Knowledge or utilitarianism: A study on the use of knowledge media in the "three examinations" of the graduating university students

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Abstract: In the context of the tight macro employment environment caused by the COVID-19, there has been a surge in the number of fresh graduates opting for the "Three Examinations",which are postgraduate examinations, preparation examinations and civil service examinations.This paper provides an in-depth understanding of fresher students' preferences for the use of knowledge media in their preparation for examinations through a questionnaire method, and examines the theory of digital knowledge due to the in-depth development of online media in the context of new media, in an attempt to answer the question of the mentality of today's university graduates in examinations - whether to acquire knowledge or to pursue utilitarianism.This study points out that the more examinees rely on e-learning materials, the lower their resource utilization, and that utilitarianism does not have a direct impact on examinees' mindset. Nevertheless, the excessive pressure on examinees using electronic materials due to the Internet information explosion warrants caution and reflection.

Keywords: "Three examinations";Knowledge media use;Utilitarianism

1 Introduction

At the beginning of 2022, the intensification of the epidemic has led to an increase in pressure in the job market, more and more college students are choosing to take postgraduate examinations, preparation examinations and civil service examinations. College students are eager for stable jobs in public sector, and the phenomenon of "three exams fever" has emerged. In this context, the demand for exam knowledge and related media has greatly increased. In contrast to the relatively closed access to knowledge in the past, a large number of examination institutions and their corresponding preparation resources have emerged in the market in the new media era. However, the author observes that under such a wide access to learning resources, candidates do not "learn" these knowledge, but desperately grasp the examination techniques, delineate the key points, and "take the test" as the first purpose, which significantly reduces the learning autonomy and research ability, and produces This shows to a certain extent the study habits of Chinese students under the long-term examination education, and the rote

memorization, which is generally perceived to be repulsive to students, has become a tool for them to achieve success. However, after the exams are over, this learned knowledge will be discarded like poison immediately. In this paper, we will examine the examination preparation habits of graduate students under the influence of utilitarianism and other ideas from the perspective of their use of knowledge media, and reflect on the drawbacks of long-term test-based education as reflected in this habit.

2 Literature Review

Regarding the research on the participation of graduate students in the "three examinations", the academic community has mostly focused on the national policy and the examination system. The author has conducted the following literature review of related studies.

2.1 Research on the macro environment of the "three examinations

The three examinations, i.e., graduate school, editorial examinations and public examinations. These national examinations have been the main choice of graduating college students, and the problems of examinations for graduate school and codification have received attention in the academic field since the beginning of the 21st century. Under the special environment of COVID-19, the phenomenon of "three examinations fever" has aroused more researches from different perspectives, and more research results have been achieved.Zhao Qinxue, a domestic scholar, combined the actual phenomenon of "involution" becoming a buzzword on the Internet with the continuous rise of the examination rate, and proposed that under the premise of a tight employment environment, obtaining an authorized strength has become the first choice of university graduates. Liu Yao analyzed the "butterfly effect" between the increase in the number of college students taking graduate school exams and the exam-oriented education, and raised the problem that the excessive pursuit of the exam rate leads to the drift of the university education goal.

2.2 Research on the preparation of college students for the "three examinations"

In the macro environment of studying the "three examinations", scholars have less research on the preparation mentality of university graduates, and most of the research and reflections on the examination mentality are focused on the compulsory education stage, while relatively little research is conducted on the examination mentality of university students in preparing for graduate degrees and preparing for work. Among the existing studies, Noam Yuchtman, an overseas scholar, through a comparative analysis of the traditional and modern education systems in China, pointed out that the long-existing test-oriented education mentality in China would further influence the mentality of college students in preparing for postgraduate exams.

Chinese scholar Zhang Zhenzhen's master's thesis published in 2020 studied the behavior and mentality of exam preparation under the domination of exam tutorial materials, which plays an important reference role in this article.

2.3 Problem formulation

In the process of research, the author combed through past research materials related to the "three examinations" and found that past studies mostly focused on macro aspects, such as the social environment and class mobility, but there were fewer studies on micro aspects. As a utilitarian choice to weigh the pros and cons in the context of a tight macroeconomic employment environment, the preparation process for the "three examinations" is also characterized by various utilitarian tendencies. Many students are not interested in contributing to society and the community under collectivism or interested in getting a job, but in finding a stable job and a "way out". This individualistic mode of thinking also influenced the use of media in the triple-examination group. Driven by utilitarianism, they do not give much thought to issues such as professional alignment, interests and specialties, but choose positions that are as easy and stable as possible and easy to obtain, eventually creating an "involution" culture. In the environment of increasing the number of triple-examination groups, the value of education in job applications is getting higher and higher, forcing more people to take higher-level exams. The availability of knowledge has become more and more significant, but under the influence of utilitarianism will lead to the selective use of knowledge by students, and immediately after the examination abandoned, the shortcomings of test-based education fully revealed. Thus, the author asks the following questions.

RQ1:Why do college students treat teaching materials or knowledge so differently before and after exams?

RQ2: What kind of ideology is involved in the test preparation behavior of today's college students?

3 Method

This paper adopts the research method of questionnaire survey to try to answer the above questions.

This questionnaire corresponds to the population of "three examinations", which is selected to study for graduate school, editorial examinations and public examinations. Second, I used the roster of college students preparing for the exams to prepare the sampling frame of the whole population; again, I conducted stratified multi-level sampling of the sampling frame with 95% confidence interval and 3% sampling error. A total of 232 valid questionnaires were obtained by selecting 250 students as the sample. The questions of this questionnaire were hypothesized as follows.

H1:The more Internet access channels, the easier it is for the candidates to access the required study materials

H2:The more candidates rely on e-learning materials, the lower the utilization of materials

H3:The deeper the test-taking ideology of the candidates, the stronger the influence of utilitarian ideology

This survey completed the process of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data on October 19, 2022. The main contents of the survey are:(1) Basic information confirmation: including age and gender. (2) Candidates' preference for the use of knowledge media (3) The preparation mindset of the "three examinations" candidates. The questionnaire consisted of 23 questions, including 20 single-choice questions, 2 multiple-choice questions and 1 fill-in-the-blank question. The questionnaire was published online and collected through WeChat community, friends circle, QQ space, and Questionnaire Star sample database.

4 Results

A total of 232 valid questionnaires were collected in this survey, among which there are more female respondents (57.8%), most of them are 21-23 years old,.And nearly 50% of the exams were not first-time exams, indicating that the "three examinations" were more difficult.

4.1Sample description

From the descriptive analysis, most people choose "self-study" or "online tutorial" as the preparation method. In terms of test preparation materials, although electronic materials are more convenient, more than 60% of people still use paper materials, which means that there is still a large market for paper materials. Among the ways to obtain materials, "3 kinds" occupy the majority, which is a medium level, and only about 25% of people think it is difficult to obtain preparation materials. In terms of how to handle the materials, 34% of the respondents said they would "share them with other students after the test", but about 20% of the respondents preferred to handle them cold.

When analyzing the other variables, I found that those who used electronic materials were more stressed than those who used paper materials.

4.2 Internet does not help candidates to access effective study materials

Through Pearson correlation analysis ,we found that H1 did not hold and that there was no significant relationship between Internet access channels and the perceived ease of access to learning materials by candidates. With the promotion of new media technology, Internet users can access a large amount of study materials through multiple channels such as social networks, web pages, and online cloud drives. However, this study found that among the candidates'

preferences of using paper-based materials and electronic materials, most of them still prefer to use paper-based materials, indicating that paper-based materials still occupy the mainstream market. Although the development of the Internet has broadened students' access to resources, including learning portals, learning self-media accounts, online learning communities and other online channels that have emerged with the development of the Internet, in the survey on access to materials, most students' access methods are concentrated in "3 types", which is a medium level, and there are still About 25% of the candidates think it is difficult to obtain effective learning materials. This indicates that the development of the Internet is not enough to promote students' access to effective learning materials.

4.3The more candidates rely on e-learning materials, the lower the utilization rate of the materials

Although many schools make available on their official websites the corresponding reference books for their professional examinations, more than half of the candidates choose to focus on the preparation materials and only use the more comprehensive and systematic reference books as teaching aids to check the gaps in their knowledge.

The development of media technology has broadened students' access to resources, but these learning resources have to some extent exceeded the upper limit of candidates' acceptance capacity, so Internet users have formed a situation of piling up learning materials but shelving them in their favorites instead of fully studying them. This study concluded through cross-tabulation analysis that 34.12% of the candidates who prefer to use electronic materials still believe that the development of electronic media has done more harm than good and that too much information on the Internet has affected the systematic nature of learning. The utilization of resources by all the candidates who participated in this study was mainly concentrated between 50% and 79%, and those who fully absorbed the information and wasted a lot of information were in the minority, but those who preferred to use electronic materials had lower utilization of resources than those who preferred to use paper-based materials. A Pearson correlation analysis revealed that H2 holds ($r=0.623$, $p=0.03^*$), indicating that candidates rely heavily on electronic tutorial materials, yet there are many materials that are very underutilized.

And the survey data show that nearly half of the candidates believe that the knowledge learned in the preparation process is useless for the future, which highlights the test-taking mindset of the candidates - learning to pass the exam rather than broadening their knowledge. And only 25.86% of the candidates expected to treasure their study materials after the exam, the rest of the students chose to pass the materials to other candidates for free or for a fee, or simply set aside the materials and did not use them anymore, and the study materials became a disposable tool to pass the exam.

4.4Students' test-taking mentality does not directly reflect the influence of utilitarianism

In the survey about the influence brought by test-taking education, the data show that about 70% of students are affected by the influence of test-taking education on their long-term development. For some candidates, the target college or establishment is just a means to make a stable living, and they choose to participate in exams under the influence of the mentality of taking exams as a way out and driven by the general social environment, and there are cases of preparing for multiple programs at the same time, which is a manifestation of utilitarianism or even a more polarized eagerness to get what they want. However, most candidates still participate in exams out of personal pursuit, and they still choose to improve their quality through exams in the face of intense exam pressure. Although there are arguments in the public opinion environment that college students' participation in the three examinations is a pursuit of utilitarianism, the study shows that most students, although they are somewhat influenced by the examination-based education system, still achieve comprehensive development under the guidance of their personal aspirations.

5 Conclusion

This study theorized the use of knowledge media among the triple-examination group by means of a questionnaire method and attempted to answer the question of what kind of preparation mentality is reflected in the preparation process of the "triple-examination" candidates. The study found that paper-based media is still the main form of test preparation preferred by candidates today. The more candidates rely on e-learning materials, the lower the utilization of the materials.

This study raises the question of how test-takers' use of knowledge media in test preparation reflects their test-taking mentality, reflecting certain changes in college students' test-preparation behavior in an environment of tightening employment and higher education. On the other hand, it also provides micro-level data analysis for the study of college students' advancement in sociological and pedagogical contexts. However, the study shows that the utilitarian ideology does not have a direct impact on candidates' preparation mentality, and most of them still study knowledge to achieve their personal pursuits.

Notably, this study found that the level of stress was greater among candidates using electronic materials than those using paper materials, and that the Internet information explosion can affect students' ability to form a systematic framework for knowledge learning, which is worthy of caution and reflection.

However, this study has some shortcomings because of the small sample size and the small number of related studies. In the future, researchers in the field of education may need to study more about the difficulties of students in further education and employment behind the phenomenon of "three examinations fever", and expand the research on macro policies as well

as the innovation of examination and learning methods of college students.

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