2009) holds the view that people who want to develop their knowledge will ignore nothing that is relevant to their career development. Likewise, knowledge can be used to improve employee competence (Yuan, Wu & Lee, 2012).

In the qualitative study conducted by Alhamoudi (2014) in two public administration institutions in Saudi Arabia, it was found that KM enabled employees to share ideas, thereby enabling them to obtain information quicker. The researcher argues that learning and innovation are key conditions for knowledge transfer in the KM arena. Accordingly, KM is viewed as learning by which employees acquire new knowledge that is used to make decisions (Nejatian et al., 2013).

Figure 2.7 illustrates a process for KM as explained by McInerney and LeFevre (2000). The diagram shows that KM should collect the knowledge that is critical for adding value in the organisation, which will help proceed to an active process for knowledge transfer, codification and storing.

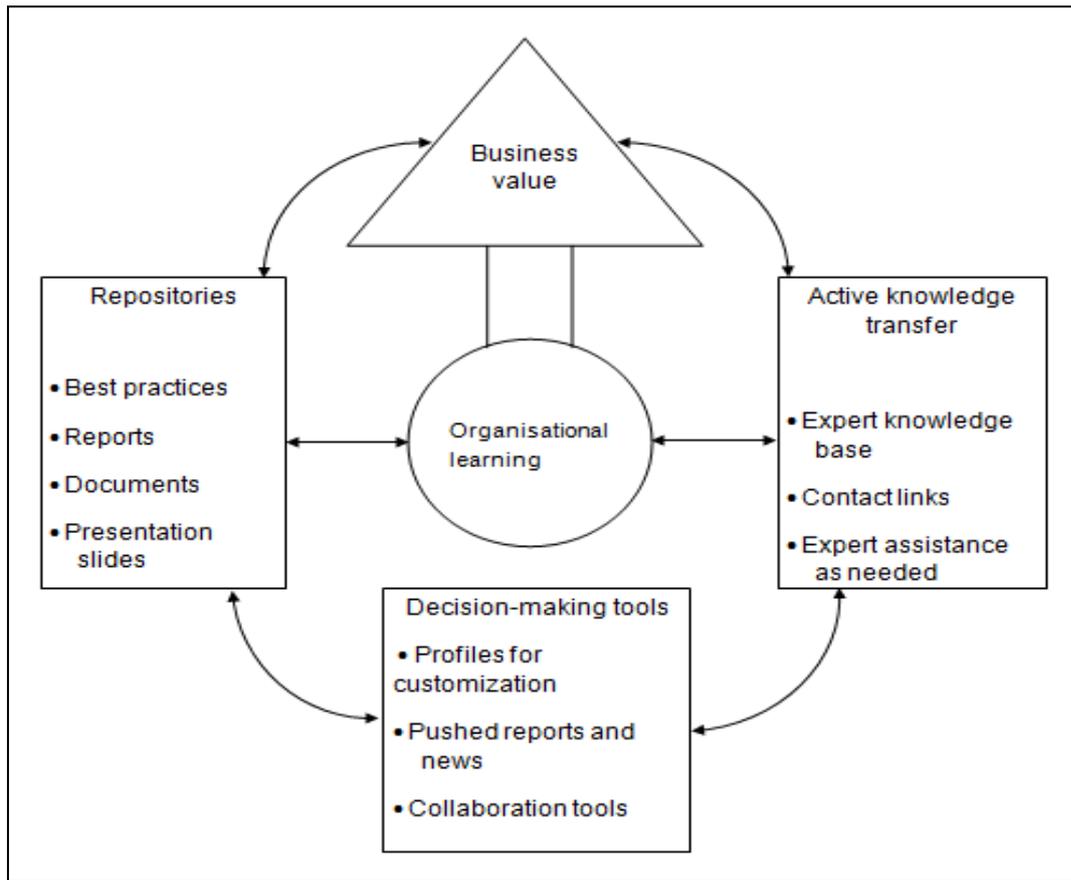


Figure 2.7: The knowledge management processes

Source: McInerney and LeFevre (2000, p. 5)

Depending on the perspective from which an individual views KM, Massingham (2014) postulates that knowledge management can either take the perspective of considering knowledge as an object, or consider knowledge as a social construct. The perspective of knowledge as an object assumes that knowledge can be manipulated or is seen as an object. The focus it will take is to try to document and store knowledge in a database or library. The second perspective is to consider knowledge as a social construct. Therefore, the KM processes adopting this philosophy will tend to create an environment that will create collaborations among employees and the sharing of best practices. In fact, Bello and Oyekunle (2014) point out that knowledge sharing is based on a culture of social interaction created by an organisation in terms of which knowledge, skills and experience are freely exchanged among individual employees. For this reason, knowledge sharing and retention are regarded as the main activities of KM (Doan et al., 2011).

## **2.8 KNOWLEDGE RETENTION**

Martins and Meyer (2012) define knowledge retention as a process used to maintain and preserve the knowledge that exists in the mind of people, hence the know-how that is significant for creating and sustaining competitiveness.

Different strategies are used for the retention of tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. According to Dewah and Mutula (2014) documentation, training and repository are commonly used to store and retain explicit knowledge and this approach is known as codification strategies. Whereas, personalisation strategy which involves personal interaction, socialisation and face-to-face communication are used to retain tacit knowledge (Dewah & Mutula, 2014). For example, the empirical study conducted by Dewah and Mutula (2014) in Sub-Saharan Africa found that libraries are using two types of knowledge retention strategies, namely codification and personalisation strategies. The codification strategies entail training, education and documentation and the personalisation strategies consist of activities such as workshops, seminars, storytelling and mentoring.

On the other hand, Alshanbri et al. (2015) found that HR departments, employees and financial rewards are critical for knowledge retention. Likewise, providing financial rewards has been considered as an effective strategy to motivate employees to share knowledge (Bello & Oyekunle, 2014; Jacobs & Roodt, 2011; O'Dell & Hubert, 2011).

Agarwal and Islam (2015) mention two types of knowledge retention strategies, namely system-based knowledge sharing and people-based knowledge sharing strategies. The former is concerned with the documentation of knowledge, training and using a digital repository system to store knowledge. The latter uses strategies such as mentoring, coaching, job shadowing, networking, storytelling and a community of practices. These authors advocate that knowledge retention should start well before talented employees are about to exit the organisation. Similarly, Nyaude and Dewah (2014) found that the Zimbabwean National Archive uses circulars, memoranda, personal interactions, conferences, newsletters, workshops, induction, mentoring, observations and attending conferences as strategies to share knowledge.

According to Baguma et al. (2014), knowledge retention should start at least three months after an employee has joined the organisation and should continue until retirement or resignation. Therefore, knowledge retention becomes a key strategic issue for HRM. However, Baguma et al. (2014) mention that trying to capture knowledge at the end, when the employee is exiting – for instance during exit interviews – may fail to capture the knowledge that was gained over many years. Bairi et al. (2013) assert that the exiting of talented employees, attrition and the ageing of the workforce can result in a shortage of skilled employees in an organisation. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the knowledge of retiring employees is documented and this should be reviewed with the knower and users to check whether it has been captured accurately and should be presented to other employees (Bairi et al., 2013).

In contrast to Baguma et al. (2014), Peet, Walsh, Sober and Reward (2010) claim that the tacit knowledge of retiring leaders can be quickly retrieved, documented and transferred to newly appointed people within a week by using a generative knowledge interview (GKI) framework. This framework involves three processes. It starts by conducting a knowledge retrieval interview with the employees who will go on retirement. The interviewer will ask the retiring employees to tell stories about their work experience, including challenges and decisions made. This will be followed by a verification interview, which will be conducted two weeks after the retrieval interview was conducted. The knowledge generated during this process can be incorporated into recruitment and retention processes, as well as in the training and mentoring of new employees. Peet et al. (2010) advocate, however, that organisations must be committed to TM in order for the GKI to successfully extract, document and transfer knowledge.

Having an appropriate system for knowledge retention is very important. Nevertheless, organisations do not invest in the development of effective systems for knowledge retention (Agarwal & Islam, 2015; Dewah & Mutula, 2014). For example, the quantitative study conducted by Mayekiso (2013) at the University of South Africa reveals that there is no system for knowledge retention, especially for those employees who are retiring or resigning voluntarily. However, the middle managers mentioned that meetings and the intranet, telephone calls and e-mails are used to share knowledge. Similarly, Bairi et al. (2013) found that the documentation of

knowledge was done poorly by an oil and gas company. Agarwal and Islam (2015) found that knowledge retention was done poorly by libraries in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Bangladesh, Denmark, India, Malaysia and Norway, and that they do not have KM policies.

## **2.9 APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

The development and application or implementation of KM should be aligned with and linked to the vision, mission and strategic goals of the organisation (Oluike, 2012). This will be followed by a good articulation of KM policy, which will specify the objectives of KM, along with rules and guidelines (Kazemi & Allahyari, 2010).

Sharma (2013) state that KM is the most important activity of an organisation, while Schiuma et al. (2012) agree and state that this is so because it facilitates the creation of new knowledge, and the documentation, transferring, use and reuse of knowledge. Recently, the study by Kianto, Vanhala and Heilmann (2016) among top managers, middle managers, expert and general employees working for municipal organisation in South Eastern Finland revealed that three activities of KM, namely knowledge codification, knowledge sharing and knowledge retention, contributed positively to the employees' satisfaction with their jobs. However, most organisations are failing to implement KM. This may be caused by the lack of practical guidance, as most researchers tend to focus on theory rather than practical guidance for the implementation of KM (Ragab & Arosha, 2013).

The literature demonstrates that there are various approaches to the implementation of KM. These include clarification of the role of talented or knowledgeable employees, understanding the process of KM (Sharma, 2013), and defining what is meant by KM and how top leadership will support the initiative, including the appointment of suitable qualified people to champion it (Ragab & Arosha, 2013). Accordingly, employees who participate in KM programmes need to be recognised and rewarded, especially for knowledge sharing (Ragab & Arosha, 2013). In addition, the implementation of KM requires the creation of a supportive organisational culture and structure, appropriate information technology, teamwork and collaboration (Alhamoudi, 2014; Gaffoor & Cloete, 2010; Nejatian et al., 2013; Ragab & Arosha, 2013; Sharma, 2013; Schiuma et al., 2012; Whelan et al., 2010).

Schiuma et al. (2012) emphasise that there should be some balance between the use of people and technology, as they complement each other.

According to Donate and Canales (2012), organisations that are focusing on technology tend to disregard the importance of having clear objectives for KM, while organisations that have a wider focus on KM have a better understanding of it, along with clear objectives, a good culture of knowledge sharing and the utilisation of KM initiatives.

### **2.9.1 Organisational culture and structure**

Organisational culture is described by Nejatian et al. (2013) as the internal system in an organisation that promotes appropriate behaviour and values knowledge sharing amongst employees. Ondari-Okemwa and Smith (2009) assert that organisational culture may enable or inhibit the implementation of KM.

Therefore, having an appropriate organisational culture is important for creating a working environment that is conducive to knowledge sharing and knowledge retention (Mullins & Christy, 2013; Nejatian et al., 2013; Nyaude & Dewah, 2014). Likewise, according to Baguma (2014) it will permit talented employees to share their expert knowledge. This will make employees feel empowered, which may result in job satisfaction and minimise staff resignations (Rechberg & Syed, 2014; Schiuma et al., 2012) and may attract, retain and improve employees' motivation to create new knowledge through attending courses. In contrast, Govender (2010) found that the failure to create and share knowledge is caused by organisational structures.

Despite this, some organisations do not value knowledge sharing and KM practices, and this is generally done on an ad hoc basis or using an unplanned approach. Ondari-Okemwa and Smith (2009), for example, found that the Kenyan government does not encourage knowledge sharing, networking, collaboration or documentation of tacit knowledge. On the other hand, the study of Gaffoor and Cloete (2010) conducted in the Stellenbosch municipality in South Africa revealed that the municipality has a strong knowledge-sharing culture, even though KM is done on an ad hoc basis. Equally, the qualitative study conducted by Mkhize (2015) with eleven participants employed by the Department of Public Service and Administration found that knowledge sharing is done informally. Alhamoudi (2014) and Gaffoor and Cloete (2010) assert that an effective organisational structure is very important for the

successful implementation of KM, because KM requires commitment, dedication and the eradication of silo operations.

Accordingly, researchers have identified a bureaucratic organisational structure as dysfunctional for KM (Alhamoudi, 2014; Schiuma et al., 2012). Ondari-Okemwa and Smith (2009) define a bureaucratic organisational structure as a form of management system that is characterised by hierarchical authority consisting of various levels of reporting with a fixed procedure. Such a structure, says Alhamoudi (2014), limits knowledge flow and knowledge sharing. In contrast, Mullins and Christy (2013) assert that a bureaucratic organisational structure normally has clear rules and procedures to ensure that employees uphold the organisational values and ethics, and working procedures are normally standardised and regulated with the aim of create order. Therefore, such a structure may facilitate knowledge sharing (Ojedokum & Idemudia, 2014).

A flat organisational structure is deemed to be more appropriate for the implementation of KM, as it is more flexible and encourages the dissemination of knowledge across all levels of the organisation, leading to the institutionalisation of KM (Nejatian et al., 2013). Additionally, Nyaude and Dewah (2014) explain that an appropriate organisational culture and structure, backed up by strong management support, will enable organisations to implement knowledge-sharing strategies, which will facilitate teamwork and ensure that the knowledge of employees who are exiting the organisation is retained.

### **2.9.2 Leadership support**

Leadership and managers are regarded as key drivers for supporting the implementation of KM (Alhamoudi, 2014). However, a study found that leaders sometimes hinder KM initiatives (Gaffoor & Cloete, 2010). Pohjola and Iskanius (2014) recommend that the executive leadership in the organisation must develop a conducive working environment that will encourage learning and sharing of knowledge through informal, virtual collaboration networks.

In their study conducted in Chennai, South India on 12 banks from the public and private sectors, Tholath and Thattil (2016) found that the private banking sector rates money as the biggest motivational factor, followed by job satisfaction and work autonomy. In contrast, it was found that money is not a priority for the public banking

sector, which cites operational autonomy, job satisfaction, creation of a learning environment and developmental opportunities.

### 2.9.3 Information technology system

Information technology (IT) is regarded as an important element for driving the KM initiative. Therefore organisations must develop an effective IT infrastructure to support KM (Alhamoudi, 2014). Likewise, Nejatian et al. (2013) say IT is commonly used for the dissemination of codified knowledge and facilitative communication between employees.

Researchers such as Stovel and Bontis (2002) and Alhamoudi (2014) demonstrate that there are various IT software systems that can be used for knowledge sharing. These include groupware, document management systems, e-mail and internet, as well as blogs. Chai, Das and Rao (2011) state that blogs are online social networking systems that are used as a tool for knowledge and information sharing. Figure 2.8 illustrates the process for KM supported by IT infrastructure.

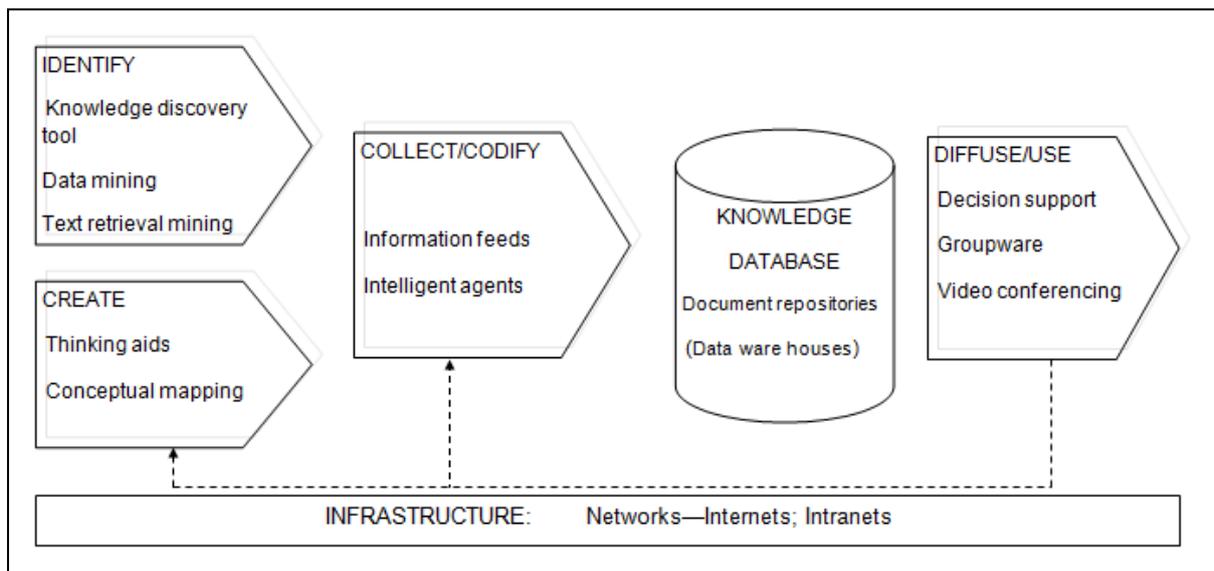


Figure 2.8: Information technology system supporting KM

Source: Skyrme (2000)

Rothwell (2011) asserts that, even though IT is considered as a critical tool for knowledge sharing by itself, it cannot facilitate KM, as the creation of knowledge hinges on human resources. There are other knowledge-sharing techniques that are human based and critical for sharing tacit knowledge, such as job shadowing, job rotation and mentoring (Rothwell, 2011). Likewise, Schwaer et al. (2012) assert that

people tend to prefer sharing knowledge with people than on their organisation's intranet. This may be due to the fact that people need to interact with the knower, who can explain, dissect and summarise the large volume of information in a simple and understandable manner (Johnson, 2009).

Mohamed, Stankosky and Murray (2006) mention that the use of IT as a tool in KM should not be overlooked because of the importance of HR interventions like a community of practice (CoP). Wenger et al. (2002, cited in Pohjola & Iskanius, 2014) explain that CoP is characterised by having a group of people who regularly come together to share their experiences, expertise and knowledge and to discuss a specific topic or to solve a particular problem. In spite of this, Pohjola and Iskanius (2014) conclude that most organisations limit the CoP to top leadership and neglect to engage middle managers or junior staff.

#### **2.9.4 Human resources**

Without people, knowledge cannot be generated and organisations will not exist (Nejatian et al., 2013). This implies that people are the centre of KM (Donate & Canales, 2012). Vance and Vaiman (2008) claimed that KM practices are built on the past experiences of human resource.

Vance and Vaiman (2008) assert that effective KM hinges on having effective tools for the management of HR, such as recruitment of talent, training, knowledge sharing, coaching and mentoring, performance management and succession planning. Likewise, Van Riemsdijk (2013) reports that organisations acquire knowledge through the recruitment of talented and knowledgeable employees. In the same way, the recruited employees must be provided with training opportunities to develop their knowledge (Patel & Gorvadiy, 2014). In fact, Patel and Gorvadiy (2014) claim that knowledge acquisition, creation, transfer and deployment can be facilitated through HR by applying HRM initiatives. Among others, HR departments are responsible for conducting exit interviews, which generate new knowledge such as the reasons for employee resignations. However, such a process lacks the capability to capture tacit knowledge, therefore it is critical for organisations to ensure that they target the capturing and retention of tacit knowledge (Dube & Ngulube, 2013).

## **2.10 TALENT AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

Researchers are slowly recognising the benefits that can be created by integrating TM and KM in order to enhance the effectiveness of people and KM (Vance & Vaiman, 2008). Poell and Van der Krogt (2008) assert that the concepts of TM and KM have many similarities. These similarities include the management and development of human resources in order to improve organisational performance.

The literature demonstrates that the integration of TM and KM is used for various reasons. For example, Yumei and Xiantao (2009) studied the integration to determine the achievement of transformation in science and technology organisation by using a multi-dimension grey connection evaluation method. They found that both KM and TM contain a wealth of benefit, such as the creation of competitive advantage, and the creation of knowledge stock, which can be shared and used by employees to learn. However, they emphasise that the integration can be difficult and may require the creation of a corporate culture, a learning organisation culture and the introduction of incentives. They conclude by saying that, once TM and KM are combined, the product should become the function of HRM.

Secondly, Whelan and Carcary (2011) looked at how KM can benefit from TM and found that knowledge creation, the development of knowledge competence, and knowledge retention will be made better if they are integrated with TM. Lastly, Chadee and Raman (2012) found that the integration can enhance production and profitability. Considering the aforementioned literature, as far as could be established no previous studies conducted in South Africa could be found, and this creates a knowledge gap in understanding how KM and TM can be integrated.

There are limited empirical studies and research papers on the integration of TM and KM. Scaringella and Malaeb (2014) advocate that more work is needed in order to determine the relationship between KM and TM in order to assist organisations to address the ever increasing challenges of the knowledge gap, staff development, knowledge and talent retention. According to Whelan et al. (2010), this limitation is caused by the idea that KM belongs to the field of information technology and TM is associated with HRM, hence there is disconnect between these two concepts.

However, researchers agree that KM is shaped by various disciplines, hence its activities have been adopted from various interdisciplinary fields, such as management science and library and information science, and for this reason KM is regarded as an interdisciplinary field of study (Desouza & Paquette, 2012; Meihami & Meihami, 2014). Yet KM is human-based information technology system used to store and transfer knowledge. Likewise, KM has a multidisciplinary approach that is used to create, document, share and use knowledge to improve learning and innovation (Meihami & Meihami, 2014), and TM deals with the integration of processes in order to ensure that highly qualified employees are attracted, recruited, developed and retained, as well as ensuring that there is clear career management of employees (Königová & Urbancová, 2012).

In the study conducted by Massingham (2014) in a large Australian Resource Council with 150 engineering and technical staff, it was found that KM can be used to manage knowledge resources. This includes having an appropriate plan to determine future competencies required and the number of employees to be recruited. Thus, Desouza and Paquette (2012) assert that KM starts with people and revolves around people and ends with people. This assumes that people are the creators and users of knowledge. The researcher emphasises that technology will not make an organisation share knowledge, but people can share knowledge and information technology can play a supportive role in effective knowledge sharing. Hence, scholars recently have been advocating the integration of KM into the HRM function to enhance the management of HR and productivity (Jafari et al., 2013; Svetlik & Stavrou-Costea, 2007).

However, researchers disregard the fact that effective KM depends on TM, and therefore practitioners are focusing more on talent attraction, development and retention and overlooking the fact that talented employees are the creators and repositories of tacit and explicit knowledge (Vance & Vaiman, 2008). The more TM practices (career management, training and development and talent retention), the more likely a culture of knowledge creation and retention is institutionalised (Figueiredo, Pais, Monteiro & Mónico, 2016). Also, the KM literature seems to be silent on the importance of retention and, as such, there are very few studies that examine the topic of KM and employees' retention (Hislop, 2013).

So, when talented employees exit the organisation, tacit knowledge, which is key to production, will also walk away. Königová and Urbancová (2012) therefore claimed that the solution lies in the utilisation of TM and KM, which will enable the organisation to identify those employees who possess the critical knowledge and can be induced to share it with others. Additionally, the success of TM depends on having a balance between the demands for knowledge and talent, which can be fairly achieved by using an integrated system of KM and TM activities (Mutsuddi & Mutsuddi, 2008).

## **2.11 THE BENEFIT OF TALENT MANAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

According to researchers such as Vance and Vaiman (2008), organisations will develop the capability to effectively manage talent by integrating TM and KM, and thereby will be able to capture, store, transfer and their retain knowledge.

Rothwell (2011) argues that TM is limited in this regard, in the sense that it does not aim to capture, collect and preserve special knowledge created by talented employees. Hence, Hartmann et al. (2010) advocate that TM should not only focus on attracting and retaining employees, but should build capability to preserve knowledge from vanishing. Researchers have argued that organisations should not focus only on retaining individual employees, but should strive to share their knowledge, skills and experience with other team members (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2012; Vivas-López, 2014).

The integration of TM and KM has some benefits and disadvantages, as explained by Königová and Urbancová (2012). The advantages are that it will:

- facilitate the identification of talented and knowledgeable employees
- improve staff retention and preserve knowledge when key employees resign
- enhance staff development
- preserve knowledge in the organisation
- improve the organisation's image and performance

Similarly, Vance and Vaiman (2008) assert that the integration of TM and KM will create a powerful combination for an organisation that will create an effective competitive advantage in the labour market. Likewise, Pastor, Santana and Sierra

(2010) state that using KM with other functions of HR, such as TM, will motivate employees and enhance skill development.

However, there are some disadvantages that come with the integration of TM and KM, as explained by Königová and Urbancová (2012). These are:

- In the short term the organisation will incur financial expenses due to the setting up of the integration approach.
- Organisational structure and culture will have to be altered to support the new processes.

In spite of this, Chadee and Raman (2012) hold the view that fusing KM and TM will facilitate job satisfaction, which may result in staff retention. The qualitative study conducted by Nthongoa (2014) in South Africa reveals that KM can be a significant contributor to talent retention. Ortlieb and Sieben (2012) conducted a study using four elements of staff retention, namely incentive as a retention strategy, and the use of norms and standards, coercion and KM.

The study conducted by Peet et al. (2010) on the use of the Generative Knowledge Interviewing Framework (GKIF) shows that organisations are able to capture and transfer the knowledge created by experts, and that this can be used for leadership development and to enhance both the TM and KM initiative. However, the researchers neglected to determine if the framework could possibly address resignations. TM is more of a concern in the attraction, recruitment, development and retention of talented employees, however, and it may be assumed that the GKIF will enhance all these activities of both TM and KM.

## **2.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has explained and conceptualised talent and TM. The chapter highlighted that there are no uniform definitions of the terms talent and TM. These terms should be defined within the organisation's context. Two types of knowledge (tacit and explicit knowledge) were identified and discussed, as well as the definitions and application of TM and KM. Furthermore, the integration and benefit of TM and KM were discussed. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology for the study.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research background, problem statement, objectives of the study and research questions were outlined in Chapter 1. The main research objective of this study as outlined in Chapter 1, section 1.5 was to establish whether TM and KM are integrated and whether they support staff retention in the South African public service. For ease of reference, the research questions and objectives of this study are reiterated in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: Research questions and objectives

Secondary research questions	Secondary research objectives
1. What is TM?	1. Describe TM.
2. How is TM applied in the South African public service?	2. Describe how TM is applied in the South African public service.
3. What is KM?	3. Describe KM.
4. How is KM applied in the South African public service?	4. Describe how KM is applied in the South African public service.
5. How can TM and KM be integrated in the South African public service?	5. Explore and describe how TM and KM can be integrated in the South African public service.
6. How can an integrated TM and KM support employee retention in the South African public service?	6. Explore and describe how an integrated TM and KM can support employee retention in the South African public service.

Chapter 2 presented the literature study, based on retention, the definition of talent, TM, the implementation of TM, the definition of knowledge, KM and the implementation of KM, and including the integration of TM and KM. This chapter discusses the research methodology, design, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

### 3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was used because the aim of this study was to explore the possible integration of TM and KM to establish if it does support staff retention in the

South African public service. According to Ritchie et al. (2013), qualitative research is a method that provides a holistic understanding of the view of the world in which the participants live and work.

Qualitative research is also assumed to be a naturalistic, subjective, interpretivist philosophy (Creswell, 2014; Ormston et al., 2014; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013; Rudestam & Newton, 2015) that assumes that meaning is not discovered but is constructed by people's experience and the context in which they operate (Merriam, 2009; Ormston et al., 2014; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Therefore, in this study, a document analysis was undertaken and individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior and middle managers working in the field of TM, KM and HRM in order to gain an understanding of the integration of TM and KM and to establish how these concepts are applied and whether they support staff retention.

According to Babbie (2014), the research methodology is generally influenced by the philosophical assumptions adopted by the researcher. The subsequent sections clarify the research paradigm, the nature of the study and the research design.

### **3.2.1 Theoretical paradigm informing the research**

A paradigm is regarded as a general philosophy that influences the manner in which a research study will be carried out. It helps the researcher to identify and explain why qualitative, quantitative or mixed research methods are chosen (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Accordingly, the research design is influenced by the philosophical assumption held by the researcher and the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Ritchie et al., 2013). Likewise, Tracy (2013) explains that a paradigm guides the processes that is used for data collection, analysis and the interpretation of the results in order to understand the reality of the world.

There are various philosophical assumptions, such as positivism, postpositivism and interpretivism, to name but a few that are used by researchers (Creswell, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013). Creswell (2014) explains that postpositivism philosophy is normally undertaken by researchers who believe that understanding can be gained through interacting with the people who experience the phenomenon under

investigation. They base their understanding on interpreting the responses of the participants.

Considering the foregoing discussion, qualitative research based on interpretivist philosophical assumptions was deemed to be the most appropriate for this study. It was the researcher's conviction that, through interacting with senior and middle managers employed in the South African public service, he would be able to explore and gain a better understanding of how TM and KM are defined and applied to retain talented employees, as well as gaining an understanding of how TM and KM are integrated and whether they support staff retention. This will enable the researcher to identify and interpret the patterns, similarities and differences that emerge, including the identification of barriers and enablers that are deemed important for the integration.

### **3.2.2 Nature of the study: Qualitative research**

Qualitative research focuses on uncovering knowledge and the construction of meaning by the people who experience it (Merriam, 2009; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Therefore, qualitative research provides researchers with systematic tool for data collection and analysis (Suter, 2012). Accordingly, qualitative research focuses on describing and providing meaning in order to fully understand the subject under investigation (Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) explain that the word "quality" suggests an emphasis on the qualities of phenomena, and the processes and meanings that cannot be measured by using numbers.

Furthermore, qualitative research is flexible and permits the use of various research designs, such as descriptive, exploratory and contextual, as it aims to explore the understanding and experiences and describe group characteristics, perceptions and views in the natural setting (Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Suter, 2012; Tracy, 2013). Likewise, there is no standardised approach to designing a qualitative research study (Creswell, 2007).

This study is qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual. The choice for choosing qualitative research was influenced by the research paradigm (interpretivism), the research questions and the objectives of the study. For example,

Suter (2012) states that the qualitative research design is based on a logical flow that links to the research questions and objectives of the study. The following section explains in detail the rationale for choosing a qualitative research approach.

### **3.2.3 Rationale for using qualitative research**

Creswell (2014) and Nieuwenhuis (2011) assert that the greatest strength of qualitative research hinges on the richness, exploration and describing of the phenomenon exactly as it occurs in the natural context. It can also be used to explore a specific subject about which little is known (Ritchie & Ormston, 2014).

This study explored the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention in the South African public service, as little is known about this, especially in the South African context. Therefore, exploration, description and contextualisation of TM and KM were required to understand how HR managers, and TM and KM practitioners define and apply these concepts. Furthermore, it also was necessary to gain an understanding of how the integration enhances staff retention. According to Ritchie and Ormston (2014), a qualitative approach enables the researcher to elicit the information and understanding required for the formulation and implementation of policy and the assessment of its impact. It was for these reasons that qualitative research was deemed the most appropriate for the study.

It is worth noting that the study did not aim to prove any theory, but it was believed that, through interaction with the participants and from the researcher's collection of data, as well as from the analysis and interpretation of the data, it would be possible to discover patterns, trends and themes, as explained by Nieuwenhuis (2011) and Rudestam and Newton (2015), in order to contextualise the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention in the South African public service.

### **3.2.4 The assumptions and attributes of qualitative research**

The following are some of the attributes and assumptions of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Ritchie & Ormston, 2014; Suter, 2012):

- Knowledge is produced by people and qualitative research allows the researcher to explore and understand the unique circumstances.
- The participants provide information to the researcher, who uses it to create meanings and make interpretations.

- Interpreting what the researcher hears and observes is a key distinguishing factor for qualitative research.
- The researcher is involved in the data collection process and the interpretation of the findings, which render objectivity impossible.
- Social reality is difficult to capture and to present accurately due to the different perceptions and understandings of the participants.
- Qualitative research tends to collect data from multiple sources, using interviews, observations and documents, rather than relying on a single data source.
- The researcher is concerned with understanding and learning the meaning as it is constructed by the participants, and not the meaning held by the researcher.

The following section explains the advantages and limitations of qualitative research.

### **3.2.5 Advantages and limitations of qualitative research**

No research approach is exempted from having advantages and limitations. The following are some of the advantages and limitations of qualitative research. Creswell (2007), Maxwell (2013), Suter (2012) and Tracy (2013) have listed some of the advantages of using qualitative research:

- The strength of qualitative research lies in its process orientation to explaining the world, as perceived by the people who live in it. This process explains the outcomes and processes that experimental and survey research are often poor at identifying (Maxwell, 2013).
- Qualitative research generates results that are understandable and experientially credible to both the participants and to other people who may be interested in the study (Maxwell, 2013).
- Qualitative research can provide a clear, detailed understanding and complex concepts in a particular context (Creswell, 2007; Tracy, 2013).

Qualitative research has its shortfalls, as outlined by Suter (2012):

- Qualitative research is often criticised for its lack of generalisation of the research findings.

- Data collection and analysis are challenging, complex, and time consuming.

It was not the aim of this study to generalise the findings to the entire population of the study, as it aimed to explore and describe the integration of talent and KM to support staff retention (as explained in sections 1.10.1 and 3.22). Therefore, this weakness was not of concern to this study. The researcher wrote to the two departments and obtained approval to access confidential documents and to conduct interviews with the targeted participants. This also allowed easy access to the participants. The subsequent sections explain the research design of the study.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design refers to the logical framework that guides the method for data collection in order to respond to the research questions of the study (Babbie, 2013; David & Sutton, 2011; DeForge, 2010). To put it simply, the research design provides a researcher with a specific direction and procedure for conducting a research inquiry.

Qualitative research is undertaken by a researcher to purposefully explore, describe, explain and interpret the data collected within a specific context (Yin, 2016). Qualitative research is regarded as descriptive, exploratory research, which are both key features of contextual research (Ritchie & Ormston, 2014). Therefore, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research designs were adopted for this study.

#### **3.3.1 Descriptive research**

Qualitative researchers tend to refer to thick description research as a method of naturalistic inquiry, which permits the researcher to observe, document and provide a background of the participants or groups within a defined natural setting (Given, 2007; Tracy, 2013).

The aim of descriptive research is not to generalise the findings, but to describe the characteristics of the participants in the study (Suter, 2012) and to explain the current trends, practices, structures, differences or relationships that exist with regard to the phenomenon under investigation within the natural context (Tracy, 2013).

The descriptive techniques was deemed appropriate for this study to explore and describe the participants' attitudes, opinions and personal views on the integration of TM and KM using interviews with open-ended questions and probing.

### **3.3.2 Exploratory research**

An exploratory study is a research strategy for investigating a relatively new field or when little is known about the subject under investigation, thereby permitting the researcher to gain new insights (Streb, 2010).

The exploratory research method was deemed suitable because there is only limited research on and not much is known about the integration of TM and KM, especially in the South African context. Thus, the researcher was aiming to gain new insight, discover how TM and KM are applied in the public service and whether they support the retention of the right staff. A further aim was to elicit the participants' views on how to integrate TM and KM to sustain staff.

### **3.3.3 Contextual research**

Creswell (2007) asserts that what people say is normally influenced by the context in which they are saying it, therefore it is difficult to separate what people say from the context or social world. Ritchie and Ormston (2014) explain that contextual research comprises research techniques for establishing what exists in the social world and the way these things have been constructed.

Considering the above assertion, the context of this study was two national departments in the South African public service in Gauteng province. The opinions, views and experiences of the participants regarding the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention cannot be studied outside the context in which the participants are working. Therefore, the participants' explanations and perceptions were greatly influenced by the context and experience they had in the South African public service. The subsequent sections discuss in detail the population, the sampling techniques, the data collection method and the analysis process used in this study.

### **3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

Babbie (2013) defines population as a group of individual people or organisations that the researcher is interested to study and draw conclusions on. Similarly, David and Sutton (2011) assert that a population in the nature of enquiry is the targeted population, which is usually defined by the research objectives of the study. Babbie (2013) asserts that it is often not practical, if not impossible, to study the entire population, and this may require a sample of the population.

As documented in Chapter 1, section 1.11, the target population for this study was senior- and middle managers employed in two national departments in the South African public service in Pretoria, Gauteng province. The researcher was convinced that these groups of employees would contribute meaningfully to the study, as they were experienced public servants. They also were more articulate and mature and able to express themselves. They could provide valuable inputs on how the public service defines and applies TM and KM, and how these terms can be integrated to support staff retention. Due to time and monetary limitations it was impossible to involve all the senior- and middle managers in both departments in this study. Therefore, the researcher had to select a sample from the total population. The next section outlines the sampling method used in this study.

#### **3.4.1 Sample and sampling method**

A sample refers to the portion of the population in which the study is conducted (Daniel, 2012; David & Sutton, 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Rapley, 2014). Qualitative research mostly use the purposive sampling method, which includes a variety of sampling techniques ranging from convenience and quota to snowball sampling (Huck, Beavers & Esquivel 2010; Yin, 2016).

A purposive sampling technique, which is a sub-set sampling technique for non-probability sampling, was used for this study. It is a strategy commonly used in qualitative research to identify and select individual participants or groups that are knowledgeable about the subject under investigation (Palikas et al., 2015). Likewise, the purposive sampling technique uses criteria determined by the researcher to select the appropriate participants (Huck et al., 2010; Yin, 2016). Basit (2010) and Emmel (2013) assert that purposive sampling allows the use of discretion, knowledge or experience by the researcher when choosing a sample that is deemed

suitable for the study. Babbie (2014) explains that qualitative research purposefully selects the site and the participants or documents to be included in the study. Purposive sampling can be done using stick criteria, called criterion-based purposive sampling or only purposive sampling (Palikas et al., 2015).

The criteria purposive sampling technique was used for this study. Palikas et al. (2015) explain that criteria purposive sampling is used to identify and select individuals who meet some predetermined criteria. The reason for using this sampling technique was that the researcher wanted to interview people who met the selection criteria set out in section 3.4.2. Therefore, the researcher used his knowledge and experience to select participants, meeting the criteria.

### 3.4.2 Sampling criteria

According to Huck et al. (2010) and Rapley (2014), the research questions and objectives are used to select the sample that needs to be included in the study. The following criteria were used to select the participants in this study (Table 3.2):

Table 3.2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
The participants must be permanently employed in the South African public service.	Contract employees, part time employees and interns are excluded.
As a minimum, participants must have five years working experience.	Employees who have less than five years' working experience in the public service.
The participants must be working in, either the field of HRM, TM or KM or a related field in the public service.	Employees who are not working in the field of HRM, TM and KM or related field.
The participants must either be employed as a senior or middle management position.	Employees who hold a position below senior and middle management.
The participants must be willing to be interviewed individually.	Employees who are not willing to participate.

As previously stated, qualitative research does not have a prescribed minimum number of participants, but focus on the saturation of the data collected. This means that in conducting the interviews, participants do not add to what was already documented. At the beginning, the researcher estimated that 13 interviews would meet this requirement. While interviewing the 10<sup>th</sup> participant, the researcher noticed

that the data collected showed repetition of those already documented. The researcher continued conducting another two interviews to confirm the saturation of data. Therefore, a total of 13 participants were interviewed.

An overview on the biographic information of the participants selected for this study is presented in the next section.

### 3.4.3 Overview of the participants

The participants were senior managers (SM) and middle managers (MM) employed in two departments (Department A and Department B) in the South African public service in Pretoria, Gauteng. The researcher allocated numbers to the individual participants, ranging from 1 to 13, with the abbreviation "MM" or "SM" respectively, for example P1MM to P13SM. Accordingly, Table 3.3 presents an overview of the total number of people who participated in the study.

Table 3.3: Overview of the biographical data of the participants

Name of department	Number and category	Gender	Race	Job designation	Years of experience in the public service
Department A	P1MM	Female	African/Black	DD: KM	9 years
	P2SM	Female	Coloured	CD: HRM	10 years
	P3SM	Male	African/Black	Dir: KM	19 years
	P4SM	Female	Coloured	Dir: HRM	26 years
	P9MM	Male	White	DD: HRM	42 years
	P10SM	Female	African/Black	CD: HRM	15 years
	P11SM	Male	African/Black	CD: HRM & D	11 years
	P13SM	Female	White	Dir: IM	28 years
Department B	P5MM	Female	African/Black	DD: HRM	10 years
	P6MM	Female	White	DD: TM	22 years
	P7MM	Male	Indian	ASD: TM	20 years
	P8MM	Female	African/Black	DD: KM	10 years
	P12SM	Male	White	Dir: RM	23 years

ASD = Assistant Director, DD = Deputy Director, Dir = Director, CD = Chief Director HRM, HRM&D, RM = Record management, IM = Information Management

Two participants (P12SM and P13SM) were working in the field of information management and records management respectively. Although these fields are not in the KM field, they are related and the researcher and supervisor felt that these participants could provide valuable inputs and as such were included in the study.

### **3.5 Data collection method**

Data collection is described as a well-planned approach consisting of various activities used to collect data in order to respond to the research questions of a study (Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, qualitative research tends to collect data using multiple sources, such as interviews, observations and documents (Creswell, 2014; Gray, 2009).

In this study, a document analysis and semi-structured individual interviews were used to collect data. The next section discusses the data collection methods. The semi-structured interview is discussed first, and followed by a discussion of the document analysis method.

#### **3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews**

An interview is defined as an interactive process between two or more people (Barlow, 2010; Tracy, 2013). The aim is to understand the participant's viewpoint, rather than explaining the phenomenon to the participant (Creswell, 2014), thereby allowing the researcher to collect a wealth of information about the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2014; Rowley, 2012).

An interview question guide was used during the interview. The interview in this study was semi-structured, dominated by open-ended questions aimed at collecting information on the participants' views or opinions on the subject under investigation. According to Basit (2010), the questions in the interview guide do not necessarily need to be asked in the same order, and this enabled the researcher to probe further. The researcher may adapt the probing questions in accordance with what the interviewee is saying (Tracy, 2013). The researcher assumed that asking people who are working in the public service will help him gain an understanding of how TM and KM are integrated and support staff retention. Likewise, the aim of qualitative research is to ask questions and to understand the experiences, feelings and social practices of people (Willig, 2014).

The findings of the individual interviews were verified through a process of triangulation by examining and comparing them with the findings obtained from the document analysis and other, previous research-based findings.

### 3.5.2 Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

Table 3.4 presents the advantages of interviews, as explained by Basit (2010) and Rudestam and Newton (2015), as well as the disadvantages mentioned by Daniel and Turner (2010) and Tracy (2013).

Table 3.4: Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

Advantages of interviews	Disadvantages of interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews provide an opportunity for the researcher to build rapport and relationship of trust with the participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews are time consuming and expensive – especially when the researcher has to travel and use the services of a professional transcriber and coder.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews tend to achieve a high response rate compared to using postal survey questionnaires.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The presence of the researcher permits participants to seek clarification and the interviewer has the opportunity to restructure the questions to ensure that they are understood.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The interview questions may be confusing and misunderstood by the interviewees (Daniel &amp; Turner, 2010), as some questions may be ambiguous or contain jargon words (Tracy, 2013).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of an audio recorder (if participants agree) ensures that the researcher accurately captures the interviewees' responses while permitting the researcher to make notes and record impressions of reactions that may occur during the process.</li> </ul>	

In order to address these limitations or disadvantages, the researcher obtained a bursary to cover the cost of transcriptions and for the external coder. Fortunately there were no travelling costs associated with the study, as the researcher resides close to the departments where the study was conducted. In order to prevent misunderstanding in relation to the interview questions, the researcher conducted a pilot study, which is discussed in detail in section 3.8.

### **3.6 THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument for identifying the unit of analysis and for undertaking data collection (Creswell, 2014; Nieuwenhuis, 2011). Likewise, the main duty of the researcher is to conduct the face-to-face semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the researcher was responsible for conducting the face-to-face interviews, ensuring accurate recoding of the interview proceedings and making sure that the audio recorder was in good working order.

Two South African public service departments (viz. Department A and Department B) were targeted for this study to collect data from senior and middle managers. It therefore was the role of the researcher to apply for and get permission from these two departments prior to data collection. The director-general granted approval and the letter contained the name and contact numbers of the gatekeepers. The approval letters explained that the researcher should maintain the confidentiality of any private information that might be exposed during and after the interviews. For this reason the researcher had to undergo security vetting and sign a confidentiality agreement.

The gatekeepers were a manager and an administrator. The researcher established a good working relationship with the two gatekeepers by contacting them by e-mail and telephonically to explain the nature of the study, the required documents for analysis and the targeted participants. The requested documents were e-mailed and others were physically collected by the researcher.

Tracy (2013) proposes that researchers should schedule and confirm the interview with the participants. Therefore, the researcher, working together with the gatekeepers, sent an invitation letter and information sheet via e-mail to 17 potential participants who met the selection criteria. The information sheet communicated information regarding the research topic, the researcher and the reasons why the participants were selected. In the end, a total of 13 participants accepted the invitation to participate in the study. Then, in consultation with the participants, the researcher discussed and agreed on a suitable date, time and venue for the interviews with the participants. Furthermore, the researcher's role was to analyse the data and discuss the findings.

### **3.7 PROCEDURE FOR THE INTERVIEW**

Tracy (2013) and Creswell (2014) advocate that the researcher must plan and pay attention to the interview process and procedure. The procedure observed for the interview proceedings are discussed in the following sections.

#### **3.7.1 Procedure before interviewing**

The researcher liaised with the gatekeeper to organise a venue for the interviews. A boardroom was secured and used for the interviews. Two days before the interviews, the researcher sent individual reminders via e-mail to remind the participants about the interviews and to inform them about the date, time and venue. Only one participant rescheduled the time of the interview to be conducted in the morning (10:00) rather than in the afternoon (14:30), as was initially planned.

David and Sutton (2012) advise that interviews need to be transcribed and that transcribing may take time, and as such researchers must consider sourcing a transcription service from a professional service provider to speed up the process. Considering the fact that the interviews are audio recorded, a professional transcriber was organised to transcribe all the interviews. Furthermore, an independent external coder was sourced to independently code the transcriptions. Both the transcriber and the external coder signed confidentiality agreements. This was done to maintain the confidentiality of the information collected from the participants.

#### **3.7.2 Procedure during interviewing**

Before the interview commenced, the researcher introduced himself, explained the purpose of the study and the anticipated time of the interview, and informed the participants that participation in the study was voluntary. He also thanked the participants for accepting the invitation. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) explain that it is important to notify participants of the length of the interview and that participation is voluntary. The interviews were conducted in the boardroom and meeting room respectively where the participants were working.

Firstly, the researcher greeted and thanked the participants for accepting the invitation to participate in the study, and explained that the interview would be audio

recorded and that participation was voluntary. The researcher asked the participant's permission to audio record the interview. A total of 12 participants were audio recorded, while one participant was not comfortable to be audio recorded and the researcher therefore took notes by hand. All 13 participants agreed to participate voluntarily and signed a consent form.

Secondly, the researcher explained the purpose of the interview and the anticipated time it would take. According to Tracy (2013), the interview should start by briefing the participant on the research topic to be covered. In order to ensure that there was minimum disturbance, a sign was placed outside the boardroom door sensitising people that interviews were in progress and that they should not be disturbed.

The researcher kept a notebook, pen and spare batteries for the audiotape recorder. The audio recorder was placed on top of the boardroom table, between the researcher and the interviewee, throughout the interview proceedings. The notebook was used to write any important information that was observed during the interview proceedings. It was observed that the participants were free and relaxed and they also showed by nodding of the head that they agreed to switch off their cell phone and to proceed with the interview. The notebook was used to detail the gender and race of the participant and the date, time and place where the interviews were conducted. According to Creswell (2014), the researcher should have a book to take note of the physical setting, including demographic information, date, time and place where the interview has taken place.

On the day of the interview, before the interview took place, five questions relating to biographical information were asked and the participants were asked to tick the correct answers on a list regarding their gender, race, age, educational qualification, job position, job title and years of experience. An interview question guide (Annexure A) was used. A digital audiotape recorder and note taking were used to record the interview proceedings. Although the interviews were recorded, the researcher also made notes on key issues.

The participants were not forced to answer all the questions, although the researcher used probing techniques where he saw a need to further clarify and get additional

information to understand the participants' statements. Daniel and Turner (2010) and Tracy (2013) explain that interviewees may avoid answering questions, and it therefore is important for the researcher to consider rephrasing the question or asking a follow-up question or summarising the participant's responses. It was observed during the interview proceedings that all the participants were relaxed and expressed themselves freely.

Creswell (2014) emphasises that the researcher must thank the interviewee for his/her time for participating in the study. Therefore, after finishing with the interview, the researcher thanked the participants for participating in the study. The participants were informed that, once the interviews had been transcribed, he would e-mail the transcripts for member checking to ensure the correctness of the transcription.

### **3.7.3 Procedure after interviewing**

The recorded responses of the participants were transcribed into a written text by a professional transcriber. Sound effects and pauses were not transcribed. Two weeks from the date of the interview, the interview transcripts were e-mailed to the individual participants for comments and for confirmation that it accurately captured and represented their views. All the participants confirmed that the transcriptions were a true reflection of their views or opinions. Thereafter, the researcher started to organise the data and prepare it for analysis.

## **3.8 PILOT STUDY**

A pilot study is preliminary research that is undertaken before the actual study is executed (Yin, 2016). It is used to pre-test the research questions in the interview schedule and to assess the time needed per interview and to make adjustments to the questions, where necessary (Persaud, 2010). David and Sutton (2012) and Roller and Lavrakas (2015) suggest that the researcher should ask the participants how they have experienced the interview and whether the questions asked were addressing the core feature of the research project.

In this study, the researcher consulted two academics (professor and associate professor) at the University of South Africa (UNISA) for critical review and to provide expert advice on the questions in the interview guide. After their inputs, the necessary amendments were made to the final interview question guides.

A pilot study was conducted with three participants – two who were employed in the field of HRM and one employed in the field of KM. The reason for conducting the pilot study was to check if the questions in the interview guide were clear and easy to understand, and to determine the time required per interview. The data obtained from the pilot study was not included in the discussion of the main study data.

The pilot interview was conducted on 30 September 2015 and 1 August 2015, in one of the targeted national departments (Department A) in Pretoria. The interviews in the pilot study were recorded and transcribed. These interviews were numbered P1MM, P2MM and P3MM. Table 3.5 summarises the biographical information and position of the participants, and the duration of the pilot interviews.

Table 3.5: Profiles of the participants in the pilot study

<b>Number and category of participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Job designation</b>	<b>Years of experience in the public service</b>	<b>Length of the interview (hours: minutes: seconds)</b>
P1MM	Male	White	DD: HRM-JE	42 years	0046:34
P2MM	Female	Black	DD: CM	13 years	00:30:23
P3MM	Female	Black	DD: KM	9 years	00:44:59
<b>Total time</b>					<b>02:40:39</b>
<b>Average length of each interview</b>					<b>00:40:39</b>

DD = Deputy Director, HRM = Human Resource Management, JE = Job Evaluation, CM = Career Management, KM = Knowledge Management

According to Table 3.5, the pilot study was conducted in 2 hours, 40 minutes and 39 seconds. The maximum time spent per interview was 46 minutes and 34 seconds and the minimum time spent was 30 minutes and 23 seconds. On average, the pilot interviews took 40 minutes and 39 seconds. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) suggest that the length of interviews should be between 30 and 60 minutes.

The participants' responses confirmed that the questions were appropriate, clear and easy to understand and relevant to the study. After consultation with his supervisor, the researcher proceeded to conduct the main interviews for the study.

### 3.9 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document analysis is a technique commonly used in qualitative research (Bowen, 2009; Coffey, 2014). It is a systematic approach to evaluating relevant documents (secondary data) for the purpose of uncovering meaning, developing understanding and discovering insight relevant to the research study (Bowen, 2009; Coffey, 2014). Document analysis includes text, audio and visual artefacts that exist in a natural setting (Raptis, 2010). Qualitative research study can be enhanced by collecting and analysing documents (Coffey, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, 14 official documents from the two selected national departments (Department A and Department B) were reviewed and analysed. In order to gain access to confidential documents, the researcher liaised with the allocated gatekeepers (a manager and an administrator) of the two departments. These documents included exit interview reports for the previous three financial years (viz. 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2014/2015), HRM policies (e.g. recruitment policies, performance management policy, retention policies, succession planning, job rotation, mentorship) and HRP. Public documents such as the annual reports for the three financial years (viz. 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2014/2015) were also studied.

According to Coffey (2014), documents serve as a tool to create understanding and to sensitise the researcher to the social and organisational practices. Similarly, Raptis (2010) asserts that document analysis helps the researcher to examine and gain background on the concept under investigation. This includes the tracking of changes and the development of the topic under investigation (Bowen, 2009). Thus, the main reasons for conducting document analysis in this study were:

- To gain an understanding of and background to the extent of the research problem by identifying the trends of staff resignation for the previous three financial years.
- To establish how the organisation defines the terms talent, TM and KM, including the application thereof.
- To establish the reasons for staff resignation from the South African public service.

Coffey (2014) asserts that documents are created for a particular purpose and can help a researcher to understand how the organisation operates, and how employees perform, interact and behave in social settings. The documents were not only used to gain background, but also to supplement the data collected through the interviews and to verify the responses of the participants (O'Brien, 2014).

### **3.9.1 Selection criteria for the documents**

The following selection criteria or questions were used, as suggested by Coffey (2014):

- Who is the author or approver of the document? This question aimed to establish the authenticity of the documents. Thus, the researcher verified that the documents were signed by the relevant authority, as well as the date on which they were signed or approved.
- What is the function and purpose of the document? The researcher explored the aim of the documents, the intended audience, and how the organisation defines certain terms.
- What kind of reality does the document create? This question aimed to discover the resignation trends, the retention strategies and the reasons for staff turnover.

### **3.9.2 Advantages and disadvantages of document analysis**

Document analysis has some advantages and disadvantages or limitations. Table 3.6 presents the advantages and disadvantages of document analysis as explained by Bowen (2009), Raptis (2010), Coffey (2014) and Creswell (2014). Bowen (2009) and Creswell (2014) argue that the benefit of document analysis overshadows its limitations.

Table 3.6: Advantages and disadvantages of document analysis

Advantages of document analysis	Disadvantages of document analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document analysis is an efficient and cost-effective data collection method (Bowen, 2009).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organisation may not permit the researcher to gain access to confidential information.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documents enable the researcher to establish background information and to track changes and developments in the phenomena under investigation (Coffey, 2014; Raptis, 2010).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certain organisations may fail to accurately document or may not have the required information stored in documents. This will inhibit the researcher's access to true information from documents. Bowen (2009) asserts that insufficient information and restrictive documents are the major disadvantages of document analysis. Accordingly, readers of documents bring their own assumptions and interpretations (Coffey, 2014).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documents permit researchers to accurately record the conceptualisation of the phenomenon under investigation (Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2014).</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documents can reveal more information about the social setting or an individual life or perceptions (Coffey, 2014).</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documents provide information that can be used to safeguard against the interviewee's bias and gaps in perception versus reality (O'Brien, 2014).</li> </ul>	

In order to address these limitations, the researcher obtained permission to access confidential documents from the directors-general of the respective departments. In an instance where certain policies or information was not available, such as the KM policy and TM policy, the researcher assumed that the organisations did not have such documents.

### 3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

A qualitative content analysis was used as technique to analyse the documents and raw data from the transcribed interviews for this study. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) define qualitative content analysis as a "systematic reduction (i.e. condensation) of content, analysed, with special attention to the context in which the data were created, to identify themes and extract meaningful interpretations [of the data]". Content analysis is flexible and a logical approach for reducing the large data into manageable text (Basit, 2010; Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Schreier, 2014).

Babbie (2014) mentions two types of content analysis, namely manifest and latent content analysis. The former is regarded as objective and focuses on counting the frequency of codes, and the latter is deemed as subjective and is concerned with the analysis of the entire data, looking at the meaning and making of a subjective judgement. Therefore, in this study, a latent content analysis approach was used, as the researcher aimed to understand how the participants defined talent, TM, knowledge and KM, including the application and integration thereof.

The reasons why the researcher adopted the use of content analysis were based on the fact that the advantages of content analysis outweigh the disadvantages, as explained by Babbie (2014, p. 352) in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Advantages and disadvantages of content analysis

Advantages of content analysis	Disadvantages of content analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is economical in terms of time and cost.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is limited to recorded information only.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no need for a large team to do the analysis.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The analysis can be done without any special equipment, as long as there is data to code.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The audio recorded information such as interviews must be transcribed before coding and analysis can take place. Therefore, the transcription can be time consuming, especially if a professional transcriber is not used.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researchers can easily repeat the coding.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It uses a portion of the data as evidence rather than the entire data.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It allows the researcher to study historical information.</li> </ul>	

In order to minimise the impact of the abovementioned disadvantages, the researcher sourced the service of a professional transcriber. It was the idea of the study to use the documents and record the voices of the participants. Therefore, the documents and transcriptions were the units of analysis. For example, the documents were used to track historical information on staff resignation, and to understand how the South African public service conceptualises TM and KM. Accordingly, unit of analysis refers to the information elicited from the individual participants and the textual documents, which contain ideas about and meanings of the topic under investigation (Babbie, 2014; Moretti et al., 2011). Figure 3.1 illustrates the eight processes that were followed when analysing the raw data.

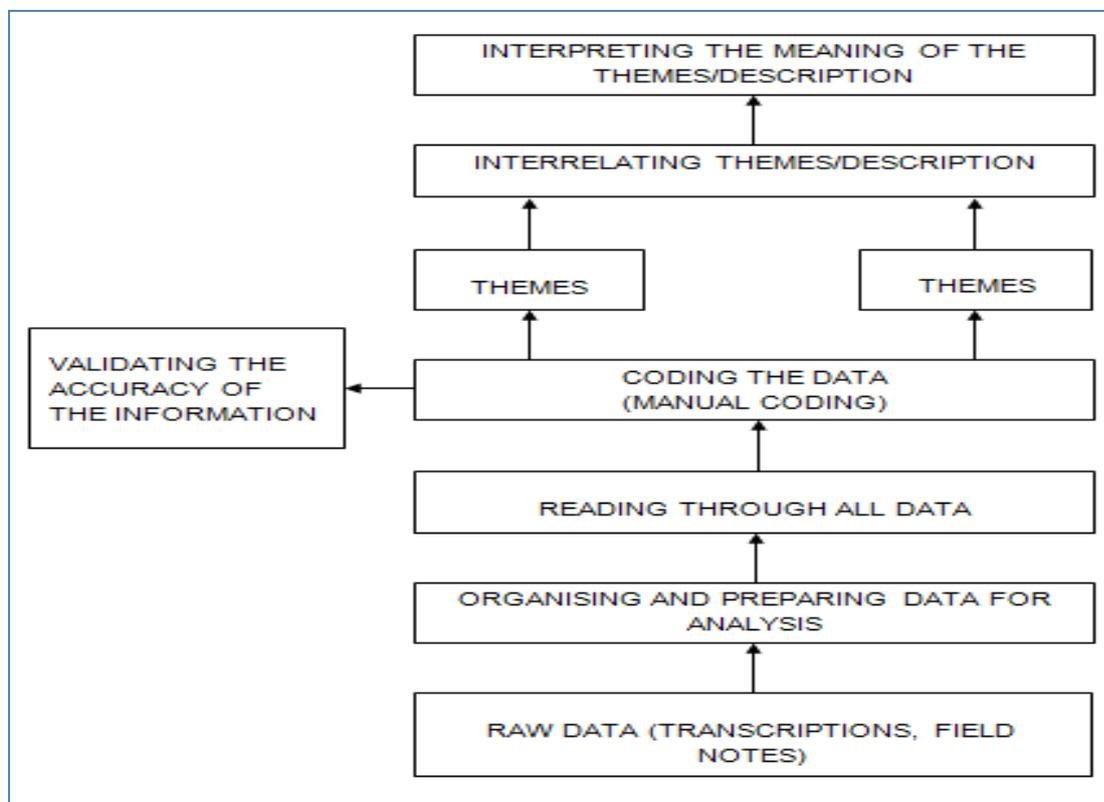


Figure 3.1: Process for data analysis

Source: Creswell (2014, p. 197)

### 3.10.1 Organising and preparing the data

As a start, the researcher organised and prepared the audio-recorded interview data for transcription. The transcription was done by professional transcribers. According to Creswell (2014), the audio-recorded participants' responses should be transformed into textual information and organised before starting with the analysis.

The transcribed interview responses were logically organised, and unique numbers were assigned to the individual interview transcriptions (P1MM, P2SM and P3SM). This was done to ensure that the names of the participants and of the organisations, as well as any names that may have been mentioned by the participants during the interviews, were not revealed. Thus, any specific name that was mentioned was replaced by a code letter, such as "X", "XX" or "Y", and the names of the organisations were replaced by the code name "Department". Roller and Lavrakas (2015) assert that research should organise the interview transcripts in a logical manner and remove any name that may make it easy to identify the participants.

### **3.10.2 Reading all the interview transcriptions**

Secondly, the researcher read and reread all the interview transcriptions in order to be familiar with the data and to get a general sense of the meaning that was being conveyed or suggested, while making notes on key emerging issues. Creswell (2014) advises that it is ideal to read and ask oneself about the ideas the participants are conveying by considering the tone and the impression created by the idea. Likewise, once the researcher was familiar with the data, a systematic data analysis could begin (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009).

Where necessary, the researcher listened to the audio recordings to ensure the accurate transcriptions of the responses. The researcher was constantly asking himself the following questions, as suggested by Creswell (2014) and Coffey (2014), when reading the participants' transcripts:

- What does this response reveal about the definition of TM or KM?
- What idea is revealed by the participant on the implementation of TM and KM in the public service?
- What is the credibility of the information?
- What is the impression created by the participants with regard to the integration of talent and KM?

Coffey (2014) indicates that a researcher must ask him/herself about the kind of reality the text in the document is revealing. While doing this, sentences were underlined and notes made on the side of the interview transcripts. Likewise, Willig (2014) says qualitative research is concerned with establishing the feelings and

experiences of people, including their social practices. Once the researcher was familiar with the data, a systematic data analysis could begin (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009).

### **3.10.3 Start coding**

The data were manually coded by the researcher and an experienced external qualitative coder. The coding was aiming at reducing the large amount of data into small, manageable text (Babbie, 2014; Creswell, 2014). Before the researcher and the external coder embarked on the coding process, they first met to discuss the coding approach and conducted a pilot coding to ensure that they both followed the same coding procedure. Roller and Lavraka (2015) assert that the initial coding is normally performed by two coders who independently code a few transcripts to ensure that they all understand the procedure.

The researcher and the external coder individually coded all the interview transcripts, and developed codes, themes and sub-themes. At the end of this process, the researcher and coder met to discuss their individual codes, themes and sub-themes and reached agreement. Likewise, Roller and Lavraka (2015) advocate a discussion of codes between the principal researcher and the second coder to resolve any unforeseen issues and to reach agreement. The refined codes, themes and sub-themes were developed and are presented in Chapter 5 of this study.

### **3.10.4 Generate description of themes and participants**

According to Creswell (2014) it is important to generate detailed descriptions of the themes by using the codes and developing themes that describe the views of the participants. This may involve developing themes on the biographical information of the participants and the organisation in which the research was conducted, including the date of and time spent per interview. The themes and sub-themes are presented as the main findings of the study and appear as headings.

### **3.10.5 Interrelated themes and description**

Interrelated sub-themes were linked with a specific theme and, in the end, a total of three main themes and ten sub-themes were developed. They are all presented in table format and then the themes are used as main heading for the findings, while the sub-themes are presented as sub-headings. After that, the individual themes and

sub-themes were discussed, including quotes from the participants to supplement the discussions and to serve as evidence.

Furthermore, the biographical information collected from the participants, including the information elicited through observation, were used to developed themes to describe the biographical information in detail. This included gender, race, age, educational qualifications, job position, job title and years of experience.

### **3.10.6 Interpreting the meaning of the themes**

In qualitative research, the researcher interprets the meaning of the findings and discusses the lesson learned from the study. This can be done by comparing the findings from the individual participants and from information obtained during the literature study (Creswell, 2014).

In this study, the findings from the senior managers and middle managers (participants) were compared with information from previous studies. Furthermore, at the end the presentation of the interview findings and the findings from the document analysis (section 5.2) were discussed, in comparison to the literature.

## **3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness relates to the validity and reliability of qualitative research studies (Suter, 2012; Yin, 2016). However, validity and reliability are not used in qualitative research but in quantitative research studies. Trustworthiness focuses on supporting the argument made in the findings of a study to enhance its credibility (Elo et al., 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1998, as cited in Elo et al., 2014) and Roller and Lavrakas (2015) identify four criteria for evaluating trustworthiness in qualitative research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These criteria are explained below.

### **3.11.1 Credibility**

Credibility refers to the truthfulness and verification of evidence (Lewis, Ritchie, Ormston & Morrell, 2014; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Suter, 2012). Thus, the researcher must accurately identify and describe the study participants, including the method used to collect the data (Elo et al., 2014). Table 3.2 presented the total

population of the study, and section 3.4 presented the approach used to collect the data.

Additionally, for the purpose of this study, credibility was ensured by the following three criteria, as mentioned by Lewis et al. (2014) and Roller and Lavrakas (2015):

- **Prolonged engagement** - The researcher engaged extensively with the participants during the interview stage. The participants were provided with an opportunity to provide additional information that they thought could assist in the implementation of TM, KM and the integration thereof. This lengthy interaction permitted the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.
- **Participants checking the transcriptions** - Once the interviews had been transcribed they were e-mailed back to the individual participants to check for correctness as part of member checking. The participants were encouraged to identify any shortcomings and to ensure that the information reflected their views. All the participants indicated that the transcriptions had captured their views correctly.
- **Triangulation** - According to Hussein (2009), triangulation refers to the use of various techniques to generate data to study the same phenomenon and helps to increase the credibility of the findings. Therefore, the researcher used document analysis, interviewed different participants (senior and middle managers) who held different positions (HR managers, TM practitioners and KM managers), as well as used field notes and literature control.

### **3.11.2 Transferability**

Green and Thorogood (2014) explain that transferability is concerned with the extent to which the findings of a study can be transferred or are applicable to another setting or context. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide a detailed explanation of the research context and the criteria used to select the participants in order to promote the transferability of the findings to a different context (Elo et al., 2014). However, Elo et al. (2014) argue that the transferability of a study will be influenced by the reader's judgement on whether or not the report findings are

transferable to another context. The following techniques, as explained by Elo et al. (2014) and Roller and Lavrakas (2015), were used in this study to ensure the transferability of the findings:

- A thick description of the phenomena investigated for the study is provided in sections 3.4 and 4.3.1, including the date and time when the data were collected. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) assert that a thick description should provide the name of the place, the date and time when the data were collected.
- The scope of the study and restrictions are discussed in detail in Chapter 1, section 1.8 and Chapter 5 of the study.
- The criteria used to select the participants are discussed in detail in section 3.4.2 of this chapter.
- The total number of participants who volunteered to participate in this study are mentioned in section 3.4.3 and the documents that were reviewed are discussed in section 3.10.
- Rich descriptions of the data and findings, which include quotations from the document analysis and the participants, are provided in Chapter 4.

### **3.11.3 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the integrity of the data in the sense that the same findings could be obtained if the study is repeated (Suter 2012; Williams & Morrow, 2014). In order to achieve dependability in qualitative research there should be a detailed explanation of the methodological procedure used in the study, especially the research design, data collection, data analysis, the method used to bracket biases and the use of quotations to support the findings (Williams & Morrow, 2014). To put it simply, there should be an audit trail of the findings (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Suter, 2012; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

In this study, the following dependability methods were used, as explained by Williams and Morrow (2014):

- Establish an audit trail that details the research method and design and provides a detailed explanation of the research paradigm and philosophy adopted in the study (sections 3.2 and 3.3).

- Discuss the data collection and analysis method of the study (sections 3.4 and 3.9).
- Discuss in detail the interview audio recordings procedure and the transcription process (section 3.8).
- Explain the procedure used to analyse the data (section, 3.11).
- Use direct quotations extracted from the participants' responses to support the findings (Chapter 4).
- Provide a detailed explanation of the bracketing of biases (section 3.12.5).

#### **3.11.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability (or conformability in some sources) refers to fairness regarding the degree to which the findings of the study represent the views of the participants and not the researcher's bias, views or interests (Elo et al., 2014; Suter, 2012). In short, confirmability in qualitative studies requires the researcher to acknowledge and maintain a balance between subjectivity and reflexivity (Williams & Morrow, 2014). Reflexivity is one's self-awareness, which enabled the researcher to clearly identify as far as possible what is reported by the participants and the researcher's interpretation (Williams & Morrow, 2014). In this study, confirmability was achieved by the following, based on Williams and Morrow (2014):

- Using self-reflexive note taking during the interview proceeding by using the study objectives and questioning the interpretation.
- Being transparent upfront about the interpretivist paradigm that was used in this study to arrive at the findings.
- Acknowledging the limitations of the qualitative research method selected for the study.
- Practising member checking of the interview transcriptions.
- Practising the use of the bracketing technique (section 3.12.5) to identify and acknowledge potential biases.

### **3.11.5 Bracketing**

According to Fischer (2014, p. 364) bracketing refers "to an investigator's identification of vested interests, personal experience, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study's data". This technique allows for the mitigation and suspension of any assumptions or knowledge, ideas and views that may be held by the researcher. However, Fischer (2014) mentions that bracketing does not totally get rid of bias, but the goal is to check if the researcher is imposing meanings on the study and to re-look to see what meanings might appear.

In this study, the researcher was well aware of possible bias that may influence the study, as he works in one of the departments (Department A). Fischer (2014) suggests that it is good practice for a researcher to identify his background and interests so that the reader can take the perspective of the researcher, which may possibly open them up to a new understanding. In this study, from the beginning the researcher has acknowledged and identified his interests.

Firstly, the aim of the study was to address the problem faced by the South African public service that is staff resignations and talent and knowledge retention (section 1.4). Therefore, the researcher purposefully chose a topic to establish and describe the integration of TM and KM in order to address this challenge (section 1.1). Secondly, the researcher acknowledged that he purposefully chose senior and middle managers to participate in this study. Thirdly, as far as possible, the researcher did not allow his background to influence the investigation of the phenomenon. The researcher consistently reflected on the objectives and research questions of this study to guide and keep him focused on the main topic of the study and to learn from the experience of the participants. Tufford and Newman (2010) assert that bracketing allows the researcher to focus on the research questions of the study. Lastly, only the views of the participants were used for reporting the study findings. This was to ensure that the researcher complied with ethical standards.

### **3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Babbie (2013, p. 32), citing the definition in Webster's *New World Dictionary*, defines ethical as "conforming to the standard of conduct of a given professional or group [or an institutions]". Suter (2012) and Babbie (2014) assert that researchers must uphold

ethical standards when conducting research projects in order to protect the well-being of the participants. The following ethical considerations were observed in this study.

### **3.12.1 Permission**

The researcher applied for and obtained approval from the research and ethics committee of the Department of Human Resource Management at UNISA before conducting the study. The researcher adhered to UNISA's Research and Ethics Policy.

Permission was granted by the two departments prior to the collection of empirical data. The approval provided that the researcher may access the building, recruit the potential participants and use the department's boardroom and meeting room to conduct the interviews, and allowed access to the relevant documents.

### **3.12.2 Informed consent**

Suter (2012) and Creswell (2014) assert that a researcher should avoid unfair recruitment of participants and obtain consent from the participants. According to Basit (2010), participants should be informed fully of the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research.

The researcher requested the permission of the participants to be interviewed. In order to enable the participants to make an informed decision, the researcher provided the potential participants with an information sheet that explained the purpose of the study, the aim, the name of the researcher, the type of participation (in this case it was an interview) and that anything shared during the interview would be kept confidential.

Before the researcher started with the interview process, the participants were verbally briefed and informed that participation in the study was voluntary. The researcher briefed each participant on the purpose for the study and requested their permission to audio record the interview. According to Basit (2010) and Green and Thorogood (2014), participation in a study should be entirely voluntary and participants should not be forced or induced into research against their will.

Therefore, the participants were encouraged to indicate their voluntary participation by signing the consent form.

### **3.12.3 Right to privacy**

The interviews were conducted in a place convenient to the participants. All participants agreed to the interview being conducted in a closed environment such as a boardroom or meeting room. The audiotape records and interview transcriptions were saved in the researcher's laptop. The laptop is password protected and the hard copies of the transcriptions and documents were kept in a lockable cupboard at the home of the researcher, as suggested by Webster et al. (2014).

### **3.12.4 Protection from harm**

The researcher assured the participants that there would be no harm from participating in the study, either physical or emotional. The participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time, without giving any reasons if they feel uncomfortable (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). Furthermore, the collected data would be stored in a password-protected personal computer and the notebook would be kept in a lockable cupboard for five years. Thereafter, a computer program or software designed to permanently delete the information from the computer would be used and the researcher would physically destroy the notebook by burning it.

### **3.12.5 Confidentiality and anonymity**

According to Webster et al. (2014), the researcher must maintain confidentiality and the anonymity of the participants in a research project at all times. Likewise, Basit (2010) and Green and Thorogood (2014) assert that the confidentiality of information supplied by and the anonymity of participants must be respected by researchers.

In this study, the researcher used code names (pseudo names) when reporting or citing evidence from the interview transcripts. The names of the organisations were not revealed, as the name "departments" was used. The researcher was interested in gaining an understanding from the participants' points of view on the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention in the public service. Therefore, the names of the participants were not of value and as such they were not revealed. In addition, the participants' responses were not linked to their names.

### **3.13 SUMMARY**

This chapter examined the research design, the nature of the study (qualitative) and the research paradigm used, namely the interpretivist paradigm, and the research methodology. The advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research and content analysis were presented. Additionally, a purposive sampling technique, guided by clear criteria, was used to select the participants. The data collection method, namely semi-structured interviews conducted by using an interview guide, along with document reviews, was discussed, as well as content analysis as a technique for data analysis, along with the role of the researcher, the procedure before, during and after the interviews, and trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents the analysis and discussion of the research findings based on the document analysis and the information elicited from the participants' opinions or views regarding the application of TM and KM and the possible benefit that can be achieved by the integration of TM and KM.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 discussed the introduction to the study, the problem statement and the main research objective, which was to establish whether TM and KM are integrated and whether they support staff retention in the South African public service. Chapter 2 presented the literature study, focusing on talent, TM and KM and the implementation thereof. Chapter 3 discussed, in detail, the qualitative research design and methodology for this study, which included the data collection methods (document analysis and semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews), population, sample and sampling criteria, the pilot study as well as the data analysis technique.

The main purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse the qualitative data obtained during the document analysis and from the semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the research findings will be presented in two phases, with an overarching summary that combines both phases of findings at the end.

Phase 1 comprises the findings from the document analysis and phase 2 the findings from the interviews. The reason for analysing documents was to explore and gain an understanding of how the selected South African public service departments conceptualise talent, TM and KM. Secondly, it was to understand the research problem under investigation and to analyse the trends of staff turnover over the past three financial years, including the factors that cause staff resignation.

The following section presents a summation of the findings obtained from the document analysis (phase 1) and interviews (phase 2), including the literature study.

### **4.2 PHASE 1: FINDINGS FROM DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

A total of 14 documents from the two departments (Department A and Department B) were reviewed. These documents were two recruitment policies, two retention policies, two HRPs covering the period from 2015 to 2020, two annual reports (AR) and two exit interview reports for the 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 financial

years, as well as one performance management and development policy for senior managers. The following policies were found in Department B only: Job rotation policy, succession policy and mentorship policy. It should be noted that the TM and KM policies were requested from these two departments but were not provided. The researcher assumed that there were no policies for TM and KM. All these documents were approved by either the Minister or the director-general of the respective departments.

At the end of the analysis it was found that all the policies reviewed for Department A did not provide any definitions of the terms talent and TM. The term KM was not defined by any policies of both departments. However, the performance management and development system (PMDS) for senior managers identifies KM as one of the 11 competencies that senior managers are expected to have in the South African public service. The terms critical skills, scarce skills and valued skills were commonly used in these policies. It was observed that there were various reasons (section 4.2.3) for staff resignation in the departments.

The findings from the document analysis are discussed under the following headings: The definition of talent, TM and KM, trends in the annual staff turnover and reasons for staff resignation. Thereafter, the interview findings will be discussed.

#### **4.2.1 Definition of talent, talent management and knowledge management**

The analysis revealed that the recruitment policies of the two departments did not define the terms talent, TM or KM. However, it was noted that the term talent appeared only once in each department. Department A indicated that headhunting would be done where scarce and critical skills were not available. In fact, the terms scarce skills, critical skills and valuable skills are commonly used in the policies and it seems that the departments are targeting to retain these groups of employees.

In the job rotation policy, scarce skills are defined as *"those skills that are needed to realise the [departmental] goal and objectives, but which are difficult to recruit and expensive to replace..."*, and critical skills are explained as *"those skills that are vitally important for the achievement of organisational goals. This term is also used in relation to a highly-skilled employee who may soon leave the [department]"*. Valued skills are seen as the skills *"that [are] not so much the scarcity of the skills,*

*but rather the value of the individual employee who makes a positive contribution and whose loss would have a negative impact on the [department's] objectives".*

Furthermore, when analysing the retention policies of these two departments, it was found that only Department B referred to the terms talent and TM. The retention policy of Department B defined talent as "*those people who have high potential, scarce, valued, high risk skills and knowledge*", and TM was defined as:

*A conscious, deliberate approach undertaken to attract, recruit, develop and retain people with the aptitude and abilities in a pool of top talent to meet current and future organisational needs. It therefore supports the recruitment, development, deployment, succession and retention of talent across the organisation (Retention policy, p. 9).*

However, the retention policy of Department A does not make any reference to either the term talent or TM. There is no mention of the term KM in either the recruitment or retention policies.

It is important to note that the HRP for 2015 to 2020 of both departments mentions KM as a competence that needs to be developed and shows that the departments need to develop a KM strategy. Yet no definition is provided for KM.

It was interesting to observe that the PMDS policy for senior managers identified KM as one of the 11 competencies that a senior manager needs to have. In terms of Annexure E of the SM PMDS policy, KM is described as "*obtains, analyses and promotes the generation and sharing of knowledge and learning in order to enhance the collective knowledge of the organisation*".

Interestingly, the PMDS for senior managers provides eight generic standards for KM. These standards are used to assess the extent to which senior managers are using the competence of KM. This standard relates to the:

*use [of] appropriate information systems to manage organisational knowledge, [evaluate] information from multiple sources and [use] information to influence decisions, [create] mechanisms and structures for sharing of knowledge in the organisation, [promote] the importance of knowledge sharing within own area, [adapt] and [integrate] information from*

*multiple sources to create innovative knowledge management solutions and [nurture] a knowledge-enabling environment.*

Accordingly, the HRP reveals that there are no plans in place to address staff turnover, and staff retirement is identified as a major cause of the knowledge gap and the loss of critical skills. It also reveals that staff resignations will result in institutional memory loss, including the loss of historical knowledge and the loss of critical experience. Consequently, this will lead to the failure to achieve organisational objectives due to the failure to preserve the knowledge and experience required for effective production. The following information comes from pages 61 to 63, 89 and 169 of the HRPs of the two departments.

*There are currently no programmes in place to be utilized to address attrition problems linked with losing experienced staff and no accelerated training programmes to impart skills and knowledge to the youth to assume leadership positions. Experienced staff leaving the department due to retirement before transfer of knowledge and skill can occur ... (HRP 2015-2020, p. 61 and 63).*

*Historical knowledge and experience [will be] lost to the department without knowledge management. Service delivery may be compromised as the performance of newly appointed people may pick up slow[ly] (HRP 2015-2020, p. 89).*

*Possible loss of institutional knowledge due to retirements, potential impact - Delay in achievement of objectives (HRP 2015-2020, p. 169).*

A similar concern was found in the exit interview reports, in which an employee mentioned that the department needed to put in place a system to help with knowledge sharing, as the current KM system was not adequate. The following quote was extracted from the exit interview report: "*no proper knowledge management system in place. More systems needed to be put in place in order to promote sharing and development.*"

The following section indicates the trends in staff resignations for the past three financial years.

#### 4.2.2 Trends in annual staff turnover

The information contained in the documents and the analysis reveals a variation in the reasons for staff resignations in the two departments. Table 4.1 shows that the turnover over the past three years ranged from a minimum of 7.6% to a maximum of 28%. The highest turnover of 28% was recorded by Department A in the financial year 2012/2013.

Table 4.1: Trends of annual staff turnover

Document title	Turnover trends over three financial years			Average percentage
	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	
Department A, AR	34 (8.1%)	43 (8.7%)	137 (28%)	71 (14.9)
Department B, AR	101 (7.6%)	189 (13.8%)	167 (10.6%)	152 (10.7%)
<b>Total average</b>	<b>68</b> <b>(7.9%)</b>	<b>116</b> <b>(11.3%)</b>	<b>152</b> <b>(19.3%)</b>	<b>112</b> <b>(12.8%)</b>

Interestingly, the information shows that, from the 2012/2013 to 2014/2015 financial years, staff turnover in Department A increased from 8.1% to 28%, and Department B experienced an increase in staff turnover from 7.6% to 13.8% in the 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 financial years and in 2014/2015 financial year it was 10.6%. However, the annual reports do not clearly indicate the strategy that is used to minimise staff turnover.

The average staff turnover of both departments was 12.8%, and the highest average of 19.3% was recorded in the 2014/2015 financial year. Figure 4.1 graphically illustrates the percentage of staff turnover. The graph indicates that there is a fluctuation in staff turnover in the two departments. However, the documents reveal that Department B experienced a slightly higher staff turnover in 2013/2014 compared to Department A in the same year, while Department A had the highest turnover in the 2014/2015 financial year compared to the turnover in Department B.

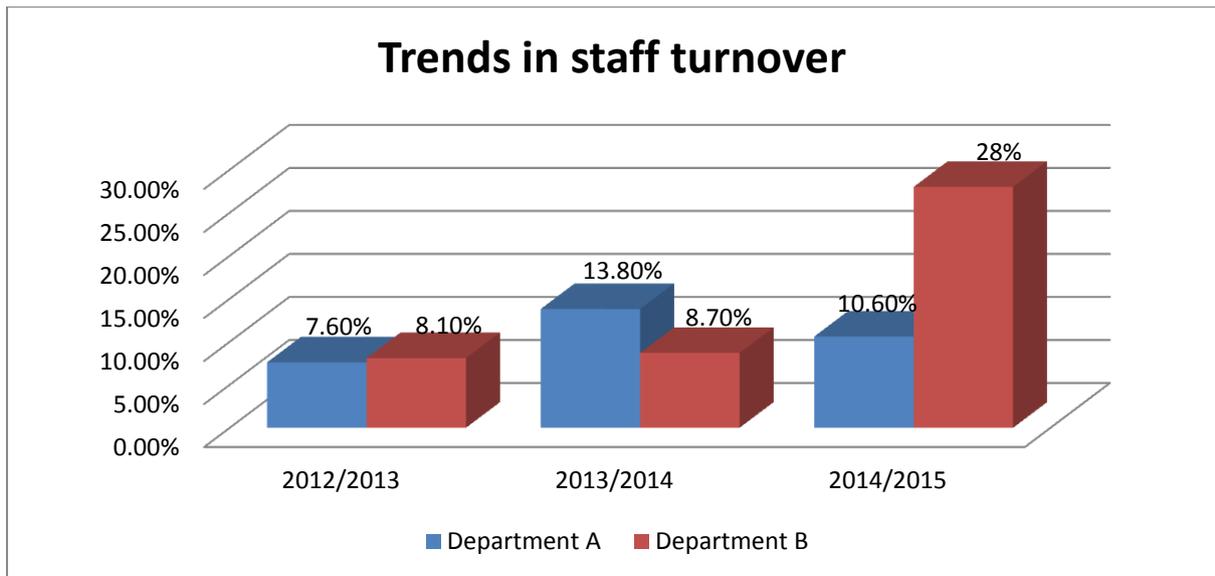


Figure 4.1: Trends in staff turnover

It is worth noting that the annual reports reveal that the departments experience staff turnover in critical occupations. Table 4.2 shows that the staff turnover in critical occupations ranges from 5% to 13.8%. However, the 2014/2015 financial year shows zero percent staff turnover in Department B for 2014/2015, and a highest turnover of 9% in 2013/2014. Table 4.2 presents a summary of staff turnover based on critical occupations in the two departments for the previous three financial years.

Table 4.2: Staff turnover for critical occupations

Document title	Turnover trends: Critical occupations			Average percentage
	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	
Department A, AR	14 (5.3%)	23 (9%)	0 (0%)	12 (4.8%)
Department B, AR	101 (7.6%)	189 (13.8%)	167 (10.6%)	152 (10.67%)
<b>Total average</b>	<b>58 (6.5%)</b>	<b>106 (11.4%)</b>	<b>84 (5.3%)</b>	<b>82 (12.8%)</b>

Table 4.2 shows that, over the past three financial years, the average staff turnover of employees who hold critical positions stood at 12.8%. However, Department B had the highest staff turnover when compared with the total average of Department A in the same financial year (2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2014/2015). It should be noted that the staff turnover in critical positions in Department B is similar to the general staff turnover (Table 4.1).

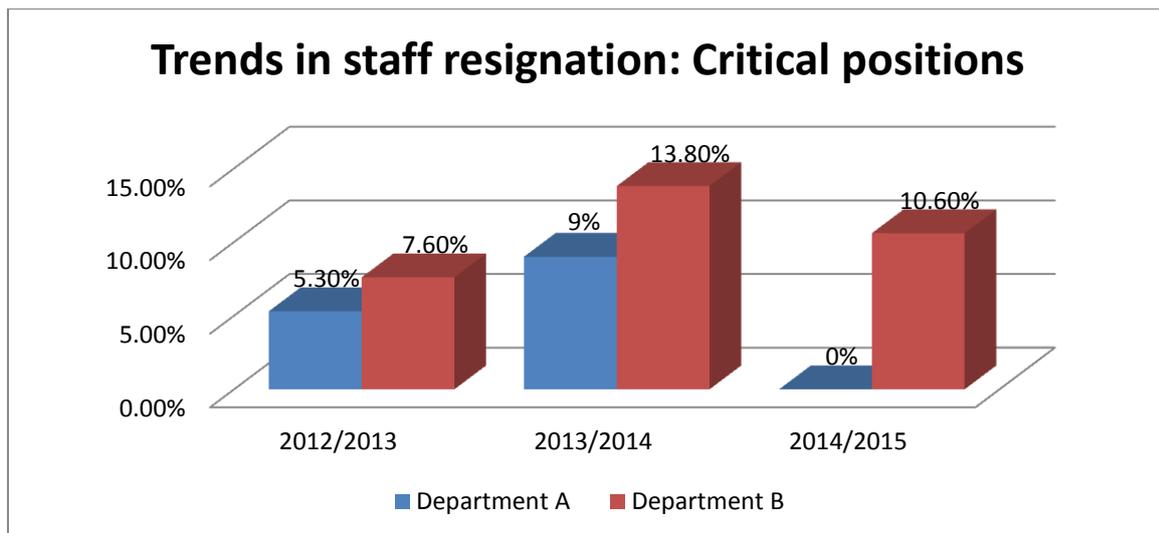


Figure 4.2: Staff turnover on critical positions

The subsequent section indicates the reasons for staff turnover in the South African public service.

#### 4.2.3 Reasons for resignations

According to the information obtained from the annual reports and exit interview reports for the three financial years (2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2014/2015), there are various reasons that cause staff resignations in the two departments. The exit interview reports reveal 15 negative issues that employees indicated they did not like about the departments. The top five issues that were cited are: Poor management style, physical environment, intergroup relation and interrelationship, lack of career development and job dissatisfaction. The resignation of employees due to poor management or supervisor style raises a serious concern in the departments and it was noted in the exit interview report of 2014/2015 that *"it is a concern that a valuable asset is leaving due to problems with his supervisor. HR is concerned that this is not the first incident"*.

It was interesting to note that the least mentioned issues were developmental opportunities, job rotation, misplacement, lack of mentorship and coaching, reward and recognition, as well as KM and information sharing. Table 4.3 summarises the 15 negative issues that were cited by departing employees during the exit interview sessions.

Table 4.3: Negative issues in exit interview reports

No	Negative issues identified in the departments	Frequency	Percentages
1	Leadership and management issues	57	27%
2	Physical environment and infrastructure	23	11%
3	Intergroup and interrelationship	22	11%
4	Lack of reward and recognition	13	6%
5	Dearth of performance management	12	6%
6	Lack of career development and progression	20	10%
7	No mentorship or coaching	4	2%
8	Lack of KM and Information sharing	4	2%
9	Job dissatisfaction	21	10%
10	Working environment	13	6%
11	Job rotation	3	1%
12	Retention issues	5	2%
13	Misplacement	2	1%
14	Organisational structure	3	1%
15	Developmental issues	6	3%
<b>Grand total</b>		<b>208</b>	<b>100%</b>

Similar causes of staff resignation were also mentioned in the retention policy/strategy of the departments, namely poor management, poor performance management, lack of promotion opportunities, a poor retention procedure, and an inconsistency in salaries at the level of deputy director.

#### 4.2.4 Recruitment and retention of staff

The annual reports for Department A indicate that only two employees were retained for the 2012/2013 financial year. However, the annual reports for 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 indicate there is sufficient budget for staff remuneration, but that the Department failed to utilise it. This information appears from two financial years of Department A, as follows:

*" ... two staff members were retained in key positions to ensure continuity and continued service delivery ... the amount unspent on compensation of employees is R8.1 million and is due to a high turnover and vacancy rate" (AR, 2012/2013).*

*" ... the amount unspent on compensation of employees is R13.4 million and is due to a turnover rate of 5% and a vacancy rate of 10.6% ..." (AR, 2013/2014).*

Furthermore, the annual report reveals that it is not only staff turnover that is faced by Department A, but it also struggled to attract and recruit employees to fill an opening vacancy. *"... vacancies often take long to fill and when people decline the*

*offer of appointment or no one is found suitable to interview the process has to start over again ..."* (AR, 2012/2013).

However, the 2012/2013 annual report of Department B shows that the Department had managed to retain 94% of its staff. *"... this is indicative that the department is building its capacity and retaining it to further policy implementation and delivery on its mandate"* (AR 2012/2013).

To summarise, it is evident from the above findings that the terms talent and TM have been defined by one department, while the other department mentions talent but does not offer any specific definition of the term. Again, both departments did not conceptualise the concept of KM. However, it was observed that KM is one of the competencies that need to be strengthened. Furthermore, it appears that there are many staff resignations and difficulties to attract and recruit potential candidates to fill opening vacancies. Phase 1 has been discussed. Phase 2 presents the findings from the face-to-face interviews for the study.

#### **4.3 PHASE 2: FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**

The empirical findings of this study were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 13 participants employed in two national departments of the South African public service in Pretoria, Gauteng province. Content analysis technique was used to analyse the data obtained from the participants.

In order to protect the participants' identity and to maintain confidentiality and anonymous reporting, the names of the participants were not revealed and code names were used, such as P1MM to P13SM. The first letter, "P", represents the participant and the number, e.g. "1", represents the number allocated to the participant. The abbreviations "MM" and "SM" represent the participant's job occupation or classification, namely middle managers (MM) and senior managers (SM). When verbatim quotes are taken from the interview transcripts, a code name, for example P1MM, is used. Furthermore, the name of the organisation where the participants are working is not revealed; instead, the name "department" is used. The subsequent section presents the frequency distribution of time spent per interview.

### 4.3.1 Frequency distribution of time per interview

Table 4.4 summarises the length of the interview with each participant. The total time spent for all the interviews was seven hours, 26 minutes. The table below shows the variation in the time spent per interview. The minimum time per interview was 30 minutes and the maximum time was one hour, 24 minutes and 30 seconds.

Table 4.4: Length of the interviews

Abbreviation	Date of the interview	Length of the interview (hours: minutes: seconds)
P1MM	07 Sept 2015	01:02:47
P2SM	09 Sept 2015	01:15:40
P3SM	09 Sept 2015	00:47:44
P4SM	10 Sept 2015	01:05:44
P5MM	11 Sept 2015	01:24:30
P6MM	14 Sept 2015	01:16:58
P7MM	14 Sept 2015	01:09:25
P8MM	14 Sept 2015	00:51.12
P9MM	15 Sept 2015	00:39.47
P10SM	16 Sept 2015	00:35:01
P11SM	28 Sept 2015	01:05.38
P12SM	29 Sept 2015	00:42:55
P13SM	30 Sept 2015	00:30.02
<b>Total time</b>		<b>07:26:00</b>
<b>Average length of each interview</b>		<b>00:34:18</b>

The variation in time may be due to the fact that some participants were very detailed in their responses and others were to the point and provided satisfying or relevant responses. Each interview took an average of 34 minutes and 18 seconds. The subsequent section outlines the profile of the participants.

### 4.3.2 Profile of the participants

The biographical information was collected by using a standardised form aimed at eliciting information on gender, race, age, educational qualification, job position, job title and years of experience. The participants completed this form before the interviews. Tables 4.5 - 4.11 discuss the different biographical information. The

biographical information based on gender is discussed first, followed by race, age group, educational qualification, job position, job title and years of experience. The themes that emerged from the interviews are discussed next.

#### 4.3.2.1 Gender distribution of the participants

Table 4.5 summarises the biographical information based on gender as observed by the researcher during the interviews. The researcher observed that the majority of the participants were female, representing 62%, and 38% were males.

Table 4.5: Gender

Gender	Biographical characteristic	Department A	Department B	Total	Percentage
	Male	2	3	5	38%
	Female	3	5	8	62%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.3.2.2 Race distribution of the participants

Data on race were not targeted for this study, but the researcher made observations and took note of the races of the participants.

Table 4.6: Race

Race	Biographical characteristic	Department A	Department B	Total	Percentage
	African/Black	2	4	6	46%
	Coloured	0	2	2	15%
	Indian	1	0	1	8%
	White	2	2	4	31%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to Table 4.6, the majority of the participants were African (46%), followed by White (31%) and Coloured (15%) participants. The least represented race group was Indian, at 8%.

#### 4.3.2.3 Age group distribution of the participants

Table 4.7 indicates that the empirical data were collected from a diverse age group. The majority of the participants (38%) fell within the age group 41 to 45 years, followed by 23% of participants who were between the ages of 56 and 64 years. Only a few (8%) participants were in the age group 51 to 55 years old. This shows that the participants represented different generations, namely baby boomers (from 51 to 55 and 56 to 64 years) and Generation X (between 36 and 40 years). This combination of age groups provides a platform to understand the different views of the different generations.

Table 4.7: Age groups

Age groups	Biographical characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
	36 - 40	2	15%
	41 - 45	5	38%
	46 - 50	2	15%
	51 - 55	1	8%
	56 - 64	3	23%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.3.2.4 Distribution of educational qualifications of the participants

Table 4.8 depicts the participants' qualifications and shows that these range from a national diploma to a doctorate.

Table 4.8: Education qualifications

Educational qualifications	Biographical characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
	National diploma	2	15%
	Junior degree	2	15%
	Honours degree	3	23%
	Master's degree	5	38%
	Doctorate	1	8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority of the participants (38%) held Master's degrees and one participant

(8%) had a doctorate. The remaining 30% had a national diploma or junior degree (15% each). This shows that the participants were well educated and can be regarded as professional employees, and that they could participate meaningfully in the study.

#### 4.3.2.5 Distribution of participants' job positions

Table 4.9 presents the distribution of the job positions held by the participants. The table shows that the participants held various positions and met the sampling criteria, as explained in section 3.3.3.

Table 4.9: Job positions

<b>Job positions</b>	<b>Biographical characteristic</b>	<b>Total participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	Human resource management	5	38%
	Talent management	3	23%
	Knowledge management	3	23%
	Record management	1	8%
	Information management	1	8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority of the participants (38%) were working in the field of HRM and 23% were working in each of the fields of TM and KM. The remaining 16% were working in the fields of record management and information management (8% each). These different groups are very important for this study, as they represent both the field of TM and KM in the South African public service and could provide valuable information for this study. Thus, having participants from different job classifications or positions improved the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

#### 4.3.2.6 Job title distribution

Table 4.10 summarises the job titles of the participants.

Table 4.10: Job titles

Job titles	Biographical characteristic	Occupation categories	Frequency	Percentage
	Chief director (CD)	SM	3	23%
	Director (Dir)	SM	4	31%
	Deputy director (DD)	MM	5	38%
	Assistant director (ASD)	MM	1	8%
	<b>Total</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*SM = senior management and MM = middle management

Most of the participants (54%) were senior managers, namely 23% chief directors (CD) and 31% directors (Dir). The remaining 46% were middle managers, namely 38% deputy directors (DD) and 8% assistant directors (ASD). These different job categories are significant for this study and for triangulating the findings, thereby improving the trustworthiness of the study.

#### 4.3.2.7 Years of experience of the participants

Table 4.11 indicates that the participants had various years of experience working in the South African public service. It was encouraging to note that the majority of the participants (42%) ha working experience ranging between 10 and 15 years. The minimum years of experience was between five and nine years, which represents 8%.

Table 4.11: Years of experience

Years of experience	Biographical characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
	5 - 9	1	8%
	10 - 15	5	42%
	16 - 19	1	8%
	20 - 25	3	25%
	26 - 30	1	8%
	31 - 45	1	8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>

These different lengths of working experience are significant for this study, as the participants could provide different perspectives on the application of and integration of TM and KM. Furthermore, they could provide insight into how the South African public service manages talent and knowledge, as well as on the establishment of the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention. The subsequent section presents and discusses the main themes and sub-themes of the study.

#### 4.4 THEMES OF THE INTERVIEWS

From the individual interview transcripts and the subsequent processing of the data by the researcher and the external coder, the findings reveal that there is no uniform definition of TM and KM. The findings show that the South African public service uses various approaches to apply TM and KM. However, TM and KM are not institutionalised and are not integrated. The participants viewed the integration of TM and KM to be beneficial in terms of supporting staff retention.

The data were categorised into themes, after which sub-themes were identified and accordingly linked to each of the relevant main themes. Table 4.12 presents the three themes and 10 sub-themes that emerged during the analysis of the participants' responses.

Table 4.12: List of themes and sub-themes

No	Theme	Sub-theme
1	Current status of the definition and application of TM	1.1 Participants' views on the definition of talent
		1.2 Definition of TM as viewed by the participants
		1.3 Application of TM in the departments
		1.4 Retention of talent
2	Current status of the definition and application of KM	2.1 Definition of knowledge
		2.2 Definition of KM as viewed by the participants
		2.3 Application of KM
		2.4 Knowledge-sharing practices
3	Participants' perceptions of the integration of TM and KM	3.1 Benefit of integrating TM and KM
		3.2 Requirements for the integration of TM and KM

Each of the themes and its sub-themes are presented, including the extracts of the

quotations from the interview transcripts as evidence of how the themes emerged.

#### 4.5 THEME 1: CURRENT STATUS OF THE DEFINITION AND APPLICATION OF TALENT MANAGEMENT

During the interviews it was apparent that most of the participants held different views on the definition of talent and TM. According to the participants' views, there were very few, if any, programmes in place to manage talent and for TM in their departments. Most of the participants indicated that their current TM systems did not support the retention of talented employees.

The following four sub-themes emerged from the participants' responses and were linked to Theme 1: Participants' views on the definition of talent (Sub-theme 1.1), the definition of TM as viewed by the participants (Sub-theme 1.2), the application of TM in the departments (Sub-theme 1.3) and retention of talent (Sub-theme 1.4). These sub-themes are discussed next.

##### 4.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Participants' views on the definition of talent

Both senior managers and middle managers viewed the definition of talent differently. One middle manager acknowledged that the term was defined differently and was quoted as saying: "...in a different industry you'll find a different connotation [of] talent" (P9MM). This is similar to the findings of Sonnenberg et al. (2014), who found that managers, talent managers, HR managers, line managers and employees have different views on the talent in an organisation. Table 4.13 presents the quotations from the participants.

Table 4.13: The definition of talent as viewed by the participants

Code name		Verbatim quotations or evidence
Senior managers (SM)	P2SM	"... <u>qualifications</u> and the ability to do certain work ... this <u>ability</u> that is even higher than everybody else ... There are some people who just have <u>superior intelligence</u> to learn things fast and they got the <u>knowledge</u> ..."  "... it's an <u>inherent ability</u> ... the ability, the enthusiasm or passion, and the energy to do things that to me is talent"
	P3SM	"I'm not quite sure. I'm not familiar with the aspect of talent management but I will just rely on my own understanding. In the work situation you'll really be talking about those specific <u>attributes</u> , <u>skills</u> and <u>competencies</u> that an individual really possesses and that are very key to enable you to advance your strategic objective or mandate as a department."
	P4SM	"Talent in my view is a combination of people where <u>competencies</u> , <u>skills</u> and <u>attributes</u> that they bring to bear in a workplace."

Code name		Verbatim quotations or evidence
	P10SM	"... talent is actually what the person brings into the organisation in order to meet the organisational objectives. So it's mainly the <u>skills</u> set of an individual ... you've got the person who have the <u>skills</u> and the <u>knowledge</u> , and <u>attributes</u> ".
	P11SM	"Talent is the inborn ... it's <u>one's inborn ability</u> to produce or ... a service or a product or act or perform a particular skill ... So it can be as raw, one born with it, and then it can also <u>be developed</u> ..."
	P12SM	"Talent is basically the <u>skills</u> , the <u>knowledge</u> , the <u>experience</u> that you have."
	P13SM	"talent is something that is <u>inherently</u> in employees which includes skills and can be <u>developed</u> or enhanced through <u>formal training</u> as long as the employee is interested in the job ... sometimes <u>people don't realise that they have skills</u> so it is good to test the employee and give him/her opportunity to display his talent".
Middle managers (MM)	P1MM	"Talent is the <u>natural ability</u> to perform in a given task. It is <u>inborn</u> but it can lie dormant and <u>undiscovered</u> . So it needs, I don't know, time or ... and <u>good environment</u> to be able to crack that and polish it and be able to branch outside."
	P5MM	"... talent is <u>the skill</u> that the employees or officials of the department possess and it means the skill that is accompanied with the <u>experience</u> ..."  "... you'll find the public service referring to <u>scarce skills</u> , the public service referring to competent skills, public service terminology referring to what is in demand in terms of the skills in demand".
	P6MM	"... it's <u>the skills</u> that you require versus what you obtain. So is it what you need and can it perform to the standard that you require it? That is the talent that I would say".
	P7MM	"... it's linked to for example the <u>skills of competencies</u> of an individual and the extent to which they can exhibit these skills or competencies ... may either have the same <u>qualification, experience</u> ... "
	P8MM	"I guess it's ... it will speak to <u>skills</u> , it will speak to <u>knowledge</u> , it will speak to <u>competencies</u> , it will speak to performances."
	P9MM	"First of all given my background it only relates to human beings. Although I believe if ... in a different industry you'll find a different connotation being talent ..."

Interestingly, a handful of senior managers and a few middle managers (P3SM and P8MM) indicated that they were not sure of how their department defines talent. Two participants were quoted saying: "I'm not quite sure ..." (P3SM) and "I guess it's ..." (P8MM). Nevertheless, the participants offered their own definitions, based on their views and understanding: "I will just rely on my own understanding ..." (P3SM). These findings share similarities with the study of Latukha (2015), which revealed a lack of clarity of what talent is by the managers of Russian organisations.

Table 4.13 indicates that the majority of senior managers and middle managers (P2SM, P3SM, P4SM, P10SM, P12SM, P5MM, P6MM, P7MM and P8MM) used the words "skills", "attribute", "competency", "knowledge", "experience" and education" when defining talent. Three participants were cited as saying: "Talent in my view is a combination of people competencies, skills and attributes that they bring to bear in a workplace" (P4SM) and "... it will speak to skills, it will speak to knowledge, it will speak to competencies, it will speak to performances" (P8MM). Also, "talent is

*basically the skills, the knowledge, the experience that you have"* (P12SM). This finding contradicts the qualitative study of Cooke et al. (2014) conducted in the private sector and state-owned and foreign organisations in India and China. They found that managers define talent as high-potential, core employees, high performers or high achievers.

Two middle managers further explained that the South African public service uses words such as "scarce skills and competency" when referring to talent or to the skills that is in demand. For instance: *"... you'll find the public service referring to scarce skills, the public service referring to competent skills, public service terminology referring to what is in demand in terms of the skills in demand"* (P5MM) and *"it's identifying those scarce, critical and valuable skills within the organisation that impact on business, that impact on productivity"* (P7MM). This supports the findings of Kraai (2015) in a study conducted in the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in Pretoria, namely that people with scarce and critical skills are targeted to be retained by the department.

Three senior managers and a middle manager emphasised that talent is an inborn or inherent skills or natural ability possessed by an individual to perform a given task: *"... an inherent ability ... the ability, the enthusiasm or passion, and the energy to do things that to me is talent"* (P2SM); equally, *"talent is the inborn ... it's one's inborn ability to produce or ... a service or a product or act or perform a particular skill ..."* (P11SM) and *"talent is something that is inherently in employees which includes skills and can be developed"* (P13SM). Likewise, *"... talent is something that is inherently in employees which includes skills and can be developed or enhanced through formal ..."* and *"Talent is the natural ability to perform in a given task"* (P1MM). The findings on inherent ability are in line with the study of Latukha (2015), who found that HR managers and executive managers in Russian organisations defined talent as a natural ability inherent in individual employees.

In addition, one senior manager and one middle manager reported that talent can lie dormant and that departments need to create a conducive working environment to discover, develop and provide opportunities for people to display their talent. *"... some time people don't realise that they have skills so it is good to test the employee and give him/her opportunity to display his talent"* (P13SM), and *"It is inborn but it*

*can lie dormant and undiscovered. So it needs, I don't know, time or ... and good environment to be able to crack that and polish it and be able to branch outside"* (P1MM). The findings on hidden talent are similar to those of the quantitative study by Schweer, Assimakopoulos, Cross and Thomas (2012), who worked with talent experts in a global organisation and found that some talents are either marginalised or hidden.

Lastly, some senior managers and middle managers acknowledged that talented employees are few, as some employees have basic skills while others have advanced skills. The participants were cited as saying: "*... you can never have too large a pool of talent because talent to me is exceptional people*" (P2SM), and "*... people have got basic skills, others they've got good skills, others have got excellent skills*" (P5MM). This finding contradicts the finding of Cooke et al. (2014), who found that talent includes all employees in the organisation.

#### **4.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Definition of talent management as viewed by the participants**

From the participant's responses it is clear that they defined TM differently, hence various definitions were provided. One senior manager and two middle managers expressed that defining TM is difficult and that it can be defined and interpreted differently. These participants were quoted as saying: "*... it's actually very difficult to define it ...*" (P10SM), and "*talent management is also defined differently*" (P7MM). Furthermore, "*... it's a difficult question because it depends on how you understand talent management first of all and there are different interpretations of course*" (P9MM). This is in agreement with the findings of Bright (2012), namely that there are different understandings and perceptions of the definition of TM by organisations. This is also supported by the findings of Lathuka (2015) and Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016). Table 4.14 summarises the responses of the participants regarding the definition of TM.

Table 4.14: The definition of talent management as viewed by participants

Code name		Verbatim quotations or evidence
Senior managers (SM)	P2SM	"talent management is that <u>process of identifying the performers, high performers</u> , and obviously high performers will be highly motivated people and how do you show your valuing of those people to make sure that you don't lose them ... <u>you retain them</u> ".
	P3SM	"I don't know how my department defines it, I will really rely on my own understanding ..."  "... it's really about then how to ensure that you've got a way within which you come up with <u>conscious effort of ensuring that you've got people</u> who have those particular kinds of attributes that are unique to your department to <u>enabling to perform better and how do you retain them</u> and ... what <u>processes you have put in place to ensure that you nurture them</u> ".
	P4SM	"The management of human resources from the time a job is identified, designed, created and funded, through the <u>recruitment process</u> , to the appointment of the individual. Then when they are placed, their induction, <u>performance management, development interventions</u> and well-being, leave types, <u>wellness management</u> , if required and support with career management."
	P10SM	"Talent management is about <u>managing</u> ... it's about making sure that the employees within an organisation who have the <u>requisite skills</u> are <u>actually supported</u> in terms of how they do their work, in terms of how they deliver their services through various interventions ... [such as] the <u>performance management, through the training and development aspect</u> ."
	P11SM	"Talent management is first understanding of what talent you need to do the work, the core mandate of your organisation. Define it, reduce it to competencies, and <u>then bring in people</u> that fit that definition ... then you <u>manage</u> and then you look at how do you <u>then retain them</u> within the organisation."
	P12SM	"I feel like I'm going to repeat what I've said earlier because the definition of what talent is and where it comes in is very similar I think ..."
	P13SM	"Talent management is concerned with the <u>management of the inherent skills</u> that the employee has to benefit both the employee and the organisation."
Middle managers (MM)	P1MM	"... talent management is something that it takes a discerning manager <u>to spot and to nurture</u> . It's a process of <u>identifying a talent</u> within organisation and providing an <u>enabling environment</u> to nurture that talent in order to benefit the strategic objective of the organisation. I think ... that's just my words to identify it".
	P5MM	No, I did not read my policy to tell you ... I gave you my own understanding and definition. The department defines talent management, if I remember, along the lines ... to them what is talent."
	P6MM	"... talent management for us would be the skills that we require at the right time in the right place ... obviously <u>developing a talent</u> for future needs".
	P7MM	"... it's identifying those <u>scarce, critical and valuable skills</u> within the organisation that <u>impact on business</u> , that impact on productivity and deliverables and impact on strategic objectives and then how best the organisation can go about through development and other initiatives ... your working environment and things like that, how we can then best retain, even attract them".
	P8MM	"That's the HR side of things. In managing [talent], because I'm coming from the knowledge and information side of things ... I don't know."
	P9MM	"I will put it very basic ... in basic terms and simple terms, that's actually what ... it is to <u>ensure that the talent available performs</u> adequately in their roles. Full stop."

Table 4.14 shows that the participants used words like "spot", "identify", "management", "nature", "growing", "develop", "recruitment" and "retention" when defining TM. These different verbs lead to a different description by the participants of what TM is.

Firstly, the majority of senior managers and middle managers explained that TM is a deliberate effort aimed at identifying, recruiting, developing and retaining talented employees who have the unique attributes to perform well. This is similar to the study of Cooke et al. (2014), who found that line managers define TM as a mechanism to identify, recruit, develop, manage and retain top performers in organisations.

Secondly, three senior managers and one middle manager indicated that TM is used to manage talented employees or the inherent skills held by employees by using various HR interventions, such as the recruitment process, career management, performance management, training and development. One participant was quoted as saying: *"The management of human resources from the time a job is identified, designed, created and funded, through the recruitment process, to the appointment of the individual. Then when they are placed, their induction, performance management, development interventions and well-being, leave types, wellness management, if required and support with career management"* (P4SM) and *"Talent management is about managing ... it's about making sure that the employees within an organisation who have the requisite skills are actually supported"* (P10SM). Similarly, *"talent management is concerned with the management of the inherent skills that the employee has to benefit both the employee and the organisation"* (P13SM), and *"... talent management is not to manage what people? Line of specialisation, managing that"* (P8MM). The finding on the management of people is similar to the study of Sonnenberg et al. (2014) conducted on 21 organisations in Europe and is also supported by the findings of Bright (2012), although the latter study was conducted in the real estate industry, which is different from the public service in which this study was conducted.

Lastly, one senior manager emphasised that *"talent management is that process of identifying the performers, high performers, and obviously high performers"* (P2SM). Viewing TM as a tool for the identification and retention of talent is similar to the findings of Cooke et al. (2014).

Oddly, two participants mentioned that the definition of TM is similar to the definition of talent. *"I feel like I'm going to repeat what I've said earlier because the definition of what talent is and where it comes in is very similar I think ..."* (P12SM) and *"... the department defines talent management, if I remember, along the lines ... to them what is talent ..."* (P5MM). Furthermore, two middle managers indicated that *"... talent management is more or less the same as knowledge management ..."* (P1MM) and *"... I think sometimes it becomes a bit confusing because people would ... or people believe that talent management and knowledge management is the same thing"* (P6MM). This finding is slightly similar to the studies of Valverde et al. (2013) and Latukha (2015), who both found that there was a lack of clear understanding and no agreed definition of the term TM by HR managers and junior staff. Both these studies were conducted with private foreign organisations in Spain and Russia respectively.

Surprisingly, one senior manager and one middle manager emphasised that they did not know how TM was defined in their department. *"I don't know how my department define it, I will really rely on my own understanding ..."* (P3SM) and *"I'm coming from the knowledge and information side of things ... I don't know"* (P8MM). This is partially similar to the findings of Latukha (2015), who found that Russian organisations have difficulties in defining TM. The middle manager elaborated by stating that TM is a function of human resources: *"... that's the HR side of things ..."* (P8MM). This view is similar to the findings of Bright (2012) in the real estate industry.

It was interesting to note that the majority of senior managers and middle managers indicated that they were familiar with the concept of TM and stressed that they were exposed to it either through education or working experience: *"It's over years starting as an educator, having done a first degree in business science ... and now in my work experiences as an HR manager on a daily basis"* (P4SM). This finding contradicts the study of Valverde (2013) conducted in a private organisation in Spain, which found that the majority of the participants (junior employees) did not have an idea of what TM is, while the HR manager had no practical experience of the term.

Surprisingly, some senior managers and middle managers indicated that they were not familiar with the concept of TM, as in: *"Not quite familiar with the concept"*

(P1MM); *"I'm not familiar with the aspect of talent management"* (P3SM). This is consistent with the findings of Valverde et al. (2013), who found that employees in a small private organisation were not familiar with the concept of TM.

The foregoing findings provide evidence that the different managers and senior managers (participants) hold different views on the definition of TM.

#### **4.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Application of talent management in the departments**

The participants provided various views on how their departments apply TM. Apparently there is no policy for TM. The findings reveal that the majority of senior managers and middle managers reported that performance management forms a basis for their TM initiatives. *"At the moment we're using the performance management ..."* (P6MM) and *"I think with what we know as performance management plays a huge role ..."* (P9MM). This finding is supported by the study of D'Annunzio-Green (2008) in the tourism industry, in which it was concluded that performance management is a core element of TM.

It was noted that both senior managers and middle managers mentioned that performance management is poorly implemented and is very subjective: *"Performance management is not really implemented as it should be, because it comes after the fact"* (3SM). Furthermore, *"it is conducive for managing talent. The only challenge is that with the current performance management system, how it's practised in the public service ... you find people are not making a concerted effort to manage performance"* (P10SM) and *"the way we're using it, is just for compliance really ... and awarding of bonuses ..."* (P3SM). One middle manager expressed that *"the performance management system leaves a lot to be desired and is subjective ... it opens a lot of can of worms and grievance"* (P5MM). Likewise, *"there is a continuous fight about it, there is a lot of unhappy people about it, so from a personal point of view what I would say is scrap performance management in government"* (P12SM). This finding is similar to that of Makhuzeni and Barkhuizen (2014), who found that performance management is poorly implemented in South African municipalities. It is also in agreement with the findings of the PSC (2014), which indicate that performance management is not properly managed, as it focuses on incentives that lead to grievances.

Interestingly, three senior managers and a middle manager reported that there is no evidence of TM being used in their departments. For example: "*To a certain extent I do not see elements of talent management being displayed*" (P1MM). Other participants said, "*I have yet to see somebody who uses it. I have ... because there is nothing in the department*" (P2SM) and "*... unfortunately I do not have a case of talent management ... experienced talent management in the department ...*" (P11SM). Also "*... it doesn't exist ...*" (P3SM). This is similar to the findings of a study conducted by Hejase et al. (2016) in Lebanon among senior managers and HR professionals. They found that 33% of the participants stated that there was no TM in their organisations.

A few senior managers indicated that there was no policy for TM: "*There's no policy and there's no talent management*" (P3SM) and "*... am not aware if the department has any policy on talent management*" (P13SM). Furthermore, "*... I don't think there is any real clear defined policy ...*" (P12SM). Surprisingly, a senior manager mentioned that "*I know that we have a policy or a framework or guideline on talent management ...*" (P2SM). This finding is in agreement with Valverde et al. (2013), who found that the HR managers of a small organisation in Spain mentioned that there was no policy for TM. The South African public service is a large employer in South Africa and it can be expected that it has a well-documented policy on TM.

Oddly, a senior manager and a middle manager explained that TM happened on an ad hoc basis: "*... things are floundering here and there it's on ad-hoc basis*" (P3SM) and "*... we've got many systems in place, is just that they are unfocused ...*" (P9MM). Dries (2013) says that using an ad hoc approach to TM will cause inconsistency and difficulties to measure its success.

One senior manager explained that the concept of TM enables departments to have a clear understanding of what talent is and allows the department to recruit those employees who fit the definition. "*Talent management is first understanding of what talent you need to do the work, the core mandate of your [department]. Define it, reduce it to competencies, and then bring in people that fit that definition*" (P11SM). Dries (2013) argues that one cannot build a case for the importance of researching TM if it is not possible to offer a singular definition of our central concepts.

Interestingly, a few senior managers and one middle manager expressed that managers hinder the implementation and utilisation of talent. *"You can have someone who is brilliant but their talent is not harnessed and is not revealed because of management styles ... people are so controlled, managed, micromanaged, to who, how they will think, what they will do outside of where they are and for me that is very limiting"* (P4SM) and *"... most people they resign not because they don't like the organisation but because of the management style of their supervisors"* (P3SM). This finding is slightly similar to the findings of Gaffoor and Cloete (2010), that leaders are hindering KM initiatives.

Nevertheless, the participants mentioned that there are various TM initiatives. These include performance management, succession planning, training and development, job rotation, recruitment, induction, career management, retention policies, and employee well-being, as outlined in: *"The management of human resources from the time a job is identified, designed, created and funded, through the recruitment process, to the appointment of the individual. Then when they are placed, their induction, performance management, development interventions and well-being, management, if required and support with career management"* (P4SM). This finding shares some similarity with Cooke et al. (2014), who found that the two industries they studied identify recruitment, performance management, training and development as well as retention as key HRM activities required for TM. The subsequent sections discuss the TM activities in more detailed manner.

- **Performance management**

The majority of senior managers and middle managers mentioned that the public service uses performance management as a primary tool for TM whereby employees enter into a performance contract, performance assessments are conducted and developmental requirements are identified. The following three participants were cited saying: *"There's a performance management system in place ..."* (P5MM); *"at the moment we're using the performance management ... we also have what we call non-monetary rewards and recognition"* (P6MM); and *"... it started off with the performance assessment ..."* (P2SM). Furthermore, *"... I use performance management to track and review how employees are doing with their job, is there any performance gap ..."* (P13SM). These findings are similar to the findings of the studies of D'Adnuzio-Green (2008) and Stahl et al. (2012), namely that

performance management is a core element of TM and should be designed to focus on individual performance as well as the required behaviour.

One senior manager mentioned that *"... it's a tool for management, managing incompetency, managing performance throughout ..."* (P3SM). In addition, a middle manager emphasised that *"the performance management system it gives me money, I go and spend it for my family and that's finish, but in terms of making me progressive and being part of the knowledge sharing and the knowledge space it doesn't offer that"* (P1MM). Lastly, a middle manager stated that *"I don't believe that you can only use performance management to pick up the talent as it is not correctly applied"* (P5MM). This thinking share a bit of similarity with the statement of Kulick (2010), namely that performance management prevented the organisation from implementing succession planning. It also is in agreement with the study of PSC (2014), namely that performance review focuses more on incentive rather than on the management of actual performance.

- **Succession planning**

Succession planning was also identified by three senior managers and two middle managers as a tool for TM that focuses on creating a talent pool for employees to occupy senior positions. One participant was quoted as saying: *"There's succession planning as well. This is where we're looking at your ... mainly at your executive or your top management jobs in SMS [senior management service] like chief director and higher and you're trying to create a pool ... to make sure that there's business continuity should anything happen to anyone, whether they leave or whether they resign suddenly"* (P7MM). This is in line with the findings of Kraai (2015), that succession planning is key for filling a leadership position.

The researcher probed to establish how effective succession planning is in the departments. Three senior managers and one middle manager agreed that the succession planning was not effective and was still in the implementation phase. Two participants were cited as saying: *"For me it's still in the implementation phase"* (P7MM) and *"I don't think they're effective ... succession planning it's one of those terms that I don't know whether it actually works in government"* (P12SM). Two

senior managers emphasised that there was no succession planning in the department: *"One other issue is where you don't have a clear succession plan"* (P3SM) and *"so in government unfortunately there's no such a thing as succession planning"* (P11SM). In addition, one middle manager asserted that *"... I think the challenge lies in terms of monitoring it ... because it's something new and it's difficult for HR to monitor everything"* (P7MM). This finding is consistent with the findings of Kraai (2015), namely that the South African public service department of science and technology does not have a succession plan in place.

- **Training and development**

Interestingly, the majority of the participants (six senior managers and six middle managers) mentioned that they used training and development to enhance employees' skills and knowledge. In fact, one participant claimed that training and development was very active and the department made funds available for the development of people. Apparently the performance management system is linked to the personal developmental plan (PDP) and they use it to identify developmental needs. *"... everything that is skills development and the linkages with performance management, the linkages with talent management"* (P4SM). *"The performance management system is linked with the PDP ... the personal development plan ... I'm not lying, when it comes to people development, nurturing, the department is not stingy"* (P5MM). This is in line with the findings of Bright (2012) and Tansley et al. (2013), who both found that the development of employees is linked to the performance management system.

Oddly, one senior manager claimed that training opportunities provided for managers and junior staffs are often neglected. *"So now here we've got the situation it's mainly managers who are exposed to training but the bulk, the real workforce, is actually still not really being given those kind of opportunities to learn, to be help, to perform better"* (P3SM). This finding contrasts with that of the quantitative study of Hejase et al. (2016) on 50 organisations in Lebanon. They found that senior managers and HR professionals reported that their organisations invested more in developing employees, including junior staff, and that the employees were more satisfied with their jobs.

It is worth noting that few senior managers and the majority of middle managers mentioned job rotation and on-the-job training as a practice for skills and knowledge transfer: *"I job-rotate them to build their capacity and knowledge so that we don't depend on one employee ... is something that I do myself with my team ... am not aware of any policy on institutional job rotation in the department ..."* (P13SM). Furthermore, *"we've got the job rotation policy which allows people to move into different areas ... to improve or you can also learn and ... in that way you're also up-skilling and you're broadening your skills base and you also broadening the understanding of individuals within the workplace"* (P7MM). This is similar to the findings of Wang-Cowham (2011), who found that HR managers working for different private organisations in China reported that on-the-job training was one of the learning initiatives.

The researcher probed about the effectiveness of the job rotation programmes. It appears that job rotation is not yet effective, as managers seem not to be comfortable with it. Two middle managers asserted that: *"...I believe government is not comfortable with it. I'm saying government but I have to say managers. We brought it in where a policy was approved in 2011. We had one employee who job rotated"* (P6MM) and *"...sometimes you rotate and you find that in your rotation you are not given as much ... they know that you are passing ... you'll be there for a year so they are not going to invest much in you ... even if they give you work but they can't rely on you permanently..."* (P5MM). Furthermore, two senior managers said: *"I don't think they're effective. Job rotation I'm not aware that it's been done on a very large scale. There's ... I'm aware of one, maybe two, cases in the department where it has happened"* (P12SM) and *"so that job rotation is important ... unfortunately I haven't seen it"* (P11SM). This is consistent with the qualitative study of Kraai (2015) conducted in a South African public service department. He found that senior managers were failing employees, among others by not implementing job rotation.

- **Coaching and mentorship**

A small number of senior managers emphasised that they use coaching and mentorship as part of their TM processes in order to capacitate and develop employees' skills. For example: *"...ensuring that the skills that are lacking are improved through ... mentoring and coaching"* (P13SM). Although coaching and mentorship are regarded as an effective method for building employees' capacity,

the participants reported that these were not being used. The participants were cited as saying: *"... mentorship ... of course I really think that is definitely other ways [of developing capacity] but it doesn't happen"* (P9MM), and equally, *"... there is mentoring and coaching. Unfortunately I haven't seen it. I can't say I've seen it"* (P11SM). This finding is similar to that of the study conducted by Stephen (2016) on Kenya Methodist University (KeMU). He found that coaching and mentorship are not utilised by the university. It is also in agreement with Kraai (2015), who found that there is a lack of mentorship and coaching.

- **Recruitment and competency assessment**

Two senior managers pointed out that the public service utilises competence-based assessments that is part of their recruitment and selection of senior managers and middle managers. They indicated that it helped them to identify the skills or potential candidate for appointment. Two participants were quoted as saying: *"So making sure that after the interview exposing this person to competency-based assessments so that we are aware of what exists, what competencies that the person ... does the person possess and we can be able to close the gaps if there're gaps"* (P10SM) and *"... apart from the interview we use the competency test ... so that's at senior management level. I do know of departments that do it at MMS [middle management service] level, that is middle management, deputy director, they also use an interview plus a competency test ..."* (P4SM). This finding confirms the study of Khwinana (2010), who found that the South African public service uses competence assessment when recruiting senior managers.

The preceding findings provide evidence that there are various activities used by the public service to implement TM. It appears that most of the activities are poorly implemented. The following sub-theme will look at how the public service retains talented employees.

#### **4.5.4 Sub-theme 4: Retention of talent**

During the interviews, the participants mentioned that the South African public service uses financial incentives (counteroffers) as a strategy to retain employees. However, the participants indicated that talented employees are not retained by the departments. Some of the participants indicated that there was no retention policy or retention strategy and that employees do not understand the current practice used

by the departments to retain staff. The subsequent sections provide evidence based on the participants' responses.

Firstly, the majority of senior managers and half of the middle managers indicated that the public service uses counteroffers as a strategy to retain employees. One participant reported that: *"... the strategy we used in the department to retain someone, you counteroffer what they were going to get where they're going, you counteroffer ... you only react"* (P4SM). Similarly, *"... a lot of [retention] is counteroffers and then pressure is put on the talent management process and policy to deliver now ... without due consideration ..."* (P7MM). This finding supports the findings of the study conducted by the PSC (2010), which found that 74% of national departments use counteroffers as a strategy to retain staff, and it is in agreement with the findings of Ortlieb and Sieben (2012), whose research was based on a different industry in Germany with HR managers from 159 consulting organisations.

It is worth noting the one middle manager who stated: *"you can't counteroffer forever because it is just going to get too expensive and with the cost containment measured ... because the retention of South African public service is monetary"* (P5MM). This finding supports the statement of WorldatWork (2012), that financial remuneration may be too costly to retain talent in the long run.

Thirdly, the counteroffer strategy apparently is not well planned and, if it was done correctly it would retain the right talent. The following middle manager was quoted as saying: *"I think if it's done in a systematic manner I think it should be aiming to retain the right staff"* (P1MM). Two senior managers asserted that a financial incentive is not an effective strategy for retaining talent: *"I told you that I don't believe money keeps me ..."* (P2SM) and *"I know there's people that say rather give me some time off so that I can focus on my studies but I'm not worried to ... too much worried about the money ..."* (P12SM). Furthermore, *"... people are not only motivated by money ..."* (P13SM). The finding supports the study Tholath and Thattil (2016) conducted with 400 employees from public, private and foreign banks in South India. They found that public banking organisations do not rate money as the biggest motivational factor.

Fourthly, the majority of senior managers and one middle manager mentioned that the current TM does not retain the right people, but rather it is poorly performing

employees who are being retained. According to one participant: *"I'm going to answer that in two ways. I think the efforts that we have in place, yes, it does retain staff. Your question as to the right staff: no, not necessarily"* (P6MM). Another mentions: *"... no, right people, talented people, have been allowed to leave the department ... I have seen talented young people leave this department and I know deadwood that have been asked to remain. We are not retaining talent"* (P2SM). This contradicts the findings of Rana et al. (2013), who found that TM is helping the Indian public service to retain its top talented employees.

Oddly, one middle manager claimed that that the current TM does retain the right talent: *"I think it does. If somebody is given an opportunity to grow, if somebody is given an opportunity to acquire more skills and they are supported"* (P8MM). This is consistent with the finding of Boichenko (2015), although the study was conducted in a different industry, namely public universities. The findings showed that universities in Britain, America and Canada use TM to address issues of recruitment and staff retention.

It was interesting that one middle manager acknowledged that there was a talent retention policy, although employees do not understand how the policy is being implemented. The participant was quoted saying: *"the policy of the department exists, it's there, it's on paper, it's a good policy but people don't understand because people argue that they don't understand how do you come to decide that this one is more talented than the other?"* (P5MM). One senior manager mentioned that *"... there is no retention strategy for critical positions"* (P12SM). This finding is slightly in line with the findings of Valverde et al., (2013), even though their study was commissioned in a different country. They found that private Spanish organisations did not have any retention policy, but were managing to retain their talent by focusing on good HRM.

One middle manager indicated that it sometimes is difficult to retain employees, especially those whose resignation is due to retirement as a result of old age. It was noted that the employees who resigned due to retirement leave with their tacit knowledge and it makes it difficult for the department to deal with the recurring problem. This participant was cited as saying: *"the person had to leave anyway because it's retirement age ... that person left with what they, I think, would term tacit*

knowledge because they would know ... they would have dealt with issue that the new person wouldn't have dealt with and some of it would be ... it's not recurring problems or issues" (P7MM). One senior manager revealed: "there was a period of time where the fluidity and the mobility of people were so rapid that you lost the talent as well as you lost the knowledge" (P4SM). This finding is closely related to the findings of Kraai (2015), who found that the benefit of succession planning will preserve institutional knowledge.

It was concerning to note that two senior managers mentioned that: "I do motivate, encourage people to look beyond department and where they are. Not to use the department as their career path because if they look in department they'll become discouraged" (P4SM), and "... at the moment I think all talent goes with ... it's all at the discretion of the supervisor but I guess because the organisational culture it's not the one that is attracted to people remaining it's ... in fact it repels the people, it makes people want to run away at the moment" (P11SM). This is in contrast to the findings of Kraai (2015), who found that the promotion system is effective, yet managers are not benefiting from the system.

It is significant to note that one middle manager mentioned that the department failed to create a pool of talented employees: "Retention is not a bad thing. How do you even start retaining when you haven't got the pool of talent? Or the pool of talent is there, you don't know. You haven't recorded" (P5MM). This middle manager continued by saying: "People are leaving because they want to do something new and get new knowledge". Another middle manager emphasised that "... if people are being empowered with knowledge they will feel they have to pay their dues" (P1MM). This finding supports the claim of Kock and Le Roux (2012) that KM can help organisations to capacitate employees.

The majority of the senior managers and four middle managers indicated that KM has a significant role to play in terms of supporting staff retention, but that it would need to be institutionalised first. Three participants were cited as saying: "Yes. Again I'm going to ... and I'm a lifelong public servant. I think knowledge management will especially help to retain" (P9MM); "... it can assist to do that in the event where it's institutionalised" (P3SM); and "Yes, I do ... In our business unit we only use documentum ... if I'm not here today nobody's going to wait for me ... it takes away some of the frustration" (P6MM). This supports the findings of the study by

Nthongoa (2014), which was conducted in South Africa, namely that KM can be a significant contributor to talent retention.

However, three senior managers and one middle manager mentioned that the current KM is not supporting staff retention in the department because the exit interviews are not aimed at collecting the knowledge of employees. Two senior managers were quoted as saying:

*"... where I work the knowledge management is never really something that is discussed when somebody leaves. I know when people leave or their exit forms or they do interviews for people they write on there on their CVs it's about growth and better opportunities and those kinds of thing. So if you take that into account I don't think it plays a major role in keeping people (P12SM).*

*Knowledge management can assist to do retain talent in the event where it's institutionalised (P3SM).*

In addition, another senior manager said: *"I think it can. It has the potential to support staff retention but the way we practice it as I indicated that in the department itself there isn't much of knowledge management that's being done ... (P10SM).*

A middle manager added: *"I think not really because we have had challenges around job rotations, succession, and that requires a lot of knowledge management sort of interventions to be part of that process ..."* (P7MM). Baguma et al. (2014) say that knowledge should be captured early, not when employees are exiting the organisation. Therefore, an exit interview is not the correct time to capture knowledge.

The following theme is based on the application of KM in the South African public service.

#### **4.6            THEME 2: CURRENT STATUS OF THE DEFINITION AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

Overwhelmingly, most of the senior managers and middle managers indicated that there was no formal definition of the term KM in the departments, and that KM was applied on an ad hoc basis. It was discovered that there was no approved policy for KM. The participants mentioned that there were various approaches that were used

to share KM in the public service. Interestingly, the majority of the participants indicated that they were familiar with KM. The subsequent sections present the sub-themes that emerged during the analysis of the participants' responses that are linked to the above main theme.

#### 4.6.1 Sub-theme 1: Definition of knowledge

The data analysis reveals that there was no consistent definition of the term knowledge amongst the senior managers and middle managers. It was noted that knowledge can mean different things to different people, depending on their situation. One senior manager was reported saying that *"I think knowledge refers to ... different things to different people depending really on your situation"* (P3SM). Singh (2007) and Kock and Le Roux (2012) explain that there are various definitions of knowledge in the world of work and in academia. Table 4.15 presents a summary on the participants' views on the definitions on the term knowledge.

However, the participants provided their own definitions and phrases. Terms such as "information", "data", "wisdom and "know-how" were used most by the participants when defining the term knowledge. The majority of senior managers and middle managers explained that knowledge was information you use when making a decision. It was noted that data need to be analysed or manipulated in order to become knowledge.

Table 4.15: Definition of knowledge

Code name		Verbatim quotations or evidence
Senior managers (SM)	P2SM	<i>"Knowledge to me is any <u>information</u> you get from people whether it is specific to what you are discussing or seemingly not relevant ... <u>what people know</u>, what you know and making it accessible to others to learn from."</i>
	P3SM	<i>"I don't think there's a <u>specific definition</u> of what constitutes knowledge. I think knowledge refers to ... <u>different things to different people</u> depending really on your situation but by and large most of us will associate knowledge with <u>information</u> and what <u>we know</u> and what we do with what we know for what particular objective actually."</i>
	P4SM	<i>"Knowledge is the <u>combination of theory and practical experience and thought knowledge</u>, thought leadership, at that time. So for me knowledge is a combination of <u>information, data, the analysis</u> thereof that becomes the knowledge."</i>
	P10SM	<i>"How can I describe it? I will say knowledge it's about making sure that the ... I think it's the ... in a simplest way it's <u>the wisdom</u> that exist within an organisation in terms of the processes and procedures that have been <u>documented</u> as contributing to the success of the organisation."</i>
	P11SM	<i>"... they say ... you have <u>information</u> and then the information can be <u>transformed</u>"</i>

Code name		Verbatim quotations or evidence
		<i>or managed to produce knowledge ... it's a <u>higher level of information</u>, let me put it that way, it's an <u>advanced level of information</u> ..."</i>
	P12SM	<i>"Knowledge is the way that you <u>apply your experience</u>, your ... the <u>information</u> that you have, your feelings, etcetera. So it's a <u>tacit</u> kind of thing. It's something that's internal to yourself that you can apply. It's not necessarily a fact but it's you <u>know how</u> to operate or you know how to react to something."</i>
	P13SM	<i>"It is <u>information</u> and understanding of and subject obtained through study and experience."</i>
Middle managers (MM)	P1MM	<i>"My understanding of knowledge is the <u>information</u> that enables you to make a decision. It's your capacity to <u>apply wisdom</u> in order to inform your decision."</i>
	P5MM	<i>"Knowledge is the <u>know-how</u>, the <u>information</u> that you use to do your job."</i>
	P6MM	<i>"Knowledge for me is the <u>information</u> that you have and you can apply so not necessarily only there. You can use it with whatever type of information it is, whether it is <u>previous information</u> that you require for analysis. That's knowledge."</i>
	P7MM	<i>"... that's a difficult one. I think there's a <u>lot of different ways to define it</u> ... So it's <u>having information or data</u>, taking that data, <u>packaging it</u> in such a way that it can tell you something and then taking that and then implement or using it ... so it's a combination of <u>printed information</u> and then also ... trying to see what the other word is. We spoke about <u>tacit knowledge</u> which is I think that part of knowing what to do with it, knowing how to deal with it and how to use it and get to a specific goal or how to deal with challenges ..."</i>
	P8MM	<i>"From my understanding knowledge is the <u>know-how</u> that is sitting in somebody's head. This comes through via data. You first of all <u>get data</u>, raw data, that you look at and you analyse to make sense out of. As you make sense out of you <u>get information</u>. You pull that information, you write it down. It becomes information ... so knowledge is sitting in somebody's head. The <u>know-hows</u>."</i>
	P9MM	<i>"Then I'm going to be simple ... I want to find the right word in English. Let me put it this way: it is simply <u>to know what to do</u>. I can talk about ... I know about applied knowledge etcetera and so forth but knowledge in itself is simply <u>to know what to do</u> about whatever is on ... comes onto your path."</i>

Two participants were cited as follows: "My understanding of knowledge is the information that enables you to make a decision. It's your capacity to apply wisdom in order to inform your decision" (P1MM); and "So knowledge moves from data. You get the raw data that you look at and you analyse it to make sense ... you get information ... that information becomes knowledge" (P8MM). Singh (2007), Gaffoor and Cloete (2010) and Rizvi (2016) explain that people confuse knowledge with information and data.

A few participants expressed that knowledge is the know-how held by individuals in an organisation, as in "from my understanding knowledge is the know-how that is sitting in somebody's head" (P8MM) and "It's something that's internal to yourself that you can apply ... it's you know how to operate or you know how to react to something" (P12SM). McIver et al. (2013) define knowledge as information and the know-how of individuals.

A handful of senior managers and middle managers categorised knowledge from two perspectives, namely tacit and explicit knowledge. The former is regarded as the knowledge that resides in people's minds and the latter as knowledge that is stored in books. The participants were cited as saying:

*"... we have the explicit knowledge which is the knowledge you have in the books and in the recordings ... we have the tacit knowledge which is our knowledge that we have in our minds. Knowledge ... it encapsulate both the tacit and the knowledge" (P1MM).*

*"... within the context of the knowledge management you've got two types of knowledge. You've got what is called the tacit knowledge and that's the knowledge that is in the minds and heads of other people and that is the kind of knowledge that is basically difficult to manage or to measure ... you also have explicit knowledge which is a knowledge that is qualified, that is documented, that is in the files, that is in the reports that can be easy accessible by anybody ..." (P3SM).*

P7MM said, *"... so for me that's the tacit knowledge part of it. I forget what the other term is, in terms of your printed information and information"*. The identification of tacit and explicit knowledge supports the two types of knowledge commonly found in the studies of Doan et al. (2011), O'Toole (2011), Mullins and Christy (2013), and Nyaude and Dewah (2014).

It was interesting to note that one senior manager attributed knowledge to the wisdom held in the department. For instance: *"I think it's the ... the wisdom that exist within the department in terms of the processes and procedures that have been documented as contributing to the success of the organisation" (P10SM)*. Two senior managers expressed that knowledge consists of experience or past information, which you can apply when you do your work. *"Knowledge is the way that you apply your experience ... the information that you have" (P13SM)* and *"Knowledge is the way that you apply your experience ... the information that you have ..." (P12SM)*. This finding is consistent with the definition of Sarkar (2013), namely that knowledge consists of experience and information.

It is clear from the above findings that the participants think differently in terms of the definition of knowledge. However, the majority of the participants associated knowledge with information. The subsequent sub-theme outlines the definition of KM as perceived by the participants.

#### 4.6.2 Sub-theme 2: Definition of knowledge management as viewed by the participants

During the interviews, the majority of senior managers and some of the middle managers mentioned that they were not aware of any specific definition of the term KM in the departments. They claimed that the departments did not have a specific definition of KM. Two participants were cited as saying: "... the organisation itself is inward looking, we haven't defined it yet I think people have personal views, as I have my own view. So, no, this department hasn't defined it" (P4SM) and "... I don't know how my environment ... my organisation defines knowledge management" (P9MM). Table 4.16 summarises the responses of the participants regarding the definition of TM.

Table 4.16: Definition of knowledge management

Code name		Verbatim quotations or evidence
Senior managers (SM)	P2SM	"I have no idea how the department defines knowledge management because, as I say, there is supposed to be a knowledge management component but you hardly hear about them."
	P3SM	"... like I said earlier, there's no one definition of knowledge management and that each sector really has to coin its own understanding based on its own unique circumstances or based on its own situation or on its own mandate."
	P4SM	"I don't know how they do define it. The organisation itself is inward looking, we haven't defined it yet. I think people have personal views, as I have my own view. So, no, this department hasn't defined it as a definition in the department."
	P10SM	"Knowledge management is ensuring that every process within the organisation is documented. Not only documented but the knowledge that exists can be utilised in different settings. So there is ... the fact that it must be documented and the fact that it must be used so that it benefits the organisation going forward."
	P11SM	"... it starts with creation of knowledge by talented ... they harvest talented people and they place them, look at the government processes ... to my department I never see any definition".
	P12SM	"I think that's a concept everybody's struggling with on how to actually define it. There's a lot of confusion I think between what information management, record management, document management, knowledge management, those kind of things, are and especially in government. I think a lot of individuals are unable to distinguish between what is the tacit stuff and what is explicit."
	P13SM	"It is the way in which knowledge is organised, shared and used within the workplace. I don't think the organisation have a define knowledge management ...".
Mid	P1MM	"It's the systemic management of both explicit and tacit knowledge of the organisation with the view of saying the knowledge that is obtained or that is within the organisation in people's mind and also explicit knowledge remains the critical

Code name	Verbatim quotations or evidence
	<i>asset of the organisation."</i>
P5MM	<i>"I don't want to lie. I don't know how the department defines knowledge management ...".</i>
P6MM	<i>"I don't remember if the department has any specific definition that I am aware of, but I can say knowledge management is how <u>you manage the ... whether it's your tacit or your explicit knowledge in the workplace and how you manage that. So how you control that, how you make it available to people and obviously how you enhance it, to put it like that. That's knowledge management."</u></i>
P7MM	<i>"Refers to how <u>tacit and explicit knowledge is stored and used within the organisation. The information must be shared and be accessible to all relevant parties. Hard copy as well as soft copy information. Especially tacit information - for purposes of skills transfer ...".</u></i>
P8MM	<i>"Knowledge management is defined as a place that <u>disseminates</u>. It is defined as a place that <u>acquires</u>, that analyses, that disseminates information that's fixed to that particular department to the relevant ... key stakeholders at the right time. That's then knowledge management."</i>
P9MM	<i>"<u>I don't know</u>. No, I will have to guess, and I can't even. So I don't know how my environment ... my organisation defines knowledge management."</i>

Two senior managers mentioned that defining KM is difficult, as it is informed by the unique circumstances of the organisation. The participants were cited as saying: *"... there's no one definition of knowledge management and that each sector really has to coin its own understanding based on its own unique circumstances or based on its own situation or on its own mandate"* (P3SM), and *"I think that's a concept everybody's struggling with on how to actually define it"* (P12SM). This finding is similar to the assertion of Kazemi and Allahyari (2010), that it is difficult to define KM.

It was not surprising to note that only four senior managers and four middle managers offered their definitions based on their own understanding. Firstly, two senior managers and a middle manager explained that KM is concerned with the acquiring, creation, storage and transferring knowledge.

They were cited as saying: *"... where it starts with creation of knowledge by talented ... they harvest talented people and they place them, look at the government processes ... you then capture that whole process, reduce it down to a manual"* (P11SM); and *"It is the way in which knowledge is organised, shared and used within the workplace. I don't think the organisation have a define knowledge management"* (P13SM). Another example is: *"... knowledge management is defined as a place that disseminates. It is defined as a place that acquires, that analyses, that disseminates information that's fixed to that particular department to the*

*relevant ... key stakeholders at the right time. That's then knowledge management."* (P8MM). The participants used the words transferring, acquiring, creation and storage interchangeably when they defined KM. Dikotla et al. (2014) assert that KM is concerned with the creation, retention and sharing of knowledge.

Half of the middle managers described KM as a process used to manage both tacit and explicit knowledge in organisations. According to one participant, *"It's the systemic management of both explicit and tacit knowledge of the organisation with the view of saying the knowledge that is obtained or that is within the organisation in people's mind and also explicit knowledge remains the critical asset of the organisation"* (P1MM). Additionally, *"Knowledge management is how you manage the ... whether it's your tacit or your explicit knowledge in the workplace and how you manage that. So how you control that, how you make it available to people ..."* (P6MM), and *"Refers to how tacit and explicit knowledge is stored and used within the organisation. The information must be shared and accessible to all relevant parties. Hard copy as well as soft copy information. Especially tacit information - for purposes of skills transfer ..."* (P7MM). This opinion is consistent with the definitions of Ondari-Okemwa and Smith (2009) and Schoenherr, Griffith and Chandra (2014).

Lastly, a senior manager explained that KM helps ensure that the department documents its processes so that they can be followed by other employees in the future. He was quoted as saying: *"Knowledge management is ensuring that every process within the organisation is documented. Not only documented but the knowledge that exists can be utilised in different settings. So there is ... the fact that it must be documented and the fact that it must be used so that it benefits the organisation going forward"* (P10SM). Furthermore, one senior manager emphasised that the value of KM is in knowledge transfer and the sharing of information in order to improve performance. *"I think the most important part or value of knowledge management is provisioning of pathways towards the transferring information or best practices to help, in helping people to share and to increase productivity"* (P3SM). This finding is similar to the definition of Patel and Gorvadiya (2014), namely creating, sharing and using of knowledge to sustain competitiveness.

Interestingly, the majority of senior managers and half of the middle managers indicated that they were familiar with the concept of KM. However, it was noticed that most of the participants had gained exposure to KM through studies or working

experience. The following participants said: *"I studied knowledge management as part of my studies for Master's degree"* (P3SM); *"So, yes, it's not something that I've been taught but it's more my experience and exposure"* (P4SM); and *"I'm very familiar. It's my ... is my bread and butter. It's my thing"* (P1MM). A middle manager stated that: *"I am not very familiar"* (P6MM). These findings support the study of Sharma (2013), who found that 70% of their participants were familiar with KM and 30% were not familiar.

It is worth noting that the majority of the senior managers and a few middle managers explained that the departments did not have an approved policy for KM. It was noted that one of the reasons why the policy was not approved was due to the fact that there were different views about it. Two participants stated: *"... we developed a policy about three years ago ... we could not get it approved, there were too many different opinions about it"* (P12SM) and *"We don't have a policy of knowledge management, nothing is approved ..."* (P1MM). This finding is similar to that of the study of Sharma (2013), even though the latter study was conducted in a different industry (the private sector).

It is evident from the above discussion that the departments in the South African public service have not yet defined KM, and that the middle managers and senior managers hold different perceptions of the definition. Therefore, it was important for this study to gain an understanding of how the departments apply KM.

#### **4.6.3 Sub-theme 3: Application of knowledge management**

According to the participants' responses, the majority of senior managers and a few middle managers expressed that KM is not institutionalised and that there is no KM policy in the departments, and as a result KM happens on an ad hoc basis: *"... no, it is happening in an ad hoc fashion ..."* (P3SM) and *"... it's so limited or low as there is no structured approach or targeted approach. It happens by conceded or on an ad hoc basis"* (P9MM). This finding is in support of the study conducted by Gaffoor and Cloete (2010) among senior personnel of the Stellenbosch Municipality. They found that KM is not institutionalised and that there is no approved policy. However, it is in contrast to the study of Sharma (2013), who found that the three Indian manufacturing organisations had a KM policy and that KM exists in everybody's job.

A small number of senior managers and a few middle managers indicated that the departments were at risk of losing valuable knowledge and argued that they needed to put measures in place to retain the knowledge held by employees. For example: *"... I've been in this institution for so many years with all the type of experiences that I've gain ... if I leave I leave with that particular kind of knowledge and then hence there's been a need to protect institutional memory or to decide to retain it"* (P3SM). Also, *"... someone cannot be there the next day for various reasons, from resignation to death, and you lost it all"* (P9MM). This finding slightly supports the findings of Nyaude and Dewah (2014), namely that resignation contributes to knowledge loss and may affect the production and performance of newly appointed employees, thus the knowledge must be retained.

Despite the non-existence of KM, the majority of senior managers and middle managers held the view that, if KM can be institutionalised, it can support staff retention. For example, *"they can assist to do that in the event where it's institutionalised ..."* (P3SM), and *"... in some other organisations, where knowledge management efforts exists"* (P13SM). Similarly, *"I think it can. It has the potential to support staff retention but the way we practise it as I indicated that in the Department itself there is no much of knowledge management that's being done. So ... but I think. if we were to apply it, it can support staff retention"* (P10SM). Equally, *"that's what it's supposed to do but I don't see it doing that. Like I said we don't have the strategy, we don't have a policy of knowledge management, nothing is approved, there's no functional in structure but that's the ideal objective"* (P1MM). Furthermore, *"yes ... I'm a lifelong public servant. I think knowledge management will especially help to retain not necessarily your high performer but, in the bell curve, that middle sixty-six percent. So I think as a retention mechanism the issue of having peace or confidence to do your job will be a big retainer or a retention mechanism for me"* (P9MM). This supports the findings of the quantitative study conducted by Novak, Roblek and Devetak (2013) on 57 organisations that are members of the Slovenian Park, namely that KM has an influence on staff retention. It is also in line with the study of Nthongoa (2014). Even though the latter study was conducted in a pharmaceutical industry, the findings reveal that KM can contribute positively to staff retention.

One middle manager indicated that knowledge can be retained, firstly, by identifying the critical knowledge held by employees who are about to go on retirement and pairing them with newly recruited employees to transfer the knowledge. This middle manager was quoted as saying: *"... you look at the critical knowledge ... the person perhaps is about to retire in the area of financial management. You take that person, you merge ... you address the knowledge gap of that person because you don't want the intern to spend ten years or more learning something that the person in finance they were practicing every day and it took them that long ..."* (P1MM). This is slightly in agreement with the finding of Peet et al. (2010), namely that the knowledge generated through the use of the Generative Knowledge Interview Framework (GKIF) sped up knowledge transfer to newly appointed employees.

Two senior managers and one middle manager claimed that they had a unit for KM, but it was not fully capacitated. Two participants stated that: *"What I do know was that the capacity of the office at the time was much bigger and they were able to generate forms ... sorry, reports ..."* (P2SM); and *"not fully functional I would say. It's there but it's not fully active and I doubt if many people are aware of that"* (P1MM).

From the above findings it is evident that KM is not institutionalised in the two departments. Therefore, it will be interesting to understand how the public service shares knowledge. The subsequent sub-theme explores the strategy used by the public service to share knowledge.

#### **4.6.4 Sub-theme 4: Knowledge-sharing practices**

Apparently there are various processes used by the departments to share knowledge that they view as formal and informal processes. These processes range from mentoring and coaching, networking, memoranda, submissions, meetings, electronic transfer, documentation, information session and workshops. *"I'd say there's various ways to share knowledge obviously"* (P6MM). This is slightly consistent with the findings in the study conducted by Dewah and Mutula (2016) on libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa. They found that documentation, workshops, mentoring, storytelling and seminars are used to share knowledge amongst library staff. According to Kazemi and Allahyari (2010) there is no prescribed approach to applying KM, therefore organisations apply it differently and, in most cases, they use various strategies (Schwaera et al., 2012).

Figure 4.3 presents the various knowledge-sharing practices, which are subsequently discussed under the following headings: (a) information sessions and networking, (b) documentation, database and repository, (c) information technology and (d) mentoring and coaching.



Figure 4.3: Knowledge sharing practices

- **Information sessions and networking**

A good number of senior managers and middle managers mentioned that they used information session and networks to share knowledge in the departments, including learning networks, community of practices, brown bag session, workshops, meetings and discussion sessions. The following three participants were cited as saying: "... share it through your various meetings ... we sit in meetings, there are agenda items, people discuss ..." (P2SM); "... we do it through workshops to say ..." (P4SM); and "Communities of practice, it depends on how you do it and how you implement it ..." (P6MM). This finding is in line with the qualitative study of Nyaude and Dewah (2014), although it was conducted in a different industry with librarian managers.

A handful of senior and middle managers explained that a community of practice has not been successful because employees are overworked and constantly out of office. They mentioned that they are attempting to revitalise the programmes. Two

participants were quoted as saying: "... we are attempting to ensure that we create what we call the learning network, which is really a platform of bringing experts together on a particular subject to come and share their experience, their frustrations, their challenges and to learn from each other ..." (P3SM), and "Communities of practice ... I have to be very honest to say we haven't had a lot of success in it. I believe, and this is a personal opinion, that we don't have that success rate because of the workload and the travelling" (P6MM). The difficulties to set up communities of practice are contrary to the findings of Mkhize (2015), who found that the Department of Public Service and Administration is sharing knowledge through the use of a community of practice.

A few senior managers and half of the middle managers indicated that knowledge is shared through training and working closely with other colleagues. One participant was quoted as saying: "... for example a training session ... you will gather knowledge from what is happening" (P12SM); furthermore, "It can be shared by working closely with somebody. It can be shared via teaching" (P8MM). This is consistent with the findings of Nyaude and Dewah (2014) in the library environment, namely to give feedback to colleagues, including personal interactions, induction, mentoring and observations.

- **Documentation, database and repository**

The majority of senior managers and a small number of middle managers mentioned that the knowledge generated during meetings was documented in the form of minutes, reports, submission and Cabinet memoranda and were stored in a database. One participant noted: "*The minutes they become a record of that knowledge, that information, emanating from that particular meeting. So minutes of meetings are very important and how we file and keep them ...*" (P2SM). Another said: "... the explicit route is through documentation, submissions, things that's been distributed throughout that you can read and actually look at it ..." (P12SM). Furthermore, "In my environment we have a central repository ..." (P13SM) and "... office files that document experiences, processes and procedures, etc." (P7MM). The findings contradict the qualitative study conducted by Bairi et. al. (2013) undertaken in India's multinational oil and gas organisation with senior managers in Bangalore, in which it was reported that documentation was done poorly.

Although the participants mentioned that a database or repository is used to store knowledge, it was noted that three senior managers and a middle manager explained that the departmental database was not effective, but rather dysfunctional. One middle manager recommended the creation of a central database system to which all employees will have access. The following participants were cited as saying: “... few years ago they started with an initiative where they could capture the experiences and knowledge ... so it was a database. That is the way it was set up but it didn't firmly take root in the department because it is not functional today” (P4SM); “...we're lacking in terms of a repository of making sure that we have a good foundation of keeping our knowledge within the organisation” (P10MM). This finding is similar to the study of Bairi et al. (2013), who found that the oil and gas organisation they studied failed to document knowledge.

Apparently the failure to keep and store knowledge in databases is due to the many restructurings that were happening in the department, which have resulted in the abolishment of the KM section, which was left with a few employees. It appears that most employees are not aware of the KM unit. The following participants were cited as saying: “There used to be ... a very strong knowledge management unit here and as a result of this many restructuring and so forth those things were terminated, were ... they were halted ... they were stopped for a period of seven years since 2009” (P3SM); moreover, “what I do know was that the capacity of the office at the time was much bigger, it was headed by a chief director and it had quite few directors in it and they were able to generate forms ... sorry, reports ... so knowledge management was working with those teams ... it has since been phased out” (P2SM); “It's there but it's not fully active and I doubt if many people are aware of it .... we don't have a fully functioning knowledge management structure or people who are executing KM” (P1MM).

Oddly, one senior manager and two middle managers indicated that they had a database in the department where they filed their documents. They were cited as saying: “In my environment we have a central repository” (P13SM) and “... we have quite a number of databases ...” (P8MM). Also, “... we have databases that we use...” (P7MM). This finding is consistent with the quantitative study of Aqarwal and

Islam (2015) on the existence of databases, although their study was done in a different environment.

- **Information technology**

A few senior managers and half of the middle managers cited that information technology systems such as the intranet, e-mail, internet and blogs are used to store and share knowledge in the departments: “... you can put it in a publication and circulate it on the intranet...” (P11SM) and “you can use methods such as the blogs but those ones are mostly liked by the young people ... you can use the intranet. It is supposed to be our knowledge sharing platforms” (P1MM). Alhamoudi (2014) found that information technology was a key factor for implementing KM in public administration institutions in Saudi Arabia.

According to Johnson (2009), people need to interact with the knower, who can explain and summarise the information. It was noted that the intranet is not considered by employees to be an effective tool for knowledge sharing in the departments. One participant was cited as saying: “... but for me it’s not in a coherent way that drives people to go there as a source of information for them to have the knowledge” (P4SM). Schwaer et al. (2012) explain that people prefer sharing knowledge with people, not going to the intranet.

- **Mentoring and coaching**

Overwhelmingly, most of the middle managers and a few senior managers mentioned mentoring and coaching as a tool for knowledge sharing. However, it was noted in section 4.5.3 of this chapter that mentorship and coaching are not used in the department. Two participants mentioned: “... coaching and mentoring you can take people who are about to retire, you bring them to ones who are just coming in to teach the young ones how to do the job. So that’s one of the ways of sharing” (P1MM). For instance, “... you can assign people to be mentored or to observe ... to be mentored over a period of time ...” (P11SM). This supports the findings of Nyaude and Dewah (2014), who found that mentorship is used as a strategy to share knowledge. The following section discusses the findings on the integration of TM and KM as perceived by the participants.

#### 4.7. THEME 3: PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE INTEGRATION OF TALENT MANAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

During the interviews it was apparent that TM and KM are not integrated in the South African public service. This may be due to the lack of approved policies and the institutionalisation of TM and KM (see sections 4.5.3 and 4.6.3). However, the findings indicate that all participants agreed that the integration of TM and KM will be beneficial to the South African public service in supporting staff retention. The participants held the view that the integration would facilitate skills transfer, and enhance employees' competence and the management of talent, promote teamwork and eliminate silo operations. Additionally, it would enable the public service to reduce knowledge loss and build a knowledge reservoir.

The participants' unique perceptions with regard to the integration of TM and KM have become a main theme. Two sub-themes have emerged and were linked to this main theme; these are: (a) the benefit of integrating TM and KM, and (b) the requirements for the integration of TM and knowledge. These sub-themes are discussed in the section below.

##### 4.7.1 Sub-theme 1: Benefit of integrating talent management and knowledge management

Overwhelmingly, all senior managers and middle managers perceived the integration of TM and KM to be beneficial to the South African public service. Table 4.17 summarises the benefits of integrating TM and KM as viewed by the participants.

Table 4.17: The benefit of integrating TM and KM

Code name		Verbatim quotations or evidence
Senior managers (SM)	P2SM	<i>Ja, I think it would be an advantage to keep the two together. As I said, if you have a talent management system or methodology and you also do your knowledge management you harvest from one to feed the other and what you have harvested you also feed into the other. As a knowledge management you look at what knowledge is coming out.</i>
	P3SM	<i>They are more advantage because as in time you're killing that silo mentality that is a main constraint in terms of better performance and so forth and so forth. So we are not going to say we've got talent if then we are not using it and then we are not going to have to say we've now knowledge management if it's not really assisting to integrate all the businesses of the department and then show how all of them can basically benefit from that sharing of information.</i>
	P4SM	<i>I think it is advantageous to marry the two through an information system. So there's a link that one needs to bring to bear So you have the person, what they do for you and the value that they bring and then you ... the combination of that you are generating information of the organisation over time and I think the</i>

Code name		Verbatim quotations or evidence
		<i>bringing everyone into a seamless so that it is a portal of information that people can get to which becomes the knowledge they will have.</i>
	P10SM	<i>The integration for me would be to ensure that the managing of talent is not done in isolation of the knowledge that exists within an organisation. So when you're busy managing talent, looking at all those aspects that I mentioned, you also look at the knowledge aspect: what are the issues that can be shared among the people that you are managing as your talent pool?</i>
	P11SM	<i>The value chain of talent management starts with talent development and what is the outcome of that talent? It's to create knowledge. Remember we're working in the knowledge economies. So it's to create knowledge. If you implement a talent management with no intended outcome what would be your intended outcome? I'm saying without talent management there'll be no knowledge because the job of talent is to create new knowledge, that's what I'm saying. If you don't have a talent to create knowledge then you are dead, you are useless.</i>
	P12SM	<i>I think the two go hand-in-hand. So, yes, I think it must be more advantageous, if you actually integrate the two. You can't really separate them from each other ... Obviously if we're not going to give our staff the opportunity to grow, to gain new knowledge, whatever, they will become bored and they will leave.</i>
	P13SM	<i>Yes I do believe it is more advantageous. You can ensure all your staff have the same knowledge but by ensuring that you also take cognisance of people's abilities and interest you will get more productive and motivated people.</i>
	P1MM	<i>I think they are a missile on their own. They are a powerful great combination on their own. Although if this one can be but this one we always have ... you're always attracting ... you're always on the view of attracting new talent within the organisation or managing talent in the organisation.</i>
Middle managers (MM)	P5MM	<i>You can't separate knowledge management with talent. Knowledge goes hand-in-hand with talent and retention but as I said is that we're jumping ship. We want to retain before we even impart knowledge ...</i>
	P6MM	<i>Ja, I think it will be. I think it will definitely be because as I say if you got your processes and your standards and everybody knows what it is there ... I can have the best talent management system in place. If I don't have a knowledge management system then I can train and train and train my employees every two years when they leave I sit with the same problem...</i>
	P7MM	<i>Yes. I think it will be more advantageous ... So I think in terms of retention, if that information is available ... so for example when a new person comes in within the first three months they'll decide whether to stay in the organisation or not. If they come in they can't find basic information anywhere and they have to fend for themselves and go get into trouble in the first three to six months they're not gonna stay with the organisation. So I think that's where the fit between knowledge management and retention will come in.</i>
	P8MM	<i>I think it should be more advantageous in the sense that you're trying to integrate two things that are seen as different although they may be one because we are talking about people here. We are talking about the different talents that we have. We are talking about the skills, competencies and knowledge that they have and the transferring and the keeping of the record ... they are aiming at one direction. One direction only of not losing the skills. It's not losing the know-how. It's not losing the information, not losing what is in other people's heads.</i>
	P9MM	<i>Yes. definitely. That is the one where it will be more advantageous. It's simply so because what you will actually achieve, in my view, the way in which you manage your talent and talent remember I said there's a closer scope again, existing workforce, will simply mean that you have a very specific preference and also equipping your available talent or workforce with knowledge to do their jobs. It's actually ... if I put it that way there's actually no rule to keep it separate.</i>

Phrases such as “powerful combination”, “go hand-in-hand”, “it will be an advantage”

and “you cannot separate the two” were most frequently mentioned by the participants. The following participant was cited as saying: *“I think it would be an advantage to keep the two together. As I said that if you have talent management system or methodology and you also do your knowledge management you harvest from one to feed the other ...”* (P2SM). Another participant said, *“... they’re a missile on their own. They are a powerful great combination”* (P1MM). Furthermore, *“you can’t separate knowledge. Knowledge goes hand-in-hand with talent and retention”* (P5MM). Vance and Vaiman (2008) explain that integrating TM and KM can form a powerful combination.

It was interesting to note that two senior managers and two middle managers indicated that the integration of TM and KM would be appreciated by employees in the public service, as it would empower them. For example, *“... people will value that integratedness as an enabler, enabling them to have more knowledge about the organisation’s day-to-day working ...”* (P4SM) and *“... it will help or assist to empower others by encouraging shadowing or mentored by an older person to another ... so that you retain that knowledge, you retain that talent ...”* (P3SM). Additionally, *“I think that [it will] assist to gives people knowledge that they wouldn’t necessarily otherwise have and that could assist in retaining ...”* (P7MM). Furthermore, *“If you’re going to send me back every time to follow a different process you’re just going to frustrate me ... and your engagement of your employees is going to dip and dip and dip ...”* (P6MM). *“... what you will actually achieve, in my view, the way in which you manage your talent ... existing workforce, will simply mean that you have a very specific preference and also equipping your available talent or workforce with knowledge to do their jobs”* (P9MM). The findings on the provision of knowledge to people slightly support the study of Novak et al. (2013), who found that providing and managing knowledge increased job satisfaction among employees and the retention of KM support staff. It also is in agreement with the quantitative study of Hasani and Sheikhesmaeili (2016), although their study looked only at the aspects of KM and found that KM predicts employee empowerment.

In fact, two middle managers emphasised that TM and KM need not be separated, as they are dealing HR and will enable the public service to create a powerful structure. The participants were cited as saying: *“Talent management is supposed to go hand-in-hand with knowledge management because ... like any people with skills*

*it's people with information and it's people with experience and expertise and maybe tools must be developed how they document that knowledge ..."* (P5MM). Likewise, *"... KM is human-based and HR also it's a human-based function ... if you bring the KM people to come and work with the HR people who are central in the organisation in dealing with the human-based issues then you have a powerful structure within the organisation"* (P1MM). One senior manager emphasised that *"... one can never do without people but there comes a time when knowledge must be available to an organisation even if the individual isn't there on that day at the time"* (P4SM).

Furthermore, one senior manager emphasised the importance of capturing knowledge from those employees who may be retiring soon to ensure that their knowledge is not lost, so that it can be reused by newly appointed employees in order to avoid reinventing the wheel. One participant was quoted as saying: *"... if you know that somebody very soon will be going on retirement there's supposed to be ways within which you can sit down ... and try to see how you can transfer that particular kind of knowledge ..., how can you capture it ... so that knowledge can still be used by those who are coming ... to ensure that there's some sort of continuity, to avoid reinventing the wheel"* (P3SM). This supports the recommendation of Agarwal and Islam (2015), namely that knowledge from employees must be captured before they exit the organisation.

A senior manager and a middle manager mentioned that the integration will help the public service to eliminate silo operations and ensure that talented employees are fully utilised and improve employees' engagement. One participant stated that: *"... in time you're killing that silo mentality that is the main constraint ... so we are not going to say we've got talent if that talent we not using it"* (P3SM). Furthermore, *"my feeling is that we do have the skill we just not aware because it's not documented, it's not known, and because we are departments that work in silos ... if they would develop something of that nature ... to transfer knowledge"* (P5MM). This finding is slightly consistent with Gaffoor and Cloete (2010). Although their study was based only on KM, they found that KM helps to eradicate silo operations.

The majority of senior managers and middle managers mentioned that the integration of TM and KM would enhance learning and the sharing of knowledge through the use of various practices such as mentoring and coaching. For example:

*“if your processes or your standards are in place in your knowledge management system it makes the skills transfer processes so much easier” (P6MM); “If I can carry over my years of experience to somebody else it will get them up to a level where they can function a lot faster, a lot better” (P12SM); and “Coaching and mentoring you can take people who are about to retire, you bring them to ones who are just coming in to teach the young ones how to do the job. So that’s one of the ways of sharing” (P1MM).* Masibigiri and Nienaber (2011) explain that knowledge transfer will facilitate work continuation. This provides slight support for the findings of the qualitative study by Scully et al. (2013) in England, namely that tacit knowledge can be converted to explicit knowledge by using HRM practices. It also tends to support the thinking on knowledge conversion (Nejatian et. 2013; Scully et al., 2013), the knowledge conversion process, and allows employees to develop and increase their knowledge.

One middle manager raised the concern that employees gain knowledge and end up being lost when they resign without even sharing the knowledge with other employees. *“... Currently you will have high attrition rates, people leaving, leaving, leaving because those who get the knowledge they get that knowledge and leave” (P5MM).* This was echoed by a senior manager, who stated: *“... every time an employee leaves, organisational resource goes ... in fact leaves. As they call it it’s a capital drain, human capital drain, gone” (P11SM).* Vaiman and Vance (2008) explain that a lack of KM will result in the loss of valuable knowledge, and Ortlieb and Sieben (2012) say KM will minimise the dependence on one employee.

It was observed that the majority of the participants emphasised that KM in the public service is not integrated: *“I think most departments drive the knowledge management ... it’s not integrated in the way that you deal with your available talent or workforce” (P9MM).* Another mentioned that *“... It is not integrated, hence HR will do exit interview and if we want to be part of it they will tell you it’s not thing of knowledge management” (P1MM).* Also *“am not aware of any integration of the two concept, what I know is that there is knowledge management and human resource unit doing their own thing separately” (P8MM).* One participant strongly expressed that the department does not value KM and does not know how to manage talent. *“This is not a department that values knowledge management; this is not a department that values talent and knows how to management talent ... hence it is not*

*integrated” (P2SM). Another said: “... there is no integrated policies that integrate the two concepts, and the draft knowledge management policy itself is not yet approved (P4SM). One participant claimed that the department did not have people who are knowledgeable in the field of KM. “... those that need to apply knowledge management do not know how to do it, first of all, and are probably also not knowledgeable enough to keep enough to knowledge management” (P9MM).*

The subsequent sub-theme outlines the key elements required for the integration of TM and KM as perceived by the participants.

#### **4.7.2 Sub-theme 2: Requirements for the integration of TM and KM**

Based on the participants’ responses and the analysis of the interview transcriptions, it was observed that the participants cited various elements that may be required for the integration of TM and KM. One middle manager was cited as saying:

*It’s cumbersome, it’s a lot of work ... if you want to integrate talent management also it sounds like a lot of work but I think you can integrate it if you get the right people to do the job. If you get people who are quite knowledgeable in the area of talent management and people who are quite knowledgeable in the area of knowledge management ... It’s quite difficult because ... KM on its own it’s a big mission if we think about it and talent management so far I feel it’s also a big mission ... (P1MM).*

This finding is similar to the study of Yumei and Xiantao (2009) on the coupling of TM and KM by using a multi-dimensional grey evaluation method. These authors found that the integration can be difficult and may not be understood by practitioners. Likewise, Turner and Kalman (2014) assert that a great strategic plan is doomed if there are no people who have the required skills and knowledge.

A handful of senior managers and two middle managers mentioned the importance of having a clear vision and mission, which must be linked to the strategic objectives of the organisation. It is worth noting that one participant mentioned that TM should be aligned to the vision and strategic objective of the department: *“We probably must have clear strategies on where we want to go with both knowledge management as well as talent management ... if we don’t know where we want to go with it, if you don’t have a clear vision on what knowledge management should be” (P12SM).*

“... but more specifically linked to the strategic objectives of the departments and that links up to your line function programmes and visions” (P7MM) and “... looking at the vision and the mission of the organisation, how they contribute strategically to the organisation” (P1MM). This finding is contrary to the finding of Yumei and Xiantao (2009), who found that the integration of talent and KM requires the creation of a corporate culture and incentives. It is consistent with what researchers are saying in the literature (Grobler & Diedericks, 2009; Kazemi & Allahyari, 2010; Oluikpe, 2012; Tansley et al., 2007), namely that there is a need to ensure that either TM or KM is aligned with the organisation’s vision and strategic goals.

It was interesting to note that the majority of middle managers mentioned that the departments should strive to have a common understanding of the concepts of TM and KM as one of the requirements for successfully building an integrated talent and knowledge management programme. One participant says talent and knowledge management currently are viewed as separate. Two participants were quoted saying:

*... there is a need to have a common understanding ... we have been in the process of developing a knowledge management policy for quite a while and I would say mostly because we don’t agree always on what should be there and what shouldn’t be there. I think sometimes it become a bit confusing because people would ... or people believe that talent management and knowledge management is the same thing” (P6MM).*

*... the constraint that I’ve seen is the separation of the two ... where talent is pushed towards human resources management and the knowledge is pushed towards the information side of things, say your library or your resource centres ... but it’s something that should work together hand-in-hand” (P8MM).*

Whelan et al. (2010) explain that KM has been seen as a function of information technology, not HRM, hence there is a disconnect between talent and knowledge management.

One middle manager stated that *“I think talent management is more or less the same as knowledge management ...”* (P1MM). This citation provides evidence that there is confusion between TM and KM in the department. This findings is similar to the study of Donate and Canales (2012) on employees in innovative Spanish

organisations. The reported that an inconsistent KM strategy is characterised by a lack of understanding and no definition of KM.

It was encouraging to note that half of the middle managers indicated that both KM and TM are dealing with HR and should not be seen as separate. One participant was quoted as saying:

*... but those two terms are always separated. Talent management as I have already said to you when you spoke talent management I said now we're talking HR and it's not supposed to be like that because it's human. It's people. The knowledge speaks to people. It speaks to humans (P8MM).*

This finding emphasises the importance of seeing these two concepts as complementary to each other, despite previously being seen as separate, with KM belonging to information technology (Whelan et al., 2010).

It was encouraging to note that almost half of the senior managers and a few middle managers mentioned that talented people need to be well managed, as they are the ones who are creating knowledge, and that such knowledge needs to be shared with other employees. One participant was quoted as saying:

*... talented people also generate knowledge whether it is the way they reason, the way they do things. So what you get from them you also package in a way that people have access to it and the knowledge that already exists you share with this talented group so that it enhances. For me the systems feed into each other. You can't manage talent without using knowledge (P2SM).*

Researchers explain that people are the creators of knowledge, hence by having knowledgeable and talented employees it is easy for an organisation to create new knowledge (Hasani & Sheikhesmaeili, 2016; Nejatian et al., 2013; Patel & Gorvadiy, 2014).

The researcher wanted to understand which approach could be adopted by the South African public service when implementing TM. This question was not part of the interview schedule but arose as a matter of curiosity, as it appeared that TM is currently not yet implemented. Most of the senior managers and a handful of middle managers were in favour of adopting a broader approach (inclusive) to TM, rather

than focusing only on top-performing employees. The following three participants reported:

*... all of them need to be managed, even the jerks ... (P2SM).*

*I think in the public service we need to manage talent throughout across all levels but obviously there will be candidates that have greater potential than others. So those are the ones that we need to have a dedicated focus ... you don't only focus on the highflyers or the hype. You need to also focus on the ones that you don't regard as high flyers (P10SM).*

*I believe every worker who's paid by the State, who's getting a salary, is a critical member of the State and their talent must be managed in every way ... (P1MM).*

This is consistent with the finding in the study of Sonnenberg et al. (2014), namely that the public service should adopt an inclusive approach to TM.

Oddly, a few middle managers held the view that TM should focus on only a few employees in the departments, especially those employees who have critical and scarce skills, as there is high turnover amongst them: *"... I would specifically start with your line function area and then identify scarce and critical skills. Scarce skills meaning difficult to find and expensive to replace .... So in fact it's a challenge to plan around it because of the turnover that's so high"* (P7MM). In contrast, Vermeulen (2008) explains that the South African public sector must include all of its employees in TM.

The participants' responses and the analysis of the interview transcripts revealed five key conditions that are required for the integration of TM and KM in order to promote staff retention in the South African public service. These are support from top leadership, organisational structure and culture, resources, legislation, knowledge capturing and sharing, KM system, reward and recognition and career development. These requirements are now discussed.

- **Support from top leadership**

The majority of senior managers and a small number of middle managers explained that the success of the integration of TM and KM required strong support from top

leadership. They argued that top leadership was responsible for making decisions, especially on the approval of the budget that can be used to support the integration. For instance, two participants were quoted saying: *"I think one needs supportive leaders because they are the people who make the final decision on finances and the supporters and sponsors of integrated systems"* (P4MM) and *"I can't say political but if there's no leadership support for something like this to happen it will not happen ..."* (P12SM).

Another quotation in this regard was: *"The top leadership are the champions. We regard them as the champions of our KM, of our talent, of our leadership, of whatever we are doing ... in Batho Pele aspect we regard them as the Batho Pele champions"* (P1MM). The study is in line with that of Yumein and Xiantato (2009), even though their study had a different objective (viz. linking TM and KM to achieve transformation) and was conducted in the private sector.

Two middle managers suggested that, in order for KM to be effective in the public service, it must form part of every senior managers' performance agreements and they must be assessed on it. One participant reported: *"Another thing we need to have is that our knowledge management must be ... must be on our annual performance ... what do you call this that we sign? Performance agreement of every senior manager ... we will have a functioning knowledge management"* (P1MM). Altinöz et al. (2013) explain that KM should form part of the performance assessment of senior managers.

- **Organisational structure and culture**

One middle manager emphasised that KM is misplaced in the departments and must be part of the same structure as HRM.

*KM in the public service is misplaced in the structure and they end up doing the good things but the good things are not being seen because they come from KM, Kela ba library [its library people], ... whereas KM is human-based and HR also it's a human-based function* (P1MM).

This is slightly similar to the finding of the quantitative study of Alhamoudi (2014), conducted on the Institute of Public Administration in Saudi Arabia, who discovered that organisational structure is a key success factor for the implementation of KM.

Four senior managers emphasised the importance of having an appropriate organisational culture in order to inculcate a culture of knowledge sharing in the departments. *"I think creating the acceptable culture of sharing expertise, if we can get that right, that it is the culture to want to help and assist someone ..."* (P4SM). Furthermore,

*... one very important thing that you need to deal with: the organisational culture, in HRD [human resource development] there's a saying we always share that there's a good HRD strategy, when pitted against an organisational culture, organisational culture always wins. So you can have a very good talent management strategy but if the culture, which is an underlying phenomenon, it's opposed to such, doesn't support it, then it's not gonna drive. Forget it* (P11SM).

In addition, one middle manager mentioned that their department was trying to build a new organisational culture, but there was no support from managers.

*The current organisational culture ... I just don't want to lie. Our corporate services has done a very good job of trying to bring up concepts about building an ideal corporate culture but it's the people who may be hindering that...it should be highly enforceable because of the resistance and most of the resistance comes from management more than juniors. Juniors will always be willing to ... you'll find even in these concepts like the Rihaga they send junior staff to go and participate ...* (P5MM).

Bello and Oyekunle (2014) explain that creating an appropriate organisational culture will help an organisation to institutionalise knowledge sharing, including the implementation of TM (Hughes & Rog, 2008).

Oddly, one senior manager indicated regarding the current organisation culture that *"I think it is conducive for implementing the integration of talent and knowledge management"* (P10SM) to support staff retention. One middle manager elaborated by saying *"... the managers must know how the team views. I think it is very critical because with a manager that doesn't know and tends to do things in the very same way it doesn't change the corporate culture"* (P5MM). Martins and Meyer (2012)

explain that having an appropriate organisational culture is significant for staff retention and knowledge transfer.

- **Legislation and recruitment practices**

Three senior managers and half of the middle managers considered the current legislation regarding HR and recruitment practices as having the potential to hinder the implementation of the integrated TM and KM, especially regarding the issue of career management and remuneration. It was suggested that the public service regulations must be reviewed. One middle manager indicated that the current public service regulation was under review and that it was hoped that the changes may assist department in addressing these TM issues:

*"Review the regulatory framework, look at the career progression, career paths, of people ... So you may have to look at the remuneration framework" (P11SM); "Recruitment practices should not be so rigid that you are not able to employ or promote existing staff which you invest a lot of time and effort" (P13SM); and "Hopefully the new regulations are going to address this but currently I would say if you don't have the knowledge that you need on your system, that you require, it is ... as I say, it's going to make your talent management process so much difficult" (P6MM).*

The participants' responses and the analysis of the interview transcript revealed seven activities that may be required for the South African public service to integrate TM and KM in order to support staff retention. These activities are presented in Figure 4.4 and are discussed as follows:



Figure 4.4: Activities required for the integration of TM and KM.

- **Resources and knowledge creation**

Three senior managers and two middle managers said that the integration of TM and KM would require that the South African public service recruit people who are knowledgeable in the field of TM and KM and that there should be enough money for employee development:

*I think you can integrate it if you get the right people to do the job. If you get people who are quite knowledgeable in the area of talent management and people who are quite knowledgeable in the area of knowledge management (P1MM).*

*... so for me the resources that make these two system works and it would be the money which will enable ... if that talent needs knowledge from outside ... you must provide it, the development or something like that, and the knowledge management you would not just need the money to run that component. You must get people that are experts in knowledge management (P2SM).*

Also, *"... you need first to get talented people so that they create knowledge. The point is it will take a talent to create knowledge, then knowledge need to be created before it can be managed"* (P11SM). This finding slightly supports the statement made by Desouza and Paquette (2012), who assert that KM starts with people and revolves round people and ends with people.

- **Knowledge capturing and documentation**

Five participants claimed that knowledge is created by employees and it needs to be captured, documented and preserved in a database to ensure that, when an employee is no longer in the department, such knowledge can still be accessed. The participants claimed that this process will assist in increasing the knowledge held in the department's repository: *"... knowledge that you get from them to build into the reservoir of knowledge in the department ..."* (P2SM). This finding shares similarities with McInerney and Koenig (2011), who found that knowledge storage helps in creating more knowledge for an organisation.

It was interesting to note one middle manager who indicated that knowledge can be captured and documented as a process and that employees can be enabled to access it in order to build their knowledge, thereby serving as a retention mechanism: *"As I've indicated you capture it as a process or as a discussion document or something ... I think that assists ... that gives people knowledge that they wouldn't necessarily otherwise have and that could assist in retaining"* (P7MM). Martins and Meyer (2012) assert that knowledge retention must form an integral part of HRM and requires appropriate knowledge transfer.

It was disturbing to note that the department currently does not capture and store the experience of employees in a database. Even the exit interviews conducted do not aim at eliciting the knowledge held by the departing employees, as indicated in the quote *"... there were attempts to create a database of information and experiences that people could utilise as then their own knowledge"* (P4SM). One senior manager indicated that *"... if you retire at the end of this month somebody will sit and do an exit interview with you ... and say why are you leaving? Where are you going? But nobody actually sits there and says this was your job for the past five years, tell me about that job. Let's try and codify this and put it on paper so that somebody else can actually know what it is"* (P12SM). The lack of database and capturing of knowledge

is similar to the findings from the study by Stephen (2016), even though the study was conducted in a different industry (Kenya Methodist University).

The majority of the participants, however, emphasised the importance of having a database or repository that can be used not only to store relevant knowledge, but to give people access to it who may need it to advance their careers. It was noted that people need to be trained on how to use the database. This will boost the confidence of the employees and they may even stay in the department longer. The following are some of the view of the participants:

*Databases must be open to the organisation. Databases should include all relevant information to avoid having to many different databases for differing types of information. The knowledge management (KM) centres must be communicated to all staff and all staff must be trained on offerings and use of the KM centres (P7MM).*

*That we each know where a central repository of every document, resource document, submissions, you have a proper filing system that could be the beginning of knowledge management (P11SM).*

*Your exposure levels are higher because if you know what is shared in specific databases, to put it like that, you know where to go and look for certain information. So, yes, just the exposure, that alone, if you look at one of the main things that employees are indicating as career development is their levels of exposure (P6MM).*

*When you have a big repository of knowledge and people know that they can benefit from the knowledge that exists within the organisation people might feel more comfortable to stay and utilise that knowledge to better their careers (P10SM).*

Researchers explain that knowledge needs to be captured, documented and stored in a database (Armstrong, 2009; McInerney & Koenig, 2011; Oluikpe, 2012).

- **Knowledge sharing**

Personal interaction is regarded as a form of knowledge sharing whereby employees share their thoughts, knowledge, experiences and skills (Bello & Oyekunle, 2014;

Dikotla et al., 2014). This assertion is similar to the findings obtained from the majority of senior managers and middle manager, who asserted the importance of knowledge sharing, and this can be done by using various personal interaction strategies, such as on-the-job training, succession planning, job shadowing, mentoring and coaching.

*Then you put process in place, this can be done through succession planning, shadowing of a person who is about to retire ... the person who is going on retirement will work with person X to transfer the knowledge and he/she can identify some gap (P11SM).*

This finding is in line with the strategies advocated by researchers such as Schmitt et al. (2011), namely a personalisation strategy that takes the form of human interaction to share knowledge.

One middle manager reported that:

*... if your processes or your standards are in place in your knowledge management system it makes the skills transfer processes so much easier. So if your knowledge management process is there in place that makes that so much easier. It's going to shorten that skills transfers plan significantly obviously (P6MM).*

Another middle manager indicated that the transfer and storing of knowledge by human beings is very risky and may be seen as a waste of time, as employees may resign at any time owing to death or resignation.

*The risk of transferring or storing information on someone else's head is that someone cannot be there the next day for various reasons, from resignation to death. So ... and you lost it all or not lost it all but it can mentally still there but you wasted a lot of time (P9MM).*

This supports the assertion of Rothwell (2011) that human talent is a waste.

- **Information management system**

A small number of senior managers and half of the middle managers emphasised the need to have a knowledge or information management system to store relevant

knowledge that can be accessed by employees. The system can be used to store the knowledge of high-performing employees to ensure that even if they leave their knowledge is still available in the system. Two participants mentioned that:

*... if you have highflyers that ... or high potential people that cannot be retained within the remuneration structure that we currently have, if they leave ... if you have a good knowledge management system you can still have the knowledge within the organisation that is there even though those people leave (P10SM).*

*I think critical is information management systems. How can one make it seamless so that it's not dependent on an individual only? ... the combination of that you are generating information of the organisation over time and I think the bringing everyone into a seamless so that it is a portal of information that people can get to which becomes the knowledge they will have (P4SM).*

According to Nyaude and Dewah (2014), a lack of knowledge may frustrate employees and lead to staff resignation.

One middle manager mentioned that employees need to get access to the documented information and the organisation needs to create processes and standards that will make knowledge transfer easier.

*Accessibility first of all and then your information that's available on your knowledge management system. It must be relevant. As I say, processes. If there is not processes there you make it so much difficult because I can have all the skills ... obviously your training and development, your skills transfer specifically if you look at things like succession planning, if your processes or your standards are in place in your knowledge management system it makes the skills transfer processes so much easier ... (P6MM).*

Furthermore, one middle manager stated that

*... when a new person comes in within the first three months they'll decide whether to stay in the department or not. if they come in they can't find basic information anywhere and they have to fend for themselves and go get into trouble in the first three to six months they're not gonna stay with the organisation (P7MM).*

This is similar to the finding of Nyaude and Dewah (2014), who found that a knowledge gap is created when employees resign and this may affect the production and performance of the newly appointed employees and lead to resignation.

- **Rewards and recognition**

A senior manager and a middle manager indicated that employees who are participating in knowledge sharing should be compensated and rewarded accordingly, as they do additional tasks. The middle manager said: "... *when you say knowledge sharing because my interpretation and view of knowledge is this knowledge that is there that X possesses must also be shared by somebody else while he is there. Let's then we can compensate*" (P5MM), and the senior manager: "*as I said, with my staff they are at a very low level so to them life is about money. So if you say to them we're going to do this and there's no financial packet or something connected to that then they're not really interested ... reward KM resources appropriately ...*" (P12SM). This finding supports the recommendation made by Yumei and Xiantao (2009), namely that the integration of KM and TM requires the introduction of incentives. Researchers explain that incentives are a key motivational factor for employees to share knowledge (Bello & Oyekunle, 2014; Jacobs & Roodt, 2011).

- **Career development**

A few senior managers and middle managers advocated the need to have strong HR development and career development opportunities for employees. Two participants were cited as saying: "*A strong human resource development ability in the organisation, that's the one*" (P9MM). Likewise,

*... give our staff the opportunity to grow, to gain new knowledge, whatever, they will become bored and they will leave. If you're not going to give the person knowledge that they're looking for ... because we all want to continuously grow and if you're not going to develop their talents there's no point for them being here* (P12SM).

This supports the findings of Khoele and Daya (2014), who conducted a study among 28 senior and middle managers in pharmaceutical organisations in South

Africa. The findings reveal that a lack of career growth and progression is one of the main reasons for employees to resign.

#### **4.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter has reported on the findings of the document analysis and the individual interviews. The document analysis identified and discussed four main themes. These themes shed light on the definition of talent, TM and KM, as well as the trends in staff turnover and the main causes of staff resignation. Using the data from the individual interviews, the researcher identified three main themes, with sub-themes. These themes gave insight into the definition of TM and KM and how these concepts are applied in the South African public service. Furthermore, it was reported that TM and KM are not integrated. However, the participants held the view that such integration will support staff retention. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings, conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 1, the study introduced the background to the study, the research problem and the main research objective of the study, namely to establish whether there is integration between TM and KM and whether it supports staff retention in the South African public service.

Chapter 2 provided a detailed literature study based on the key words of the study, viz. retention, talent, talent management, knowledge, knowledge management and human resource management, as well as integration of TM and KM. It was noted that there is no agreed definition amongst researchers and scholars on the terms TM (section 2.4) and KM. There are various approaches and activities that are used by organisations to implement TM (section 2.6) particularly inclusive and exclusive approaches. Most researchers tend to favour the exclusive approach to TM. Additionally, it was observed that only a few empirical studies have been conducted on the integration of TM and KM (section 2.10). Königová and Urbancová (2012) indicated that organisations can benefit greatly by integrating TM and KM.

Chapter 3 presented the qualitative research design for and methodology of the study, interpretivist philosophy and the research assumptions (section 3.2.1). It further discussed the data analysis techniques and procedure (section 3.10) and the ethical considerations that were observed throughout the study. Data were collected from fourteen official documents (section 3.9) and empirical research interviews were conducted with a total of thirteen (13) managers, namely seven senior managers and six middle managers employed in two national departments of the South African public service (section 3.3.4)

Chapter 4 reported the findings of the documents analysis, followed by the empirical findings obtained from the individual participants. Three main themes and sub-themes linked to the main themes were presented in Table 4.12 (section 4.4). The discussion of each of the main themes and sub-themes was supported by direct quotations obtained from the documents and from the interviews.

Chapter 5 outlines the conclusions based on the findings obtained during the document and interview analysis about the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention. The conclusions are drawn on the basis of the research objectives and the findings presented in Chapter 4 of this study. Furthermore, Chapter 5 discusses the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future research. The following section discusses each of the research objectives, followed by a presentation of a contextual framework in Figure 5.1 that has been developed as a theoretical contribution based on the research findings.

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND INTERVIEW FINDINGS**

The primary research objective of this study was to establish whether TM and KM are integrated and whether this supports staff retention in the South African public service. From this main research objective, six sub-research questions and objectives were formulated, as presented in Chapter 1. The following section discusses the main findings based on the research questions and the objectives of the study.

### **5.2.1 Objective 1: Describe talent management**

Both the senior and middle managers were asked how the South African public service defined TM. The findings showed that the senior managers and middle managers defined talent and TM differently (sections 4.5.1. and 4.5.2). The findings from the document analysis reveal that there was no definition of TM in Department A and that only Department B had a clear definition of TM (section 4.2.1). Reading from the findings of the document analysis and from the findings of the individual interviews, it can be concluded that, in the South African public service, talent refers to those employees who have scarce, critical and valued skills.

Firstly, the majority of senior managers and middle managers viewed talent as a combination of skills, competence, knowledge, experience and education, while a few senior managers and middle managers viewed talent as an inborn or inherent skill to do a job. This definition differs from the definitions found in the retention policies of the two departments (section 4.2.1). It was observed that only a few middle managers defined talent in line with the retention policy (section 4.5.1). It can be concluded that the majority of senior managers and middle managers do not understand how the public service conceptualises talent. This implies that they are

not familiar with the content of the retention policy. This lack of understanding may result in the identification of people who are not targeted by the public service to be retained, while talented employees leave the public service.

Secondly, when the senior managers and middle managers were asked how their departments defined TM, a few of them reported that defining TM was difficult and as such could be defined in different ways. However, the majority of senior and middle managers defined it similarly to the retention policy (section 4.5.2). This may suggest that the majority of senior managers and middle managers understand how the South African public service defines TM. Few senior managers and middle managers reported that they did not know how their departments defined TM. It was observed that these participants were working in the field of KM. Therefore, it can be concluded that TM in the South African public service is defined as focusing on attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining people who have the aptitude and abilities in a pool of top talent.

### **5.2.2 Objective 2: Describe how TM is applied in the South African public service**

When asking the participants how the departments applied TM, the majority of senior managers and middle managers reported that there was no TM in the departments, while a few senior managers and middle managers emphasised that there was no policy and that TM happened in an ad hoc manner (section 4.5.3). However, it was found that performance management is used as the main pillar for the TM programme, although it was observed that it was poorly applied and focused more on providing incentives (section 4.5.3). Likewise, the retention policy and exit interviews report revealed that performance management is poorly implemented.

Furthermore, the participants mentioned that policies such as job rotation, succession planning, coaching and mentoring are in place, but that they are not used by managers to empower or capacitate employees. However, the participants mentioned that competency assessments and training and development are utilised and are fully effective (section 4.5.3). It appears that the government is challenged to apply succession planning and job rotation. It may be assumed that the South African public service has good initiatives for TM, but lacks the capacity to implement them. As such, they are more of a wish list.

When the participants were asked how the departments retain talent, it was mentioned that talented employees are not retained but that deadwood is retained. It was found that the departments have a policy on talent retention, but employees and managers do not understand how to use it (section 4.5.4). In fact, one senior manager stated that *"I do motivate, encourage people to look beyond department and where they are. Not to use the department as their career path because if they look in department they'll become discouraged"* (P4SM). Counter offers are used as a main strategy to retain staff (section 4.5.4). The exit interview reports identify a poor management style, the physical environment and interrelationships, a lack of career development and job dissatisfaction as the main reasons that cause staff resignations (section 4.2.3).

The findings from the document analysis (annual reports) indicates that the departments are struggling to retain key staff (section 4.2.4). The general trend in staff turnover rate for the 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 financial years ranged from 7.9% to 19.3% (section 4.2.2). It was noted that only two key employees were retained in Department A. The HRP reports mention that there is no plan in place to address staff attrition (section 4.2.1). It can be concluded that the retention policies of the departments are not effective and this is due to the lack of understanding by senior and middle managers on how to effectively apply the retention policy. As a result, the wrong staff are being retained.

### **5.2.3 Objective 3: Describe knowledge management**

When the participants were asked how the South African public service defines KM, the majority of senior managers and a few middle managers mentioned that they were not aware of how the departments defined KM and that there was no approved policy. Interestingly, the findings from the document analysis provide a definition of KM (section 4.2.1), namely that KM is described as a process used to obtain, analyse and promote the generation and sharing of knowledge and learning in order to enhance the collective knowledge of the organisation.

However, the participants provided their own definitions based on their understanding, although very few senior and middle managers defined it closely to the definition found in their performance management and development policy (section 4.6.3). Half of the middle managers reported that KM was used to manage

explicit and tacit knowledge. Therefore, it can be concluded that, in the South African public service, KM is defined as a process used to acquire, analyse, create and share knowledge to improve learning and enhance collective knowledge in the organisation.

Even though there is no formal approved policy for KM, the findings reveal that there are various initiatives used by the South African public service to share knowledge. These include information sessions and networking, for example meetings, workshops and brown bag sessions. The minutes, reports and submissions are also used as mechanisms to share knowledge, as are e-mails and the intranet (sections 4.6.3 and 4.6.4). However, it was noted that the public service fails to document the knowledge generated by its employees (section 4.6.4).

#### **5.2.4 Objective 4: Describe how is KM is applied in the South African public service**

When the participants were asked how the South African public service applies KM, it was found that the majority of senior managers and a few middle managers emphasised that KM was not institutionalised and was applied in an ad hoc manner (section 4.6.2). Equally, the findings from the document analysis (exit interview reports and HRP) reveal that there is no KM system in the departments and that the lack of KM will result in institutional memory loss because the knowledge of employees who are resigning is not retained, and this will compromise the performance of newly appointed employees (section 4.2.1). Similarly, the senior and middle managers reported that the departments are at risk of losing valuable knowledge (section 4.6.3). It can be concluded that KM is not formalised or prioritised and is applied informally in the South African public service. Yet retaining knowledge was deemed as critical by the participants.

It was reported that KM has the potential to support staff retention and can be used to capture the knowledge of employees who will soon go on retirement. Knowledgeable employees should be paired with less experienced employees. This will build the latter's confidence and they will be empowered to perform their jobs (section 4.5.4). This implies that KM is viewed as an appropriate tool to support staff retention.

When the participants were asked how the South African public service shares knowledge, it was found that meetings, workshops, mentoring and coaching, memoranda and submissions as well as networking are used as strategies to share knowledge (section 4.6.3). It can be concluded that, although there is no KM, the departments do share knowledge with each other and this is a good start to the implementation of KM.

### **5.2.5 Objective 5: Explore and describe how TM and KM can be integrated in the South African public service**

When the researcher asked the senior and middle managers how the South African public service integrates TM and KM in order to support staff retention it was found that TM and KM are not integrated in the South African public service (section 4.7), as they are not institutionalised (no approved policies) (see section 4.5.3 and 4.6.3). However, the participants indicated that, where TM and KM was institutionalised, the integration can support staff retention (section 4.6.3).

It was mentioned that the integration of TM and KM would require various elements (section 4.7.2). Firstly, there should be a common understanding of the conceptualisation of TM and KM (section 4.7.2), and it would also require:

- The development of a clear vision and mission for TM and KM and for them to be aligned to the strategic objectives of the departments.
- The establishment of strong support from top leadership to ensure that they allocate an appropriate budget for the integration.
- The building of a strong organisational culture.
- A review of the organisational structure.
- A review of the recruitment policies and development of TM and KM policies.
- The development of a HRP.
- The recruitment of competent people in the field of TM and KM.
- The reward and recognition of employees who share their knowledge.
- The inclusion of KM in the performance management of senior managers.
- Sourcing the appropriate information/KM system.

It was found that the majority of senior managers and middle managers recommended an inclusive approach to TM (section 4.7.2), while a few tended to

favour an exclusive approach. Looking at the definition of talent and TM found in the document analysis and from the interviews, it appears that the South African public service tends to favour an exclusive approach to TM. Lastly, all employees must have access to the KM system. Therefore, it can be concluded that the South African public service should adopt an inclusive approach to TM. This will enable the public service to discover hidden talent and critical knowledge that needs to be captured, documented and shared with other employees.

#### **5.2.6 Objective 6: Explore and describe how TM and KM can support employee retention in the South African public service**

The participants mentioned that the integration of TM and KM could be beneficial for the South African public service in terms of supporting staff retention. It was agreed that such integration would facilitate skills transfer, improve the management of talent, empower employees and improve their competence, as well as ensure the promotion of teamwork and the elimination of silo operations, including the reduction of knowledge loss, thereby retaining valuable and critical knowledge (section 4.7.1). The majority of senior managers and middle managers viewed the integration as enabling the South African public service to create a powerful structure through which they could capture the knowledge held in the minds of employees, especially retiring employees.

Additionally, the findings suggest that the concepts of TM and KM must not be separated, as both concepts deal with the management of human resources. It can be concluded that the integration will improve employees' job satisfaction, thereby reducing staff resignation. This finding therefore supports the thesis statement, namely that the integration of TM and KM will support the retention of talent and knowledge in the South African public service.

It was reported that, in order for the public service to be successful, it needs to start capturing, documenting and keeping the knowledge held by employees in a database, especially of those employees who will soon go on retirement. This will ensure that there is a stock of knowledge that can be re-used by newly appointed employees.

It was noted that the integration will provide the South African public service with the following benefits:

- Remove silo operations and improve teamwork/collaboration.
- Enhance learning through knowledge sharing.
- Empower employees and keep them more engaged.
- Help to capture the expert knowledge of retiring employees, creating a knowledge stock.
- Work continuity in the case of resignation.
- Minimise frustration of newly appointed employees, as they will have access to knowledge and support from colleagues.

The findings on the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention were summarised and are presented within a contextual framework in Figure 5.1 (section 5.3), based on the findings obtained from the document analysis and face-to-face interviews. The following section presents the contextual framework.

### **5.3 CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK BASED ON THE FINDINGS**

The findings from the participants' responses, combined with the findings obtained from the document analysis, resulted in the development of a contextual framework shown in Figure 5.1. The framework is based on the perceptions of the participants on the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention in the South African public service.

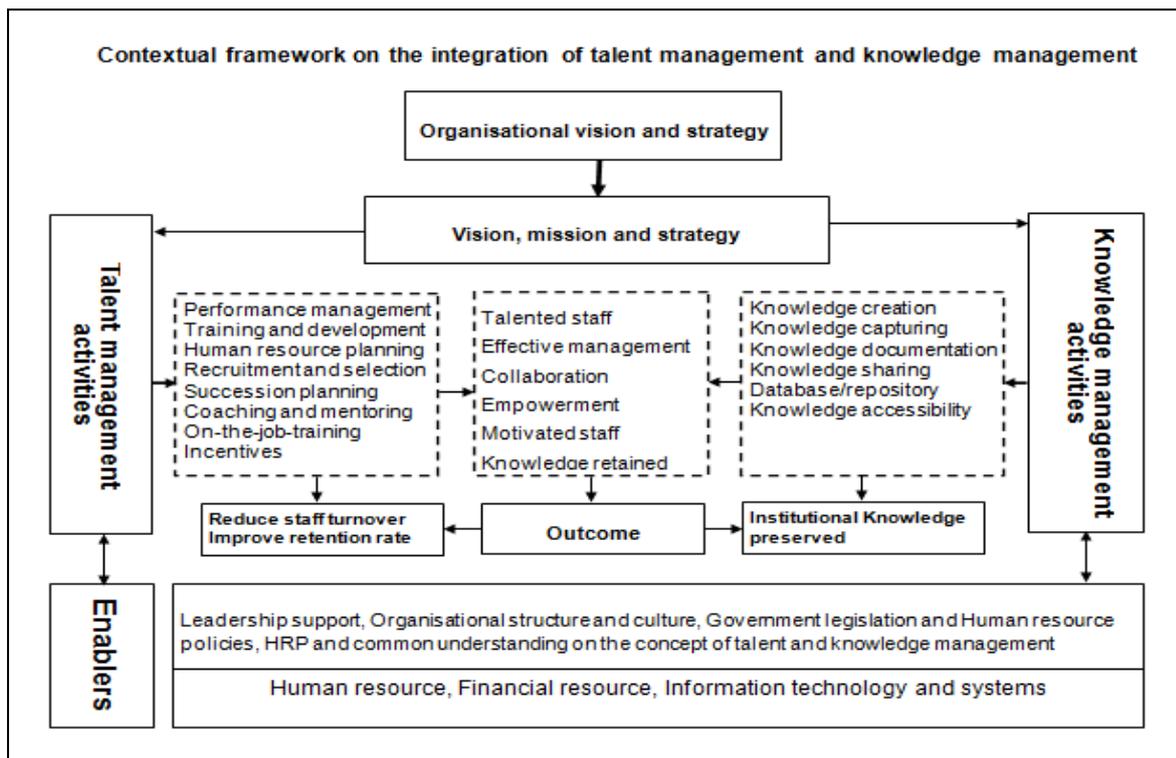


Figure 5.1: Contextual framework

#### 5.4 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

One strength of the study lies in the qualitative design, which enabled the researcher to collect information from multiple sources – a review of documents and individual interviews with participants from different occupation categories (senior and middle management). The fact that the researcher was working in the South African public service made it easier for the departments to provide access to confidential documents such as the exit interview reports.

Although the researcher has his own opinion on the definition, application and integration of TM and KM to support staff retention, since he is working in the public service, this bias was minimised by collecting data from multiple source, the formulation of prior research objectives and questions, and the use of an external coder for data analysis. Furthermore, the bracketing technique was also used to minimise bias (section 3.12.5).

The document analysis permitted the researcher to gain a better understanding of how the South African public service contextualises TM and KM. It also provided an opportunity for the researcher to discover the prevalence of and reasons for staff

resignation. The findings were then triangulated with the findings from the face-to-face interviews, which contributed to the credibility of the study.

The interviews enabled the voice of the participants to be heard and to understand how TM and KM are defined and implemented within the context of the South African public service, rather than imposing a definition that is found in the literature. They also explain how these two concepts can be integrated to support staff retention, allowing the researcher to interpret the findings and develop a contextual framework in Figure 5.1 (section 5.3) that can be used for the development of policies and as a baseline for the linking or integration of TM and KM to support staff retention.

Considering the lack of literature on the integration of TM and KM, the contextual framework is a significant contributor to the literature gap, as currently little is known about the integration of these concepts, especially in the South African public service context. Therefore, this may challenge academics, professionals and writers to broaden their understanding of how staff retention can be enhanced through the integration of TM and KM.

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Given the fact that the study was a qualitative study and only two national departments and 13 participants occupying senior and middle management level were selected, the findings cannot to be generalised to the entire South African public service. It is understood that qualitative and exploratory research tends to collect data from a small sample, especially where little is known about the topic, and as such 13 participants (viz. seven senior managers and six middle managers) from two national departments were purposefully selected.

Again, it was not the intention of the study to generalise the findings; rather, the researcher has provided an audit trail through a clear description of the research design, research methodology and research philosophy, as well as the procedure used to collect and analyse the data. Furthermore, considering the fact that the researcher was a primary instrument for data collection, this may create bias. To minimise the bias, the researcher and an external coder individually coded all the interview transcriptions and compared and discussed their findings and reached

consensus. Importantly, the research objectives and questions kept the researcher focused on the study.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The ultimate goal of any government is to provide effective service to the citizens of the country. This will require that public service departments staff themselves with competent and knowledgeable employees. Therefore, these employees need to be effectively managed and staff turnover, including knowledge loss, has to be minimised. It is therefore recommended that the South African public service should integrate TM and KM. In order to integrate these concepts, the researcher recommends the following:

- Develop TM and KM policies and strategies. The policy should clearly define talent, TM as well as knowledge and KM. This will enable managers to have a common understanding and be able to attract, identify, select, develop and manage talent and knowledge.
- The TM and KM strategies should be aligned to the strategic objectives of the departments to ensure that they support the government programmes.
- The departments should review the current organisational structure and culture to ensure that they support and create a conducive environment for collaboration, therefore minimising silo operations.
- The performance management system needs to be reviewed to ensure that it includes team assessments. It should also enable employees to assess the leadership or management style of their supervisors.
- Managers should be trained in the usage of performance management, which will minimise subjectivity and thereby ensure that performance management does not focus only on giving incentives, but also on identifying and developing potential and talented employees. This can be achieved during the performance assessment period.
- A reward and recognition scheme should be developed that entails either a monetary or non-monetary reward.
- Career management policies should be developed.
- Succession planning, job rotation, mentoring and coaching should be institutionalised.

- A KM system should be developed or procured.
- An electronic database has to be developed to store critical and valuable knowledge.
- It should be ensured that experienced public servants participate and share their knowledge with other employees.
- The retention policy should be aligned to ensure that it does not only focus on retaining individual employees, but also focuses on retaining the knowledge they have.
- Top leadership and managers must own and financially support the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention. This will benefit the government in the long run, as counteroffers will be more expensive.
- Knowledge capturing should start as early as possible and not only once employees have tendered their resignation.

## **5.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The findings suggest that TM is poorly implemented and that it is defined differently by senior managers and middle managers employed in the South African public service. However, this finding cannot be generalised. It therefore would form a baseline for future study, and it is suggested that future studies need to be conducted with a large sample by using a mixed methods design (i.e. qualitative and quantitative research design).

Secondly, it was found that the integration of TM and KM can benefit the South African public service by supporting the retention of staff. The study also contextualised the integration of TM and KM, which could form a foundation for future studies. Therefore a large sample should be targeted in the future and mixed methods research should be used. If given an opportunity, the researcher would love to undertake such research and to test the contextual framework with a larger sample.

## **5.8 CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study, its limitations and strengths, and provided recommendations for the South African public service and for future

research. The main finding was that TM and KM are not institutionalised in the South African public service, as they happen on an ad hoc basis and there are no approved policies. Most of the participants do not understand how the public service defines TM, besides a few middle managers. The integration of TM and KM was summarised within a contextual framework based on the findings of a document analysis and interviews with the participants. It can be concluded that the integration can support staff retention in the South African public service, although it is recommended that future research be undertaken to advance this research topic.

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## ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Interview questions

1. In your view, what is knowledge?
2. How do you share knowledge in your organisation?
3. In your experience, what is the definition of KM in relation to your organisation?
4. How do you apply KM in your organisation?
5. Do you think KM as your organisation applies it, supports the retention of the right staff?
6. How familiar are you with KM? Motivate your answer.
7. In your view, what is talent?
8. What is your definition of TM in relation to your organisation?
9. How do you manage talent in your organisation?
10. How do you apply TM in your organisation?
11. Do you think the TM efforts used in your organisation support the retention of the right staff? Motivate your answer.
12. How familiar are you with TM in your organisation?
13. When you integrate KM and TM, do you think your integrated efforts are more advantageous than separate KM efforts? Motivate your answer.
14. How do you integrate KM and TM in your organisation?
15. Based on your experience, which constraints may affect the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention? Motivate your answer.
16. In your experience, which enablers should be in place first to enable the integration of TM and KM to support staff retention? Motivate your answer

### Particulars of respondent interviewee

Job title: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupational category: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee's years of experience: \_\_\_\_\_ Highest qualification: \_\_\_\_\_

Which one of the following age group represent your age:

18-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-64
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Which one one the following representing your race: African/Balck; Coloured; Indian; White.

Which one one the following representing your gender: Male or Female

Is there anything else that you think is necessary to take note of to address these challenges?

Thank you for your time.

## ANNEXURE B: ETHICAL APPROVAL



### DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH, ETHICS AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

11 May 2015

Ref #: 2015\_HRM\_004  
Name of applicant: Mr. T Sibusiso  
Student #: 36908002

Dear Mr. Themba Sibusiso

**Decision: Ethics Approval granted**

**Student:** Mr. Themba Sibusiso, 36908002@mylife.unisa.ac.za, 0731264081

**Supervisor:** Prof MJ Bushney, mbushney@unisa.ac.za, 0124293748

**Proposal:** The integration of talent management and knowledge management in the South African Public Service.

**Qualification:** M.Com Business Management (with specialisation in Human Resource Management)

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance to the Department of Human Resource Management Research, Ethics and Innovation Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the project or as determined by the HRM Research, Ethics and Innovation Committee.

**Full approval:** The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the Department of Human Resource Management Research, Ethics and Innovation Committee on 28 April 2015.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the HRM Research, Ethics and Innovation Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.
- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant

to the specific field of study.

- 4) Please ensure that all recommendations and guidance provided by the HRM Research, Ethics and Innovation Committee and your supervisors are adhered to prior to fieldwork.

Note:

The reference number [2015\_HRM\_004] should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the HRM Research, Ethics and Innovation Committee.

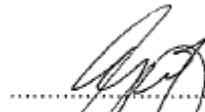
Kind regards,



Prof A Bezuidenhout

Acting Chairperson

[bezuid@unisa.ac.za](mailto:bezuid@unisa.ac.za) / 012 - 429 3941



Prof BT Mpotu

Acting Executive Dean

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## ANNEXURE C: PERMISSION LETTER



Department  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag [REDACTED] PRETORIA, 0001 [REDACTED]

Enquiries: Ms A. Ontong  
Telephone: [REDACTED]  
E-mail: AOntong@[REDACTED]

Mr Themba Shabane  
707 Hollard Place  
323 Jeff Masemola Street  
Pretoria  
0002

Dear Mr Shabane

**RE: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT the dti FOR YOUR MASTER OF COMMERCE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT (HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT) DEGREE**

Your submission requesting approval to conduct research at the [REDACTED] refers.

the dti is in support of your research towards your Master of Commerce Business Management (Human Resource Management) and is willing to provide you with the necessary support to make your studies a success. We trust that the recommendation you will provide will contribute to the body of knowledge on the integration of Talent Management and Knowledge Management to support staff retention in the South African Public Service.

Kindly note that approval has been granted on the following conditions:

- a) That you complete a Confidentiality Declaration form to ensure compliance with Departmental policies;
- b) That you participate in a briefing discussion with the Vetting Unit before commencement of the research;
- c) That you provide the dti with a detailed research plan and draft questionnaires, surveys and/or interview questionnaires (where applicable); and
- d) That you submit a copy of your research report once you have published the final document.

Should you have any further enquiries regarding the content herein, please contact the Director, Learning Centre, Ms Angie Ontong on 012 394 [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 08/04/2015



[REDACTED]  
Department:

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X [REDACTED] PRETORIA, 0001 Tel: [REDACTED] Fax [REDACTED]  
Private bag [REDACTED] Cape Town, 8000 Tel: (021) [REDACTED]

Mr T S Shabane  
707 Holiard Place  
323 Jeff Masemola Street  
Pretoria  
0002

Dear Sir

**APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY**

I have pleasure to inform you that permission is granted for you to conduct research in the Department of [REDACTED]

Upon completion of your studies, you are required to provide the Department with a copy of your final report. The point of contact to assist you within the Department will be Ms N.P Busane from HR.

You are therefore requested to sign this letter to indicate that you agree with the terms and conditions of this approval and send back a signed copy to

Patience Busane: [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

  
T. MANZINI  
CHIEF DIRECTOR: HR & FM  
DATE: 2015.04.14



I Agree with  
the term and condition  
2014/04/14