

## Research Networks and Knowledge Sharing: An Exploratory Study of Aquaculture in Europe

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**Abstract :** The collaborative European funded research and development landscape provides prime environmental conditions for multi-disciplinary teams to learn and enhance their knowledge beyond the capability of training and learning within their own organisation cocoons. Whilst the emergence of the academic entrepreneur has changed the focus of educational institutions to that of quasi-businesses, the training and professional development of lecturers and academic staff are often not formalised to the same level as industry. This research focuses on industry and academic collaborative research funded by the European Commission. The impact of research is scalable if an optimum research network is created and managed effectively. This paper investigates network embeddedness, the nature of relationships, links, and nodes within a research network, and the enhancement of the network's knowledge. The contribution of this paper extends our understanding of establishing and maintaining effective collaborative research networks. The effects of network embeddedness are recognized in the literature as pertinent to innovation and the economy. Network theory literature claims that networks are essential to innovative clusters such as Silicon valley and innovation in high tech industries. This research provides evidence to support the impact collaborative research has on the disparate individuals toward their innovative contributions to their organisations and their own professional development. This study adopts a qualitative approach and uncovers some of the challenges of multi-disciplinary research through case study insights. The contribution of this paper recommends the establishment of scaffolding to accommodate cooperation in research networks, role appointment, and addressing contextual complexities early to avoid problem cultivation. Furthermore, it suggests recommendations in relation to network formation, intra-network challenges in relation to open data, competition, friendships, and competency enhancement. The network capability is enhanced by the adoption of the relevant theories; network theory, open innovation, and social exchange, with the understanding that the network structure has an impact on innovation and social exchange in research networks. The research concludes that there is an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the impact of network reuse and network hoping that provides scaffolding for the network members to enhance and build upon their knowledge using a progressive approach.

**Keywords :** research networks, competency building, network theory, case study

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