

# A Study on the Effect of the Wechat to the Information Literacy of the Undergraduates in the Electrical Engineering

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**Abstract:** In today's information society, the undergraduates in Electrical Engineering need a high degree of information literacy skills to find out the information they need from large amounts of information, so that they can make themselves gain a foothold in the society. Wechat appeared in 2011, which has rapid affect college students' way of gaining information. In this paper, we will analyze that how the undergraduates in Electrical Engineering use Wechat, and we will find out the Wechat's effects on the cultivation of the undergraduates' information literacy, put forward the corresponding countermeasures, make a useful attempt to cultivate the undergraduates' information literacy as well.

**Keywords** Undergraduate; Information Literacy; Wechat;

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays in our society of information explosion, it requires our information literacy competency to obtain what they need quickly and accurately from the complicated information. The CEO Forum on Education and Technology of America has summed up information literacy, learning skills, innovative thinking ability, interpersonal cooperative spirit and practical ability as the competence needed for 21st Century [Baidu Wikipedia]. The undergraduates who major in Electrical Engineering are the builders of the national electric power system and the promoter of the socialist cause [Jun Hao,2013]. Now, they are recipients, users and conveyors of information. In the future, they are creators of information. Actually, cultivating the undergraduates good information literacy is the process of laying a solid foundation for the undergraduates who major in Electrical Engineering to insist on lifelong learning, to adapt them to the information aging society and to become employed successfully.

The concept of information literacy was originally put forward by Paul Zurkowski in 1974. Information literacy is simply the ability for an information literate person to adapt to the information society, which includes the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information. In China, the undergraduates must have the stronger information literacy. It can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The ability to retrieve, evaluate and use the needed information effectively.
- 2) The ability to judge the information obtained, and to combine the useful information with his own ideas.
- 3) The ability to recognize the information forwardly, and to treat the information differently.

## DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENT STATUS

Wechat is a free app for providing instant messaging service for smart terminals, which was launched by Tencent on January 21, 2011. It supports to send voice messages, video, pictures and text through the network among different communication operators and operating system platform, and it only consumes a small amount of Internet traffic[ Shan xiaotong,2013]. At the same time, we can make use of network data for streaming content and some location-based social plugins, such as shake, drift bottle, moments, official accounts, voice notepad and so on. Compared to other dating platforms, Wechat has the following advantages:

- 1) It is convenient to register and use it. It is really convenient to use Wechat, and it only requires the Internet-enabled smart phones without computers, mouses or keyboards. It is also very easy to register Wechat. It only requires the phone number, email or QQ account number.
- 2) The use cost is really low. It is free to use Wechat. The functions attached to Wechat is free of charge, and the Internet traffic fees generated by Wechat is charged by

the network operators. Nowadays, with the WIFI signal everywhere and the mobile network traffic growing, it is almost free to use Wechat.

- 3) There are various communication ways. Wechat is in support of sending text, voice, pictures, videos and other forms of information, which brings a lot of entertainment and convenience compared to traditional video chat or text chat. A variety of communication ways make the information interaction more interesting.
- 4) Wechat also has many other functions. The users can use it for chatting in a group, following public platforms, finding people who use Wechat near, using drift bottle, scanning QRcode, shaking and so on. It makes Wechat that is mainly used to communicate with acquaintances have the function of communicating with strangers.

These help the Wechat users to establish a comprehensive social network, and the Wechat users can allocate social energy more effectively as needed. Nowadays most undergraduates majoring in Electrical Engineering are energetic. They have a strong desire to make friends and a strong ability to accept new things. The appearance of Wechat attracts the attention of college the undergraduates. It became one of the main means of communication soon.

#### **THE INFLUENCE OF THE TRADITIONAL INFORMATION LITERACY TRAINING**

Wechat is a kind of social networking software which is mainly used to communicate with acquaintances. The functions of "Mobile Contacts" and "QQ Contacts" determine that the acquaintances shall be the most original source of friends, that is, QQ friends and friends in the mobile phone contacts. However, Strangers making acquaintance by "People Nearby", "Drift Bottles", "scan QRcode", "shake" or other functions play a minor role in the Wechat social network.. The undergraduates' WeChat friends mainly include friends, classmates, family and so on. They are acquaintances whom they usually contact with frequently. By Wechat without visibility and privacy, the undergraduates can easily convey feelings and thoughts that is difficult to be expressed face to face. In addition, Wechat can be used to convey feelings by pictures or text messages, which makes the students willing to communicate with their friends by WeChat. It helps to maintain the relationship among acquaintances. The undergraduates can also meet "acquaintance's acquaintance" through the Wechat platform to

expand their social circle. However, WeChat provides a convenient means of communication to the undergraduates' but also has a negative impact on their information literacy training.

#### **2.1 The information in Wechat affect the undergraduates in Electrical Engineering of the ability to take the initiative to identify**

The information is mainly released by the official accounts or the Wechat users. Most of the information is transmitted from a friend to another in the method of forwarding, much of which is mixed with a lot of bad information. The WeChat friends circle consists of friends, classmates, family, or other friends with common interests. They contact with each other frequently and trust each other firmly, which makes the undergraduates majoring in Electrical Engineering think the information passed from their friends is reliable in the subconscious instead of taking the initiative to distinguish them. Especially after some bad information is shared by many friends, the undergraduates will be more convinced of the authenticity of the information. What's more, the forwarding function provided by Wechat weakens their analytical capability in the process of editing information. If things continue this way, the capacity of taking the initiative to identify information will diminish gradually, which is harmful to the formation of the undergraduate's information literacy.

#### **The information on WeChat updated quickly, which is not conducive to cultivate the undergraduates' integrated ability to use these information.**

The main way of the Wechat information transmission is the forwarding among friends. In this information transfer mode, the more friends a Wechat user has, the more information he will receive. The undergraduates majoring in Electrical Engineering make friends widely, and they often focus on more things. Therefore, they have more friends in their Wechat Moments, and they receive a large amount of information every day. Some of them often receive dozens of or even hundreds of pieces of information a day. In order to keep abreast of the Wechat friends in time and maintain friendship with their friends, the vast majority of them will spend a lot of time on WeChat and collect information that is useful to themselves. Due to the constant generation of new information, they will be attracted by these new information. But they won't understand the validity, the use and the meaning of the information deeply, not to mention use these information effectively,

which hinders developing their ability of information-gathering.

**Wechat is a virtual communication platform, which is likely to cause apathy and alienation in the real interpersonal communication.**

Wechat is a platform on which they can communicate with each other. Due to the privacy of the WeChat and equality among the users, the undergraduates contact with each other through WeChat without any restraint. They enjoy communicating with each other free. Communicating with others through WeChat, the undergraduates' can't see facial expression or make eye contact with others. What's more, they can't hear the voice from others. So that they can not fathom more subtle messages beyond words. It largely makes This makes the interpersonal communication terrible. If things go on like this, the undergraduates will be accustomed to this virtual means of interpersonal communication. Therefore, it weakens the interpersonal ability in real life, and weakens the ability to acquire information through real interpersonal communication.

#### **THE CULTIVATION OF THE UNDERGRADUATES' INFORMATION LITERACY IN THE WECHAT ENVIRONMENT**

**Raise the teachers' awareness of information literacy, and cultivate the undergraduates' ability to take the initiative to identify information.**

Teachers are the main disseminators of knowledge of the undergraduates' so that it is necessary to raise the teachers' awareness of information literacy. Only when the teachers are aware of the importance of information literacy, can they guide students to improve their information literacy skills. The teachers can offer some disinformation that attracts extensive attention and that is widely forwarded on Wechat to the undergraduates through group chat, then point out the mistake in the message, and finally cultivate the undergraduates' ability to take the initiative to identify the message. At the same time, the teachers can also set the undergraduates who have more friends on Wechat Moments as "Hot Spot", criticize and correct their disinformation, through which it can help their

friends to improve the awareness of identifying disinformation.

**Guide the students to use Wechat in a proper way, and increase their information-gathering capabilities.**

During the undergraduates use Wechat in daily life, the teachers need to guide the undergraduates to classify information on WeChat. For friends' status, advertisement or some bad information, they can filter out them directly. For information that is useful to themselves, the teachers should guide the undergraduates to analyze and organize the source, the use and the connotation of the information in detail, through which it can improve their information-gathering capabilities.

**Organize all kinds of campus cultural activities, and enhance the undergraduates' interpersonal skills.**

The colorful cultural life on campus helps students get rid of the temptation of the virtual network and the dependence on the virtual interaction such as Wechat. Universities and colleges should carry out a variety of science and technology activities to guide students to actively participate in the construction of network culture. They can also encourage students to participate in the science and technology competition and set up online e-books. These activities will attract the undergraduates' attention and improve their ability to adapt to the development of the network. The teachers can try some new teaching methods combining the network and the reality to make the students regard the network and Wechat as a supplementary means to obtain information rather than all. It will enhance the undergraduates' interpersonal skills in the reality.

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