

Research on Online Knowledge Sharing Behavior of College Students

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Abstract. Knowledge is the prerequisite for college students to obtain employment abilities and opportunities. At present, most of the research on students' knowledge sharing is conducted from the perspective of academic achievement, but seldom from the perspective of vocational education and vocational development knowledge. This paper explores the college students' understanding of vocational knowledge sharing behavior and the antecedents of online knowledge sharing behavior. This paper uses qualitative research through inviting 30 people (including 7 teachers and 23 students) to interview based on semi-structure interview (31 questions for students and 16 questions for teachers) using mobile phone record software. In view of our research, this study has obtained the factors affecting college students' online vocational knowledge sharing. This study also puts forward suggestions and suggestions on how to improve students' knowledge sharing from the perspective of students, schools and society.

Keywords: knowledge sharing, college students, vocational knowledge, influencing factors.

1. Introduction

Knowledge is in conformity with the direction of civilization, and the sum of the results of human exploration of the material world and the spiritual world [1]. Knowledge is everywhere. It can be either theoretical or practical. Knowledge can help people understand the world and solve problems. Vocational knowledge, as one kind of knowledge, is the holistic and effective knowledge needed for work and labor [2]. For College students, vocational knowledge can promote students to adapt to market demand, playing an important role in determining whether college students can enter and adapt to society smoothly.

With the development of information and communication technology, more and more people use related equipments. As a kind of products based on communication and information technology (e.g. Web 2.0), social media defined as applications designed for the users' information exchange and creation have been widely used by people [3]. Chiu et al report that number of people. The Chinese users of social-networking sites, microblogs and other online communities will be more than 300 million in 2012. [4] Social media can enable college students to solve their learning problems, exchange ideas and knowledge creation. At present, most of the research on students' online knowledge sharing is from the perspective of academic achievement[5] [6] [7] [8], but seldom from the perspective of vocational education and vocational development knowledge. Therefore, this study proposes the following questions: RQ1:What is the current situation of the sharing of vocational knowledge in colleges and universities? RQ2: what are the main ways for university students to share knowledge and what contents are shared? RQ3: what are the influencing factors of the knowledge sharing in universities? RQ4: what should students, teachers and schools do to promote the vocational knowledge sharing?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Vocational Knowledge.

Knowledge, as a resource and an invisible factor of production, will not be depleted, and has the characteristics of renewability, low cost of replication, increasing advantages and difficult imitation of tacit knowledge.[9]In the past, there was no specific classification of vocational knowledge. This paper roughly divides the vocational knowledge into three parts: vocational knowledge, employment knowledge and technical knowledge. Vocational knowledge evolves from personal knowledge shaped by rational cognitions and peer exchanges [10]. This research believes that the knowledge that college students learn in college or acquire through various ways is vocational knowledge, which is the main content of College assessment and company recruitment assessment. Employment knowledge refers to the basic knowledge that college students must master in order to obtain employment, such as: carefulness, anti-frustration ability, self-expectation, basic understandings in interview and the development status of the target industry, etc. The sources of employment knowledge of college students are usually obtained through vocational planning courses, online and offline employment knowledge sharing, personal social practice and other ways. Technical knowledge (explicit and implicit knowledge) refers to knowledge that can be acquired from manuals related to procedures and rules and individual experiences [2]. The employment ability of college students not only reflects the effectiveness of education and teaching, but also relates to whether students can survive in society [11].

The literature shows that the knowledge sharing can make individuals and organizations be ahead of others [12]. If college students want to improve their employability, they must learn vocational knowledge through knowledge exchange so that they can know what they are good at and interested in. Through knowledge exchange, students can have some preliminary understanding of career development and make some career planning to prevent blind employment [13].

2.2 Online Knowledge Sharing of College Students.

Knowledge sharing is an activity of exchanging knowledge, i.e. information, skills or expertise, among people, friends, families, communities or organizations [14] with social media, such as online forums, e-mail list servers, blogs, bulletin boards and Wikipedia [15] [16], integrating the human society, material world, digital life and information space [17][18].

Students are the main group as the participators of the knowledge sharing and the general way of sharing is in the form of online knowledge sharing. For college students, online knowledge sharing can solve some of their learning problems. Zhan et al. point out that the knowledge sharing help learners promote knowledge construction and improve learning performance and satisfaction [19]. At present, scholars have carried out a lot of research on the knowledge sharing mechanism in university from different perspectives (e.g. [20] [21] [22] [23]).

3. Method

This research conducted semi-structured interviews to answer the research questions. In this research, 30 interviewees, including seven college teachers and twenty-three college students were interviewed face-to-face. Interviewees are mostly sophomores majoring in Japanese, English, Nursing, Electromechanical Technology, Computer and Science, Food Safety, Communication Engineering, Architectural Engineering, Software Engineering, Atmospheric Science, International Economics and Trade, Electronic Engineering, Electronic Information, Financial Management, Science of Acupuncture, Energy and so on. All the interviews were recorded by mobile phone record software and transcribed to transcripts, and the data was analyzed through thematic analysis with NVivo (QSR International, 10.0 versions). In this research, interview questions were divided into five parts and the interview text was analyzed in detail. Besides, some key words were(are) extracted from data to explore what interviewees thought. The results were reviewed by interviewees to get more information.

4. Result

4.1 Status Quo about College Students' Vocational Knowledge Sharing.

It is found that the frequency of vocational knowledge sharing is low among the college students, especially among the freshmen and sophomores. A second year English major student says, "I haven't thought about my future work." Another student from third year in English major asserts "It doesn't make much sense to think too much about planning future career and study is the first thing." These responses show that the college students don't pay much attention to vocational knowledge sharing, reflecting the lack of professional education in recent high institutes.

The study found that students and teachers have different understandings of career planning classes. An interviewee majoring in Japanese says, "It's too formalized to help." And the other interviewee majoring in Journalism says, "It's a little helpful for her to take career planning classes." Some students suggest that the vocational knowledge sharing in the career planning class could be more specific information, which can let them learn more about occupations that related to their majors. A teacher who is interviewed says, "It may better to have career planning courses in the second semester of third year or the first semester of fourth year." She asserts that "Students might receive the information better than what career planning courses gives students as they do some internship at that time."

4.2 Channels and Contents of Knowledge Sharing.

The study found that college students generally share knowledge online, the main social applications they use are QQ and WeChat. Among the interviewees, around 80% students prefer to WeChat and 15% students like QQ more and 5% students say that they do not favor any social applications. They prefer to share knowledge with roommates, classmates and friends. The content of sharing knowledge is "course content" or "general information". Several interviewees say that they had the experience of sharing courseware and answers of coursework with classmates.

4.3 Factors and Influencing Ways of Sharing.

The study found that the factors influencing the sharing of vocational knowledge include personality, competition, relationship, resource access and return. The interviewees who are lively and amiable are more willing to share knowledge. Besides, competition is an important factor. When interviewees are asked, "Do you worry about being approached or surpassed by classmates after sharing knowledge with others around you", a Business English student says, "I do, because everybody at the almost same level and what if they are better than me." There are also some interviewees say that they are not afraid of competition because they are confident in their self-ability. Another factor affects the sharing is the relationship between people around you. An interviewee says, "I'm sure I will tell them proactively if I acquire it when we have a close relationship." They decide whether to share it or not based on the relationships. Return is also a factor to be concerned. An interviewee majoring computer science says, "If I share with him, he will share back." Sharing and acquiring knowledge from each other is one of their motivations for vocational knowledge sharing. Another student majoring food safety say, "What if they have the information I want later." These responses reflect that norms of reciprocity are main motivator to knowledge sharing.

5. Discussion

5.1 Results.

5.1.1 The Present Situation of Knowledge Sharing.

The research found that WeChat and QQ are the main knowledge sharing platforms for college students. Two big social media platforms serve as major academic platforms for today's Chinese college students, and QQ plays a more important role in it. Although WeChat has become the most

popular social media sites in China [24], this conclusion illustrates that QQ is still the pivotal platform among college students when they share vocational knowledge online.

5.1.2 Online Vocational Knowledge Sharing.

It is difficult for college students to learn vocational knowledge systematically by themselves. Colleges are still the main roles in vocational knowledge sharing. From vocational knowledge to occupational knowledge, individuals need to draw resources from the groups. Vocational knowledge sharing occurs when most of the team members need to gain additional knowledge. Vocational knowledge sharing in colleges is more likely to happen under specific circumstances, such as: first, the teacher shares resource with the class leaders to help members to solve problems. Second, individuals come across some problems they may seek knowledge or share knowledge for return to solve the problems. The more emerging problems are, the more proactive sharing behaviors will happen. Social media has high efficiency help students receive new knowledge for self-assessment and usage for practical career planning.

5.1.3 Major Factors.

This study found six factors besides three factors (motivation, opportunity, ability) proposed by Enno et al [25], including personality, competition, relationship, access for resource, returns, and ease of use of social platforms.

Personality

People with different personalities make different decisions on the same choices. The research found that extroverts were more willing to share knowledge than introverts. The findings verified the conclusions of Matzler et al and Tech et al [26] [27].

Competition

The research found that most people maintained conservative attitude toward vocational knowledge sharing. On the one hand, people will seek information and exchange information so that they can survive in future competition. On the other hand, to stand out among fierce competitions, people prefer to keep valuable information to keep advantages. This sense of competition reflects that people are afraid of being caught. This factor can be studied for further research.

Relationships

The interviews suggest that the relationships determine the who an individual wants to share, how much he wants to share (quantity and quality). In general, people who are close to each other may share more resources with each other, while people who are not close may share a little or none with each other. But, if there's a dilemma, it can affect the cognition of the definition of "relationship". In this context, people may broaden the definition of tie to overcome problems together. This factor can be studied for further research.

Other factors

The way of accessing resources may influence the knowledge sharing. At present, most of the students share with each other, but they seldomly exchange knowledge with teachers. The exchanging knowledge between teachers and students may be more efficient. The kind and the usage of social media also influence knowledge sharing. In college students' groups, the WeChat and QQ serve as platforms of knowledge sharing. However, due to the features of QQ and WeChat are more related to entertainment, the usage of these software may affect the quality of knowledge exchanges. Therefore, more professional knowledge sharing platforms like Woodworm and Github should be concerned for further knowledge exchange. Anticipated return also influences the knowledge sharing. Li believe that even children perform sharing intentions (not real sharing behavior) out of expecting return [28]. In this research, it is believed that this kind of pseudo-sharing behaviors also exists among the adults, out of selfish motives, people may share knowledge with probing attitude.

5.2 Implication.

The implications can be discussed from the perspective of theoretical and practical perspective.

From the theoretical perspective, this study investigates the cognition of college students toward online vocational knowledge sharing, filling the gap in related contextual gap. This study also

proposes the dualistic effect of fear of being lose (i.e. competition in this research) and the potential change of perception of people on “social tie (i.e. relationship in this research)” on knowledge sharing, which is worth exploring in further study.

The implications for the practitioners as follow: For students: 1. Pay attention to career planning and determine own goals to strengthen awareness of vocational knowledge sharing. 2. To be self-knowledge. Under the guidance of tutor and parents, in combination with own experience, students should try to work out the career planning. 3. Students may be more proactive and open-minded to make friends with different people with different backgrounds and exchange knowledge for further cooperation and self-learning.

For colleges: 1. Establish “sandwich” model for education. In developed countries, mature education model has been established in terms of career education. Universities may try to establish close relationships with colleges, enterprise and families to help students adapt the society. 2. Design graded vocational education classes for all students. Preliminary employment knowledge education may be taught to freshmen and sophomores to help them adapt to college life, cultivate suitable learning methods and habits and establish a learning process for career development. 3. For the students in year three and year four, the college may provide more opportunities of exchange study and internships to broaden their horizon, helping students adjust the professional objectives. Additionally, the training (e.g. model interview training) and psychological health lectures and counseling service may be organized for the students to shape a positive and rational attitude towards further competition in markets.

5.3 Limitations.

Since the interviewees are college students from undergraduate level and tutors from general universities, the responses of participants cannot represent all the cases. Additionally, due to the drawbacks of qualitative method, some data collected from interviewees may not fully reflect their real thoughts. In this regard, the further research can be conducted with mixed method and various kinds of samples to explore the potential factors and knowledge sharing behaviors.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, qualitative research methods are used to learn more about the students' cognitions through interview and the results can help students and colleges to improve students' knowledge sharing.

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