Perceptions of MBA Students Towards Learning Environment for Managerial Knowledge
A Study at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to explore different cultural dimensions of the learning climate at a business school located at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The study focuses on MBA students, at the International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Sampling population contains Masters' level students at the university. The reason for selecting one business school is controlling location related biases aligned with intellectual level. It is predictable that students located in a sole business school have same site and instructive cohorts.

Key words:

INTRODUCTION

Learning environments’ conceptualisation, quantity and perception of managerial knowledge have received a high level of researchers’ interests during last decades. Characteristically, learning environment research challenges students to have a proper understanding about their favoured and practised classroom environment. These researches utilize practical surveys to achieve a class or individual mean scores on learning environment’s psychosocial perspectives. Research in this area was firstly framed with the study of an objectivist system of semantics (Johnson 1987, Putnam 1981). This framework considers the existence of an actuality with complete truths which can be communicated to other individuals. That exploration can decide and separate those reality variables. They can then be deployed for forecasting and controlling (Guba and Lincoln 1989). A direct learning environment studies’ hypothesis states that existing of an actual learning environment is related to variables available in the learning environment. This class’s mean is the most proper factor of that environment. Respondents’ knowledge of a skilled reality is considered as the main goal of questionnaires’ extracted data.

Social constructivism is considered as a hypothetical structure for the aim of studies done by researchers during recent years. It focuses on learning’s significant individual and communal factors. Meaning is made by people as novel information cooperates with their existing information. While it is stated that there is an actuality, learning is defined as an individual and slanted phenomenon and merely subsists in knower’s mind.

To achieve an understanding about learning environments, hence, it is essential to discover the semantic systems and students’ related actions aligned with instructors in specified classroom surroundings.

Learning can be defined using different approaches. From the human point of view, it is a critical socio-cultural practice. The meaning can be achieved by constructing knowledge extracted from social communication made by human. This meaning is expressed using different ways. This study deploys a “constructivist” paradigm for practically analyzing the learning climate for managerial knowledge. To achieve this goal, a public business school located at Kuala Lumpur Malaysia is considered as the case of this study. Thus school Master of Business Administration (MBA) students are the main population of study.

Statement of the Problem:

Five perspectives of learning such as climate, culture, learning styles, resources, methodology and environment was measured. Also, business knowledge effective learning pattern by the students of the school will also described. This is done due to its concern about globalization and diversity dynamic confronts.

Research Limitations/Implications:

First, this study is the result of a research done on a business school located in a developing country. Second, outputs of this study can be very important regard to their implication in developing countries involved in business education strategic management due to their comparable socio-economic situation.

Objectives of the Study:

The study has been designed to achieve the following objectives. It is hoped to show that learning climate for managerial knowledge is most effective, when:
H1. School culture encourages sharing, innovation, participation and group learning.
H2. Responsive learning resources (of textbooks, multimedia, internet, etc.) are established.
H3. Environment of trust is constructed by all involved in the learning activity (students, teachers, parents, administration and support services).

**Literature Review:**
Plato (1955) defines learning as the process of an extreme force action on the mind or soul in order to impact them. This definition is based on the knowledge’s characteristic which is innate and claiming. It means an individual cannot learn what he does not know. Philosopher John Locke (1947) did not accept this idea. Considering learning from another point of view, Locke (1947) considered infant’s mind as a tabula rasa, or empty slate, meaning that knowledge is not innate comparing to capability of processing it which is innate. Plato or even Locke was not the last people discussing about connection between learning and knowledge.

**Philosophies of Learning:**
It is a long period that philosophers, academicians, and social scientists are focusing on learning concept. It is essential to think the diverse philosophies of learning to effectually address the concept of learning. There are four philosophies containing (a) behaviorism, (b) cognitivism, (c) social learning, and (d) humanism (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

**Behaviorism:**
The discussion of the behaviorist view of learning started by J.B Watson (1913) research which is focused on environmental influences of changes in noticeable behavior. The concepts of stimulus-response are introduced by Edward Thorndike (1913), Ivan Pavlov (1927) and B.F Skinner (1966) according to Watson’s research (1913) as well as conditioned stimuli and operant conditioning respectively and defined learning through causal relationships between stimuli and responses. Behaviorism explains learning through changes in remarkable behaviors as a result of the individual’s response to environmental conditions (Pavlov, 1927; Skinner, 1966; Thorndike, 1913; Watson, 1913).

**Cognitivism:**
Max Wertheimer in 1923 introduced the cognitivist view approaches learning as information processing or problem-solving activity. In fact cognitivism goes more than the behaviorist conception of stimulus-response behavior to analysis of cognitive actions. Kurt Lewin (1951) explained the whole structure of the cognitive process as a cycle and stressed on the importance of integrating theory and action at the present moment.

**Social Learning:**
It considers learning as the as the continuous interactions between the environment, behaviors and psychological processes. In this case social learning unites combination of the concepts of behaviorism, cognitivism, and humanism, attributing learning to environmental, cognitive, and social influences, respectively that it means social learning. However social learning emphasize on learning as the result of interactions (Bandura, 1977; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

**Methodology:**
**Target population:**
The study focuses on MBA students, at the International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Sampling population contains Masters’ level students at the university. The reason for selecting one business school is controlling location related biases aligned with intellectual level. It is predictable that students located in a sole business school have same site and instructive cohorts.

**Sample Design:**
A systematic sampling technique aligned with a learning climate survey (LCS) was deployed in order to evaluate students’ responses scaled on a one-five-Likert rating scale. Students were grouped considering their different programs, like MBA (professional), MBA (executive), MSBF (Master of Science in Banking Finance), etc. The existence of an order considering intellect between these groups is believed. 50 students were randomly selected from each group. Following shows detailed diverse specifications of the design.

**Sample Size:**
The sample size changed to be n = 150. This was done due to a pilot survey carried out on a extremely restricted level to provide a suggestion regard to variation available in the data. The population’s intrinsic dispersal for an issue like learning climate is controlled by the locale and intellect homogeneity.
**Questionnaire:**

This study considers five dimensions thought to be the most significant gap for learning climate, mentioned before. These perspectives include school culture, learning style, learning resources, learning methodology and learning environment. To discuss more in detailed, these gaps are stated with the aim of various models and theories explained earlier in the first section. This can results in a tool in quest of information on a broad variety of features and specifications. 41 diverse characteristics used in the questionnaire are shown as follows. Next paragraphs show the classification of these characteristics for the five perspectives of the study.

1. Participate in positive learning experience in the classroom
2. Become self-aware
3. Exhibit their personal talents
4. Unleash their creativity
5. Share knowledge and information frankly in the classrooms
6. Broaden their vision by knowledge of social science, humanities and arts
7. Cultivate effective communication skills, e.g. (spoken, written, etc.)
8. Present innovative ideas in the classroom without fear
9. Rid themselves of cultural stereotypes about gender, language and ethnicity
10. Know the ethical implications of modern business practices
11. Take responsible decisions about their classrooms, projects/assignments
12. Simulate and reproduce solutions to real-time business problems in the classrooms
13. Develop social responsibility towards the community/peoples in which they live
14. Enhance cultural sensitivity to the values and norms of different cultures in handling business affair
15. Know the Islamic basis of trade, finance and business in modern world
16. Acquire effective business and managerial knowledge
17. Perform their task alone
18. Perform/learn their task in groups
19. Multimedia and audiovisual interaction of lesson plans in the classroom
20. Traditional and personal way of imparting classroom Instruction
21. Relevant text books on management disciplines
22. Information about cross-cultural interactions in business management
23. Insight into global interdependence in business and trade through curricula and text books
24. Knowledge on environmental issues in business
25. Awareness about universal dignity of human agent in business market place through written and visual materials
26. Access to modern sources of knowledge such as internet, multimedia, etc.
27. Open and frank discussions on problems faced by the business community
28. Exposure to diverse management philosophies in the classroom
29. Care towards student’s concern in/out of classrooms
30. Discipline during instructional sessions
31. Discrimination due to cultural differences such as gender, color, language and ethnicity, etc.
32. An ability to bring in the knowledge and wisdom of other cultures for the benefit of students during their instructional activity
33. Engage their students morally and intellectually
34. Fair play, impartiality and justice in assessing the performance of students
35. Apply narratives, stories, jokes and games to make classroom activity interesting
36. Respect for cultural difference in classroom
37. Trust and reliability
38. Regular interaction of faculty, support staff and facilities department with students
39. Satisfaction to its stake holders (participants and parents)
40. Motivate students to learn effectively
41. Competitive and engaging vis-a`-vis other business school in the area/city

**School Culture:**

This factor is measured using statements 1-16. The culture which efficiently tutors managerial knowledge motivates learners for sharing and contributing, ethnically responsive and communally in charge is very critical. It helps them to change to efficient business skills units. School culture is considered to be most important measurement of the learning climate.
Learning Styles:
Learners’ learning style is rated through statements 17-18. Autonomy against group learning is investigated in these retorts. Group learning and collaboration in learning context appears to be another significant learning climate’s aspect for efficient learning and managerial knowledge transmission to the learners.

Learning Resources:
Learning resources are evaluated using statements 19-26. Responses extracted from learners’ comments to conventional against contemporary learning resources are investigated. Managerial knowledge relevancy to learning needs contemporary is evaluated using these features. Learners have stated multimedia, internet and other audiovisual learning resources as the main part of this learning climate’s dimension.

Learning Methodology:
Learning methodology is rated using 27-35 statement. The educational abilities of the teachers such as learners’ caring, cultural differences respect throughout practical work, variety, practical works’ originality and objectivity aligned with the way it shapes in the general learning climate construction is considered for the managerial knowledge.

Learning Environment:
Environment is other learning climate’s dimension occurrence. It is calculated with the aim of statements 36-41. Learners’ motivation, stakeholders’ satisfaction and trust comprise significant characteristic of this learning climate’s dimension.

Table I is explaining this classification.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>1-16</th>
<th>School culture</th>
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<tr>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>Learning style</td>
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<tr>
<td>19-26</td>
<td>Learning resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-35</td>
<td>Learning methodologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>36-41</td>
<td>Learning environment</td>
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</tbody>
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Table I. Five dimensions of LCS

Data Analysis:
A social science statistical Package is deployed for the aim of data analysis. Based on the afro mentioned objectives and subsequent hypotheses’ type and nature, a multivariate factor analysis with the ability of changing all variables available in the questionnaires into sorted clusters should be deployed. It may then be assigned to hypotheses specification. Luckily, there is no obligation from factor analysis to ask for a lot of suppositions for an apt application to be satisfied. Extracted factors choosing are the most significant factor to be considered. It would explicitly impact on the information contents analyzing of subsequents. Deployed data reliability may be certified by Cornbachβ.

Research Findings:
Research findings have been categorized in accordance with the hypotheses. However, the data should be tested for internal consistency and reliability. Cornbachavalue turns out to be 0.8332 which is signifying acceptable internal consistency and reliability in the data. A multivariate factor analysis is carried out using principal component extraction applied on a covariance matrix. In total, 41 different characteristics have been studied in the questionnaire.

Results and Implications of Research:
The current research is a positive study of the learning climate for managerial knowledge at a private sector business school located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The “constructivist” paradigm as discussed in the introduction, was employed and then tested by developing a learners’ responses to the five dimensions of the learning climate, designed on Likert rating scale. Each dimension of the learning climate has been then clustered together by grouping features/factors that best suit to them. Interesting corroborations of the propositions of the study were found as outlined in the section on objectives of the study.

In the research results, it has been observed that culture and environment are the most important dimensions of the learning climate for managerial knowledge at the business school. This partially demonstrates that
The efficacy of the learning climate, is closely linked to the different socio-cultural dimensions interacting with each other.

The most important result of the study shows that the learning climate must look into the needs of its stakeholders such as satisfaction and motivation of the learners. The practicality and effectiveness of the business and managerial knowledge have been considered a highly desirable feature of the learning climate as is evident in the responses of the learners. The school culture which encourages learning of effective managerial knowledge is thought to be most relevant in creating appropriate learning climate for acquiring business and managerial knowledge.

The concept of innovation has also been responded by the learners of the business school very appreciably, as reflected in the use of multimedia, internet and audiovisual aids, etc. thus corroborating the proposition on learning resources fully as hypothesized in the objectives of the study. The learning climate for managerial knowledge is most effective in case of innovative application of modern learning tools available in contrast to traditional instructional techniques.

In the future study can be diversified to ascertain the gender differences reflected in learning climate for managerial knowledge. It would also be interesting to diversify and explore the relationships of the income levels and change of locale (both being important cultural and environmental determinants), such as another business school in Malaysia or some corporate sector organization and find out as to how far five dimensions of the learning climate can be generalized to explain the learning characteristics of these sectors.

REFERENCES


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