



the dpsa

Department:
Public Service and Administration
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

REPORT ON PUBLIC SERVICE
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

MARCH 2019



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REPORT ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT MATURITY ASSESSMENT

1. PURPOSE

This assessment report is presented to give a status quo on the status of knowledge management in the public service. The findings are envisaged to enhance the knowledge management framework as well as to inform the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) on the kind of support and programs needed to facilitate the mainstreaming of knowledge management in the public service.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Minister for the Public Service and Administration (MPSA) is responsible for establishing *uniform norms and standards* to support an efficient and effective public service delivery in line with Section 3 of the Public Service Act, 1994, as amended. With an ever growing mandate for service delivery, public sector organisations need to be innovative in their use of resources in an environment where demand exceeds supply.

Improved Knowledge Management (KM) is essential to the public sector at national, regional and local levels to improve decision making and implementation capacity. As a result, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) embarked on a KM maturity assessment in order to determine the current state of KM within the various public sector organisations.

This assessment was meant to evaluate how advanced the respective public service organisations are in terms of understanding and implementing knowledge management practices. This would assist the DPSA in identifying those departments that can provide best practice and lessons learnt on KM implementation in the public sector to ensure that similar levels of maturity are attained across the public service.

The assessment measured the following categories; Leadership and Governance, Business alignment, People and Culture, Technology, Knowledge Process, Learning and Innovation as well as Monitoring and Evaluation in order to strengthen the framework in these critical areas.

A circular was sent to Heads of Departments in both national and provincial government informing them and requesting permission to conduct Knowledge Management Maturity Assessment in their respective departments. In addition, requesting them to nominate the responsible KM practitioner(s) or any designated personnel that would have been responsible for completing the e- assessment.

3. KM ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The assessment was done on an excel spread sheet with programmed calculations. The scoring was done in line with the categories assessed in order to determine the maturity level of each organisations. The scoring grid in each category varied from 0-10 based on the statements. The phases on each category ranges as follows: **Initiation=0; Awareness= 2; Enabled=5; Accomplished= 8; Optimised=10**. The maximum score per dimension was 30. The levels of KM maturity were determined by a score out of a possible 210 based on 105 statements.

CAT	CATEGORY SCORES	Score	Max. Score
1	KM LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE	0	30
2	BUSINESS ALIGNMENT	0	30
3	PEOPLE & CULTURE	0	30
4	TECHNOLOGY	0	30
5	KNOWLEDGE PROCESSES	0	30
6	LEARNING & INNOVATION	0	30
7	MONITORING & EVALUATION	0	30
TOTAL SCORE		0	210

Figure 1: Assessment tool

The total of the score gave an indication on where the department is in terms of its Knowledge Management maturity. The maturity levels were defined as in the tool below.

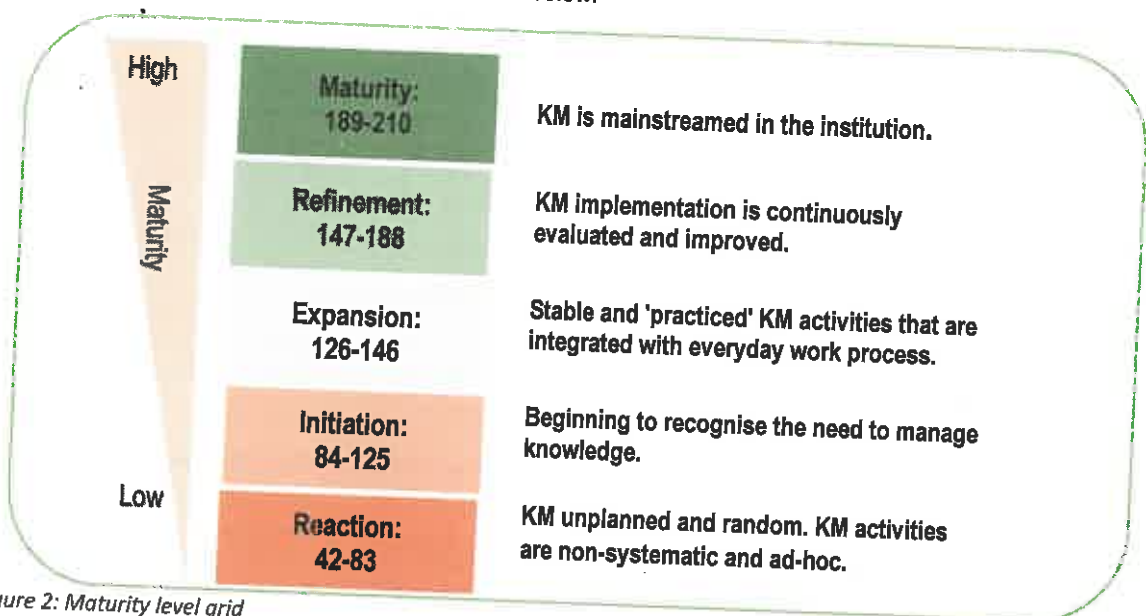


Figure 2: Maturity level grid

4. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT MATURITY ASSESSMENT RESPONSE AND SUBMISSION

The following chart depict the rate of submissions

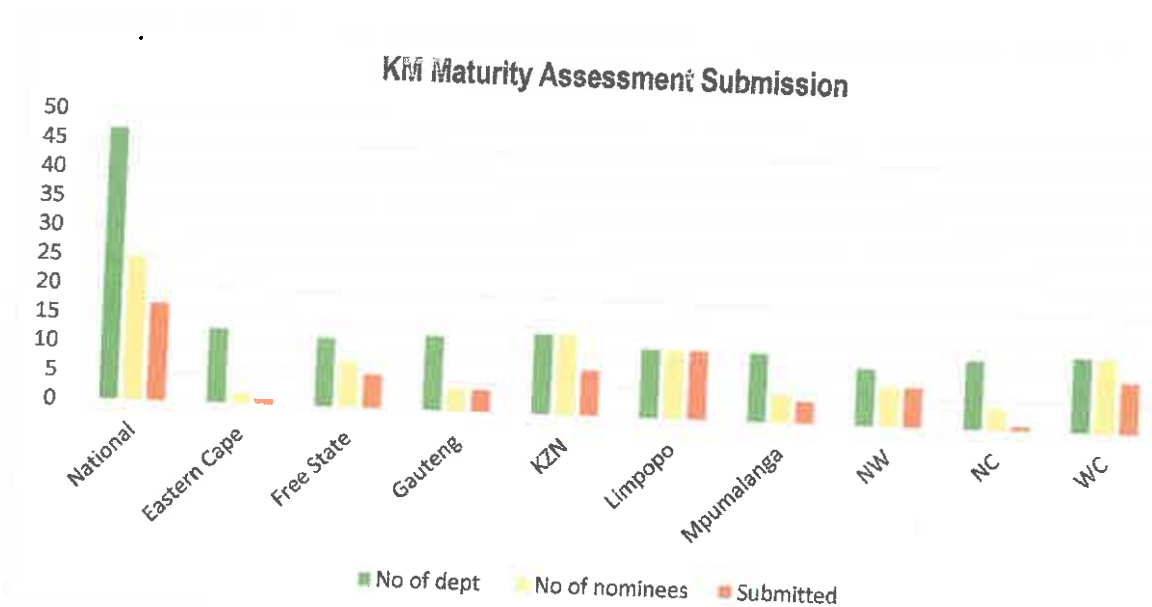


Figure 3: KM Maturity Assessment response and Submission

The national government consists of **47** national departments, but only **25** departments responded with nominees (**53%**). There were only **17** assessments completed and returned to DPSA (**68%**).

The same circular was sent to both the Provincial Directors-Generals DGs and the Departmental HODs to nominate an official who will complete the assessment. The provincial departments responded as follows:

- Eastern Cape- Out of **13** departments only **2** departments responded with nominees **15.4%** and only **1** department submitted the completed assessment.
- Free State- Out of **12** departments only **8** departments responded with nominees **66.7%** and only **6** department submitted the completed assessment (**80 %**).
- Gauteng- Out of **13** departments only **4** departments responded with nominees **30.8%** and all of these departments submitted the completed assessment (**100%**).
- Kwa Zulu Natal- Out of **14** departments only **14** departments responded with nominees **100%** and **8** of these submitted the completed assessment (**57%**).
- Limpopo- Out of **12** departments only **12** departments responded with nominees **100%** and **12** of these submitted the completed assessment (**100%**).
- Mpumalanga- Out of **12** departments only **5** departments responded with nominees **41, 6%** and **4** of these submitted the completed assessment (**80%**).

- g) North West- Out of 10 departments only 7 departments responded with nominees 7% and 7 of these submitted the completed assessment (100%).
- h) Northern Cape- Out of 12 departments only 4 departments responded with nominees 33.3% and 1 of these submitted the completed assessment (25%).
- i) Western Cape- Out of 13 departments only 13 departments responded with nominees 100 % and 9 of these submitted the completed assessment (69%).

5. THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE METHODOLOGY

The first constraint was the:

Lack of understanding in terms of the person who is supposed to be responsible for KM in the departments. In some cases the respondent was located in records management or in human resources.

The second constraint was the:

Lack of response from certain departments that have been practicing KM for some time impacts on the full picture of the status of KM in the public service especially in national departments.

The third constraint is:

Many respondents did not understand how to complete the assessment despite the instruction and guidance given resulting in scoring that is not truly representative of the departmental situation.

6. FINDINGS

In the national sphere of government all the departments who submitted only **three** are still in **reaction phase** while the rest are on the **initiation phase** meaning that there is acknowledgement of the need to manage knowledge by the national sphere however integration of KM activities to work process is happening at a very minimal scale. The three that are in reaction phase depict a clear picture that management of knowledge is random and the activities thereof are not systematic they coincidentally materialise.

In the provincial sphere there were 51 provincial departments that submitted, 24 are in **reaction phase**, 19 are in the **initiation phase**, and 7 are in **expansion phase** and finally 1 **refinement**.

National KM Maturity

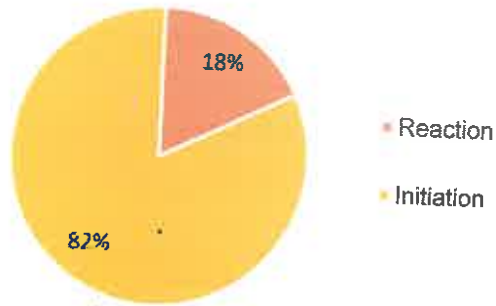


Figure 4: National departments Maturity

Provincial KM Maturity

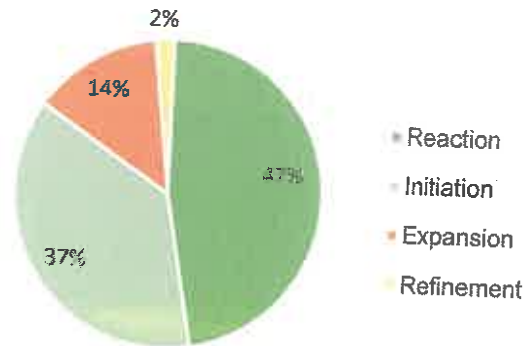


Figure 5: Provincial departments Maturity

It is clear from the findings that at a provincial level less than 50% departments are at the reaction phase which means that the knowledge management in these organisations is random, unplanned and there are minimal to none KM activities within the organisation. However, there are a number of departments that have moved to initiation phase and also a 16% percent that are practicing KM and striving to integrate it to their day to day process.

A selected number of national departments have a knowledge management strategy in place which is an indication of awareness by managers of the need for KM in the departments. However, the business case for KM is not clearly defined in most instances and as a result the responsibility and accountability on the function is left at junior level. This is a clear indication of ad hoc implementation of knowledge management due to the absence of government-wide guidelines on the implementation of knowledge management in the public service. This affects the standardised and integrated implementation of KM in the organisation's processes. The findings also depicts that KM is not viewed as strategic management function of many government organisations as a result critical organisational knowledge needed to advance organisational strategic goals is not explored and recognised.

The location of KM in the organisations plays a significant role in ensuring that the mainstreaming of KM processes and initiatives are effective. Furthermore, the lack of linkage of KM to business needs and processes perpetuates silos and thus inhibits knowledge flow and impact. The analysis on the national departments that have indicated that they have KM strategy in place does not demonstrate on how it filters and influence KM implementation in provincial offices.

Provincial departments' response on governance and leadership as well as business alignment demonstrates silos coexist even among sister departments due to the lack of standardisation of KM processes within the provinces. The fragmented approach of working in departments also has a bearing on the organisational culture of knowledge sharing.

The findings also indicate that the participation of senior managers in informal knowledge sharing platforms is minimal thus resulting in knowledge sharing forums being poorly attended and also not being regarded as a critical activity. Learning and sharing platforms are key for capitalising on knowledge harvested and senior manager's participation enhances the quality of knowledge shared while also setting an example to all in organizations. Many times the critical organisational intellectual capital resides as tacit knowledge within the experts in the department.

Furthermore, the sharing platform is a vehicle to promote knowledge transfers especially the tacit knowledge thus ensuring that critical knowledge which is the organizational intellectual capital is harvested and documented for organisational future use and innovation. The findings also highlighted the fact that in mostly project driven departments, collaborations are evident due the nature of work done where task systems are utilised, however there is a need for a knowledge system that is easily accessible that will disseminate the accumulated knowledge to all within the organisation. The conducive knowledge sharing culture in all departments will promote collaborations and assist with eliminating silos.

Furthermore, the findings portray that there is technological support systems in the government departments, yet there is a need to provide innovative knowledge sharing e- platforms that will promote collaboration and knowledge exchange between government departments. Government departments create knowledge and have various tools used to capture the knowledge but, the analysis, classification and storage of this knowledge for accessibility is not clear. The findings on the assessment also depicted the need for government's technology to support knowledge transfer, collaboration and learning over and above the communications function.

Knowledge management processes allow departments to ensure that critical knowledge needed to achieve organisational goals and objectives is documented and easily accessible. There is a concern raised across the departments both national and provincial in relation to the fact that knowledge management processes are not embedded in business processes, thus inhibiting the organisations from harvesting current key information and knowledge for the departmental advancement. It is also evident from the assessment that formal learning is encouraged and supported throughout government however, informal learning is regarded as individual's responsibility hence there isn't adequate time and resources allocated for peer learning , knowledge exchange and mentorships programme.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emanate from the suggestions and opportunities provided by the participating departments:

- i. There is a need for the public sector knowledge management framework to be finalised, approved and endorsed.

- ii. The location of the knowledge management function needs to be clearly identified to ensure that it is strategically positioned.
- iii. For government success in ensuring that the KM function is embedded in organisational processes, knowledge sharing should form part of the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) assessment with KM indicator.
- iv. The knowledge management units needs to be capacitated with relevant personnel to be able to drive the KM processes and activities within organisation.
- v. There is a need for ensuring that knowledge management forums are facilitated and resuscitated in the provinces for knowledge exchange driven by the Offices of the Premier.
- vi. Learning and sharing platforms driven at senior management level should be encouraged to promote knowledge sharing and organisational learning.
- vii. We propose that the DPSA's Director-General be the Knowledge Management champion, this will facilitate the entrenchment of knowledge management in the public service as well as enforce the institutionalisation of it.

8. CONCLUSION

From the assessment it is clear that there is a need for the DPSA to finalise the framework as a working document that will guide the implementation of KM in the public service since most of the departments are in reaction phase. This will also assist these departments in providing a guide on key knowledge management principles as they develop their own KM strategies in line with their knowledge needs. Furthermore, there is a need for buy-in from senior management in the management of knowledge in the public service as this will assist with interfacing the KM processes with organisational processes for organisational knowledge needs which are key in planning.

There is a dire need for identification and location of critical knowledge in government organisations so that it can be easily discovered and accessible for future use. Therefore the DPSA guidelines needs to give clear indication of the location of the function so that it will be strategically placed to identify departmental challenges and access key departmental information. This will facilitating improved integrated planning which is supported by management information systems.

Finally, DPSA KM unit needs to facilitate KM forums in the provinces coordinated with the Offices of the Premier to assist the provinces in building the knowledge management capacity for optimal results.