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**2019 ANNUAL REPORT:
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT COLLOQUIUM**

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PUBLIC SERVICE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT COLLOQUIUM REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

The management of knowledge is an essential and a necessary task for any organization and results in improved organisational effectiveness, efficiency innovation and customer service. The public service information becomes strategic when harvested and used to support the South African government to achieve its National Development Plan targets. In this competitive information age, government needs to keep abreast with effective and efficient mechanisms that will facilitate improved service delivery. The subject of managing knowledge and leveraging on it for learning and sharing in government can lead to better planning and decision making thus resulting in improved service delivery. The NDP advocates for coordinated and integrated planning and implementation while defining knowledge as “systemically integrated information that allows a citizen, managers, or a minister to act purposefully and intelligently in a complex and demanding world” and as “the only form of investment that allows for increasing returns in building the stocks and flows of knowledge that a country needs to become economically productive”.

The public service, as a learning organisation, requires that we focus on developing new management skills to ensure that we meet the objective of creating a better life for our citizens. The NDP also identifies the establishment of communities of practice to develop and exchange knowledge as one of the ways in which we can enhance public sector knowledge. Collaborative organizations work together to be more efficient and effective, and are characterized by new forms of structures and operations. This is also supported by the Asian productivity organization in their research report on Knowledge Management in the public sector. Therefore, it is imperative to establish learning exchange programmes for the purpose of sharing best practices, challenge and methodologies, in the field of KM and the Public Service KM Summit seeks to promote this.

2. DISCUSSION

- 2.1 Governments are increasingly required to determine, define, develop and set service delivery targets to meet the needs of their citizens. It is therefore essential for public servants to understand the context within which problems arise. Management of knowledge provides them with ability to develop, modify and adjust service delivery mechanisms to deal with Public Service challenges.
- 2.2 Government needs to keep abreast with effective and efficient mechanisms that will facilitate improved service delivery in real time inspired by knowledge.
- 2.3 The main purpose of the conference was provide a platform for knowledge management practitioners within the public sector to discuss their work and to recommend how government can get all public servants to apply KM principles in their day to day operation. The 2020 Conference was meant to also provide a platform and an opportunity to promote collaboration amongst government knowledge workers towards a driving a knowledgeable economy.

2.4 Furthermore, brings together the knowledge management community in the public service for robust dialogue, deep dives and collective learning that will strengthen the value proposition and practice of the discipline. Finally, it was meant ensure that knowledge managers in the public sector are aware of current trends within the field of KM. Ultimately, the conference was envisaged to produce a unified manner in which public servants will implement KM government-wide framework.

2.5 The objectives of the PSKM Conference were:

- a) To identify the role of KM in driving Service Delivery Modes.
- b) To share know-how in entrenching KM capabilities in understanding statutory provisions in supporting KM harvesting
- c) To explore appropriate KM tools to be used
- d) To clarify the role of IT in the promotion and enhancement of KM
- e) To explore how KM Monitoring and Evaluation can be used to enhance KM in Public Service

3. SUMMARY OF DELIBERATIONS OF THE DAY

The Public Service Knowledge Management Conference was held at the GCIS on Thursday 6 February 2020 and focused on how Knowledge management (KM) can be implemented uniformly across government guided by the approved Knowledge Management Strategic Framework. The programme consisted of knowledge exchange sessions on experiences, practices, tools and methodologies that work in different government departments as part of continuous professional development. The conference also served to provide a platform and an opportunity to promote collaboration amongst government knowledge workers towards building a learning public service. It is hoped that in future, this event will bring together the knowledge management community in the public service for robust dialogue, deep dives and collective learning that will strengthen the value proposition and practice of the discipline in the public sector.

The Acting Director-General of the Department of Public Service and Administration, Mr Mandla Ngcobo emphasised the fact that the institutionalisation of KM in the Public Service, is a necessary step for ensuring that we derive the full value of knowledge management in improving the quality and efficiency of service delivery to citizens, while reducing the costs associated with those services. Furthermore, capitalising on relevant knowledge will enable the public service to take informed decisions in ensuring service delivery that is efficient. In closing he said “You can bring as much tech as you want, as long as you don’t exploit the knowledge, 4IR will remain a dream”.

In an attempt to clarify value knowledge management in the public service and its role in achieving the NDP Prof Bwalya of UJ reiterated the words of the acting DG that without Knowledge Management we cannot achieve 4IR. He further clarified that the 4IR is about automation, increased intelligence and increase in

connectedness. There is a need for KM practitioners to clearly articulate their position within the information value chain. He further stated the need for SA as a country to look at the basics such as standards, guidelines and the aspect of leadership are key areas in viewing the role of knowledge in an economy. The need for public service to understand its service recipients and to be agile as to ensure that that services provided are in line with needs for the service recipients resulting in SMART service delivery. He further iterated the fact that without knowledge there cannot be any innovation i.e. that importance of harnessing knowledge in different processes for improvement. KM in public sector is about operational excellence and responsiveness. The application of KM in the public service will assist in ensuring that services provided are effective and efficient.

DPSA DDG: Research and Policy analysis Ms Colette Clarke in her opening summarised what the President had alluded to in the Cabinet Lekgotla and during the ANC January 8 statement on the importance of capability and capacity of the Public Service (PS). These hinged on Information management, KM and digitisation as drivers of improvement. She further stated that in preparation for change, the PS needs to establish the objective to meet the changes announced by President. This has to be done by defining the high-level processes which means that the DPSA needs to develop a business process code book in which business processes must be standardised and codified before they can be automated or digitised.

Ms Clarke discussed the key dimensions for the Public Service to be able to support the vision of a “Society of the Future”, namely innovation, agility, transparency and connectedness.

However she also highlighted several systemic challenges, as reported by the Auditor-General as contributors to the struggles of the public service in delivering on the mandate. These included amongst others:

- (i) Data Management Skills & Capability
- (ii) Compliance with regards to providing performance information timeously and accurately
- (iii) Classification of Records has not been institutionalised and modernised
- (iv) Slow progress on implementing Digital Government due to a lack of e-enabled integrated administration systems.
- (v) 2019 NMOG (National Macro-Organisation of Government) Outcomes have not yielded results in support of an integrated Government.

In her presentation she mentioned that currently the PS is more focused on capacity in terms of input and output than on capability. However, there is a dire need for more focus on input, output and outcomes to ensure the right capability and competence in government to provide impact on service delivery. Government needs both high capacity and capability that will ensure that its goals are met, as well as informed, correct decisions from the executive leadership. This can only be facilitated when there is a business process management guideline and technology that supports these processes.

The policy fields related to KM, innovation and operations management for government reforms, hinges on norms and standards on records management for administrative purposes being clear and integrated into business processes.

In the PS there are different administrative policy mandate and they are different processes in government policy mandate but each department has to account for the Policies Technical efficiency, allocative, programme effectiveness and accountability that is responding to social vision which requires. As a result there is a need for coded KM systems in knowledge management system that are driven by IT system so that as to achieve as impact outcome interface.

The game changer in government in this regard will be the creation of the future functional public service through leadership bench strength and through innovation and growth supported by data analytics. Active Records contribute to knowledge repository, therefore there is a need to standardise government data sets for the purpose of knowledge management and also to support monitoring and evaluation of each department's delivery on their statutory mandate. She explained that there are various transversal policy prescripts which require departments to manage and provide artefacts that contain public administration data & information. Effective Document management depends on standardised Data management and Records management. As such two policy interventions have been developed:

- The Draft DPSA Statutory and Regulatory Framework for Application in Records Management Policies is a framework to support Documents Management function.
- The Draft Guideline on Public Administration Data Management provides guidance in relation to:
 - Legal prescripts pertaining to public administration data & information
 - Sources of public administration data & information that can assist departments in the performance of their functions as prescribed in law
 - In terms of this Framework all official documents are identified as Records that must be dealt with in accordance with a uniform administrative records management policy

It is further proposed that a Data Audit Committee would be appointed to deal with aspects of norms and standards; dimensions of data as well as data rules and parameters.

Ms Sebenzile Zibani (DPSA) presented on the State of KM in the Public Service and alignment with KM Framework. This was a reflection on the findings from the validation done by DPSA based on the KM Maturity Assessment that was done in 2018/2019. These validations were done as workshops .The DPSA: CD KM approached the participating Provinces and Departments not only to validate the results during their initial assessment, but also with the intention of identifying best practices that could be shared with the rest of the Public Sector. In addition, these workshops aimed to assist the participating Provinces and Departments to develop their own respective KM roadmaps.

The impact of organisational culture on knowledge management was the topic of a presentation by **Dr Ronel Davel (SARS)**. She described four fundamental cultural types as classified by Charles Handy, a leading authority on organisational culture, namely: Power Culture; Role Culture; Task Culture; Person Culture. She explained that government organisations could generally be classified under the Role Culture where the defining structure was a hierarchical bureaucracy with a highly defined structures. This means that such organisations should be able to produce improved rules and procedures by studying past experiences but were also very resistant to rapid and constant change. In a study conducted by Dr Davel, she identified groups of KM tools that were most effective in various organisations and explained the factors that determined the success of KM programmes in such organisations.

Ms Elmi Bester (Thinking knowledge) facilitated a session on learning and innovation using one of the tools from Liberating Structures to engage participants in purposeful and focused conversation that engages each person's own reflections and diverse perspectives. The activity known as Troika Consulting serves to encourage peer-to-peer learning in an organisation.

The Knowledge Café session consisted of three roundtable discussions on the following topics:

1. Business alignment of KM strategies, facilitated by Dr Andrew Kok (formerly of the WC Dept of Transport) which focused on the importance of knowledge audits and consultation with all levels of employees when developing a KM strategy.
2. Monitoring and Evaluation of KM programmes, facilitated by Dr David Makhado (DPME) which dealt with the Theory of Change and Logical Framework models of determining indicators for KM programmes that supported departmental goals set out in the MTSF and informed by the NDP.
3. KM Governance and structures, facilitated by Mr Dudley Moloji (DPSA) which discussed the processes underway to institutionalise knowledge management in the Public Service and possible approaches to determining the most effective location and composition of KM units in the various different types of government departments.

Some light entertainment was provided by a demonstration of the Kahoot! Online quiz game software before the facilitators of the Knowledge Café gave their feedback on the discussions held.

The Colloquium/ conference was closed by the Programme Facilitator with some concluding remarks and a message of thanks for the event organisers and some encouragement for the KM practitioners that attended the event.

4. WAY FORWARD

From the café's it became clear that it is imperative to align KM processes with business strategy in order to be able to identify where we can use KM to improve our business processes, ensure that the public service becomes a learning organisation and ensure that we improve on our best practices. Also identified as key to business continuity. There is a need for DPSA to come up with a standard way for conducting knowledge audit as this will assist departments in developing their KM Strategy. The audit will assist with the mainstreaming of KM in the Public Service in aligning to individual mandates ensuring the following:

- i. Defining a clear vision for KM
- ii. Identification of challenges and gaps in respective organisations]
- iii. Assisting in creating awareness
- iv. Identifying pockets of excellence within the organisation and
- v. Determine whether the organisation is ready to implement KM initiatives.

The location and prioritisation of the KM function within Government has contributed to it being downplayed as a critical function. Therefore it is very imperative that DPSA KM unit with the DPSA organisational design unit to look into the matter and come up with a solution that guidelines that will assist the Public Service in dealing with this challenge.

To ensure that KM is part of the organisation, the DPSA has to finalise the template on the implementation plan that will ensure that the organisations take KM seriously and are indeed focusing on the core mandate as they integrate the KM processes within the organisation. This will allow departments to come up with outcome that will have an impact on the organisational mandate.

There is also a need for the DPSA to develop a database of KM Practitioners in government as conference included many officials who were not in the KM space rather RM and data management. Whilst the conference was well attended not all departments represented. This will assist the DPSA in identifying those departments that do not have the KM function.