

# **Discourse on Unequal Power Relations in Knowledge Sharing Transactions at Selected Township Schools in Nkangala Education District**

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## **Abstract**

Sustainable Development Goal No 4 (SDG4) resonates with all education systems of the world. It has resulted in education policies being created and promulgated with sustainability and development in mind. In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), sustainability speaks to the need for schooling systems to operate as a knowledge society and to maximally exploit the abundance of knowledge assets that exist in their ecologies. This implies that they must adopt knowledge management (KM) to take advantage of the 4IR era aligned technological innovations, instructional practices and administrative standards. In light of the view that, of all KM processes, knowledge sharing reigns supreme and gives rise to the generation of new organisational knowledge as well as the innovation of existing organisational knowledge; the study adopted a qualitative approach embedded in an interpretivist paradigm to explore the perceptions of teaching and support staff- specifically six teachers and four administrative clerks (altogether ten participants) - of factors contributing to unequal power relations in knowledge sharing practices at two selected schools in Nkangala Education District, Mpumalanga Province (South Africa). The study found that poor leadership practices contributed to unhealthy professional interactions, knowledge hoarding, contravention of contextual ethics (of Ubuntu), trust deficit, top-down communication and workplace bullying.

*Key words:* Power relations; knowledge sharing; school management teams; township schools; knowledge management; knowledge workers

## **Introduction**

The new world order's presentation of "information and knowledge" as a source for national wealth and prosperity (Drucker, 1993, p. 69) accentuates the call for the provision of quality education as every citizen's basic human right that is protected by all the world's constitutions. Drucker (1993, p. 69) asserts that "knowledge today must prove itself in action". "Action" means sharing this knowledge with the masses so that it pervades the public domain and anchor human development and agency. Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (2000) state that the actuation of knowledge sharing can never bear fruition without the provision of "*Ba*" (i.e., a Japanese term for a *platform* created for people to engage in social interactions). As such, schools along with other education and training institutions, have long carved a niche for themselves as universally accepted

platforms for knowledge sharing and creation. Consistent with this view, Senge (1990) likens knowledge sharing and creation processes to a learning experience aimed at developing individuals' aptitude and proficiency to perform knowledge work. Nonaka and company often refer to organisations whose daily operations are fixated on knowledge sharing and creation processes as "knowledge intensive firms" (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka and Konno, 1998; Nonaka et al., 2000; Nonaka, von Krough & Ichijo, 2000). Schools, as pointed out by Ozmen (2010), typify knowledge intensive firms. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), knowledge intensive firms employ groups of qualified individuals to actuate knowledge creation and sharing processes at varying capacities of specialisation. After an extensive analysis of these individuals' scope of work, Peter Drucker coined a term "knowledge worker" (Drucker, 1999, p. 86) to refer to them. He based his reasoning behind calling them "knowledge workers" on the fact that their scope of work was somewhat non-routine and technically specialised in orientation and can be found in almost all economic sectors. In the context of primary and secondary education sector, knowledge workers are but not limited to teaching and administrative personnel such as teachers, heads of departments (HODs), administrative clerks and principals (Chaudhry & Sivakamasundari, 2004; Cooper, 2006; Edge, 2005; Petrides & Guiney, 2002; Petrides & Nordene, 2003; Reynolds, 2005). As much as in their schools, all the above categories of knowledge workers carry out knowledge work in silos (for example, in offices and classrooms), the nature of their work also binds them to work in group formations to harness each other's technical know-how predispositions and best practices. It is within a group setting that individual knowledge workers critique, reject and contest each other's knowledge capabilities (Oreoluwa, 2018). Such behavioral tendencies among knowledge workers render knowledge a powerplay. Generally, power tussles among teachers, school management teams (SMTs), "learners and school governing bodies" (Zulu, 2012, p.6) occur in classrooms, communities of practice and staffrooms across South African schools. Oftentimes, leaders' and managers' autocratic approaches to managing staff have made it almost impossible for subordinate staff, most notably teachers and administrative clerks, to assert themselves in knowledge sharing processes (Flores & Pérez, 2010; Min, 2017; Perez-Soltero et al., 2019). Due to counterproductive leadership practices, today's schools have become "poor knowledge sharers" (Fullan, 2002; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2010). Therefore, considering the scarcity of studies investigating key factors that inhibit knowledge workers' collaborative culture and knowledge sharing practices (Bates et al., 2018), the study sought to address the following question:

Which factors do teachers and administrative clerks perceive to be contributing to unequal power relations in knowledge sharing transactions at selected township schools in Nkangala Education District?

At the heart of the Education for Sustainable Development agenda lies a systemic way of thinking proactively on best practices to navigate present situations and unlock doors into the future (Clarke, 2022). Ecological knowledge sharing is one such construct, which Petrides and Guiney (2002), Petrides and Nordene (2003) praise for its ability to develop and sustain a collaborative learning culture among teachers. With its core focus being to investigate ways in which unequal power relations affect the sustainability of knowledge sharing transactions at selected township schools, the study brings to bear solutions that should be explored to transform the state of

knowledge sharing in these schools for the greater good of learners' quality of learning. Beyond just accentuating the growing need for schools to pioneer their own sustainable development by "learn[ing] very carefully how to share all resources [including how to share each other's knowledge to propel productivity] as the new century moves on" (Heasly, 2020, p. 93), the study further explores the bearing that the state of relationships between school leaders and teachers (Khumalo, 2019) and between school leaders and administrative clerks has on the wellbeing of knowledge sharing transactions in these schools. Hereunder lies a comprehensive discussion relating to literature, methodology, ethical issues, findings, conclusions, recommendations, limitations and implication for future research.

### **Knowledge Work and Continuous Professional Development in the Epoch of 4IR**

The pressure exerted on knowledge workers (i.e., teachers, administrative clerks, HODs and principals) in diverse schooling contexts is immense, especially amidst the dawning of the 4IR era. 4IR has resulted in schools being constantly on the receiving end of policy reforms, technological advancements and curriculum changes. To cope with the 4IR related changes and innovations that infiltrate institutional processes and systems, it is of utmost importance that "Continuous innovation, learning and teaching" should anchor these "knowledge worker's job" (Drucker, 1999, p. 86) for the entire duration of their career in the education sector (Darling-Hammond, 2006). This is consistent with Spinks (2014) who argues that knowledge workers (i.e., teachers, administrative clerks and principals) who value professional learning richly benefit from new skills and familiarity with policy reforms that may directly or indirectly affect their work. Professional learning does not only encapsulate the acquisition of formal certificates and learning units/credits, but also the learning that unfolds informally among workers through social interactions or dialoging. Meaningful social interactions can contribute to mutual learning (Adyanga & Romm, 2016), school effectiveness and best practices (Nkambule, 2023a; Romm & Nkambule, 2022). Meaningful social interactions imply that individual knowledge workers show appreciation for each other's tacit knowledge predispositions by extending the courtesy to share knowledge (Hafsah, 2017) beyond the confines of private spaces (i.e., office, classroom and library) and inner circles.

### **An Overview of Knowledge Sharing in Schools**

Tsolo (2019) defines knowledge sharing as a dialogically mediated social engagements that occurs between two or more individuals in an organisational setting. Runhar and Sanders (2015) consider it as a professional development exercise that enables groups of workers to learn from one another's experiences in a form of peer mentoring. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) point out that when the knowledge firms set conditions for collective knowing, the knowledge sharing process can sustain a thriving culture of knowledge innovation. They imply that teachers who are engaged in frequent inquiries into their practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) are likely to perform above average and build solid professional networks. Also, principals and HODs who engage in knowledge exchange with co-workers tend to practice effective instructional leadership (Nkambule, 2020). Furthermore, school administrative clerks who maintain regular and cordial social contact with co-workers are better placed to perform knowledge work effectively (Nkambule, 2023b, 2023c). Relationship building in

knowledge sharing is of pivotal importance as it allows knowledge workers to impart their skills and technical know-how to other individuals, resulting in knowledge transfer (Wu, Lin & Lin, 2006).

Since “knowledge lies less in databases than in people” (Brown & Daguid, 2002, p. 121) continuous dialogue among knowledge workers is sacrosanct as it is the most effective method to stimulate the willingness by individuals to externalise their tacit knowledge dispositions so that they could be consolidated into the knowledge repository of the organisation. What makes tacit knowledge worth managing is its espousal of a combination of occupational field-based experience, technical skills, formal and informal training, all of which are stored in people’s minds. A properly managed tacit knowledge externalisation process sets a tone for tacit knowledge conversion into an explicit form of knowledge, which ensures that it is documented, easy to access and modify. Despite tacit knowledge having the potential to significantly grow the organisational knowledge reservoir, Tsolo (2019) argues that the management of tacit undertakings continues to be ignored by many schools. Much of what results in ineffective knowledge sharing practices in schools is attributed to leadership practices that do not value the adoption of knowledge management (Fullan, 2002; Kazak, 2021).

### **The Effect of Power Dynamics on Interpersonal Undertakings and Knowledge Sharing**

Naturally when people co-exist in a group setting, they are likely to have conflicting ideas and engage in power tussles (Oreoluwa, 2018). This is a clear demonstration of what Foucault (1993, p. 336) meant when he remarked that “where there is power, there is likely to be resistance”. According to Bates et al. (2018), power is having influence over other people’s way of thinking or understanding of a particular situation. Ziblim and Ertuk (2022) state that organisational power is a disposition used by those in the leadership echelon of the organisation or society to coerce individuals into adopting a particular decision or stance. The word “power” is not necessarily always a bad thing, but it is how it is being exercised by those entrusted with it that subjects it to negative or positive judgment (Bates et al., 2018). A positive exercise of power occurs when it is used to influence change for the greater good of all, rather than when it is being channelled in favour of a select few (Bates et al., 2018). Simply put, power is viewed in a positive light when it espouses democratic values of inclusion, development and equality.

In borrowing from French and Raven (1959), Bush (2003) extends a notion that a school is a social space where the manifestation of powerplay is inevitable. He made reference to five modes of power that occur in this social space, namely, (a) *positional power*: a direct manifestation of the authority leaders or managers have over decision making processes; (b) *charismatic power*: the flair with which an individual uses their likeability and beaming aura to overrule other people’s suggestions; (c) *expert power*: when people endowed with sought after skills and connections exude “an aura of authority” to almost single handedly regulate processes or over-rule resolutions (Morgan, 1997, p. 81); (d) *coercive power*: also known as “harsh” power because its regulatory nature forces individuals to adopt resolutions they would ordinarily have refrained from endorsing; (e) *resource power*: when resources are allocated either based on merit to deserving employees or through favouritism, gender or nepotism. Within that latitude of thinking around the modes of power that pervade organisations,

the study investigates unequal power relations in knowledge sharing transactions at selected schools.

### **Exploring Power Relations Through the Lens of Power Elite Theory**

To provide a theoretical depiction of the extent to which in today's sectors of societies, power is almost always a disposition that works to the advantage of a minority and to the disadvantage of the majority, the Power Elite Theory (PET) (Mills, 1956) was used. The theory purports that a ruling minority of individuals who are situated in the management or leadership echelons of state organs (including schools and a host of other educational institutions) have dominion over legislative, operational and miscellaneous outcomes. These dynamics filter through all operational ambits of the organisation, including in knowledge sharing meetings wherein the "elites" (i.e., principals and HODs) wield power over the "non-elites" (i.e., teachers and administrative clerks) to disempower and relegate them to a gatekeeper position in key decision-making processes. The overriding hypothesis of this theory is that, as power remains centralised among a handful of elites, the ordinarily powerless non-elites gradually become weary of the status quo (Shannon, 2011) and begin to show resistance towards their elite counterparts. The theory further hypothesizes that in the absence of neutrality or through failed mediation, the "non-elites" resolve to become "counter elites" who are characteristically more radical and defiant than their former selves (Gilens & Page, 2014). The author considers that using PET as a theoretical lens rationalises the ongoing standoffs between subordinate and superior staff in many South African schools and inarguably in many other developing countries too.

### **Research Approach and Selection of Participants**

Situated within the locus of the interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 2009), the study sought to elicit the perceptions of subordinate staff namely teachers and administrative clerks on factors contributing to unequal power relations in two schools in Nkangala Education District, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Fueled by the view that a qualitative research approach is best suited for investigating "staff perceptions and human behavior" (Chiliza, Adewumi & Ntshangase, 2022, p. 134), the researcher interfaced with the participants that were affected by the phenomenon. In line with a purposive sampling procedure (White, 2004), only participants who were deemed to be of purposeful value to the objectives of the study were selected. A total of ten participants; six teachers and four administrative clerks were selected from two township schools in Nkangala Education District, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa.

### **Research Sites**

School A is a combined school (Grade 1- 9) whereas school B is a primary school (Grade 1-7). Both schools are characterized as quintile 3 schools, which implies that they are non-fee-paying schools (Grant, 2013). As such, they are fully reliant on the subsidy from the ministry of education (Mashiane-Nkabinde, Nkambule & Ngubane, 2023). Being situated in communities where families fall within the lower end of the socio-economic strand (Mampane, 2023) implies that both schools host a government funded National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) to ensure that learners can receive at least one meal per day during school hours. By implication of their inability

to generate extra income consistently other than the meagre subsidy they receive from the government, both schools do not have adequate facilities such as computer laboratories, fully equipped science labs, smart boards and school hall.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews as per the compiled interview guide (Mbokazi et al., 2022). To record the interviews, an audio tape recorder was used (Mbokazi et al., 2022) and field notes were taken to document participants' body language. Through examining their body language, the researcher was able to draw their state of emotions in relation to issues of serious concern to them. During interviews, body language such as facial and hand gestures brings to bear crucial semantic information beyond spoken words (Beattie & Shovelton, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2011; Denham & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). To facilitate the data analysis process, data were coded using inductive thematic analysis (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016) to identify key themes about unequal power relations and knowledge sharing at selected township schools. A highlighter pen was used to conduct "a line by line" (Nkambule, 2020, p. 181) perusal of data with the intention of spreading it into manageable "chunks" to identify elements of it that resonated with the nature of the study (Maree et al., 2007, p. 105) and adopt them as themes.

### **Reflexivity**

The fact that, at the time when data collection was implemented, the researcher worked [as a teacher] in the sector warranted the need for him carefully rethink the impact that his role in the facilitation of the interviews was to have on its credibility (Green & Johns, 2019). Therefore, "bias during the analysis and in results" (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017, p. 7) was dealt with by applying reflexivity. According to Blair (2015), reflexivity occurs through examining the ethical grounding and balance in data credibility during data collection. In practicality, it entailed revisiting the research questions to establish coherence between themes and the research questions. It was further enhanced through "member checking" (Thorne, 2001), a process that included re-visiting the studied schools to allow participants the opportunity to review the interview transcript to see if their views were properly documented. In instance where they felt that certain parts of the transcript did not fully reflect their views, they were allowed to correct them. This also gave the researcher a chance to ask for clarity on some issues that he felt were not clearly articulated in the interviews. Finally, the researcher requested an independent auditor (i.e., a research professor and the author's doctoral research supervisor) to vet the transcripts and provide advise on how best to report on the participants' narratives.

### **Ethical Issues**

An ethical clearance certificate was issued by the relevant research ethics committee. Participants were assured that their identities and participation in the study would remain private and confidential. As such, no names of participants and institutions were to be mentioned, instead alphabets representing their occupational titles and numbers were to be used to identify them throughout the study (e.g.,

T1=Teacher number 1; AC2= Administrative Clerk number 2 etc.). Lastly, participants were informed of their right to rescind their participation if they were aggrieved by it.

## Findings and Discussion

The study elicited the views of ten participants: six teachers and four administrative clerks, on their perception of factors contributing to unequal power dynamics in their respective schools. According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM, 2016), both professional occupations constitute the non-managerial staff component of the school, meaning that they work under the supervision of the SMTs, for example, teachers are under the direct supervision of HODs whereas administrative clerks work under the directive of the principals. Hereunder lies a thematic layout of the findings that emerged from the interviews held with participants in their respective schools.

### ***Theme 1: Low levels of collegiality and high levels of knowledge hoarding among teachers***

The study found that low levels of collegiality gave credence to knowledge hoarding between senior and novice teachers. The effect of this was felt the most by novice teachers who were still trying to establish themselves in this field of occupation. To express the extent to which the status quo affects them, T1 explained:

*Senior teachers talk among themselves when we are not around, and they do not want to empower us with what they know that we do not know yet.*

Referring to senior teachers' behaviour in meetings, T3 added:

*They talk only when they are asked to comment about something. Otherwise, most of the time they look as if they are not interested in what is happening. You can tell that others cannot wait to leave the system.*

Collegiality is of critical importance to establishing a productive workplace because fosters the sharing of common goals (Shrifian, 2011) and decision-making power (Bush, 2003). In a school setting, collegiality propels teachers to engage in meaningful collaborative work (Brundrett, 1998). This finding is consistent with that of Kalema, Motsi and Motjoloane (2016), which went even deeper to explicate that senior teachers hoarded knowledge from their novice counterparts because they regarded their tacit knowledge assets as a proxy for commanding respect (p. 20) and highlighting their relevance in the field.

### ***Theme 2: Lack of contextual relational ethics underpinning teachers' social engagements***

Building on what was discussed above [in theme one] regarding poor relations between senior and novice teachers in the studied schools, the study further elicited that senior teachers' hoarding of knowledge stemmed from their perception of the attitude that novice teachers had towards them. Senior teachers were discontented with the manner in which novice teachers address them on a daily basis. They felt that as elders, a little more respect needed to be shown by novice teachers towards them. Besides feeling undermined by their novice colleagues, they also observed that, instead of empowering them with ICT skills, often joke about their below par ICT skills. One of the participants representing senior teachers posited:

*These youngsters think they know everything. They want to talk every time during meetings. Because they know technology, they undermine us. They like to type things and give them to us saying that we must implement those things. But you must talk to people first and let them suggest a few things and then you ask them to try those things out. This thing of being undermined by youngsters is a big problem for us (T6).*

T8 added:

*I wouldn't mind working with young teachers if they didn't have a bad attitude. You try to show them the way and they challenge you as if you don't know what you are doing.*

This finding recaptures Ngogi's (2018) sentiment about South African schools, right now, being characterised by a most pernicious behavior from teachers. The absence of mutual respect and trust among participants signals their disregard for contextually relevant relational ethics (Okeke & Okeke, 2016), which put an emphasis on the younger ones respecting their elders and vice versa. Several studies based on the local schooling contexts (Bambi, 2012; Bipath & Nkabinde, 2013; Bush, 2003; Jaca, 2013; Nkabinde-Mashiane, 2020; Moeketsane Jita, & Jita, 2021; Nkambule, 2018; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Rajoo, 2012; Tapala, van Niekerk & Mentz, 2020) partially attribute the ongoing rifts between [novice and senior] teachers to middle managers' (i.e., HODs') inability to promote collegiality and to establish common ground for mutual respect among teachers.

### ***Theme 3: Unfair treatment of administrative clerks by teachers and HODs***

Despite evidence proving that administrative clerks' knowledge management "skills" especially the recording, sharing and utilisation of "knowledge" (Memisoglu, 2016, p.133) are at best when they have cordial relationships with teachers and HODs (Bayat, 2012), the study found that they continue to be unfairly treated by teachers and HODs. To explain this ordeal, AC1 commented:

*HODs would storm into this office demanding that you abandon what you are doing and attend to their needs. If you politely explain that you will do it later, they do not accept it. Then you are forced to leave everything and attend to them.*

AC4 gave an example of how their ill-treatment unfolded:

*They (HODs) give an exam paper out of which we must make copies for their learners. Guess what? ... they don't discuss anything except for telling you to produce X amount of copies and by when. With one printing or typing error, they tell you where to get off.*

AC1 succinctly added:

*When it [referring to examination paper and copies] comes out wrong, they sit on your neck demanding that you fix it now.*

AC3 stated:

*It is very difficult to work with them because they just don't understand when you tell them you have a lot of work to do and that they must leave what they want you to do so you can do it later.*

AC2 added:

*Teachers send learners to us for copies and when the learner takes time to return to class, they come down to shout at us, claiming that we don't want to assist learners (AC 2). The problem with them is they don't ask but they just overreact as if they are your bosses. If I'm not mistaken my bosses are Mr ... and ... [referring to the principal and his*



*two deputies]. I don't understand why we suffer like this because they are not our bosses. We belong to the principal.*

This finding affirms what Bayat (2012, 2014) as well as Bayat, Naicker and Combrinck (2015) had already established in their studies, both of which respectively concluded that administrative clerks were the easiest targets of HODs. This finding also proves that beyond just being the community liaison agents of the schools in which they work (Bayat, 2014), administrative clerks are not adequately given the credit they deserve in keeping South Africa schools afloat (Nkambule, 2022).

#### ***Theme 4: Top-down decision making***

According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), the success of knowledge creation rests on people's active and mutual participation to share their tacit knowledge. Despite the growing need for South African school management teams (SMTs) to fully recognise the value of people's participation in enriching their organisational knowledge assets (Steenhuisen, 2012), it was established that teachers and administrative clerks felt alienated by their SMTs during knowledge sharing events such as meetings, briefings and workshops.

*We are not given the opportunity to contribute to anything. We go to meetings with suggestions but ours are never implemented. When you challenge them for not taking your ideas seriously they consider you a bad influence. Then I keep quiet (T3).*

Another participant hinted that there were double standards as some teachers' ideas were being taken seriously by the leadership over others.

*Somedays we are being listened to but in some we just play second fiddle to our SMT. It depends on who you are, some teachers like...are taken seriously when they talk (T2).*

This "double standards" that participants allude to typify what Bush (2003) identified as the exercise of charismatic power to gain advantage over others. This exclusionary practice is contrary to a suggestion forwarded by Noor and Salim (2011) who called for inclusive and non-hierarchical approaches to knowledge sharing.

#### **Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

The researcher acknowledges that the study is not immune from some limitations. The fact that only under-resourced schools were selected to form part of the study implies that the transferability of the findings would be of insignificant value to former Model-C schools (i.e., well-resourced schools which during the apartheid political dispensation exclusively serviced White South African learners). Also, the researcher admits that the sample size of 6 teachers and 4 administrative clerks (altogether 10 participants) is not enough to strengthen the case for the generalisability of the findings across all township schools within the radius of Nkangala Education District. Based on these limitations, the study invites prospective researchers to consider investigating the phenomenon using a mixed methods approach, to be able to work with a larger sample size and draw out thick layers of diversified opinions (Nkambule, 2023a). Lastly, since the focus of the study was exclusively limited to township schools, future researchers are encouraged to consider conducting comparative studies to understand the gist of power relations in knowledge sharing transactions across both under-resourced and resourced schooling ecologies.

## **Conclusions**

Although the role of education has always been to develop learners and prepare them for adulthood, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2015) noted that, lately, the urge by schools to develop learners has been further strengthened by the enactment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which regard access to primary and secondary education as a basic human right and an entitlement that should be extended to all the children of the world. However, as schools travel this noble yet challenging path confronted by under resourcefulness (Mashiane-Nkabinde et al., 2023), they must apply the presence of mind to the fact that the actuation of Education for Sustainable Development requires them to use knowledge assets that pervade their premises to develop their own unique system that fosters resource mobilisation, context-specific curriculum content, adherence to school ethos, adaptive leadership and management practices, active community partnerships (Cloud & Jackson, 2016; Evans, Whitehouse & Gooch, 2012), a climate that nourishes internal collaborations, organisational learning, collegiality and mutual trust. Motivated by these empirical perspectives and field-based anecdotes of what it might mean to achieve sustainability in education amidst the dawning of the 4IR era, the study investigated the perceptions of subordinate staff of factors influencing unequal power relations at two selected township schools in Nkangala Education District, Mpumalanga Province (South Africa).

The study found that the cultivation of a healthy knowledge sharing, and equitable distribution of power relations was compromised by the hierarchical nature (Green & Johns, 2019) of the schools' organogram which is synonymously known for its one-way and autocratic knowledge undertakings (Bush, 2003). It also became apparent that teachers (both senior and novice) did not have reciprocal ground upon which to institute meaningful knowledge sharing transactions.

Unfortunately, this led to a situation whereby senior teachers hoarded their tacit knowledge, citing novice teachers' lack of respect and their show of ICT expediency as a primary reason for them to refrain from transferring their tacit knowledge to them. The root cause was the HODs' lack of consequence management and team building skills as well as failure to establish context specific and mutually agreed upon rules of engagement and Ubuntu processes of social interactions between both parties. In the absence of principals' negligence of their core leadership functions, teachers and HODs, who according to PAM (2016), are not mandated to exercise direct supervision over support staff were found to have subjected administrative clerks to unfair treatment. As such, the noticeable one-way communication approach has made it hard for teachers and administrative clerks to have a voice in knowledge sharing meetings, due to them either being completely ignored or being overruled by their SMTs or a handful of individuals whose inputs are always considered sacrosanct. Exclusionary knowledge sharing and decision-making processes in these educational institutions (Shrifian, 2011) can be attributed to the under whelming interest in promoting knowledge sharing practices across all ecologies of operations (Fullan, 2002; OECD, 2010).

Based on these findings it cannot be disputed that "embarking on the path of sustainable development will require a profound transformation of how [they] think and act" (Rieckmann, 2017, p. 7) towards one another as co-workers. To effectively mitigate the above cited challenges, it is thus recommended that the following aspects be borne in mind by HODs, principals and the rest of the SMTs in both schools:

- Top-down knowledge sharing undertakings must be distilled with bottom up initiatives (Luvalo, 2017; Makambe, 2017) so that there is a fair share of interdependence and inclusivity in the sharing of knowledge among all stakeholders and less authoritative and power mongering tendencies throughout the knowledge sharing value chain of the school.
- There is a need for the appreciation and infusion of context-specific ethics of Ubuntu to restore a climate of interdependence, collective accountability and broad-based knowledge sharing practices among staff.
- Also, the management must obliterate a culture of knowledge hoarding by exploring new methods of knowledge sharing and interpersonal communication (Bilginoglu, 2018).
- Furthermore, as per the recommendation tabled by Harrison, Freeman and Abreu (2015), individuals entrusted with leadership roles (HODs and principals) ought to consider the ethical gravitas of their actions towards those that they lead (p. 859) and move towards participative, adaptive and collegial leadership models.

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