Chapter 5

Knowledge Transfer: The Innovation Side of Knowledge Management in Education

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ABSTRACT

In order to overcome the challenges posed by globalization, an increasingly complex business world, and the transition to the knowledge-based economy, both academia and practitioners need to reinforce the importance of knowledge transfer activities between universities and other stakeholders and the development of new forms of transfer activities between academia and the external environment. As businesses, economies, and society in general become more global, and as the pace of change increases, they become more dependent on science and technology, on new and innovative forms of knowledge transfer, which are provided partially by universities. The knowledge in academics is an asset but also a liability. The innovation processes on knowledge management in education through knowledge transfer activities will facilitate the shift from teaching as the transmission of knowledge to teaching as the facilitation of learning. Drawing from the literature on knowledge exchange and foregoing observations, this chapter explores the innovation side of KM in education, based on knowledge transfer partners and activities. As academics continuously evolve collaborative forms of research activity and re-imagine the nature of academic-practitioner exchange and knowledge transfer, this chapter considers key contributions in the area and details important avenues that warrant further research.

INTRODUCTION

The term “knowledge management” is unknown to the classical education science (Hameyer & Strittmatter, 2001). Quality management, marketing, evaluation, organization development, etc. have become important features within the education system that gets increasingly dominated by competition and other dogmas of market economy. Schools are no longer only regarded as “organizations for learning” but “learning organizations” as well.

Knowledge management is closely connected to the concept of the “learning organization.” This is based on the willingness and ability of organiza-
Knowledge Transfer

Knowledge Transfer is the process of sharing knowledge among organization members to learn and apply the knowledge acquired to develop it into new knowledge. Each individual's continuous learning process delivers an important element for the knowledge collected in an organization, but a “learning organization” is more than the sum of the learning activities and achievements of all organization members. It also consists of the continuous interaction with its environment (and transfer partners: other universities, business environment, other public bodies, alumni associations, etc.), the integration into a cultural network and all individual experiences. In this way, new knowledge is created which can successfully be integrated in the already existing system. Knowledge management has to make sure that within a company or university this systemic knowledge based on a common context is kept vital and enriched over time to create an “intelligent organization” that can rely on an independent “collective mind” (Weick & Roberts, 1993; Willke, 1998). Universities and schools need organizational intelligence as well to successfully complete their tasks.

At the beginning, knowledge management in schools is project management. Projects are a form of cooperation in the business world that enables the solving of complex problems and tasks. They are of limited range with a clearly defined beginning and end, pursue specific innovative goals, and take certain risks. Projects are usually granted major importance within an organization (Litke, 1995).

In the last few decades, the economies of the developed countries became knowledge dependent. Knowledge turned into the key driver of sustainable economic growth and productivity. Therefore, economies of the developed countries are becoming increasingly dependent on knowledge producers. An important amount of knowledge is created and provided by universities and research centers. In order to benefit from this knowledge and to use it to increase the common welfare of citizens, the results of research need to be transferred from the university to its stakeholders (Vinig & Rijsbergen, 2008). This process is known as knowledge transfer. Some authors use the terms “Knowledge Sharing” and “Knowledge Exchange” as synonyms for “Knowledge Transfer.”

As different authors suggested, managing knowledge means to create an environment within the organization to facilitate the creation, transfer or sharing of knowledge (Bratianu & Vasilache, 2009). The most discussed activity in the process of knowledge management today is knowledge sharing (Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi, & Mohammed, 2007). Why this importance of knowledge sharing activities? Knowledge abounds in organizations, but its existence does not guarantee its use. And thus knowledge sharing leads to faster knowledge connection with portions of the organization that can greatly benefit from this new knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 2000). Knowledge management determines the improvement of knowledge sharing.

The challenges to be faced in implementing Knowledge Management are many, but universities need to cope with them if they want to succeed in business environment where the consumers’ preferences are changing more rapidly than in the past and existing knowledge becomes obsolete after short time life cycles. The knowledge transfer becomes the essential issue and the innovation side is highly related to the definition of transfer partners and activities to ensure its effectiveness.

Several authors (Argote & Ingram, 2000; Duan, et al., 2010; Hubig & Jonen, 2006) define the knowledge transfer as a process by which one individual or organization transmits its experience to another and systematically organized information and skills are exchanged between entities. Authors argue that there are some factors, which facilitate and some other factors, which might hinder knowledge transfer. In the category of facilitators can be included determinants such as: commercial resources of a university, research and teaching experience, the stock of technology, whether it is private or public university, the
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