

Evaluation of Seminar 2 “Knowledge Management as an Education Tool”

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Abstract: This contribution presents the run of Seminar 2 and its following evaluation by a specific cohort of its participants – the students of a master program at Vysoká škola manažmentu. The results indicate that Knowledge Management awareness and its value for education is worth of further study.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Education, Study program development.

1 Introduction

The seminar on *Knowledge Management as an Education Tool* was a part of IWKM pre-conference activities. As the Knowledge Management study program was dismissed by the Accreditation Commission due to formal reasons (one of its guarantors exceeded 70 years), one of its aims was to introduce the VŠM students to its basic concepts. At the same time, the seminar served as an introduction to Knowledge Management to participants not familiar with its theoretical basics. The seminar has a format of an interactive lecture – short talks of the authors were combined with their questions to the participants and their reactions.

The seminar introductory talk can be found in this proceedings [1], its slides prepared by both authors, too [2]. The first part addresses the models of knowledge and its acquisition, the second one introduces communities of practice as a method of acquisition outside school and university environment. The aim of the second part was to point the participants’ attention to the fact that learning can have a form of knowledge sharing and is not limited to formal education.

A week after the seminar, a short questionnaire was distributed among the students. Its results are presented in Section 2. Due to a small number of returned sheets, their results have practically no statistical validity. Still, they represent an interesting information about the seminar influence on their appreciation of Knowledge Management and can serve as a form of qualitative research to be supported by a wider survey in the future. Our considerations about its orientation are presented in Conclusions.

2 Questionnaire and Its Results

2.1 Understanding the Concept of Tacit and Explicit Knowledge

The questionnaire contained ten questions corresponding to the sections of the seminar. In the first one, the participants’ ability to distinguish explicit and tacit knowledge was tested by using four questions. The respondents were asked to underline the correct version of their text. Below, the reader can see the questions with their correct marking.

- *Driving a car* / *Knowing the distance* between Bratislava and Prague is an example of using tacit knowledge.
- *Tying shoelaces* / *knowing the weight of an elephant* is an example of explicit knowledge.
- We can easily google *explicit* / *tacit* knowledge.
- *Tacit* / *explicit knowledge* can only be acquired through experience and practical application.

In all cases, 9 out of 10 answers were correct. It indicates that the difference between tacit and explicit knowledge does not represent a problem. To understand the relationship between school education, practical experience and their affect on a person's knowledge was not so clear. Only 7 out of 10 answers correctly responded to the following question:

- What is especially valued in expert knowledge is their *explicit* / *tacit* knowledge.

Possibly, the respondents wrongly presumed that the only possible way of getting tacit knowledge is through practical activities. It was quite observable to their responses to the question

- At schools we gain *explicit* / *tacit* / *both types of* knowledge.

Only 4 responses correctly addressed both types of knowledge; 6 remaining answers pointed to explicit knowledge. Their wrong feeling could be explained by the fact that Slovak schools concentrate on memorizing – which is a sort of education primarily targeting explicit knowledge. At the same time, the full comprehension would require a longer discussion that was probably not delivered during the limited time of the seminar. This contradicts to the correct conclusion that *Tacit knowledge can only be acquired through experience and practical application*. It seems that they do not view their school activity as a *right* experience and practical application but the issue deserves a longer study.

2.2 Communities of Practice

Four questions addressed communities of practice, their importance and ways of communication. The authors intention was to stress the importance of mutual knowledge sharing and the importance of involvement of each member of community. All respondents properly answered the question:

- A member of the community of practice *is supposed to* / *does not need to* contribute to the knowledge base of the community.

At the same time, they likely missed some of the key ideas behind it. The previous text requires active participation of the member of community on its knowledge sharing.

- Sharing a common interest *is* / *is not* enough to create a community of practice.
- Social media may create a false feeling of a community of practice due to the *ease of sharing a common interest* / *communication* / *common practice*.

In fact, the previous two questions are just variation of one. As both were correctly answered just 5 out of 10 respondents, one can conclude that their level of understanding is shallow.

At the same time, a certain optimism can be based on all correct answers to the question:

- A community of practice *may* / *may not* be created also in the classroom environment.

Again, one can presume that a longer time period spent during seminar plus creation of a sample community of practice by students themselves would probably lead to full understanding of the idea.

3 Conclusions

The outcomes of the questionnaire indicate that Knowledge Management concepts and practices can partially be understood on an intuitive level, but their full appreciation requires more than general information. They must be trained – not necessarily in special courses. Likely the most appropriate way is to apply its practices in various courses, so they become a natural part of the future managers' intellectual weaponry.

Literature

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