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Provoking students' engagement in physical and digital classrooms

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Provoking students' engagement in physical and digital classrooms: An ACARD-SR model in the South-East Asian context

Abstract:

The country with the highest power-distance index score in the world is Malaysia, and this is reflected in a national culture that negatively influences students' learning experiences (Green, 2013; Hofstede, 1998). Hofstede (1998) defines power distance as the degree to which the less influential participants (students) in an institution assume and agree that authority (such as the teaching practitioner) is allocated disproportionately. As a result, students are confronted with the complexity of ineffectively communicating their ideas openly in class, and especially in a hybrid learning environment (*physical* and *virtual* classrooms) catalysed by the Covid 19 impact (Harland et al., 2013). This consequently amplifies teaching practitioners' task of getting students to keenly contribute and engage in the learning exchange experience (Mendes & Hammett, 2020). This challenge becomes more evident when there is a convocation of local and international students incorporated to promote cultural diversity in the classroom (Ryan & Viete, 2009). Though a high power-distance society helps to encourage students' knowledge memorization and usage, it however, hinders socio-academic exchanges necessary for cross-fertilization of knowledge (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Salleh et al., 2018). Knowledge memorization and application among other rationales perhaps explains the reason why some Malaysian students have struggled to excel in the field of management, in comparison with core science subjects (Salleh et al., 2018). Congruently, existing literature yet lack sufficient evidence that informs on how students' classroom engagement could be bolstered accordingly. By also recognising rising technological and digital advancements, we therefore, seek to explore how students' engagement can be further engendered in a physical and digital classroom. Consequently, the ACARD-SR model is examined to emphasize how student's engagement may be stimulated via **acquisition, cross-fertilization, assimilation, retaining, demonstrating, sourcing of feedback and re-evaluating** knowledge in a hybrid system.

The ACARD-SR model is anchored on social learning, collaborative, and scaffolding theories (Glazewski,and Hmelo-Silver. 2019; Coulson, and Harvey, 2013; Harland, Raja Hussain, and Bakar, 2013). Successful implementation of the ACARD-SR model is contingent on efficient

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deployment of the learning exchange ecosystem (LEE). LEE consists of drivers such as learning exchange mode, information support systems, learning climate/environment, students' equality and diversity, and social interaction. These drivers help to inspire students' *willingness* to become actively engaged in ACARD-SR initiatives.
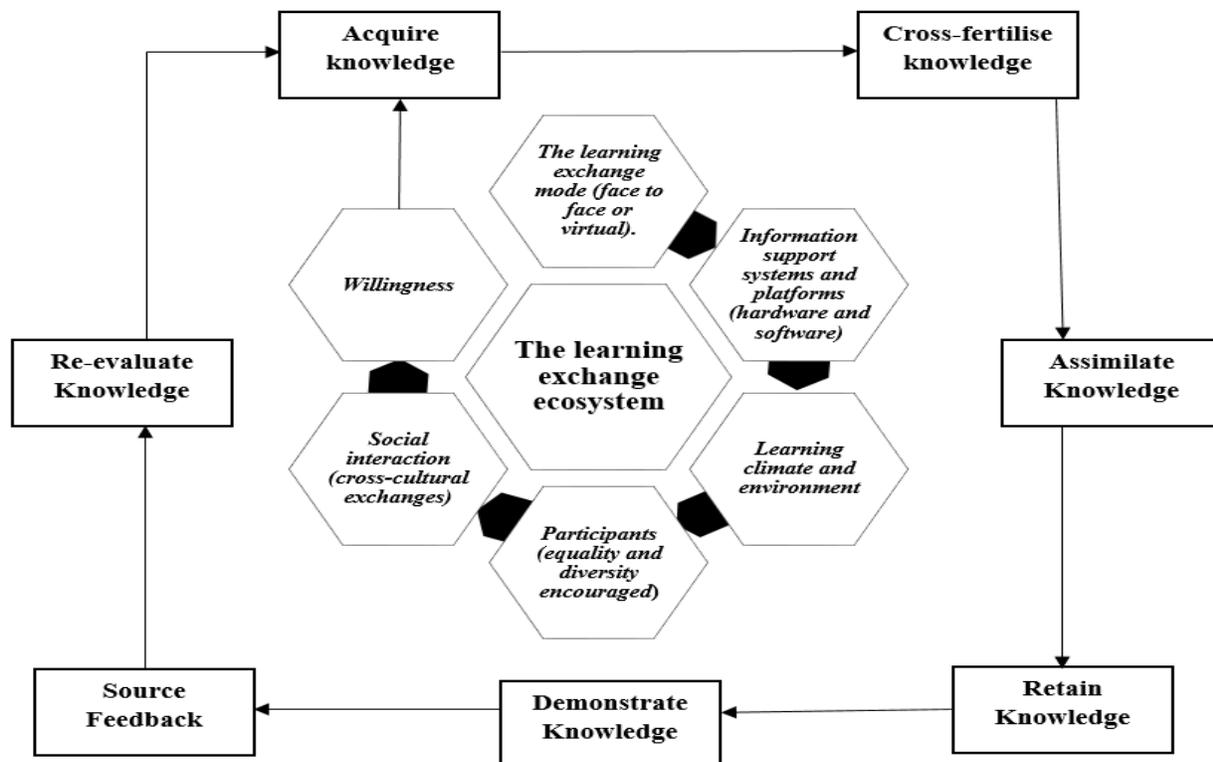

Fig. 1: The ACARD-SR model

The ACARD-SR model first deals with the ***acquisition*** of knowledge between a culturally diverse group of students. The pursuit to acquire knowledge will then provoke a ***cross-fertilization*** of students' opinions. An efficient cross-fertilization activity will engender several neural routes for students to ***assimilate*** knowledge gained from peers and their lecturers. Likewise, by employing the scaffolding theoretical assumptions, students can ***retain*** *knowledge.* Before each lesson, gamification (Kahoot/mentimeter games) is used to revise and assess individual student's knowledge of previous lessons. After each lesson delivery, team presentations are done before everyone in class as each team ***demonstrates*** defined knowledge by discussing and applying solutions to issues identified. Subsequently, the lecturer instigates a ***source feedback*** gathering

session where all class participants, including the lecturers obtain feedback about the learning exchange process from each other. During the sixth week of the semester, a much comprehensive appraisal congruent with the source feedback session, is circulated to students to assess the learning exchange practice. Students anonymously offer remarks about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and suggests proposals for advancing the ACARD-SR tenets. Next, the *re-evaluation* stage which conveys an appropriate collation and analysis of students' surveys is performed. Additionally, new knowledge is ***acquired,*** and the ACARD-SR model cycle is consequently repeated to guarantee sustainability of the improved learning exchange experience. Nevertheless, knowledge acquisition in this model is contingent on the strategic integration of a diverse group of students working together in a team.

A summary of methodology employed are students' observations in the hybrid system, frequent interactions via WhatsApp before and during the Covid-19 season. Equally, students' comments in university-wide surveys known as "***Re-ValuAte***" are used consistently. Lastly, academic reports of student's performance between *Caleb* university (pseudonym used) in Malaysia and the main campus in Australia were examined. Furthermore, a key finding obtained from implementing the ACARD-SR model indicates that from 2018 – 2020, examination results of undergraduate students who were taught via the ACARD-SR tenets in Malaysia outperformed their counterparts in Australia where the model was not utilized.

Keywords:

ACARD-SR model; Students' engagement; Physical and digital classrooms Hybrid system; Learning exchange ecosystem (LEE)

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