

Active Development of Tacit Knowledge: Knowledge Management, High Impact Practices and Experiential Learning

Authors : John Zanetich

Abstract : Due to their positive associations with student learning and retention, certain undergraduate opportunities are designated 'high-impact.' High-Impact Practices (HIPs) such as, learning communities, community based projects, research, internships, study abroad and culminating senior experience, share several traits in common: they demand considerable time and effort, learning occurs outside of the classroom, and they require meaningful interactions between faculty and students, they encourage collaboration with diverse others, and they provide frequent and substantive feedback. As a result of experiential learning in these practices, participation in these practices can be life changing. High impact learning helps individuals locate tacit knowledge, and build mental models that support the accumulation of knowledge. On-going learning from experience and knowledge conversion provides the individual with a way to implicitly organize knowledge and share knowledge over a lifetime. Knowledge conversion is a knowledge management component which focuses on the explication of the tacit knowledge that exists in the minds of students and that knowledge which is embedded in the process and relationships of the classroom educational experience. Knowledge conversion is required when working with tacit knowledge and the demand for a learner to align deeply held beliefs with the cognitive dissonance created by new information. Knowledge conversion and tacit knowledge result from the fact that an individual's way of knowing, that is, their core belief structure, is considered generalized and tacit instead of explicit and specific. As a phenomenon, tacit knowledge is not readily available to the learner for explicit description unless evoked by an external source. The development of knowledge-related capabilities such as Aggressive Development of Tacit Knowledge (ADTK) can be used in experiential educational programs to enhance knowledge, foster behavioral change, improve decision making, and overall performance. ADTK allows the student in HIPs to use their existing knowledge in a way that allows them to evaluate and make any necessary modifications to their core construct of reality in order to amalgamate new information. Based on the Lewin/Schein Change Theory, the learner will reach for tacit knowledge as a stabilizing mechanism when they are challenged by new information that puts them slightly off balance. As in word association drills, the important concept is the first thought. The reactionary outpouring to an experience is the programmed or tacit memory and knowledge of their core belief structure. ADTK is a way to help teachers design their own methods and activities to unfreeze, create new learning, and then refreeze the core constructs upon which future learning in a subject area is built. This paper will explore the use of ADTK as a technique for knowledge conversion in the classroom in general and in HIP programs specifically. It will focus on knowledge conversion in curriculum development and propose the use of one-time educational experiences, multi-session experiences and sequential program experiences focusing on tacit knowledge in educational programs.

Keywords : tacit knowledge, knowledge management, college programs, experiential learning

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