Session 3

LEVERAGING INNOVATION & KNOWLEDGE – CREATING A LEARNING ORGANISATION

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(i)Learning organisation, (ii)Organisational Learning & (iii)Organisational Culture

- *"A Learning Organisation is one in which people at all levels, individuals and collectively, are continually increasing their capacity to produce results they really care about"*
(Richard Karash.,2002)

- **Organisational learning**
  - **Develop and embed new knowledge**
  - **Develop and maintain the corporate "memory" – this is critical**

- **Organisational culture**
  - **Pattern of shared basic assumptions – crucial for organisational learning**

Question: Can Organisations Learn …or is it just people that learn?

- **Organisations, like individuals, can learn - Many of the fundamental phenomena of individual learning apply to organisations**

- **There some distinctive characteristics with reference to what is learned, how it is learned, how the learning is embedded, and the adjustments required to enhance learning.**

  - **Example: Research on C2C learning in Durban yielding importance of taking everyone together in learning journey.**

  - **What are the consequences of not learning together???**

Question: Can Organisations Learn …or is it just people that learn?

☐ **Must accept that any organization by definition is a collective, with individuals & larger units in different roles that involve different perspectives & values, passing information through their own filters, & with various information channels connecting them**

So what is (i)organisational learning?

☐ **the process that enables an organisation to adapt to change and move forward by acquiring new knowledge, skills, or behaviours, & thereby transform itself. Two types of transformation can be distinguished:**

□ **Outer transformation, which involves organisational shifts in policies, strategies, processes, practice, and systems; &**

□ **Profound transformation, which involves organisational change that combines inner shifts in people's values, aspirations & behaviour (April & Izadi, 2004)**

(ii)The Learning Organisation

- "**Organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire**, where **new & expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured**, where **collective aspiration is set free**, & where people are **continually learning to see the whole together**" (Senge 1990: 3)

  - Think about YOUR organization for a minute:
  - Are people expanding their capacity all the time?
  - Are NEW patterns of thinking allowed or stifled?
  - Is collective aspiration nurtured?
  - Are you all seeing the whole together?

(ii)The Learning Organisation

□ **"The learning organisation is a vision of what might be possible. It is not brought about simply by training individuals; it can only happen as a result of learning at the whole organization level.**

□ **A learning organisation is an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself" (Pedler *et. al.* 1991: 1)**

Features / Characteristics of Learning Organisations

❑ **Has a shared vision for the organisation**

❑ **Provides continuous learning opportunities & uses learning to reach its goals - more 'informal' and involve far less 'teaching' than in the case of individual learning**

❑ **Encourages & rewards learning & innovation – it typically has an organic decentralised organisational structure**

❑ **Links individual performance with organisational performance**

❑ **Learns from the past & anticipates possible futures**

❑ **Learns from best practices**

Features of Learning Organisations cont.

- **Fosters inquiry and people who take risks – encourages flexibility & receptiveness to new ideas wherever & from whomever**

- **Engages with problem solving, experimentation & knowledge transfer within the organisation**

- **Has an effective & knowing workforce that is encouraged to share / exchange information so that knowledge flows & infuses the organisation – encourage flexibility & receptiveness to new ideas – wherever and from whoever**

- **Aware of its environment & interacts with the environment**

- **Learns about its clients, & potential clients, its staff at all levels, its environment & the communities it serves**

(iii) Characteristics of a LEARNING CULTURE

☐ **Open to narrative, anecdotes and story-telling – this allows the synthesis of ideas and the building of a organisation-wide culture of knowledge, preferably documented**

☐ **Developing the learning culture of an organisation is a collective act that requires enlightened leadership :**

> **NOTE: We are *all* contributors BUT it is *leaders* who facilitate**

☐ **Leaders manage the *channels* through which knowledge flows, linking people - they do not block knowledge flows by means of overly bureaucratic procedures**

☐ **Leaders identify mentors for new staff AND for staff given new responsibilities**

So what can we do?

- **Basic task: recognising the role of managers & leaders**
  - **This means fostering learning rather than devising plans, & encouraging managers to develop & consider implications of possible scenarios**
  - **This encourages an attitude that is prepared for *change* & can respond *creatively* to *uncertainty***
- **Synergizing the roles of organisational culture, leadership, innovation & the creation of intellectual capital in public sector organisations**

So what can we do?

☐ **Consciously ask ourselves:**

☐ **Are our municipalities learning organisations or does it repeat its mistakes?**

A note on organisational memory (also known as "institutional or "corporate" memory)

- is the accumulated body of information and knowledge created during the organisation's existence

- It consists of 4 parts viz. (i) the filing systems and databases of the organisation, (ii) the memories of individual staff members,(iii) the documented business processes of the organisation, and (iv) intellectual property in the form of licences, patents and documented reference material

- To be useful the organisational memory must be accessible.

- Organisational memory is created when tacit knowledge residing in the head of staff members is made explicit and hence turned into recordable information

In summary: Organisational Learning, Learning Organisation, & Organisational Memory

Organisational Learning
Cognitive & learning processes & activities which are:
- **Greater than the sum of individual learning**
- *Experiential (informal) learning e.g. CoPs*

Learning Organisation
Characterised by:
- **Environmental monitoring mechanisms**
- **Organic decentralised structures**
- **Permeated by learning cultures**

Organisational memory is created when tacit knowledge is turned into explicit knowledge and therefore again becomes information that should be utilised during the acquisition phase.

Source: Beeby & Booth (2000:75-88)

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Session 4

KM PROCESSES, TOOLS & TECHNIQUES – APPLICATION TO NAMIBIAN MUNICIPALITIES

Introduction to KM Processes & Practices

Organisational knowledge & innovation have to be "stewarded" by means of a variety of processes & procedures

☐ **knowledge & innovation are not *stable commodities, but dynamic* & ever *changing, i.e. complex***

☐ **everyone engaged in tasks in an organisation has valuable knowledge & innovative ideas to contribute**

☐ **the knowledge & innovation value chain relates to the processes through which knowledge workers build their organisations' competitive advantage & improve productivity & business / organisational processes**

☐ **these processes increasingly take place in formal and informal groups, co-located and/or dispersed, face-to-face and/or virtual**

Collection / capturing vs. Connecting

An organisation's ability to effectively engage with & leverage knowledge will largely depend on whether it can

- encourage knowledge sharing &
- whether it can transform tacit, complex knowledge into explicit, recordable knowledge (information) that can effectively be used by all

Three Pillars of KM

KM is often categorised as embodying the following components:

- the **people** in an organisation & its organisational culture

- appropriate **KM processes** to facilitate
  - knowledge & information collaboration, sharing, capturing
  - creating information & knowledge repositories & using them

- a common & reliable **information & communication technology** (ICT) infrastructure to facilitate these processes

- All three components work synergistically together to ensure that an organisation's intellectual capital is leveraged & no single element should be emphasized to the detriment of the other

See next slide

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The Three Pillars of KM – work synergistically together

People & Organisational Culture

KM is about people, their motivation, willingness, & ability to share, use & generate knowledge - public sector organizations particularly need to change attitudes & behaviours to reduce barriers & develop a knowledge sharing culture

KM Processes

KM processes relate to finding, acquiring, organizing, sharing & using knowledge & also to the organizational infrastructure to enable these processes. The latter includes the organisational structure, resource allocation, management and staff roles and responsibilities
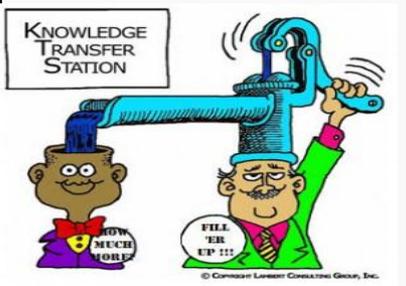
Information & Communication Technology

The ICT infrastructure is an enabler in KM. It facilitates the collection, capturing, storing & sharing of knowledge & information. It must meet the needs of the people & KM processes of the organisation

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Key processes in the knowledge value chain relate to

- **Knowledge Conceptualisation:** all processes that relate to knowledge creation, identification, acquisition, development & representation - leads to innovation

- **Knowledge capturing & codification**: conversion of tacit knowledge into accessible & applicable formats (explicit knowledge, IC)

- **Knowledge acquisition / discovery**: includes enhancement, integration & storage

- **Knowledge utilisation**:   use & application of acquired/generated knowledge & its integration into the organisation's products & services – also leads to innovation

- **Knowledge distribution, dissemination & sharing**: Movement of both tacit & explicit knowledge from point of generation to where it is applied – learning takes place, also innovation

- **Knowledge monitoring & review**: Evaluation & monitoring of KM Innovation practices - effect on organisation's achievements

1.Knowledge & Information creation / generation & innovation	2.Knowledge & Information discovery, acquisition & enhancement	3.Knowledge & Information sharing, distribution, & learning	4.Knowledge & Information use & application
❑Focus on creating environment that encourages generating new skills, new services, better ideas, better ways of doing things etc. ❑Aim to produce capabilities not yet present	❑Focus on tracking & discovering tacit & explicit knowledge 	❑Challenge: create processes/system to ensure effective interaction between knowledge sources (human & recorded) & those who need knowledge	❑It is not sufficient to acquire, organise, & develop information & knowledge if it is not made usable & more important if not USED ❑Therefore, ensure that pockets of knowledge, experiences, skills, know-how, etc. are turned into knowledge & information that entire organisation can use

5. Organising & managing knowledge: conversion, codification, review & monitoring

Selection of KM Tools & Techniques

- Knowledge harvesting
- Benchmarking
- Brainstorming
- Storytelling
- After-Action-Reviews (AAR)
- Debriefing
- Coaching & Mentoring
- Peer Assist
- Exit Interviews (Knowledge-focused)
- Study Tours
- Twinning
- Knowledge Networking & Communities
    - Learning networks
- Communities of Practice

Knowledge   harvesting

- KM technique used to extract, capture, & record tacit knowledge / know-how of experts & top performers
- This know-how can then be made available to others, e.g. through training programmes, manuals, best practices & KM repositories
- Purpose of knowledge harvesting is thus?
  - Making know-how of experts & top performers widely available
  - Making better & wider use of your employees valuable knowledge
  - Finding out 'what your organisation knows'
  - Vital knowledge is not lost to the organisation when people leave
  - The learning curve of new people joining the organisation is shortened
  - The knowledge assets of the organisation can be increased
  - Productivity and efficiency can be improved, as people can use existing expertise

How to Harvest Knowledge?

- **Focus** on most NB knowledge for success & wins

- **Who** will use the knowledge?

- Identify the **experts** ; i.e. who has the know-how/expertise you need

- Identify best persons to do **'harvesting' , NB skill**

- **Gather** the tacit knowledge, e.g. interview experts face-to-face – ask what they do to solve problems & what specific know-how they use

- **Capturing the responses?** Use a tape recorder or 2nd person to transcribe, or both – Delphi technique / Video techniques?

- **Package, Organise, & Share** knowledge harvested

- **Use**: apply, evaluate & adapt

Questions that can be used for Knowledge Harvesting

- Describe a time when…?; What's the first thing you do?

- How do you know to do that?; How do you know when to do it?; What do you do next? Why? ; What usually happens? What happens if something else is done?

- What would happen if…?; Who else is involved?; What are some common mistakes or misconceptions?; What is the most important thing to remember when you're doing this?

- Describe how you currently help others learn how to do this?; What are the main obstacles that prevent them from achieving the same results as you?

- What are examples of support materials, documents, procedures, manuals, research evidence, checklists that are relevant?

- What would make this process easier to understand?; What would make this process easier to achieve?

Other aspects to consider re Knowledge Harvesting

- ☐ **Whether you have a culture of knowledge sharing or hoarding will affect success of process**

- ☐ **Must have resources to effectively organise & disseminate harvested knowledge**

- ☐ **Not all tacit knowledge can be made explicit –use other KM tools?**

- ☐ **Would it be more effective to connect people? (COP's, storytelling, white pages/expertise directories, etc.)**

- ☐ **U a variety of KM techniques**

Benchmarking

□ **Benchmarking is the process of improving performance by continuously identifying, understanding and adapting outstanding practices and processes found outside an organisation (company, public organisation, institute, etc.).**

□ **Benchmarking of business is usually done with top performing companies in other industry sectors. This is feasible as many business processes are essentially the same from sector to sector.**

Brainstorming

- ☐ **Idea generating method widely used by teams to identify problems, alternative solutions, or opportunities for improvement**

- ☐ **Originated in 1941: Alex. F. Osborne while searching for creative ideas thought of using an unstructured group process of interactive "brainstorming" – this generated more & better ideas than individuals could produce working independently**

- ☐ *Brainstorming* **now a commonly used word & the generic term for creative thinking & idea generation (also knowledge generation)**

- ☐ **Often done naturally & doesn't necessarily require planning**

- ☐ **In KM we often use the method to generate new ideas, alternative solutions, etc. - the more you generate, the better chance you have of uncovering the best solution**
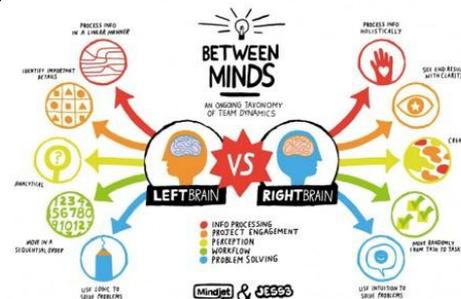
Storytelling /Narrative /Anecdotes

- Combines explicit with tacit, information with emotion & brings together many facets of knowledge
- Helps to express & understand context-rich aspects of deep knowledge
- Harvard Business School – case studies; also Snowden & Cynefin
- Multi-media applications – adds more non-text clues
- Stories thus very important to leverage knowledge

"Stories tap into all that is richest about knowledge, so when dealing with knowledge you are well served tapping into the richness of stories. And if nothing else, they are certainly more interesting than reading the manual" (Rudy Ruggles)

After-Action-Reviews (AAR)

- Originally developed & extensively used by US Army, but equally valuable in all organisations

- AAR's facilitate learning & subsequent embedding of new learning into organisational knowledge by means of an extensive knowledge reviewing process

- Involves discussion of projects / activities so that individuals involved can learn what happened, why it happened, what went well, what needs improvement & what lessons can be learned from the experience

- This learning captured in repositories & quickly disseminated to relevant employees in the organisation using various communication media: print, videos, CD's, Internet (e-mail), etc

After-Action-Reviews (AAR) Main points to consider
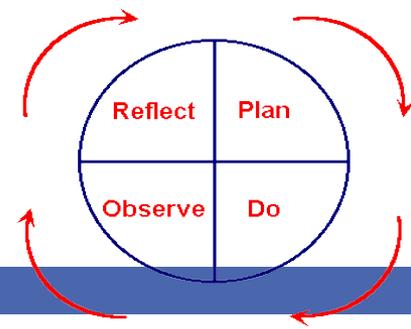
- All important projects must be reviewed – build time for AAR into project schedules
- Review projects as soon as possible
- Appoint facilitators to focus discussion
- All members of project team must participate
- Ensure that team members are free to express themselves without fear of retribution
- Use standard procedure & questions, e.g.
  - What were objectives? What did we accomplish? What did we not accomplish? How do we sustain & develop what we did right? How do we improve on what we did wrong?
- Record lessons learned – provide access tools
- Disseminate lessons learned to all relevant parties as quickly as possible

What are the benefits of AARs?

- Capture tacit knowledge & make it explicit during life of a project. Learning captured before team disbands, people forget what happened & move on to something else

- Conduct after each event within a project or major activity – a live learning process – lessons learned can be immediately applied

- Provide insights into what contributes to the strengths & weaknesses of project / activity – performance of each individual involved, project leader, team & various processes involved

- Useful to develop employees – constructive, directly actionable feedback in a non-threatening way because not linked to employee assessment

- Similarly, they give people an opportunity to share their views and ideas and to be heard

Debriefing

- **Debriefing similar to AARs**
- **Also originally used by military to question persons who return from a mission / exercise - establish what had occurred & then develop new strategies as a result of previous experience**
- **Now, it refers to purposeful reflection, which assists persons to develop and transform experience into learning**
- **The what, why, how & when of things that happened is explored orally & then transcribed for capturing in a repository for later use**
- **It prevents loss of valuable lessons learnt & other tacit knowledge**
- **Useful tool for inducting new employees & for succession planning**
- **Make explicit any tacit learning to transfer to a wider audience & organisation's knowledge base**

Coaching & Mentoring

- ☐ **Coaching and mentoring – distinct but also related methods of retaining & developing talent**

- ☐ **Coaching: Focuses mostly on performance & can be relatively short-term (sometimes as little as a few hours, occasionally a few months) & carried out between line manager & staff members**

- ☐ *Mentoring:* **Much more holistic than coaching: places more emphasis on career development usually involves a longer-term relationship and is often conducted outside the reporting line**

- ☐ *Mentors and coaches require a number of common skills, e.g. ability to:*

  - ❑ **ask good, insight-provoking questions & communicate clearly**

  - ❑ **allow employees time to think & articulate own thoughts – hold back on giving advice**

  - ❑ **help the employee decide what they want to do & to plan how to do it**

Peer Assist

☐ **A peer assist is a facilitated work-session, held face to face or virtually, where peers or individuals from different teams & organizations share their experiences & knowledge with a team (or an individual) that has requested help to solve a problem / challenge**

☐ **Knowledge in the form of good practices, lessons learned, & insights are typically shared by the people who experienced them**

☐ **Does three things: Targets a specific technical, mission, or business challenge; Acquires assistance & insight from people outside the team & identifies possible approaches & new lines of inquiry; Promotes sharing of learning & develops strong, & often new, connections among staff, partners, suppliers, & customer**

Exit Interviews (Knowledge-focused)

- Not a new phenomena – usually HR function conducted with employees when they leave organisations

- More recently widely adopted & adapted in KM – capturing knowledge from employees leaving the organisations – applies particularly to those who have unique skills

- Benefits of exit interviews : vital knowledge not lost to the organisation when people leave; the learning curve of new people joining the organisation is shortened; relatively quick & inexpensively ; leaver has more positive view of the organisation

The UK Post Office uses exit interviews as one part of a series of 'cradle-to-grave' interviews to collect knowledge, using a method called 3E: Entry, Expert & Exit. Entry interviews allow you to gather knowledge when employees first join when they have 'new eyes' & a fresh perspective, & also to ask them what they would like to know to help them 'get up to speed'. Expert interviews are conducted as they develop skills & become experts in a particular role or field (SDC KM Toolkit, 2009)

Knowledge Fairs / Market

What is a Knowledge Fair / Market?

- **Different groups within an organisation showcase their KM efforts in a public forum**

- **Increases the visibility of KM projects, & generates greater enthusiasm**

- **They can be run as a competition - this motivates the different teams to be creative, & encourages spending extra effort preparing for the fair**

- **Create a pleasant informally structured learning event**

- **Guiding principle: *everyone has something to learn and something to share – nobody is seen to be an expert – emphasis* on informal interaction**

Study Tours

Participants connect with experts outside their own working environment, gather new knowledge & creative ideas by means of site visits & planned interaction

Benefits & Objectives:

- ☐ **Benchmarking, learn about best practices & knowledge exchange**
- ☐ **Awareness, training, research & support in the field by observing**
- ☐ **Creating strategic partnerships with local and international centres of excellence**
- ☐ **Learning from experienced organizations & practitioners in the field**
- ☐ **Participate in 'Think-tank' discussions with experts outside the organisation, region, country, etc.**
- ☐ **Facilitate thinking 'outside the box'**
- ☐ **Network formally & informally on the tour**

Twinning

What does twinning mean in KM?

- ☐ **Establishing a link between two persons either in the same or different organisations to foster exchanging of knowledge, learning from each other & discussing similar problems**

Objectives of a twinning agreement?

- ☐ **Promote capacity building where two parties share experience, expertise and learn from one another**

- ☐ **Learning & knowledge exchange – involves peer to peer exchanges between professionals who have to solve similar problems in their working life**

- ☐ **Occurs between 'twins' in two different organisations, or between two persons in the same organisation**

- ☐ **Roles often divided between an expert twin & beneficiary twin**

Group Exercise

- Divide into your groups & discuss the problems of turning tacit into explicit knowledge & of sharing knowledge

- Identify the **THREE** most pressing challenges & benefits of tapping into tacit knowledge

- Discuss the most NB practices that in you can be Briefly report back