

A Framework for Action to Improve Tacit Knowledge Sharing in Nigeria's Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Knowledge creation, sharing and use for research, teaching, learning and societal interventions is what Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are about across the world. However, HEI usually focus mostly on the production, publishing and use of explicit knowledge products, and often sub-optimally on the sharing and use of tacit knowledge. In view of this, this paper explored the role of tacit knowledge sharing in HEI in Nigeria, and how the institutions can improve their identification and use of available internal tacit knowledge resources. The methodology adopted was a literature search and discussion as basis for proposing a framework for action. This paper discusses the nature of tacit knowledge, institutional environment conditions for successful tacit knowledge transfers, as well as techniques for facilitating maximal use of tacit knowledge in HEI. An actionable framework for matching potential tacit knowledge transfer channels with tacit knowledge sources and recipients is proposed and discussed. This paper concludes that Nigerian HEIs need to embrace knowledge management tenets for the proper management and utilization of tacit knowledge, recommendations are provided towards achieving that objective.

Keywords: Tacit Knowledge, Knowledge Sharing, Universities, Nigeria

Introduction

Knowledge can be seen as the bedrock of sustainable development because it often leads to innovation and economic growth of a nation (Mohagan, 2016). In another perspective, knowledge is an important organizational resource for long-term sustainable competitive advantage and success of any organization (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995). Knowledge can be defined literally as actionable information which helps in reducing uncertainty as well as enhancing decision making. The idea of sharing knowledge is as old as knowledge itself because sharing from time immemorial facilitates transfers of knowledge from one person to another, from philosophers to their students and the larger society, or between rulers and the ruled, and within society, which invariably leads to generation of new knowledge, innovation and societal development.

Polanyi (1967) was the first philosopher to explicate two main categories of knowledge, i.e. explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is referred to as documented or recorded knowledge in such tangible artefacts as written correspondences, memo, books, newspapers, web pages and databases. Tacit knowledge is knowledge residing in people's minds which are often not explicitly articulated or recorded in external artefacts, but is often used when the possessor of the knowledge is confronted with a specific problem that needs solution. Tacit knowledge is usually expressed in responding to new situations and problems, therefore creating new knowledge (Pasher & Ronen, 2011). Tacit knowledge is however difficult to formalize because it is rooted in action, procedure, commitment values and emotions (Subashini, 2010). It may be observed and learned without any prior intention to observe and learn; therefore, the learner may not aware that knowledge acquisition has taken place (Leonard & Insch, 2005). Examples of tacit knowledge are the collections of personal experiences, know how, know why, know what, know about, beliefs, values, attitudes and cultural elements held in a person's mind.

Explicit and tacit knowledge complement one another and should always be made so, in the sense that one cannot exist or grow without the other. For instance, explicit knowledge without tacit insight loses its relevance and importance over time (Sanchez et al, 2012), and loses the contextual and application insight concerning the explicit knowledge. Therefore, knowledge creation and use entail interactions between tacit and explicit knowledge (Sanchez et al, 2012). Tacit knowledge is however often downplayed in most organizations due to lack of knowledge on its contributions to development and progress of the organization (Odiri, 2015). But, tacit knowledge cannot be overlooked due to its strategic role in sustaining competitive advantage (Tsuokas, 2003); and in impacting the society positively by influencing the right decisions to be made by government, industries and other relevant stakeholders. Tacit knowledge transfers and exchanges help to maintain sustainable development for the present and future generations, but only if articulated and applied well (Palmer, 2013).

HEIs play an indispensable role in the building and development of a nation. This role extends to producing experts in various fields who contribute to the generation, preservation and use of knowledge (Pircher and Pausits, 2011). They are knowledge intensive organizations which thrive in efforts to generate, store, share, use and preserve knowledge in order to successfully train students (Ozmen, 2010); and also produce research outputs that are disseminated globally, apart from nourishing their academic and other training programmes. Thus, HEIs serve as critical nodes in societies for advanced knowledge creation, sharing and use for the benefits of institutions and their internal and external participants and stakeholders.

In both developed and developing countries, the roles of HEIs in promoting sustainable development of arts, science and humanity have grown over the years. HEIs are involved in knowledge generation and dissemination thereby contributing to sustainable development of societies and the world. Sustainable development can be defined as the development that focuses on the immediate needs of the present without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their needs (United Nations, 2010). Education for sustainable development can be seen as a “process of equipping learners with the right understanding, knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities required to work and survive in a way that would contribute to the development and growth of a nation” (Ekene & Oluochi-Suleh, 2015).

HEIs are usually very much focused on explicit knowledge-related activities, which results from their constant focus on their creation, transfer and use of knowledge through internal unpublished documents such as teaching notes, essays, theses and dissertations, as well as published books and journal articles. Due to this their traditional emphasis, an aspect of which is referred to as the “publish or perish” imperative, HEIs are often unable to utilize optimally tacit knowledge for sustainable development in their research, teaching, learning, and public service engagement activities. HEI stakeholders are often inadequately knowledgeable of the importance and potential contributions of tacit knowledge to achieving their focus on explicit knowledge activities, inputs and outputs. However, the usually inadequate focus on the use of tacit knowledge in HEIs likely results in reduced capability for innovation, competitiveness and development (Gamble & Blackwell, 2001).

The full exploitation of the potentials of tacit knowledge for boosting the explicit knowledge creating and using activities of HEIs in Nigeria would require a paradigm shift from the conventional way of utilizing knowledge to more sophisticated methods that are relevant in this knowledge era. Due to the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), most of the HEIs in Nigeria are gradually embracing the tenets of Knowledge Management (KM) which emphasizes on capturing, preserving, sharing and managing knowledge to support learning and achieving the development goals. For instance, explicit knowledge management has been embraced considerably in institutions of learning to a certain extent due to the adoption and use of (ICTs). Quite a number of explicit or documented knowledge such as books, journals, databases and many more have been managed and preserved electronically to facilitate easy transfer and sharing from one person to another on several online platforms in HEIs (Dhamdhare, 2015). However, tacit knowledge management

has not been given adequate attention by HEIs in Nigeria as expected as a tool to achieving sustainable development. It has been pinpointed that effective management of tacit knowledge is a key success factor for sustainable long term development of an organization (Mohajan, 2016). Notwithstanding, tacit knowledge is very difficult to capture, share and store since it is difficult to be expressed and formalized (Majewska & Szulczyńska, 2014), more so, it is unconsciously acquired by people in their immediate environment. Therefore, HEIs may need to identify various ways of identifying, capturing and managing tacit knowledge to achieving sustainable development in education.

Due to the minimal exploitation of tacit knowledge in organizations as often noted in the literature, this paper explores how to promote use of tacit knowledge as a tool for improved performances of HEI in Nigeria. In achieving this, this paper discusses the concept and characteristics of tacit knowledge, elements for successful transfer of tacit knowledge sharing, and feasible techniques for facilitating greater sharing of tacit knowledge within and among HEI in Nigeria.

Tacit Knowledge

Tacit knowledge was first coined by Michael Polanyi in 1967 before several other scholars delved extensively on this concept. Tacit knowledge has been defined differently and similarly by authors with different philosophical backgrounds. For instance, Polanyi (1967) defined “tacit knowledge as something that we are not aware of its existence because it resides in the unconscious domain of an individual, that is, such knowledge is difficult to write or to be codified, and difficult to transfer “. According to him, “tacit knowledge connotes that individuals know more than they can tell”. In other words, tacit knowledge is embedded in the unconscious of an individual; therefore there is the need to tap this knowledge in solving specific problems or proffering solutions to problem arising situations. Therefore, effective transfer of tacit knowledge requires personal contact and trust before it can be shared successfully (Mohajan, 2016).

Nonaka and Takuechi (1995) defined tacit knowledge as personal and hard to formalise, it is rooted in action, procedures, commitment, values and emotions. In the context of an organization, tacit knowledge evolves from day to day experiences gotten from cultural or organizational environment such as work procedures and processes, clients, cultural elements among others. Tacit knowledge cannot be utilized by other people unless it is shared. Sharing of tacit knowledge can be enhanced through different transfer mechanisms and technologies as identified in the literature such as web 2.0 technologies, teleconferencing, video conferencing, organizational learning, communities of practice, observations, apprenticeship, mentoring, metaphors, analogies, storytelling, best practices, learning by doing, lesson learned cognitive maps, brainstorming among others (Chennamaneni, & Teng, 2011; Duguid, 2005). However, the only challenge lies in identifying, capturing and using tacit knowledge to solve a particular problem situation. If tacit knowledge is not identified and utilized by organizations, they may eventually lose the knowledge on account of death, retirement or voluntary departure of employees from the organization (Nnabuike & Onwuka, 2015). Therefore, HEIs need to devise ways of capturing tacit knowledge of their long serving employees before they exit their jobs due to unforeseen circumstances such as death, retirement and relocation of employment among others.

Tacit knowledge has been classified into four main categories by scholars in the literature (Lundvall and Johnson, 2011).

- *Know What:* It refers to knowledge about facts and information that are particularly known by experts in a field or discipline. They can be regarded as rule of the thumb or principles guiding a set of action or behaviour. Quite a number of experts or professionals depend on this category of knowledge. Examples are medical doctors and lawyers.

- *Know Why:* This refers to scientific knowledge on the principles and laws of nature. This kind of knowledge underlies scientific discoveries, technological development and product development in corporate organizations. This type of knowledge can be imbibed through learning and training.
- *Know How:* It defines the capability of doing something over time. This kind of knowledge is based on accumulative experiences in doing a particular task or job. Know how is peculiar to organizations with specific expertise on products and services. This kind of skill is relates to the methods and procedures for performing various tasks to desired performance and quality levels.
- *Know Who:* This refers to information about who knows what and who knows how to do what. This kind of knowledge expresses itself by being connected to experts who possess the required knowledge. This kind of knowledge is internal to an organization where there are experts with the requisite skills and knowledge.

These categories of knowledge are usually possessed by employees in organizations depending on their educational and work experiences in their lives and jobs, and it is the expected duty of the human resource departments in HEIs to identify which employees possess what kinds of the above tacit knowledge categories at any time and to deploy strategies and platforms for the sharing of the knowledge; to boost the problem solving, decision making and knowledge transfer and documentation capabilities of employees and the organization as a whole.

Mahajan (2016) and Pavlicek (2009) summarized the fundamental characteristics of tacit knowledge as extracted by them from various literature sources as follows:

- It resides in human mind or in peoples head
- It is unstructured
- It is difficult to see, codify, estimate
- It can be investigated, formalized, written down, captured and communicated accurately,
- It can be acquired by sharing experiences through observation, imitation and through face-to-face discussion or interaction
- It is difficult to learn, but can be learned through personal experience, practice, apprenticeship, observation, imitation, and reflection,
- It is rooted in action, procedures, commitment, values and emotions, etc.
- It can be transferred through coaching and mentoring
- It is rarely documented, highly individual, personal and hard to formalize,
- It is less familiar, unconventional form of knowledge
- It can be learnt through experiences, skills, observation, intuitive feeling, mental modes, beliefs, and values,
- It can deal with new and exceptional situations
- It is experience-based (knowledge-in action),
- It is mostly unconscious and invisible knowledge

These characteristics emphasize the both the importance of and the need for HEI to strategize to promote effective transfers of tacit knowledge among various potential sources and recipients within their internal and external public; towards achieving the goals of teaching, learning, research and public service relevance and engagements.

SECI Model of Tacit to Explicit Knowledge Conversion

Nonaka, Toyama, and Konno (2000) proposed the SECI model which identified four processes for conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge, and back to tacit knowledge: *Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization*.

Socialization: The first method is socialization, where tacit knowledge is converted into tacit knowledge through various direct interpersonal communications, interactions and observations, including meetings, discussion groups, team work, etc. For instance during

meetings convened by the university or across faculties, tacit knowledge may be consciously or unconsciously observed, shared and utilized appropriately to make decisions in real time or later.

Externalization: This method converts tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge during discussions and meetings. Tacit knowledge is captured through document, manuals and minutes of meeting. This later becomes explicit knowledge which can be used for reference purposes in circulars, memos and operational procedures.

Combination: This method converts explicit knowledge to explicit knowledge. It occurs when explicit knowledge gives rise to new knowledge. This new knowledge can further be documented to facilitate access and use.

Internalization: It occurs when explicit knowledge is converted to tacit knowledge through logic and reasoning, intuition and sense of judgement. This means that, for example, if a student accesses a documented work in form of a book or manuscript, he or she can derive and retain tacit knowledge.

The possibilities of sequential, non-sequential, cyclic and feedback interrelationships among these four stages should not be overlooked, as any of the stages may be repeated or jumped at any time, as tacit forms of knowledge are documented into explicit forms of knowledge, and as explicit knowledge is learned, evaluated and applied to solve problems.

Organization Environment Requirements for Tacit Knowledge Sharing

In HEIs, tacit knowledge sharing involves the process of transferring residual knowledge from a sender to the recipient using a specific medium. Tacit knowledge can be transferred through conventional methods such as mentoring, apprenticeship, discussions, face to face interaction among others. However, the evolvement of ICTs has enhanced the transfer of tacit knowledge through several electronic platforms such as online discussion groups, video conferencing, teleconferencing among others

In a bid to achieving successful transfer of tacit knowledge regardless of the media, there are some “Ba” elements that can aid easy transfer of tacit knowledge. “Ba” connotes a space for emerging relationship that takes place within or outside an organization. This space can be physical or virtual. Ba is a place where hidden knowledge can be revealed through certain elements such as culture of openness, trust, commitment, engagement among others (Stone, 2013). HEIs in Nigeria can integrate “Ba” elements in the academic environment to facilitate easy transfer of tacit knowledge among the academic and non-academic staff. Geromin (2015) identified some “Ba” elements that are relevant to HEIs as discussed below:

(a) *Corporate/Institutional identity:* Tertiary institutions of learning must develop strong corporate and institutional identity among their staff, students and other stakeholders. Everyone must be successfully persuaded to share the organizational values, vision, mission, goals, etc., as well as positive attitudes and strong beliefs towards sharing knowledge that align with organizational the goals.

(b) *Caring environment:* HEIs must create a caring environment for the employees constituting the academic and non-academic staff. These categories of employees serve as excellent sources of solving problems and creating new knowledge. Therefore their welfare should be given utmost priority by the management of these institutions. By this approach, tacit knowledge can be easily captured and shared.

(c) *Social dynamism:* This involves understanding the dynamics of social interaction and the need for continual interaction and communication between the academic and non-academic staff. There must be mutual trust, collaboration and emotional connectedness. In the course of interaction both parties would exhibit the right attitude and behaviour towards sharing which allows viewing problems from each other's perspective (Oztjok, 2012).

(d) *Trust and openness:* HEIs should imbibe the culture of trust and openness in the academic environment. The culture of trust and openness is a sine qua non for sharing tacit

knowledge by academic and non-academic staff. Effective transfer of tacit knowledge thrives well in an environment of mutual trust

(e) *Innovation and entrepreneurship*: The culture of innovation and entrepreneurship need to be entrenched in institutions of learning. Innovation can drive sustainable development which can be achieved through the maximum use of tacit knowledge. Innovation entails generating unique ideas to produce tangible products and services.

(f) *Intellectual activities and effort*: There must exist diverse platforms for diffuse and vigorous intellectual activities to foster tacit knowledge exchanges among the academic and non-academic staff to solve problems confronting the university system. Staff and student bodies and groups should be facilitated to organize frequent symposia, seminars, forums, retreats, etc. focused on specific issues, topics or subjects at the group, university, university system and societal levels.

(h) *Human and technological resources*: Human beings serve as store house for tacit knowledge, therefore, HEIs should be able to identify and cultivate experts that possess the requisite knowledge to tackle issues and proffer quick solutions. Apart from the human resource, the role of ICTs cannot be undermined in capturing tacit knowledge. There are specific technologies that can facilitate the capturing of tacit knowledge such as teleconferencing, video-conferencing, blogs, wikis, etc. These technologies should be tailored toward promoting the recording and sharing of both formally written explicit knowledge and informally and unconsciously expressed tacit knowledge among relevant stakeholders within the institution.

Tacit Knowledge Transfer in HEI in Nigeria: A Framework

Nigeria's HEI need to boost how they harness their existing and new tacit knowledge resources and opportunities to boost the effectiveness and efficiency of their research, teaching, learning and social intervention activities. Towards stimulating reflection and discussion on how to do this, Figure 1 provides a proposed action framework for effective tacit knowledge sharing in Nigerian HEIs, which identifies and matches various potential tacit knowledge sources, providers and recipients through different tacit knowledge interaction and exchange channels. The opportunities and strengths provided by the different channels for different possible sources and recipients are explained further below.

As reflected in Figure 1, there is a continual interaction between potential sources and recipients to aid successful transfer of tacit knowledge in HEIs. There are several potential sources of tacit knowledge that are equally recipients in HEIs. These sources are human agents that need to be managed maximally by individual institutions. These agents can be found within and outside the institutions such as students, academic staff, non-academic staff, research fellows, public/private employees among others. These potential sources can utilize several channels to aid the transfer of tacit knowledge such as conferences, faculty meetings, symposium, online platforms such as blogs, wikis, and social media platforms among others.

Sources, Providers and Recipients

The main sources, providers and recipients include:

- (a) *Academic staff*: Academic staff are viable sources of tacit knowledge based on their abilities to generate and exchange knowledge in their various fields of endeavours. In a situation, or forum where academic staff are brought together to discuss fledging issues, tacit knowledge can be easily captured, shared, refined and used to solve specific problem situations, and more importantly, taking appropriate decisions.

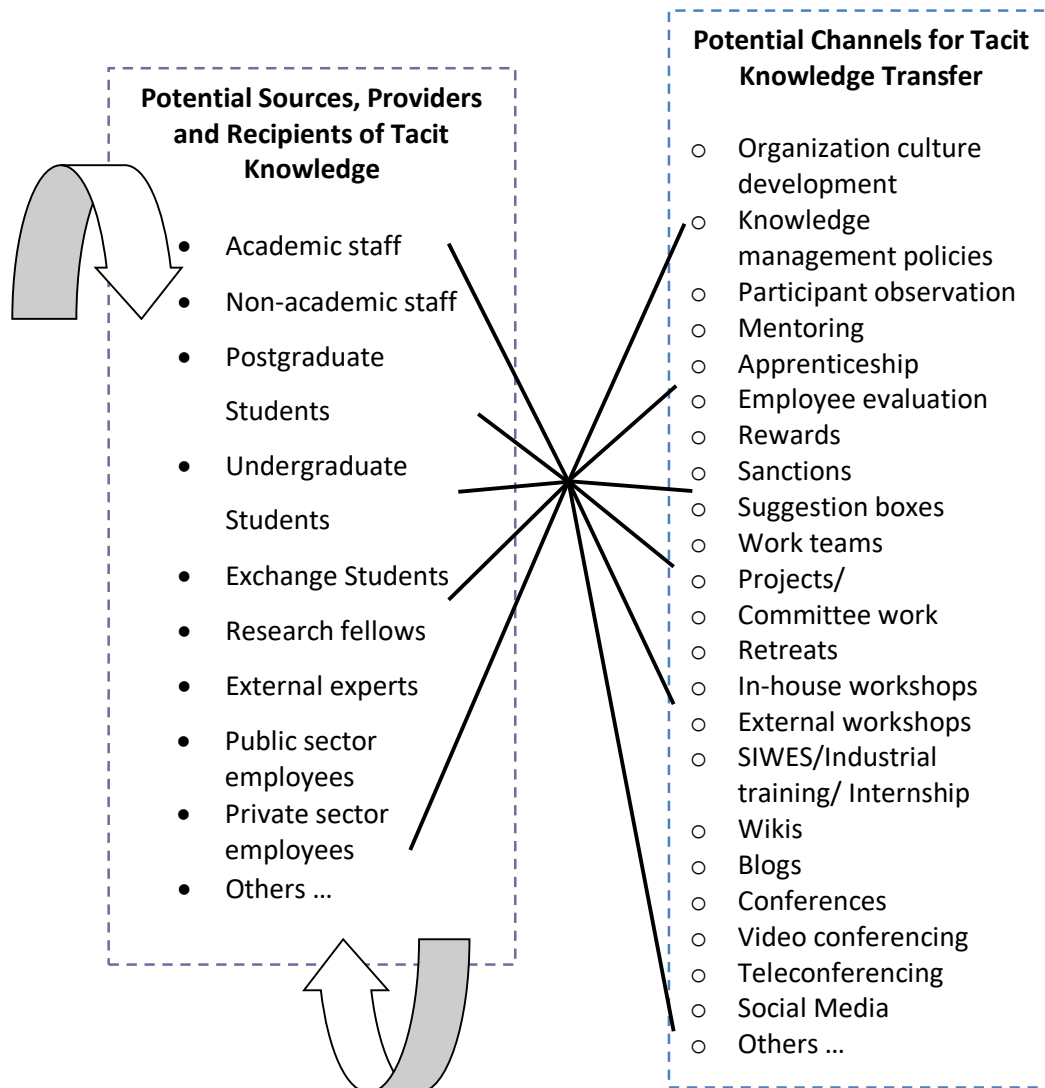


Fig. 1: Framework for Tacit Knowledge Transfer in HEIs

- (b) *Students*: Students generally, are potential sources of tacit knowledge in HEI. They are of different categories such as undergraduates, post graduates, exchange students among others. Students accumulate knowledge from time to time on their specific areas of interest and even outside their domain; also based on interactions with co-students and lecturers. Students can come together to share tacit knowledge or transfer through various channels such as workshops, seminars, conferences, exchange programmes within and outside institutions in Nigeria. There are other electronic channels that are mostly used by students to effect the acquisition and transfer of tacit knowledge such as video conferencing, teleconferencing and several online platforms among others.
- (c) *Non-academic staff*: Non- academic staff are employees in HEIs that carry out duties that are strictly related to administrative matters .This source is very potent due to acquisition of knowledge on daily tasks that pertains to the job. Tacit knowledge can be shared by non-academic staff through various channels such as meetings, retreat, online discussions among others.
- (d) *Research Fellows*: These categories of people are also viable sources of tacit knowledge. They are found in most public and private sectors. They have specialized knowledge and professional acumen that cannot be undermined. The Fellows can be

invited by HEIs to share their tacit knowledge in workshops, symposium, conferences, seminars, etc.

- (e) *External Experts:* These are experts in specific disciplines in HEI. These experts can be consulted to give specialized advice by management. They have specialized knowledge in their field of endeavour, which cannot be undermined. HEIs should capitalize on these categories of people by identifying and utilizing their knowledge base as means of sustaining development. Exchanges of written communication with these people results in exchanges of explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge exchanges can only be facilitated through contrived platforms within and outside HEI for team work problem solving processes involving these experts and the various internal HEI members. At times, professional experts can be sought outside HEIs, through consultancy or advisory services.
- (f) *Public and Private Sector Employees:* HEIs need to gain much tacit knowledge from the public and private sectors of the Nigerian society. The public and private sectors provide highly complex and contrasting contexts and cultures for problem solving and decision-making which HEIs need to understand deeply in order to be able to provide really relevant research, advice and interventions. The Nigeria public sectors, and often including the public HEIs, are often described as being inefficient and uncompetitive because of assured, even if inadequate, annual government financing. This contrasts with private sector organizations which must survive or die in often tough economic and market environments. Thus, public or private sector employees are potential sources of rich tacit knowledge, based on their accumulated experiences in their environments. HEIs can and should tap into this knowledge in order to promote new insights for problem solving and productivity and efficiency improvements.

The above list should not be considered as exhaustive, as it is possible to consider subdivisions of each of the above and other categories towards identifying the peculiar tacit knowledge they have and can be made to exchange.

Channels and Platforms

There are also diverse channels or platforms that can be created to facilitate the effective transfer of tacit knowledge among the above sources, providers and recipients. These include both traditional and modern, and manual and electronic channels, as discussed below.

- (i) *Mentoring Programs:* In ensuring effective tacit knowledge transfer, formalized mentoring programs should be implemented by HEIs which allows for proper selection and matching of mentors with mentees across faculties. Through formalized mentoring practices, tacit knowledge is consciously or unconsciously transferred from the mentor to the mentee and vice versa.
- (ii) *Rewards:* Human beings are the carriers of tacit knowledge; therefore, in a bid to effecting successful transfer of tacit knowledge, HEIs must ensure that employees are motivated to share knowledge continually. Employees can be motivated through several rewards in form of financial and non-financial incentives such as promotion, wage increment among others. HEIs should embrace a culture that rewards tacit knowledge transfer to prevent hoarding of knowledge by the knowledge holders. Rewards, such as promotions, awards, pay increment have been found to be positively related to knowledge contribution (Wang & Noe, 2010).
- (iii) *Organizational Culture of Sharing:* HEIs should embrace a culture of sharing that encourages easy transfer of tacit knowledge from one employee to another. The culture of sharing eliminates hoarding of knowledge which hinders the successful transfer of tacit knowledge. The culture of sharing in HEIs should emphasize on openness, free communication and interaction among students and lecturers.

- (iv) *Participant Observation*: This method allows the persons to keenly observe ongoing activities while participating fully, thereby facilitating both conscious and unconscious tacit knowledge transfer. Designed participant observation scenarios can be used to transfer tacit knowledge among various categories of people in HEIs. For instance various categories of students or staff can be grouped to carry out contrived or real tasks armed with instructions on how to systematically observe and interact to facilitate exchanges and acquisition of tacit knowledge as the tasks are being performed.
- (v) *Industrial Training/Internship/Apprenticeship*: In most HEIs, students are often required to undergo industrial training, internship or apprenticeship as means for acquiring practical on-hands experience before graduation. Through the industrial training experience, tacit knowledge is expected to be acquired by the students from their apprenticeship bosses or supervisors through the personal interactions. HEI should pay attention to effectively monitoring their students to ensure that they gain maximally from their experiences. Also, academic and non-academic staff of HEI can acquire tacit knowledge through short term attachments to various other kinds of organizations in the education and other sectors, and required to provide detailed documentation of their experiences for sharing, use and archiving. This objective clearly underlies the recent advocacy by the National Universities Commission (NUC) that academic staff of Nigerian universities should undergo industrial training to improve their abilities, prowess and knowledge base (<https://punchng.com/nuc-plans-industrial-attachment-for-lecturers/>).
- (vi) *In-House and External Workshops*: In-house or external workshops are channels of acquiring tacit knowledge for students and staff. Workshops generally have practical components to support training. This should be undertaken continually by HEIs in order to impart new skills to students and staff or improving on their existing skills. Workshops can be organized across departments and faculties in HEIs. In implementing this, resource persons can be invited as facilitators for the workshop to broaden the knowledge base of students and staff.
- (vii) *Wikis*: HEIs can design and adopt customized wikis that are unique to every faculty within the University. Wikis is web based software which allows people to post information and edit each other's entries (Banasu, Busu & Nedelcu, 2013). By this, tacit knowledge is shared, captured and disseminated through collaborative efforts of people on the platform
- (viii) *Video Conferencing/Teleconferencing*: These are ICT tools that can be used by HEIs to facilitate the transfer of tacit knowledge. Video or teleconferencing assists in the interaction of people regardless of the distance. These tools could be useful in HEIs especially for exchange programmes. Staff and students can visualize tacit knowledge displayed or verbalized through these technologies. Unfortunately, these tools are not often used by HEIs, perhaps, due the huge cost in procuring and maintaining them (Afolayan, 2015).
- (ix) *Suggestion Boxes*: This is a channel that is popularly used in most organizations. However, this channel can be maximally used in HEIs for the effective transfer of tacit knowledge. In order to entrench the culture of openness and communication in HEIs, suggestion boxes can be used as a viable channel in achieving this. Suggestion boxes can be placed at strategic places cutting across faculties and departments. Whenever, there are decisions to be taken on pending issues, it should be made open so that people can participate in the decision by making use of suggestion boxes as a means of getting their ideas to the right quarters. Students and staff can forward their good ideas and grievances via this channel to management.
- (x) *Social Media*: Communication on social media are often more carefree than through formal or technical communication media such as correspondences, memos, books and journals. The usual carefree communication footprints left by people to social media

provide a very rich source of insight knowledge about the thought processes, problem solving and decision making by people. Accordingly, HEIs can promote much tacit knowledge sharing among their members by encouraging and promoting autonomous use of different types of social media by academic and non-academic staff and students based on faculty, department, halls of residence, gender, etc.

Matching Channels and Platforms to Sources, Providers, Recipients

Identifying sources, providers and recipients of, as well as the diverse channels and platforms through which they can be brought together to promote tacit knowledge sharing is not enough. Of crucial importance also is ability to match potential providers and recipients with appropriate channels and platforms. This would require researching, recommending and applying relevant local and global best practices. This activity can be undertaken or sponsored by centres for excellence in teaching and learning, research management units, and gown-to-town and internationalization units in each HEI or by National Universities Commission.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Tacit knowledge sharing in HEI in Nigeria is a potent tool to achieving sustainable development in education. Sustainable development hinges on continual generation of knowledge from time to time to promote national and educational development. Therefore, in optimizing fully the use of tacit knowledge as a means of achieving sustainable development in education, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- i. Knowledge management practices should be promoted, facilitated and institutionalized by each HEI in Nigeria. These practices focus on identifying, capturing and utilizing tacit and explicit knowledge for the advancement of the Institution. Each institution should design an appropriate framework for knowledge management activities. The implementation of this framework should be championed and facilitated by experienced KM professionals.
- ii. Employees in the human resource departments of HEIs in Nigeria should be trained and updated on the tenets and practices of knowledge management and its strong linkage with human resources management. The human resources departments should implement various strategies to identify and harness various types of tacit knowledge required for enhancing production of explicit knowledge or for conversion to explicit knowledge using appropriate SECI processes.
- iii. Policies and environments for transparency, accountability and internal knowledge exchanges among units and departments and staff and student categories should be implemented by HEIs in Nigeria. This would assist employees to express their minds freely on issues that need urgent attention by management. This can equally be implemented by placing suggestion boxes in strategic places in the university and across faculties, thereby facilitating effective tacit knowledge transfers.
- iv. Sharing policy should be adopted by the University management. Sharing policy would enforce practices such as openness, freedom of expression and regular brainstorming for sustainable development within and outside the University environment.
- v. The framework proposed and explained above should be assessed, adopted, improved as needed, and implemented by the HEI, and the implementation evaluated from time to time. This would help in ensuring successful transfer of tacit knowledge among staff, students and other stakeholders of the HEI.
- vi. Future research should empirically investigate how HEIs in Nigeria are actually harnessing the various potential sources, providers, recipients and channels for tacit knowledge exchanges in HEIs.

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