

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Importance of knowledge management at Mauritius Institution of Education

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This paper aims to explore the permeability of the knowledge management (KM) concept at Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), a leading Higher Education Institution (HEI) in teacher training established five decades ago. HEIs consolidate their strengths in a number of ways but managing the quality and quantity of knowledge and education can leverage its competitive advantage. Looking thoroughly at KM concepts in HEIs brought attention to other areas of interest like knowledge sharing practices and community of practices (CoPs). The research methodology used is a descriptive design where academics of different schools and departments at MIE were surveyed to look at (1) awareness about KM, (2) consumption of information and knowledge by academics, (3) knowledge sharing practices at personal and institutional level, and (4) the prevalence of (CoPs) in HEIs. The findings exposed a number of issues about KM practices and it also questioned the role and responsibilities that HEIs management can undertake in establishing KM strategies to gauge organisational excellence.

**Key words:** Information, knowledge, knowledge management, Mauritius Institute of Education.

## INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of institutions in the educational sector, more particularly in higher education institutions (HEIs), around the world like the UK, adopted Knowledge Management (KM) to meet challenges arising in knowledge economy or knowledge-driven society to achieve quality, efficiency and eventually leverage on the competitive edge.

For four decades, the interest around KM has been evolving with more research undertaken to know the meaning of KM, how to achieve it, why is it important now, where should it happen and who are the winners. There were several research papers on the role of knowledge in the educational sector in Mauritius during a

TEC conference in 2011. More than one paper prioritized the need to march towards a knowledge economy and recommended that the government should embrace KM in national policies for an increased role of higher education to consolidate consolidating a knowledge economy (Pillay, 2011).

On the other hand, KM concept needs to be embraced urgently if organisational performance, effectiveness, excellence, leadership and competitiveness are to be built or retained. Norris et al. (2003) claim that the "epicenters of knowledge economy" will be the knowledge networks and community of practice (CoPs) that would specialise in tacit knowledge to create,

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distribute, and add value to knowledge, the very activities in which colleges and universities are engaged in”.

This paper examines the significance of KM at Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), a leading national teacher education institution which exists since 1968. Based on its functions in the field of education, MIE can be coined as a knowledge centric organisation, a learning organisation and/or an organisational learning institution given that its main activities are knowledge-based such as dealing with information and knowledge, delivery of lectures in content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, curriculum development, and production of teaching and learning materials and many other activities that produce information and knowledge in the HEI. Research questions are:

- (1) What change or benefits would accrue to the MIE by creating an awareness of knowledge management concepts in the strategic role that it fulfills in Mauritius?
- (2) To what extent can KM enhance the performance and organisational effectiveness?
- (3) What should be done to bring KM at MIE?

An empirical study was carried out to gauge the receptiveness of KM at MIE in the key areas that relate KM concept into the prevailing practices of academics at the institute. The research throws light on academics' perception of KM concept, their roles, responsibilities, knowledge sharing practices in managing information and an analysis of strategies to build KM concept at MIE to position itself as an excellent learning organization in a knowledge-driven economy.

The findings also exposed the traceability of KM, apparently conceivable but appear unfamiliar and imperceptible in the context due to lack of relevant information in the field. The strategies to build KM principles, process and strategies matter to a very large extent from academic perspectives. This research would be most relevant to management at MIE to position itself as a knowledge epicenter and leading HEI in the 21st century.

### **KM defined**

There is quite a wide variety of definitions that underpin the significance of KM in organisational effectiveness. They converge towards:

- (1) ‘How groups of people make themselves collectively smarter’ (Horton et al., 2001)
- (2) “The process of creating value from organisations intangible assets seeking synergistic combination of the data and information processing capacity of information technology, and the creative and innovative capacity of human beings”.
- (3) ‘Process of creating, acquiring, capturing,

manipulating, storing, disseminating and re-using knowledge both tangible and intangible knowledge assets available in implicit and explicit knowledge’ (Islam et al, 2011).

KM is also described to be embodied into organisational processes that seek to balance combination of data and information processing capacity of information technologies, the environment of using and sharing information and knowledge and the creative and innovative capacity of human beings. It is perceived as a social and technological process that facilitates the mechanisms to utilise, harvest, transfer, create and preserve knowledge in both tacit and explicit forms: comprising multiple dimensions, including knowledge strategy, CoPs, help desks, knowledge bases, knowledge capture, knowledge storage, knowledge dissemination, knowledge taxonomies, quality assurance, authentication procedures, budget incentives and knowledge measures (Davidson and Voss, 2003).

### **The knowledge management (KM) revolution**

In his paper, “Socializing KM: The influence of the opinion of leaders”, Cheng (2002) evoked a fundamental change occurring since two decades leading organisations towards a revolutionised way of management applying KM. Ruggles (1997) explains the importance of KM by stating that even those rare firms which do not quite require dramatical change in augmenting their knowledge or operating in mature industries or rely little on innovation recognize an increasing need for KM in their organisations.

In practice, KM often encompasses identifying and mapping intellectual assets within the organisation, generating new knowledge for competitive advantage within the organisation, making vast amounts of corporate information accessible, sharing best practices, and technology that enables all of the above-including groupware and intranets (Barclay and Murray, 2007). The objective of KM is to improve the quality of people's contributions to their organisations by helping them to:

- (1) Make sense of the context within which the organisation exists
- (2) Take responsibility
- (3) Cooperate and share what they know and learn, and
- (5) Effectively challenge, negotiate and learn from others (Cormican et al., 2012).

According to Cormican et al. (2012), organisations need well-defined KM strategies as KM initiatives are linked to these strategies. Five critical success factors that affect KM initiatives are identified namely:

- (1) Strategy and leadership

- (2) Culture and climate
- (3) Architecture and structure
- (4) Motivation and performance and
- (5) Communication and collaboration (Cormican et al., 2012).

Gold et al. (2001) researched and affirmed that KM can contribute significantly on the potential of innovation, coordination of efforts, speed of new products' commercialisation, anticipation of surprises, responsiveness to market changes, reduction of redundancy of information/knowledge etc. Thus, the benefit of effective KM pays off in:

- (1) Fewer mistakes
- (2) Less redundancy
- (3) Quicker problem solving
- (4) Better decision making
- (5) Reduced research development costs
- (6) Increased workers' independence
- (7) Enhanced customer relations, and
- (8) Improved service (Becerra-Fernandez, 1999).

Other reasons found behind initiating KM are to:

- (1) Improve the quality of available knowledge within an organization
- (2) Sharing it across operating units
- (3) Reduction of loss of intellectual assets caused by employees' fluctuation
- (4) Reduce or control the costs
- (5) Encouraging innovation in a company, as well as
- (6) Improving responses to competitive forces (Mitchell and Young, 2003).

### **KM and HEIs**

Norris et al. (2003) elucidated that "learning" is a continuous process in every organisation and by their mission and purpose educational institutions bear this pressure more intensely. In "Selling Knowledge on the Net" (p41), it is stated that the need to manage knowledge actively becomes more obvious when what is being sold is knowledge (Ruggles, 1997).

Kidwell et al. (2000) give away that KM is not a radically new concept in HEIs but there is always scope to further explore the benefits that to HEIs which joins the idea of a strong growing interest in KM (Ponzi, 2002). Best practices, business models, innovations, and strategies are the new ways in which knowledge should be acquired, assimilated, and shared. A review of literature throws light on the new dimensional role of educational institutions in leveraging knowledge factor in HEIs like universities and academia. Researchers including Bloom (2005) observed that globalisation and marketisation would pull HEIs to new challenges; faced

with intensified external pressure to cope with the global integration. The knowledge business (Rowley, 2000) involves:

- (1) Knowledge creation
- (2) Dissemination
- (3) Learning
- (4) knowledge networks and
- (5) CoPs would be the key players in the economy.

Norris et al. (2003) wrote that educational institutions like colleges and universities or those producing tacit knowledge are:

- (1) Epicenters of a knowledge economy forming an intrinsic part of the economy and even.
- (2) Production centers of knowledge (Prof. Vice Chancellor of Wellasa of University of Sri Lanka).

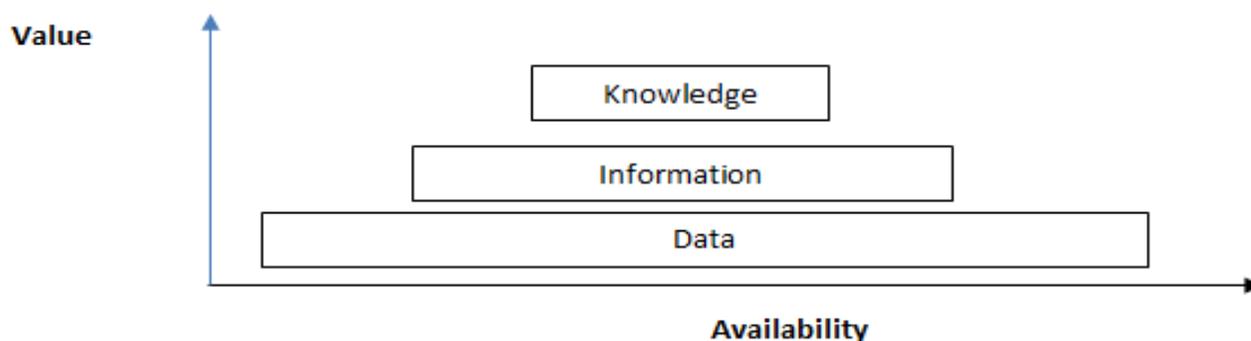
Given the challenges ahead, Cranfield and Taylor (2007) explain that HEIs would be forced to think about the way in which they teach, conduct research and manage institution and its various stakeholders. Mason et al. (2003) further evoked the responsibility of the academia to be reflective about the forms and uses of knowledge and its sharing practices. Cranfield and Taylor (2007) thought that universities could benefit from a competitive advantage using KM as a "business management tool". However, further research was required to explore the opportunities of implementing KM. An institution-wide approach could lead to better decision-making capabilities and a number of benefits in terms of university processes and services in the fields of:

- (1) Research process
- (2) Curriculum development process
- (3) Student and alumni services
- (4) Administrative services
- (5) Strategic planning and
- (6) Cost reduction.

The other aspect of KM revolution is looking at the knowledge sharing practices in HEIs whereby e-learning, KM and IT cannot be taken separately if strategic differentiation is to be achieved. They should be combined to invigorate the dynamics of institutional business practices and new knowledge-based experienced are to be unleashed to create enhanced value. Thus, the eventual mission and goals of universities are to create, organise, and share knowledge with appropriate people and groups to facilitate KM (Geng et al., 2004).

### **Managing data, information and knowledge**

Data, information and knowledge are distinct from each



**Figure 1.** Hierarchical form of data, information and knowledge.

other and are not interchangeable (Davidson and Voss, 2003). They are critical to KM, play a key role in the prevalence of KM and determine the type of intellectual capital available in organizations. De Long et al. (1997) relate the growing consensus about the importance of knowledge as a basis of competition and operational effectiveness. The three concepts are presented in a hierarchical form (Davidson and Voss, 2003) (Figure 1).

Data is important to every organisation to which Davidson and Voss (2003) explain that some establishments are seen to be entirely reliant on its usage. Described as raw materials for decision making, data are perceived as discrete, objective facts about events or simply as structured records of transaction. Data is not a commodity that can be used on its own but need to be processed into information, which in turn, is conceptualised as 'data invested with meaning' endowed with relevance and purpose (Drucker), contextual and yielding insight on application in a particular context (Norris et al., 2003). When information is obtained, data is contextualised, categorised and condensed. Moreover, the availability of data allows for advanced calculations as well as new discoveries or accurate information (Davidson and Voss, 2003). On the other hand, knowledge is more than information; when purpose is added it is transformed into knowledge – a philosophically slippery concept but easily recognized through different means such as:

- (1) Experience
- (2) Practical utility
- (3) Speed
- (4) Complexity and
- (5) Evolution (Davenport and Prusak, 1998).

It seemed complicated to Cranfield and Taylor (2007) because knowledge has several functions of interpreting, reflecting, creating, applying, realising, understanding, associating, recognising, and repurposing including its enhancement. Alfred (2002) asserts that knowledge is

regarded as the only resource that grows when shared, transferred and managed skillfully. It therefore rests on a social construct that could be enhanced through "interactivity and communication with others" rather than information understood as used "individually and in isolation"; joining what Davenport and Prusak (1998) contends that transformation of information into knowledge requires human intervention as humans apply their skills, ability, and experience, know-how, values and culture via some transformation, comparison, communication, connections and consequences to change information into knowledge.

### **KM process**

The theoretical framework of KM, developed by several theorists, explains the KM framework model and KM process as dynamic and continuous social process that involves:

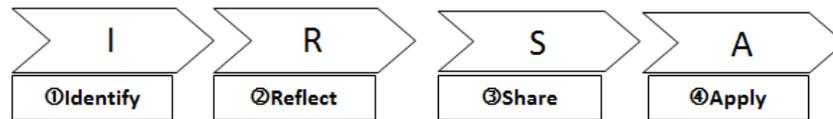
- (1) Acquisition/identification
- (2) Organisation/reflection
- (3) Storage and retrieval/sharing
- (4) Dissemination/application of knowledge resources to user group with relevant feedback to achieve organisational goals (Roknuzzaman et al., 2009) (Figure 2).

In principle, KM processes in an organisation should make information and knowledge:

- (1) readily available
- (2) recalled
- (3) easily retrieved.

### **KM culture, knowledge sharing practices and community of practices**

Culture seems to have a preponderant role in the



**Figure 2.** Knowledge management and sharing process.

realisation of KM. Cheng (2002) describes the challenges and opportunities of introducing new concepts and creating a change in the existing culture. Successful implementation of KM requires a new environment for knowledge sharing and is dependent on a number of human factors such as:

- (1) Staff development and training
- (2) Change management
- (3) Capitalisation of organisational knowledge as KM is integrated with business process
- (4) Technology tools
- (5) Enabling people to act more efficiently to create value and a conducive environment for sharing knowledge in the organisation.

Knowledge sharing culture is developed when organisations encourage people to work together more effectively, to:

- (1) Collaborate
- (2) Share
- (3) Make organisational knowledge more productive.

According to the American Productivity and Quality Centre (APQC), an effective way to initiate KM concept is to socialise the concept for alleviation of misconception on KM and promotion of KM concept more successfully (Cheng, 2002).

On another level, Norris et al. (2003) elaborated on the socialisation process of KM directing towards another dimension of the role of HEIs, which is to build opportunities to apply KM through knowledge sharing practices and CoPs. The existence and nature of CoPs in an organisation or institution are said to determine the success or failure of managing knowledge effectively. It joins Wenger (1998) description of the significance and bearing of CoPs which explain the process whereby people group themselves to share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly; members are engaged in joint activities and discussions, helping each other, and sharing information; building relationships to learn from each other; and eventually reaching optimum organisational excellence. It gave rise to the discussion

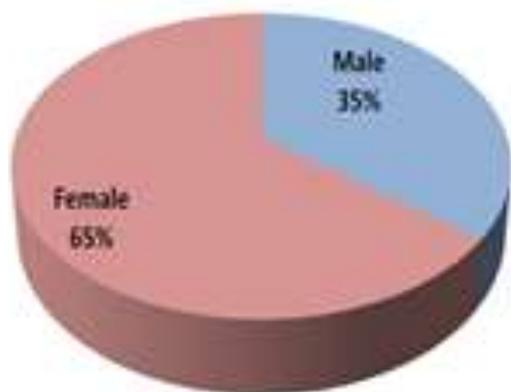
on educational institutions to establish a strong CoPs through which the best knowledge sharing practices could be tapped.

Cranfield and Taylor (2007) evoke the abilities of individuals, their skills, experience, values, work ethos and culture to transform information into knowledge and which can be acted upon to become broader organisational knowledge namely constituting both explicit and tacit knowledge. Colleges or universities also termed as knowledge-based enterprises toil to make right knowledge available to the right people at the right time. Norris et al. (2003) looked into academics' disposition towards embracing KM, and wrote that academics and educators are astoundingly unreflective about the nature of knowledge outside their immediate domain of interest. They would inquire about the reasons of sharing knowledge in their place of work. More so, knowledge generated from research activities rarely crosses disciplinary boundaries; it would rather stay within laboratories rather than be divulged; reside in archipelagos of individual knowledge clusters; not made available for "systematic sharing" and therefore is not what can be called "academic collaboration".

Practitioners do not substantially utilise the potential of knowledge networks and CoPs to interact; however, they believe that e-knowledge can change the situation as the new knowledge sharing ecology will ground itself in collaboration, communities of practice, and knowledge networks. Cheng (2002) argued that real knowledge sharing culture cannot be developed if people cannot see for themselves the benefits of knowledge sharing. However, in a qualitative study carried by Islam et al. (2011), the insights and views of the academics seem to have evolved as they recognise that knowledge sharing is a central concept of KM but it requires a complementary relationship between KM in an e-learning system in terms of their goals or objectives, components, tools and technologies. Knowledge sharing across the organisation is increasingly used as a strategic tool, to:

- (1) Boost customer service
- (2) Decrease product development times, and
- (3) Share best practice.

It is believed that computer systems that are networked



**Figure 3.** Gender proportion.

across organisational boundaries can improve the flow of information and knowledge to meet business goals. Intranets (an internal Internet) are seen as user-friendly and cost effective ways of achieving this. However, technology is merely the enabler. It is people who turn its potential into bottom-line benefits. This briefing outlines the role of intranets in knowledge sharing and suggests guidelines for achieving their potential. More than one research paper discusses the urgency of reviewing and transforming the knowledge ecology of colleges and universities so as to remain attractive to learners. Various stakeholders are found to be involved in the process like employees, supervisors, working teams or academics. Institutional leadership is challenged to get faculty and staff to:

- (1) Understand
- (2) Reflect on the nature of knowledge and
- (3) Promulgate it in different ways.

Educators and practitioners are also cautioned to be more reflective about their:

- (1) Current practices
- (2) Environment
- (3) Use of technology and
- (4) Implication to create new experiences to learners, faculty and staff (Norris et al., 2003).

Dermol (2011) purports that organisational incentives to transfer and share knowledge directly influence KM processes, employees processes, personal and organisational performance. As far as the MIE is concerned, research about KM concepts has not been explored yet. Until now, no survey has been carried on the outlook of academics on KM and their insights into knowledge, information and the current knowledge sharing practices at the MIE.

## METHODOLOGY

For this study, a qualitative approach was used 'to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context' (Yin, 1994). The research strategy chosen is explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. A survey was conducted at MIE among the academics through a questionnaire of 60 questions divided into 5 themes namely:

- (1) Perception about knowledge economy
- (2) Meaning of information and knowledge
- (3) Knowledge at MIE
- (4) Knowledge sharing practices and
- (5) Community of practices.

The questions were prepared to look into perception of the growth of the knowledge economy and how MIE is affected thereby;

- (1) Role and management of information and knowledge based on the functions of the academics at MIE
- (2) knowledge sharing practices among the academics at MIE; and
- (3) Existence of a CoPs and its strength, if any.

A pre-test survey was carried prior circulating the questionnaire among the population of academics at MIE (Figure 3).

## Profile of respondents in the survey

The age group of the academics varied between 25 to 65 years and above. Most of them (70%) are between 25 to 44 years old. 65% of the respondents are female and the rest are males. It is to be noted that the academic community at MIE consists mainly of women in a ratio of 2:1. Academics' main task remains the delivery of lecture (32%), their involvement in research and to a lesser extent some administrative work. Most of the respondents are interested in the results of the survey. The survey was coded and entered into a computerised database using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 16.0 software. The analysis plan is based on the construction of frequencies and percentages for the various variables/areas of the questionnaire.

## Reliability analysis

An assessment internal consistency reliability, which is expressed as a Cronbach alpha coefficient, is the degree of relatedness of the individual items in one factor or scale. The Cronbach alpha coefficient has a range of 0 to 1, where 0 indicates no internal consistency, and 1 indicates the maximum internal consistency. The alpha value of 0.70 or higher is usually considered acceptable. Hence, the result reveals a value of 0.794 which is higher than 0.70 indicating a high reliability and internal consistency of data (Table 1).

## RESULTS

Academics' opinion differs about fitting KM at MIE. There is an interesting disclosure on the ways academics value information and knowledge, and the styles of dealing with both at work. The study indicates that the majority of the academics hold an interest about Mauritius transiting towards a knowledge economy. They reveal their position about the challenges ahead of them to cope in their place

**Table 1.** Cronbach Alpha Reliability Analysis

Reliability statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
0.794	124

of work. Another aspect explored through the findings is the role played by MIE in helping its academics to create, generate as well as share knowledge at their end; this helps the study to throw light on the attitude of the academics towards knowledge sharing practices and community of practices.

### Knowledge economy

Very few academics opined that Mauritius is not transiting towards a knowledge economy. 80 % of the academics at MIE are of the opinion that Mauritius is, now transiting to a knowledge economy and only 12% of them seem to have no idea about such transition taking place. 47 % of the academics are of the opinion that the right initiatives are being undertaken to face challenges arising in a knowledge economy while 29% of the respondents feel that nothing has been done in this direction. 23% of the academics have no idea whether some initiatives about KM have been triggered within the economy. Surprisingly, 14% of the respondents still do not consider themselves to be part of a knowledge-driven society but the rest (85%) do feel that they form part of a knowledge-driven society. As far as MIE is concerned, 67% of the respondents believe that MIE is a knowledge-driven institution. Though the reasons have not been found out about why they feel so they evoke a number of barriers that stand in their ways to move towards a knowledge-driven society. They are of different dimensions. One is the lack of support of management followed by heavy workload added with administrative work, lack of access to data and appropriate technology, bureaucracy and corporate culture. Also, MIE is not seen to be involved in policy-making and decision matters at the level of the Ministry of Education. The academics are also of the views that misconceptions or gaps about knowledge should be cleared and good practices prevailing in other institutions should be given more exposure. To meet the challenges of a knowledge-driven society respondents highlighted that training, staff development, forum for discussion and exchange of views creating new knowledge, access to wider international literature and management support should be made available to them.

### Community of practices (CoPs)

CoPs at MIE are perceived mostly to be an informal

group (69%) rather than a formal group (31%). However, 93% of the respondents agreed that forming part of a group of interest is important and 40% think that belonging to a group of interest facilitate the sharing of knowledge. 73% of the respondents agreed they form part of a group with a common interest in MIE but only 53% considered the group a CoP; while 21% had no idea if it could be termed a 'community of practice'. The respondents think that, irrespective of belonging to a particular group they do not restrict themselves to share knowledge only with people they can trust; however, most agree that one can be more motivated to share knowledge with people of the same interest. It is interesting to note that about 17% of the respondents as peers or colleagues at MIE always share or share easily what they know while more that 50% of the respondents would be reluctant to share and 10% would never share what they know.

The following responses were obtained as reasons for which academics would join a group or a community of practice. Popular reasons are the benefits from the development of new knowledge, transfer of best practices, and increasing the level of knowledge, to learn and share further area of interest and to establish new contacts or friends. Though to a lesser extent, other reasons identified were the creation of synergy, collaboration with experts at MIE or elsewhere and locating solutions to tackle daily problems (Table 2, Figure 4).

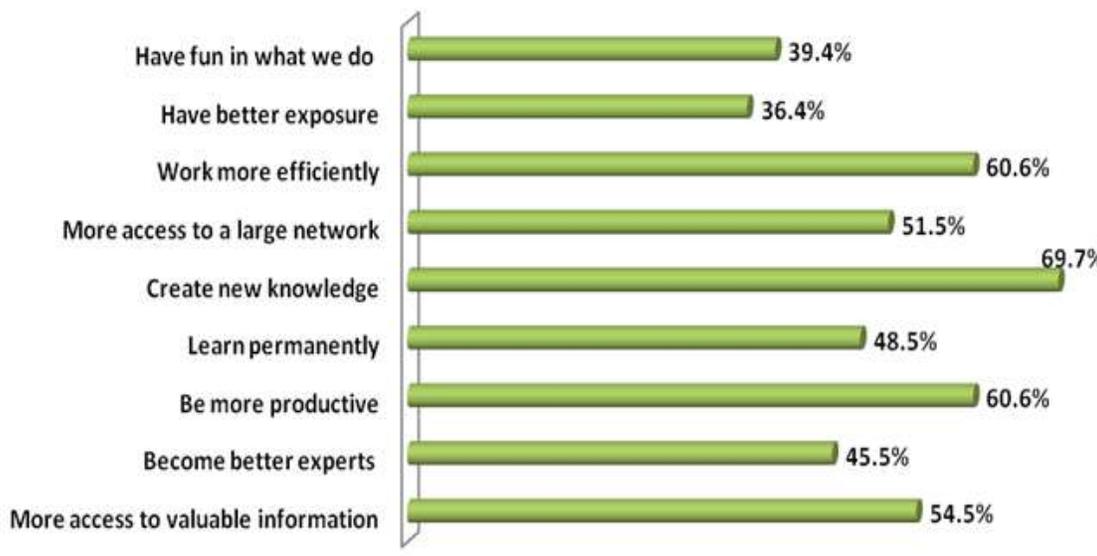
72% think that a group of interest facilitates the sharing of knowledge and 75% of the academics agree that they share knowledge better with colleagues or peer having common interest. 51% of the respondents would prefer to share their knowledge to share information with others as well as to build relationship with others rather than for any other reason like incentives (9%), idea of receiving information (21%), anticipated reciprocity (18%) or increased reputation (21%). However, 51% of the academics think that colleagues do not share knowledge so easily but are rather do so reluctantly at MIE. The benefits of joining a community of practice as staff of the MIE are principally to create new knowledge, achieve efficiency by being more productive, have more access to valuable information, develop access to a larger network, learn permanently and become better experts (Figure 5).

Only half of the respondents got the right meaning of knowledge. 70% of the academics would collaborate among themselves to improve the quality of work and generate new insight of their work and ideas. 48% of the academics like to collaborate to accede to new knowledge, bring some innovation in their functions as well as to achieve job satisfaction.

Work culture (49%) and motivation (24%) are recognised to be essential in the effective management of knowledge and information at MIE. According to academics, management initiatives (18%) and

**Table 2.** Reasons academics join CoP

Variable	Percentage
Deliver solutions for daily problems	25
Transfer of best practices	50
Identification of experts	14.3
Stimulate collaboration between experts	21.4
Development of new knowledge	57.1
Increase knowledge level	46.4
Speed up learning	10.7
Working on own in particular field with a larger group of experts and beyond the frontiers of MIE	21.4
Coordination of activities and projects	21.4
Create synergy	28.6
Make new contacts or friends	42.9
Learn and share area of interest	46.4



**Figure 4.** Benefits of joining CoP

technology (9%) play lesser important roles in managing information and knowledge effectively at MIE.

**Knowledge at MIE**

The academics’ views are quite dissimilar about the role, production and use of knowledge at MIE. At MIE, the academics agree that they (62%) not only use but also (66%) optimise the knowledge that they possess based on their functions carried at MIE. However, the academics tend to differ about the use of knowledge in the working environment at MIE. If 41% think that the MIE provide them with the best working environment to

create, use and share knowledge that they possess, 47% think that MIE has been helping with such environment “just a little”. At MIE, 44% of the academics are not sure whether new knowledge is being created and 18% think that new knowledge is not generated which got nearly all the academics believe that the MIE could do more to enhance the quality and quantity of knowledge (Figure 6).

**Knowledge management**

At the time of the survey, some academics never heard of KM or believed that it is just a management fad. Some (22%) do think that it could just be something the MIE is doing under a disguised form and only few (19%) think

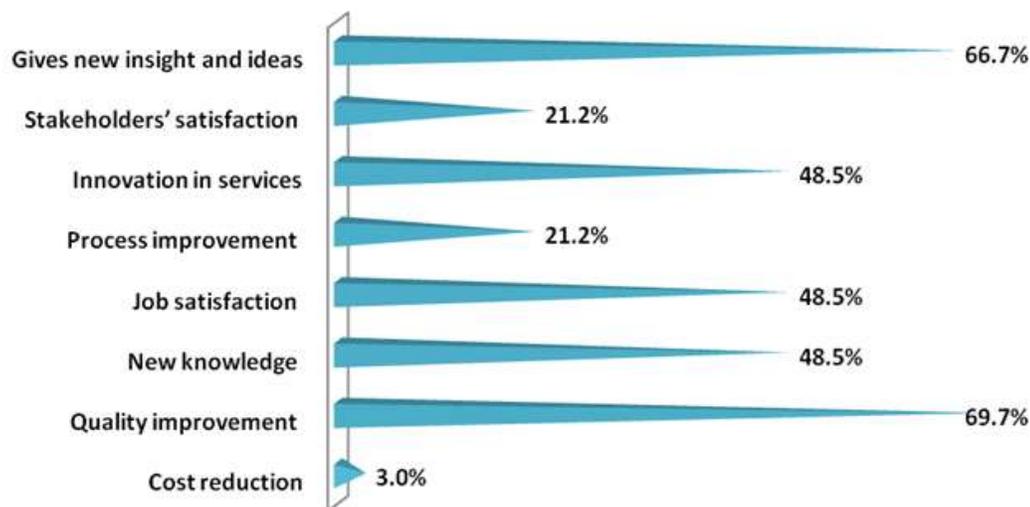


Figure 5. Reasons for knowledge sharing practices

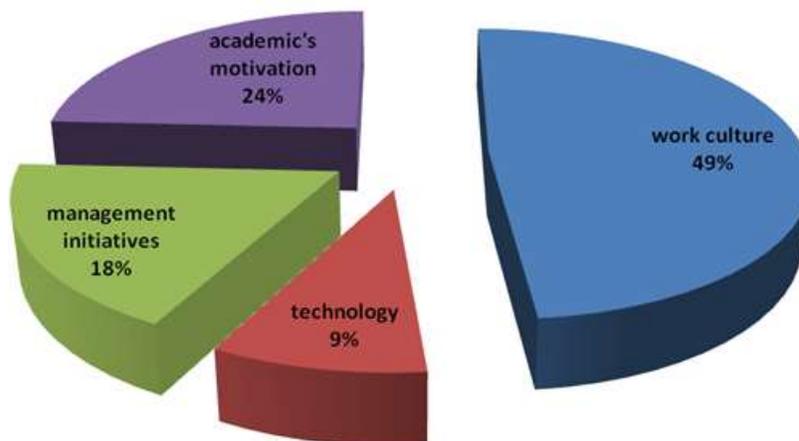


Figure 6. Factors affecting effectiveness of knowledge and information at the MIE

that it should be concerned with the strategic management at MIE. Interestingly, a larger population of the sample academics perceives KM to be 'something that could be beneficial for MIE' (Figure 7). The opinion that MIE's strength is knowledge differs though half of the respondents do agree to this statement though it is generally believed that it can do more to enhance the quality and quantity of knowledge as an educational institution. The academics are unsure that new knowledge is being created at MIE with the exception of few who opine that the MIE is not into creating new knowledge. However, a high proportion of the respondents is unsure or even thinks that MIE does not have a structure that enables the highest production of knowledge. 63% of the respondents answered that their

department 'knows' what they know and are able to optimise their personal knowledge at work. 24% of believe that their respective department know only a little of what they know and 34% believe they optimise elsewhere rather than at MIE. Around 46% of the respondents agree that MIE provides the best working environment to create, use and share knowledge that the academics possess and that it helps them in generating the knowledge that they possess.

### Knowledge sharing practices

Academics say that they are engaged in sharing what they know at MIE irrespective of the environment and

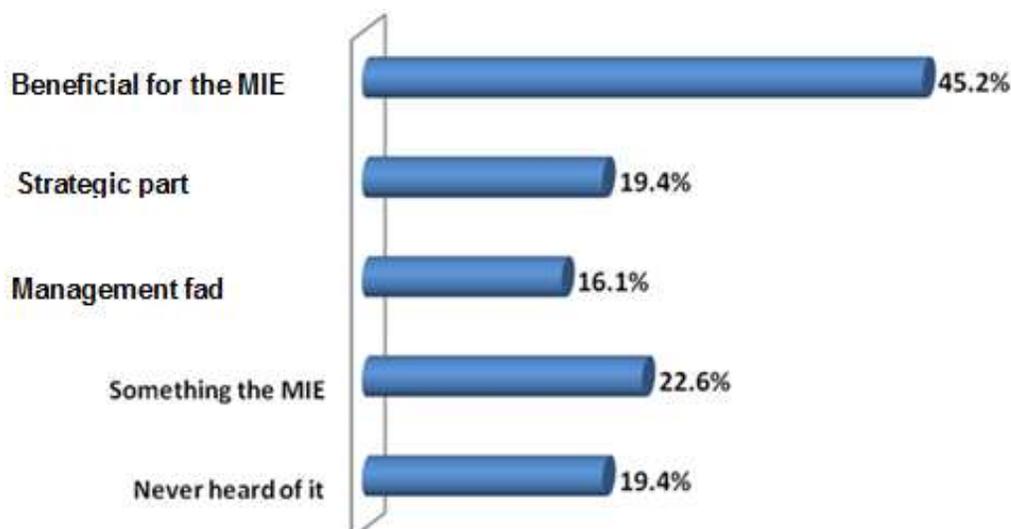


Figure 7. Academics' awareness about KM

facilities available to them and they are willing to share what you know in terms of information and knowledge. It was almost unanimous that the academics in the sample would not hoard any knowledge or skills for themselves. A number of reasons were highlighted about why academics would share what they the knowledge that they hold.

### Information and knowledge

This part of the survey deals with the perception of academics about information, its importance, its role in their workplace, managing information and barriers that prevent academics to use information effectively. The academics ascertain that knowledge is power and it is considered to reside mainly in the individual brains rather than the other options given namely services, organisational processes, books and written documents, products and facilities like internet. More than 50% of the academics perceive knowledge as an asset.

Only 54% of the academics feel that their department or the management recognises them as an intellectual asset in their work place. Knowledge is perceived as an asset rather than a tool and a means rather than an end. Training/seminars, internet and their own learning are three most effective ways to gather information and knowledge they possess over time. Colleagues/peers, work groups and the management are not really perceived to be obvious ways to gather information and knowledge. First of all, 59% of the academics indicated that knowledge stands as the most important resource before information (47%) and experience (36%) and only 12% pointed out that raw data are relevant as a resource.

Only 60% agree that the MIE provides for updated information to academics whilst 32% disagree. The survey reveals that technology has a very important role as it helps the academics to best gather more information relevant to the functions that they carry at MIE. Information generated by academics is used for different purposes; delivery of lectures (>81%); undertaking research (>30%); administrative work; and collaborating with management. Management of information appears to be important to respondents who add that the management at MIE could help effectively in this task.

Poor management of information prevents them from creating, sharing and using knowledge that they possess. 63.6% of the respondents agree that they are subject to dealing with larger mass of information than previously and 58% are of the views that large mass of information at their disposal allow them to carry their work more effectively. Most of the respondents agree that they can manage information on their own except 3% who admit not being really able to do so (Figure 8).

Technology and facilities like internet do not seem to be a barrier standing in the way to generate information at MIE but rather factors like time (>81%), attitudes of colleagues (>33%) and documents or materials (>27%) have been considered as obstacles. Knowledge is perceived as an asset (>59%), a means (>21%) but to a lesser extent as a tool (18%). However, most academics feel that the most important resource at MIE is human capital (49%) rather than knowledge (37%) leaving technology and information with a degree of lesser importance (<10%). More than half of the academics in the sample feel that their department or the management at MIE does value them as intellectual asset while 27.3% have no idea about it and 18% do not feel so.

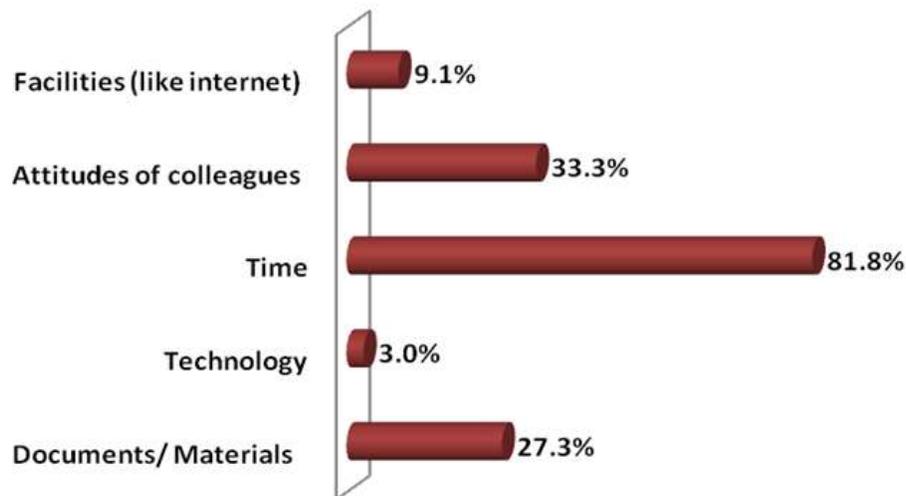


Figure 8. Barriers preventing generation of information required in the workplace

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Organisations operating in the new business environment therefore need to be adapting at creating and applying new knowledge as well as on-going renewal of existing knowledge archived in organisational databases. The revolution in technology creates the impetus of e-knowing and e-learning. Such trends would, undeniably, force colleges and universities to revisit their current practices as well as the CoP given that such transformation cannot stand alone. If colleges and universities are to survive in the increasing knowledge-driven society they need to focus on a making a strategic differentiation. Academics and educators who still passively remain unreflective about the nature of knowledge, outside their immediate domains of interest are the weak links in the process. The HEIs that currently exist are calling for a drastic transformation through revisiting the processes adopted by a learning organisation if organisational excellence is to be the driving force in the increasingly levelling up challenges ahead of next centuries.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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