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KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the knowledge sharing in online environment by the students. The analysis revealed that a large majority of the students use the Internet to make seminar papers and projects. A majority of the students use the Internet for academic learning. Students prefer the World Wide Web as a channel for sharing knowledge. The students strongly agree that it is important to share knowledge with other students for the benefit of all. It is found that a majority of the students use social networking sites for sharing knowledge. Students believe in developing user friendly interface to improve knowledge sharing through online participation.

Keywords: *Knowledge Management, Knowledge Sharing; Internet; World Wide Web, Online environment; Online learning; E-learning*

Introduction

The widespread developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the explosive growth in the Internet helped the mankind to achieve fast access to knowledge. The innovation of computers and the Internet made a tremendous change in the access, storage and dissemination of knowledge. Knowledge is the familiarity, awareness or understanding of someone or something such as fact, information, description or skills which is acquired through experience or education by perceiving, discovering or learning. Knowledge encompasses theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. It can be implicit or explicit knowledge. Knowledge sharing is an activity through which knowledge namely information skills, or expertise is exchanged among people, families and organizations. Knowledge sharing activities are generally supported by knowledge management systems. Technology constitutes only one factor of the knowledge management system that affects the sharing of knowledge in an organization. Other factors may include organizational culture, trust and incentives.

Knowledge sharing activity involves at least two parties; knowledge owners and knowledge reconstructors. Knowledge owners are that who possess certain knowledge expertise and delivered through communication media in order to share the knowledge with others.

Knowledge reconstructors who receive new knowledge from knowledge owners tend to reconstruct, comprehend and interact new knowledge using the knowledge they already have. Knowledge exchange helps students to answer questions, solve problems, learn new things, increase understanding regarding a particular subject or merely acts as a means to help one another (Hogberg & Edvinson, 1998). There are many situations where knowledge is not shared effectively due to some physical, technological, psychological, personality & cultural factors (Riege, 2005, Yeian et al, 2005).There are also some barriers like lack of trust in relationship, fear of performance, shyness, lack of time, lack of appreciation, and even some time they do not know what to share, etc.

Review of Related Literature

An attempt has been made to review various literature pertaining to the study and related areas. Ani (2010) discussed on the Internet access and use among undergraduate students in three Nigerian universities. Major findings of the study shows that the Internet is extensively used by under graduate students in the surveyed university. There is inequitable access to the Internet, as students mostly relay on the private commercial Internet cyber cafes both on and off campus for the access and use. Chen, Chen & Kinshuk (2009) examined the factors influencing the participant's knowledge sharing behavior in virtual learning

communities. Study revealed that attitude, web specific self efficiency and social networking sites are shown to be good predictors of knowledge sharing intention. Cheng, et al. investigated knowledge sharingin multimedia universities of Malaysia. It was found that incentive systems and personal expectation are the two key factors in motivating academics to engage knowledge sharing (2009). Dermott & O' dell (2011) investigated overcoming cultural barriers in sharing knowledge. The study revealed culture is often seen as the key inhibitor of effective knowledge sharing. It was found that they didn't change their culture to match their knowledge management initiatives. The overall studies revealed that there is inequitable access to the Internet among the students. Cultural factor had different levels of importance in knowledge sharing. It is also clear that students using web 2.0 technologies in learning and sharing knowledge.

Results and Discussions Purpose of use of the internet

Today the Internet is used for various purposes. Internet is a repository of information of all kinds. The blending of the Internet into higher education intensified the information seeking capacity of the academic community. Students use the Internet for various purposes such as, to make seminars, projects, lecture notes, entertainments, etc.

A large majority of the students use the Internet to make seminar papers and projects. Majority of the students use the Internet for class work/assignments. Only a very few students use the Internet for online games. A few students use the Internet for online games. Sources for academic learning. There are different types of sources for academic learning. It can be formal or informal like books, Internet, library resources, etc. These sources help the students to guide and develop their academic skills. The students were asked to indicate various sources they use for academic learning and the responses are given in the table 2.It is found that a large majority of the students use the Internet for academic learning and books are used by 73.5 per cent of the students. A majority of the students use library resources and 60.7 per cent of the students consult lecture note for

academic learning. A few students consult with their fellow students for academic learning through the Internet. A few students consult fellow students for academic learning.

Channels for Knowledge Sharing

There are various ways in which information is flowed from one to other. The introduction of ICT gave new impetus to communication of information. Channels for sharing information such as WWW, Online chats, mobile phones, etc. are emerged as result of the ICT revolution. Table 3 shows channels preferred by the students for knowledge sharing.

Attitude towards knowledge sharing

Attitude is one of the significant determinants to influence human behaviour (Ajzen,1985). The attitude of the students towards knowledge sharing is essential factor of study in knowledge sharing activity. Students have different attitude towards knowledge sharing, such as some feel that it is important to share knowledge with other students and someone feel that sharing knowledge will lead to plagiarism, etc.

Use of social media for sharing knowledge

According to Research Information Network (RIN), social media refers to theInternet services where the online content is generated by the users of the service. Several researches have been conducted on the use of social media in learning and research. There are various social medias, like SNS, video sharing sites, micro blogging sites, etc.

It is found that a large majority of the students use social networking sites and majority of the students use wikis for knowledge sharing. Very few students use RSS and Podcast equally.

Barriers of knowledge sharing

Identification of barriers is a critical success factor to restrict the limitation in knowledge sharing. It is found that a good number of the students, face fear of giving opposing or wrong comments as barrier for sharing knowledge. A good number of the students face

poor communication skills as a barrier. Very few students fear of getting opposing comments from others.

Motivational factors for face to face knowledge sharing

Face to face knowledge sharing is one of the prominent forms of knowledge sharing. Body language and facial expression are the two key factors for face to face knowledge sharing. The students were asked to indicate the motivational factors for face to face Knowledge sharing.

Knowledge sharing through traditional media is currently being transforming by online media. Online participation could improve by using various ways such as giving more incentives for online participation; make online participation compulsory for all, etc. The students were asked to indicate the knowledge sharing through online.

It is found that a majority of the students believe that selecting interesting topics will improve knowledge sharing. A good number of the students consider giving more incentives for online participation (marks) will improve the knowledge sharing.

Conclusion

Online medias are become major tools for education and entertainments. Knowledge can be disseminated and shared through online medias.

Compared to other communication media online media has found to be the most proffered media for sharing knowledge. Social networking sites & social media appear to be positively and significantly associated with knowledge sharing intention. Online social networks are increasingly being recognized as an important source of information dissemination. It is found that a majority of the students are aware about online media. A good number of the students aware about the Internet services and making use of it.A large majority of the students use the Internet to make seminar papers& projects. Majority of the students prefer the WWW as a channel for sharing knowledge. A good number of the students face fear of giving opposing or wrong comments as barrier for knowledge sharing. A very few of the students face fear of getting opposing comments from others.

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