A Social Knowledge Management platform for Higher education

Dr. Shilpa Parikh,Astt.prof, MKHS Gujarati Girls College, Indore
Shruti Naidu, Research scholar, IMS DAVV, Indore

Abstract:

Today society is knowledge based and it is driven by knowledge workers. Due to large force of young human resource, world has recognized India as the potential knowledge superpower house. There is a phenomenal growth not only in number of institutes of higher education, but also in numbers of students enrolled in higher education. As per the latest figure given almost 30% of total population in the age group of 18-23 will be studying in higher education by the end of 2020. With such a huge expansion what is required is the quantitative and qualitative expansion of resources-infrastructural, educational, and technological human and more so economical.

Key Words: Knowledge management, Social network, Higher education

Paper Type: Literature Review

Introduction

Harry Scarbrough defines knowledge management as *"any process or practice of creating, acquiring, capturing, sharing and using knowledge, wherever it resides, to enhance learning and performance in organizations."*(Scarbrough, Swan et al. 1999). Hedlund (Hedlund 1994) suggests that knowledge management addresses the generation, representation, storage, transfer, transformation, application, embedding, and protecting of organizational knowledge.

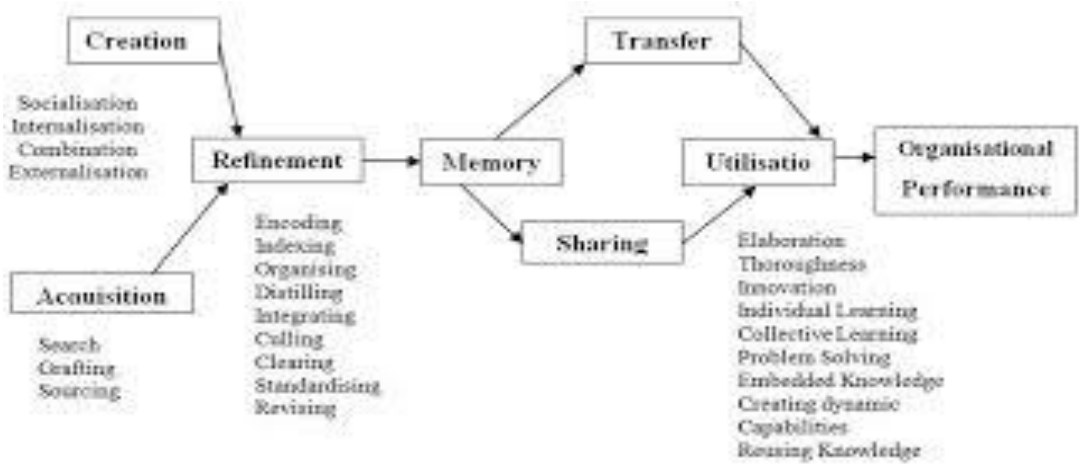
KM is considered as a component that gives the institute competitive advantage by creating better academic environment , empowering employees and increasing the efficiency of the institute (April and Izadi, 2004:15). By identifying and managing the knowledge that exists within the institute or that can be brought into the institute, an institute becomes better equipped to address its weaknesses and threats as well as improve its strengths and maximize on the opportunities.

With the growing popularity of the Social Media and Web 2.0 technologies, the concept of "Knowledge Management 2.0 (KM 2.0)" has evolved to allow individuals to create and modify content collaboratively. This enables improvements in connectivity, resultantly weaving a relationship of trust, improvement in communications and knowledge transfer (Semple, 2012). In this context, Social Knowledge Management is defined as a knowledge management framework that allows us to create and modify content collaboratively using social media and web 2.0 technologies.

In our context, social knowledge management is a framework for holistic learning and knowledge dissemination in higher education through digital connections and social collaboration using web 2.0 technologies. A social knowledge management framework will impart universal education in the form of both formal and informal knowledge by mobilizing free online knowledge resources and the dormant knowledge capital of educated senior citizens. It further illustrates the design and development of a social media based knowledge management platform named Owlish Oracle that addresses issues of exclusion and unequal educational attainment through "connecting generations".

Social Knowledge Management Life Cycle Knowledge management refers to efforts to capture, store, and deploy organizational knowledge using a combination of information technology and business processes. Knowledge management is a conscious strategy of getting knowledge to the right people at the right time and putting it into action to improve organizational performance (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Al-Hawamdeh, 2003; Choo, 2006). So, the companies trying to implement knowledge management (KM) require a coherent and comprehensive KM life cycle model or framework. Wiig (1993) was among the first to address the need for a 'coherent and practical framework for KM' through identification of a set of organizational knowledge processing phases. His approach was based on the principle that knowledge must be organized, to be useful and valuable (Dalkir, 2011). Dalkir (2005) investigated four life cycle models (Wiig, 1993; Meyer & Zack, 1999; Bukowitz & Williams, 1999) with respect to their scholarly adoption and frequency of use by practitioners. Dalkir (2011) formulated an integrated life cycle model that incorporated most of the elements of the above models. The intent was to simplify the KM life cycle as much as possible by combining phases where possible and by identifying key activities before linking them to major phases. It included the following phases: create/capture, assess, share/disseminate, contextualize, apply/use, update. By integrating the major KM life cycles developed thus far, Evans (2013, 2014) proposes a model, the Knowledge Management Cycle (KMC) model, containing seven phases: identify, store, share, use, learn, improve, and create. Although there is a plethora of

research dealing with different models of KM life cycle in the context of business organization to enhance the organizational performance, there is no explicit proposal for the KM life cycle in the context of social knowledge management where the objective is to manage social knowledge for social development. Building on existing models, a social knowledge management life cycle model is proposed below with four phases: 1. Identification/creation, 2. Organization and storage for universal access, 3. Sharing/Interactive Dissemination (dissemination of both explicit and tacit knowledge), 4. Evaluation.



Social Networking Media In The Academic Environment Social networking media have extensive applications in today's society. Corporations have embraced these technologies, using them to recruit and train employees, market products and services, and even design and develop new ideas. With the rapid adaptation of these technologies by companies, it is important to develop coursework to prepare students for their entrée into the corporate world. Graduate and undergraduate courses should be redesigned to include a module on social media along with applications that relate directly to course topics. Social networking media are used by faculty members at universities and this technology is especially well suited for teaching and scholarly work. According to a recent national study of 1000 university faculty members conducted by a major collegiate book publisher, more than four out of every five professors use social media in one of its varied forms. In addition, more than half of the surveyed professors use tools such as videos, blogs, podcasts, vodcasts, and wikis in their classes (Parry, 2010). Jeff Seaman, co-director of the Babson Survey Research Group, which conducted the study with the book publisher, said "at the moment, it's used primarily as another information resource, not as something which … could only be done in social media" (Parry, 2010). Parry (2010) also reports that (1) Almost 25% of professors surveyed have accounts on four or more social networks, and 59% have more than one account; (2) Approximately 33% of faculty members use social

networks to communicate with their peers, and more than 30% use them to communicate with students; (3) Professors with more than 20 years of teaching experience use social media slightly less than their younger peers; (4) Faculty members teaching in the humanities and social sciences report greater social-media use than do their colleagues in business, mathematics, and science; and (5) By a ratio of over four to one, faculty members report that social media have value for teaching (Parry, 2010). These data reinforce the fact that social media have been used to interact with students and teach in almost every discipline, including business. A recent survey by Gartner, Inc., a research advisory firm, indicates that by 2014, social networking will replace e-mail as the primary form of communication for 20% of business users (Henneman, 2010). This has implications for teaching and for most if not all business administration and management courses. As a first step, academia must examine ways in which social networking can be integrated into graduate and undergraduate classrooms.

Applications to Classroom Teaching: Social networking in higher education is certainly not new, but it has not been widely accepted as the typical way to educate students. However, one must recognize that the purpose of academia is to educate. If tools are available to help better engage and educate students, they should be incorporated into the curriculum, not exclusively, but rather, in a supplemental fashion. Historically, instructors have found that students with certain types of personalities have been difficult to engage in discussions. Social media offer a means to help these students. Research has shown that "shy individuals were more likely than non-shy individuals to report satisfying relationships established online" (Orr, 2009). Because collaboration and interaction are key aspects of learning in higher education, social networking tools can engage students who would otherwise be left out of the education experience and help the entire class by increasing the amount of interaction and exchange of ideas that would not have taken place had these individuals remained withdrawn. Social networking media could likely benefit students with other types of disabilities, personality traits, or learning preferences. These media could be applied to topics in any subject, and certainly business management. The question of whether social networking media facilitates teaching is an important one. Detractors of social networking in academia often point out that social networking sites offer poor reference material often generated by unreliable sources. In general, the classroom can be used as a means to instruct how to responsibly use social networking as an educational tool. Just as all students have taken a course on how to use a library, courses on how to network, search, and filter social media would benefit students. Instead of regarding social networking as something of little to no value, academia could create a new medium by which reliable information could be quickly disseminated and learned. There is, in fact, an article describing how a team of neurosurgeons engaged with medical students and others over Twitter to describe an ongoing surgical procedure

(Pinto, 2009). Surgeons not directly attending to the patient or performing the surgery responded with tweets to observers posing questions during the procedure. This online dialogue was well received by students whose understanding of the medical procedure was enhanced by virtue of the knowledgeable and immediate interaction with the participating surgeons. Harris and Rea (2009) identify the major benefits and limitations of using Web 2.0 technologies, such as social networking media, in the classroom.

Potential benefits include the following:

1. Students become part of the lesson. They participate and thus become actively engaged in the learning process, which enhances their understanding of the material being presented.

2. The world becomes the classroom. Today it is essential that students develop a global perspective. Due in large part to Internet-based technologies, a class need not be confined to a single room. Students can now easily work across boundaries with others who have different cultural backgrounds, values, and beliefs.

3. Collaboration and competition increase learning. The benefits of collaboration are well documented. Competition between teams or individual students also presents an opportunity to broaden their knowledge base.

4. The classroom is available 24/7. It is no longer confined to a Monday-Wednesday or Tuesday-Thursday meeting time on a university campus. Learning can occur asynchronously at whatever time the student learner is interested in pursuing it.

Potential limitations include the following:

1. Availability of computing resources. Not all students have access to computing resources and the Internet when off campus. This presents a major disadvantage to students who cannot afford these resources or do not have access for some reason.

2. Web resources can be damaged or sabotaged. Web access is a wonderful convenience, but sometimes it is disrupted.

3. Plagiarism. The capability of online users to simply copy and paste text from existing sources makes plagiarizing easier, and even legitimizes the behavior in some users‟ view.

4. Level of openness. Written assignments and responses become available for many to see. Some students are very uncomfortable with this, believing that their work should be a private communication between them and their instructor (Harris & Rea, 2009). It is important to understand the benefits and limitations of technology and use them to one's advantage.

Conclusion

Social media puts an interactive twist on traditional one-way media delivery methods. It is the interactive component that makes it valuable, but it can also be detrimental if proper monitoring is not applied. Social media is available in many formats. As a teaching tool it affords students the opportunity to access material and garner an understanding of new material in ways that best facilitate their learning styles. It is fast growing and ever changing, allowing users to be on the cutting edge of their chosen fields. Businesses are already utilizing social media and drawing benefits from its use. Whether used for internal training or public relations, its broad scope allows for creative implementation. The gap between business implementation and academic use must be bridged to help make social media a best practice. Professors can become more effective by using social media in their classrooms. Collaborative lectures between universities and additional learning options can better prepare students for entry into the job market. Many progressive companies recognize that younger talent is connected through social networking platforms and are using social media tools to attract the best talent. The implementation of social media as an instructional technology at universities will be second nature to the student body. Many students already understand its power and breadth and would likely embrace social networking technology as a learning tool. In fact, it has been argued that the current generation of youth, often described as Net Geners or Digital Natives, may be resistant to traditional methods of teaching and learning. The use of the Internet for searching and retrieving information may have contributed to a fundamental shift in learning styles (Bosch, 2009). Social media websites, which include webcasts, podcasts, wikis, and blogs, are used every day. New applications continue to be developed. Almost every industrial and service sector of the world uses social media. As it becomes more refined, its role in the classroom and in business and management courses will expand and improve. While social media is still emerging, the availability of peer reviewed research studies describing its uses and evaluating its effectiveness as an instructional technology is somewhat limited. The providers of social media websites have copious writings on its potential and place in today's world. There is a need for quantitative and qualitative studies evaluating the role and efficacy of social networking media to facilitate learning in higher education. As Mazman and Usluel (2010) conclude with regard to future research on social network use by college students, one important area to examine is the shift from a structured learning environment to an informal and flexible environment where students usually feel more comfortable.

A social KM framework has been discussed and several design issues have been highlighted in order to make an acceptable, usable and beneficial social KM platform for the targeted

community. In developing countries like India, where qualified teachers and good teaching learning materials are not available in remote classrooms, Internet-enabled social KM platform may be the primary choice in future.

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