Creating a Culture of Inquiry Literature Review

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Introduction

Creating a culture of inquiry is to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable and welcomed to question a particular task or situation. Such environment is key to foster effective collaborations as it will allow everyone to participate and understand how to inquire and validate a respond. It is important to know how to generate relevant and genuine inquires, as well as developing a climate where questions are greatly valued. This in turn will allow us to become more willing to inquire whenever we feel uncertain, and having the drive to seek for an answer.

This review will focus on the definition and the importance of the role of creating a culture of inquiry within a learning environment, the key challenges and complexities inherited in this role, and links made to the learning of learners and/or novices.

The role of creating a culture of inquiry

To create a culture of inquiry requires the support of leadership teams. They should create an environment where inquiries are encouraged and are asked genuinely with an open-mindedness towards disagreements and new ideas. To apply this, leaders need to form appropriate questions about the situation in order to understand the underlying reasons causing the problems without prior assumptions. This can be achieved by avoiding confirmation bias where they seek information that confirms their own beliefs and ignore facts that disagree with their prior assumptions (Le Fevre, Robinson, & Sinnema, 2015; Lilienfeld, Ammirati, Landfield, 2009; Nickerson, 1998). Also, leaders need to avoid attribution bias where they evaluate or try to find reasons for their own and others' behaviours of problems (Le Fevre et. al., 2015; Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008). By avoiding such biases, leaders are able to test the validity of their underlying beliefs of people and the issues, and be able to identify and support people to change their beliefs that contributed to the

wrong actions. This allows leaders to be open-minded when new inquires arise, thus providing a better understanding of the context of the problems, which in turn lead to better solutions and addressing the problems.

Leaders have a tendency to maintain unilateral control to retain authority and efficiency in completing tasks. However, this will lead to situations where people are not encouraged to make genuine inquires because they will fear that they will be punished for expressing their ideas or raising their concerns. Leaders must make direct inquires and welcome ideas that challenges their beliefs and decisions in order to broaden the possibilities for positive changes (Argyris, 1990; Bridges, 1992; Le Fevre et. al., 2015). Also, leaders should enforce a mindset where people who ask questions will not risk upsetting the relationship they have (Le Fevre et. al., 2015). Likewise, they should not ask questions that they already have an answer to, as well as having negative reactions when their beliefs are challenged (Peeters & Robinson, 2015; Le Fevre et. al., 2015; Robinson, 2016). Leaders who maintain a unilateral control will focus on communicating their own views and bypass different views. These leaders will advocate their decisions rather than be open and accepting to different opinions, which can limit the possibility of creating an effective collaborative environment (Le Fevre et. al., 2015). Leaders should maintain an environment where inquiries and inputs from others are valued.

Furthermore, leaders should encourage people to acquire data and evidence to support their inquires and concerns. Using data and evidence will remove subjective views and allow collective examination of the evidence present (Little, 2005). However, leaders must know what they need to focus or learn first in order to know the type of data and evidence they need to obtain (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). By gathering appropriate information, it helps to make better and more informed questions, thus direct the focus to the main issues (Earl & Katz, 2010). Leaders must be critical of the data available and this can be done through open discussions between team members. Through open-dialogues, inquires about the data gathered will allow people to gain new knowledge and enable generations of new questions and possibilities. This will likely open up opportunities to create more innovative solutions (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Key Challenges and Complexities

One of the key challenges is that people are not aware or willing to change their old habits of not making inquiries genuinely with an open-mindedness and not taking discussions into

actions (Le Fevre, 2010; Le Fevre et. al.2015; Timperley, Kaser, & Halbert, 2014). A way to solve this is to invite external experts to challenge their old habits, assumptions, beliefs, and guide them to change and believe in the new process (Earl & Katz, 2010). External experts can identify and provide evidence to make them be aware of their old habits, and provide guidance for teams to create an environment to make changes (Costa & Kallick, 1995; MacBeath, 1998).

Another key challenge is to encourage leaders to distribute leadership responsibilities to ensure this culture is created and maintained. Distributing leadership responsibilities recognises that everyone is capable of implementing changes and it also shares the responsibility of creating and maintaining this culture (Clarkin-Phillips, 2009). This suggest that everyone is able to utilise their skills to create and maintain the culture of inquiry and that is not solely the responsibility of the leaders.

Links made to learning

Learning can be improved when a culture of inquiry is created as it promotes teams to want to ask questions. By asking more questions, collaborative discussions are formed. This will help us learn the unknowns thoroughly, and identify the learners' needs and root causes of the problems comprehensively (Timperley et. al., 2007; Timperley et. al.2014). Also, asking more questions will lead to people wanting to seek and understand the answers. As it has been described in the literature, creating a culture of inquiry is a way to ensure that people will have a desire to learn, and ask questions genuinely when they feel uncertain (Hakkarainen, Palonen, Paavola, & Lehtinen, 2004). This will lead to better and more feasible solutions as well as promoting learning autonomy (James & McCormick, 2009).

Furthermore, asking questions allow teams to promote unity and a tighter sense for a common purpose. It allows them to want to ask questions and share the knowledge and experience that they have (Supovitz, 2006). It also allows them to test the validity of their underlying beliefs and prior assumptions with others, thus enabling them to change their thinking into a mindset where they ask questions that test what they think they know (Earl & Katz, 2010; Hakkarainen et al, 2004). Overall, this will lead to a common understanding and develop common goals.

Summary

It is hard and inefficient for people to know what they don't know, unless they know who, what, and how to ask, and they are willing to inquire genuinely. It is more effective to come to a conclusion with an open-mindedness, no judgmental mindset, and be open to challenges to prior assumptions. A culture of inquiry will existed when everyone understands these concepts and follows them persistently.

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