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Knowledge management for poverty eradication: a South African perspective

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to explore poverty issues in South Africa, to investigate some of the key contributions that knowledge management can make in the eradication of poverty and to suggest a strategy of knowledge management for poverty eradication in South Africa.

Design/methodology/approach – This is a conceptual paper. Secondary data sources, in the form of journal articles, policy documents, newspaper articles and the internet, were consulted.

Findings – This paper contributes to the debates on moving towards an integrated poverty strategy that goes beyond reducing poverty by simply raising national income. The paper advocates for a contextualised knowledge management strategy tailored to specific poverty intervention projects and communities. It also suggests that a knowledge management strategy will result in permanent investment in knowledge and the human development of people.

Research limitations/implications – Given that this is a conceptual paper, the paper recommends empirical future studies that will implement this strategy within specific poverty-stricken communities in the country.

Practical/implications – The paper raises awareness among policy and decision-makers of the importance of knowledge management as a tool for poverty eradication. In the knowledge economy, knowledge assets – other than the tangible assets of financial capital and local infrastructure – are the prime creator of wealth. It adds to the body of knowledge on knowledge management for poverty eradication by the World Bank and other international organisations.

Social implications – A knowledge management strategy will create an environment in which human development is attained and the minds of the poor are transformed. It will enhance policy formulation and implementation, empower the poor and create a learning organisation.

Originality/value – The paper presents a proposed strategy for knowledge management for poverty eradication in South Africa.

Keywords South Africa, Knowledge management, Human development, Poverty, Communication technologies, Knowledge, Knowledge-based economy, Poverty eradication

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Poverty remains one of the world's greatest challenges, and neither the industrialised nor the resource-rich countries have succeeded in its total eradication. Such eradication remains an integral part of the developmental agendas of individual nation states and of the world at large. Eradication of extreme poverty was goal number one of the millennium development goals (MDGs), which lapsed in 2015, and it is currently goal number 1 of the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) that seek to eliminate poverty by 2030. Knowledge is an essential element for the achievement of the SDGs (World Bank, 2017). Sachs (2005) argues that poverty can be eradicated by 2025 through carefully planned development aid. The

Constitution of South Africa (1996) recognises the importance of eradicating poverty, and, in this regard, Sections 27, 28 and 29 reiterate the rights of access to social security, social services and education. To this end, since 1994, the post-apartheid government has implemented a number of policies, pieces of legislation, plans and strategies to deal with poverty, ranging from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (African National Congress, 1994) to the National Development Plan, which seeks to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2011, 2013). Some of the policies have been criticised for being top-down handouts and temporary relief measures through the provision of social grants, free houses and free social services, which, taken together, have resulted in a perpetual dependency mentality (Williams, 2006; Moyo, 2014). In addition, some of the policies do not provide for monitoring and evaluation of the poor in terms of who they are or in terms of the trends in poverty, and there is also a lack of an interdisciplinary analysis of poverty and a lack of a link between poverty assessment and other instruments of planning (Maxwell and Conway, 2000; Mbuli, 2008). Above all, ineffective knowledge-sharing and the lack of proper coordination among government agencies in pursuit of effective problem-solving remains a challenge.

As the debate around moving towards an integrated poverty strategy in the knowledge economy continues, emphasis is being placed on the role of knowledge management for poverty eradication (World Bank, 1998; World Bank, 2007; United Nations Development Organisation UNDP, 2014). A World Bank "Voices of the Poor" study based on interviews with 60,000 men and women concluded that people want access to knowledge and opportunities, rather than charity, to fight poverty (Nath, 2000). This paper explores poverty eradication within the context of knowledge management and advocates for a contextualised strategy tailored to specific poverty intervention projects and communities. It raises awareness among policy- and decision-makers as to the importance of knowledge management as a tool for poverty eradication. To consolidate the line of thought, secondary data sources, in the form of journal articles, policy documents and newspaper articles, were consulted along with internet sources.

The key research objectives for this article are:

- to explore poverty issues in South Africa;
- to investigate some of the key contributions that knowledge management can make in the eradication of poverty; and
- to suggest a strategy of knowledge management for poverty eradication in South Africa.

The first section defines poverty and provides an understanding of poverty within the South African context. This is followed by an overview of poverty issues in South Africa. The third section presents an overview of knowledge management. The fourth section presents a review of literature on knowledge management strategies for poverty eradication. The final section provides a knowledge management strategy for poverty eradication in South Africa.

What is poverty?
Poverty is a relative, multidimensional concept that has evolved over time but that has no single, universally accepted definition. Its meaning varies from context to context and from country to country. It is generally viewed from an absolute (objective or extreme), relative (social) or social exclusion perspective. The definition of "absolute poverty" has evolved from the definition traditionally used by the World Bank and the United Nations and which refers to the lack of basic or minimal necessities for survival, such as food, shelter, clothing

and other essential commodities, including health and education (World Bank, 1993, p. 130). Relative poverty, on the other hand, is defined based on an explicit socially constructed belief about the inability of individuals, households, families or entire communities to attain a minimum and socially acceptable standard of living (Machado, 2006). The main measurement of relative poverty is the income needed for a family to survive at a given time (Bradshaw, 2006). In relative terms, individuals are considered poor when their financial position compares unfavourably with an average living standard in society. While absolute poverty is considered easy to eradicate, relative poverty is persistent and systemic and is spoken of in terms of "alleviation". The social exclusion perspective of poverty goes beyond insufficient material resources to include issues of human rights, security, denial of choices and opportunities and violation of human dignity. It is also viewed in terms of persistent and systemic multiple social exclusion and deprivation (Stilwell, 2011; Khumalo, 2013; Stilwell, 2016). Terms such as "incompetence", "meaninglessness", "exploitation", "conflicting values", "inequality" and "underdevelopment" are related to social exclusion (Gharajedghi, 1986; Sachs, 2005; Stilwell, 2011).

As in the case of the complex definition of "poverty", the parameters and standards for its measurement vary from the use of income levels, to poverty lines, human development indexes and the Gini coefficient, among others. Absolute or extreme poverty is measured at an "international poverty line" indicator of US$1.25/day, calculated at 2005 rates and adjusted for purchasing power parity. On the other hand, the UNDP (2015a, 2015b) uses the Human Poverty Index to measure poverty by focussing on the proportion of people in a country who fall below the threshold levels of life expectancy, adult literacy, education and purchasing power parity. Poverty is also measured using the Gini coefficient, which measures inequality according to a number between 0 and 1, where 0 indicates total equality and 1 indicates total inequality; therefore, the higher the coefficient, the greater the inequality. South Africa's Gini coefficient is calculated to be approximately 0.65 (based on expenditure data per capita, excluding taxes) and 0.69 (based on income data per capita, including salaries, wages and social grants).

South Africa does not have a standard definition or measurement of poverty. The "Towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy for South Africa" discussion document (2008) defines poverty as a deficiency in an individual's socio-economic capabilities. Its manifestations include a lack of income and a lack of access to basic services, assets, information, social networks or social capital; it also has a non-material dimension. The non-material dimension referred to in the above definition indicates that poverty in South Africa is not confined to a lack of income – quantified and minimised in monetary terms – but is viewed from a multidimensional perspective, which includes characteristics such as social exclusion, inequality, seasonal and chronic poverty. The inequality perspective on poverty is evident in the country's steady rise in the Human Development Index (HDI) value since 1990, indicating an increase in the rate of inequality. In terms of the HDI, South Africa is above the expected average of 0.630 in the human development category and above the average of 0.518 for countries in sub-Saharan Africa – placing it at 116 out of 188 countries (UNDP, 2015a, 2015b). Seasonal factors such as natural disasters, weather patterns and economic shock are transient conditions that result in poverty. However, poverty may also be chronic, with successive generations being affected by its vicious cycle. There are also many who exit poverty in one period and later re-enter poverty because of life-course events and unanticipated negative occurrences (Dang et al., 2011).

Since 2012, the country has been measuring poverty on the basis of the following three categories: the food poverty line (FPL), the lower-bound poverty line (LBPL) and the upper-bound poverty line (UBPL). The FPL is the level of consumption below which individuals

are unable to purchase sufficient food to provide them with an adequate diet. The LBPL includes non-food items but requires that individuals sacrifice food to obtain these, while individuals at the UBPL can purchase both adequate food and non-food items. The rand value of each line is updated annually by using the consumer price index data. In 2014, the FPL in South Africa stood at R400, the LBPL was R554 and the UBPL was R753 (Nicolson, 2015). It is positive to note that in 2014, the UBPL indicated a drop in poverty from 46.2 to 39 per cent [Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2014)]. This is largely due to the poverty intervention measure of the provision of grants, as well as free basic services and taxes favouring the poor (Nicolson, 2015).

Poverty issues in South Africa
Although statistical records indicate that the country has experienced better economic growth post-1994, poverty is still pervasive in South Africa, where 12 million people live in extreme poverty. Also, 21.7 per cent of South Africans live in extreme poverty, not being able to pay for basic nutritional requirements; 37 per cent of people do not have enough money to purchase both adequate food items and non-food items; and 53.8 per cent of people survive on under R779 per month (Nicolson, 2015).

Poverty in the country may be partly attributed to the systemic exclusion and deprivation of groups resulting from the structural legacies of apartheid, partly to a manifestation of laziness that has resulted in a vicious cycle of black poverty and also the lack of political will and leadership in the post-apartheid regime in bringing about meaningful changes. The NPC Diagnostic Overview (2013) revealed that unemployment and education are historical disadvantages that continue to dominate the fight against poverty in South Africa.

The groups mostly affected by poverty in South Africa are the inhabitants of rural areas, female-headed households, the disabled, retrenched farm workers, members of the black race, children, youth, the elderly and those affected with HIV/AIDS (Manuel, 2004; Triegaardt, 2006; Stilwell and Munyua, 2009; Moyo, 2014; Viljoen and Sekhampu, 2013; Statistics SA, 2017a). Most of the unemployed youth (50.7 per cent) are those within the age group of 18-24 with no formal education (Stats SA, 2014). Furthermore, the correlation between youth unemployment and education attainment reflects a mismatch between the type of skills provided to the youth by the education system and the skills that are needed in the labour market (Ashourne, 2016). For example, Mahlakoana (2018) observed that the poor quality of education has resulted in a skills mismatch and an unemployment rate of 7 per cent among university graduates and 33 per cent among Technical Vocational Education and Training college graduates.

Although President Zuma, in his address during the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September 2016 in New York, reported that South Africa has attained Goal 2 of the MDGs in providing access to primary education for all (Dlamini, 2016), universal education has not translated into quality education. Also, 60 per cent of children cannot read at even a basic level by the end of Grade 4 (Janson, 2016). South Africa was ranked last out of 50 countries in a 2016 study on grade four reading (Radebe, 2018). A small percentage of schools have functional libraries which are supposed to promote literacy, although the availability of libraries does not mean the presence of resources in such libraries. The South African Government has acknowledged the shortcomings of the educational system and has made a public commitment to its reform through stakeholder engagements aimed at fostering inclusive education (Radebe, 2018). These stakeholder engagements and collaborations may be seen as a positive step in the right direction

towards knowledge management, as they will provide a platform for effective knowledge-sharing, which, so far, has been lacking in the policy formulation.

An overview of knowledge management

Knowledge management involves capturing, creating, distilling, sharing and using know-how. Data, information and knowledge are crucial in the discourse of knowledge management research. Knowledge may be tacit or explicit (Polanyi, 1966). Tacit knowledge (or know-how) is knowledge "in the head of the people", while explicit knowledge is articulated, documented and stored. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) observed that tacit knowledge is produced and acquired when employees interact during training, education, workshops, seminars, storytelling, mentoring and apprenticeships. In rural areas, tacit knowledge exists in the form of indigenous knowledge and is a crucial resource for preserving valuable heritage, learning new things, solving problems, creating core competences and initiating new situations for individuals and organisations, both now and in the future (Liao, 2003). Knowledge may also be individual, organisational, social and cultural. Social knowledge is inherent in the collective actions of a group of people working together and is dependent on the social context in which they belong (McDermott, 1999). Cultural knowledge is practical, intellectual, spiritual and unwanted knowledge or small talk or past time knowledge (Machlup 1980; Choo, 2002). For the purposes of this paper, knowledge is defined as a high-value form of information combined with experience, context, interpretation, intuition and creativity, plus the ability to use the information to act or innovate and to apply it to decisions and subsequent actions.

As in the case of knowledge, the definition of "knowledge management" is replete with different perspectives, reflecting the diversity of the concept and its definitional antiquity. Such perspectives may include technological, social or people, individual or personal, organisational, processes and business perspectives (Fombad, 2016). Knowledge management strategies enable organisations to convert information and data to relevant knowledge that will meet the organisational objectives (Hovland, 2003). Codification and personalisation are the two major knowledge management strategies (Hansen *et al.*, 1999). Generally, an information and knowledge audit is the first step in designing and implementing a knowledge management programme (Leung *et al.*, 2010).

People, as well as processes and their associated technologies, are major enablers of knowledge management. Knowledge management is about managing the relationships between people and how organisational structures, process teams, leaders and culture affect the people who implement knowledge management processes as part of their work.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are at the centre of knowledge management and help to retrieve the varieties of explicit and tacit information and knowledge embodied in systems. ICTs expedite knowledge management and are integrated with the way in which people work. Examples are collaborative technologies, data warehouses, knowledge repositories, best practices, document management, knowledge portals, intelligent tools, expert profiles, visualisation software, content management systems, online questions and answers, customer help desks, discussion forums, benchmarking, search and retrieval software and collaboration and project workspaces. Knowledge management systems are a class of information systems that are applied to facilitate the capture, storage, retrieval, transfer and re-use of organisational knowledge (Alavi and Leidner, 2001). Studies on knowledge management for poverty eradication have focussed on the use of ICTs and knowledge systems (Zakota, 2011; Ajakaiye and Olusola, 2003; Marker *et al.*, 2002).

Knowledge management processes are interdependent, intertwined, continuous and dynamic processes involving knowledge discovery, creation, sharing, storage, retrieval, transfer utilisation and application (Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Bhatt 2005; Grover and Davenport, 2001; Grey, 1999)

Knowledge management literature refers to informal and personal techniques of knowledge management.

The most widely recognised informal technique of knowledge management is communities of practice (CoPs). These are informal groups of people from all levels and functions in the organisation who share a common area of expertise and/or who are searching for solutions to common problems (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Lave and Wenger (1991) described CoP amongst midwives, tailors, naval quartermasters, butchers and alcoholics. Knowledge and skills are produced and disseminated through conversations and networking activities supported by CoPs. Other techniques include conversations by water coolers (Webber, 1993) and tutoring and mentoring (Skyrme, 2002). Knowledge networks are formal techniques of knowledge management that consist of formal teams, alliances, groups of colleagues or partnerships with people from various organisations, positions and spheres of influence, all brought together by electronic interaction, such as chat rooms, to hold "best practice" sessions, work on projects, foster learning and solve problems (Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Apostolou and Mentzas, 1999, p. 134).

The World Bank Institute's (2013) practical manual for knowledge management on poverty eradication includes the following techniques:

- CoP;
- knowledge jams (conversations between the doers and the knowers);
- conferences;
- multiple stakeholder dialogue;
- expert visits;
- upcoming community events;
- lessons learnt;
- storytelling;
- after-action reviews;
- collecting best practices;
- knowledge centres, such as libraries and information centres;
- building a repository;
- research and development; and
- monitoring and evaluating projects and programmes.

The next section reviews some of the frameworks and techniques for knowledge management for poverty eradication drawn from international organisations and scholars and that will form the basis for developing a technique for knowledge amendment for poverty eradication in South Africa.

Knowledge management strategies for poverty eradication

The knowledge-based economy model of the World Bank (2007) is relevant in understanding the concept of knowledge management for poverty eradication. This model identifies the pillars of the knowledge economy as knowledge and innovation-related

systems, a country's educated and skilled labour base, modern information and telecommunications infrastructure and overall business and governance framework. Knowledge is key to human capacity development and economic, social and environmental sustainability (Rooney *et al.*, 2008). In the knowledge economy, knowledge is generated, processed and made available to all members of the society to improve the human condition (Ali and Avdic, 2015).

A framework on knowledge management for poverty eradication in the Caribbean has been advanced by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. It addresses the design of community projects to support sustainable development and considers knowledge inputs or assets, knowledge management processes and tools, the foundation or pillars on which these elements should be built. In addition, it pays regard to the surrounding environment and sees the role of stakeholders – and the necessary monitoring and evaluation considerations.as key to poverty eradiation (ECLAC, 2010).

The International Federation for African Development (IFAD) (IFAD, 2007) strategy for knowledge management for poverty eradication has four strategic components: strengthening knowledge-sharing and learning processes; equipping IFAD with a more supportive knowledge-sharing and learning infrastructure; fostering partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning; and promoting a supportive knowledge-sharing and learning culture.

A UNDP programme, known as the GEF Small Grants Programme (UNDP, 2012), pioneered innovative community-based approaches to knowledge management by capturing lessons; conducting knowledge exchanges; organising training workshops; establishing and nurturing networks; and working with the government in achieving national environmental priorities. Hess (2006) proposed a four-knowledge network group in rural development as a global donor platform for rural development comprising of the Swiss Centre for Agriculture Extension and Rural Development, the African Forum on Rural Development and the African Knowledge Network, which provides a platform for farmers, practitioners, researchers and donor agencies to share their experiences and knowledge. This network group facilitates knowledge-sharing

Cortez *et al.* (2011) affirmed Grey's (1999) categories of knowledge management – the process of knowledge discovery, knowledge-sharing, knowledge creation and knowledge utilisation – as a framework for developing effective knowledge management practices in the African context. ECLAC (2010) identified six highly intertwined and dynamic processes of knowledge management for poverty eradication as locating, capturing, creating, sharing, applying and storing knowledge (ECLAC, 2010). Ali and Avdic (2015) considered elements such as identified stakeholders, rural development categories and knowledge management systems as a framework for sustainable rural development. Liu and Makoto (2010) presented a knowledge-sharing development framework for the integration of various types of resources to help farmers connect with the market.

Chantarasombat *et al.* (2010) developed a five-stage knowledge process model for creating self-reliant communities in Thailand, consisting of preparation; creating, motivating and promoting participation; developing a knowledge management plan; and implementing the plan and evaluating the process. The bottom line of this model is the creation of groups forged on common interest in a knowledge area.

Some challenges in knowledge management for poverty eradication are ensuring that the right information and knowledge are produced and delivered in the right format to a wide range of stakeholders, building on existing indigenous knowledge, strengthening capacity and taking a realistic approach to technologies (Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) 2016). Other possible challenges include too little or too much

information or data; lack of information and knowledge on key areas such as strategic project management; project planning; monitoring and evaluation; systematisation of lessons learnt; and geographical and language barriers (Mikolajuk, 2011). Chantarasombat *et al.* (2010) identified leadership, culture and technology as the key success factors for knowledge management. Knowledge management governance provides for measurement, monitoring and evaluation of the strategies in the long and medium term to ensure that the objectives and benefits are achieved. Measurement may be undertaken using a balanced scorecard approach (Kaplan and Norton, 1996), perception (Tallon *et al.*, 2000), return-on-investment calculations and by benchmarking knowledge management activities (O'Dell *et al.*, 2000)

ICTs are critical enablers for knowledge management for poverty eradication. ICTs are a convenient means to promote access to learning, health information and communication with peers and family (Selwyn *et al.*, 2003). Hamilton (2013) observed that farmers need to connect to new markets, entrepreneurs need to find capital to start businesses and health workers need access to research to provide up-to-date care to patients. ICTs were used by the Chamorro people to preserve, capture, distribute and convey cultural knowledge (Nicolas-Rocca and Parrish, 2013). A case study of a six-month ICT training course called the RIGHT programme in Sarawak, Malaysia, was conducted with a group of RIGHT graduates to investigate the roles of knowledge practices in empowering rural youth with skills and experiences to move to the labour market.

CoPs knowledge nodes, mentoring, knowledge centres and other social networks may provide an essential platform for knowledge creation and participation by the poor. The FAO has established a community of practice on food loss reduction amongst nations (FAO, 2016). Mikolajuk (2011) observed that a network of knowledge-sharing among known community-based knowledge nodes (offices/centres) can provide direct access to knowledge resources to diverse groups of users around the world and package these resources in the format and language appropriate to local context. Mikolajuk (2011) posits that by using the right language and context, most black local business individuals in South Africa lack the strong information literacy skills needed for using ICTs effectively (Mason and Tembo, 2015), as well as the right media (text, images, animations, voice and video). Most black local business individuals in South Africa lack the strong information literacy skills needed for using ICTs effectively (Mason and Tembo, 2015), and people with little education can access and share the knowledge they need. Mchombu (2014) observed that mentoring sessions between the commercial farmers and communal farmers in Namibia fostered knowledge-sharing and empowered poor farmers. Similar knowledge communities are the Swiss Centre for Agriculture Extension and Rural Development, the African Forum on Rural Development and the African Knowledge Network, which devised a platform for farmers, practitioners, researchers and donor agencies to share their experiences and knowledge (Prynoy, 2004).

Proposed strategy for knowledge management for poverty eradication
This section draws from the various causes of poverty considered in this paper and the frameworks on poverty reviewed in the preceding sections to suggest a technique for knowledge management for poverty reduction in South Africa. It advocates for a contextualised intervention, tailored to specific poverty projects and involving communities with similar knowledge areas. In Thailand, for example, knowledge management has moved from organisations to community settings, and community leaders motivate and develop projects to empower the community, reduce poverty and promote self-learning (Yammill and McLean, 2010). As Raditloaneng (2009) observes, there cannot be universal

solutions to problems in diverse global populations. This strategy claims that knowledge management for poverty projects should focus on, among other things, specific groups and interventions such as black small businesses, the unemployed youth, the unskilled youth, equality in education, women and rural development. The strategy advocates that a knowledge management centre, a knowledge audit, knowledge creation and knowledge-sharing and utilisation processes, supported by enabling factors such as ICT leadership, institutional frameworks and learning organisation, which are subject to measurement and evaluation, will result in poverty eradication and a knowledge economy as a sustainable development, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The first step in a knowledge management technique for poverty eradication in South Africa is the creation of a knowledge management centre for poverty reduction. The centre should be led by a chief knowledge officer. Similar centres have been created by IFAD (2013), the World Bank (2003) and the International Poverty Reduction Centre in China (2004). There is also the Knowledge Management Institute in Thailand (Liu and Makoto, 2010). The knowledge management centre for poverty reduction will serve as a national hub for knowledge and information exchange on poverty. It will further serve as a coordinating body for forums, workshops and conferences that explore the dynamics of poverty and knowledge management in the country.

An information and knowledge audit on the specific poverty project or intervention will determine the trend of the project and identify its information and knowledge needs, as well as its resources and knowledge flows. There is a general lack of information on the poor: who they are; where they live; why they are poor; and what the best way to overcome the problem of poverty and inequality would be (May, 2000). A knowledge audit per poverty project may be one of the possible ways of addressing this challenge.

The knowledge processes of knowledge creation, sharing and utilisation are interconnected, recursive, expanding and discontinuous processes that form part of this technique. Knowledge creation will seek to capture the tacit and explicit knowledge base of a specific disadvantaged group. Tacit knowledge creation may take the form of tapping into the rich cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge in every community. As
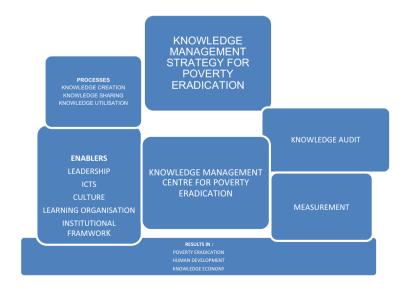
Mikolajuk (2011) observes, tacit knowledge identifies new entrepreneurial opportunities and advance local businesses. Explicit knowledge in communities may be created by accessing specific materials and knowledge resources such as developmental projects, government materials and global information, as well as by transforming, translating, localising and contextualising such material into knowledge presentations that are appropriate for the community.

Given the challenges to poverty eradication, knowledge creation may take the form of skills development and training, research into poverty issues and education and learning. This is imperative, given South Africa's current challenges around the quality of education, the high rate of unemployment amongst the youth and the low levels of entrepreneurial skills. One of South Africa's anti-poverty strategy documents reiterates that human resource development, in particular in education and skills development, will play a significant role in preventing the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Discussion document, 2008).

Knowledge may be created through enhancing literacy skills such as information literacy, computer literacy, library instruction media literacy, network literacy, cultural literacy and visual literacy skills. These skills are benchmarks for human development that will facilitate the accessibility of information for poverty reduction (Subotzky and Prinsloo, 2011; UNDP, 2015a, 2015b). A 2012 survey revealed that one of the major causes of youth unemployment – resulting in poverty – was a lack of information for acquiring appropriate skills (Manpower Group, 2012). Most black local business individuals in South Africa lack the strong information literacy skills needed for using ICTs effectively (Mason and Tembo, 2015; OECD, 2011). Therefore, in line with UNESCO (2003), ICT literacy should be promoted through training programmes that teach people to locate and evaluate the quality of information, to store and retrieve information, to make effective use and ethical use of information and to apply information to create and communicate knowledge. As Vong et al. (2017) posit, the knowledge and skills acquired from ICT training will enable the youth to expand their social and professional growth and equip them through knowledge utilisation in employment in such a way that they, in turn, will share their knowledge to educate their communities. Entrepreneurial skills may be acquired from teamwork and brainstorming (Anumnu, 2014; Adepoju and Adedeji, 2012). These skills include creative, innovative, managerial, analytical, marketing, communicative and career skills (Idowu 2004; Adepoju and Adedeji 2012).

The poor members of the community should be able to create knowledge by researching the solutions to their problems. Research into poverty issues in the country will generate knowledge that will result in poverty eradication. South Africa should be able to address and solve its own problems by means of locally generated knowledge and research and development facilities. A conference entitled "Being Poor Matters" was held by the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development, a partnership between the Presidency of South Africa and the EU (Skyrme and Amidon, 1997).

Given the causes of poverty in the country, this strategy also advocates for knowledge acquisition through education and learning. The current Minister of Basic Education describes the education system in South Africa at present as a "national catastrophe". She posits that there are still two education systems in the country – one where there is high performance and pockets of excellence and another which is deprived of resources and has pockets of disaster (South African education a national catastrophe, 2016). Knowledge management practices in education provide the foundation for skills and competencies that are necessary to find jobs (Campagnoni, 2016). The Jordanian Education Initiative improved the delivery of education in Jordan through public–private partnerships, fostered innovation among teachers and students through the effective use of ICT and building of the capacity of

the local information technology industry (ECLAC, 2010). In Ecuador, for example, knowledge management focusses on building a society that learns how to learn, promoting the emergence of an emancipatory education that fosters creativity and solidarity, as well as the development of learning skills and intelligence throughout their lives (Muñoz *et al.*, 2014).

Knowledge-sharing techniques such as mentoring, CoP, knowledge centres and communication forums will enable the knowledge created to be shared. A community of practice provides an opportunity for specific groups of those affected by poverty and who have the same knowledge and interests to come together and search for solutions to their common problems with dignity. It is only through the sharing of information and knowledge that young people can gain transparent access to the labour market (Manpower Group, 2012). The various poor communities should be made aware of the availability of knowledge centres and knowledge nodes and of their rights to benefit from both country-specific and global knowledge resources. For example, in China, a knowledge platform was developed to share knowledge about ecological rabbit breeding (Liu and Makoto, 2010). According to Chantarasombat *et al.* (2010), a knowledge management centre should be created for each project intervention and should serve as a driver for groups to meet and share knowledge, and this will foster creation and development of a local knowledge industry.

Communication forums directed at the poor may be powered by word of mouth, visual material, dramas, games, cultural interaction, networks and conferences (Mchombu, 2014). Small businesses should also be able to capture and share tacit and explicit knowledge local to the community (Cortez *et al.*, 2011).

It is only when the knowledge is acquired and shared that sustainable development and poverty eradication will result, and this is referred to as knowledge utilisation. Knowledge utilisation depends on the users' ability to not only acquire and assimilate knowledge but also recognise the value of new knowledge and to use it (Daghfous, 2003).

Leadership, ICTs, institutional frameworks, culture and learning organisations are enabling prerequisites for knowledge management projects for poverty reduction to flourish. Each knowledge management project should have a leader to champion the process. Similar to the suggestions of Chantarasombat *et al.* (2010), a project may have a knowledge manager, a facilitator, a network manager and note taker with functions clearly defined.

ICTs will provide unprecedented opportunities to combat poverty by communicating relevant information that can help individuals to create opportunities and improve their access to basic services (World Bank, 2000; Moodley, 2005). Mchombu (2012) reported that poor illiterate women in Bangladesh obtained market information through cell phone technology and this empowered them in their egg business. Community radio stations, as another example, are suitable ICT channels by means of which the poor can participate in decision-making and receive local information on issues such as nutrition, hygiene, habitat, economic engagement and primary health-care standards (Fombad and Jiyane, 2016). The use of technologies for knowledge management – in education, for example – will transform processes and systems and thus improve information flow (Beidelman, 2015). Notwithstanding the importance of ICTs, challenges such as affordability, accessibility and a lack of literacy skills persist.

In line with the knowledge-based economy model of the World Bank (2007), a country's overall business and governance framework is relevant for poverty eradication. South Africa does have several enabling polices on poverty eradication in place. Examples are the Expanded Public Works Programme (2004); Integrated Sustainable Rural Development

Programme (2006); and the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (2006). However, considering the top-down approach according to which these polices are developed, implementation remains a challenge. It is important to engage with the poor at the outset to ensure that policies are developed bottom-up, rather than in the form of top-down, handout measures introduced by rich and affluent decision-makers who know nothing about poverty. Lessons learned from skill experience and participatory learning will facilitate the formulation and implementation of polices. (IFAD, 2007; Yamnill and McLean, 2010). Engaging the poor in policy formulation and the decision-making process will enhance the participatory approach to development espoused in Section 26 of the Constitution, 1996. A knowledge management policy that provides for monitoring and evaluation of the poor in terms of who they are and in terms of trends in poverty is lacking from the poverty policies in the country, and it is imperative that this matter be addressed. Tanga (2014) observed that the poor people in a community are disempowered and need to be empowered by deciding what is best for them, rather than simply being presented with a solution or project for adoption. The leadership of the country should be willing to support policies directed towards knowledge management.

Learning organisation is already evident in the country in the form of massive investment in research and development, acquisition of ICTs and a variety of projects. Nonetheless, learning and lessons learned should be prioritised in all poverty community intervention projects to build on and learn from the knowledge and skills of all involved. Communities should be encouraging people to prioritise learning as part of their day-to-day work, by learning before, during and after the tasks and projects performed (Tobin, 1998). As in the study of Chantarasombat et al. (2010), lessons learned through community projects should be used in the solving of problems to create an appropriate body of knowledge. To foster learning, errors made by organisations in any project should not recognised as failures, but as sources of information. Members involved in a project should be willing to discuss past experiences and promote new knowledge. Given the challenges, and the timid nature of small black businesses in the country, as already observed, it is imperative for businesses to be learning organisations. As Clarke (2003) posits, for knowledge management to be applied effectively in small businesses in Africa, businesses should become learning organisations.

The effectiveness of this strategy can be ascertained when a poverty project is measured and evaluated. A monitoring and evaluation strategy should be developed for each project to evaluate and report on the levels, patterns and trends of poverty as part of the anti-poverty programme. Such a strategy should also design assessments that will generate conclusive evidence in assisting policy-makers regarding poverty eradication. The British Standards institution approach (BSI, 2003), Sveiby's (2002) intangible assets monitor and the reference model (Botha and Fouche, 2002) are sample metrics for the assessment of the outcomes of knowledge management practices that may be adopted for this technique.

Conclusion

This paper presents a strategy for poverty eradication in South Africa and argues that poverty eradication should be approached step-by-step by way of a project-specific community intervention in the current knowledge-based economy. It examines some of the key contributions that knowledge management can make in the eradication of poverty and suggests that knowledge management will result in permanent investment in knowledge and the human development of people. The paper recommends empirical future studies to implement this strategy among specific poverty-stricken communities and projects in the country. Given the strong connection between poverty and education and the poor quality of

education in the country, it recommends that a starting point for the implementation of this strategy should be knowledge management and quality education. This paper contributes to the debates on moving towards a poverty strategy that goes beyond reducing poverty by simply raising national income, as the latter strategy has resulted in a vicious cycle of laziness and dependency by the poor. In the context of this paper, the adage "an investment in knowledge pays the best interest" may be changed to "an investment in knowledge reduces poverty". Knowledge management for poverty eradication will create an environment in which human development is attained and the minds of the poor are transformed.

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