Assessing the Application of the Knowledge Management Success Paradigm in South Africa

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Abstract

This paper reports on the application of knowledge Management (KM)in the context of South Africa. The study focused on six success areas that affect successful KM initiatives: culture, learning, support, business strategy, top management support, and technology as enabler. The research was conducted over a seven-month period between February 2006 and September 2006 with the participation of six large organizations engaging with some form of KM initiatives in South Africa.

Apart from the general focus on the six success areas, there were certain critical insights. For instance the issue of culture was prominent with the respondents indicating a need to cultivate the culture of knowledge sharing in organizations. This is not well established and employees view it as something 'extra' they are giving the organization. This makes KM initiatives unsuccessful, since culture is a problematic success factor due to the complexities in 'incentivizing' knowledge sharing.

1. Introduction

Wendy Curie contends that during the last three decades, the Information systems (IS) literature has been flooded with discussions of organizational Information Technology innovations claiming to offer novel approaches for enhancing business value (Curie, 2004). Not least amongst these innovations that have been receiving legitimization in these discourses is the concept and practice of Knowledge management (KM). Concept, in terms of the interest that Knowledge Management has stirred in the global academic community and practice, evidenced by an aggressive Knowledge Management industry, awash with what may be regarded as 'plug and play' solutions. The sheer amount of Knowledge management research output in recent times, as well as the interest amongst practitioners point to an idea that is already well grounded.

One of the visible aspects of a novel innovation is the assessment of its impacts in terms of carrying out evaluation activities. Evaluation is attempted in order to further ingrain the rationale for the innovation.

Knowledge management may be claimed to be attempting a legitimization of its 'being' as researchers and practitioners take stock and assess the success of Knowledge Management activities. Evaluation, as a post implementation activity, has been likened to an activity for internalizing and systematizing knowledge (Iftikhar, et al, 2003). Subtly, these evaluative activities give Knowledge management practice some universal form as prescriptions emerge in the form of knowledge management success frameworks. For instance, Jennex and Olfman (2004) reviewed a number of studies and developed a model that may be considered useful for Knowledge management evaluation. There have also been other studies that have presented Knowledge management success factors such as Grillitsch et al (2007). While these are noble efforts for legitimization of the discipline and practice of Knowledge management, it may be important to reflect on certain 'tensions' that are emerging from these Knowledge management success models. This is even more urgent, especially in the context of organizations in developing economies such South Africa, that are quick to join the bandwagon in what Swanson and Ramiller (2004) has described as a "me too" concept.

This paper adopts a critical stance to unearth 'tensions' in the concept of Knowledge management by focusing on some of the factors that have been considered critical in its application. The success factors are used as lenses to analyze the understanding of the actors. The choice of the selected factors is deliberate and follows from recommendations from other authors (Iftikhar et al, 2003): that in evaluative practice, it may only be important to include factors that are considered critical for KM initiatives. The critical stance is apt, given that South Africa is a developing economy, whose practices are influential in other developing countries.

The paper will first describe a number of frameworks/models with a focus on their areas of focus. Then the relevant factors from the models will be discussed as part of the framework that was used for illuminating the main research question. This will be followed by a discussion of the findings and then conclusions.

2. Knowledge Management Frameworks

Knowledge management seems to be an elusive concept in terms of the emphases that various authors give. For instance, Swan et al, (1999) describe knowledge management as being about creating, sustaining, applying, sharing and renewing knowledge and making the best use of knowledge available to the organization to enhance organizational performance. In addition, Knowledge management should enable the organization to become more than just the sum of the knowledge of its individuals. Davenport et al, (1998) define it by saying that the challenge of knowledge management is making the right *kinds of information* available to the right people, at the right time, and then making sure the right actions are taken. These two perspectives seem to advocate for what may be regarded as an object view of knowledge management, emphasizing the enabling role of knowledge towards organizational success. Mu̇ller-Merbach (2007) in an attempt to discover the source of knowledge captures this perspective by lucidly arguing that the object of Knowledge management should be to deal with priori as well as a posteriori knowledge. That, the distinction between these two knowledge forms, should be critical to the knowledge manager. Nonaka, largely considered as the *guru* of Knowledge management, (1991) sees knowledge management as a process of making tacit knowledge explicit, and explicit knowledge, tacit (Nonaka, 1991).

Another notable perspective has largely focused on managing the environment of knowledge. This view is captured by Takeuchi (1998), albeit subtly when he advocates that the domain of knowledge management should have less control over employees, but should be all inclusive of everyone in the organization to create and share knowledge, which in turn fuels the organisation's innovative strategy. This different philosophy is shared by Sveiby (2000) who argues that knowledge is not something that can be "managed", and that the term to be "Knowledge Focused" is preferable. Sveiby 2000 also states that knowledge focused managers do not manage knowledge, since this is impossible, but the environment in which knowledge is created is targeted for management. Thus overall, the environmental emphasis of knowledge management provides a different perspective. The above two emphases is used to illustrate the elusive nature of the concept and practice of knowledge management. The import is to point out in a preliminary sense, that there exist different viewpoints which are presented to knowledge managers which are open to disparate interpretations. This is evident in the different foci of the knowledge management frameworks, some of which are summarized below taking into account the constraints of a conference paper.

An early attempt to study the emphases of KM frameworks was undertaken by Sunassee and Sewry (2003). The KM frameworks they studied referenced a number of essential tools for achieving effectiveness: KM implementation strategies, alignment to organizational strategy, the role of people in the KM effort and technology vis-à-vis human alignment. In terms of KM implementation strategies, they classified the frameworks as descriptive, prescriptive or hybrid (Rubenstein-Montana et al, 2000). Prescriptive frameworks provide direction on the types of knowledge management procedures without providing specific details of how there procedures can or should be carried out. Descriptive approaches describe knowledge management, and identify attributes of knowledge management that can influence the success or failure of the initiative. Finally, hybrid approaches are a mixture of both the prescriptive and the descriptive approaches.

The resulting analysis by Sunassee and Sewry (2003) had a number of emphases. First, only one of the prescriptive frameworks emphasised the importance of people and their contribution to the knowledge management effort and that most of the descriptive frameworks and the hybrid framework emphasised the role people play in contributing towards a successful knowledge management effort.

Secondly, the study looked at the emphasis of technology and humans in the different frameworks. Six of the 12 frameworks analysed reveal that the focus on technology was disproportionate to the human (employee) focus. Only three frameworks showed a strong emphasis on both the human and technological factors. Most of the earlier studies(Malhorta, 2000; Tiwana, 2000; Zack, 1999a) also pointed out that there seemed to be more emphasis on acquiring and using technology rather than empowering and managing people in the knowledge management effort. Again, these contradictions are pointing the elusiveness of knowledge management in practice.

Thirdly, the study highlights that; prescriptive frameworks do not emphasise aligning the knowledge management strategy with the overall strategy of the organization. Only one each of the descriptive and hybrid frameworks does. The consensus on the need to align any functional strategy, nay, knowledge management strategy to overall strategy is not in doubt (Chatzkel, 2000; Duffy, 1999; King 2001). Thus if knowledge managers are using these frameworks as references, applicability in an organizational setting would be in doubt if in fact; the alignment of knowledge management practice to business strategy is in doubt. To emphasize, Sunassee and Sewry as well as Zack (1999a) claim that a Knowledge Management

implementation strategy must be a function of the business strategy, or else the KM initiative will fail to accomplish goals that are tangible to the organization (Sunassee & Sewry 2003; Zack 1999a).

Moteleb and Woodman (2007) has captured recent concerns about KM frameworks by pointing out that the models lack credibility, are inconsistent and obfuscate various concepts relating to KM. Their review identified two limiting dichotomies of KM models: analysis dichotomy and working dichotomy. The focus of the analysis dichotomy is on the nature of knowledge independent of its context (epistemological models), or an emphasis on the context or environment of knowledge independent of its nature (ontological models). The working dichotomy has two emphases: analytical and actor dichotomies. The analytical dichotomy models elevate the importance of explicit knowledge and the technological infrastructure for to enable sharing, while actor models are people-and process-oriented by emphasizing tacit knowledge and the social infrastructure required (Herder *et al.* (2003).

These dichotomies limit the organizational value of KM models especially since there is a paucity of systematic empirical research that addresses the relationship between the organizational, human and technological aspects of KM (Moteleb and Woodman, 2007). Malhotra (2005) points out a key flaw in KM models are in their focus on KM activities without addressing why knowledge should be managed. In response, Moteleb and Woodman (2007) argue that addressing the why question critically links KM initiatives to organizational strategy. This research responds to the need for more empirical studies that can contribute to better understanding of the inconsistencies evident in the available KM frameworks whose focus suggest that a strategic gap exists between KM implementation strategies and achievement of organizational strategy. Given the nascent nature of KM initiatives in developing countries, the study was exploratory in nature and therefore attempted to delineate which factors are emphasized in the context of a developing country similar to and/or conflictual to KM frameworks that find their origins in developed nations.

The research framework thus referred to factors that have been prominently elevated in earlier frameworks and which continue to be expressed in much more recent KM frameworks. The framework presented in the next section borrows various studies reported in Rubenstein-Montano et al., (2000), Sunassee and Sewry (2003) and Moteleb and Woodman (2007).

3. Research Framework and Methodology

From the review of literature review, the following propositions guided the development of the interview guide:

- Culture - Employees are willing to share and invest their knowledge in the organisations.
- Learning - Ideas and experiences amongst employees are shared and encouraged.
- Support - Support is provided by the organisation in the form of training and incentives.
- Business Strategy - Knowledge is defined in the organisation and they can define the gap.
- Top Management Support - Knowledge Management is promoted and has top management approval.
- Technology - Technology acts as an enabler for continuous improvement.

Thus the critical variables captured include creating and managing a knowledge culture, creating and managing organisational learning, alignment of knowledge management strategy with the business strategy, top management support and support within the organisation. The overall research framework is provided as an addendum (Appendix A).

The collection of primary data was gained via six non-standardised semi structured interviews with senior managers who have some responsibility for their organizations KM initiatives at a single point in time. A list of the questions that was covered was derived from the prevalent themes that emerged from the literature review. There was a discretionary application of the interview guide as some questions from the interview were omitted given the organizational context and the interviewee's level of understanding with regards to KM. Table 1 provides a summary of the respondents that participated in the study.

Table 1: Respondents

Industry Sector	Respondent Position
Manufacturing	KM Manager
Financial	Information Architect
Financial and Management Services	KM Manager
Transport	IT Manager
Lifestyle	IT Manager
Government	IT Manager

The detailed systematic analysis of these interviews follows.

4. Assessing the Knowledge Management Success Paradigm in South Africa

This section discusses the findings from the interviews in light of the adopted research methodology with a specific focus on unearthing the 'tensions' that are inherent in the adopted knowledge management success paradigm.

Organizational Culture and Knowledge Sharing
There was acknowledgement amongst the subjects that knowledge sharing was extremely important to achieve a successful knowledge management initiative even though achieving such a fete difficult. A common theme that emerged when answering the question, "In your view, why do you think employees are reluctant to share knowledge?" was that there is a competitive streak across various business units in the organization which inhibits Knowledge sharing. Each business unit has its separate targets and goals and this makes it difficult to collaborate and share ideas. There was also an allusion to the fact that issues of risk and litigation factors also inhibit knowledge sharing depending on industry sectors such as in banking. For instance, one of the interviewees explained that:

> After the Enron-era, risk management has also made it incredibly difficult to share information due to different global policies and country laws.

Another cultural aspect that was observed was the resistance by employees to use other employee's knowledge. One manager referred to this as the "not created here syndrome." Another manager in agreement attributed this behaviour to the age and experience of employees. He claims that, "Older or more experienced employees are less likely to use knowledge that has come from their younger or less experienced counter part."

It was also observed that employees were not explicitly willing to invest their time and efforts in KM. One of the interviewees explained, "Employees don't really feel they gain any utility by investing in Knowledge Management." This shows that the knowledge provider usually sees little benefit in sharing knowledge as it requires effort that could be spent on what is perceived as a more productive activity.

So while the respondents underscored the need for the right organizational culture in the organization, their responses pointed to a lack of knowledge sharing culture within South African firms. In assessing this success factor, the underlying motivations for the views held by these respondents were assessed. This was necessary to unearth 'tensions' in these factors presumed as antecedents to KM success. For instance a respondent had this to say:

> There is the term that knowledge is power. I don't necessarily believe that that's a problem in our organization; I just think that people don't know what we have to share. So far with most organizations they actually say the same things workers are not willing to share but literature says its one of the key success factors but organizations don't actual do that and it's a difficult thing as literature assumes that workers are willing to share and use others knowledge.

It thus appears that the community of practice of knowledge management has presumed what need to be shared and there may be need to define them formally to understand what aspect of knowledge need to be shared to make it a pervasive concept in the organization.

Another emerging reason for lack of the knowledge sharing culture may be attributed to the economic paradigm which is prevalent in how organizations are run as well as lack of a clear definition of the political process necessary for the implementation of Knowledge Management initiatives. This is because of the inadequacy of resources, not only organizationally, but also within business units in addition to the lack of enumeration of the participation process to foster a knowledge sharing culture. This intention is further highlighted from the response below:

> So people don't think about talking about a customer to another division, they just think in their own space. As I talked about earlier about not wanting to share resources, because if you have a lot of requirements and only have say 2 resources, you would keep them busy and don't want to share them with someone else. Yet there will be times when your resources will be sitting idle and another person is frantic trying to get people to do things for them and they are not willing to share, because they think that if I let him go then maybe he will like it and leave.

Learning
All the organizations emphasised that employees were encouraged to share experiences and ideas. Most of the participants also mentioned the importance of the creation of new ideas and providing an environment to facilitate these ideas. One manager stated that, "Employees are encouraged to study and come up with creative new solutions." While another said "Various business units have two days away in a year to talk about various issues and come up with creative new solutions." This was the only incident in the research were a conscious effort was made to share information and ideas amongst various business units.

All the managers also indicated that there were efforts to identify all knowledge relevant to the organization.

One manager explained that, "Knowledge Managers occasionally get together to discuss what they need to be doing in terms of services and new action plans." Another respondent stated that;" As knowledge is important for growth, it is therefore important to identify what the organization knows and more importantly, what it needs to know."

Organizational and Top Management Support
The consensus amongst the participants was that support and incentive schemes have a role to play in the performance of KM. This may include training in new KM initiatives, internal marketing to popularize KM, charging an individual(s) with the KM portfolio as well as the need to provide incentives for those participating in KM initiatives. Participating firms underscored the need for such KM support and practiced these in one way or another in their organizations. However, there was no agreement on the extent of this role, the metric or method to be used for giving incentives. For example, one manager emphasised that:

> *The firm is very emphatic about this issue; we do not offer any monetary incentives for knowledge sharing as this is seen as part of the employees' responsibilities of employment. Employees are rewarded based on their knowledge and competencies.*

The same manager however, states that, "We recognize them (employees) in news letters and /or performance reviews." This shows that the role of the incentive scheme is more for recognition than reward. The rest of the organizations did not seem to offer any form of recognition or rewards.

When asked what the role of top management was in the KM, all the participants shared the same view point. They all emphasised that top management had to be supportive and actively promote Knowledge management. One of the two interviewees whose organizations have an international presence mentioned that, "The core role of top management is to support the initiatives and Knowledge management plans on both the global and service lines." She however explained that although there was no support across the entire firm, "…the global market leader was a very, very strong supporter of Knowledge management." The other manager whose firm has an international presence also indicated that, "All Knowledge management efforts have to be initialised by top management." There was also evidence that top management were aware of KM initiatives in their organizations.

However, despite recognition of this success factor, tensions inhibiting its realization are evident when aspects of rewards are analyzed. For instance, one manager stated the value that arises from KM initiatives is a benefit to the company rather than to the individual, and that this perspective was largely reinforced by top management to avoid the issue of incentive. Thus while the additional value maybe recognized, the issue that emerged may have been hampered Knowledge Sharing is how all the organizational community member benefit. Another element frustrating this support factor also stems from the persistent Business-IT culture gap which is still prevalent. The business-IT culture gap is still quite evident with a clear demarcation of the business side and their role of interpretation (presumably because they understand the business better compared to IT); while IT's role is a focus on technology (tools). For instance one participant alluded to this unwittingly when commenting on another aspect:

> *All we can do is delivering the tools and the data; we can't do the interpretation of the information which must be done by the business area.*

Business Strategy
Most interviewees reported that their organizations Knowledge Management initiative is aligned with the overall business strategy. One manager when asked to define knowledge management explained. "It is the developing and utilising knowledge to increase organizational performance and to meet strategic goals." Another manager asserted, "Knowledge management is definitely a strategic issue." The strategic goals for Knowledge Management ranged from, "Retain and capture of employee knowledge to provide a better service to customers and increase efficiency in the organization," to "Growth of the business and retention of market share." One candid manager however emphasised that Knowledge management was not formally aligned at all to the business strategy but noted that, "Knowledge management is however intuitively aligned to the overall strategy."

Most of the participants indicate that they have sessions where different groups i.e. Knowledge managers or IT managers come together to identify what the organization knows and what the organization needs to know. All participants also carry out strategic planning sessions. One interviewee said," We have strategic planning exercises where we determine what the company can do and what it is actually doing." This shows that most organizations were actively seeking to breach the strategic and knowledge gap.

Technology
The participants viewed IT as an enabler of Knowledge management initiatives. When asked what role IT played in Knowledge management efforts, one

participant mentioned up front that, "IT is a key enabler." Another manager mentioned that, "… Our new system is a big facilitator in our Knowledge management efforts." Only one manager expressed that IT was the most important component in Knowledge management initiatives. He clearly explained that, "It plays a big role; it is the backbone of the business and therefore the main component in any Knowledge management efforts." It was interesting this individual belonged to an organization that had never used any Knowledge management system and hence had no past experience. All the other individuals were also entrusted with the Knowledge management responsibilities in their various organizations and had prior experience with KM systems. Over and above all, the managers advocated a common theme in that; "technology has to be intuitive, easy to use and has to be accepted by users."

Organisational Structure

All of the managers stated that a top-down approach is the most appropriate structure to support KM processes. One manager explained, "It has to be a top-down approach because of the buy-in that is needed from the top managers who control access to most of the resources in the organization." Another manager recommended a combination of centralised and decentralised approach with Knowledge managers acting as the facilitators of the KM process. However, one executive made this interesting statement;

One of the main reasons Knowledge management has not been successful in this organization is that we are a very bottom up culture and Knowledge management needs a top down approach.

The appropriateness of a top-down structure appears universal amongst the respondents. However, there were certain structural elements of organizations that seem to frustrate the KM efforts. For instance, some firms had the following views:

We have small teams working in KM but not nearly enough to utilise it and to challenge the thinking of supply orders, customer segmentation and product categories, all those things (This was in reference to the other functional areas of the firm).

This may be a pointer to the 'struggle' for recognition of the KM function within organization vis-à-vis the other dominant functional areas. The success of adoption of KM initiatives may therefore be questionable given the current lack of 'clout' of KM initiatives as a result of division of organizations into functional areas. This 'tension' is apparent in one of the responses of the respondents below concerning what are some of the reasons why the KM effort is not very visible in the organization:

I would say some of our corporate structures because we are very siloed operations. We have different teams that do a little bit of analysis in their own areas without looking across the whole board. If you take a business like ours that's supposed to be customer focused, it shouldn't matter whether any businesses are but must be the customers, and how you maximize sales to the customer should be across the whole group not just your particular area.

Another aspect of tension in the KM success framework concerns the prevalent organizational philosophy. In a majority of these firms, the structuring of the businesses is not aligned with KM philosophy. Further, if there is a KM philosophy, the political process for implementation of KM initiatives is unclear. The political process of how to handle the KM initiatives is not clear to the adopters yet. Implementation of IS is a political process, thus KM initiatives need to be understood as such. This aspect is validated below:

I also don't think the business has been structured from a KM perspective they have been structured around buyers and merchandises more product focused rather than customer focused. (And in response to whether they KM teams).Yes, they would have small teams within each silo, but not one that is in a corporate structure.

We are aiming to do that, we have proposals to do that. One of the bigger problems is ownership of the resources, so where someone says they don't want Johnny and Mary to go and work in this overall group as we are going to lose control of the ability just to draw up reports for me and that is an issue we struggle with.

Concept of Knowledge and Operational Clarity of Knowledge Management

All of the participants mentioned the Data–Information-Knowledge hierarchy. They all highlighted that data and information were the building blocks of knowledge.

Data and Information are the building blocks of knowledge. Organizations need to master managing data and information before attempting to manage knowledge. Most organizations are still far from achieving this and therefore will find it difficult to try and manage knowledge.

It terms of the clarity of the concept of knowledge management, it appeared that it is an elusive concept. For instance to some of the participants, KM appears similar to information management as is evident from the above quote. One participant mentioned that "Is it not interesting that knowledge management is one of the few disciplines where you have to ask what it means to an individual, you would expect that people would know what it means." This view was prevalent amongst the participants with the overriding perception being that KM being perceived as the retention of information from employees and/or customers to enhance business performance.

Other insights that emerged were even more telling of lack of conceptual clarity of KM. For instance an important element of the firms' perceptions seemed to focus on the fact that the current struggle for most firms is how to manage their information resources and not really KM. For others, it appeared that the focus of KM is on non-operational information as opposed to operational information. These perspectives are captured below:

> The KM stuff or the non-operational information is more around the clock trends; take out information to see which products are selling more than others. There's that whole side of it. There is also non business type of information, and here I pick on things like pictures of products, video clips, all sorts of other knowledge, its all of   that information for me is in KM section.

> [...] must have a mind set of information manipulation. Not just if you ask for a list of the top 10 customers they give you the top 10 customers but it looking intuitively into that as well and how else I can add value to that data

There was also an insight which emerged: that of conceptual bias in defining information. The firms seemed to lean towards the rational or a priori concept of knowledge (Muller-Merbach, 2007). According to Muller-Merbach (2007), a priori knowledge is certain knowledge arrived at through a deductive process possibly through a certain frame of reference. It can be proven by logic, independent of sensation. Its understanding can be spread by logic or logical argumentation. Anybody who has understood the argumentation can reproduce the knowledge. Some of the responses that allude to this conceptual bias are quoted below:

> I don't believe one uses it enough. I am on the IT side, we have a lot of data and it is that data rather than information. It is the converting of data into information and knowledge which leads to wisdom which I

> don't believe we are actually strong enough in. so we do some of it(KM as a conversion process). The key one is having the data available so that you make sure the resources are going to work. If you have the data available, then it's the tools, having the right tools to extract information quickly and easily and thirdly is the actual people themselves.(Shows the frame of reference for knowledge creation is a priori availability of data)

But while this is the aspiration, the firms indicated that they still fell short of attaining KM. So while the predominant perspective is the rational one, literature reiterates that for successful KM, there is need to consider other knowledge perspectives such as the empiricist(posterior) perspective as well as a hybrid of a priori and posteriori concepts of knowledge (knowledge (Muller-Merbach, 2007). The success of KM initiatives in developing countries may therefore be questionable due to the lack of conceptual clarity of Knowledge and Knowledge Management.

Nascent Organizing Vision of the Knowledge Management Paradigm

Swanson and Ramiller (1997) claim that the organizing visions of new innovations are characterized by interpretive, legitimizing and mobilizing activities and based on this activities, it may be possible to point out the state of the innovation. In the context of developing economies such as South Africa, it may be regarded that the concept of Knowledge Management is still nascent based on some of the evidence below:

> We have people looking after the data warehouses and the tools themselves. On the business side we are proposing to have what we call a Knowledge Discovery leader.

This may be a pointer to what is currently underway in terms of most organizations attempting to understand the appropriate structure of the KM function. The participating firms did not have a similar structure or even similar titles of those charged with the KM function. Some of them had Knowledge Managers while others had IT managers handling the function. This attempt to make sense of the appropriate structure may be regarded as an interpretive activity.

Another aspect of the organizing vision of KM is evident in terms of how the KM departments are attempting to legitimize their initiatives by showcasing 'success' in their 'silos' to the rest of the organizations:

> Yes, that's right and we have done it in IT and are trying to convince the business that that's the better was to go to stop losing resources, to

share the load across the areas and to stop losing people.

Legitimization is also evident when some of the participating firms referred to endorsements of particular vendor products by reputable consulting firms or when some of the participants pointed out their evaluation activities to measure success (Evaluation as a legitimization activity); especially after deploying KM applications:
:
The Cognos suite is brand new and is internationally accepted and is rated by Gartner as one of the best suites around. It works in a way that is structured for depending on what type of user you are for example you would have adhoc queries capabilities, a very simple way of picking and dragging fields to create a query with that.

There are 2 ways of measuring the one is actual throughput of reports, how many reports get run. Cognos suite has management reports which tells you that 13 000 reports were run this week, so we don't take that and measure that information further. So we look at that and say wow that's great and next week it is 14 000 and that's good so now we can see an upward progression of acceptance but nothing

The role of vendors was also emphasized as a legitimization activity:
Very often you get suppliers who come in and show business users something that is so sexy, awesome and wow it can do this and that, that in itself it is not probably a bad tool but put it together with the rest of the infrastructure and it is a nightmare.

All these point to what may be regarded as an innovation in a nascent stage with the community of practice attempting to make sense or build an image of what it means.

5. Conclusions
It is clear that effective implementation of KM in developing countries requires greater emphasis in and improvement in some success over others as postulated in the KM frameworks. For instance the issue of culture was prominent with the respondents indicating a need to cultivate the culture of knowledge sharing in organizations. The culture of sharing has not been well established and employees view it as something 'extra' they are giving the organization and need to be compensated. This makes KM initiatives unsuccessful, since culture is a problematic success factor due to the

complexities in 'incentivizing' knowledge sharing in organizations.

There were other critical insights that also emerged despite the general focus on the six success areas: that the concept of Knowledge Management seems to be elusive. The Knowledge Managers view it as a metaphor representing various aspects of managing information resources in the organizations. Some regarded employing advanced Information Technology applications as Knowledge Management while some viewed it as 'improving' management of information and its resources in various ways. This elusiveness of the concept in developing economies point to a stage in its adoption in which the relevant community of practice is still attempting to make sense of the concept. Thus conceptual clarity is still lacking, which points to a need to better clarify the need for KM (what and why issues). In addition, the political process of ensuring the success of KM initiatives is not clear as most organizations are not clear about the organizing philosophy of KM. Lack of clarity in this aspect impacts on how the implementation process is interpreted. Thus some organizations resort to crafting implementation strategies basing their assumptions on other management approaches such as information management.

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Figure 1Appendix A: Research Framework