

Analysis of Tacit Knowledge Sharing Among College Teachers Based on the Social Exchange Theory

Zhuozhi Fan

Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an 710128, China.

Abstract: With the advent of the era of knowledge economy, tacit knowledge sharing has attracted many researchers as a hot topic. Tacit knowledge sharing emphasizes that individuals can effectively communicate and share their accumulated tacit knowledge with others, which is of great significance for knowledge dissemination and innovation. As the main force of imparting sophisticated professional knowledge, college teachers are responsible for sharing their individual tacit knowledge to break the shackles of individual learning and achieve the development of teachers' professional. Based on the social exchange theory, this paper analyzes how the tacit knowledge sharing mechanism of college teachers operates, points out the obstacles that currently hinder college teachers from sharing tacit knowledge, then puts forward corresponding measures, aiming to find a feasible path to help university teachers share their tacit knowledge. The research found that college teachers should be encouraged to enhance their willingness to share knowledge from the aspects of teacher subject, teacher group, school management and technical support.

Keywords: The Social Exchange Theory; College Teachers; Tacit Knowledge Sharing

1. Introduction

In the era of knowledge economy, knowledge sharing has become the key part of knowledge management. Only when knowledge is used and shared by people can it exert its due value and achieve more innovation. Polanyi, an English philosopher, divided knowledge into two categories for the first time: there is a kind of knowledge that can be recorded and encoded by people in the form of words, symbols, languages and formulas for expression. This kind of knowledge is called explicit knowledge; another kind of knowledge cannot be expressed by people in the form of words, language and symbols. This kind of knowledge is called tacit knowledge. The famous psychologist Stenberg in his book *Tacit Professional Knowledge* has mentioned that tacit knowledge exists in six major fields: management, sale, politics, military affair, education and law, which provides a basis for researchers to pay attention to tacit knowledge in the field of education^[1]. As the core force in the field of education, there is no doubt that college teachers are the pioneers in practicing knowledge sharing. College teachers' tacit knowledge exists in teaching process, learning process and daily life. Promoting tacit knowledge sharing among college teachers will help them promote their professional development. It is also the only way for teachers to achieve the change from novice teachers to expert teachers. At the same time, it can also improve the comprehensive competitiveness of higher education.

2. Theoretical basis: social exchange theory

The social exchange theory is proposed by American sociologist Hermans, who regarded human behavior as exchange behavior, trying to construct a rational proposition system that can explain human behavior, and deduced some micro sociological laws. This theory holds that human social behavior is a tangible or intangible exchange activity between at least two people^[4]. As for tacit knowledge sharing of university teachers, it belongs to social exchange behaviors. In this process, teachers' knowledge sharing refers to the social exchange activities among individual teachers. Knowledge sharing among

teachers not only promotes the exchange of knowledge among individuals, but also helps to generate new knowledge. The process of teachers' knowledge sharing is not a simple process of experience dissemination and absorption. It needs to be based on certain social interaction and the basic principle of mutual benefit.

3. Tacit knowledge sharing mechanism of university teachers

According to the social exchange theory, the tacit knowledge sharing mechanism of university teachers means that college teachers share some knowledge as the cost and charge the corresponding knowledge as the reward, and then decide whether the next knowledge sharing behavior will occur based on their own comparison of the real reward and the expected reward^[5]. The sharing mechanism is mainly based on the following elements:

Social rewards is the first important element. In the process of knowledge sharing, both participants in social exchange hope to obtain the expected benefits in the process of social interaction, that is, social rewards. According to different nature, social rewards can be divided into internal remuneration and external remuneration. The first one is the reward obtained from the social interaction relationship itself. It emphasizes the strong value of exchange behavior, and refers to the reward held by the exchange subject itself, such as fun, love, gratitude, social approval and other personal factors. The second one refers to the reward obtained outside the social interaction relationship. It emphasizes the strong instrumental nature of exchange behavior, and refers to the more utilitarian reward, such as money, honor, social capital and other external resources.

Cost is the second important element. The social exchange theory emphasizes that the exchange subject should follow the principle of reciprocity and fairness in the exchange process. The principle of reciprocity means that the two exchange subjects will pay a certain cost when they get a return, otherwise the social interaction will not last. There are three types of costs, It includes input cost, direct cost and opportunity cost.

Social expectation is the third important element. It is the expected goal for college teachers to participate in knowledge sharing and obtain remuneration. When teachers consider whether to participate in knowledge sharing, they will also compare social rewards with expected goals. This means that teachers will expect the possible social rewards in the future. There are three kinds of expectations here, including general expectations, special expectations and comparative expectations.

It can be seen that the tacit knowledge sharing mechanism of university teachers is a closed loop process. When university teachers in the organization share knowledge, they will compare the cost paid with the social rewards they receive. If the social rewards obtained fit with their previous expectations, they will continue the knowledge sharing behavior.

4. The Difficulties Faced by the Tacit Knowledge Sharing Mechanism of College Teachers

Social exchange theory believes that the basic process of social exchange includes attraction, competition, differentiation, integration and conflict, in which power plays an important role. Therefore, the reason why teachers' knowledge sharing encounters difficulties is mainly because there are problems in some process of exchange.

First of all, the ability of teachers to deal with tacit knowledge is insufficient. From the inherent attribute of tacit knowledge, this kind of knowledge exists in teaching, scientific research and social activities. Compared with explicit knowledge, tacit knowledge is highly personalized knowledge related to specific situations^[6]. Nowadays, most college teachers lack knowledge management awareness and the ability to deal with tacit knowledge, so they do not have the ability to share tacit knowledge.

Secondly, the expectation of teachers to share invisible knowledge is not strong. From an individual perspective, teachers will focus on their own efforts and gains in interaction, compare them, and make a decision on whether to share. Some teachers also worry that sharing behavior will pose a certain threat to their professional status. From the group perspective, the teacher community is a specialized organization for teachers' knowledge sharing. However, due to the management system, it is difficult for the teacher community under administrative intervention to stimulate the motivation of

teachers' knowledge sharing [7].

Thirdly, the mechanism for teachers to share tacit knowledge is lacking. From the perspective of management, universities are social organizations with typical bureaucratic structure. Some scholars have pointed out that organizations with bureaucratic structures are not conducive to the construction of sharing mechanisms [8]. This mode of division of labor limits teachers' work to their majors, so most teachers are indifferent to the development of their universities.

5. Strategies of tacit knowledge sharing among college teachers

Although teacher knowledge sharing from the perspective of social exchange theory is a social exchange activity, it is actually based on an "individual perspective", which provides new inspiration for promoting knowledge sharing among college teachers.

First, improve the processing ability of college teachers' knowledge. College teachers should strengthen their understanding of the importance of knowledge sharing in order to cultivate knowledge sharing values in the teacher community. College teachers should also keep learning by themselves, which can help teachers enrich their knowledge structure. At the same time, they should improve their knowledge management literacy, such as mastering some knowledge management skills and methods.

The second is to stimulate the expectation of knowledge sharing among college teachers. Schools should clarify the remuneration and responsibility of teachers in knowledge sharing, establish a normative system and incentive system for teachers' knowledge sharing, and pay attention to the fairness of incentives. More importantly, schools should also strive to build an organizational culture based on trust through communication and cooperation among teachers.

The third is to change the functions of institutions and build a technical platform. Schools should promote the flattening of organizational levels, and also hold academic reports and seminars to create a flexible knowledge sharing platform [8]. The technical platform here mainly refers to the school knowledge map, knowledge database and teacher organization intranet.

6. Conclusion

As an effective way for teachers' professional development, tacit knowledge sharing in colleges and universities meets the requirements of knowledge flow in the information age. Based on the theory of social exchange, it is of great significance to analyze the operating mechanism of tacit knowledge sharing among college teachers to promote effective knowledge sharing among college teachers. At the same time, further quantitative analysis can be carried out based on this theory to explore more effective sharing paths.

References

- [1] Du Y. Analysis on Approaches and Influencing Factors of Tacit Knowledge Sharing among College Teachers. *Research on Science and Technology Management*. 2008; (07): 232-234.
- [2] Zhao L. Research on Knowledge Sharing and Formation Mechanism among College Teachers in Implicit Scenarios. *Heilongjiang Higher Education Research*. 2013; 31 (04): 20-23.
- [3] Wang YF, Yang Z. Review of Knowledge Sharing Research Theory. *Nanjing Social Sciences*. 2010; (06): 37-43+50.
- [4] Zhang QJ. Research on Individual Factors in Knowledge Sharing Based on Social Exchange Theory. *Science, Technology and Industry*. 2014; 14 (05): 74-76.
- [5] Liu Y. Teachers' knowledge sharing mechanism and implementation strategy - based on the perspective of social exchange theory. *Contemporary Education Science*. 2021; (08): 28-34.
- [6] Liu L, Wang Q. The Difficulties of Tacit Knowledge Sharing among College Teachers and the Solutions. *Education and Profession*. 2014; (02): 79-81.
- [7] Li W. Knowledge sharing in the teacher community: dilemmas and breakthroughs. *Education Development Research*. 2017; 37 (20): 74-78.
- [8] Xia DJ. On the Construction Strategy of Teachers' Learning Community from the Perspective of Knowledge Sharing. *Education Exploration*. 2013; (04): 95-97.