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A framework for knowledge retention to support business continuity in the cross-border mergers of the telecommunications industry in Lesotho

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to investigate a framework for knowledge retention to support business continuity in cross-border mergers of the telecommunications industry in Lesotho.

Design/methodology/approach – This study applied a qualitative case study, with data collected through interviews from a purposively selected sample of staff members who held managerial positions. Information in this study was partially extracted from the PhD thesis of Dr Tseole ET supervised by Prof Ngulube P at the University of South Africa completed in 2021.

Findings – The study discovered that a considerable amount of knowledge may have been lost because employees who either left the organisation or those who were apparently forced to resign during the process had left without any proper knowledge retention arrangements.

Research limitations/implications – The framework proposed in this study may be used in framing future studies as a theoretical framework. The study also provides new literature for review and discussion of background in future related studies.

Practical implications – The framework provided in the study may be used as a benchmark in the knowledge management industry and/or organisations for policy development or improvements and implementation of knowledge retention strategies.

Social implications – Through recommendations and framework provided by this study, organisations will be able to improve their services to their sphere of influence in the surrounding communities. So, community will be receiving an improved and good service at all the times.

Originality/value – A framework for facilitating knowledge retention in the cross-border mergers of the telecommunications industry is therefore proposed and the researchers believe it will be helpful to the organisation for improving knowledge retention going forward, particularly in the merger process.

Keywords Mergers, Knowledge, Post-merger, Knowledge acquisition, Knowledge retention, Telecommunications industry

Paper type Research paper

Information in this study was partially extracted from the PhD thesis of Dr Tseole ET supervised by Prof Ngulube P at the University of South Africa completed in 2021.

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Introduction and background

Knowledge should be retained because it is an asset that supports and sustains business continuity and productivity. This study investigated knowledge retention (KR) in cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho to develop a framework for its retention. Knowledge retention, also known as knowledge continuity, refers to the storing of knowledge within the organisation so that it can be retrieved and used at a later stage (Motshegwa, 2017; Sumbal *et al.*, 2017; Wikström *et al.*, 2018; Sumbal *et al.*, 2018; Sumbal *et al.*, 2020; Levallet and Chan, 2019). Knowledge retention is an aspect of knowledge management (KM), which is concerned with ensuring that the organisation does not lose the knowledge that is embedded in the minds of employees who leave the organisation from time to time (Agarwal and Islam, 2015; Nair and Munusami, 2019; Annosi *et al.*, 2021). For instance, employees may leave an organisation for different reasons such as retirement, death, dismissal or resignation due to new employment opportunities (greener pastures).

The knowledge-based view of the firm states that the key to an organisation's competitive advantage lies in its inimitable amalgamation of physical, organisational and human assets (Wernerfelt, 1984; Castro *et al.*, 2011; Chen *et al.*, 2016; Farooq, 2019; Butt *et al.*, 2020; Issah, 2020; Safari and Saleh, 2020). Specifically, for an asset to qualify to be a source of sustained competitive advantage, it needs to be valuable, exceptional and complex to surrogate. Organisations need to put in place different mechanisms aimed at retaining critical knowledge before people possessing it can leave (Adobor *et al.*, 2019). Tung-Ching *et al.* (2016), Levallet and Chan (2019), Ensslin *et al.* (2020) and Houghton (2021) concur with Peterson (2012) and suggest that due to the importance of knowledge in affording organisations a competitive edge, organisations have a duty to identify, secure, manage, transfer, exploit, diffuse and retain important knowledge. Knowledge retention may be accomplished using the multiplicity of knowledge retention strategies including mentoring, exit interviews, communities of practice (CoPs), job shadowing, storytelling and job rotation (Malinski, 2002; Colon-Aguirre, 2015; Jeske and Linehan, 2020; Crhová and Matošková, 2019; Houghton, 2021).

Furthermore, Dei and Van der Walt (2020) opine that it is essential for organisations to shift their attention to KR practices and strategies, as well as channelling their knowledge with the sole purpose of exploiting their intellectual capital. Knowledge retention practices are normally referred to as those actions performed that are meant to augment the internal flow of knowledge within the organisation (Mavodza and Ngulube, 2011; Tseole, 2016; Manamela, 2018; Mat Nor *et al.*, 2020).

To remain cut-throat, numerous organisations around the world have merged with each other to expand their business, to access innovative technologies and to increase their profits (Vazirani, 2015). A merger is defined as the amalgamation of more than one organisation, whereby the assets belonging to those organisations are immersed (Scott, 2003; Berrioategortua *et al.*, 2018; Bodner and Capron, 2018). After the merger, these organisations become one legal entity (Scott, 2003; Alao, 2010). According to Tang (2016), mergers and acquisition (M&A) activities have been clustered throughout numerous waves or epochs. An acquisition happens when one organisation buys the assets of another organisation, a division or even the whole organisation (Scott, 2003; Tang, 2016; Lundqvist *et al.*, 2019). Carson (2021) argues that acquisitions are more hostile in nature than mergers because they no power balance. According to Haye (2021), the only distinguishing factor between a merger and an acquisition relates to whether or not the deal is hostile or friendly and also how it is announced, particularly to the organisation's board of director, staff members and the shareholders. DePamphilis (2009) opines that six M&A waves took place starting from the 1980s and each wave lasted between two to eight years.

In most studies, including this study, the terms "mergers" and "acquisitions" are mentioned together and the reason in this study is that the merging organisations as per the definition above is that the assets of the two organisations were immersed, as opposed to an acquisition where the acquiring organisation acquires the other organisation together with its assets. Tang (2016) notes that during mergers and acquisitions, knowledge transfer and retention are important because they ensure that knowledge is retained, and that it remains with the organisation when employees leave. Nonetheless, Sumbal *et al.* (2018) maintain that for knowledge to create value, this knowledge must circulate in an organisation. The ability to absorb and exploit knowledge is what transforms knowledge into value (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Engelman *et al.*, 2017; Muraliraj *et al.*, 2020). This ability, referred to as absorptive capacity, has been suggested as the most critical determinant of organisational knowledge flows.

For the potential of the mergers to be realised, the capabilities and knowledge regarded as decisive must be transferred to the organisation that does not have them (Casal and Fontela, 2007). However, the transfer and retention of knowledge should be an ongoing process because organisational merger processes are usually characterised by high levels of uncertainty, leading to staff turnover. Frantz (2015) lists five major integration issues in mergers and acquisitions, which include individual uncertainty and ambiguity, organisational politics, voluntary departure of key people and cultural resistance, which are said to be problematic. Mergers and acquisitions also affect the employees' career plans because they lead to forced dismissals, relocations and loss of influence (Rodríguez-Sánchez *et al.*, 2019). Knowledge retention is therefore vital in ensuring that the knowledge of employees leaving the organisation as a result of these challenges of M&As is not lost.

Contextual setting

The contextual setting for the current study is Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL). ETL is an organisation that resulted from the merger between Telecom Lesotho, which was owned by the Government of Lesotho, and Econet Ezi-Cel Lesotho in April 2008. Econet Ezi-Cel Lesotho was a diversified telecommunications group of companies owned privately and it operated on different continents, including Africa, Europe, South America, North America and the East Asia Pacific Rim. The merger between Telecom Lesotho and Econet Ezi-Cel Lesotho has consequently permitted ETL to provide both fixed and mobile services using a single licence (Gillwald *et al.*, 2017). The merger has also allowed ETL to enhance customer contentment by offering the newest services at affordable rates and to draw new clientele with ground-breaking product offerings (Gillwald *et al.*, 2017).

Problem statement

Organisations in the telecommunications industry, like many other organisations, are faced with the risk of knowledge loss as a result of mergers and acquisition. Specifically, tacit knowledge is easily lost because organisational mergers and acquisitions involve complex processes, where critical decisions need to be made, yet this takes place relatively seldom (Milton, 2010; Martins and Martins, 2011; McKinney *et al.*, 2017; Durst and Zieba, 2019; Sumbal *et al.*, 2020). Tacit knowledge is one of the two types of knowledge which is defined as that which consists of intangible qualities and "know-how," and is based on intuition and internalised practices (Park, 2021; Schoenherr *et al.*, 2014). Castaneda and Toulson (2021), Mustafa (2021), Pahani *et al.* (2016) posit that this kind of knowledge is often acquired through personal, face-to-face interactions, such as socialising and networking between participants. Explicit knowledge on the other hand is defined as codified and mostly technical knowledge that communicated through written, print or electronic media (Park, 2021; Schoenherr *et al.*, 2014).

Prior research indicates that employee turnover as a result of M&As is a major driver of knowledge loss within organisations (Winkelen and McDermott, 2008; Martins and Meyer, 2012; Massingham, 2018; Durst and Zieba, 2019; Sumbal *et al.*, 2020). Knowledge is usually lost when older employees leave their job because of M&As (Joe *et al.*, 2013; Sumbal *et al.*, 2020; Levallet and Chan, 2019). Once this valuable tacit knowledge is lost, the performance and productivity of the organisation may also deteriorate, and organisations may also find it more difficult to continue with some or all of their business functions.

The result of losing these employees is that the organisation will also lose much needed and much valued knowledge, the basis of which affords an organisation a competitive edge. The knowledge these departing workers have is significant because it could lead to organisational memory deterioration when these personnel leave. This may ultimately make retrieving this knowledge very difficult (De Massis *et al.*, 2016). Madsen *et al.* (2003), Ranucci and Souder (2016) and Zebal *et al.* (2019) opine that because tacit knowledge is important to the organisation and the way in which staff mobility affects organisational behaviour has become increasingly important. This therefore, points to the significance of this study, particularly of the proposed framework for knowledge retention.

Purpose and research objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate a framework for knowledge retention to support business continuity in the cross-border mergers of the telecommunications industry in Lesotho. The objectives of the study were to:

- find out availability of a knowledge retention policy for knowledge retention;
- establish the knowledge retention practices discharged during the merger process;
- identify knowledge retention strategies used to support business continuity in the cross-border mergers of the telecommunications industry in Lesotho; and
- propose a framework that may be used for retaining knowledge in cross-border mergers of the telecommunications industry in Lesotho, particularly prior to the merger.

Research methodology

This is a qualitative case study that used interviews as instrument for data collection. A qualitative case study was found appropriate for the current study because it provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena in their context (Powell and Connaway, 2004; Yin, 2009; Rashid *et al.*, 2019; Sang *et al.*, 2020). Qualitative data were gathered by means of interviews from the purposively selected staff members who held managerial positions and passed through the whole merger process. The table below presents the characteristics of participants.

The researcher requested to record the interviews and consent was given by all participants. Immediately after the transcription, the data were analysed manually by content analysis.

Findings of the study

This section presents the study findings from the investigation based on the interviews report. The interviews were held with all the participants as tabulated in Table 1.

Knowledge retention policy

The study posed a question to find out if any policy exists that addresses knowledge retention. The study results on the availability of a knowledge management policy as presented in Table 2 shows that no policy existed for the management of knowledge.

As can be seen in Table 2, responses differ, with participants A and C clearly stating the absence of the policy, and participants B and D not being sure of the KM policy’s existence.

However, it may be vital to note that the existence of any organisational policy is normally made known to all employees to enforce it.

Knowledge retention practices during the merger process

The study also posed a question about KM practices as also presented in Tseole (2022) with the intention to determine existence of any knowledge retention practices. This was for the researchers to be sure about whether certain organisational knowledge was retained during the process of organisational merging. However, participants responses appear to be different to researchers' expectations. The participants reported that during the organisational merger there were no techniques or mechanism in place to retain or safeguards the knowledge from the organisations involved in the merging process. The possibilities are that tacit knowledge generated within the merged organisations over the past years may have been lost on the process. Nevertheless, as also reported in Tseole (2022), Participant A indicate that important tacit knowledge was secured from getting lost as quoted verbatim in the following statement:

> *The organisation made sure that the 'star performers' were retained, and the rest of the staff members were interviewed before leaving the organisation.*

Furthermore, it is very imperative to keep in mind that organisational employees generate significant amount of tacit knowledge overtime during their stay within the organisation when discharging their respective job activities and that should contribute to knowledge wealth of the organisation to assist or be used by the future generation of employees in moving the business ahead. However, as Tseole (2022) report Participant B explained in detail to reiterate why he believe that during the merger process some tacit knowledge held within employees might have lost. The report was captured verbatim as follows:

> Things were never handled properly, particularly for people who left as a result of the merger and I am saying this because not even exit interviews were held with them. I even talked to the executive management then, making them aware that whenever people are released from work for a variety of reasons, they are first taken through a process to heal them. So, briefly, nothing was done to retain the knowledge of staff members who left during the merger.

Additionally, Participant C also supported the statement from participant B as captured verbatim below:

Gender	Designation	Classification of respondents
Male	General manager HR	Participant A
Male	Head re-acquisition	Participant B
Male	Head CORE networks	Participant C
Male	Manager, environment, health and safety	Participant D

Table 1. Characteristics of participants

Participant	Response
A	No, we do not have a KM policy
B	As for the policy, I don't think we have one
C	No, I would not say we have that, not to my knowledge
D	For now, I don't remember seeing such a document

Table 2. Existence of KM policy at ETL

> Organisations should always ensure that the process of knowledge retention is always ongoing such that there is no problem when people leave organisations. However, I don't recall that anything has been done to retain the knowledge of staff members who left the organisation during the merger.

Retention strategies for knowledge applied by Econet Telecom Lesotho during the merger

The question about KM strategies was also posed to determine the extent to which knowledge was retained in the pre-merger, during and post-merger stages and to find out the strategies used for retaining that knowledge. Participants A and B identified job rotation as the strategy that was used to retain knowledge. As evidenced in Tseole (2022), responses from participants were recorded in verbatim as follows:

> Our technicians used to be specialists in power, switches and transmission. The rotation of these technicians in these special areas enabled knowledge acquisition and therefore I can say there was job rotation.

However, as also presented by Tseole (2022), participant C appeared to be doubtful about implementation of coaching as a strategy for knowledge retention and whether it was just documented without appropriate implementation, and his verbatim response were as follows:

> I am not sure if it was successful or if it took off in the first place, but I think coaching as knowledge retention strategy did exist.

Moreover, participant D claimed that there were no retention strategies for knowledge during the merger, and his response is presented verbatim as follows:

> There was nothing in as far as knowledge retention strategies are concerned.

Discussion and recommendations

This section provides the discussion and recommendations for the study from the findings based on the objectives.

Knowledge retention policy

Nair and Munusami (2019) postulated that the existence of a knowledge management policy is often thought of as the first and most important step in the institutionalisation of knowledge management in an organisation. Similarly, Detlor *et al.* (2006), Mavodza and Ngulube (2011) as well as Abu-Shanab and Shehabat (2018) suggest that for organisational knowledge to be managed, it is essential to have a knowledge management policy that will be well understood by all staff. Additionally, Makhubela and Ngoepe (2018) suggested that organisations should enforce knowledge retention policies to achieve their strategic objectives. The study findings show that ETL did not have a knowledge management policy which is a basis for institutionalising knowledge management in any organisation. All the participants indicated that no knowledge retention policy existed in the organisation. As the participants in the study was at the higher level, it becomes obvious that indeed there was no policy for knowledge retention. This poses a high risk of officials just operating from common sense or nor implementing knowledge retention at all. It is highly recommended that organisations should develop a knowledge retention policy, train staff regarding it and ensure its implementation through relevant officials employed for that purpose.

Knowledge retention practices during the merger process

All participants held the view that nothing was done to guard against knowledge loss during the merger process, which means that important tacit knowledge might have been lost during this time. Nevertheless, as the star performers were retained according to one of the participants, it means some knowledge might have been retained during the process, but this should have been done to a larger extent if knowledge retention was practiced throughout their stay in the organisation. The same participant mentioned that all the employees were interviewed before leaving as a means of retaining knowledge, which was contradicted by responses from other participants who stated that no interviews were conducted with departing staff. This may not be enough, or it is not the right timing for knowledge retention and exit interviews do not normally serve the purpose of retaining knowledge but instead just checking the feelings of those leaving the organisation and hearing about their future plans. It is important to note that any employee who has been with an organisation for a long period has accumulated a wealth of organisational tacit knowledge that needs to be retained and made available in the future. Organisations must develop policies and strategies for knowledge retention and implement them practically in different situations, including while they are holding their positions and when they exit their job and the organisation. Furthermore, Houghton (2021) affirms that because organisations cannot afford to lose their valuable knowledge, they need to develop and have knowledge retention practices in place to retain knowledge from their employees before they could leave the organisation.

Knowledge retention strategies used by Econet Telecom Lesotho during the merger

Levallet and Chan (2019) explained knowledge retention strategies as different means by which knowledge is transferred from the knower to the organisation so that it can later be retrieved for usage by the knowledge seeker. According to Motshegwa (2017), knowledge retention involves the process of focusing on the important knowledge that the organisation is at the risk of losing. Motshegwa (2017) further argues that ones this process is completed, actionable plans should be established on how that knowledge will be retained. The results of the study are fragmented and contradictory regarding the availability of knowledge retention strategies particularly during the merger process. The organisation had not clearly defined strategies for knowledge retention, except for job rotation and mentorship – but the participants were also uncertain about its existence. Job rotation was somehow implemented as one participant reported. It is very important that organisations develop a knowledge retention strategy document to guide the implementation from time to time to maintain the practice.

Proposed framework for knowledge retention

The development of a framework that may be used in facilitating knowledge retention in cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry was one of the objectives for the current study. The proposed framework is tabulated in Figure 1. This proposed framework suggests linking factors targeted at facilitating knowledge retention in the context of cross-border mergers. The suggested factors include knowledge manager; human resources practices; knowledge acquisition; key factors of knowledge retention in M&As; knowledge management strategies; knowledge retention strategies; the role of ICTs in the knowledge retention process; the organisational culture; and key challenges of knowledge retention in the post-merger period. As can be noted, the suggested factors have been connected to each by arrows showing their interrelatedness (Van der Waldt, 2020). Each of the suggested factors are explained in the next sections.

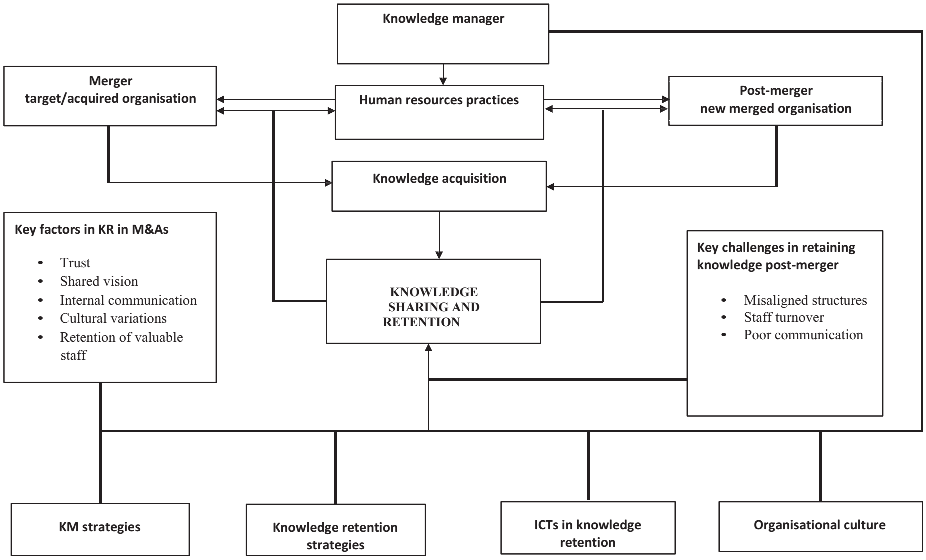

Figure 1.
Framework for knowledge retention in organisational cross-border mergers

Knowledge manager. Knowledge managers are individuals who are given the task of making sure that the knowledge management process is discharged successfully in an organisation. For the knowledge management initiative to be successful, Micic (2015) argues that a knowledge manager should have qualities and skills that enable the creation, sharing and use of knowledge in an organisation. It has been revealed in this study that retaining knowledge is critical in the context of M&As. It is, therefore, suggested that a qualified knowledge manager should be identified and appointed before the start of the exercise to champion it. Hofmann-Fuchtner (2018) establishes that a successful knowledge management initiative does not happen spontaneously, and therefore, someone must take the initiative to see things through. As depicted in Figure 1, the knowledge manager should be appointed in the pre-merger period to lay the required foundation and being a link between all other relevant factors suggested in the proposed framework.

Human resources practices. HRPs are described as a set of logical and consistent organisational practices that are intended to strengthen and support employee skills, motivation and commitment (Elrehail *et al.*, 2019; Cherif, 2020). KM and HRM are two concepts based on people focusing on the creation, use and sharing of knowledge with the knowledge that neither one can be managed without the other (El-Farr and Hosseingholizadeh, 2019; Khawaldeh, 2020).

Knowledge acquisition. Knowledge acquisition, as one of the processes of knowledge management, is described as a process during which employees or an organisation acquire knowledge and apply that knowledge to realise organisational objectives (Kaba and Ramaiah, 2020). Similarly, Mathew (1985); Abdoulaye and Chennupati (2020) argue that knowledge acquisition "is about grasping, integrating, adapting and confirming knowledge for concept formation, clarification, formulating questions or understanding the problem to be solved or reaching conclusions". Thang and Tuan (2020) view knowledge acquisition as an essential activity in the learning cycle because it helps the firm to constantly develop and expand its knowledge base.

In the context of cross-border mergers, knowledge acquisition is described as an organisation learning more about the production, the processes, technologies, management as well as skills and competencies from its partner (Yang *et al.*, 2019). The organisational learning theory states that "a firm is a knowledge system, and the process of acquiring and creating knowledge through inter-organisational learning is the source of a firm's sustainable competitive advantage" (Grant, 1996).

Key factors of knowledge retention in M&As. The key factors of knowledge retention in M&As refer to those factors that facilitate knowledge retention in the M&A context. This study identified the following key factors: trust, a shared vision, internal communication, cultural variations and the retention of valuation staff. Trust means that when organisational employees trust each other, they will be able to share their knowledge which is important for knowledge retention (Ouakouak and Ouedraogo, 2018). According to Pillay *et al.* (2021), trust permits workers to draw on previous experiences and share know-how, thus enabling the externalisation of knowledge. Shared vision is a linking instrument that supports different groups of personnel (Zulkifly *et al.*, 2019).

Shared vision could potentially improve employees' motivation to be actively engaged in the knowledge retention process. Internal communication is assumed to be positively related to employees' motivation and, consequently, can positively influence the knowledge transfer process. Organisational culture is widely assumed to be a success factor for knowledge retention. This means that for knowledge retention to take place, an organisation should create a culture that is conducive for knowledge sharing. Cultural variations mean that when organisations with different cultures are combined, a clash may occur and should be managed. Retention of valuable staff is related to the fact that if knowledgeable staff members are not retained in M&As, valuable knowledge may be lost.

Knowledge sharing and retention. This study proposes that knowledge sharing should be at the centre of the merging process because it enables knowledge retention by ensuring that the knowledge of both the merging partners is retained.

Key challenges in retaining knowledge post-merger. These refer to those factors that inhibit knowledge retention that must be taken into account in the post-merger period and this study identified misaligned structures, staff turnover and poor communication. Misalignment of structures refers to how the restructuring process is accepted by both organisations post the merger. Organisations should ensure that they align themselves to the predetermined strategies to avoid the attrition of talent from their teams as well as the organisation. Therefore, it becomes imperative for organisations to always be aligned to the predetermined strategies. Communication is not only important in the post-merger period but also in the pre-merger period. In the pre-merger period, communication that realistically conveys the key goals and integration plans can alleviate fears and concerns of staff members. With no communication, staff members base their expectations on any information they can find, including rumours (Sarala *et al.*, 2019). It is essential for the acquiring firm to identify who knows what and to retain key employees (McKinney *et al.*, 2017). Nonetheless, conflicts that arise during mergers could lead to employee turnover, which can be a precondition for knowledge loss.

Knowledge management strategies. KMs have proved to be vital for organisations. Organisations undergoing M&As, therefore, should ensure that they implement these strategies. This study identified two types of knowledge management strategies: codification and personalisation. A codification strategy is concerned with obtaining and storing explicit knowledge for use in the future. A personalisation strategy is about people-to-people interaction with the aim of sharing tacit knowledge.

Knowledge retention strategies. Knowledge retention strategies should be implemented or incorporated into the organisation from the beginning, that is, from the time that the employee is recruited into the organisation. The implementation of strategies should ensure that knowledge circulates within the organisation and therefore is not lost in case of any employee departing. Those that have been identified in this study include mentorship, CoPs, job rotation, storytelling and job shadowing.

Information and communication technology in knowledge retention. Technology is at the heart of knowledge retention, and it helps to store and retrieve knowledge embodied in various knowledge management systems, including databases, documents management systems, institutional repositories and others. Such knowledge may be explicit (documented) or tacit (embedded in people's minds).

Organisational culture. Culture is often identified as one of the determining success factors of knowledge retention. Dube and Ngulube (2012) and Mat Nor *et al.* (2020) describe organisational culture as the common assumption espoused by the organisation and this assumption may be visibly and invisibly. In the context of the organisation, culture occurs if there is adequate communal history. Organisations undergoing M&As should ensure that their organisation have a culture that supports knowledge retention.

Looking at the framework, in the implementation of effective knowledge retention and sharing, human resources need to adopt a new practice and they must appoint a suitably qualified and competent knowledge manager. The knowledge manager will take responsibility for knowledge retention and coordinate sharing. In the implementation of knowledge acquisition from both the merger and post-merger organisations for sharing and retention, the knowledge manager will have to study and consider the organisational culture, the ICT used for knowledge retention, the available knowledge retention strategies and knowledge management strategies, together with the key factors. The key factors include trust, shared vision, internal communication, cultural variations and the retention of valuable staff. The knowledge manager must also consider and pay attention to key challenges in retaining knowledge post-merger such as a misaligned structure, staff turnover and poor communication.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, it is hoped that the framework proposed will serve as a benchmark for different organisations in the same situation, not only the one in the study. The study shows very well that knowledge retention is a very critical function and practice for the organisation and it must be taken serious at all times. Otherwise, the organisation will never grow in terms of operational performance and productivity. This is because with initiatives for a new *modus operandi*, like it happens in research with the background statement, an organisation will need to look back on the past and current as to what and how things have been done, what was done well and what were badly done – and must be improved. In this way the organisation will be able to identify aspects that must be improved and practices that need to be maintained. It is vital that policies and strategies are documented to guide employees from generation to generation. Without this, mergers and acquisitions by their turbulent nature, are likely to lead to loss of organisational knowledge if not well managed. This study has implications for both theory and practice. Firstly, the study offers several contributions to literature through the development of a conceptual framework that may be useful in reinforcing knowledge retention in the context of cross-border mergers of the telecommunications industry. This study, however, has some limitations. First, this is a single case study and therefore the results may not be reflective of the general situation. Second, other organisational cross-border mergers have taken place in Lesotho such as the one between the former Lesotho Bank and Standard Bank of South Africa, but as they are not in the telecommunications sector, they will not be covered. However, it would be interesting to also cover this merger to find out if the results from one merger would be applicable to other mergers.

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