University for Business and Technology Knowledge Center: Making Local Knowledge Visible

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Presentation Outline

- National and Local Context for Paper
- Course Context and Design
- Active Learning Approach Using Systems Ideas – Soft Systems Methodology
- Outcome of SSM Application
- National Impact and Future Work
- Concluding Reflections on Course Design

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National Context

In setting the institutional vision for University for Business and Technology in 2001, founder Dr. Edmond Hajrizi sought to educate Kosovo students to become active contributors to the society and in the workplace, within the country, the Balkan region, and beyond. The UBT Knowledge Center initiative extends the founding vision of national development through higher education. This initiative acknowledges a university’s responsibility to foster democratic civil society and regional economic growth, as well as further smart business practices and higher education efficiencies. Since local knowledge, identity, and learning are necessarily situated, Kosovo students, faculty, staff, and administrators serve as domain experts and international educators from Sweden and the United States serve as design facilitators.
Local Context: Knowledge Center

Reflective of its institutional maturity, the University now produces considerable local knowledge, including but not limited to faculty publications and presentations, student paper and projects, and commissioned studies and reports. Therefore, the Knowledge Center initiative aims to make local knowledge visible through creation of a repository system and associated workflows for acquisition, organization, and dissemination of student research projects, faculty research papers, and community research reports.
Course Context

Designing educational systems to encourage and enable participants to learn from each other to co-create relevant and useful knowledge

- Course pedagogy: Active learning participatory design pedagogy
- Course title: Information Systems Analysis, Design, and Modeling course
- Course tools: Systems Thinking and Soft Systems Methodology
- Course case: Making local knowledge visible and accessible
- Course location: University for Business and Technology, Pristina, Kosovo
Course Design

– Reading literature in advance of class sessions, so ‘flipped classroom’

– Active learning of systems thinking and systems tools, using Soft Systems Methodology (SSM)

– Participatory co-design of local knowledge center concept, with and for stakeholders

– Reflection paper, noting changes in understanding of course topic and changes in understanding of personal learning
Soft Systems Methodology Approach

Students learned about systems thinking processes through using Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) tools, including Rich Picture and PQR techniques, to explore the UBT Knowledge Center concept. Design tools guided exploration of essential questions related to the why, what, and how of the Knowledge Center innovation generator.

In addition, in recognition of the social context of learning – that knowledge is acquired and understood through action, interaction, and sharing with others, modeling explored social relationships necessary for information exchange and knowledge creation, oftentimes enabled by technology.
Expected Learning Outcomes

Explain information system aims and objectives in the context of human activity related to the UBT Knowledge Center, including concepts, models and methods,

and

Design applicable processes for inclusive information systems development, including models, for purposeful information systems for the UBT Knowledge Center.
Student Knowledge Center Concepts

Three initiatives surfaced as essential for advancing UBT knowledge ecosystem design through soft systems:

A digital environment to advance local knowledge visibility – the focus of this paper

An organizational environment to enhance boundary crossing collaboration

A robust digital academic library environment for access to academic publisher content
Examples:

Group #1:
Digital collection of student and faculty scholarship for exchange and usage to promote innovation.

Group #3:
Electronic archive (e-archive) for curating, storing, and sharing local knowledge through a global platform accessible by other universities within the region and around the world.
PQRs – What, How, and Why? – for Local Knowledge Repository

Group #1:
What? Centralized accessible collection of UBT generated research and project content
How? Curate, collect, organize, classify, and index qualified resources on exchange platform
Why? Re-use knowledge, share knowledge, and produce knowledge

Group #3:
What? E-archive of UBT generated research and scholarship connected to other universities
How? Interconnected open source software environment sustained by UBT
Why? Advance faculty and student curation, classification, indexing, and usage of UBT knowledge
Local and National Impact

This work-in-process has significant implications for the University’s knowledge vision, which recognizes the critical importance of developing new and more complex ways for connecting people, information, and technology in the university and with the society, in Kosovo and beyond.
Future Development of the Knowledge Center

Further evolution of the Knowledge Center concept through additional visioning activities with university students, staff, and leaders, building upon Systems

Further engagement of faculty and students from multiple disciplines in co-design of aspects of a synergistic ecosystem for curation, discovery, and access to UBT-generated academic knowledge
Concluding Reflections on Course Design

Active learning activities applied to improvement of real world situations motivates students to engage in course content and processes

Systems thinking and systems tools applied to improvement of real world situations activates and extends students’ prior understanding

Reflection and dialogue within groups and by individuals amplifies appreciation for learning about course topic and learning about learning

In the words of one student: “I can say that my life will have two eras, before SSM and after SSM.”
Selected References


Thank you for your attention!

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