



Knowledge Utilization in Teams of Experts and Novices: An Attribution Theory Approach

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Introduction and Objectives

- Knowledge Transfer (KT) processes have recently attracted interest by academic researchers
- Many factors influence the success of KT
- We aim to:
 - Explore KT between experts and novices
 - Build a theoretical model that explains how the interactions between experts and novices influences KT
 - Based on Attribution Theory (Weiner 1985) and Model of KT Process from Organisational Theory (Rich & Oh 1994)



Decision Teams of Experts & Novices

- Decision making teams are often comprised of experts and novices
- Experts can be researchers, consultants, “senior” employees, etc.
- Experts are expected to share or transfer their knowledge to allow:
 - novices to learn
 - for good decision making (e.g. setting policies, firm objectives, etc.)
- Need to know how to manage the transfer process



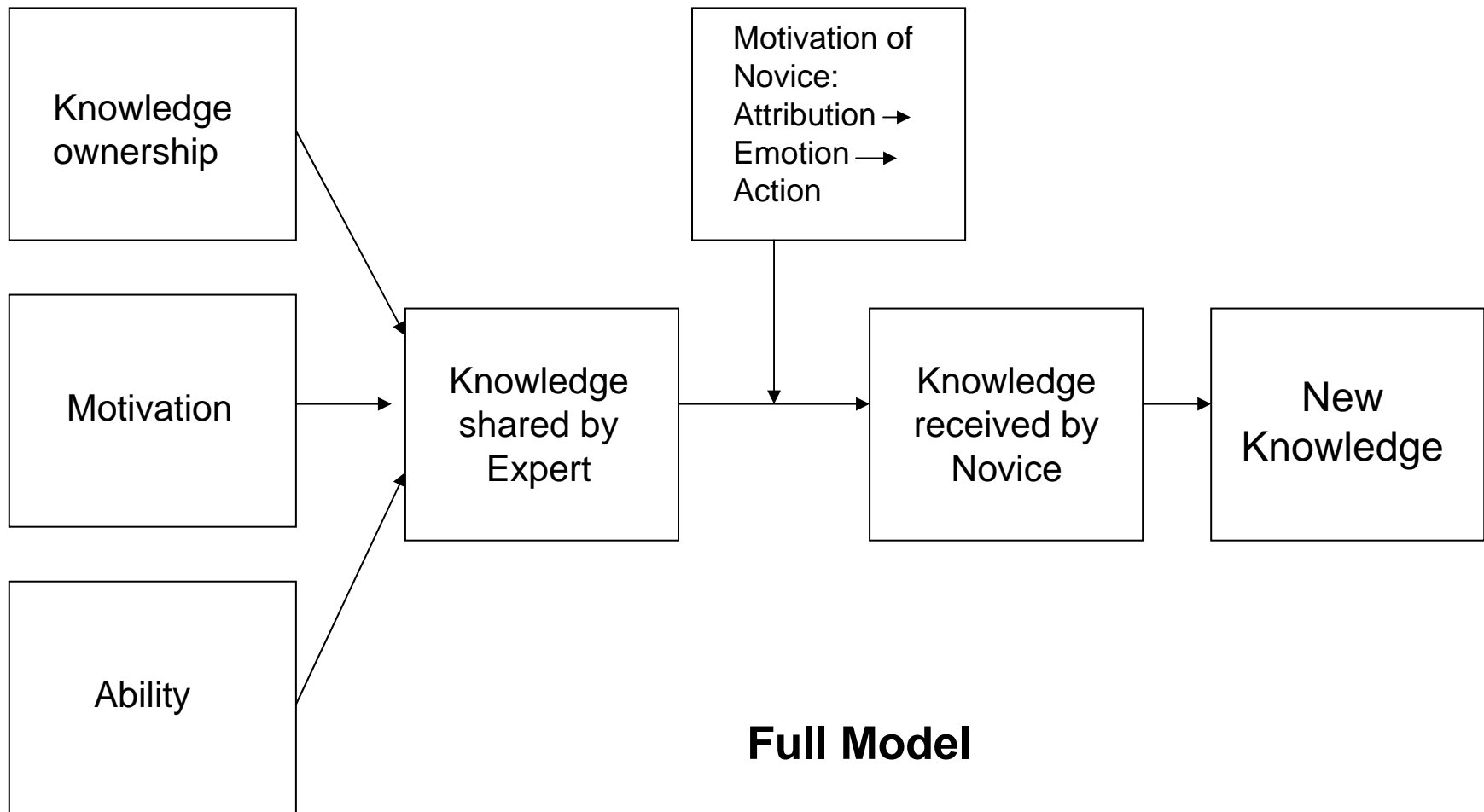
Knowledge Transfer (KT)

- Requires individuals to share and acquire knowledge
- Individual characteristics influence KT
- Most research has concentrated on the characteristics of the experts and their KT strategies
 - Ownership of knowledge
 - Ability to communicate their knowledge
 - Motivation to share knowledge
- Little is known about characteristics of the recipient (i.e. novice)



Attribution Theory (AT)

- AT is a theory explaining a person's motivation to behave in certain ways, given the person's attribution
- People attribute causes or reasons to what they experience in their environment
 - e.g., ability, effort, task difficulty, luck
- These result in different emotional experiences
 - Ability attributions → envy, scorn
 - Effort attributions → admiration, gratitude
- These attributions and emotions can be directed at:
 - one's self (inner-directed)
 - others (other-directed) leading to either pro- or anti-social behaviours





Our Model

- KT from an expert to a novice results in new knowledge
- New knowledge is then used in decision-making
- Expert's knowledge ownership, ability and motivation are antecedents to knowledge sharing
- Novice's motivation is also an antecedent to his/her receiving knowledge

When will a novice be receptive and accept knowledge from an expert?



- If the expert is perceived as attributing expertise to effort:
 - Admiration will lead to pro-social behaviour
 - Knowledge is accepted
- If the expert is perceived as attributing expertise to ability:
 - Envy will lead to anti-social behaviour
 - Knowledge is rejected
- Thus, attribution-emotion-action sequence explains motivation of the novice to accept/reject the knowledge



Implications

- Effective interaction between experts and novices is an important ingredient in the KT process
- Decision makers need to make sure experts:
 - Consider knowledge theirs to be shared
 - Have motivation to share knowledge
 - Have ability to share knowledge
- Decision makers must take care to manage the interaction between experts and novices so that novices make *effort attributions* about the actions of experts