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Research on Public Engagement in Social Affairs under the Background of Social Networks

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Abstract. Social affairs are closely related to the daily life of each person. Hence, it is necessary for people to participate in social affairs. In addition, the public engagement in social affairs could also help improve the existing laws or regulations, which are out of date. Nowadays, the social networks are popular and accessible to ordinary people. Then, the social networks can greatly help people participate in social affairs. People can speak out their ideas on the Internet and organize some public activities to promote the social improvements. Therefore, it is meaningful to make use of the social networks to promote the public engagement in social networks. This study first discusses the basic concept of social networks. Afterwards, the necessity of public engagement in social networks is analysed. Finally, some possible ways of promoting public engagement in social networks via social networks are suggested.

1. Introduction

Social affairs are also called public affairs. Broadly speaking, it can be defined as all non-commercial behaviours of the organization. In a narrow sense, public affairs refer to the political activities involved in the organization and its relationship with the government. The contents of social affairs involve many aspects such as education, medical treatment, social insurance, which are closely related to people's daily life. Therefore, people should take participation into social affairs positively in order to protect their own interests [1-6]. From the aspect of government, the intensive public engagement could provide suggestive advices for the government officials as for modifying some laws or regulations. Hence, it is meaningful to promote public engagement in social networks. With the rapid progress in information technology and computer sciences, the Internet-based social networks become accessible to ordinary people. With an instant messaging application, people from all over the world could contact with each other and speak out their ideas. In this sense, modern social networks provide effective tools for people to participate in social affairs. People could participate in social networks via social networks in different manners. For one thing, someone could launch an initiative on the Internet and then organize people to join a club, which aims to protect their legal rights. For another thing, someone could directly submit his or her suggestions to the government via e-mails or website. Many other ways could also be adopted to joint into social affairs [7-12].

This study conducts some researches on the public engagement in social affairs via social networks. As one of the most popular tools in people's daily life, social networks play an important role in the



development and progress of each person [13-17]. Despite from entertainment and making friends, the social networks should be properly employed to participate into social affairs. This study first introduces the basic concept of social networks with their potential applications. The necessity of public engagement in social affairs are discussed afterwards, which are the main objective of this paper. Finally, some suggestive ways of participating into social affairs via social networks are given for future investigations.

2. Concept of Social Networks

Social networks come from social networking, and the starting point for social networking is email. The Internet is essentially a network between computers [7-12]. Early E-mail solved the problem of remote mail transmission. It is also the most popular application on the Internet, and it is also the starting point of social networking. The BBS goes one step further and normalizes "broadcasting" and "forwarding", theoretically realizing the function of releasing information to all people and discussing topics (the boundary is the number of visitors to the BBS).

The BBS has taken the social networking one step further, from the simple cost reduction of peer-to-peer communication to the reduction of the cost of point-to-point communication. Instant messaging (IM) and blogs are more like upgraded versions of the first two social tools. The former improves immediate effects (transmission speed) and simultaneous communication (parallel processing); the latter begins to embody sociology and psychology. The theory—the information publishing node begins to embody more and more individual consciousness, because the scattered information in the time dimension can be aggregated at first, and then become the “image” and “character” of the information publishing node. For example, from RSS, flickr to recent YouTube, Digg, Mini-feed, Twitter, Fetion, Video-Mail have solved or improved a single function, is a tool to enrich the network social.

Social networks provide many accesses for people to release social affairs and speak out their opinions. In the civilized society, someone could effectively organize others to express their idea and launch some social activities. Therefore, social networks have capabilities to make some effects in the enhancement of public engagement.

3. Necessity of Public Engagement in Social Affairs

The social affairs involve many aspects of people’s life so they should be properly handled in order to make the society more stable. The public engagement in social affairs should be encouraged and promoted. The necessity of public engagement in social affairs can be analyzed from two aspects [1-6]. First, it is a feasible and effective way to promote the overall development of the society. It is unavoidable that there are some defects in the existing laws or regulations. Also, there may be some focused social events. In these situations, the citizens must have some approaches to speak out their opinions and appeals to the governments. On the contrary, the turbulences may occur, which breaks down the stability.

Second, it is a general trend in the today’s information society to let citizens take part into the social affairs. With thousands of medias on TV and Internet, etc., the citizens could get easy access to the social affairs. In the meantime, the social networks also provide many ways for the citizens to share their opinions towards the social networks. Therefore, it is unwise to hinder the free engagement in social affairs.

4. Ways of Public Engagement in Social Affairs via Social Networks

To enhance the level of public engagement, efforts should be made from two aspects, i.e., citizens and governments. As the major ground of public engagement, the citizens should be proactive to join into the social affairs. Their social networks should be used as one of the effective tools to claim their ideas and propose their advices. If necessary, the actual activities can also be organized to emphasize their appeals.

From the aspect of the governments, they should encourage the citizens to participate into social affairs. They should be open-minded to adopt the reasonable advices and criticisms from the citizens. The social networks can work as an important medium for the governments to hear the voices and collect advices from the citizens such as the official mail box and website. Fig. 1 shows some potential ways for the citizens and government to enhance the level of public engagement via social networks. In detail, it has several advantages as follows. First, the government could help the citizens to get access to the Internet-based social networks. So, the citizens could obtain more information and intelligence from the Internet. Second, based on the information from the social network, the citizens could give their advices on the social affairs. These suggestions can be directly published on the Internet or personally sent to the government officials. Therefore, the citizens could help the government make improvements in their works. Third, as a whole, the citizens and governments could promote and help each other to build a more stable and harmonious society. In the meanwhile, the previous social networks will be more compact and richful.

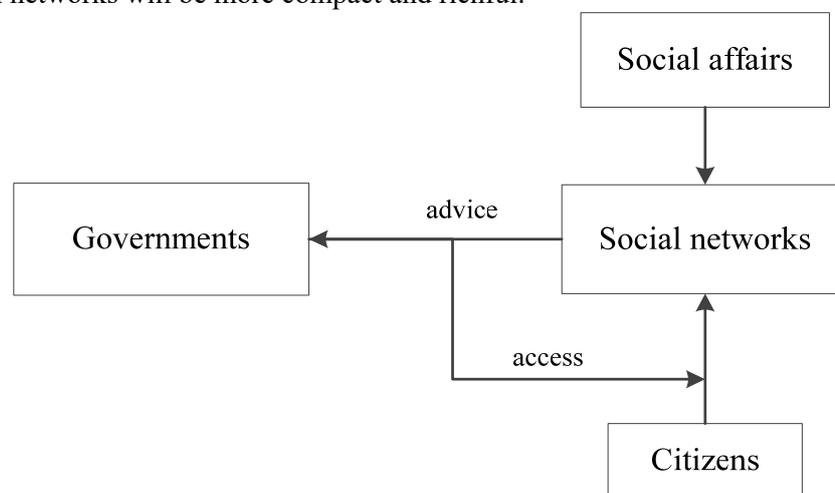


Fig.1 Illustration of ways of public engagement via social networks.

5. Conclusion

This paper researches on the public engagement in social affairs under the background of modern social networks. Nowadays, the social networks develop fastly, which provides many possible accesses for people to communicate with each other as well as the governments. In the meantime, the social networks provide more opportunities for ordinary people to participate into social affairs. To protect the legal rights, people should be proactive to participate into public affairs. Meanwhile, the government should encourage citizens to provide advices or even criticisms. Through the efforts from both the citizens and governments, the level of public engagement can be improved, which is beneficial to the overall development of the whole society. In the future works, the suggested ways for public engagement via social networks should be further analysed to obtain more reasonable advices.

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