Dare to Share

Nine recommendations to the University of Amsterdam for the promotion of
knowledge exchange in education.

University of Amsterdam Knowledge Exchange Working Group

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August 2015

Introduction

The objective of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) is to provide high-quality education. It aims to offer its students a solid academic foundation, in which education is tightly interwoven with research, where activating teaching methods are employed as part of blended curricula, and students receive differentiated instruction. To realise these goals, the UvA must be an organisation where everybody can share their didactic knowledge simply, effectively and efficiently. After all, knowledge exchange helps teaching professionals (from junior lecturer to director of education) gain new inspiration, learn from others' experiences, work more effectively and provide higher quality. This in turn provides a practicable means of realising our common objectives.

The UvA has a wide variety of initiatives for promoting improvement and innovation in education. However, the knowledge and experience thus gained are rarely widely shared with other professionals within the organisation. Enthusiastic project groups spring up and often disappear again, having never been aware of each other's existence, activities or expertise. There have been previous UvA initiatives aimed at better organising

knowledge exchange; to date, however, they have failed to gain lasting purchase. The negative effect of this is that the education wheel must constantly be reinvented, and poor justice is done to the innovative strength of the UvA.

The UvA must therefore take measures to promote knowledge exchange in education. The purpose of these measures is to encourage and support professional educators in sharing their knowledge with one another. Here, 'professional educators' refers explicitly to everybody at the UvA who plays an active and substantive role in the provision and organisation of education, from junior lecturer to director of education. 'Knowledge' encompasses all ideas, experiences and expertise developed or tested in practice, at a variety of levels (from course components to degree programmes) and in various areas (including pedagogy, course content and education innovation). It is precisely the sharing of this knowledge developed in practice that is an important prerequisite for ensuring that the UvA as a whole can effectively address the challenges in education, and realise the objectives outlined in the new Strategic Plan.

An example: In response to the National Student Survey, one degree programme intends to devote greater attention to career preparation among students, and to integrate professional orientation into the curriculum. Various issues arise: What formats are suitable for use? How can we organise them? What do we need? What relevant experiences do other degree programmes have? What works, and what doesn't? What are the common pitfalls? What do the students think? How do we get the professional field involved in these plans? Sharing experiences with colleagues who have already worked on similar projects could aid those involved in avoiding the biggest 'rookie mistakes'. But how to find experienced colleagues? And how can the UvA ensure that the more experienced colleagues are prepared to share their knowledge with other degree programmes? The working group's recommendations aim to answer these questions.

The present recommendations are based on a comprehensive analysis using the following procedures and methods: a) interviews with directors of education from various faculties, experts and those with extensive experience in knowledge exchange; b) focus-group discussions with lecturers and other stakeholders, such as staff from ICT & Education; c) a literature study on the success and failure factors of knowledge exchange; d) two overviews of knowledge exchange projects within and external to the UvA; and e) an online survey conducted from 5–20 March 2015 among UvA employees with either a full or part-time

academic position (over 3,000 employees were approached, 501 of whom completed the survey). We wish to extend our sincere thanks to all those who were prepared to share their knowledge and insights with us – their contributions were indispensable in creating these recommendations. Appendix 1 presents an overview of the interviewees. Appendix 2 outlines the results of our survey, and Appendices 3 and 4 provide information on our overview of knowledge exchange projects.

Three challenges

Knowledge exchange is a social and dynamic process, in which professionals are asked to take implicit knowledge (which is often strongly intertwined with personal experience) and make it accessible to others (Maly, Agterberg, & van den Hooff, 2014; van den Hooff & Huysman, 2009). Communities of enthusiastic professionals who meet to discuss issues play a key role in this respect. To promote pan-organisational knowledge sharing, these communities must be fostered, strengthened and connected with each other. A crucial part of this process is the association with knowledge-sharing initiatives, mutual collaboration, and community formation – all from the ground up.

A far less effective solution (but one that is often employed due to its apparent simplicity) is that of asking professionals to share their knowledge via a formal knowledge database (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2001; Hinds & Pfeffer, 2001). Enormous effort is required to take implicit and context-based knowledge, and make it available to an unknown public with varying needs in an explicit, generalised, and up-to-date fashion. And the results are meagre: it is through personal interactions that professionals wish to learn from their fellows' context-based experience.

An extensive survey (see Appendix 2) conducted by the working group among UvA staff has shown that UvA employees are keen to share education-related knowledge and experiences with their fellows ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.66$ using a 4-point scale where 4 = completely agree). Their preferred method for doing so was via personal interaction with colleagues ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.72$). Online variants, such as visiting forums and searching the internet for information, are clearly less popular ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 0.85$ and $M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.88$ respectively). Lack of time is viewed by far as the most significant barrier to knowledge sharing ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.64$), and respondents also indicated that effective, practical suggestions and advice are not easy to find ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.83$).

The working group believes it is paramount for knowledge-exchange measures at the UvA to complement initiatives by professional educators, and that the measures must aim to support, encourage and link these initiatives in a tailored fashion. The UvA faces three interrelated challenges in this respect:

1. The social challenge of connecting people and existing communities within the UvA, and supporting the development of new communities.

The UvA already has many communities of professional educators where knowledge can be shared. One challenge involves the effective support of these communities to enable the emergence of a dynamic constellation of well-performing, varied and short or long-term communities. An essential part of this process is enabling the various communities and individuals to find one another – including across organisational (e.g. faculty) boundaries – which will allow the strengthening of social connections across departments and faculties.

2. The human resources challenge of motivating professionals and genuinely enabling them to share their knowledge.

A key criterion for successful knowledge exchange is that education, professional development, innovation and knowledge exchange itself be genuinely valued within the organisation. This will strengthen intrinsic motivation, and contribute to the development of a culture in which collaboration and innovation go without saying. It is also necessary for professionals to have both enough time and a basic level of didactic expertise to share their knowledge.

3. The administrative and technological challenge of introducing a governance structure and IT system that provide flexible support to knowledge exchange as it is developed.

The dynamic character of knowledge exchange necessitates the continual monitoring of developments in the field, and the implementation of new measures to facilitate it. This policy approach aims to mould knowledge exchange into a dynamic system of well-performing short and long-term measures and initiatives. In this respect, modern ICT systems offer a prime means of putting professionals in touch with one another and encouraging knowledge exchange, provided these systems are properly embedded into existing social relationships and work processes.

Nine recommendations

To address the above challenges and promote knowledge exchange at the University of Amsterdam, the working group proposes nine concrete measures that have been defined at three different organisational levels, i.e. UvA-wide, faculties, and departments/programmes. These measures are aimed at enabling effective knowledge sharing by supporting, strengthening, encouraging and linking new and existing initiatives.

> *1. Faculties, departments, education institutes and university working groups should organise - in consultation - regular subject-related education events in order to bring people together and raise levels of expertise.*

Knowledge exchange is entirely dependent on the quality of social contacts within an organisation (van den Hooff & Huysman, 2009; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). Organising face-to-face meetings is an important tool in strengthening social connections and promoting knowledge exchange. People are much more prepared to share their knowledge if they have personally met the people involved (Agterberg, van den Hooff, Huysman, & Soekijad, 2010) and if they expect to meet them again in the future (Berlanga, Bitter- Rijpkema, Brouns, & Sloep, 2008). In turn, knowledge exchange of this type strengthens an organisation's social capital.

In addition, such events provide an opportunity to raise the basic level of expertise, to develop a shared language for talking about education, and – in a more general sense – to create a collaborative atmosphere in which knowledge can be shared more easily. In interviews, both lecturers and directors of education expressed a need for such events for sharing knowledge.

A survey has revealed that relatively large numbers of UvA lecturers (see percentages in parentheses) would 'definitely' like to know more about the following topics:

- Motivating and activating students (60%)
- Teaching academic and intellectual skills (49%)
- Developing courses (drawing up learning objectives, planning teaching activities, planning and selecting forms of assessment) (47%)
- Developing or reviewing curricula (44%)
- Research-based education (43%)
- Giving feedback, and facilitating peer feedback (43%)

Lecturers with a coordinating role also add e-learning and use of ICT to this list; directors of education are also greatly interested in collaborative learning. The survey also revealed that sufficient experts in these fields are employed at the UvA.

> *2. Faculties and departments should support existing communities and encourage the formation of new ones, by giving the right people both the remit and the time to maintain them.*

Communities are crucial to knowledge exchange. 'Communities of practice' or 'knowledge networks' consist of professionals who work in a particular field and share their enthusiasm and expertise. Successful communities maintain close ties with professional practice and follow the relevant issues (Agterberg et al., 2010). The UvA has many examples of existing and potential communities: lecturers who teach a certain learning track within a degree programme, 'hands-on' experts examining specific topics (such as digital assessment) across programmes, senior lecturers who perform certain duties (chairing an Examinations Board, for example) and staff undergoing a particular type of training or course (e.g. Basic/Advanced University Teaching Qualification (UTQ), educational leadership).

For their continued existence, communities depend on individuals who are prepared to spend time organising events and facilitating mutual contacts. These 'community-organisers' (themselves active members of the community) must receive support for their community activities in the form of time, recognition and/or practical assistance. The exact requirements, and who is to finance them, will vary from case to case. Flexible solutions at departmental and faculty level will be necessary.

> Preferably, community organisers will themselves be experts in their community fields, and be part of the community itself (Agterberg et al., 2010). They increase the viability of the community by asking people to participate personally; they welcome new members and bring them up to speed; they keep members up to date on relevant events; they organise interesting activities with some regularity; they promote the visibility of experts and the distribution of questions among several of them; they guarantee that professionals who offer knowledge to colleagues themselves receive assistance in the future; and they promote communication within the community in a more general sense (Berlanga et al., 2008; Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005; Fulk & Yuan, 2013; Gibbs, Rozaidi, & Eisenberg, 2013).

> *3. Every faculty (or department) should appoint one or more 'matchmakers' who can point people with education-related questions in the right direction, and actively foster knowledge sharing within and between faculties.*

One key challenge in encouraging knowledge sharing is to ensure that people and communities can find each other, particularly across the boundaries of faculties and study programmes. One way to facilitate this is by using 'matchmakers'. How this is implemented will depend on the circumstances involved. The Faculty of Science (FNWI), for example, has a project office able to fulfil this networking function. At other locations, a well-placed lecturer could fulfil this role. The crucial element is a central point of contact where staff can go for information on initiatives and expertise at the UvA, and where potential needs with regard to knowledge or community-forming can be effectively identified, along with interest in new areas.

> *4. The UvA must explicitly include knowledge exchange in the result areas of the University Job Classification System (UFO). Agreements must also be made during annual performance interviews (with employees who choose to do so) concerning the employees' contribution to knowledge exchange, the time required, and the evaluation thereof.*

UvA employees state that the biggest obstacle to knowledge exchange (and in a broader sense, to improving education) is lack of time. They are keen to share their education-related knowledge and experience with colleagues ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.66$) and are prepared to invest extra time and energy in doing so ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.77$), but nonetheless feel that they have too little time to engage in knowledge exchange ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.64$). This is also evinced by written comments in the survey (e.g. 'I am willing to share and learn (new) teaching methods but I struggle with a lack of time'; 'I have no time to do any of these things, commendable though they are. If there are hours available for these activities, that would be a big thing').

Besides time, success in knowledge exchange strongly depends on the intrinsic willingness of professionals to share their knowledge (Osterloh & Frey, 2000; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). Extrinsic motivators do not work. Intrinsic motivators also have to do with the extent to which employees are themselves satisfied with their own performance and enthusiastic about their subject (de Vries, van den Hooff, & de Ridder, 2006), and can be further encouraged by a symbolic reward. In this respect, reciprocity in sharing knowledge and the freedom to innovate (and to make

mistakes) are key factors that can help promote knowledge exchange (Bock et al., 2005). This was also confirmed by the employee survey: people are more willing to share knowledge if others do too ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.92$), and if people know that their fellows and the management appreciate knowledge exchange initiatives ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.97$; $M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.99$, respectively).

The practical implication of these considerations is that explicit recognition, time and appreciation are required for staff who are themselves prepared to take an active part in knowledge exchange. One way to do this is by explicitly including knowledge exchange among the result areas of the University Job Classification System (UFO), and then making agreements (at departmental, Graduate School or faculty level) regarding objectives, available time and evaluation with employees who wish to take an active part in knowledge exchange. This puts an end to the catch-22 situation in which employees are 'too busy doing their daily jobs to take the time to acquire the new knowledge and skills that would allow them to perform more effectively' (Davenport & Prusak, in Hinds & Pfeffer, 2001, p. 17).

Other theoretical impediments to knowledge sharing do not play such a major role at the UvA. UvA employees are not afraid that sharing knowledge will somehow undermine their position (e.g. competitiveness or power) ($M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.65$), nor are they worried that incorrect information will damage their reputation ($M = 1.41$, $SD = 0.65$). This is probably because there is little competition among lecturers in education. It is important to safeguard and monitor this situation (Hinds & Pfeffer, 2001).

> ## 5. The UvA should make knowledge sharing an explicit part of the Basic/Advanced University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) and other

As professionals become increasingly aware that other professionals at different locations carry out the same activities and can face the same problems, and as they are given more opportunities to meet each other face-to-face, their motivation to genuinely share knowledge will grow (Agterberg et al., 2010; Alavi et al., 2006; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). This is how the organisation of inter-faculty and interdisciplinary professional development activities can help promote knowledge sharing. In the same way, it can help during professional development programmes to draw explicit attention to the importance of knowledge sharing, and to make knowledge sharing activities a concrete part of the programme.Another way to promote knowledge sharing is to explicitly ask participants in the Advanced UTQ course, other advanced professional

development programmes and innovation projects to actively contribute to knowledge sharing. After all, these are the people who have the expertise to offer. Their contribution will increase the value of knowledge sharing for others, allowing for the organisation of a critical mass.

> ### 6. The UvA should invest in a UvA social network to enable efficient knowledge sharing.

An Enterprise Social Network (ESN) helps people and communities to find each other, enabling professionals to get in touch with one another, exchange information, share documents and collaborate (Fulk & Yuan, 2013). In practice, the opportunity to establish new contacts via an ESN has proven considerably important (Maly, 2013). An ESN can also help give participants a better idea of who is investigating which topics, which questions have been asked before, and who the experts are in various fields (Leonardi, 2014; Majchrzak, Faraj, Kane, & Azad, 2013). Answers to questions asked previously can be retrieved if necessary. Plus, if users are given the option to rate individuals or contributions, knowledge sharers can build up a reputation of expertise, which may further motivate people to participate actively in knowledge sharing (Fulk & Yuan, 2013). In turn, the visibility of contacts and mutual positive assessments serve to strengthen relationships.

> 'To conclude, the findings show that [...] the social networking site [at Philips] can be seen as a supporting tool that enables the establishment of the necessary connections together with valuable background knowledge to be able to get in contact and discuss work and work-unrelated matters with the right people in real time.' (Maly, 2013, p. 31)

The user-friendliness of the tool used is important to the success of an ESN (Oostervink, 2013), and it must also be embedded into existing work processes and ICT applications, eliminating the need to visit a separate ESN. Participants must easily be able to determine what and whom they follow, and retain control over their contributions. Rules concerning acceptable behaviour must be formulated clearly and transparently (Berlanga et al., 2008), and faculties, departments and Graduate Schools will need to use the ESN actively themselves (Honcoop, 2014).

'As with any change in the workplace, communication and training are essential. Employees will likely need to be encouraged and taught how to make the most of the enterprise social network. Showing "how and why" appears to be critical. Even more important, companies should clearly demonstrate the benefits of using the network, such as showing that employees receive faster and higher quality responses to information requests if they use an enterprise social network rather than email.

Most critically, organisations should work to make enterprise social networks part of their existing workflows and business processes. Indeed, making these networks part of everyday communicating, collaborating, and creating seems likely to be the tipping point in building engagement and utility.' (Deloitte, 2013).

7. The UvA should link a dynamic digital knowledge database to the Enterprise Social Network, to be maintained by an editing team.

For the most part, the knowledge and expertise that most professionals have to share is implicit and context-based, making codification a laborious and inefficient process. This does not apply to all data, however. ICTS, ICT & Education and other support services in particular have explicit data available, in the form of manuals, best practices and lists of tips and protocols. In its recommendation titled 'Memorandum on ICT Knowledge Sharing for Education' (*Notitie Kennisdeling ICT ten behoeve van onderwijs*), written for the VIC project group and our working group, the ICT and Education Working Group (*Werkgroep ICT en onderwijs*) once again verified that access to this kind of information is currently very poor, constituting another barrier to improvements in education.

Unlike the empirical knowledge of professionals, this explicit information could easily be made available through a central online repository. A knowledge database of this type would need to offer flexible performance options, and provide easy access to content through various channels (e.g. by educational topic, organisational level, and tool). The proper functioning of this kind of - dynamic - knowledge base would require an editing team to formulate clear editorial guidelines, and maintain the knowledge base by providing simple storage and accessibility of texts. This implies that the editorial staff would need to concentrate on a limited number of essential topics. The actual content disseminated by a knowledge database in this manner is also important, but must not substitute for the creation of opportunities for professionals to learn from one another (Hinds & Pfeffer, 2001).

'We believe that expertise is largely tacit and embedded in the context in which it is being used. Systems that purport to capture expertise for later perusal by those in need often fall short of the goal. This is in part because it is difficult to capture the knowledge of experts in such a form and in part because users find it difficult to absorb expertise from such a system. As we discussed, experts' ability to explicate their tacit knowledge is limited by the way they represent their knowledge in memory. This not only interferes with their ability to articulate this knowledge to novices, but makes it difficult to articulate it in such a way that it can be loaded into an information system for later retrieval. Further, experts are unlikely to be motivated to document their knowledge for others to use. For these reasons, our assessment is that these systems generally capture information or data rather than knowledge or expertise. Information and information systems are extremely useful, but do not replace expertise or the learning that takes place through interpersonal contact.' (Hinds & Pfeffer, 2001, pp. 23–24).

> ## 8. The UvA should appoint two project officers to maintain the Enterprise Social Network and support knowledge-sharing initiatives at the UvA.

These officers will work closely with the matchmakers from all faculties, and ideally form part of this group themselves. They must adopt a pro-active and supportive attitude, and keep the network running by personally inviting people to participate, demonstrating the network's added value (Deloitte, 2013), preventing all questions from being directed to the same small group of experts (Gibbs et al., 2013) and solving any other problems as they arise. In response to university developments, they may also organise knowledge sharing events and initiate communities in key strategic fields.

> ## 9. The Executive Board should set up a steering committee to monitor developments in knowledge sharing and launch new initiatives.

It is important for knowledge sharing to continue to develop, in terms of both subject matter and organisation. Whereas several years ago study success was a new field and, following that, assessment policy, in the years ahead more and more attention will be devoted to digital tests and blended learning, professional orientation and internationalisation. And while now the emphasis lies on the organisation of communities within the UvA, at a later stage the focus may shift to knowledge exchange with other universities, sourcing specific expertise externally, or expanding the knowledge database.

A UvA Steering Committee for Knowledge Sharing in Education could help to monitor and guide this process, as well as aid the appointment and professional development of faculty matchmakers and community-organisers.

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Appendix 1. Overview of consulted parties

In preparing our recommendation, we consulted with a large number of stakeholders and experts.

Initial exploratory interviews (March–July 2014)

Before commencing the actual project itself, we began with a number of orientation interviews to determine whether there was a need at the UvA for knowledge-sharing recommendations, and the best approach to take. We interviewed the following people:

- Christel Lutz and Anna Gerbrandy, co-founders of the Teaching Academy University Utrecht
- Klaas Visser, Director of Education in Psychology and chair of the study success working group
- Members of the University Committee on Education (UCO) and the Education and ICT Expertise Group
- Brigitte Widdershoven, UvA Academic Affairs
- Our fellow course participants in the Education Leadership learning track
- Dymph van den Boom, Rector Magnificus, UvA

Round of discussions with Directors of Education (Sep–Oct 2014)

Once our working group got to work, we first met with directors of education individually to discuss the knowledge-sharing needs of lecturers and directors, existing knowledge-sharing initiatives, and possible success/failure factors. We interviewed the following people:

- Peter van Baalen (Faculty of Economics & Business, FEB)
- Jeroen Goedkoop (Faculty of Science, FNWI)
- Ronald Gorter (Academic Centre for Dentistry in Amsterdam, ACTA)
- Jan-Willem van Henten (Faculty of Humanities, FGW)
- Johan Post (Faculty of Social & Behavioural Sciences, FMG)
- Jan Hindrik Ravesloot (Amsterdam Medical Center, AMC)
- Arthur Salomons (Faculty of Law, FdR).

Focus groups with various stakeholder categories (Dec 2014)

We then organised focus groups in order to gain a more concrete idea of the thoughts of different teaching staff and others from various faculties on knowledge sharing. We discussed how lecturers seek information if they wish to improve a

course, their need to share knowledge, the conditions under which they are prepared to participate in knowledge sharing, and how knowledge sharing should be organised at the UvA. We ran three focus groups altogether, with the following participants:

Lecturers/course coordinators:
- Sanjay Bissessur (FEB)
- Lisette Duyster (FEB)
- Rob van Hemert (FEB)
- Saskia Kolkman (AMC)
- Anne Loeber (FMG)
- Annemie Ploeger (FMG)

Lecturers who had worked on a grass-roots project:
- Alexander Savi (FMG)
- Lissan Taal-Apelqvist (Faculty of Humanities, FGw)
- Casper Troost (FEB)

ICT & Education/ICTS/University Library:
- Nynke Bos (FGw)
- Sijo Dijkstra (ICTS/O&O Service Group (ODG))
- David Jan Donner (ICTS/ODG)
- Nynke Kruiderink (FMG)
- Henriette Reerink (University Library)
- Agnes Schreiner (FdR)
- Tim Sijstermans (AMC)

Other interviews

At the start of our activities we spoke to:
- Jeroen Goedkoop, Lucy Wenting and Brigitte Widdershoven (representing the University Committee on Education (UCO)), to discuss the relationship between our project and the UCO's activities and many other UvA initiatives, working groups and departments;
- Sijo Dijkstra (ICTS, Sept 2014) regarding employee initiatives at the ICTS, ICT & Education and the University Library aimed at improving the accessibility of ICT & Education-related information;

- Jan Bergstra (Faculty of Science (FNWI) Works Council, October 2014), regarding the knowledge-sharing and other activities of the former Amstel Institute;
- Bart van den Hooff (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, November 2104), regarding the success and failure factors of knowledge sharing and research in this area;
- Hotze Lont (Academic Affairs (AZ), January 2015), regarding the communities he organises as part of quality assurance;
- Natasa Brouwer (FNWI, January 2015) regarding the possibilities offered by Starfish.

Lastly, during the completion stages, we discussed a draft version of our recommendation with:
- Peter van Baalen and Jeroen Goedkoop, representing the UCO; and
- Dymph van den Boom, Rector Magnificus, UvA

Appendix 2. Results of the survey on knowledge sharing among UvA employees (February–March 2015)

Summary

Between 5 and 20 March 2015, an online survey was conducted among staff with a full or part-time academic appointment at the UvA. Over 3,000 employees were approached in total, 501 of whom answered our questions on knowledge sharing.

All respondents expressed a willingness to share their education-related knowledge and experience with their fellows (M = 3.50, SD = 0.66). They also frequently stated that they inform their colleagues of their teaching activities (M = 3.31, SD = 0.71) because they find it personally important (M = 3.23, SD = 0.71). One sentiment clearly highlighted by the survey was that respondents feel they have too little time to engage in knowledge sharing. However, this did not prevent them from expressing a willingness to invest - additional - time and energy in sharing their knowledge and experience with their colleagues (M = 3.21, SD = 0.77).

Respondents are therefore keen to share their knowledge and skills with their fellows. This fact also clearly emerged from the responses to the question of how they would prefer to further develop their knowledge and skills, namely through direct contact with their fellows, e.g. discussions with colleagues from the same department (M = 3.43, SD = 0.72) or from other departments (M = 3.38, SD = 0.72), other contexts such as workshops (M = 3.25, SD = 0.82), or directly with an ICT & Education officer or education expert (M = 3.20, SD = 0.82). Respondents are less keen to learn or share knowledge and skills using an online environment, e.g. by visiting online forums (M = 2.54, SD = 0.85), joining an online community (M = 2.74, SD = 0.94), or by searching for information on the internet (M = 2.87, SD = 0.88).

So although respondents indicate their willingness to share and further develop their knowledge through interaction with colleagues, the survey did identify a major barrier to achieving this goal: a lack of time (M = 3.63, SD = 0.64), an aspect that was also frequently addressed in the written comments left behind by respondents in the boxes provided. Another obstacle to the continued development of individuals' didactic knowledge and skills is the conviction that good, practical suggestions are in short supply (M = 2.80, SD = 0.83) – almost a scale point below 'lack of time'.

A summary of the topics that respondents are most interested in learning more about also provides some fascinating insights. 'Motivating and

activating students' had the highest level of interest, followed by 'teaching academic and intellectual skills' (M = 3.42 and M = 3.25, respectively). The lowest interest levels were recorded for 'professional orientation', 'internationalisation' and 'binding study advice' (M = 2.76, M = 2.60 and M = 2.51, respectively).

Respondents

In March 2015, the Knowledge Sharing survey was emailed to all University of Amsterdam employees with an academic appointment (both full and part-time), including directors of education and education coordinators (N = 3161).

In total the responses from 501 employees were suitable for reporting purposes. The largest group of respondents was from the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences (FMG; 30.6%), followed by the Faculty of Humanities (FGw; 18.2%) and the Faculty of Science (FNWI; 15.9%).
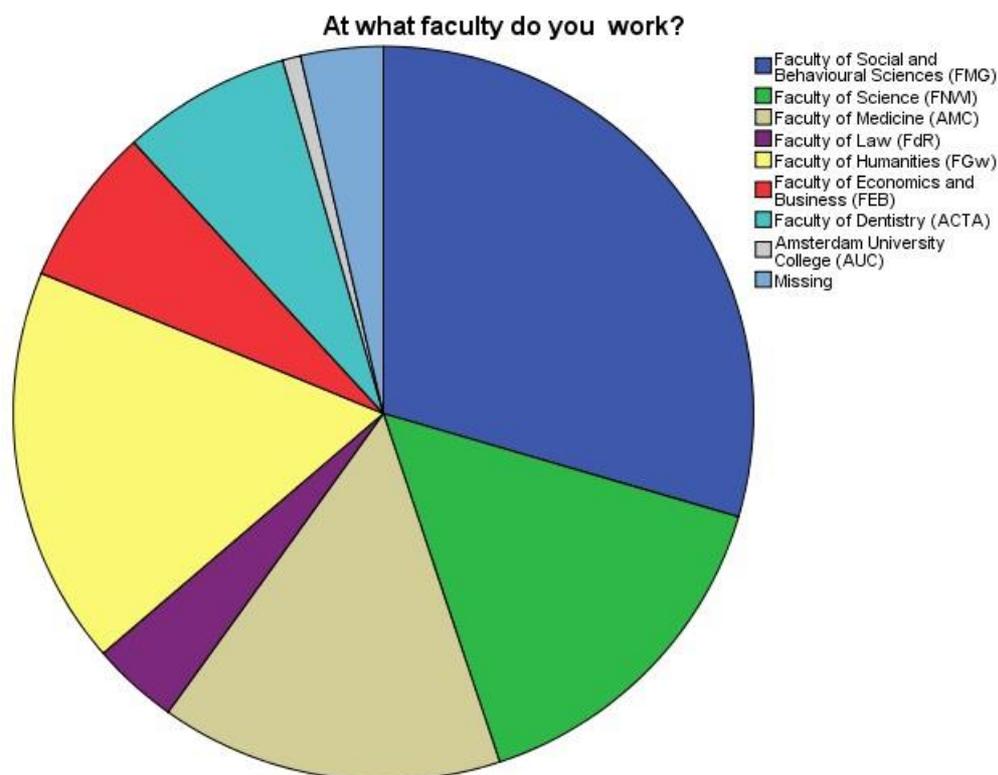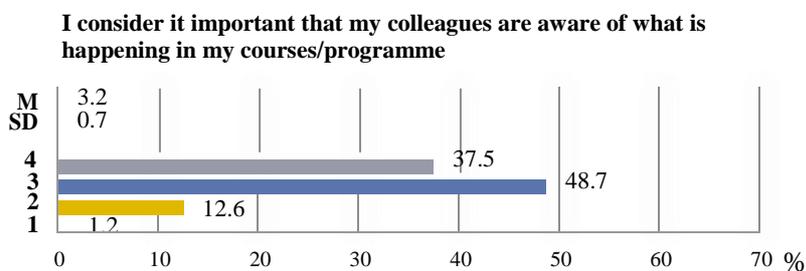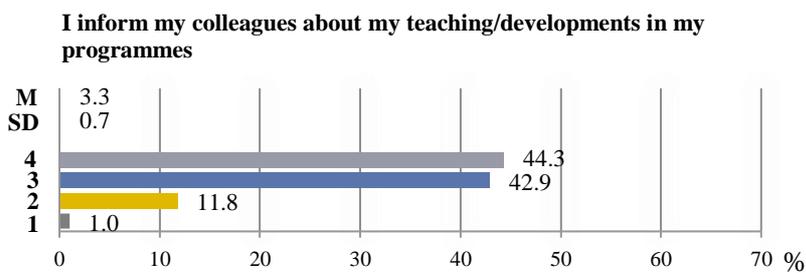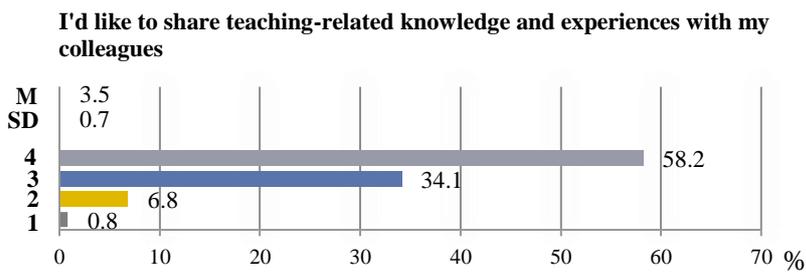
Results

The following pages provide a summary of the respondents' answers to the questions and statements in the survey. They address, in order:

- Beliefs about knowledge sharing (current state of affairs, needs)

- Preference for certain methods of knowledge sharing

- Obstacles to knowledge sharing

- Willingness to share knowledge

- Prerequisites for knowledge sharing

- Interest in specific topics

1. Beliefs about knowledge sharing (current state of affairs, needs)

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

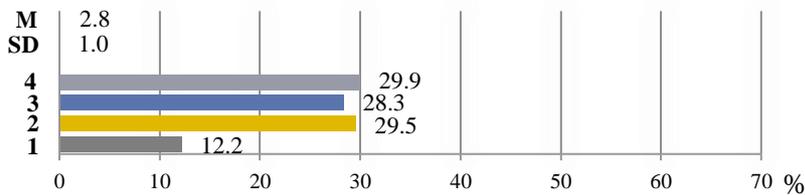*[1 = Disagree, 2 = Tend to disagree, 3 = Tend to agree, 4 = Agree]*

I'd like to share teaching-related knowledge and experiences with my colleagues

M	3.5
SD	0.7

4	58.2
3	34.1
2	6.8
1	0.8

I inform my colleagues about my teaching/developments in my programmes

M	3.3
SD	0.7

4	44.3
3	42.9
2	11.8
1	1.0

I consider it important that my colleagues are aware of what is happening in my courses/programme

M	3.2
SD	0.7

4	37.5
3	48.7
2	12.6
1	1.2

I am willing to spend time and energy to share my teaching experiences/knowledge with my colleagues

M	3.2
SD	0.8

- 4: 39.5
- 3: 44.5
- 2: 13.4
- 1: 2.6

(%, axis 0–70)
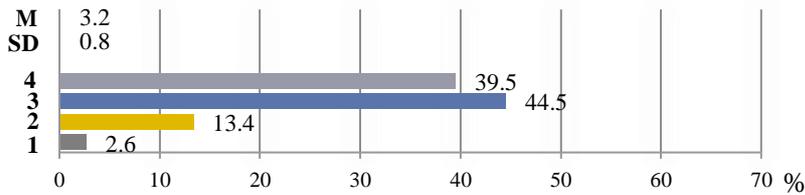
When I have learned something interesting or new about teaching or my programme, I make sure my colleagues learn about it too

M	3.1
SD	0.8

- 4: 29.1
- 3: 50.3
- 2: 18.2
- 1: 2.4

(%, axis 0–70)
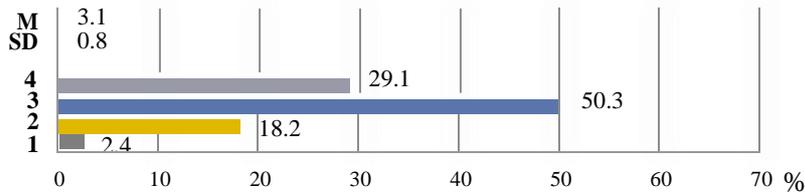
I miss a venue to exchange ideas and experiences with my colleagues

|	
M	2.8
SD	1.0

- 4: 29.9
- 3: 28.3
- 2: 29.5
- 1: 12.2

(%, axis 0–70)

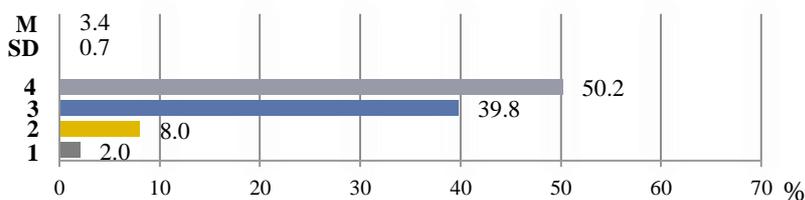*2. Preference for certain methods of knowledge sharing*

I would use the following methods to increase teaching-related expertise in particular topics (e.g., blended learning, course design, motivating and activating students)

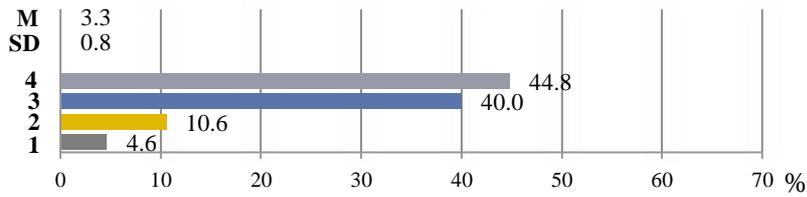*[1 = Definitely not, 2 = Probably not, 3 = Maybe, 4 = Definitely]*

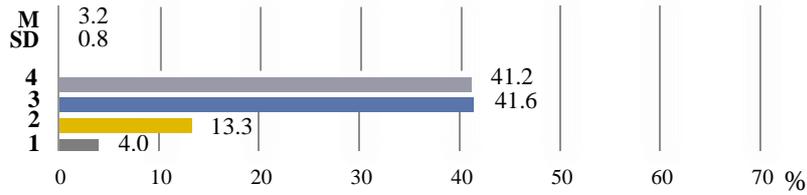**Discussing with colleagues/staff members from my department**

M	3.4
SD	0.7

- 4: 54.9
- 3: 35.8
- 2: 7.0
- 1: 2.2

(%, axis 0–70)
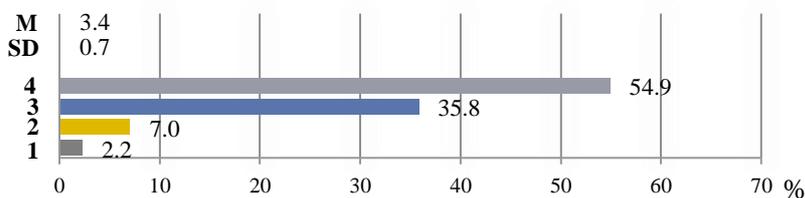
Learning from experienced colleagues from other departments

M	3.4
SD	0.7

- 4: 50.2
- 3: 39.8
- 2: 8.0
- 1: 2.0

(%, axis 0–70)

Following one or more workshops

| M | 3.3 |
| SD | 0.8 |

4: 44.8
3: 40.0
2: 10.6
1: 4.6

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)

Getting personal advice from an ICT & Education or educational expert

| M | 3.2 |
| SD | 0.8 |

4: 41.2
3: 41.6
2: 13.3
1: 4.0

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)

Visiting an online UvA repository with tips and best practices

| M | 3.1 |
| SD | 0.9 |

4: 36.8
3: 42.3
2: 15.5
1: 5.4

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)

Searching for information on the internet

| M | 2.9 |
| SD | 0.9 |

4: 25.1
3: 44.0
2: 23.3
1: 7.6

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
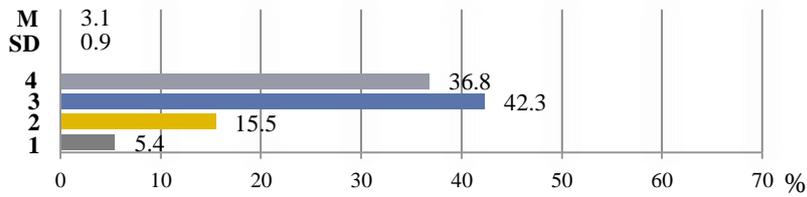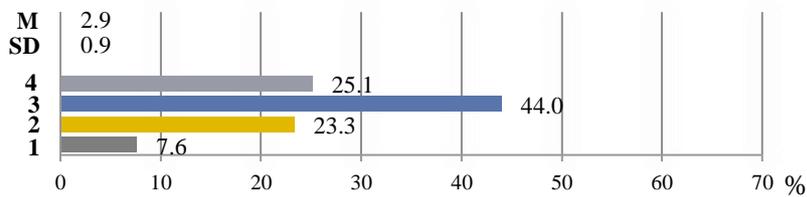
Reading a book on the topic

| M | 2.8 |
| SD | 0.9 |

4: 21.3
3: 46.0
2: 25.3
1: 7.4

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
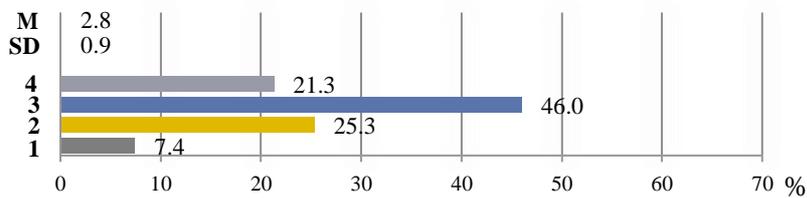
Joining an online community of UvA colleagues to share experiences

| M | 2.7 |
| SD | 0.9 |

4: 24.1
3: 36.3
2: 29.3
1: 10.2

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
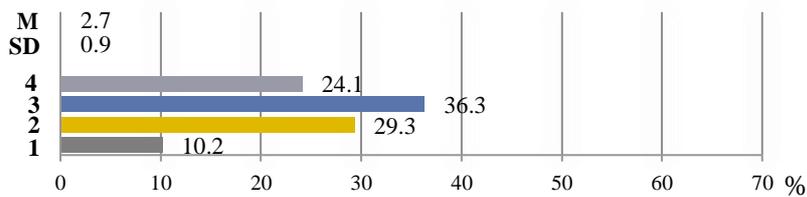
Visiting a forum where I can ask questions

M	2.5	
SD	0.9	

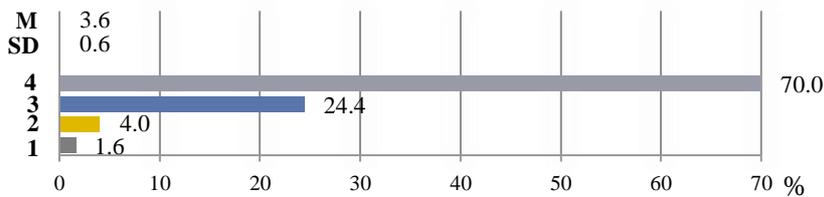- 4: 13.7
- 3: 37.1
- 2: 39.2
- 1: 10.0

(x-axis: 0 to 70 %)
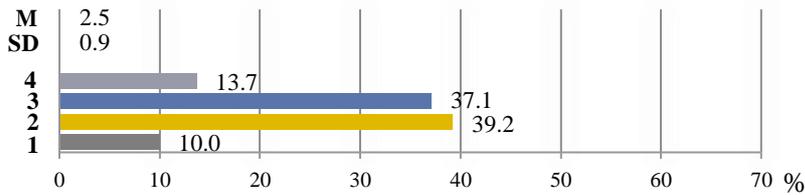
## 3. Obstacles to knowledge sharing

To what extent do the following obstacles hinder you to further develop your teaching (management) skills and knowledge?

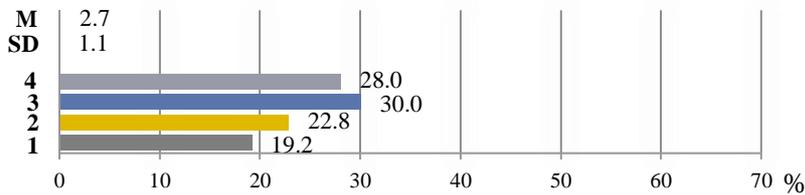*[1 = Not at all, 2 = Very little, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = To a great extent]*

Lack of time

M	3.6	
SD	0.6	

- 4: 70.0
- 3: 24.4
- 2: 4.0
- 1: 1.6

(x-axis: 0 to 70 %)

Good practical suggestions and hands-on advice are not readily available

M	2.8	
SD	0.8	

- 4: 19.4
- 3: 49.2
- 2: 24.0
- 1: 7.5

(x-axis: 0 to 70 %)
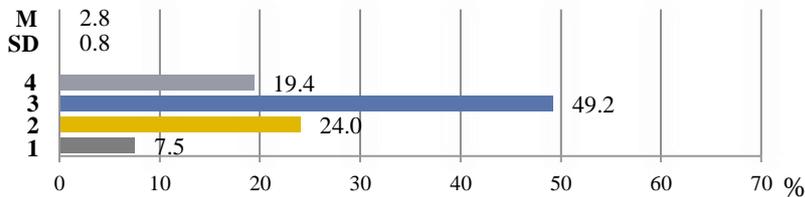
My investments in teaching quality are not sufficiently appreciated at UvA

M	2.7	
SD	1.1	

- 4: 28.0
- 3: 30.0
- 2: 22.8
- 1: 19.2

(x-axis: 0 to 70 %)

High-quality information on educational concepts and approaches is not readily available

M	2.6	
SD	0.9	

- 4: 12.8
- 3: 45.1
- 2: 28.9
- 1: 13.2

(x-axis: 0 to 70 %)
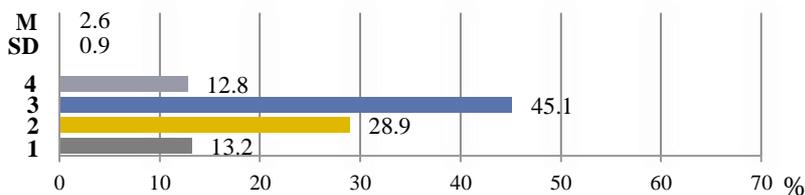
There seem to be too few exemplary teachers/directors to inspire me and learn from

M	2.2
SD	0.9

- 4: 9.2
- 3: 23.8
- 2: 40.4
- 1: 26.6

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
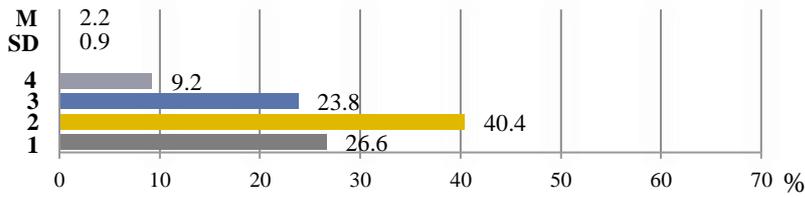
There seem to be too few people with like-minded interests to exchange ideas and cooperate with

M	2.2
SD	0.9

- 4: 8.4
- 3: 26.1
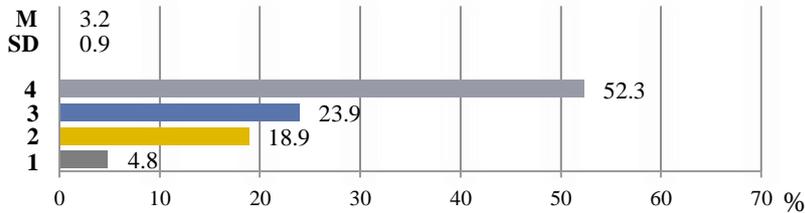- 2: 38.9
- 1: 26.7

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
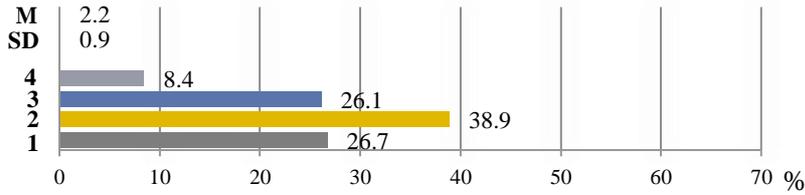
4. Willingness to share knowledge

Please indicate how important the following incentives are for you to be willing to share your expertise with colleagues.

[1 = Not important, 2 = A little important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very important]

Knowing that others will answer my questions in return

M	3.2
SD	0.9

- 4: 52.3
- 3: 23.9
- 2: 18.9
- 1: 4.8

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)

Knowing that colleagues appreciate my contribution

M	3.1
SD	1.0

- 4: 50.6
- 3: 10.8
- 2: 36.7
- 1: 1.8

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
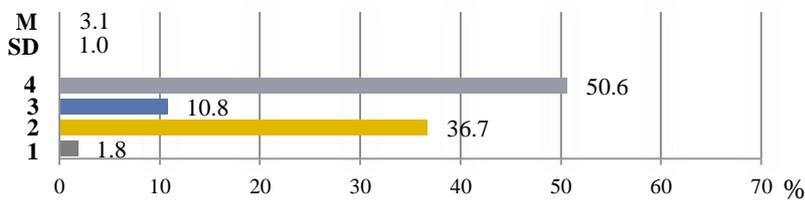
Knowing that my superiors appreciate my contribution

M	3.0
SD	1.0

- 4: 45.2
- 3: 19.1
- 2: 29.9
- 1: 5.8

(0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
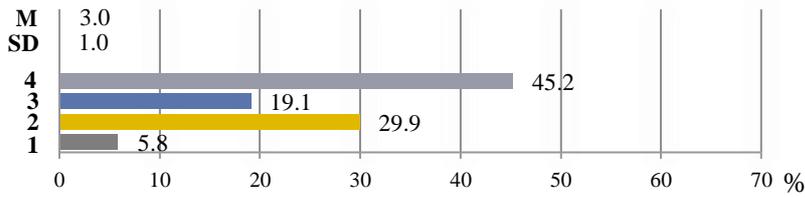
Getting compensated for the time spent in knowledge sharing

M	2.9
SD	1.0

- 4: 33.3
- 3: 28.3
- 2: 28.7
- 1: 9.6

(0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
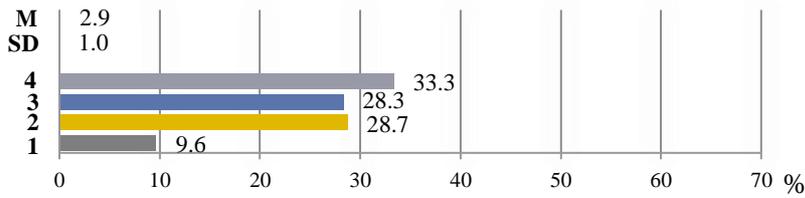
Please indicate to what extent the following reasons are important for you *not* to share your knowledge.

[1 = Not important, 2 = A little important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very important]

I don't want to spend a lot of time on answering questions

M	2.2
SD	1.0

- 4: 10.3
- 3: 27.5
- 2: 34.2
- 1: 27.9

(0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
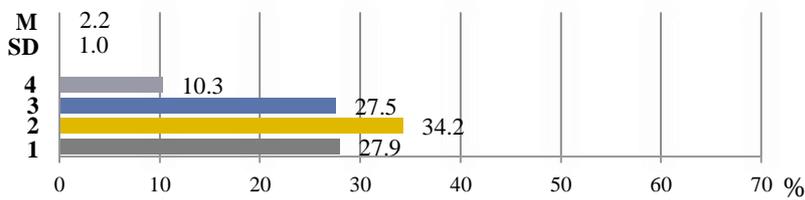
I don't want to be held responsible if things go wrong

M	1.4
SD	0.6

- 4: 0.8
- 3: 6.3
- 2: 26.1
- 1: 66.8

(0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
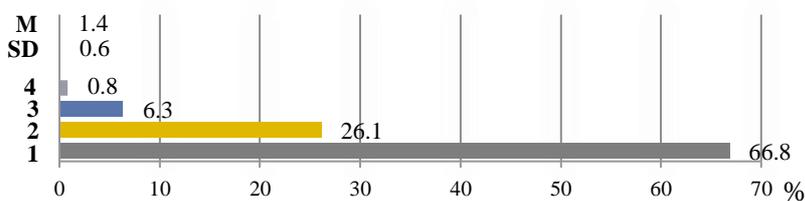
I have invested a lot in developing my expertise

M	1.4
SD	0.7

- 4: 1.6
- 3: 8.7
- 2: 18.4
- 1:

(0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 %)
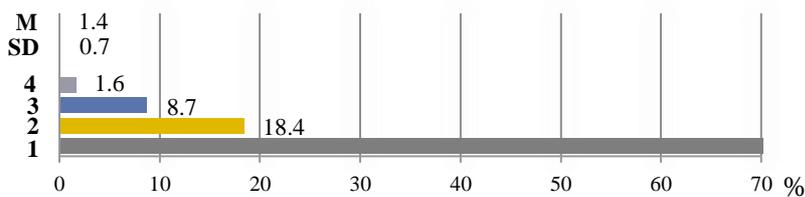
My expertise is what protects my job

M	1.3
SD	0.7

4	1.0
3	7.3
2	15.2
1	

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70 %
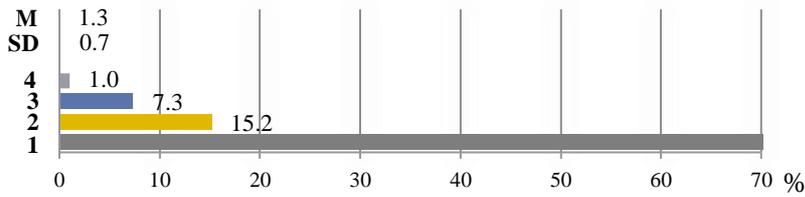
5. Prerequisites for knowledge sharing

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements, first for your department, then for your faculty and finally for the university.

[1 = Disagree, 2 = Tend to disagree, 3 = Tend to agree, 4 = Agree]

I know who has expertise that is relevant to my teaching

1   2   3   4

- 3.4
- 3.3
- 3.2

I can rely on my colleagues when I need support in my work.

1   2   3   4

- 3.4
- 3.0
- 3.0

I believe that we basically think in the same way about teaching

1   2   3   4

- 3.1
- 3.1
- 3.0

we have a strong feeling of being 'one team'

1   2   3   4

- 2.9
- 2.3
- 2.3
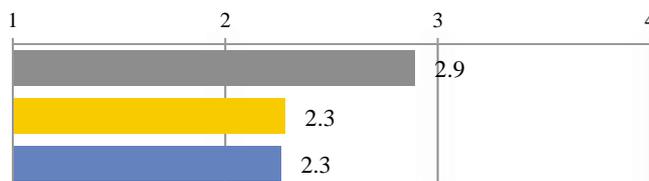
6. Interest in specific topics

Below is a list of topics of teaching-related practices and methods you might like to learn more about, with the intention to apply this to your own {courses/programmes}. Please indicate for each topic whether you would like to learn more about it.

[1 = Definitely not, 2 = Probably not, 3 = Maybe, 4 = Definitely]

Topics of teaching-related practices of interest to UvA employees

Topic	Score
Motivating and activating students	3.4
Teaching academic and intellectual skills	3.3
Research-based teaching	3.2
Collaborative learning	3.2
Course design	3.2
Giving feedback and facilitating peer feedback	3.2
Curriculum design or revision	3.14
Blended learning/flipped classroom	3.11
Team-based learning/problem-oriented teaching	3.1
E-learning	2.99
Digital testing	2.97
Personalized teaching	2.85
Online courses/MOOC	2.8
Honours programmes	2.76
Work orientation for students	2.6
International student activities	2.51
Selection and BSA	

1

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[1] 90 respondents stated that they did not know what blended learning/flipped classrooms were.

Appendix 3: Initial overview of knowledge-sharing initiatives at the UvA and elsewhere (2014)

Various organisations in the Netherlands and Flanders are involved with the organisation of knowledge sharing in higher education. As an initial step, in the spring of 2014 we created an overview of these initiatives through desk research, internet searches and an interview with two representatives from the Teaching Academy Utrecht University (Christel Lutz and Anna Gerbrandy).

NOTE: This overview was written in May 2014.

UvA initiatives

Various knowledge-sharing initiatives were underway at the UvA in the spring of 2014. Compared to those at other universities, it is noteworthy that all of the initiatives at the UvA were local in nature (i.e. focused principally on their own programme or faculty).

The Faculty of Science's ICT & Education department created Starfish, a knowledge-sharing platform that boasts a number of good practices, project descriptions, Q&As, and lists of definitions, interesting events and interested people. The motive behind this project: 'There are a lot of educational innovations by fantastic educators (lecturers and trainers) and projects, but they often exist in isolation. Bringing their gained experience and expertise together will not only accelerate their progress, but also help supporting other teachers. And beyond discovering knowledge inside and outside of their faculty and institution, teachers should be able to discover other teachers with relevant

experience that they can interact with.'[2]

The Faculty of Humanities (FGw) set up a website – 'Competencies in Context' – whose purpose is to 'flesh out the list of UvA competencies by zooming in on what educators do in specific teaching situations, using video clips from a variety of lectures/tutorials.'[3] The site is aimed at new UvA lecturers taking a UTQ course, and all others who wish to expand their didactic repertoire.

The coordinator of lecturer professional development at the Psychology department has created a Digital Lecturer Handbook (*Digitaal Docentenhandboek*): a website offering practical information (e.g. about Blackboard and plagiarism) and concise didactic information (on the development of courses and evaluations, for example). A mailing list for peer consultation on didactic issues is still under development. On a somewhat related note, Communication Science (CW) has produced a CW Wiki: the online successor of the paper lecturer handbook offering mostly practical information on the organisation and evaluation

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[2] http://starfish.innovatievooronderwijs.nl/information/40/

[3] http://www.cic.humanities.uva.nl/

of education. More content-based didactic information is also available in the form of overviews of the various forms of assessment, their strengths, weaknesses and pitfalls. A centralised project is the UvA Assessment Policy Wiki (*UvA Toetsbeleid*). Unfortunately, the entries with best practices (sorted according to assessment policy requirements) are mostly still empty.

The IC and the University Library recently launched an initiative to investigate whether the information on ICT and education can be made more accessible at the UvA. In Medicine and Social & Behavioural Sciences, faculty-based projects have taken place aimed at improving information for lecturers about ICT applications. As mentioned above, the Education (and ICT) Expertise Group commissioned an investigation into which innovation projects previously run by the ICT & Education Programme Council would be suitable for larger-scale implementation at the UvA.

Online knowledge sharing outside the UvA

A number of interesting knowledge-sharing initiatives were also identified outside the UvA in the spring of 2014. At national level, SURF offers a knowledge database with 1262 entries of 'reports, videos and presentations by SURF and higher-education institutions'. [4] These are mostly references to ICT-related innovation projects, events and reports. Examples include the announcement of a SURFacademy webinar about a tool for creating online test questions,[5] a best-practice video in which ICT managers talk about their successful migration to a new electronic learning environment,[6] and an article titled '5 opportunities offered by digital assessment for lecturers'.[7] Information on ICT and Education is also available from other sources. The Delft University of Technology has a relatively comprehensive website on ICT in Education that is maintained online by three service departments: The Education Technology department, E-learning Support (ELS) and the OC Focus: Centre for Expertise in Education. This site offers plenty of information on ICT and Blackboard tools that is searchable in various ways, including by education topic (assessment, work placement supervision, etc.). Short descriptions of projects and lecturer experiences are also available.

Risbo, an independent research institute at Erasmus University, offers a website titled 'Digital Pedagogy' (*Digitale Didactiek*). According to its subtitle, the site (a collaboration between Erasmus University, the University of Groningen, Delft University of Technology, University College Ghent, HAN University of Applied Sciences and the SURF Foundation) offers 'concrete step-by-step plans for the use of ICT in

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[4] http://www.surf.nl/kennis-en-innovatie

[5] http://www.surf.nl/kennis-en-innovatie/kennisbank/2014/webinar-thats-the-question.html

[6] http://www.surf.nl/kennis-en-innovatie/kennisbank/2014/good-practice-verandertraject-nieuwe-elo-bij-hogeschool-windesheim.html

[7] http://www.surf.nl/kennis-en-innovatie/kennisbank/2014/artikel-5-kansen-van-digitaal-toetsen-voor-docenten.html

higher education'.[8] What is striking is the structured and consistent approach taken to offering information, including systematic attention to real-world examples, the purpose of IC technologies, when they can and should be used, points for attention during preparation and implementation, prerequisites, background information and additional references.

Information on assessment is provided by Educational Services at the University of Twente, a service that offers an extensive Assessment and Evaluation Information Site (*Informatiesite Toetsing en beoordeling*) with separate access for lecturers, examinations boards and policymakers. The entries on the site mostly contain links to other sources of information.

In addition to this offering, the Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching (ICLON) maintains the 'Study Success in the Higher Education Sector' website, containing an unknown number of blog posts including (again) mostly links to interesting initiatives and documents, research results (e.g. studies showing that student motivation, in terms of self-confidence, expectations and aspirations, clearly correlates to study success) and a study success FAQ.

Outside the Netherlands – in Belgium – we find two other interesting initiatives. The first is the E.G. Database (*BV Databank*) which provides effective access to relatively detailed information on 40 'innovative approaches to education, and teaching & evaluation methods',[9] one example of which is the 'lecture with activating elements'. The database also offers a large glossary of terms (from 'key term' to 'focus session'), as well as a considerable number of systematic descriptions of inspiring examples of 'student-focused and activating education in day-to-day practice'.[10] The database is the result of an incentive project by the Flemish government, and is now maintained by multiple universities.

The University of Leuven (KU Leuven) offers an online version of the book titled *Steekkaarten doceerpraktijk* (Ideas for Education in Practice) which contains 55 'index cards' on a variety of didactic topics, ranging from research-based education to interim assessments. Each card offers a concise and concrete definition of the topic, explains why it is important, covers concrete application and also lists recommendations and pitfalls.

Lecturer and institutional networks

Utrecht University is home to the Teaching Academy University Utrecht (TAUU), a lecturer network set up by the participants in the Education Leadership training programme (2011-2012) run by the Center for Excellence in University Teaching. The TAUU organises events where lecturers can discuss concrete education scenarios and innovations, based on introductions from lecturers with varying levels of

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[8] http://www.digitaledidactiek.nl/

[9]   http://www.bvdatabank.be/databank/index.php

[10] See above

experience. The network has its own website, which now also accommodates the existing knowledge database of the Utrecht University Education and Learning Centre (*Centrum voor Onderwijs en Leren*). The database is organised thematically, and its entries include practical examples of honours education, matching backgrounds and an assessment FAQ. The TAUU website also includes an event calendar, and a blog where lecturers write about or reflect on their own experiences in education.

Dutch research universities have collaborated to set up five innovation and knowledge-sharing networks for Physics, Mathematics, Computing Sciences, Biology and Chemistry, referred to jointly as the 'Academic Science Education Innovation Centres' project. 'The aim of these discipline-based innovation centres is to increase the quality of academic education in science and technology. Various teams of research lecturers from various universities are working on projects related to topics such as 'curriculum innovation', 'academic success rates' and 'lecturer professionalisation'. This collaboration enables knowledge, experiences and best practices to be accessed and exchanged.'[11]

The Dutch research universities are also collaborating with 12 universities of applied sciences as part of the Sirius programme, in order to promote excellence programmes. Sirius involves a subsidy scheme, an audit committee that advises participating institutions (through events, study trips, newsletters and a concise online overview of best practices).

Lastly, there is the national Higher Education Expertise Network (EHON), consisting mainly of education advisers and teacher trainers.

Education support services

In addition to online and other knowledge-sharing activities and networks, various universities also make use of education advisers to promote education innovation and lecturer professionalisation. The UvA has its central and faculty-based ICT & Education staff who advise primarily on the application of ICT. The Amsterdam Institute for Lifelong Learning in Education (CNA) also organises training courses and knowledge-sharing events, and runs UTQ training.

The Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching (ICLON), OC Focus: Centre for Expertise in Education (Delft) and the Centre for Education Support (Twente) are, along with the Education and Learning Centre (Utrecht), the major education consulting services in the Netherlands. Other seemingly smaller services are located at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and in Nijmegen. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has an education advisory department as part of its library which advises on ICT and curriculum development, as well as an Education and Quality Assurance department within Student and Education Affairs. Radboud University Nijmegen has an Education Support department that organises seminars and runs UTQ training.

The Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching (ICLON) advises and provides training courses in the areas of assessment, accreditation, quality assurance, curriculum development, ICT and pedagogy (e.g. thesis supervision). Leiden lecturers may request free advice via email (where the centre agrees to be

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[11] http://www.icab.nl/?pid=2

available for approximately one hour to answer questions) from the Digital Question Repository (*Digitale Vraagbaak*). ICLON also provides training to lecturers taking a UTQ programme. In addition to these activities, ICLON staff also conduct applied research commissioned by higher education institutions into academic success rates, students' time management and alumni experiences in the labour market, and also perform evaluations.

The Delft OC Focus: Centre for Expertise in Education performs a comparable series of tasks, i.e. advising on education innovation, supervision and pedagogical training of lecturers, providing training courses and organising events. The Centre focuses mainly on e-learning, internationalisation, lecturer professionalisation and education development. Similar to the Digital Question Repository offered by ICLON, Focus offers a Quick Education Consult (*Snel Onderwijs Consult*) to lecturers who have questions about teaching in practice. Focus advisers have a maximum of six hours available per question. Focus also runs UTQ training programmes in Delft.

The Centre for Education Support at the University of Twente has a service that advises lecturers and administrators, offers support for accreditations, supervises education projects, develops and runs professionalisation activities (UTQ training, workshops, coaching) and conducts applied research. The staff of this service are partially based at the faculties as education experts. Knowledge transfer and exchange (special events, education and study days, 'knowledge sites' and 'guidebooks' are listedas key a ctivities;[12] for example, in addition to the above-mentioned site on assessment aimed at a broader public, the service also offers sites aimed specifically at UT staff containing information on evaluations, the UTQ and education innovation.

The Education and Learning Centre at Utrecht University runs an Education Consultation and Training department, which provides the (now familiar) gamut of services: advice and support for education development and innovation; training, courses and programmes for lecturer professionalisation; and applied research. UTQ training is offered to beginning lecturers; advanced lecturers may take advantage of the services offered by the Center of Excellence in University Teaching. A striking aspect of the Centre in Utrecht is that they also offer courses for students (e.g. on academic study, oral presentations and time management). Lecturers can contact the Centre for a 'Professional Consultation', and funds are available from the Educational Resources Pool (*Educatieve Middelen Pool*) for projects targeting key areas of quality improvement and innovation in education (matching and selection, assessment, intensification of education in combination with extension for lecturers, and honours education).

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[12] http://www.utwente.nl/ces/od/organisatie/

One final interesting and international example is the Institute of Advanced Learning and Teaching (IATL) at the University of Warwick in Great Britain. This institute is an interesting case, because it is based on a different model: instead of education experts, the institute employs experienced lecturers from a range of disciplines. As part of their duties, they act as adviser, consultant and matchmaker to help other lecturers improve their pedagogical skills. Part of their work consists of passing on best practices from programme to programme. The institution also has funding and fellowships available for lecturers wishing to improve their courses, who may use it to partly 'buy themselves out' in order to devote substantial time on innovation on their courses.

Integrated approach

In a recent study by the Association of Universities of the Netherlands (VSNU), researchers from the (former) IVLOS at Utrecht University and the (former) IOWO at Radboud University stress that knowledge sharing is an important building block in lecturer professionalisation. Other key components mentioned in the report include the basic University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) for beginning lecturers, education innovation projects that serve both lecturers' teaching skills and their continued development, and an institutionalised rating system for lecturers and quality of education. The researchers stress that an effective knowledge-sharing infrastructure must fit within the institutional strategy for lecturer professionalisation, and be in line with the institution's vision on education. They therefore argue for an integrated approach to lecturer professionalisation in which education policy, staffing policy and quality policy come together.[13]

Conclusions

We can conclude that a variety of interesting knowledge-sharing initiatives exist both in the Netherlands and internationally, at different levels (from programme-specific to nationwide), in varying formats (from online blogs to fully fledged centres), run by a range of parties (from lecturers to education support centres) that organise a broad range of knowledge-sharing and professionalisation activities (including UTQ training, applied research and tailored consulting).

Viewed alongside these developments, the knowledge-sharing initiatives at the UvA can be characterised as 'rather modest'. The existence of knowledge sharing at the UvA is mainly thanks to one or more individuals who believe that knowledge sharing is important: these individuals are the driving forces who get initiatives off the ground and keep them going. There is certainly room to increase both the scope and quality of knowledge-sharing activities.

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[13] Van Alst, J., de Jong, R., & van Keulen, H. (2009). *Docentprofessionaliteit in het Nederlandse hoger onderwijs*. [Lecturer professionalisation in Dutch Higher Education]. Nijmegen/Utrecht.

Appendix 4. Second overview of knowledge-sharing initiatives at the UvA and elsewhere (2015)

Approach

Various organisations in the Netherlands and Flanders are involved with the organisation of knowledge sharing in higher education. To learn from their experiences, we have contacted various initiatives via telephone and email and presented several questions regarding the use, evaluation and costs of knowledge sharing. We also drew a distinction between online knowledge-sharing platforms at the UvA and elsewhere, and education service departments that include knowledge sharing as part of their (often much broader) palette of duties. Most initiatives responded, using email to do so.

Initiatives

The overview was created between February and June 2015, and the following initiatives were contacted:

Online knowledge-sharing initiatives at the UvA

- ACTA lecturer network (*docentennet*)   Diana RazabSekh
- Competencies in Context (FGw-UvA)   Anne Bannink & Jet van Dam – Isselt
- Digital Lecturer Handbook (*Docentenhandboek*) (UvA)   Rifka van der Meer
- Starfish   Natasa Zupancic Brouwer
- UvA Assessment Policy (*Toetsbeleid*) Wiki   Hotze Lont

External online knowledge-sharing initiatives

- E.G. Database (*BV Databank*, Flanders)   Sarah Slock
- Digital Pedagogy (*Digitale Didactiek*, Erasmus)   Gerard Baars
- Ideas for Education in Practice (*Steekkaarten doceerpraktijk*, Leuven)   Anne-Leen Maes
- SCORE AUAS/HvA   Veronica Bruijns
- SURF Knowledge Bank   Eric Daamen
- TAUU (Utrecht)   Maarke Roelofs

Education support services

- ICLON advisory service (Leiden)   Jossi Gijzen
- OC Focus (Delft)   Toine Andernach
- Centre for Education Support (Twente)   Irene Visser

Questionnaire

The following questions were presented to representatives of online platforms and education support services, respectively.

Online platforms:

- Use

    1. How many people use/visit [NAME] per year (or month)?

    2. How would you describe your key user group(s)?

- Evaluation

    3. Are there any evaluations of [NAME] available?

    4. What factors do you believe contribute to the success of [NAME]?

    5. Which aspects would you like to improve?

- Costs

    6. How many staff (FTE) does your organisation need (ad-hoc or permanently) to offer [NAME]?

Education support services:

- Use

    1. How many advisory consults are conducted per year? /How many questions are submitted to [SERVICE] per year?

    2. Who are the key users of the services?

- Evaluation

    3. Are there any evaluations available of the listed services?

    4. What factors do you believe contribute to the success of the listed services?

    5. Which aspects would you like to improve?

- Costs

    6. How many staff (FTE) does your organisation need (ad-hoc or permanent) to offer the listed services (advisory consults, online questions)?

Summary of responses

Platform content/structure

The structure of the various websites varies considerably. Some have a website where users can enter content and share knowledge directly (Starfish). TAUU has an active community of around 50–100 lecturers who make voluntary contributions by writing blog entries for the site, for example. Other sites only provide information and are less interactive, only allowing users to search for information. Multiple

platforms therefore consider a search function and linking system (i.e. using tags) to be essential (SURF.nl, *BV Databank*, *Digitale Didactiek*). Some emphasise the connection between online and offline communities as a key element of knowledge sharing (TAUU, and the Digital Lecturer Handbook at UvA Psychology).

Use

An initially striking factor is that data on the use and evaluation of such services is by no means always systematically collected, meaning there is relatively little information available.

The visitor numbers provided in response to our questions differs considerably between websites (varying between 386 users of Starfish and 5671 visitors per year for *BV Databank*, and from 100–150 visitors per month at SCORE to several thousand per month at *Digitale Didactiek*). Most visitors are lecturers, however support staff, policy officers and directors of education also visit the various sites.

The ICLON conducts around 100 advisory consultations per year (often as the starting point for a longer consulting programme). The Digital Question Repository (*Digitale Vraagbaak*), a new service, only received 10 questions in 2014.

Costs

An overview of various platforms (websites) where knowledge is shared reveals that both the construction and maintenance of websites requires a lot of time (FTE). The (one-off) costs for building a site are estimated at around 3–5 FTE. Maintenance (i.e. updating both technology and information, and adding new information) requires around 0.5–1 FTE (rough estimate by the initiatives contacted).

Success factors

Some websites claim that potential visitors/users are unaware of the website's existence, or of how to find it. Awareness is therefore an initial success factor. Some initiatives would like to do more to promote awareness. It is also important for initiatives to be easily accessible.

Some initiatives report that visitors/users ultimately stop visiting, because the information on the site is out of date. It is therefore of vital importance to continually update the information. The systems used to build the sites also quickly become out of date, and so the sites themselves also regularly require updating.

Administrators say that users are generally very happy with the sites, and find them useful for finding information to support their teaching activities. There is a lack of formal evaluations, however, as mentioned above. One important success factor mentioned is the provision of practical examples, or the establishment of a link between theory and practice (*Digitale didactiek* & *BV Databank*).