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LANGUAGE, SOCIALIZATION AND NETWORKS: KNOWLEDGE CREATION IN GLOBALIZED BUSINESS SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores antecedents of knowledge creation in a globalized business school industry. We focus on linguistic socialization of researchers as a contingency factor which influences the ability of academics to extract value from the quality of their professional socialization and from social capital embedded in their knowledge network (1).

INTRODUCTION

The business school industry has experienced rapid growth and internationalization in the last 50 years (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Bachrach, 2008; Zammuto, 2008). While the opportunities offered by this internationalization have been welcomed by the academic community (Doh, 2010; Mitchell, 2007), the impact this process has on knowledge creation and dissemination has been largely overlooked. Meanwhile, linguistic diversity among a new generation of management scholars is likely to impact upon their ability to extract value from both professional socialization and scientific collaboration within knowledge networks.

Within the business school context, research performance is a critical functional outcome for a number of stakeholders. For academics, it acts as a key driving force behind career success; this success being understood either as promotion within a given organization (Callie & Cheslock, 2008; Miller, Taylor, & Bedeian, 2011; Park & Gordon, 1996) or as an increase in salary (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1992; Judge, Cable, Colbert, & Rynes, 2007). For administrators, high levels of research productivity among faculty members is a means by which to secure accreditation from leading international bodies, such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) or the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) (Zammuto, 2008). It also allows them to achieve higher positions in the industry rankings (2). Higher rankings in turn act as seals of quality, and these seals have two advantages. Firstly, they enable educational establishments to attract funding from public (government agencies) and private (alumni and corporate partners) sources. Secondly, a strong position in mass media rankings allows a business school to select the best students (D'Aveni, 1996) and charge higher tuition fees. This process perpetuates a virtuous cycle: better students who pay higher fees have both the abilities and motivation to find better-paying jobs upon graduation. In turn, higher salaries see the alma mater place higher in the next ranking. Consequently, the challenge facing administrators is that of ensuring an acceptable rate of knowledge production among full-time faculty members and aligning this production with the need for international diversity within faculties; another factor that contributes to ranking position.

Our study seeks to make two contributions to the literature in this field. Firstly, we

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contribute to the research on knowledge networks by investigating the "black box" of nodal attributes (Phelps et al., 2012) and by introducing linguistic and professional socialization as contingency factors that explain the differences in individuals' ability to leverage the social capital that knowledge networks comprise. Secondly, we contribute to the discussions seeking to understand the "too-much-of-a-good-thing effect" in management (Pierce and Aguinis, 2011) by exploring the mechanisms that underpin the curvilinear relationships between network possession and individual performance.

In order to explore the interplay between professional socialization, language and knowledge networks in supporting the knowledge creation of a given individual, we analyzed the career strategies and research productivity of 550 tenured academics from 30 business schools occupying the top positions in MBA and Masters in Management rankings produced by the *Financial Times* (FT). This sample is appropriate for our study as it brings together schools from across the globe (the two rankings together comprise business schools representing the United States of America, European Union and Asia) and covers a variety of markets: the MBA degree represents the dominant logic which has traditionally underpinned US business education, while the Masters in Management programs are a key education product in EU member states.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Professional Socialization in Academia and Research Output

Professional socialization is "the process by which an individual acquires the values, expected behaviors, and social knowledge needed to assume an active role" in a given profession (Cable, Gino & Staats, 2013: 2). In an academic context, professional socialization predominantly occurs as a part of doctoral education (Baker & Lattuca, 2010; Li & Seale, 2008) and includes the transmission and acquisition of discipline-specific skills and an awareness of professional norms (the 'rules of the game'). The quality of professional socialization (measured in our study in two ways: as the research-based rank of academic origin; and the impact factor of one's first peer reviewed journal) has a long-term impact on an academic's ability to produce original knowledge, as evidenced by studies conducted into the role of academic origin in the development of scientific productivity (for a review of these works, see, for example, Clemente & Sturgis, 1974). In our study research productivity is measured both as volume of peer reviewed journal publication and citations. The influence of socialization on performance is viewed as the result of exposure to organizational "career scripts" (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Long, Bowers, Barnett & White, 1998) and to highly productive role models (Park & Gordon, 1995; Williamson & Cable, 2003). It is presumed that institutions providing high-quality professional socialization also provide a resource-munificent environment (Crane, 1965; Long et al., 1998) and school doctoral students with high intellectual abilities, attracted through the process of "input creaming" (D'Aveni, 1996).

In the absence of any published research output, the research output of prior generations of researchers in a PhD-granting institution becomes a proxy for the quality of a graduate's socialization when an external community assesses it. Hiring committees' expectations regarding a graduate's future research productivity are based on the perceived quality of professional socialization, and define the quality of environment in which the academic would be expected to conduct their research (Bedeian, Cavazos, Hunt & Jauch, 2010; Miller et al, 2005). Due to the fact that organizational incentives impact heavily upon research productivity (Long et al, 1998),

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it is developed through a self-reinforcing mechanism of accumulative advantage.

Hypothesis 1: The quality of professional socialization positively influences individual research performance.

Linguistic Socialization and Research Output

High-quality writing is a key pre-requisite for publication in top journals (Grant & Pollock, 2011; Judge et al, 2007; Pollock & Bono, 2013). This is also cited as one of the reasons why a paper may be deemed interesting by the academic community (Bartunek, Rynes & Ireland, 2006). Multiple authors agree that writing well is difficult and that mastering this skill takes time and a great deal of effort (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007; Ragins, 2012). The time and effort required is even greater for academics that have been socialized into their profession in a non-English speaking environment (Tietze & Dick, 2013). All things being equal, proficiency in basic language ought to facilitate the acquisition of scientific language. As a result, the cost of publishing a paper (including, but not limited to temporal costs) are higher for those who have been introduced to academic language in a non-English speaking environment. Besides, greater cognitive effort is required in order to adjust to a different scientific conversation (Huff, 1999). Additional investment in copy-editing is also necessary in order to remedy grammatical and stylistic imperfections (Delamont, Atkinson & Parry, 1997). (In our study linguistic socialization is measured as the language of the country where an academic received their first degree.)

Hypothesis 2: Linguistic socialization moderates the relationship between the quality of professional socialization and individual research performance. More specifically, socialization in a non-English speaking environment diminishes the positive impact of professional socialization.

Knowledge Networks and Research Output

Recent developments in social capital research (McFadyen & Cannella, 2004; McFadyen et al., 2009; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001) point towards the proactive use of interpersonal networks, and resources that such networks contain, as a means with which to develop individual productivity in response to the increasing pressure to "publish or perish" in the globalized world of academia. Co-authorship can enrich the foundations of a paper, increase the likelihood of it being accepted by a journal and result in greater volume of publication (Acedo, Barroso, Casanueva & Galan, 2006; Floyd, Schroeder, & Finn, 1994).

There is, however, an ambiguity in current research regarding the exact nature of the relationship between the characteristics of an academic's ego-network and knowledge creation outcomes (Phelps et al., 2012). While some authors emphasize the value of a wide network of co-authors (measured as the number of unique co-authors) as a means to create a richer and more diverse repository of information, others highlight the costs of network maintenance. For the majority of scientific research, we expect that collaboration will begin to issue diminishing returns as the number of co-authors grows, and that the quality of research may at some point become inversely proportional to the number of authors involved. We believe this to be a manifestation of the "too-much-of-a-good-thing effect" (Pierce & Aguinis, 2011), which can be identified in a variety of contexts within the field of management science.

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Hypothesis 3: There is a curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) relationship between the knowledge network size and individual research performance.

Linguistic Socialization and Knowledge Network Utilization

Research into networks suggests that the ability to extract value from a knowledge network depends on the individual characteristics of the actors concerned (Wei, Chiang & Wu, 2012). We seek to contribute to such research by analyzing linguistic socialization as a factor which influences an academic's ability to transform the social capital embedded in knowledge networks into tangible research outcomes.

There are multiple reasons why linguistic socialization may explain the differences between the outcomes of network utilization. The first of these is that when research collaborators come from different language backgrounds, the differences in knowledge structures resulting from linguistic socialization may serve as a barrier impeding communication (Marschan, Welch & Welch, 1997). There is also evidence in cross-cultural management research that individuals socialized in cultures different to those of their colleagues are more likely to commit cultural faux pas, "producing behavior that does not match expectations of appropriateness" among their peers from other cultures (Molinsky, 2005: 104).

The second reason is that network maintenance costs are likely to be higher for academics who have been initially socialized in a non-English speaking environment and who collaborate with peers socialized in English-speaking countries. Such collaboration is considered beneficial for the quality of the papers produced (Linton, 2012), as those socialized in an English-speaking environment can assume the dual role of co-researcher and copy-editor of co-authored papers. Network relationships, however, are based on the principle of reciprocity (Carpenter et al., 2012). Consequently, in return, academics socialized in a non-English speaking environment may be expected to shoulder more of the responsibility for data collection or data analysis.

Hypothesis 4: Linguistic socialization moderates the relationship between the size of knowledge network and individual research performance. If an academic has been socialized in a non-English speaking environment, the positive impact of network size decreases and their network carrying capacity is reduced.

Professional Socialization and Network Utilization

The quality of professional socialization influences the understanding which an academic has of the professional norms and 'rules of the game'— an understanding which may prove beneficial for the extraction of value from the knowledge network. For example, the awareness of professional norms may lead to fewer conflicts over credit (Floyd et al., 1994) and result in more productive relationships with co-authors. High- quality professional socialization may also result in graduates with greater political skill, where political skill is defined as "an ability to form accurate perceptions of social requirements, choose appropriate behavioral responses, and vary responses in accordance to situational demands" (Wei et al., 2012: 385).

Professional socialization through early publication in a high-quality journal may also be beneficial for the extraction of value from a network, as the knowledge of the 'nuts and bolts' of

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the peer-review process helps a young academic to engage with editors and reviewers in a productive manner. This in turn increases the likelihood of a co-authored paper being accepted. Thus, the quality of professional socialization "represents a contingency factor affecting [individual's] ability to leverage social capital" embedded in knowledge network (Payne, Moore, Griffis & Autry, 2011: 509)

> *Hypothesis 5: The quality of professional socialization moderates the relationship between the size of the knowledge network and individual research performance. High quality professional socialization reinforces the positive impact of network size and increases the carrying capacity of the network.*

METHODS

Sample and Data Analysis

The final sampling frame included 1,825 permanent faculty members (senior lecturers (3) and associate professors upwards) from thirty business schools, eight of which were in the US and twenty-two in Europe and Asia. These faculty members were drawn from two sources. 1,262 academics were drawn from 16 top business schools as ranked by the *Financial Times* 2011 MBA ranking. 563 academics were drawn from 14 top business schools in the *Financial Times* 2011 Masters in Management.

We then used stratified random sampling to select a sample of 550 academics from the main sampling frame. We retrieved detailed information about each academic's careers and published work. We collected CVs and profile information from the websites of business schools where the academics in question were working at the time of research and supplemented and cross-checked the information using the Thomson Reuters ISI Web of Science and the ProQuest Database of Dissertations and Theses.

This piece of research takes the form of a multilevel study that examines the cross-level direct and interactive effects of macro- and organizational-level predictors on individual-level outcome, namely the research output of individual academics. We used a multilevel mixed modeling (MLM) approach in STATA 12.1 software (Albright & Marinova, 2010; Bliese, 2002).

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1, which suggests that professional socialization has a positive influence on academics' knowledge creation, is supported. The data does not support Hypothesis 2, which suggested that non-English speaking socialization impacted negatively upon the relationship between professional socialization and knowledge creation. Hypothesis 3 assumed the existence of a curvilinear (inverse U-shaped) relationship between network centrality and knowledge creation. This hypothesis is supported, with inflection points of this relationship equal to 56 co-authors for the number of papers and 51 co-authors for the number of citations measure of academic output. Hypothesis 4 has received partial support. While the interaction between the two in Model 7 is positive and indicates the greater value of network centrality for academics with non-English socialization, the comparison of inflection points reveals that the carrying capacity of knowledge networks is lower for academics that have received non-English linguistic socialization. Hypothesis 5 is not supported. Comparison of results for our two dependent

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variables shows that professional socialization has a weaker connection with the volume of research produced, relative to the link with the impact of research.

CONCLUSION

While professional socialization and linguistic socialization have a lifelong impact on knowledge creation, an academic's ability to extract social capital from knowledge networks can further bolster research performance. Inverted U-shaped relationship between size of knowledge network and performance demonstrates that working with additional co-authors is likely to produce diminishing returns when the number of collaborators exceeds the inflection point. Having a larger knowledge network is more important for academics whose professional socialization is of inferior quality and academics socialized in non-English speaking countries. At the same time, academics socialized in non-English speaking countries have a lower network carrying capacity. This represents an interesting conundrum: while additional co-authors constitute a valuable asset for such academics, these academics must be particularly selective when establishing co-authorship ties, as their network maintenance costs are higher than those of their peers socialized in English speaking countries.

In a globalized world the diversity of academic backgrounds within a faculty is an important source of cross-cultural knowledge that enables business schools to nurture global leaders (Eisenberg, Hartel & Stahl, 2013) and thus bolster the school's competitive advantage. As a result, it is crucial to establish practices that "mitigate specific dilemmas arising from the idiosyncratic attributes of a given firm's pool of human capital" (Coff & Kryscynski, 2011: 1439). We believe that these findings will provide academic administrators with an insight into how to create a beneficial environment for knowledge production, which in turn would facilitate the attraction, retention and motivation of unique human capital in a global market. Moreover, an understanding of drivers of knowledge creation is key to the education of doctoral students who aspire to continue their careers in academia.

ENDNOTES

1. This study is part of the IPSE project as funded under the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI) cycle 5 and co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

2. While research performance may directly account for only 10% of the Financial Times MBA ranking, this difference can be enough to move a school up the ranks. Research productivity also indirectly influences a school's position in the rankings, as it allows the school's PhD graduates to be recruited by into top schools. This in turn earns the school additional points according to the FT ranking methodology.

3. Senior lecturer is a tenured position in the British academic system. We characterize this as the first career grade promotion after lecturer, in that it is a post-PhD promotion based on research, teaching and service criteria. In the US, senior lecturer is usually a non-tenured position, so senior lecturers affiliated with US business schools were not included in the sample.

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