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Workplace-related use of knowledge-based Internet portals in municipal administration

- an evaluative study using the project example „Virtual Environmental Office“

Abstract

The present study primarily aims at investigating the application potentials of knowledge-based Internet portals for the internal knowledge management and workplace-related, situative learning processes in municipal (environmental) administration. Besides, as regards methods and content two different approaches are being introduced, the so-called "*Environment Analysis*" and the "*Evaluation Investigation*". While the "*Environment Analysis*" is designed to investigate general conditions concerning the application of knowledge-based Internet portals in everyday working situations, the "Evaluation Investigation" encloses a qualitative and exemplary assessment of the pilot project "Virtual Environmental Office". With aspects referring to the "Geography of Education" as well as theoretical considerations concerning the terms "*Virtual Space*" and "*Social Space*" this mainly explorative and interdisciplinary study can in a broader sense be assigned to the geographic research field. The detailed illustration of basic principles concerning the management of information and knowledge, the evaluation research as well as project planning schemes permit the derivation of a comprehensive research design which encloses both mentioned investigation parts. Among other things the knowledge management model of Probst et al. therefore represents a valuable theoretical basis. Results of comparable studies as well as the incorporation of standardised criterion catalogues allow the realisation of the questionnaire-based and interview-based investigations as well as the final classification of the results.

As an overall result of this study it can be resumed that the idea of using knowledge-based Internet portals within the work setting is appreciated by the majority of probands. Despite the partly unsatisfying conditions of the respective workplaces the significance of situative learning offers in terms of knowledge-based Internet portals within daily work routines has widely been accepted as a supplement to traditional training, especially in contrast to the use of curricular learning-units. A correlation between the acceptance of Internet-based learning offers and organisational or socio-demographic aspects cannot be proved by the investigation's results. In contrast to that the pre-experience of the potential users regarding the utilisation of the Internet in general as well as the appraisal of their own working conditions play a relevant role in that respect. With regard to the investigation object "Virtual Environmental Office" defects concerning the content depth as well as its relevance for practice have been revealed by the evaluation process. Practice relevant tips for the creation, application as well as the monitoring of situative learning offers in the context of municipal education and advanced training can be derived from the detailed results of the "*Environment Analysis*" and the "*Evaluation Investigation*". The application of knowledge-based Inter-

net portals as part of the comprehensive strategy supporting municipal knowledge management should contribute to overcome the traditional segregation of learning and work environments.