Information Needs of Vocational Training From Training Providers’ Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

In a transition economy, there is an increasing need for vocational training and career counseling for workers to cope with changes in the job market. This study seeks to enhance career guidance services by means of an information and communication technology-based (ICT-based) career information and guidance system. Although electronic learning (e-learning) has received much attention from researchers in the recent decade, the number of studies on how to make use of ICT in helping individuals acquire relevant information and advice that supports a career change and development is relatively small. Undoubtedly, an effective ICT application will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of career decision processes and enhance the quality of counseling services that assist human development in a transition economy. The study aims at revealing the perspectives of training providers in offering counseling services to individuals, through an ICT-based career information and guidance system, prior to the enrollment of on-the-job training or retraining programs. Data collected through semi-structured interviews were analyzed based on a constructivist grounded theory approach. Findings from participants from five institutions showed positive views on the use of ICT-based means that enables the collaboration of career counselors, educators, and professionals from different industries for providing tailor-made career guidance services. Further, functional requirements of the system and potential factors influencing system acceptance were discussed.

KEYWORDS
Career Guidance, Career Information Management and Guidance System, Information Seeking Behavior, Qualitative Research, Vocational Training

INTRODUCTION

A recent, common phenomenon in the human resources and training sectors is the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in the provision of the training and career guidance services to employees, which enables organizations and individuals to remain competitive in society. Evidence showed that the use of ICT by the government, businesses, and individuals was positively correlated with improved efficiency and effectiveness in career counseling services.
related to on-the-job training (Kottemann, 2009). As suggested by Chen (2010), there was a significant association between electronic learning (e-learning) and overall job performance, which provided a basis for the investment in e-learning systems by corporations. In the past decade, e-learning in the workplace has received substantial attention in the literature, and there has been an increasing trend of research interests (Cheng et al., 2014). For example, when we conduct a query of “e-learning system” and “Workforce” in the Google Scholar, we found that there are more than 2,320 articles published so far in April 2019. Research on e-learning in the workplace covers many topics. Some of them are focused on the design of information systems, such as the performance-oriented e-learning system (Wang et al., 2011) and the ontology-based e-learning system (Jia et al., 2011). There are also studies using other theories to design new e-learning systems, such as using the activity theory to build-up adaptive e-learning systems (Peña-Ayala et al., 2014), and Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory to conduct empirical analysis (Katuk et al., 2013). Some studies are interested in probing into the relationships between training and knowledge economy (Batra, 2009).

However, studies that focus on assisting individuals in the identification of appropriate career information for making career decisions, such as the selection of a suitable training course, have rarely been conducted. Some researchers, for example, Roztocki and Weistroffer (2015) recommended that more research on the use of ICT in transition economies focusing on the micro level, including organization departments, teams, or even individuals is indispensable. On the other hand, others, such as Bullock-Yowell et al. (2012) suggested that research regarding career guidance for the needs of the workforce was insufficient. Clearly, acquiring skills through learning from expertise is one of the means for humans to achieve freedom (Qureshi, 2010) and to reduce poverty in an economy (Assar et al., 2010). An effective online career information and guidance system provides a cost-effective solution to assist organizations in improving their human capital in a timeless approach, whereas appropriate career information and recommendations provide career guidance to support individual career decision making. The lack of research on this subject indicates the need for additional studies on the concentration of career information needs and assistance for individuals in making career decisions, especially for training purposes.

As discussed, there is a gap in the current research, as scant research has been conducted in the use of ICT to support career counseling services for individuals. There is a lack of research with regard to resolving the problem of excessive career information, in particular, for training the workforce. Therefore, the aim of this study is to reveal the needs of ICT-based career information and guidance systems for the workforce through the lens of training providers. The findings of this research will enrich studies regarding the perspectives of training providers on integrating ICT into their career counseling services and provide insights for researchers and practitioners regarding the consideration of developing an online career information and guidance system to fulfill the career information needs of the workforce, which are invaluable to human development in a transition economy, as there is an increasing need for vocational training and career counseling for workers to cope with changes in the job market. A review by Roztocki and Weistroffer (2015) shows that empirical studies of wider topics that support the development of theories are imperative for ICT in transition economies.

Therefore, this article investigates the needs for the developing a Career Information Management and Guidance System (CIMGS) at workplaces, which can meet the current and emerging organizational requirements through on-the-job training and retraining. In particular, we are interested in the following three research questions (RQs):

**RQ1:** What are the user requirements of an ICT-based career information and guidance system that help career decision making in a transition economy?

**RQ2:** How should a career information management and training recommendation system be designed to facilitate such career decisions for human capital development?

**RQ3:** What is/are the personal characteristic(s) and/or environmental factor(s) affecting the establishment of such an ICT-based career information and guidance system?
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