



# SHARING INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE COLLECTIVELY: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR EMERGING KNOWLEDGE ORGANISATIONS

## ABSTRACT

*Scant attention has been paid to the role of individual employees in the knowledge management discourse, even though knowledge is recognised to be rooted in the individual. Where organisational theorists believe that the collective knowledge of individuals needs to be managed, it is only possible if knowledge leaders emerge as change agents to facilitate knowledge creation and sharing. Hence an excessive focus in the knowledge management literature recently acknowledged the appropriation of individual knowledge through participation as distinct from knowledge practice focusing on managers or leaders who choose how to manage knowledge. The commonality of most recent research indicates an emphasised focus on knowledge management and knowledge leaders to implement strategic integrated communication to assist with the creation of knowledge organisations. Where knowledge management focuses on human capital and knowledge based theory, strategic integrated communication emphasises that knowledge leaders should acknowledge the premises of the strategic intent of knowledge organisations through the management of information, innovation, creativity, cultural phenomena, participation and inputs from the environment based on trust, loyalty, integrity and credibility. This forms the basis to address the research problem that, despite the tremendous research opportunities to examine these constructs, limited research has been conducted from evolving organisational and knowledge leadership perspectives.*

**Keywords:** knowledge management; change agents; organisational leadership; strategic integrated communication

## INTRODUCTION

According to Rechberg and Syed (2014), the term knowledge management is seen as an organisational activity that leads to success and is a stimulus for debate and subject to a wide range of interpretations. Although research has been conducted on knowledge management for the last 20 years, it was only in the early 2000s that the focus shifted from the learning organisation initiative to the realisation of the importance of the use of knowledge management as an innovative tool for leadership and change. This was echoed by various researchers like Baines (1997), Bollinger and Smith (2001)

and Scharmer (2001) who suggested that in learning organisations, leaders were responsible for learning at an individual and organisational level through the creation of a culture that respects knowledge, reinforcing its sharing to retain people and to build loyalty to the organisation through training, empowerment, to name a few, and to create knowledge infrastructures.

Despite this realisation, research conducted by Johnson (2002), Politis (2001) and Bryant (2003) found that although leaders paid attention to the learning organisation initiative, it was not implemented in organisations. The most significant idea based on their research is the realisation that knowledge management should be applied to the entire organisation from top to bottom to ensure that this learning takes place through knowledge creation, codification, storing and sharing. The need for further research between leadership, knowledge management and change in the organisation, society and environment, as pointed out by Bryant (2003), provides impetus to the identified gap in existing literature that a lack of studies exist to investigate the relationship between the use of knowledge management and strategic integrated communication by knowledge leaders during organisational change and transformation to create knowledge organisations. One example in support of this gap is Bryant (2003: 41) who said, "Researchers may want to explore the link between transformational leadership and managing knowledge at the individual and group levels". Furthermore, in an empirical study conducted by Crawford (2005: 9) he came to the following conclusion: "Given the substantial relationship between innovation and transformational leadership it seems deserving of further investigation". Based on recommendations made by Rusly, Corner and Sun (2012: 349) that "further analysis of knowledge management implementation from a change perspective could possibly offer new insights and explanations regarding the increasing number of knowledge management failures", this study sets out to address this gap and develop a theoretical framework for the use of knowledge management by knowledge leaders during change and transformation to create what is referred to as knowledge organisations. According to Mishra and Bhaskar (2011), successful organisations are "those that are better at sharing knowledge among individuals". These statements provided impetus for the research problem that a lack of studies exist to investigate the relationship between individual and collective knowledge to create knowledge organisations. This study is exploratory in nature and seeks to address this gap and to enhance the field's discussion with two main objectives: to critically review existing literature based on an interpretivist approach as research methodology; and to propose a theoretical framework to indicate the interrelatedness of these concepts.

According to Bryman and Bell (2016), interpretivism stems from an epistemological position and refers to the critical application of analyses of various academic traditions to study the social world. The main findings will make recommendations for future research and/or perspectives which need to be considered by knowledge organisations to ensure long-term beneficial relationships with all stakeholders. The new proposed theoretical perspective presented emerged as a response to the need to realise the importance of knowledge creation and sharing by knowledge leaders in emerging knowledge organisations. The focus is hence on the sharing of individual

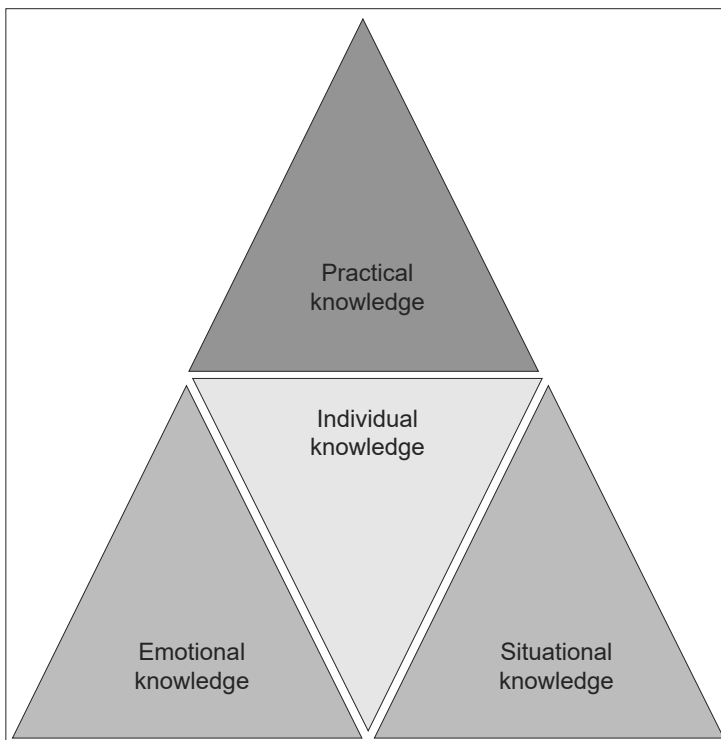
(tacit) knowledge to create collective (explicit) knowledge which can be used to the benefit of all.

The article is structured as follows: individual and collective knowledge; approaches to change and transformation; strategic integrated communication; knowledge management; knowledge leadership; a theoretical framework for knowledge organisations; limitations and future research; and conclusion.

## INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

Individual knowledge and identity are flexible and can change according to abilities, willingness and interest to participate (Nonaka 2008). The degree of individual knowledge is personal and based on the individual's willingness to acquire and/or share this knowledge which is difficult to manage (Rechberg & Syed 2014). Individual sense-making refers to the relationship between the signifier (norm) and the signified (sens) (Saussure 1983) and the meaning created (Pratt 2014). This means that individuals should participate in the knowledge creation and sharing process in such a way that they interpret the world as their own understanding to ensure meaning is created to others. Three types of individual (tacit) knowledge are prevalent in the literature, as indicated in Figure 1:

**FIGURE 1:** TYPES OF INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE



Practical knowledge, or skilful knowing, is a skill not known and refers to concrete and context specific doing highly tacit and embodied which can be shared by clues and tools that individuals themselves do not observe (Polanyi 1998). Situational knowledge is closely related to Heidegger's (1962) concept of *Dasein* or being-in-the-world, which means the individual needs to be physically present and willing and able to participate in the situational space to create and/or share this knowledge. Emotional knowledge is gained through emotional intelligence, the individuals "gut feeling" which influences the understanding and again their willingness to participate in the knowledge management practices. The extent to which individuals participate will determine the quality and amount of knowledge gained, created and shared.

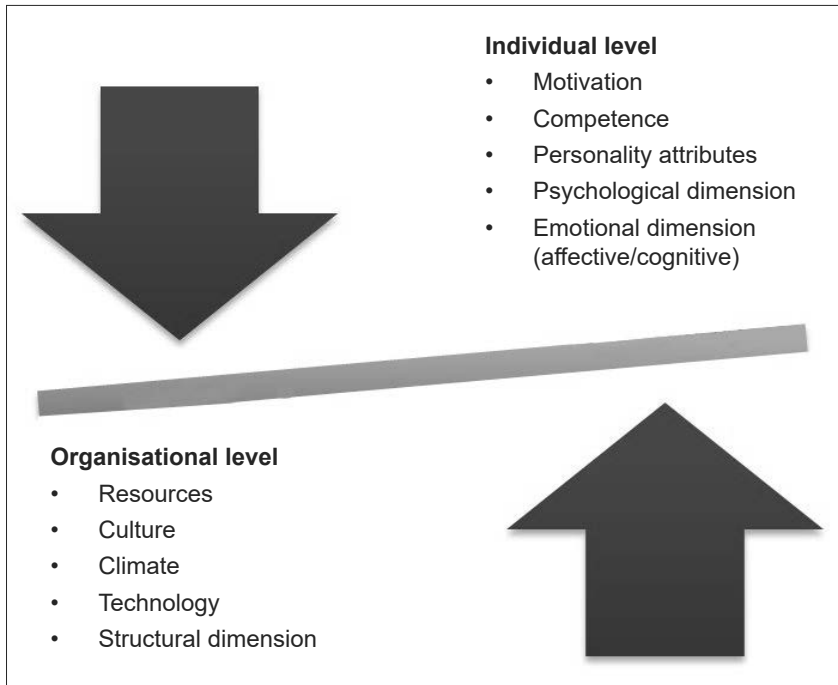
Collective knowledge is rooted in the individual's willingness to participate in knowledge management to add value to the organisation. Bhatt (2001: 70) defines organisational or collective knowledge as the "interactions between technologies, techniques and people" and Felin and Hesterly (2007: 200) that a mutual dependence or amalgamation between organisational and individual knowledge exists where "the individual and collective do not exist as a real, separate entity". Rechberg and Syed (2014: 436) refer to it as "together" rather than "either" thinking where everything is part of the whole or system, which Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) refer to as the "collective self".

## APPROACHES TO CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

Firstly, change processes involve three phases: preparation or planning for change, adoption to change, and the internalisation of change by embedding new modifications or accepting the need to adapt to change to the benefit of the organisation. According to Rusly *et al.* (2012), beliefs on change should evolve from the personal change to collective attitudes or intentions of all members of an organisation. In the context of this article, the definition of change proposed by Kanter, Stein and Jick (1992) has been adopted: "the shift in behavior of the whole organization to one degree or another". According to Crawford (2005: 6), "nearly every modern organization is confronting the change in information systems, from ledger cards to a digital area", which he refers to as the trend towards "informatics", which arguably affects all aspects of the organisation, including leadership, transformation and knowledge management. Change occurs at two distinctive levels: individual and organisational (Kim 1998), of which the key elements are presented in Figure 2.

In terms of change management, the traditional approaches like the action research model (systematic analysis of change), the three-step change model (unfreezing, moving and refreezing), and the phases of planned change approach (OD, which focus on processes and participation) have been criticised by authors like Overman (1996) and Jaatinen (2002). According to them, these approaches are too rigid, that phases or steps are not chronologically ordered because of changes in the environment, that incremental and isolated changes rather than radical transformation are addressed, that they over rely on a management approach to reduce conflict, create order, control chaos and simplify the complexities in the turbulent environment and that it will not work in all organisations. Furthermore, they argued that the underlying viewpoint is that information is power which needs to be controlled, hence the need for structures.

**FIGURE 2: CHANGE AT INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL LEVELS**



It is therefore argued that although these approaches were effective for many decades, the introduction of new technology, overload systems, better-informed employees and worldwide access to new approaches conflict or crisis usually resulted from poor planning and control.

In more recent approaches like chaos theory (which touches on participatory nature to change management), complexity theory (rooted in systems theory), and the contingency approach (role of external environment to develop congruence), the focus shifts to dynamic environments moving away from planned change and organisational development to the management of change and transformation at a strategic organisational level. This supports the underlying purpose of this article, which sets out to emphasise the need for strategic integrated communication with the emphasis on true and interactive participation and a holistic perspective where all systems and subsystems are integrated to create shared ownership and commitment (Barker 2013).

Jaatinen (2002) made convincing arguments for the importance of interdependence, participation and relationship building in terms of new approaches to change management. Hence, it is posited that the process of the system becomes important where all the subsystems should participate to add to the richness of information, knowledge creation, codification and storing, shared responsibility, trust, transparency, connectivity, creativity and relationship building. This argument is supported by

authors like Grunig and Hung (2000), who indicate the importance of the concepts of control mutuality, joint acceptance of degrees of symmetry, trust and satisfaction with the relationship to communication management and relationship building. Today most organisations tend to follow a combination of the planned and emergent approaches to change management usually based on their specific strategic goals and objectives.

On the other hand, transformation is seen as the step-by-step process of restructuring an existing organisation by removing what does not work, keeping what does and implementing new systems, processes, infrastructure and cultural values where needed (Head 1997). This ultimately needs resources, structural and cultural processes aligned with the strategic intent of the organisation which could arguably be possible through knowledge management and strategic integrated communication. Hence, transformation is seen more than the flow and management of information, but also includes connectivity, creativity, innovation and participation by all to ensure relationship building.

## STRATEGIC INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION

This study reflects on integrative models which stress the need to consider interrelations amongst contexts and theories. The definition proposed by Barker (2013) for strategic integrated communication has been adapted for the purpose of this article: the process of strategically managing mutually beneficial organisational and stakeholder relationships where the planning thereof recognises the added value of a strategic integrated communication approach through the integration of all functions. This process should be information driven, participative, innovative, interactive, and focus on consistency in brand, messages, knowledge creation and sharing, processes, culture and the strategic intent of the organisation.

Barker (2013) also posits that by using the cliché of the current “rapid changes in the environment and field of communication”, it is probably essential to reconsider, re-examine and review the current situation in the field. In the past the traditional media-centric approach of purchasing space and filling the space did not work. Today the “creative idea” and “creative integration” to solve actual organisational problems becomes key which emphasises the need to refocus on the importance of a strategic integrated communication approach with creative, innovative and motivational appeal to ensure knowledge creation and sharing takes place. At this point the importance of knowledge leaders makes business sense and becomes important to ensure a holistic and integrated approach is followed with interactive engagement and participation with stakeholders to the benefit of the organisation. The importance of this argument is underlined by Mårtensson (2000) who argues that communication is a missing link in strategic management and leadership approaches.

## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Although numerous research studies have been conducted on knowledge management during the last 20 years, it was only in the late 1990s that the importance thereof in learning organisations were highlighted by Baines (1997) who suggested that

leaders were responsible for learning, both personally and organisationally. Learning organisations are skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and to modify behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights (Garvin 1985). Senge (1990), for example, argued that organisations need to be capable of learning in order to adjust to changes and expand their capacity continuously through innovation. In order to do this, knowledge management is usually used in learning organisations; hence, according to Singh (2008: 5), knowledge management and learning go hand-in-hand in organisations.

Where learning organisations present a paradigm shift from the more traditional organisation to new perspectives of how organisations should function, how they should be managed and how they should cope with changes (Hitt 1996), more recent approaches focus on emerging “knowledge organisations”. This set the scene for the 2000s where the focus shifted from the learning organisation to the realisation of the importance of knowledge management as an evolutionary step in the development of knowledge leaders and the need for innovation. For example, Crawford (2005: 13) argues that innovation, as a personal construct, may be manifested outward through knowledge management behaviour.

Various authors contributed to provide a substantial theoretical basis for knowledge management and leadership. One such an example is a substantial research study conducted by Politis (2001) who found that self-management, transformational and transactional leadership styles are related to dimensions of knowledge acquisition, emphasising the need for participative collaborative leadership in the face of transition to the knowledge society. In addition, Rusly *et al.* (2012: 259) argued that substantial investment in technological infrastructure and processes does not always guarantee successful knowledge management; rather it is claimed that the main pillar of achievements rests on employees’ willingness and commitment to participate in the initiatives. Another example is from Crawford (2005) who established in his research findings that transformational leaders were significantly more innovative, which is often associated with characteristics of knowledge leaders, especially their ability to create and manage information and knowledge. However, according to Singh (2008), information and knowledge are two different entities where information should only be seen as a building block for knowledge which can in turn be used to create wisdom in organisational lives. The findings in the study by Crawford (2005: 14) provided evidence of

a growing interest in the relationship between the ‘high touch’ nature of leadership and the ‘high tech’ aspect of the workplace ... and demonstrated the link between person-centered transformational leadership and some technical construct, in this case knowledge management.

This is emphasised by Oluikpe (2015) who posited that the importance of knowledge management in the organisation should include both the capabilities to enable the capture and leverage of intellectual capital and the deployment of this capital to the advantage of the organisation. According to Mårtensson (2000), the term “intellectual capital” is the preferred umbrella term because it refers to the possession of knowledge, applied experience, stakeholder relationships and professional skills,

which links to strategy to create value to the organisation. Based on the conceptual roots of intellectual capital identified by Edvinsson, Roos, Roos and Dragonetti (1997), the strategic contribution of knowledge is based on the way in which knowledge is created or developed as well as the way it is leveraged into value.

In spite of this realisation, knowledge creation and development is mostly examined from the learning organisation perspective; whereas it is argued that in order to create this value, it should also focus on “knowledge sharing” to enhance the value, and ultimately gives an organisation a sustainable competitive advantage. One major issue, which has hardly been dealt with, is the integration of knowledge from both perspectives where the focus shifts from individual perspectives to an emphasis on knowledge residing within the organisation as a whole, which is then collective knowledge. For the purpose of this study, intellectual capital is linked to both strategic integrated communication, human and monetary sources needed for the processes and structures in the organisation and knowledge-based resources. This includes the management of leadership styles, technology, stakeholder relationships, innovation, creativity, participation, strategic intent and corporate culture of the organisation. The importance of creativity, innovation, participation and culture are according to Chase (1998) the heart of creating successful knowledge organisations.

Based on these arguments and because knowledge management is a well-established phenomenon in various interdisciplinary fields today with increased application to the organisation and leadership perspectives, the theoretical basis chosen for this article is knowledge management. It is argued that knowledge management should be used by what is referred to as “knowledge leaders” in emerging “knowledge organisations” and be linked to other theoretical traditions in social sciences. In terms of the theoretical constructs, knowledge management includes three main components: technological (systems), communication (strategic integrated communication) and human (stakeholders), which are presented in Figure 3 (adapted from Barker 2008).

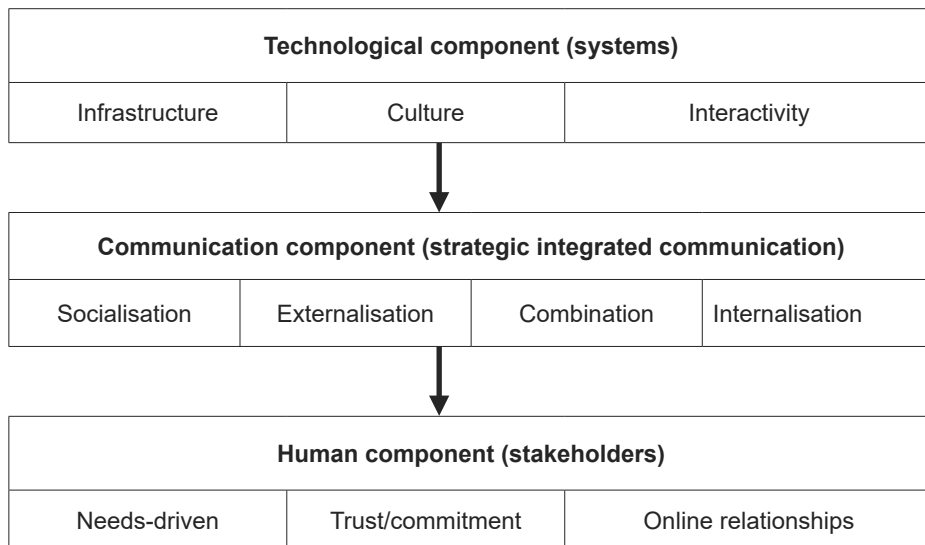
According to Bo (2013: 4), “a knowledge-based view proposes that ‘knowledge’ is the strategically important resource of a firm [knowledge organisation]”, which means that individuals should share and put information into action that strives to improve organisational performance. Ardichvili, Page and Wentling (2003) re-emphasise the importance of the human component of knowledge management, arguing that one of the crucial aspects to determine organisational success is motivated by active participating members of the organisation in all activities. Although most traditional approaches to knowledge management assumed this knowledge to be relatively simple, more recent approaches realise that knowledge is in fact complex, factual, conceptual and procedural.

According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), leading researchers in this field, the process of knowledge management is based on the ability of all members of the organisation to add value to the [strategic] integrated communication business processes through the creation, communication, codification and coordination of both tacit and explicit knowledge storing. Tacit knowledge refers to “informal cognitive/mental and technical/concrete know-how and skills which are personal, context-specific and difficult to



formalise or articulate because they are stored within the individual” (Van Dyk, Greeff & Barker 2015: 124). Bollinger and Smith (2001: 46) see it as the “unarticulated knowledge that is in a person’s head that is often difficult to describe and transfer”, which is arguably the key characteristic of emerging knowledge organisations. Because the focus of existing research is also on knowledge creation, codification and storing to the benefit of the organisation, explicit knowledge refers to more formal and tangible, observable, precise and formally articulated and embedded in tools, processes and rules, which are transferable through written documents (Nonaka 2005). For the purpose of this article and based on the argument that most existing research focuses on knowledge creation and storing, and less on knowledge sharing (Milne 2007), this concept has been included as a focus area for this study. Where individual knowledge subsides within the human minds in terms of innovation, creativity, participation, skills and their adaptability to change during transformation, to name a few, collective knowledge is formed through unique patterns of interactions, technologies, communication and humans which create and shape an unique organisational culture (Bhatt 2001). These are indeed the profound components or knowledge management identified earlier. To build a knowledge culture in a dynamic organisation, it is argued that these emerging knowledge organisations should transform, develop and nurture systems and processes to ensure knowledge creation, storing, codification and sharing in a meaningful way to expand the “individual knowledge” (implicit) to “collective knowledge” (explicit). This knowledge should then be interpreted and applied or used to ensure learning is created to clarify and adapt the strategic vision of the organisation during change. This viewpoint is substantiated by Rusly *et al.* (2012: 337), who said that it “represents a process of transforming an individual’s justified beliefs to a higher level to form an organisational belief system, which enhances the individual-possessed knowledge”.

**FIGURE 3: COMPONENTS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**



One of the key discourses of the knowledge management perspective is hence the focus on explicit and implicit knowledge, but according to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) also include embodied, tacit and narrative knowledge and the “absent presence” of the body as an essential part of everyday communication because it allows for the creation and sharing of knowledge (Barker 2013). Despite the growing interest in knowledge management, it has been critiqued by researchers like Andreeva and Kianto (2012) for being too optimistic, which promises more than what it can deliver and that it is difficult to manage knowledge. Furthermore, locating knowledge might also be difficult. However, Massingham (2014) addressed these concerns in an empirical study using action research from a critical systems perspective and provided empirical evidence that knowledge management can be used to manage knowledge resources (strategic integrated communication, human, monetary and information-based). It can also be used during organisational change in terms of performance, strategic alignment, knowledge retention to enhance productivity and knowledge creation and sharing to improve problem-solving, but Massingham (2014) agreed that it is difficult to implement. From a knowledge management viewpoint, networks of information and knowledge become key for organisations to be able to react to constant influences and changes in the environment, which necessitates ever-increasing networks and relationships with outside systems. This arguably creates “borderless aggregates” where an aggregate is seen as the classification of individuals within a community based on certain characteristics that they possess in common and who affect the organisation in some or other way.

## KNOWLEDGE LEADERSHIP

Since it was argued that emerging knowledge organisations are associated with adaptive approaches, the most prominent leadership theory used in the literature is usually the transformational approach. Transformational leadership emerged in the 1980s and differentiates between four important skills: self-awareness (reading one’s own emotions and recognising their impact, knowing one’s strengths and weakness, self-worth and capabilities); self-management (emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, initiative and optimism); social awareness (empathy, service and organisational awareness of decisions and politics at various levels); and relationship management (inspirational to others, influencing and developing others, act as change agent or catalyst, managing conflict, building bonds and collaborative teamwork) (Van Dyk *et al.* 2015).

Burnes (1978: 20) first defined transformational leadership as a process in which “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of mortality and motivation”, where the process of transformation is based on empathy, understanding, insight and consideration; not manipulation, power or coercion. According to Crawford (2005: 8), “few researchers address the link between information technology and leadership, and even fewer address the relations between transformational leadership and knowledge management”.

During the change process, Denrell (2005) concluded that leaders should comply with the following: empower individuals (like employees) to respond creatively; adopt

personal and active attitudes towards individual and organisational goals to contribute to resonant managerial (leadership) practices; be self- and socially aware (and therefore be able to recognise, understand and react empathetically to his or her own and others' emotions and goals); be equipped with skills such as self- and relationship management (which are characterised by transparency, adaptability, collaboration and inspiration); be associated with a supportive organisational climate due to a constructive organisational culture that could be related to leadership practices; and their role in the change process is to inspire people. This is in contrast to the traditional managerial approaches which focus mainly on rationality and control to maintain organisational goals, resources, structures and the people involved with these. Based on this, Singh (2008: 6) highlighted the need for knowledge leadership, which she argues should be evident throughout the organisation and operate on all hierarchical levels from top to bottom. The role of these knowledge leaders is to

provide strategic visions, motivate others, effectively communicate, act as a change agent, coach other around, model good practices and carry out the knowledge agenda ... knowledge leaders should religiously explain the goals of knowledge management to all concerned (*ibid.*).

**TABLE 1: KEY THRUSTS OF NEW KNOWLEDGE LEADERS**

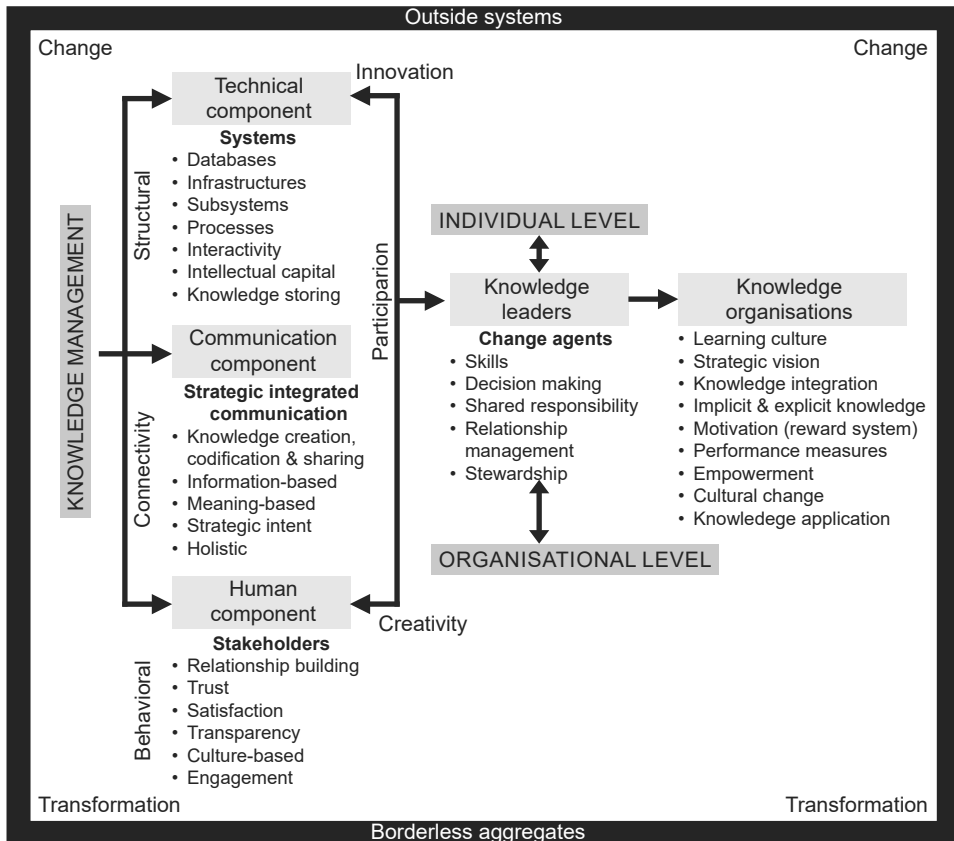
<b>Key thrusts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Combine aspects of transformative and transactional leadership styles</li> <li>■ Act as role models and <i>change agents</i> by encouraging learning through and stimulate them intellectually, institutionalise learning through the provision of incentives and training, foster a pro-learning culture through cross-functional and -discipline engagement</li> <li>■ Intensify <i>explorative</i> initiatives by seeking to create new knowledge and meaning</li> <li>■ Encourage the willingness for <i>exploitation</i> practices which aim to leverage existing knowledge through storage, transfer, sharing and application</li> <li>■ Have a direct effect on the application of knowledge through <i>knowledge sharing</i> based on strategic integrated communication and the strategic intent of the organisation</li> <li>■ Provide strategic visions, motivate others, communicate effectively, model good practices and carry out the knowledge agenda through interdependent relationships</li> <li>■ Religiously explain the goals of knowledge management to all concerned through interaction, vision, creativity, innovation and empowerment to create meaning</li> </ul>

Because knowledge management was presented as the theoretical foundation for this study, specifically the importance and role of change agents or experts which can manage all information at all levels (individual and organisational), the term knowledge leaders has been adopted and highlighted in the theoretical framework.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the above discussions, the author constructed a new theoretical framework which focuses on the relationship between the key constructs, which is presented in Figure 4.

**FIGURE 4:** THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SHARING INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE COLLECTIVELY IN EMERGING KNOWLEDGE ORGANISATIONS



From Figure 4 it is deduced that knowledge management allows for organisational strategies based on structural elements. These include intellectual capital, systems, processes and knowledge codification and storing in databases (technical component), connectivity through strategic integrated communication which is knowledge-information-meaning-based (communication component) and focused on behavioural aspects to ensure relationship building which should be culture-based to obtain trust, satisfaction, transparency and engagement by all (human component). It is argued that if tacit knowledge is made explicit, individual knowledge can be transferred,

shared and used at all organisational levels to create collective knowledge. Due to the difficulty to transfer tacit and individually-owned knowledge to explicit and collective knowledge, the major contribution is that if knowledge leaders as change agents apply knowledge management it will lead to greater possibilities to manage and control this knowledge effectively, especially during change and transformation.

In Figure 4 it is hence posited that through the use of knowledge management, knowledge leaders can be used as change agents because it can either be described as an operational tool or a strategic tool. From a strategic perspective, knowledge management is firstly about the acquisition of information; secondly about the codification and storage of this information and knowledge in various databases which can be used for data-mining; thirdly to make the information available and accessible to all hierarchical levels in the organisation; and lastly, that this information should be shared and used through sharing, socialising, externalisation and exchange of information.

In order to do this, participation becomes a key element to ensure the three components of knowledge management (technical, communication and human) are implemented through connectivity, structural and behavioural constructs. This will lead to creativity and innovation which are key elements for emerging knowledge organisations. It is further argued that if knowledge management is implemented in the organisation during change and transformation, knowledge leaders will emerge as change agents (or experts) with the necessary skills to enhance decision-making, shared responsibility, relationship management and stewardship at all levels of the organisation (from individual to organisational levels). This emphasises the need for knowledge leaders to have a sound understanding of people, processes, systems, strategic visions, and more aspects of the organisation. In order to do so, these knowledge leaders should rely on strategic integrated communication to fulfil the roles of both collaborator and catalyst, in other words, change agents. Hence it is argued that if these change agents or knowledge leaders respond to changes in the outside systems and borderless aggregates during transformation, knowledge organisations could be created. These knowledge organisations will then create a learning culture in line with the strategic vision through integration of both individual (implicit) and collective (explicit) knowledge. Reward systems and performance measures therefore become important to ensure motivation takes place to empower individuals to share knowledge which can be used do ultimately lead to cultural change.

Lastly, it is argued that in the long-term this process will enhance the value of knowledge organisations, specifically in terms of its culture, knowledge creation and sharing to the benefit of all.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has limitations in its interpretations which are based on an exploratory study of existing literature, the author's knowledge and elucidations thereof, and the introduction of alternative viewpoints which indicate the importance of other avenues for further research. More rigorous research could be conducted, especially to refine and test these theoretical viewpoints in practice through the development of a

measuring instrument for knowledge management, which definitely sets the scene for envisaged future research. Despite concerns on the use of knowledge management by knowledge leaders in emerging knowledge organisations, it is argued that the proposed theoretical framework is a good starting point to explain the knowledge-individual-collective-relationship and could be a benchmark for more general studies.

## CONCLUSION

Grounded in a competence-based literature review of existing perspectives, and in line with the main objectives, this article identified the most critical theoretical factors which provided impetus to the core concepts of this study. In line with the main goal of the article to examine how changes in the organisational environment can be managed, it was argued that knowledge management can present knowledge leaders the opportunity to implement strategic integrated communication to ensure knowledge creation and sharing. This will lead to sustainable relationship management which encourages the use of relationship-orientated systems and processes through a holistic approach. Moreover, the theoretical framework highlighted that knowledge leaders should acknowledge the strategic intent and vision of these emerging knowledge organisations. These integrations were theoretically justified and compatible with existing viewpoints, but probably went one step further by contextualising it in a comprehensive theoretical framework. The challenge for knowledge leaders is to develop an organisational culture conducive to the sharing of knowledge and where learning becomes the norm because knowledge is continuously created and re-defined which makes it difficult to capture, control, organise and coordinate (Alvessen 2001).

While it is realised that it might be a little problematic to implement, and that it is not clear which elements of knowledge can be managed, it is argued that if knowledge management is used by knowledge leaders as change agent, it can encourage and support a range of positive outcomes in the dynamic changing environment and transformations of organisations. However, research has yet to reveal whether it is indeed implementable because research-based evidence is needed to provide the expected outcomes and the results of the sharing of individual knowledge to create collective knowledge. In spite of this, the importance of this article is re-emphasised by the growing interest in knowledge management, which has according to Oluikpe (2015: 351), “moved the topic from a relatively new discipline to an important strategic source for competitiveness”.

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