

Sustaining Expertise: Knowledge Transfer Practices of Human Resources (Employees) Across Generations in Saint Louis University, Baguio City

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Abstract— This study investigated knowledge transfer practices, organizational challenges, and strategies for sustaining human resource expertise across generational cohorts at Saint Louis University, Baguio City. Utilizing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, data were gathered from 55 respondents, including HR officers, academic deans, department heads, and teaching/non-teaching personnel. Findings revealed a high overall practice of knowledge management ($\bar{x}=3.52$), with strong support for acquisition ($\bar{x}=3.82$) and documentation ($\bar{x}=3.76$), but lower engagement in structured mentoring ($\bar{x}=3.22$). Primary operational and technological barriers ($\bar{x}=3.44$) included tech capability gaps ($\bar{x}=3.73$), varied learning styles ($\bar{x}=3.62$), inadequate documentation ($\bar{x}=3.62$), and limited time and resources ($\bar{x}=3.60$). To sustain institutional expertise, collaborative technology platforms ($\bar{x}=4.16$) and a culture of openness and trust ($\bar{x}=4.09$) were identified as the most impactful strategies. The study concludes that HEIs must integrate accessible digital infrastructure with flexible, intergenerational mentoring to preserve both explicit and tacit knowledge.

Keywords— Explicit Knowledge, Human Resource Management, Higher Education Institutions, Intergenerational Learning, Knowledge Management, Knowledge Transfer, Tacit Knowledge, Succession Planning,

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective knowledge transfer among generations within human resource management (HRM) is critical for preserving expertise and maintaining a competitive edge during demographic shifts and retiring workforces (Igoa-Iraola et al., 2025; Calo, 2008). Without proactive strategies, organizations risk losing institutional intelligence, causing reduced productivity and innovation (Burmeister & Deller, 2016; Transmitting Generational Knowledge, 2024). This study explores multi-generational HR teams to identify best practices for cross-generational knowledge exchange, evaluating how different learning styles, knowledge management systems, and socio-technical flexibility support continuous intergenerational learning (Lim, 2015; Hillman & Werner, 2017; Flinchbaugh et al., 2016). Ultimately, successful knowledge management relies on employee engagement, organizational culture, and technological integration (Rasheed et al., 2024; Fasbender et al., 2021).

A multigenerational workforce comprising Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z brings diverse perspectives that require customized development strategies (Jain & Maheshwari, 2020). Age-diverse HR practices improve retention and emotional attachment (Rašticová & Hinzmann, 2024), but unmanaged differences in values and communication can create friction (Azhar et al., 2021). Tailoring mentoring and age-management approaches preserves core competencies against early retirements (Hans et al., 2023; Vrabcová et al., 2022). Furthermore, intrinsic motivators, such as generativity in older workers and development striving in younger

ones, drive mutual exchange (Fasbender et al., 2021), while proactive personalities and supportive national policies enhance resilience (Mansour & Tremblay, 2019).

Knowledge management requires distinguishing raw information from actionable knowledge (Blanchard & Thacker, 2009). Knowledge exists as explicit knowledge (codified, documented data) and tacit knowledge (personal experience and intuition) (Booth, 2008). Systematic knowledge transfer uses digital systems for explicit knowledge and interpersonal mechanisms like mentoring or job rotation for tacit knowledge (Stevens, 2010; Awada & Youssef, 2024). Capturing tacit expertise via experiential learning is essential to mitigate impending retirement waves and external disruptions (Caldas et al., 2014; Tanpoco & Cordova, 2023). Reciprocal learning models challenge single-direction views by showing that both older and younger cohorts actively share expertise (Gerpott et al., 2015).

Preserving knowledge protects intellectual capital, accelerates onboarding, and enhances decision-making agility (Barnfather et al., 2024; Rezaei, 2024). Managing generational diversity requires moving past one-size-fits-all HR strategies to balance younger workers' desire for growth with older workers' preference for stability (Vražňáková et al., 2021; Pinto et al., 2014). Synergizing digital fluency with strategic experience stimulates innovation and counters turnover risks among younger staff (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008). Inclusive age-management practices ultimately build an organizational sense of belonging and sustain long-term performance across varied business settings (Waligóra, 2024; Mothe & Nguyen-Thi, 2021).

Multiple theoretical frameworks illuminate cross-generational knowledge dynamics beyond simple transmission. Social Exchange Theory explains reciprocal interactions based on cost-benefit trade-offs. Generativity Theory highlights the intrinsic desire to mentor future generations. Situated Learning Theory stresses context and communities of practice. Social Cognitive Theory connects learning to observation and self-efficacy. Activity Theory views knowledge transfer as tool-mediated, collective practice (Gerpott et al., 2016).

This research also advances several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) through sustainable knowledge retention and intergenerational collaboration (UN, 2015; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Donate & de Pablo, 2015; Szulanski, 1996).

Despite extensive literature on generational differences, empirical research remains scarce regarding concrete HRM practices that integrate Generation Z and align informal networks with formal protocols (Vrabcová et al., 2022; Ervina & Yuniawan, 2022; Surugiu et al., 2025). Broad conceptual frameworks must unite generational learning traits with technology-driven and traditional transfer channels (Rašticová & Hinzmann, 2024). Addressing cohort-specific preferences, such as Gen X's autonomy versus Boomers' advisory roles, helps HR maintain high engagement and knowledge-sharing motivation (Jabid et al., 2023).

Effective HRM interventions, including cross-training, mixed-age project teams, and boundary-spanning leadership, mitigate age polarization and foster inclusive cultures (Kordova et al., 2022; Wardani et al., 2024). Without structured engagement, differences in tech skills, communication, and work values lead to resistance,

higher turnover, and corporate amnesia (Wissemann et al., 2022; Leon et al., 2023). Aligning wage expectations, productivity views, and learning opportunities ensures smooth tacit knowledge flow across generations (Černíková et al., 2024).

Organizational knowledge relies on balancing explicit (know-what) and tacit (know-how) dimensions (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Schmidt & Muehfeld, 2017). Because tacit knowledge is heavily context-bound, it represents both the primary source of competitive advantage and the hardest resource to retain during demographic transitions (Harvey, 2012). Established frameworks guide these processes. The SECI Model (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) models a continuous conversion spiral across Socialization (tacit-to-tacit), Externalization (tacit-to-explicit), Combination (explicit-to-explicit), and Internalization (explicit-to-tacit). The Tacit-Explicit Knowledge Continuum (McInerney, 2002) positions knowledge along a fluid spectrum, guiding organizations to blend codification and socialization tools for efficient intergenerational transfer.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design to examine knowledge transfer strategies and their impact across generational cohorts at Saint Louis University (SLU) in Baguio City, Philippines. Data were collected using convenience sampling from 55 participants comprising human resource officers and staff, academic deans, department heads, teaching personnel, and non-teaching personnel who had at least one year of service at the university. The primary data collection instrument was a validated, self-made structured survey questionnaire administered either online or in person according to participant preference. Ethical approvals and clearances were secured from the Benguet State University Research Ethics Committee alongside permissions from SLU's HR Office and RISE Center, with strict adherence to voluntary participation and data privacy protocols. The quantitative portion of the survey gathered Likert-scale responses regarding demographic characteristics, knowledge management practices, challenges, and proposed strategy evaluations, which were processed using SPSS and cross-verified via Microsoft Excel. Statistical treatments included descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations), One-Way ANOVA to test for significant differences across employee job positions and generations, Confirmatory Factor Analysis to validate strategy groupings, and Pearson correlation analysis to analyze the relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational outcomes. Concurrently, qualitative data collected through open-ended survey items were evaluated using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework to triangulate empirical findings, identifying key themes regarding operational continuity, competency building, and institutional resilience.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Demographic and Professional Profile of the Respondents (N=55)

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1. Generation	Generation Y/Millennials (29–44 y/o)	27	49%
	Generation X (45–60 y/o)	17	31%
	Generation Z (21–28 y/o)	10	18%
	Baby Boomer (61–79 y/o)	1	2%

	Generation Total	55	100%
2. Job Position	Teaching Personnel	29	53%
	Non-Teaching Personnel	19	35%
	Department Head	4	7%
	Human Resource Officer/Staff	2	4%
	Dean	1	2%
	Job Position Total	55	100%
3. Years in Service	More than 10 years	29	53%
	1–5 years	15	27%
	Less than 1 year	6	11%
	6–10 years	5	9%
	Years in Service Total	55	100%

The survey sampled a total of 55 participants from Saint Louis University to analyze knowledge transfer practices across generational cohorts. In terms of generational composition, the respondents were predominantly mid-career and younger employees, led by Generation Y/Millennials at 49% (27 respondents), followed by Generation X at 31% (17 respondents), Generation Z at 18% (10 respondents), and a single Baby Boomer representing 2% of the sample. By job position, teaching personnel formed the majority at 53% (29 respondents), followed by non-teaching staff at 35% (19 respondents), department heads at 7% (4 respondents), human resource staff at 4% (2 respondents), and one academic dean at 2%. Regarding length of service, a substantial 53% (29 respondents) had been employed at the institution for more than 10 years, while 27% (15 respondents) served for 1 to 5 years, 11% (6 respondents) for less than a year, and 9% (5 respondents) for 6 to 10 years, highlighting a strong base of institutional knowledge alongside newer personnel.

Table 2: Knowledge Management Practices in Human Resource Management Expertise Transfer

Item / Practice Indicator	Weighted Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Verbal Interpretation
4. Our organization has effective processes to acquire knowledge relevant to human resource expertise across generations.	3.33	Neutral
4.a processes through mentoring	3.44	Agree
4.b processes through coaching	3.4	Agree
4.c processes through storytelling	3.33	Neutral
4.d processes through documenting	3.76	Agree
5. Knowledge sharing among different generations is encouraged and practiced in our institution.	3.56	Agree
6. Organizational culture supports knowledge management on	3.47	Agree

6.a knowledge acquisition	3.82	Agree
6.b knowledge sharing	3.76	Agree
6.c knowledge retention	3.69	Agree
7. There are structured programs for mentoring or coaching to transfer expertise to newer generations.	3.22	Neutral
8. Training sessions are conducted to share tacit knowledge.	3.42	Agree
OVERALL WEIGHTED AVERAGE	3.52	Agree

Table 2 evaluates knowledge management practices at Saint Louis University, yielding an overall weighted mean of 3.52 (SD = 0.88), indicating that practices are generally "Highly Practiced" or agreed upon. The strongest areas were organizational culture supporting knowledge acquisition ($\bar{x} = 3.82$), documentation ($\bar{x} = 3.76$), knowledge sharing ($\bar{x} = 3.76$), and retention support ($\bar{x} = 3.69$). These were followed by cross-generational knowledge sharing ($\bar{x} = 3.56$), overall culture ($\bar{x} = 3.47$), mentoring ($\bar{x} = 3.44$), tacit training sessions ($\bar{x} = 3.42$), and coaching ($\bar{x} = 3.40$). Conversely, structured mentoring or coaching programs for transferring expertise received the lowest rating with a neutral score of 3.22, alongside neutral ratings for general acquisition processes ($\bar{x} = 3.33$) and storytelling ($\bar{x} = 3.33$), highlighting that while documentation and supportive culture are established, formal mechanisms for tacit knowledge transfer require strengthening.

Table 3: Challenges in Knowledge or Expertise Transfer

Challenge Indicator	HR Staff	Dean	Dept Heads	Teaching	Non-Teaching	Overall Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Verbal Interpretation
9. Generational differences hinder effective sharing of knowledge within the organization.	3.5	4	3.75	2.97	2.84	3.02	Neutral
9.a Generational differences on communication channels	4	5	3.25	3.34	3.32	3.38	Neutral
9.b Generational differences on learning style	4	5	3.25	3.66	3.53	3.62	Agree
9.c Generational differences on technological capabilities	4	5	3.5	3.83	3.53	3.73	Agree
10. There is reluctance among some employees to share tacit knowledge.	4	4	3.25	3.28	3.16	3.27	Neutral
11. Lack of time and resources impedes the transfer of critical employee skills.	4	5	3	3.52	3.74	3.6	Agree
12. Inadequate knowledge documentation limits knowledge management capabilities.	4	4	3	3.59	3.74	3.62	Agree
13. There is insufficient support from top management for knowledge transfer initiatives.	2.5	2	3	3.31	3.47	3.29	Neutral
OVERALL SECTION MEAN	3.75	4.25	3.25	3.44	3.41	3.44	Agree

Table 3 presents the challenges in knowledge transfer, obtaining an overall mean of 3.44 ("Agree"), which classifies these barriers as a "Serious Challenge".

The most critical obstacle identified was generational differences in technological capabilities ($\bar{x} = 3.73$), followed closely by differences in learning styles ($\bar{x} = 3.62$), inadequate knowledge documentation ($\bar{x} = 3.62$), and lack of time and resources ($\bar{x} = 3.60$).

In contrast, generational differences in communication channels ($\bar{x} = 3.38$), insufficient top management support ($\bar{x} = 3.29$), employee reluctance to share tacit knowledge ($\bar{x} = 3.27$), and the broader assertion that generational differences hinder knowledge sharing ($\bar{x} = 3.02$) all received neutral ratings.

These findings indicate that the primary barriers to expertise transfer in the institution are operational, technological, and structural rather than interpersonal conflict or lack of willingness to share

Table 4: Overall Effectiveness of Strategies to Overcome Challenges

Strategy Indicator	Weighted Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation (σ)	Rank	Verbal Interpretation
14. Implement cross-generational mentoring or coaching programs.	3.67	0.88	5	Effective
15. Developing formal knowledge documentation and repositories for each office.	3.98	0.83	4	Effective
16. Encouraging a culture of openness and trust to ease tacit knowledge sharing.	4.09	1.01	2	Effective
17. Providing incentives and recognition for knowledge sharing behaviors.	4	1.04	3	Effective
18. Leveraging technology platforms that facilitate collaborative knowledge exchange.	4.16	1.03	1	Effective
OVERALL SECTION MEAN	3.98	0.96		Effective

Table 4 evaluates proposed strategies for overcoming knowledge transfer challenges, yielding an overall mean of 3.98 (SD = 0.96), classified as "Effective". Leveraging technology platforms for collaborative knowledge exchange ranked highest ($\bar{x} = 4.16$), followed by encouraging a culture of openness and trust ($\bar{x} = 4.09$), providing incentives and recognition for knowledge-sharing behaviors ($\bar{x} = 4.00$), and developing formal documentation and repositories for each office ($\bar{x} = 3.98$).

Implementing cross-generational mentoring or coaching programs ranked lowest but remained effective ($\bar{x} = 3.67$), indicating that while interpersonal learning is valued, employees favor digital tools and cultural support to drive seamless knowledge exchange.

Table 5. Perceived Impact of Knowledge Transfer Strategies on Succession Planning, Employee Growth, and Organizational Success

Action Plan Indicator	Weighted Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Standard Deviation (σ)	Rank	Verbal Interpretation	Equivalent
19. Establishment of a centralized digital knowledge repository.	4.15	0.82	2	Agree	Effective
20. Institutionalization of structured knowledge-sharing policies and protocols.	3.95	0.85	4	Agree	Effective
21. Implementation of incentive and recognition frameworks for knowledge retention.	4.02	0.91	3	Agree	Effective
22. Deployment of collaborative digital tools and communication channels.	4.22	0.78	1	Strongly Agree	Highly Effective
23. Conduct of regular cross-departmental mentoring and knowledge transfer workshops.	3.75	0.89	5	Agree	Effective
OVERALL SECTION MEAN	4.02	0.85		Agree	Effective

Table 5 presents the perceived impact of knowledge transfer strategies on succession planning, employee growth, and organizational success, obtaining an overall section mean of 4.02 (SD = 0.85), which indicates that respondents view these strategies as "Effective". The deployment of collaborative digital tools and communication channels ranked highest ($\bar{x}$ = 4.22), interpreted as "Strongly Agree" and "Highly Effective". This was followed by the establishment of a centralized digital knowledge repository ($\bar{x}$ = 4.15), the implementation of incentive and recognition frameworks ($\bar{x}$ = 4.02), and the institutionalization of structured knowledge-sharing policies ($\bar{x}$ = 3.95). Regular cross-departmental mentoring and knowledge transfer workshops ranked lowest ($\bar{x}$ = 3.75), though still considered effective. These results highlight that digital collaboration and centralized repositories are seen as the most impactful drivers for maintaining institutional expertise and ensuring long-term organizational continuity.

Thematic Analysis

Using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, three themes emerged:

- **Theme 1:** Operational Continuity and Pipeline Resilience shows that knowledge transfer reduces disruption during workforce transitions. Repositories and mentorship ensure seamless succession, as one respondent noted: "Having documented repositories ensures the next person doesn't start from zero." Another added: "Knowledge transfer builds a ready bench... junior employees who have been mentored can step up immediately without disrupting departmental workflows."
- **Theme 2:** Professional Empowerment and Competency Building highlights that shared resources and senior guidance shorten learning curves and boost engagement. One participant stated: "Accessing shared digital templates and receiving direct guidance... helped me master complex administrative protocols in half the time." Regarding recognition, another shared: "When knowledge sharing is recognized and rewarded, employees feel valued and are far more motivated to expand their skills..."

- **Theme 3:** Institutional Resilience and Operational Excellence establishes that eliminating knowledge silos minimizes errors and enhances administrative agility. A respondent observed: "Eliminating knowledge silos reduces repetitive mistakes across departments, which speeds up service delivery..." Addressing adaptability, another remarked: "An organization where information flows freely adapts much faster to institutional changes, audit standards, and administrative demands."

Together, these findings confirm that knowledge transfer is a core institutional capability that protects organizational memory, builds talent, and ensures long-term operational excellence.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. **Foundational Knowledge Practices with Gaps in Tacit Mechanisms:** Saint Louis University possesses a supportive culture and highly practiced documentation systems, but relies heavily on informal pathways rather than structured social mechanisms like formal mentoring, coaching, and job shadowing to transfer tacit expertise.
2. **Operational and Structural Transfer Barriers:** Key obstacles to knowledge sharing stem from practical and operational challenges such as technological capability differences, inadequate documentation, varying learning styles, and limited time rather than employee resistance or lack of management support.
3. **High Support for Digitally Enabled, Culturally Reinforced Strategies:** Employees perceive digital collaboration platforms, centralized repositories, cultures of trust, and recognition frameworks as the most effective strategies to bridge transfer gaps, alongside practical, workload sensitive mentoring.
4. **Strategic Impact on Resilience and Succession:** Systematic knowledge transfer acts as a vital capability that transforms individual expertise into a permanent institutional asset, reducing operational disruption during transitions, accelerating onboarding, and strengthening overall organizational resilience.

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