KNOWLEDGE WITHIN TRANSITIONS: KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE PRIMARY TO SECONDARY TRANSITIONAL STAGE

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Abstract

Educational institutions are knowledge intensive enterprises, relying on a strategic knowledge base to provide a crucially effective learning organisation. This knowledge base then becomes a key organisational and economic resource, through effective knowledge transfer management. The aim of this research is to evaluate the process and phases of Knowledge Transfer Management within the Primary to Secondary Transition. This will be achieved through identifying the influencing factors within the Knowledge Transfer Management during the Primary to Secondary school transition, considering the experiences of all direct and indirect participants within the transitional process, and establishing correlated impacts within the micro, meso, exo, and macro system knowledge transfer phases. Moreover, it explored Psychological, Physical, and Key Life Transitions which could impact on the knowledge transfer, as well as developmental stages of the individual transition being experienced by the student and the situational nature of these transitions.

This research proposed a linkage of the impacts of the transition to the phases of the knowledge transfer, thereby enabling the clarity of knowledge structure and elaborating possible gaps causing negative impacts on the individual transition. Interviews were conducted with six interest groups (Year 6 and 7 students, Headteachers, Year 6 Teachers, Year 7 Teachers, SEN Teachers), involved in the Primary to Secondary Transition to explore the perceptions and expectations of the Knowledge transfer process. A roadmap framework of each phase was established according to the questionnaires results with discussion concerning the perceived impacts of each phase on the transitional outcome.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Knowledge Transfer, Transition, Primary School, Secondary School.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Physical Transition for pupils from Primary to Secondary School (Year 6 to Year 7, or Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3) has been defined as the Primary to Secondary Transition¹. West et al.² described this transition as one of the most difficult key life transitions during a pupils’ educational career, covering the beginning of major biological and emotional changes associated with puberty. This transition has been noted as the period when learners experience a dip in motivation, disengagement, and underachievement (attainment “dip” has been established as affecting 40% of students in 2011³, and continues to be a prevalent issue⁴ within various countries such as Germany, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, Spain, Tasmania, as well as England⁵.

Various factors have been identified for this attainment dip. For instance, stress and disengagement are just two of the factors some pupils experience at this stage, with additional support and interventions, which are needed prior to and during the transition, have been evaluated in multiple studies⁶, ⁷, ⁸. Although many authors established that most students experience successful transitions due to these additional interventions, unsuccessful transitions seem to be correlated with certain groups of children (low socioeconomic background, developmental delay, nature and level of family support, immigrants, diverse cultural groups and gender, with boys understood as being more demanding⁹). Nevertheless, it has been ascertained that students saw these difficulties within transitions as lying in the structure and organisation of the school, as not all of the above groupings experienced difficult transitions⁷. Edmond and Price¹⁰ reiterated therefore that each transition is based
on the individual student. Ofsted 2016 report\textsuperscript{11} noted that poor handling of the Primary to Secondary Transition was impeding the overall performance of secondary schools, with Sir Michael Wilshaw indicating that: “…pupils begin to fall behind after the transition (attainment ‘dip’)”. There was inadequate sharing of information (between the Primary and the Secondary School) about assessments and curriculum as well as secondary school do not fully understand the shared information due to the apparent mistrust between primary and secondary school. Therefore, this paper attempts to explore the knowledge management framework for the transition between primary and secondary school.

2 METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a qualitative-based approach to explore the knowledge management process through semi-structured interviews with transition coordinators, headteachers, teachers, Special Educational Needs Coordination Officer (SENCOs) in both primary and secondary school (Table 1). The overall research design process can be found in Fig.1 which highlights how the conceptual framework was developed based upon interview results and academic literature as well as government reports, utilising thematic analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Job title</th>
<th>No. of staff involved in the transition</th>
<th>Participated in the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>Transition Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 6 Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Headteacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>Transition Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 7 Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Headteacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 RESULTS

A conceptual model (Fig.2) was developed to illustrate the phases of knowledge transfer within the primary to secondary transition. Three phases of Initial, Implementation, and Ramp-up, lead to the final Integration stage which incorporates the impacts of the transition on the student. This model assimilates and elaborated upon (1) The process of knowledge transfer model put forth by Szuslanski\textsuperscript{12}; (2) Factors Influencing Inter-Organisational and intra-organisational knowledge transfer explained by Easterby-Smith \textit{et al.}\textsuperscript{13}; (3) The Five Bridges Framework for Primary to Secondary Transition posited by Dawrent\textsuperscript{14} and Symonds\textsuperscript{8}.
Figure 2. Knowledge Transfer Management Framework for Transition Between Primary & Secondary.

**Initial phase: January (April) - June**
- **Knowledge Transfer Donor**
  - Absorptive Capacity, Transfer Capability, Motivation, Mutual Interest, Commitment
- **Knowledge Transfer Recipient**
  - Absorptive Capacity, Transfer Capability, Motivation, Mutual Interest, Commitment

**Activities:***Cluster grouping/student individual time with transition coordinator & teachers, meetings with teachers in primary school***

**Knowledge Transfer Nature**
- Explicit and tacit knowledge transferred from spreadsheets/meetings with students & staff in their schools with protocols/pro forma/transition priority analysis survey/collaboration strategy & plan

**Knowledge Transfer Dynamics**
- General dynamics: Power relation / Trust / Risk / Structure / Mechanism / Social ties
- Special factors for primary/secondary education: Administration or Bureaucratic Bridge / Cost / time / students' influence / Alliances / Consistency / Transparency / Leadership & management / Mismatch between primary & secondary

**Implementation phase: June - July**
- **Knowledge Transfer Donor**
  - Absorptive Capacity, Transfer Capability, Motivation, Mutual Interest, Commitment
- **Knowledge Transfer Recipient**
  - Absorptive Capacity, Transfer Capability, Motivation, Mutual Interest, Commitment

**Activities:***1-day induction (includes class meet/teacher/sample canteen/orientation/implementation gap survey/information pack / parents Q&A with head teacher, grouping with siblings, individual time with their teacher), additional transition sessions, emails to parents***

**Knowledge Transfer Nature**
- Tactile knowledge transferred from meetings with students & staff in their schools then internal meetings with all in the secondary school

**Knowledge Transfer Dynamics**
- General dynamics: Power relation / Trust / Risk / Structure / Mechanism / Social ties
- Special factors for primary/secondary education: Administration or Bureaucratic Bridge / Physical transition / Psychological transition / cost / time / Consistency / Transparency / Leadership & management / Mismatch between primary & secondary

**Ramp-up phase: July - September**
- **Knowledge Transfer Donor**
  - Absorptive Capacity, Transfer Capability, Motivation, Mutual Interest, Commitment
- **Knowledge Transfer Recipient**
  - Absorptive Capacity, Transfer Capability, Motivation, Mutual Interest, Commitment

**Activities:***Camps/workshops in balanced student groups / parents evening/emails to parents***

**Knowledge Transfer Nature**
- Explicit and tacit knowledge transferred based on gap evaluations

**Knowledge Transfer Dynamics**
- General dynamics: Power relation / Trust / Risk / Structure / Mechanism / Social ties
- Special factors for secondary education: Professional Development / Self-management of Learning Bridge / Physical transition / Psychological transition / cost / time / staff training / Diffusion of knowledge / Teachers' beliefs / Support & information provided by parents / Consistency / Transparency / Leadership & management

**Integration phase: September - December**
- **Knowledge Transfer Donor**
  - Absorptive Capacity, Transfer Capability, Motivation, Mutual Interest, Commitment
- **Knowledge Transfer Recipient**
  - Absorptive Capacity, Transfer Capability, Motivation, Mutual Interest, Commitment

**Activities:***Classes in balanced student groups / milestones award / celebration assembling / extra-curriculum / study trip / student voice / parent evening / frequent self-management course***

**Knowledge Transfer Nature**
- Explicit and tacit knowledge transferred based on gap evaluations

**Knowledge Transfer Dynamics**
- General dynamics: Power relation / Trust / Risk / Structure / Mechanism / Social ties
- Special factors for secondary education: Professional Development / Self-management of Learning Bridge / Peer influence / Cost / Time / Staff training / Diffusion of knowledge / Teachers' beliefs / Support & information provided by parents / Consistency / Transparency / Leadership & management
3.1 Outlined detailed timing of four phases

Szuslanski\textsuperscript{12} highlights four processes (Initiation, Implementation, Ramp-up, and Integration) as phases for a transition period for organisations, and includes the possible difficulties that organisations may experience at each stage. Applying this model for school transition, the donor is the primary school and the recipient being the secondary school. These four phases are distinguished by using time period, activities, and the nature of knowledge transfer as well as influencing factors for each phase.

We outlined more details based on marketing material of transitions from five schools in England as well as from interviews and academic literature. For example, in the framework, we suggested the transition preparation commencing in January. According to information provided by the Year 6 teacher has, Year 6 students usually start school selection in January, and the secondary school will come to collect data from the primary school in April. However, it might be difficult for teacher and students from primary schools to meet with staff from secondary schools, as students might prefer to focus on preparing for exams in April. As such, we suggest that the transition should start in January, and headteachers, as well as teaching coordinators should visit the primary school to do talks to help students understand the expectation from the secondary school, hopefully helping students to get motivated for study. Moreover, it would be a great opportunity for staff from secondary schools to understand, gather and record information of primary schools, such as the study environment of these students.

3.2 Identified the key donors and recipients

Key donors and recipients are identified for each stage based upon the information provided by participants in the interviews. Although headteachers from primary schools do not appear to be fully involved within the transition process, Ofsted 2016 report\textsuperscript{11} postulated that leadership and management from the headteacher or the school is essential for the successful knowledge transfer. However, participants from both primary and secondary schools appear to all completely understand why there has not been much involvement and leadership due to cost and time issues existing in all schools.

Moreover, the other staff who were not in the transition visits will be involved in the transition process after the initial phase. During the implementation stage, teaching coordinators, teachers, and headteachers will have frequent meetings for sharing the information that they have collected from primary schools and discuss possible issues and solutions for enhancing transition with other colleagues.

3.3 Proposed the key influencing factors for each stage for inter-organisational knowledge transfer

Power relation, trust, risk, mechanism, structure, social ties are general dynamic factors for the inter-organisational knowledge transfer\textsuperscript{13}. These factors related to firms from different industry backgrounds. However, another set of dynamic factors were revealed through interviews and reports for each phase. Ofsted 2016 report\textsuperscript{11} maintained that “mistrust” appears to be the main issue in the transition, and shared information regarding assessment and curriculum was not fully understood by schools. Primary school leaders believe that secondary schools are “confused” about the way of assessment and curriculum design in primary school. However, participants from the interviews do not support this opinion, with a transition coordinator arguing that students should be evaluated based on the “new benchmark” for secondary schools. This benchmark could be influenced by the differences in the mechanism, pedagogy, curriculum design, etc. between primary and secondary education.

Moreover, these influencing factors appear to be consistent with the five bridges highlighted by Galton \textit{et al.}\textsuperscript{15}, which are:

- Bureaucratic or Administrative Bridge - communicating information about students including achievement, behaviour, learning difficulties, home life, school adjustment, special circumstances, with the help of transition coordinators;
- Social and Emotional Bridge - social skills, friendships, being safe, provision of induction days, celebration events, summer camps;
- Curriculum Bridge (subject continuity eliminating “dip”, cross phase teaching, bridging units, demonstrations of learning, summer learning schools);
• Pedagogy Bridge - sharing pedagogy from primary to secondary, through demonstration, observation, joint teaching and planning;

• Self-Management of Learning Bridge - introducing ownership of learning, organisational and social skills, focus on orientation activities for students, involving parents and carers to enable the students to become part of their new school (Symonds, 2015; Dawrent, 2008).

Furthermore, Year 7 teachers also suggested that it is not really about trust, it is more about whether and how the data can be used. For example, “…languages are the big one…”, the results of languages from “…one of the primary school were based on Japanese language study only, and some students have never done foreign language study before, and this does not allow us to map it towards our curriculum.”

4 RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Fig.2 provides a framework that can be used by donors and recipients from both primary and secondary schools as a strategic map for communicating internally and externally. This framework can be also easy to understand by students and parents/carers. Additional recommendations are as follows:

1 The Department of Education or the local learning authorities can help to alleviate the “mistrust”, “cost”, and “time” issues by establishing a database that allows all schools to share basic information about assessment, curriculum, and pedagogy, etc. This self-serve system can help to reduce the cost and enhance the efficiency of information transfer. Moreover, through the process of comparing and contrast among information gather from all schools, both primary and secondary will have a better picture of the overall environment. However, it is worth noting that this would have to conform to GDPR requirements to be implemented successfully.

2 Mutual interests are required to be established and enhanced to improve the sense of trust between primary and secondary educational establishments. For example, more funding opportunities can be provided for both primary and secondary schools if the attainment dip of these schools can have significant improvement; A positive transition has been explained as one where the student has settled and is doing well, academically and emotionally; Whereas a negative transition has been related to unsettled behaviour and poor academic achievement, with Ofsted (2016) linking this directly to mismanagement of knowledge transfer during the transition process.

3 Consistent policies, protocols, and evaluation survey are required to allow the transition gap to be evaluated across all schools. The department of education and local learning authorities can provide more guidance for the leadership and management by publishing policies and developing protocols and gap evaluation surveys. These policies, protocols, and gap evaluation survey design should be developed based on all stakeholders and encouraging educational researchers to be involved by providing research grants.

REFERENCES


