

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

Student Name:	Alexandra Williams
Student Number:	2126654
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Introduction

Knowledge is an important resource in organisations because it helps to make decisions, improve efficiency and meet goals. Knowledge management is particularly important in all sectors, but for example, in education, responsibilities for safeguarding, government regulations, financial, student and employee data and records, involves the management of large amounts of information.

Knowledge management is about how organisations generate, store, share and use knowledge. It includes formal information (policies, systems) and informal knowledge (staff experience and judgement).

Alavi and Leidner (2001) define knowledge management as the process of creating, storing, sharing and applying knowledge within an organisation to improve decision making and organisational performance.

The report will assess the important concepts of knowledge management such as the relationship between data, information and knowledge and the difference between tacit and explicit knowledge. It will also consider how individual knowledge relates to organisational knowledge.

The report will then consider knowledge management processes and will apply the concepts to a workplace setting and explain how to develop a framework for knowledge management improvement including systems, knowledge assets and Key Performance Indicators (KPI).

1. Evaluation of Knowledge Management Concepts

1.1 Data, Information and Knowledge

Data, information, and knowledge are often described as a hierarchy, where each level builds on the one before it. (Rowley, 2007)

Data refers to raw facts that have little meaning on their own. For example, numbers or individual records are considered data.

Information is created when data is organised and given meaning. This allows patterns to be identified and understood.

Knowledge is developed when information is combined with experience, understanding, and context. Knowledge allows individuals to make decisions and take action. For example, in a school office environment, this can be seen in attendance monitoring, by attendance marks are data, reports are information, and identifying patterns or safeguarding concerns is knowledge. This shows how knowledge supports decision-making in practice

One commonly used model to explain this is the DIKW hierarchy (Data–Information–Knowledge–Wisdom). See figure 1 below

Figure 1 – Data Information Knowledge and Wisdom Pyramid



However, this process is not always simple. The way information is interpreted can vary depending on experience, which means knowledge can and will differ between individuals. This can lead to inconsistencies in decision-making. (Ackoff, 1989)

According to Ackoff (1989), knowledge is developed when information is interpreted and applied using experience and understanding.

1.2 Tacit and Explicit Knowledge

Knowledge can be further divided into tacit and explicit forms.

Explicit knowledge is that which is documented and easily shared. Including official guidance, policies & procedures.

Tacit knowledge is personal knowledge, learned through experience. It includes skills, intuition, and judgement and is often difficult to explain or document.

Both kinds of knowledge are important. Tacit knowledge enables people to deal with real life situations, while explicit knowledge provides consistency and compliance.

However, tacit knowledge can be a risk as it is not always shared. If it isn't recorded, it can be lost when staff leave. (Smith, 2001)

Tacit and Explicit Knowledge in Practice

As a School Office Manager/Administrator, I use both explicit and tacit knowledge on a daily basis to help ensure the smooth running of the school. According to Nonaka (1994), explicit knowledge refers to knowledge that can be codified, documented and shared through formal systems, whereas tacit knowledge is personal, experience-based and often difficult to articulate. This distinction is evident within my role.

Nonaka (1994) argues that both tacit and explicit knowledge are essential because an organisation relies on documented information as well as employee experience and judgement.

Explicit Knowledge

Explicit knowledge is codified knowledge that can be easily communicated and shared through documents, procedures and systems (Nonaka, 1994). Within my role, this includes policies, procedures, financial systems and official guidance. For example, when it comes to school finances, I follow established processes for submitting purchase orders, processing invoices and meeting audit requirements. Similarly, when supporting teachers and external professionals, I utilise documented procedures such as safeguarding policies, referral procedures and attendance

procedures to ensure consistency, accuracy and compliance with organisational requirements.

Tacit Knowledge

Tacit knowledge is developed through experience and is often more difficult to express or document because it is based on personal judgement, intuition and practical understanding (Nonaka, 1994). This is evident in my communication with parents and carers, where I adapt my tone and approach depending on the situation to achieve positive outcomes. It is also used when supporting staff, as I develop an understanding of individual working styles and can anticipate needs or pressures, particularly during busy periods.

Tacit knowledge is particularly important when working with multiple professionals and children. For example, I may recognise when a situation requires urgent attention based on subtle cues, even when this is not explicitly stated in procedures. Similarly, when working with children, I often draw upon my experience to identify when a child may need support, even if they do not communicate this directly.

Both types of knowledge are complementary and essential within my role. Explicit knowledge ensures that tasks are completed correctly, consistently and in accordance with regulations, while tacit knowledge enables me to apply this information effectively in real-life situations, build positive relationships and respond flexibly to the needs of the school environment. This reflects Nonaka's (1994) view that organisational knowledge is created through the interaction of tacit and explicit knowledge.

The combination of tacit and explicit knowledge enables me to perform my role effectively, maintain professionalism and provide a supportive environment for staff, parents and pupils. Furthermore, effective knowledge management involves the creation, storage, transfer and application of knowledge within organisations (Alavi & Leidner, 2001), all of which are demonstrated through the daily activities and responsibilities associated with my role. Within the school office role, explicit knowledge includes safeguarding procedures and financial systems. Tacit knowledge

is used when dealing with parents, supporting staff, or recognising when a situation requires attention.

Application of the SECI Model

The interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge can be further explained through Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI model, which describes how knowledge is created, shared and transferred within organisations. The model consists of four stages: Socialisation, Externalisation, Combination and Internalisation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Together, these stages explain how individual knowledge can become organisational knowledge and contribute to continuous learning and improvement.

1.3 Individual and Organisational Knowledge

The difference between tacit and explicit knowledge also points to the relationship between individual and organisational knowledge. Individual knowledge is the knowledge, skills, and experience that employees build up through their work and professional practice. Organisational knowledge, on the other hand, is the collective knowledge of the organisation, which is captured and shared through systems, policies, procedures, and databases (Wiig, 1997).

A major challenge for organisations is that valuable knowledge is often held by individuals rather than being formally documented. This can create risks when experienced employees leave, retire, or are absent, as valuable knowledge may be lost. Therefore, organisations need to put in place effective knowledge management practices that enable them to capture, store, and share knowledge to ensure continuity, efficiency, and consistent service delivery (Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

Knowledge of administrative systems, communication approaches, and problem-solving techniques is often developed through experience within a school office environment. The ability to manage complex parental enquiries, to coordinate with external agencies, and to prioritise competing administrative demands is knowledge

that develops over time. If this knowledge is not shared or documented, it can be hard for new staff to do their job well. Therefore, transforming individual knowledge into organisational knowledge is essential to support succession planning, staff development, and operational continuity.

The relationship between individual and organisational knowledge is particularly important in schools where service continuity is critical. Good knowledge management means that expertise is retained within the organisation, rather than being dependent on individual employees, reducing the risks associated with staff turnover and supporting long-term organisational learning.

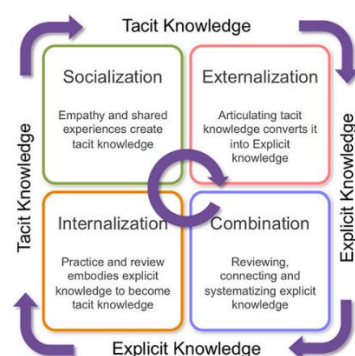
This demonstrates why schools need systems that capture employee knowledge and make it available to others across the setting.

2. Knowledge Management Processes

2.1 Knowledge Creation

Knowledge creation is the process through which organisations develop new knowledge through experience, training, problem-solving and collaboration. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), knowledge is created through the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. Their SECI model explains how knowledge develops and is transferred within organisations through four stages: Socialisation, Externalisation, Combination and Internalisation.

(SECI Model of Knowledge Creation (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995), 2019)



Socialisation involves sharing knowledge through observation and experience. Externalisation occurs when tacit knowledge is documented and shared with others. Combination involves organising and integrating different sources of explicit knowledge, while Internalisation occurs when individuals apply knowledge in practice and develop their own understanding.

Within my role as a School Office Administrator, knowledge is created daily through interactions with staff, parents, pupils and external professionals. For example, when dealing with new attendance procedures or changes in safeguarding guidance, I develop knowledge through training, practical experience and collaboration with colleagues. This knowledge can then be shared with others through discussions, guidance documents or administrative procedures.

The SECI model demonstrates that knowledge creation is a continuous process rather than a one-off activity. In a school environment, this supports organisational learning and helps ensure that valuable knowledge is retained and shared across the organisation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Table 2 illustrates how the SECI model can be applied within my role as a School Office Manager/Administrator.

Table 2: Application of the SECI Model in a School Environment

SECI Stage	Description	Example from Practice
Socialisation (Tacit to Tacit)	Knowledge is shared through observation, discussion and experience.	Learning effective communication techniques and administrative processes by observing experienced colleagues and collaborating with teachers and external professionals.
Externalisation (Tacit to Explicit)	Personal knowledge is documented and shared with others.	Creating written procedures, guidance notes or checklists based on experience of admissions, attendance monitoring or safeguarding referrals.

Combination (Explicit to Explicit)	Different sources of documented knowledge are combined to create new knowledge.	Using attendance data, safeguarding records, financial information and government guidance to produce reports and support decision-making.
Internalisation (Explicit to Tacit)	Individuals apply documented knowledge in practice, developing personal understanding and experience.	Applying policies, procedures and training in day-to-day work until they become embedded within professional practice.

The SECI model highlights that knowledge management is not only about storing information but also about creating opportunities for knowledge sharing and learning. This process within the school environment helps to support effective decision-making, regulatory compliance and continuous improvement. Encouraging both the sharing of experience and the effective use of documented information enables schools to ensure that valuable knowledge is retained and utilised even when staff roles change or experienced employees leave the organisation.

The SECI model is particularly relevant within educational settings because much of the knowledge required to support pupils and families is developed through experience and professional judgement. However, organisations can become overly dependent on tacit knowledge if important expertise is not documented and shared, creating risks when experienced staff leave the organisation.

2.2 Knowledge Storage, Capture and Verification

Once knowledge has been created, it must be captured and stored so that it can be accessed and used in the future. Knowledge storage involves recording information within documents, databases and digital systems to ensure continuity and organisational memory (Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

Knowledge can be stored in a variety of formats, including policies, procedures, electronic records and management information systems. However, if information is poorly organised, duplicated or outdated, it can become difficult to locate and use effectively.

Within a school environment, knowledge is stored through systems such as Arbor, shared drives, financial management systems and safeguarding records. As a School Office Administrator, I regularly access and maintain these systems to ensure that information remains accurate, accessible and compliant with organisational requirements. Verification is also important to ensure that information is reliable and up to date, particularly when managing pupil records, attendance information and financial data.

Effective storage and verification processes help ensure that important knowledge is not lost and can be accessed when required to support decision-making and operational activities.

Knowledge storage is particularly important within schools because information relating to safeguarding, attendance and finance may be required for future decision making, inspections or audits. (Alvi & Leidner, 2001)

2.3 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing refers to the transfer of information, expertise and experience between individuals and groups within an organisation (Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

Effective knowledge sharing supports teamwork, consistency and organisational learning. (Davenport et al., 1998)

Knowledge can be shared through formal methods such as meetings, training sessions, reports and emails, as well as informal discussions and collaboration between colleagues. However, barriers such as time pressures, poor communication or reluctance to share knowledge can reduce its effectiveness.

Within my role, knowledge sharing takes place regularly through communication with teaching staff, senior leaders, parents and external agencies. For example, attendance information, safeguarding concerns and administrative updates are

communicated to relevant stakeholders to ensure that decisions are based on accurate and timely information. Sharing knowledge effectively helps maintain consistency and supports the smooth operation of the school.

2.4 Good Knowledge Application

Knowledge application occurs when knowledge is used to support decisions, solve problems and improve organisational performance. Without application, knowledge has little practical value (Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

In a school setting, knowledge is applied in a variety of ways. For example, attendance data may be analysed to identify patterns of absence and potential safeguarding concerns. Financial information may be used to support budgeting decisions, while knowledge of policies and procedures helps ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

As a School Office Administrator, I apply knowledge daily when responding to enquiries, supporting staff, managing records and ensuring that procedures are followed correctly. The effective application of knowledge enables informed decision-making and contributes to the efficient operation of the school.

3. Developing a Knowledge Management Framework

3.1 Business Case for Knowledge Management

A business case for knowledge management explains why organisations should invest in systems and processes that support the creation, storage, sharing and application of knowledge. Effective knowledge management can improve efficiency, reduce errors, support decision-making and ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements (Davenport, De Long, & Beers, 1998).

Within schools, knowledge management is particularly important because of responsibilities relating to safeguarding, attendance, financial accountability and data protection. Effective management of knowledge helps ensure that information is accurate, accessible and available to those who need it, supporting both operational effectiveness and educational outcomes.

Furthermore, knowledge management reduces the risks associated with staff turnover by ensuring that valuable organisational knowledge is documented and shared rather than remaining with individual employees. This contributes to continuity of service, improved performance and organisational resilience.

3.2 Current Knowledge Management Systems

Knowledge is stored in several different ways within schools, including digital systems, emails, and paper records. These systems allow information to be saved and accessed when needed. Again, according to Alavi and Leidner (2001), storing knowledge effectively helps organisations retain important information and supports decision-making.

In my role as a School Office Administrator, I use systems such as local authority shared drives, applications, approved LA programmes (Bromcom) and email to manage information relating to attendance, safeguarding, finance and communication with parents and staff. These systems are useful because they make information easier to access and share. However, when information is stored in different locations, there can be problems such as duplicated records, inconsistent information and difficulty finding documents.

To improve efficiency, schools should ensure that information is organised clearly and stored in a consistent way across all systems.

3.3 Knowledge Assets

Knowledge assets are resources that provide value to an organisation. These can include staff experience, policies and procedures, organisational data and professional relationships (Davenport et al., 1998).

Within a school environment, staff knowledge and experience are particularly valuable. Experienced staff often develop practical knowledge about safeguarding, attendance procedures and communication with parents that helps the school operate effectively. Policies, procedures and data are also important because they provide information that supports decision-making and ensures consistency. These knowledge assets should be managed carefully to ensure that important knowledge is not lost when staff leave the organisation.

3.4 Strategic Action Plan

To improve knowledge management within the school, several actions could be taken.

Firstly, important knowledge should be captured by documenting key procedures and creating guidance documents. This would help reduce reliance on individual members of staff.

Secondly, information storage could be improved by organising files more effectively and storing documents in central locations where staff can easily access them.

Thirdly, knowledge sharing could be encouraged through staff meetings, training sessions and opportunities for collaboration.

Fourthly, data should be used more effectively to support decision-making, particularly in areas such as attendance, safeguarding and finance.

Finally, information security should be maintained through compliance with data protection legislation and appropriate staff training. (Department for Education, 2023)

Table 3: Strategic Action Plan for Knowledge Management Improvement

Objective	Action	Expected Benefit
Capture Knowledge	Document key procedures and create guidance documents.	Reduces reliance on individual staff members and supports continuity.
Improve Storage	Organise files more effectively and store documents in central locations.	Improves access to information and reduces duplication.
Improve Knowledge Sharing	Use staff meetings, training sessions and opportunities for collaboration.	Encourages organisational learning and improves consistency.
Improve Knowledge Use	Use attendance, safeguarding and financial data to support decision-making.	Supports informed decisions and improved performance.
Improve Information Security	Follow data protection legislation and provide staff training.	Reduces risk and supports legal compliance.

3.5 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

KPIs are measures that organisations use to monitor performance and assess whether objectives are being achieved.

Table 4: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

KPI	Target	Purpose
Attendance Rate	Above 95%	Monitor pupil engagement
Response Time	Within 24 hours	Improve efficiency
Training Completion	100%	Support knowledge sharing
Financial Accuracy	98%+	Ensure compliance
Safeguarding Reporting	Same day	Improve responsiveness

These measures can help identify areas for improvement and monitor the effectiveness of knowledge management activities. However, KPIs should not be used on their own because they do not always show the full picture of organisational performance.

3.6 Information Governance

Information governance is concerned with ensuring that information is managed securely, accurately and appropriately. This is particularly important within schools because staff handle sensitive information relating to pupils, parents and employees. Good information governance helps ensure confidentiality, accuracy and accessibility of information. In my role, I regularly work with pupil records, safeguarding information and financial data, all of which must be managed in line with school policies and data protection legislation. (*UK GDPR Guidance and Resources*, 2026)

Effective information governance helps schools remain compliant with legal requirements while maintaining trust with pupils, parents and staff.

4. Critical Discussion

Knowledge management provides many benefits, including improved decision-making, greater efficiency and better sharing of information. However, organisations can face several challenges when trying to manage knowledge effectively.

One challenge is that staff may not always have enough time to document and share their knowledge. Another challenge is that organisations can become dependent on experienced employees whose knowledge has not been recorded. This can create problems if those employees leave the organisation.

Within schools, it is important to balance formal systems and procedures with the flexibility needed to respond to different situations. Effective knowledge management should support staff rather than create unnecessary administrative burdens.

Conclusion

Knowledge management plays an important role in modern organisations, particularly within schools where large amounts of information must be managed accurately and securely.

This report has explored the relationship between data, information and knowledge, as well as the differences between tacit and explicit knowledge. It has also examined how knowledge is created, stored, shared and applied within a school environment. Overall, effective knowledge management helps improve efficiency, supports decision-making and reduces the risk of knowledge being lost. By continuing to develop knowledge management systems and practices, schools can improve both organisational performance and the quality of support provided to staff, pupils and families.

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