

A constructivist perspective of knowledge management theory: A KM solution to online teachers professional development



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The poster presentation describes the author's epistemological stand and the theoretical framework of his proposed doctoral study. The new theoretical perspective based on the constructivism is proposed as the theoretical foundation for the action research study.

Introduction

The poster presentation describes the author's epistemological stand and the theoretical framework of his proposed doctoral research study. The research to be conducted is an action research study, applying the knowledge management (KM) solutions to a very important problem in education, namely the teachers professional development (TPD) and life long learning. The research subscribes to the interpretive research perspective, as it is more appropriate to the education context and it is the epistemological stand of the researcher, that is, the constructivism. The study will be conducted in Malaysia. The research sample is the teachers participating in the K-Perak Project, a currently ongoing project initiated by the government of the state of Perak, a state in Malaysia, to transform Perak to become a knowledge-state (K-state) by the year 2010. About 60 primary and secondary schools are involved in this project. Currently no KM solution has been proposed for this project for the schools and teachers.

The researcher is proposing a new theoretical perspective for KM, based on the constructivist perspective and the literature from the field of organisational learning and organisation theory. The presentation will describe the proposed theoretical principle. The basic premise of the theory is a clear distinct differentiation of information from knowledge. The nature of knowledge will be based from the constructivist perspective of knowledge. The explicit "knowledge" is only a representation of knowledge, not the knowledge itself. It is documented (codified) information. Knowledge is not an object that can be package in boxes, which then distributed in an organisation. Knowledge distribution and transfer involve learning, which is a sense making process of the information or "explicit knowledge", and the information that one received from the other sources, which may not be explicit nor documented (implicit).

Distinction is also made in level of knowledge possession. They are the personal knowledge, group knowledge, organisational knowledge and the societal knowledge. Every individual creates his or her own knowledge upon interacting with a piece of information (an object which represent certain knowledge) based from his or her existing knowledge that he or she currently possessed. Knowledge that is shared through collaboration within a group will become the group knowledge and knowledge that is accepted at the organisational level is the organisation's knowledge. From the constructivist principle these knowledge is localise and context specific. Individual, group, organisation, or community may has its own unique knowledge of an event or phenomena. Knowledge that is created is a function of the existing knowledge an individual, group or organisation possessed.

Knowing is seen as the process of giving meaning to information or as the result of combining different knowledge. Knowing is part of learning process. The process of decisions making, planning and problem solving is also a learning process. Learning can occur at all level, individual, group or organisational level. An organisation that can learn is a learning organisation. Codification is the process of representing knowledge in the form of systematic symbols that can be understood by the individual, group or organisation. A complex symbol system becomes language. All codified knowledge is information. Not all knowledge can be codified (Nonaka, 1994). Tacit knowledge cannot be codified (Al-Hawamdeh, 2003). Tacit knowledge is knowledge that grows from experience and can be in the form of competency or skills. Implicit knowledge is the mental model that an individual, group or organisational possessed. This implicit knowledge can be subconscious and not known even to those that possess it. However,

through reflection one could uncover or expose the implicit knowledge and document (codified) it to become information.

The proposed theoretical model of knowledge was created out of the need of a viable research theoretical framework.

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