Affective experiences and student engagement in higher education

According to Kolb [1], experience is the source of learning and development. This is a statement that serves as the starting point of this study. We argue that the role of affective experiences cannot be overlooked when evaluating university learning and teaching. In the present paper, we will study students’ affective experiences in higher education setting, specifically in engineering education in a technological university. The perceived affective experiences are empirically analysed through a mystery shopper data set, which was gathered in the case university by a group of students. The study bases theoretically on affective experiences framework, more familiar from the consumer behaviour research stream. The aim of the study is to analyse what kinds of affective experiences students recognise when studying in a technical university and further to elaborate, how these affective experiences could be used to increase student engagement and the students’ motivation to learn. The study provides an innovative approach to university learning and teaching by applying mystery shopper method and affective experience approach from more business-oriented disciplines. The contribution to education science is the increased understanding of the role of affective experience in learning.
MYSTERY SHOPPERS RECOGNISING KNOWLEDGE SHARING BARRIERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This study focuses on the knowledge sharing barriers in the space between learning and teaching in higher education as reported by mystery shoppers. There is surprisingly little context-specific research on learning and teaching in a knowledge intensive community like a university from the perspective of knowledge management (KM). Discussing learning and teaching within KM is based on considering students controversially as customers or stakeholders. Thus including them more meaningfully in assessing and developing teaching practices, or knowledge flow, seems justified. The specific aim of this paper is to first recognise possible knowledge sharing barriers and then categorize such barriers emerging from the material into three larger domains, namely, individual barriers, technological barriers and organisational barriers.

There were 45 students from all faculties participating in a mystery shopper project in a Finnish university of technology. They observed their learning experience for six weeks in order to supplement data from other sources, to add a student voice on the process of developing learning and teaching in higher education. 

The research approach represents qualitative content analysis in which knowledge-sharing barriers were recognised from the qualitative mystery shopper data. The results identify teaching practises that contribute to creating knowledge sharing barriers. More detailed and almost real-time contextual activity sampling is suggested as a method for further study and also an avenue for instant feedback for teaching staff. The results will provide data on current knowledge practices and learning processes in a technical university in Finland.