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## Knowledge Sharing among Academic Staff in Engineering Colleges: A Survey

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### Abstract

*Knowledge is being seen as the most important strategic resource in organizations and many of this knowledge is considered critical to organizational success. Educational institutions play a major role in knowledge creation. Effective knowledge sharing ensures that academics are able to develop and realize their potential to the fullest. This paper focuses on knowledge sharing among academic staff in both private and aided Engineering Colleges in Kollam District. With the help of a survey-based method, barriers in knowledge sharing are examined. The paper recommends the awareness among academic staff about Knowledge Sharing.*

### Keywords

Knowledge Sharing; Knowledge Management; Academic staff; Engineering Colleges; Internet.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is clearly considered as an essential element in the present ever-changing and complicated environment. It is regarded today as a factor of production together with land, capital and labour. As we are moving towards a knowledge-based economy, knowledge is considered as the main driver of this new economy. Organizations must consider how to transfer expertise and knowledge from experts who have it to novices who need to know.

Organizations need to emphasize and exploit knowledge-based resources that already exist within the organization. Knowledge sharing between employees and within allows organizations to exploit and capitalize on knowledge-based resources. Because of the potential benefits from knowledge sharing, many organizations have invested considerable time and money into knowledge management initiatives including development of Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) which use state-of-the-art technology to facilitate collection, storage and distribution of knowledge. The effective use of knowledge is a key ingredient in all successful organizations.

### 1.1 Definition of Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge Sharing refers to the provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies or procedures. It can occur via written correspondence or face-to-face communication through networking with other experts, or documenting, organizing and capturing knowledge for others. Knowledge sharing differs from knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange. Knowledge transfer involves both the sharing of knowledge by knowledge source and the acquisition and application of knowledge by the recipient. Although knowledge exchange has been used interchangeably with knowledge sharing, knowledge sharing includes both knowledge sharing and knowledge seeking.

### 1.2 Why Knowledge Sharing?

The main aim of knowledge sharing is to distribute right content to right people at right time. Individuals are often the most difficult source to document because they feel that sharing what they know will make them expandable or that their knowledge on any given subject is what makes them unique. Each

time employees leave their job, they carry what they know with them. If they share tacit knowledge among employees it ensures that pertinent employee's knowledge stay around long after the employees leave the company.

### 1.3 Platforms of KS

Some most popular platform of KS are as follows:

- **Training Programs:**

Training sessions/ Programs are the process of learning the skills, procedures activities for a particular job or task. It allows the trainees to interact with each other and with trainers/experts.

- **Formal Meetings:**

These are the best means of knowledge sharing where people come together formally in order to discuss about experiences, problems, opinions, projects etc. and take decisions. People express their expertise and knowledge about particular topic in such meetings and thus enhances the knowledge of other participants and leads to knowledge sharing.

- **Video Screening Sessions:**

It is one of the most effective means of KS which contains case studies, best practices, past experiences and methods to achieve the goals and objectives to meet the deadlines.

- **Seminars/ Conferences:**

It allows the people to discuss their views and opinions. Video Conferencing enable people in different parts of the world to meet by watching and listening to each other by using video screens.

### 1.4 Barriers to KS

Lack of time, low awareness, difference in level experience, lack of leadership, lack of appropriate reward system, organizational factors, stressors and personal gains have been identified by several authors as major barriers to successful knowledge sharing. Riege (2005) in his extensive review identified over twelve potential barriers in knowledge sharing. Some of them includes lack of time to share, fear of job security, dominance in sharing, low awareness, lack of contact time, poor verbal/written communication, age differences, lack of social network, difference in education levels, lack of trust in people and differences in national culture. Organizational barriers include lack of formal and informal space to share, lack of leadership, physical work environment, existing cooperate culture etc.,

while barriers associated with technological factors include unrealistic expectations of employees, mismatch, lack of compatibility, lack of training and communication etc. The impact of barrier on employee attitudes to knowledge sharing could differ from one organizations to another.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To assess the frequency of knowledge sharing among academic staff.
2. To understand the importance of knowledge sharing.
3. To identify ways in which academic staff share knowledge.
4. To identify the barriers in knowledge sharing.
5. To find out the strategies to promote knowledge sharing among academic staff.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tan, C.N.L (2016) studied on the impact of knowledge management factors in encouraging Knowledge Sharing among academics. A self-administered questionnaire using quota-sampling method with 421 responses from 94 Professors, 154 Associate Professors and 173 senior lectures were gathered. Findings revealed that knowledge sharing is influenced by organizational rewards, trust, culture, system quality, openness in communication and face-to-face interactive communication whereas research collaboration is strongly influenced by Knowledge Sharing. Daud, Normala, Abdul Wahab Rabiah and Nordin, Noor Asilah Nordin (2015) in their research article examined knowledge sharing behaviour among academic staff at a Public Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Malaysia. Results indicated that normative norm, attitude and perceived behavioural control were found to have significant effect on knowledge behaviour of academic staff. Abdul Rafiu, Misbau Abiola and Opesade Adeola. A (2015) investigated the factors driving academics to engage in work-related knowledge sharing activity using conceptual model from Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) of Ajzen (1991) and two affective components. Self-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that perceived behavioural control and affective commitment were significant predictors of intention to share knowledge, while attitude, subjective norm and affect-based trust are not. The study recommends that

more group activities should be encouraged and collaborative research and teaching should be emphasized to further promote knowledge sharing by academics. Ziaki, Soraya (2014) investigated the current status of Knowledge Sharing among the Faculty Members of the Iranian Library & Information Science Departments. An applied survey method was employed and the data were analyzed using SPSS Statistical Software Program. Findings showed that most of the faculty members showed a high degree of awareness of knowledge sharing. The absence of an appropriate knowledge sharing culture was the major involved factor. Chin Wei Chong, Yee Yen Yuen, Geok Chew Gan (2014) conducted a study to build upon Jain et al.'s (2007) work by investigating the knowledge sharing barriers and strategies of academic staff in public and private Universities in Malaysia. A survey was conducted by distributing 502 questionnaires. SPSS was used for data analysis. Findings showed that Private Universities are more effective in Knowledge sharing.

**4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Primary data was collected by distributing questionnaires to the academic staff in 27 private and Aided Engineering Colleges in Kollam District. From each college, samples of 5-10 academic staff were selected for research. A total of 412 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to all academicians in their respective institutions. From this, 258 participants successfully responded with a response rate of 62.6%.

**5. DATA ANALYSIS**

**Table: 1** Frequency of Knowledge sharing among Academic Staff

Frequency	Respondents	(%)
Daily	123	47.6
Weekly	69	26.7
Monthly	58	22.48
Not at all	8	3.1
Total	258	100

Table 1 shows that majority of academic staff confirmed that they share knowledge daily especially with their students. This was supported with 123 (47.6%) while 69 (26.7%) admitted that they share

knowledge weekly.

**Table: 2** Importance of Knowledge Sharing

Sl No	Importance	Respondents	%
1	Use to Improve Professional Competence	51	20
2	For Educational purposes	40	15.
3	Expedite the research competence	61	23.6
4	Abreast with up to date information particularly in their fields	70	27
5	Facilities collaborating Learning	36	14

Table 2 revealed the importance of knowledge sharing. 70 (27%) maintained that the most important of sharing knowledge is that it keeps them abreast with up-to-date information particularly in their field and 61 (23.6%) agreed that knowledge sharing help them to expedite research competence.

**Table: 3** Ways of sharing knowledge among Academic staff

Sl No	Ways of sharing knowledge	Respondents	%
1	Electronic Meeting	29	11.24
2	Through research findings in Journals	40	15.5
3	Conferences, Seminars & Workshops	53	20.54
4	Internet	71	27.5
5	Textbooks	28	10.85
6	Common Room Discussion	15	5.81
7	Departmental Meeting	22	8.52
8	Notice Board	No response	No response
9	Mobile Phone	No response	No response

Table 3 shows the ways in which academic staff shares knowledge. 71(27.5 ) agreed that they share knowledge through the use of Internet, while

53(20.54 ) agreed that they share knowledge by attending conferences, seminars & workshops.

**Table: 4** Barriers in Knowledge sharing

SI No	Barriers	Respon dents	%
1	Non-Cordial work relationship among staff	39	15.11
2	Lack of awareness about knowledge sharing in libraries	49	19
3	Lack of relevant ICT skills	17	6.5
4	Reluctance to share knowledge due to prejudice	53	20.54
5	Poor Reward systems that motivate people to share their knowledge	32	12.4
6	Lack of Formal Foral that encourage knowledge sharing	38	15
7	Lack of Adequate ICT facilities	30	11.62

Table 4 examined the barrier for knowledge sharing. Many academic staff admitted that many of them do not like to share knowledge due to prejudice by 53 (20.54 ) and 49 (19 ) reported that there is no adequate awareness about the need for knowledge sharing in libraries.

**Table: 5** Strategies for promoting Knowledge Sharing

SI No	Strategies	Respon dents	%
1	University needs to create awareness about the importance of knowledge sharing	52	20.1
2	University should create knowledge Repository in Libraries	31	12.01
3	Need of adequate ICT	33	13
4	Academic staff need to publish their research findings on University Website	26	10.07
5	Establish appropriate reward system which encourages knowledge sharing	40	15.5
6	Adequate dissemination of	28	10.85

	information		
7	Cultivating right attitude and willingness to work	22	8.52
8	Employment of more knowledge officers in the University	26	10.07

Table 5 shows the strategy for promoting knowledge sharing. 52 (20.1 ) admitted that there is a need for mass awareness about the importance of knowledge sharing in academic environment. 40 (15.5 ) admitted that there is a need for appropriate reward system.

## 6. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

It is very important that academic staff engage in knowledge sharing particularly in this information age. Many of the academic staff reported that they share knowledge every day. Sharing of research data and information among academic staff in different geographical locations are some of the benefits of knowledge sharing which is discovered in the findings of this study. Internet is the major way to share their knowledge with outside world. There is very low awareness about the importance of resource sharing among academic staff. The following recommendations are made:

1. Institutions should take some measures to motivate the staff for knowledge sharing by providing an enabling environment.
2. Academic staff should be encouraged in publishing their research findings in the institutional repository.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Knowledge sharing is vital in knowledge-based organisations since the majority of the employees are knowledge workers. In the context of higher education, Universities and Colleges are considered as knowledge based organisations due to their role as the epitome of knowledge development and management. The sharing of knowledge among academic staff, would enhance the capability and quality of research undertaken by educational institutions. It is a norm and culture in an academic institution that senior academic staff share knowledge and expertise with junior academics to improve the symbiotic process of teaching and learning respectively.

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