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# KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR UNIVERSITIES' COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines how knowledge sharing underpins effective communicative practices in university institutions. Drawing on resource-based and stakeholder perspectives, it distinguishes tacit and explicit knowledge and outlines SECI dynamics to show how universities can convert individual know-how into organisational capability. The study identifies cultural, organisational, and technological enablers and barriers, emphasising the centrality of trust, cooperation, and performance systems, alongside digital tools such as LMS platforms and professional social networks. It argues that the strategic alignment of internal and external communication, along with tailored channels for diverse audiences, enhances reputation, innovation, and crisis readiness. The article concludes that cultivating a cooperative organisational culture and deploying well-designed mechanisms for knowledge circulation are strategic necessities for universities seeking quality, excellence, and sustainable development.

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## KEYWORDS

Knowledge Sharing, University Communication, Organisational Culture, SECI Model, Learning Management Systems

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## Introduction:

The importance of knowledge distribution or knowledge sharing in the organisational context is beyond dispute; knowledge distribution has a strategic duty to create products and functions that respond to the continuous changes in the needs of the institution's members and those related to it. This knowledge, in and of itself, does not reside in institutions. However, in some individuals who constitute them, although this may seem obvious, the transfer of knowledge from the individual to the institution actually presents a challenge because individuals' knowledge does not necessarily align with the institution's needs. The obstacles to disseminating and distributing knowledge may also be linked to the way the individual behaves or performs at the organisational level, or this complexity may be considered to arise from the constraints imposed by traditional managerial tools and methods, which have gradually become unable to meet the new requirements of the market and society and to enable the application of multifunctional management on the basis of knowledge and the new key factors for success.

The university institution today is the principal teacher in any developmental equation, and the countries that have recognised this are now among those that have come to govern the world, whereas those still slow to acknowledge it are floundering in many problems. Moreover, the university environment is by nature suitable for employing the principles and methods of knowledge sharing in its organisational performance, especially since the way in which institutions acquire, generate, and share knowledge today is part of the potential response of modern knowledge management in many universities worldwide, through which the process of knowledge creation is achieved by means of conversation among people and the exchange of information and experiences in an environment in which relationships among them are stimulated and cooperation and trust are reinforced.

Based on this introduction, a central problem can be formulated as follows:

### **Introduction to the Problem:**

How can a university institution activate knowledge-sharing strategies within its organisational environment in a manner that ensures the development of its performance and its effective contribution to achieving development and confronting contemporary challenges?

From this problem, we can pose a set of subsidiary questions, the most prominent of which are as follows:

- What are the obstacles that hinder the process of transferring knowledge from individuals to university institutions?
- What resources or strategies can be adopted to activate knowledge sharing at the university?
- How can effective communication contribute to strengthening a culture of knowledge sharing within a university institution?

Accordingly, the content of our article focuses on the importance of knowledge sharing in university institutions as one of the principal solutions for development and for confronting various types of challenges by identifying the most important resources or strategies that can be used to develop participation rules within the framework of effective communication inside university institutions.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework:**

#### **1—Concept of knowledge**

In this era, knowledge has become the primary, most important, and vital source of wealth for institutions. Every era has its wealth, and the wealth of this era (the era of globalisation and the globalisation of knowledge, information and communication technology) is indisputably knowledge. The one most capable of managing it effectively is the most deserving of success.

The concept of "knowledge" has evolved from its rudimentary beginnings to its current form; however, the novelty of this concept lies in the magnitude of its impact on scientific, economic, and social life, as well as on human growth. The tremendous progress and development of information technology, which has been witnessed in the current century, is considered the most significant change in human life, enabling humans to impose control over nature, and the factor of development in the field of knowledge has become more influential in life than other material factors.

Knowledge is a process that needs to be organised in a way that drives it towards growth and development through processes such as innovation, diffusion, sharing, and support.

In the specialised literature, knowledge is defined as "the information residing in individuals' minds, related to facts, procedures, concepts, interpretations, ideas, observations, and judgements" (Alavi & Dorothy E. Leidner, 2001, pp. 108–109).

According to the resource-based view, organisations are distinguished from their competitors by virtue of the resources they possess, as these resources enable organisations to be competitive and therefore cannot be neglected. They are also regarded as a strategic resource of utmost importance for organisations. In fact, they enable them to achieve a competitive advantage and to improve their performance compared with their competitors. The success of knowledge management policy depends particularly on the sharing of intellectual capital owned by the organisation and the manner in which this capital is carried out within the organisation, which enables it to create value. Intellectual capital can be divided into three components:

- **Human capital** includes the knowledge, skills, experiences, and beliefs held by employees.
- **Structural capital** refers to the organisation's intangible resources.
- **Relational capital** concerns the knowledge and capabilities that exist between the organisation and its stakeholders.

Knowledge is defined as a strategically important asset for organisations. This is especially true today, when organisations must innovate not only in their products, business, or cultural processes but also in their business models. Since all innovations arise from a creative process derived in itself from the use and transformation of explicit and tacit knowledge, an organisation that wishes to innovate must distinguish itself in what is extremely difficult and impossible to imitate: the management of its knowledge, particularly its sharing. However, this is not easy. It is not merely a matter of collecting information, such as books in a library or files on a hard drive. To manage its knowledge effectively, the organisation must establish a comprehensive human and material infrastructure. There are several ways to achieve this, one of which is through a community of practice. The community approach has become one of the most effective and popular means of knowledge sharing, and one of the main reasons for this is that knowledge is inseparable from its context (Harvey, J. F., 2011, p. 73).

### 1–1 Forms of knowledge

The Japanese academic Ikujiro Nonaka identifies two types of knowledge:

The first, called explicit, is easily communicated because it can be expressed verbally, primarily through numbers and data, and is considered more objective in terms of progress in the production process, the development of the institution's figures, and the manner of completing and executing contracts.

The second, called "tacit" knowledge, refers to an ability acquired by the person, including intuition, interpersonal skills, and knowing how to manage a particular client, among others. This knowledge is difficult to codify.

The dynamic theory of knowledge creation, developed by Nonaka and Takeuchi in 1995 and known as the SECI model,<sup>1\*</sup> assumes that knowledge is created through the creative tension between tacit and explicit knowledge. This tension leads to a dynamic flow of activities that facilitate the generation, transfer, and application of knowledge, and these activities include the following:

- **Socialisation (socialisation):** converting knowledge from tacit to tacit; this occurs when individuals exchange experiences and learn directly from one another, often through observation, imitation, and participation.

- **Externalisation (externalisation):** converting knowledge from tacit to explicit; this process involves expressing the knowledge latent in individuals' minds and transforming it into a form that can be shared and documented, such as models, concepts, and hypotheses.

- **Combination:** converting knowledge from explicit to explicit; at this stage, existing explicit knowledge assets (such as documents and databases) are integrated and refined to generate new and more complex knowledge.

- **Internalisation:** converting knowledge from explicit to tacit; individuals learn from explicit knowledge assets and internalise them, enabling them to recall and apply the new learning in their practices.

These activities are repeated at increasing levels of complexity, allowing knowledge to expand through the knowledge spiral (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The four knowledge-creation activities are assigned to separate quadrants; when the organisation creates knowledge, it moves through these four elements and gradually forms more complex knowledge with each cycle (Bandera & Fazel Keshtkar, 2017, pp. 165–166).

The researcher Imad Abdel Latif also indicated that knowledge is not a single, homogeneous, stereotypical type; it does not have a fixed form, and it cannot be placed within a single framework. Moreover, it is classified as follows:

**Explicit knowledge:** declared and written knowledge that is treated in a documented manner, which has been recorded and can be transferred formally and systematically. It is organised, limited-content knowledge characterised by its outwards manifestations, expressed through drawing, writing, and speaking, and technology allows it to be transformed and transmitted.

**Tacit knowledge:** This is the undeclared (hidden) knowledge retained by individuals in their minds; it is the knowledge stored in employees' minds that has not been documented and deepens through an individual's procedures and experiences, such as the ideas, values, and feelings adopted by the individual. It refers to the skills present within each person's mind that are difficult to transfer and transform into others. Knowledge may be technical or cognitive and is challenging to understand because of its practical nature or because it can be expressed in words. It is the outcome of mental processes that take place within the human mind. This type of knowledge is difficult to perceive and control because it exists only in the minds of its owners. However, it can be invested in and transformed into explicit knowledge through documentation in bulletins or manuals, thereby becoming information. Knowledge sharing aims to convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, thereby transferring ownership from the individual to the institution and making it part of the institution's assets that can be managed, stored, reused, and invested in for the future (Abdel Latif, 2021, pp. 229–230).

As the economist Friedrich Hayek explains in his book *The Use of Knowledge in Society*, tacit knowledge cannot be separated from the person who possesses it: "Almost every individual has some advantage over all others because he possesses unique information of which beneficial use might be made, but this will be so only if the decision is left to him or is made with his active cooperation" (Hayek, 1986, p. 121).

This type of knowledge transfer creates a living substance, unlike the storage of information, which crystallises data in files. Therefore, the exchange of knowledge, or what is called knowledge sharing, is an

<sup>1</sup> \*SECI: Nonaka and Takeuchi's model of knowledge creation (SECI model), which they presented in their 1995 book titled *The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*. The model explains how knowledge is created within organisations dynamically through the continuous interaction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge.

evolving and adaptive flow of knowledge among people rather than the storage of data that gathers dust on a hard drive. To achieve this, the institution must mobilise its resources to secure continuous progress. From individual intelligence, the institution transitions to collective intelligence, enhancing skills that are beneficial to all individuals. Effective management of internal and specialised knowledge fosters intellectual stimulation and the acquisition of new skills for all employees.

Within the concept of “tacit knowledge”, we distinguish between “contextual knowledge” and “practical knowledge” (Robert, 2004, p. 03).

- **Contextual knowledge:** “Contextual knowledge” represents “a set of implicit values and standards, shared to a greater or lesser extent”. The elements not expressed in language constitute a form of “shared knowledge” by a group or by the entire organisation. This knowledge refers to culture and a “system of beliefs, perceptions, and evaluations”. By referring to traditions, this knowledge allows the formation of “a stock of actions shared by several actors, which sometimes leads to stereotypical and routine behaviours” (Reix, 1995, p. 18). Thus, it appears that the requirements of innovation, precision, friendliness, the quality of relations with internal and external clients, or respect for ethics and foundational values are only a few examples of standards that, when not explicit, can be linked to “contextual knowledge”.

- **Practical knowledge:** “Practical knowledge” corresponds to know-how that eludes discourse. We may mention everything that gives work an additional advantage that distinguishes it from another task that appears similar on the surface: what distinguishes a specific professional identity linked to manual skill or working methods or what defines each individual’s experience within the company.

The concept of knowledge in this regard refers to numerous concepts, most notably the term 'knowledge economy', 'culture of participation', 'knowledge sharing', and 'knowledge management', among others.

A knowledge economy is an economy based on information, where information constitutes the principal element in the production process; it is the sole product in this economy. It determines methods of production and methods of promotion.

Importantly, knowledge refers to information, expertise, research, studies, technology, modern management systems, and the skills possessed by individuals.

The value of information lies in its use and employment, not merely in its acquisition or storage. Notably, the value of knowledge equals zero when it is stored; when it is used, it frees the economy from the problem of scarcity, which has been the basic rule governing the market up to the present time. There is no scarcity in information or in knowledge in general; in contrast, the opposite is true: information grows, and the use of knowledge produces knowledge (Mathnani, 2009, pp. 154–155).

## 2—Concept of the culture of participation:

UNESCO defines culture as follows: "Culture, in its broadest sense, may be said to be the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. It includes, in addition to the arts and letters, modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs."

In the institution, culture corresponds to the set of values and beliefs shared among the actors within the same organisation.

Participation, meanwhile, is a form of unity: it means “working together” with an individual or a group of external individuals, such as sharing a point of view, an idea, or a feeling, an idea that reflects the reality of participating in something simultaneously with others.

Participation also refers to the notion of give-and-take, and here, the concept diverges from its meaning of division or exclusion. In contrast, it corresponds more closely to the idea of aggregation, resembling sharing in something, the capacity for experience, and connection.

In the professional environment, building relationships enables the creation of a system for exchanging resources (knowledge, skills, etc.) with colleagues; thus, building ties leads to the benefits of good relations. According to the researcher Norbert Alter, we can understand professional relationships only by uncovering the types of exchanges that constitute organisations. Within the organisation, each individual possesses a varying degree of knowledge, organised through the acquisition of new information. Thus, to reach this as-yet-unacquired knowledge and access it, it is classified and stored for subsequent sharing.

This approach necessarily requires technical means in terms of information and communication, as well as changes in behaviour and performance within the organisation. This has enabled analysts to develop the concept of knowledge management, thereby highlighting knowledge as a factor of strategic importance and

encouraging organisations to develop their capacity for research, innovation, and production with the aim of competitive advantage at the level of knowledge and the knowledge economy (Bouhedi, 2013, pp. 47–48).

### **3—Concept of knowledge sharing at the institution:**

Knowledge sharing is an integrative systemic process for coordinating the activities of the educational institution towards achieving its objectives. Knowledge management is a tool that enables an effective educational institution to invest its intellectual capital by making access to the knowledge it generates easy and accessible to others in need of it.

It is defined as “the effective transfer of knowledge, and this means that the one who possesses knowledge is able and willing to share it with others. Knowledge may exist among individuals, groups, departments, or organisations, but the existence of knowledge somewhere does not mean that there is knowledge sharing” (Najadat, 2012, p. 7).

Knowledge sharing is also a process that enables various stakeholders to exchange research results, discoveries, inventions, intellectual property, technology, data, and technical expertise. More commonly, the term refers to the transfer of these assets between universities, public research organisations, and industrial or governmental institutions, which constitute a source of economic value and industrial development.

#### **3–1 Mechanisms of knowledge sharing:**

There are four mechanisms through which knowledge sharing occurs among individuals within the organisation:

- Knowledge sharing through the organisation’s database.
- Knowledge sharing through formal interactions among individuals within the organisation and across work teams and organisational units.
- Knowledge is shared through the informal interaction of individuals with one another.
- Knowledge sharing among individuals through communities of practice, such as voluntary activities.

Among the most prominent mechanisms of knowledge sharing are also shared understanding, a learning climate, training, and the rate of job mobility. The implementation of a performance management system, which includes both employee performance appraisals and competency evaluations, can be one of the mechanisms for knowledge-sharing behaviour among employees. The institution can also use many other mechanisms, systems, and technologies that enable its members to share the knowledge they possess, such as expert directories, video conferences and networks, knowledge maps, information maps, continuous training programmes, and the development of cooperative skills among communities of practice that lead to the creation of new and innovative ideas and the provision of new products and services that increase the efficiency of the organisation.

In this context, higher education institutions are among the most prominent producers of knowledge and the largest repositories and disseminators of it in society. Therefore, these institutions are expected to develop and share knowledge and expertise among the members of the teaching staff (professors) themselves, especially as they are today facing numerous demands to achieve quality in the sharing of resources and expertise. The members of the teaching staff, as knowledge employees, are considered the principal element influencing change in the knowledge society in the current era, as they perform essential roles in the development of information technology and changes in work and production systems (Al-Balawi, S., Degree of Knowledge Sharing Practice, 2019, p. 563).

Accordingly, knowledge sharing among members of university institutions is a fundamental pillar of any transformation or development, especially in their pursuit of quality and excellence. This process is influenced by important factors such as organisational culture, which must support risk acceptance, creativity, and trust among members. Mutual trust among employees is essential for fostering the exchange of knowledge and providing all that is beneficial. An efficient organisational culture also plays a vital role in enhancing communication and collaboration, allowing the freedom of ideas and contributing to progress.

#### **3–2 Components of knowledge sharing:**

There is a set of requirements that the university institution must provide to achieve effective knowledge sharing and to transform it from individual knowledge into institutional knowledge, including the following:

- Providing a working climate that stimulates knowledge sharing.
- Modern systems and technologies that enable employees to share knowledge assets are provided.
- Easing constraints on strategic alliances with relevant societal institutions.

- Facilitating access to the knowledge bases owned by the institution.
- Activating the role of institutional media in transferring knowledge between units and departments.
- Providing information about the experts within the institution.
- Voluntary work teams should be formed to provide scientific consultations.
- Evaluating performance levels according to knowledge-sharing systems.

Activating knowledge-sharing practices in institutions requires the presence of a cooperative organisational culture that encourages employees within the institution to share their knowledge and exchange views, thereby contributing to the production of new ideas. Some rely on the role of organisational culture in facilitating or hindering the process of knowledge sharing, since it has not been proven that technology constitutes the sole solution for facilitating knowledge sharing; instead, the excessive focus of many institutions on building technological infrastructures and ignoring cultural factors has led to many failures. The dimensions of organisational culture, such as trust, cooperation, empowerment, autonomy, and others, directly affect knowledge sharing among employees and the nature of their readiness to share their knowledge. Consequently, it plays a vital role in strengthening the process of sharing among members of the university institution, as it determines how this process can take place. This role is evident in that it forms the basic assumptions about knowledge worthy of sharing; defines the relationship between the employee's knowledge and organisational knowledge; the nature of the relationships and interactions through which knowledge sharing is conducted; and the processes concerning how new knowledge is created, validated, and disseminated throughout the university institution (Al-Balawi, 2019, p. 580).

### 3–3 Knowledge-Sharing Strategies (Al-Balawi, p. 581)

The literature indicates two principal strategies for knowledge sharing: written contributions (codification) and social interactions (personalisation). In the codification strategy, knowledge is shared after being codified and stored in databases, making it subsequently available and easily accessible to others. The personalisation strategy, by contrast, affirms that knowledge is closely tied to the person who develops it and is shared primarily through direct communication. Here, the principal aim of the computer is to help people share their knowledge, not to store it.

The two strategies are defined as follows:

➤ **Written contributions** refer to knowledge sharing via information technology, such as an online document library or a local network (intranet) system, or through traditional repositories, including reports, manuals, and other documents.

➤ **Social interactions:** People interact to find and share knowledge; thus, the key issue in knowledge sharing is effective interaction. This usually occurs through direct, person–person communication. Social interactions among individuals formally and informally provide channels for knowledge sharing among members of the organisation. Through social interaction, individuals gain more opportunities to share their knowledge and experiences with others. The personalisation strategy is of particular importance because it facilitates the sharing of tacit knowledge, which is context-dependent and challenging to obtain via an internet knowledge base.

It has also been shown that employees tend to resist sharing their information and that knowledge does not always flow easily after the implementation of means intended to facilitate its circulation within the organisation. Consequently, the literature identifies numerous factors that affect knowledge sharing at the internal organisational level. In this context, various barriers to knowledge sharing have been identified and classified into three dimensions: individual, organisational, and technological. We summarise some of them as follows:

The first concerns individual barriers, such as lack of time, knowledge sharing, finding a colleague who needs specific knowledge, establishing connections with new knowledge sources, differences in level of expertise, level of education, language skills, cultural or ethnic skills, values and beliefs, lack of trust in the use of shared knowledge, trust in the credibility or accuracy of shared knowledge, awareness of mistakes made, perception of the social network, fear that knowledge exchange threatens job security, level of knowledge ambiguity, and establishing a hierarchy on the basis of status or formal authority.

Second, organisational barriers include the lack of integration of knowledge management into the organisation's strategy, lack of leadership in communicating the benefits of knowledge sharing, lack of spaces (formal or informal), high levels of competitiveness between and within units, daily communication channels, and a physical environment that restricts knowledge-sharing activities.

Third, with respect to technological barriers, there is an absence of technical support in the use of information and communication technology, unrealistic expectations regarding the information technology system, and a lack of training on the information technology used (Harvey, J.-F., 2010–2011, p. 74).

#### **4. Concept of Communicative Practice at the University Institution:**

The communications of higher education institutions fall within the field of public communication, also known as public relations. Public communication is defined as "official communication that aims at the exchange and sharing of information of public benefit, in addition to maintaining the social bond, and the responsibility for it lies with public institutions" (Zémor, 2008, p. 3).

Like other public institutions, universities have gradually adopted communication functions within their organisational structure, as communication increasingly asserts itself as a strategic task for higher education institutions. However, in many cases, the communication function in universities' central departments is still regarded as a service provision, without always being given the keys to integrate these products and tools into an overarching strategy that serves the institution. Moreover, the organisational structures of universities often reveal deep gaps in the linkages between internal communication and human resources, on the one hand, and between external communication and the valorisation of research and training, on the other hand (Appel & Hélène Boulanger, 2012).

The role of communication departments in universities is often limited to implementing the practical aspects of communication, without always being able to participate in formulating the strategic orientations that underpin these operations. Although university leaders have begun to recognise the importance of this role and show a desire to involve communication departments in strategic planning, internal mechanisms and the prevailing culture in universities may constitute obstacles to achieving effective integration (Appel & Hélène Boulanger, 2012).

Over the past twenty years, stakeholder theory, as formulated by Freeman (1984), has expanded into a broad field of management studies, enabling organisations to meet the expectations of stakeholders in any project. In fact, the theory assumes that the organisation is an entity comprising participants with multiple objectives and that every action taken by the organisation produces effects on one or more stakeholders. Consequently, stakeholders should not be neglected, as they can influence organisations' strategies and performance. From this standpoint, higher education institutions fall under the responsibility and interest of numerous stakeholders who must be identified: current students, prospective students, students' parents, companies, institutions, the local community, alums, the general public, the media, government agencies, suppliers, boards of directors, faculty members, competitors, administrative staff, and accrediting agencies. Among all these stakeholders, the student plays a crucial role in their institution because they are more than just a client of the organisation, and their evaluation of the institution's reputation is important, as they are coproducers of knowledge (Benjamin, 2020, p. 76).

#### **4-1 Types of Communication at the University Institution (Internal, External, Formal, Informal):**

- Internal communication is often considered the weakest link in an organisation's communication system, despite the rapid development this function has witnessed in recent years (Brulois, Maturité de la Communication Interne, 2019).

- Internal communication can be defined as "a set of practices and behaviours that constitute exchanges and interactions within institutions" (Carayol, 1994). It is also defined as follows: "it includes all acts of communication that occur within the organisation; it falls within a social perspective, responding to employees' pressing and legitimate expectations for information. They need to understand the organisation's direction, have their competencies recognised, and be listened to" (d'almeida & Thierry Libaert, 2014).

This stage is fundamental and must be closely linked to the desired objectives because effective communication is targeted, intelligible, and accessible. Internal communication does not mean information overload; instead, it means distribution, and thus, the proper match between the objective, target groups, and means is selected. In this context, all studies show that this principle is rarely respected and that torrents of information and memoranda submerge a large number of employees (especially managers). Consequently, the internal communication plan aims to replace the principle of "always more" information with the principle of information quality (Libaert, 2008).

Because internal communication falls within the remit of several sectors within the organisation, the person in charge cannot, under any circumstances, bear the responsibility for all internal communication activities and responsibilities alone. These activities and responsibilities must be shared by all employees,

following the administrative hierarchy. In this context, Morel states, "Internal communication is everyone's responsibility" (Morel, 2012, p. 28).

In a context in which institutions have become "more open" than before owing to globalisation and the inevitable media coverage these institutions face, increasing challenges from actors who "enter" the institution, such as the media, politicians, the judiciary, and nongovernmental organisations, or who are present in it de facto (employees, trade unions).

The multiplicity of these actors who intervene in the institution requires forms of dialogic communication rather than solely one-way communication. The various "stakeholders" are no longer satisfied with traditional communication methods whose "content" is strictly controlled and approved. Nonetheless, the restriction of communication and messages remains widespread because of its link with the issue of reputation.

Work within the institution is changing; it integrates more cooperation and communication, as "it is no longer possible to work without communication". This shared dimension of communication at work translates into new communicative competencies. The institution lies at the heart of transformations but also at the centre of tensions and contradictions that a simple communication policy based on image and controlled content cannot resolve (Charpentier, 2018, p. 357).

### **External Communication:**

The university's external communication primarily aims to promote itself externally and gather information from its environment, which enables it to continue excelling and adapting to the changing conditions of its context. External communication takes various forms, as many university employees communicate with different partners or interlocutors within its environment. Thus, each individual conveys an image and messages on behalf of the university and, in return, receives information that they integrate and disseminate within the university institution. This is known as strategic external communication, which is realised through network building, that is, developing positive relationships with key actors in the environment who can contribute to supporting the university in achieving its mission. Strategic communication is also practised through external listening, which provides the university, with the help of information carriers present in the environment, with strategic information about the development of universities.

The university also relies on external information related to reputation to promote its educational and research programmes; the value of its degree; the quality of its staff, services, and infrastructure; its diverse achievements; and its contribution at the social, economic, and cultural levels.

In the competitive landscape of higher education, clear and strategic external communication is crucial for attracting prospective students, engaging with alums, establishing partnerships, and securing funding. Mastery of this aspect of communication, which falls within the scope of external communication, can have a profoundly positive influence on an institution's reputation.

The first important step in mastering external communication is identifying the principal audience in higher education. These may include current and prospective students, alums, parents, donors, government agencies, industry partners, the media, and the general public. Each of these audiences has distinctive needs, interests, and expectations, necessitating communication strategies tailored to engage with them effectively.

External communication in higher education relies on numerous channels to reach diverse audiences and interact with them effectively. These channels may include traditional channels, such as press releases, newsletters, and direct mail, as well as digital channels, including social media, websites, email newsletters, and online advertising.

Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each channel is crucial in developing a comprehensive communication strategy that leverages the most effective channels to achieve the desired outcomes (College Unide Ceres, 2023).

The principal means that the university institution can improve its image and develop its reputation:

- Advertising in the media and through its own publications (leaflets, posters, etc.).
- Promotion in schools, fairs, conferences, etc.
- Support provided for cultural and sporting activities.
- Participation in seminars, conferences, public discussions, and the organisation of such group activities, including open days.
- Articles about the university and its achievements in technical, scientific, and cultural journals.
- Outreach activities through seconding some members as experts or consultants or by encouraging internal secondment.
- Support for certain student activities.

- Publication of annual activity reports.
- Sharing the university's resources in external committees.
- Links with alums and others.

#### **4–2 Mechanisms and Strategies for Activating Knowledge Sharing at University Institutions:**

Knowledge sharing is the foundation of development and innovation in institutions, particularly universities. The exchange of expertise and information among academics, researchers, students, and administrative staff enriches the educational environment and enhances a university's ability to achieve its objectives. However, activating this sharing requires well-crafted mechanisms and strategies that ensure the smooth flow and efficient circulation of knowledge.

Among the most important mechanisms and strategies on which the university institution can rely to stimulate knowledge sharing with a focus on the role of technology in achieving this goal is the use of digital tools and platforms, such as learning management systems (LMS), to facilitate communication and manage academic content, in addition to the role of social media and professional networks in breaking traditional information barriers, with an analysis of the challenges that institutions may face in adopting these tools.

##### **1. Digital tools and platforms:**

###### **• Use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) and online collaboration platforms:**

Distance learning platforms are software tools designed to enable the management of distance education, and the term Learning Management System (LMS) is traditionally used in the vocabulary of computer science (Prat, 2012, p. 83). Learning management systems (LMSs) are considered software solutions designed to manage learning pathways, track learners, and disseminate (online) learning content. Several expressions are used to refer to learning management systems, such as online learning platforms, learning management systems, virtual training centers, and e-learning platforms. In contrast, the most common term used is "digital learning environment". In general, Learning Management Systems (LMS) offer similar general functions: communication, the organisation and monitoring of learning pathways, the production and publication of content, the creation of discussion threads, viewing messages, replying to a message, and identifying the contributor, depending on the platform's performance (Brunel, Merlin Ferdinand Lamago, & Philippe Girard, 2014, pp. 03–04).

##### **2. Employing social media and professional networks**

The issue of controlling the circulation of information lies at the heart of communication problems within institutions. For example, incorporating the use of social networks into the operational communication strategy of an institution or one of its components is not easy. The initial hesitation among decision-makers internally stems from the perceptions they may hold about a tool such as Facebook, as well as the gap between the content they assume would be hosted there and the image of their institution. However, once this obstacle is overcome, the question of controlling the dissemination of information principally emerges. For example, in the context of creating institutional Facebook pages, many instances of refusal to share information, nonstrategic in nature, with other Facebook pages belonging to the same institution are observed.

The other principal barrier relates to the interactive nature of these spaces: here, the fear of slippage emerges, or rather, the fear of moving from a one-way model of conveying information to a multidirectional model involving actors whose legitimacy to express themselves is not considered valid with respect to the topics under discussion. What will students say on the networks? How will they react? Moreover, what do we do if they say something negative? (Appel & H el ene Boulanger, 2012)

##### **Conclusions**

The analysis presented in this article confirms the fundamental importance of knowledge sharing in enhancing the effective communicative practices of university institutions. By building solid foundations of shared knowledge and the exchange of expertise, university institutions can develop more effective communication practices at the internal and external levels, contributing to the construction of a cohesive academic community, enhancing their reputation and attractiveness, supporting their capacity for crisis management, and encouraging innovation and creativity. However, activating knowledge sharing requires the adoption of well-considered mechanisms and strategies that consider the nature of the university institution, its culture, and its organisational structures. Investing in the construction of an institutional culture that supports knowledge sharing and in the provision of the tools and initiatives necessary to achieve it represents a strategic necessity for university institutions in their pursuit of excellence and leadership in a changing world of knowledge.

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