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Motivational Factors for Knowledge Sharing using Pedagogical Discussion Cases: Students, Educators, and Environmental Factors

Narumon Sriratanaviriyakul^{a, b*}, Jamal El-Den^a

^aCharles Darwin University, Ellengowan Dr, Casuarina NT 0810, Australia

^bRMIT University, 702 Nguyen Van Linh Boulevard, District 7, Ho Chi Minh City 70000, Vietnam

Abstract

This research examines the motivational factors which affect knowledge sharing among university students during the use of pedagogical discussion cases in/out of the classroom. The research identifies three factors, namely the individual level (student's prior knowledge, experience and self-efficacy), the lecturer level (lecturer's prior knowledge, experience and characteristics of trust and fairness), and the environmental level (course context and diversity in team structure). The research was conducted on undergraduate business students enrolled in one of the business management courses (n = 103) and analyzed using multiple regression, a questionnaire was administered to the students and data analysis was conducted. The results of the analysis demonstrated that the student's prior knowledge and experience, the lecturer's prior knowledge and experience, and the course context positively influenced the level of knowledge sharing. In addition, the analysis demonstrated that the student's self-efficacy, the lecturer's characteristics, and the diversity in team structure have no significant influence on knowledge sharing. The implication of the study is that lecturers need to promote the students the importance of knowledge sharing as well as understanding their subject and cultivate a positive course context and learning environment to encourage knowledge sharing among the students.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +6-141-400-4570; fax: +6-188-946-6642.

E-mail address: narumon.sriratanaviriyakul@cdu.edu.au

1. Introduction

It is without any doubt that the mission of universities is to equip students with the necessary knowledge for their future careers. They focus on creating innovative techniques which help students to learn through knowledge sharing among the students as well as from educators. Despite this seemingly apparent statement, there are limitations in the current research on how actually universities fulfill their mission. While the Bloom's taxonomy and its revisions do offer guidance on the process of learning, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of learning, [1-3], there is somewhat more limited evidence for the role of knowledge sharing (KS) in the learning process.

This research takes place in an international university in Vietnam context. Vietnam has been experiencing rapid growth in its tertiary educational system enrolment and provision, with enrolment rates rising from about 10% in 2000 to 25% in 2013 [4]. This growth has occurred due to a rapidly expanding and advancing economy. In other words, Vietnam has undergone a rapid increase in the demand for human capital, requiring also a rapid increase in educational achievement within the population [5]. This is part of a global shift toward requirement for higher levels of education and technical skills and knowledge in the workforce, which must still be met at the local level due to limitations on the free movement of people [5]. Thus, the problem of increasing demand for human capital and knowledge is not unique to Vietnam.

Vietnam's tertiary education system does struggle under the challenges posed by a rapid increase in demand for skilled workers, due to a lack of capacity and funding [4]. Unfortunately, conditions for learning in Vietnamese universities are not always ideal, with poor working conditions and pay as well as poor training conditions [6]. A heavy reliance on international education also runs the risk of so-called brain drain, which occurs when individuals trained in international universities choose to seek employment abroad (typically because of better living and working conditions and pay) rather than return to their home country [6]. Thus, if Vietnam's classroom learning experience and knowledge transfer is not highly effective, the country will continue to face skills shortages and human capital shortages, which will prevent further economic development.

The aim of this research is to examine the effect of peers (students), educators (lecturers), and environmental characteristics on the students' motivations to share knowledge using pedagogical discussion cases. While this research supports current general theories on interpersonal knowledge sharing in universities and small-groups context, it also serves as a practical tool in curriculum development and teacher/lecturer training to enhance knowledge acquisition and integration for students working on discussion cases.

2. Knowledge and Knowledge Management (KM)

Nonaka & Peltokorpi stated that "Data can be classified as raw numbers, images, words and sounds derived from observation or measurement. Information represents data arranged in a meaningful pattern. Unlike information, knowledge is about beliefs, commitments, perspectives, intention, and action [based on this knowledge] [7]." A Piagetian perspective on knowledge holds that knowledge can be constructed through experience and interactions with others [8]. A broad definition of knowledge is useful because it is a highly complex concept that may not be shared between members of an organization or group [9].

KM is often defined as an organizational capability for leveraging its knowledge assets in order to make the organization more competitive [10]. Gold, et al. [11] further developed the organizational definition of KM by pointing to the importance of technical, cultural, and structural infrastructures that support KM within the organization. Technological infrastructures such as business intelligence systems, organizational structures intended to support KM, and cultural elements such as a culture of sharing all contribute to development of KM [11]. The technical infrastructures these researchers refer to are usually termed knowledge management systems (KMS) [12]. The development of KMS does draw on the theory of organizational knowledge management, but is a separate technical discipline [12].

Modern knowledge management (KM) stems from the research of Nonaka and Takeuchi [13] who defined KM and explained its utility for the organization based on their research in Japanese companies. The model of Nonaka and Takeuchi [13] is based on spiral of knowledge creation, which different forms of knowledge are combined, socialized, and internalized and externalized to transform knowledge and enable its use. The forms of knowledge identified by the authors include tacit knowledge (unwritten knowledge, which may not even be recognized by the

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