

THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION LITERACY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

BibiZubaini Zulkifpeli, Halida Yu and Saidatul Akmar Ismail
*Faculty of Information Management,
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)
Puncak Perdana Campus,
UiTM Selangor, Malaysia*

Abstract

This paper aims to find out the importance of information literacy among high school students. It aspires to give insights of information about the perspective of information literacy and media social for information literacy. It is crucial to understand the importance of information literacy to empower high school students with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage in lifelong learning. This also to help the high school students to go through for their university life.

Keywords: education, high school student, knowledge, information literacy

INTRODUCTION

High school students are school children who have completed their elementary or primary schools and are attending secondary schools. They are usually around 12 to 16, or 13 to 17 years old, depending on the school they go to, or their local school education system. Upon their school graduation, many of these students will further their studies at a tertiary level in colleges or universities. Hence, it is imperative that schools adequately equipped all school children with the necessary skills and competencies to prepare them for the future workplace or colleges upon high school graduation (Jackson, 2006, Smith et. al, 2013, Yu, Abrizah, Abdullah Sani, 2016).

Information literacy is one of the most important learning skills in the 21st century. At its simplest, information literacy can be defined as “the ability to find and use information”, AASL (1998), (p.1). The concept of information literacy was first coined by Zurkowski in 1974. Back then, the skill was much straightforward and could be interpreted as simply someone who is trained in the application of information resources in his/her work area. In the present days, the concept and scope of information literacy continue to develop and expand in line with today's growing complexity of technologically advanced society.

Among the numerous available definitions of information literacy today, Tan and Theng (2006) and Montgomery (1997) offer ones that are probably most relevant to today's learning skills and competencies. Tan and Theng believe that in today's complex society, information literacy is best envisioned as an extensive concept, encompassing all of the other forms of literacy, while Montgomery sees it as an umbrella term, which, includes electronic searching and information retrieval skills, library skills, media skills, research skills, reference skills, learning skills, and study skills. It is important to note that the authors see information literacy as a comprehensive skill, consisting of various learning skills components, all of which are required for the students to succeed

academically. The need to become information literate has become even more pressing for school-going children in the 21st century. At the most basic, to be information literate, school students are expected to be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and know how to use the needed information. All of this shows that school education system today carries a heavy responsibility to educate students on information literacy to prepare them for higher education requirement and future working place (Saidatul, 2014).

More particularly, with discipline-based knowledge and skills, universities and other higher institutions are expected to be facilitators of lifelong learning, (Ross, 2016). This is because; on the twenty-first-century skills, information literacy and critical thinking skills are important parts. The capabilities to think reflectively and use it skilfully known as critical skills, so as to decide what information is authorized and what actions should be taken during find the solution time and problem-solving (Kong, 2014).

In the recent years, there is an increasingly expectation that high school and university students will complete their studies with great skills, including academic and information literacy (AIL) (Adams, 2016). At the same time, studies (Jackson, 2006, Smith, 2013) also observe that transiting students (from high school to universities) are experiencing difficulties to adjust themselves to new learning requirements in colleges. For instance, they are not prepared to take control of their own learning as they are so used to structured tasks, fully guided by teachers. The independent, less structured learning formats in tertiary education environments has posed new challenges to many first-year college students (Smith, 2013) as many of them enter higher learning institutions without achieving these skills (Gross, 2012). Discussing new challenges faced by these students, Metzger, 2015, adds that among others, students experience difficulties finding reliable information, given the considerable information options available today.

Addressing the fact that many high school students are graduating schools without necessarily mastering in information literacy skills, many researchers (Jackson, 2006; Saunders, 2012) are asserting the importance of information literacy education (ILE) in schools. They argue that information literacy is relevant to all disciplines, and hence, should be integrated as a part of the general education curriculum. Increasing recognition of information literacy is also one of the main focus of almost all countries that have signed the Prague Declaration and Alexandria Proclamation which were declared in 2003 and 2005 at the seminars endorsed by UNESCO (Kratochvil, 2011). The declarations reason that information literacy is important because the skills are required not only for scholarly rigor during the undergraduate study but also well into further study and employment (Adams, 2016).

ISSUES

Several issues have been identified pertaining to information literacy awareness, understanding, and practices in high schools. Among some of the problems spotted are:

- Secondary school committee does not take information literacy seriously.

- The assumption by teachers and secondary school committee that students will learn information literacy by themselves when they enter higher education level.
- The society committee thinks that information literacy is not too important for students.
- Students themselves are not interested in learning information literacy.
- Information literacy is still not being considered as one of the subjects in secondary schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Several research questions have been drawn to get information for the study, there are:

- How to educate secondary school students on information literacy?
- How to integrate information literacy into secondary school curriculum?
- How to educate secondary school students on information literacy through social media?
- What is the relationship between information literacy mastery and academic performance?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of this paper is to understand the importance of information literacy to high school students, as well as to find out their mastery of the skills. A few objectives have been listed to achieve the research goals, they are:

- To disclose the importance of information literacy in secondary school curriculum.
- To increase high school students' awareness of information literacy.
- To find out the relationship between social media and information literacy.
- To increase high school students' interest to learn information literacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

Based on previous studies, it can be told that most students in high schools need to improve their information literacy skill. This is because the information literacy has become increasingly important in industry and also in the government sector (Ross, 2016). Because of this development, several universities have started to include information literacy as one of the subjects in their curriculum.

There is a perspective that students will learn about information literacy on their own through trial-and-error method (Jackson, 2006). According to Walk (2014), there are also opinions that high school teachers have already taught all the skills the students needed to know. This issue has become a concern among high school and college librarians as in reality, many students still lack information literacy skills. These days, the traditional education has developed in such a way that it also teaches learning competencies and social responsibility out of awareness that information literacy prepares students for lifelong learning (Ross, 2016). Competencies in information

literacy will enable students to retrieve the right information, at the right time and at the right place.

The information literacy educational program is not something that we can learn in classrooms only. People, especially IT savvy younger generation, such as school children can also learn something about information literacy from current media social. Media social has some influences on people's outlooks (Storksdieck, 2016). There is a conservative perspective that media social is more to entertainment only and hence, students' engagement with it will result in negative consequences, such as getting lower reading comprehension result and lower GPA attainment (Lee, 2013). Contrary to the outlook, several previous studies have shown that media social can also be used to educate students on information literacy.

Media social is a digital technology and it can help students to find information and study materials for their courses more effectively (Kratochvil, 2011). This will provide great relief to the students as finding reliable information these days can be complex and challenging (Metzger, 2015). With this media social, the information can be saved in one place and can be used and shared by many students (Kratochvil, 2011). According to Kong (2014), this also can help teachers in guiding the students to discover information literacy elements in learning the skill. Students can appropriately process information from various sources and integrate it into knowledge for everyday use. This, in turn, helps students to develop their critical thinking skill.

With the advancement of technology these days, information can be published in many ways and can result in information overload (Head, 2013). This is where information literacy skill is so important for students to be able to retrieve the right information to be used in solving their task. Besides that, information literacy skill is also importance because there are increasing expectations that students who have just graduated from high schools are readily competent in various skills (including information literacy) and are ready to further their study or to join employment (Adams, 2016). For instance, information literacy mastery is important for students entering college or university as it is really useful to help students navigating their research (Smith, 2013). Being information literate will help students to conduct research more effectively and efficiently. At the same time, students will also be more independent, and have better control of their own learning. Mastering the skill will empower the students with the ability to seek the right information for their task, evaluate information sources, and solve learning problems (Cheng, 2013). Thus, information literacy skill also can be regarded as lifelong learning for high school students (Head, 2013).

Figure 1 is a proposed theoretical framework that will be used to guide this research. Based on the previous study, the proposed theoretical framework illustrates a dependent variable (High school students' IL performance); and three independent variables (IL through school curriculum; IL through social media; and IL competence). The framework will be used to answer the main research objective, that is, to understand the importance of information literacy to high school students, and their mastery of the skills.

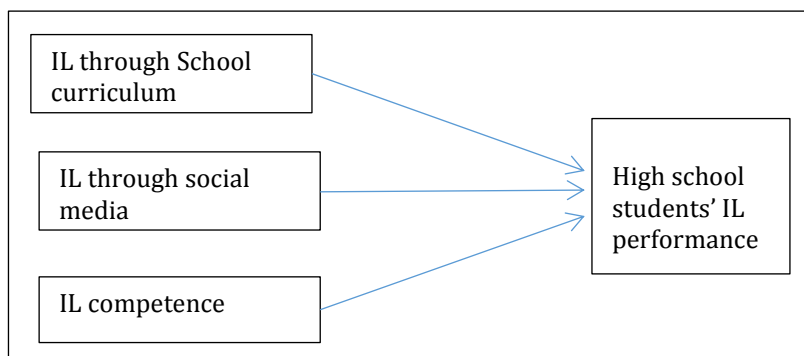


Figure 1. Proposed theoretical framework

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this research seeks to highlight the importance of information literacy and information literacy education for high school students to succeed academically and personally. There are still rooms for improvement pertaining to information literacy education. We should go for more attractive and exciting ways to deliver information literacy to the young, IT savvy school children, one of which is through social media. School children can pick up on new ways to look for, evaluate, share, and use information more effectively by interacting through social media.

REFERENCES

- American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT). (1998). *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*. Chicago, American Library Association.
- Adams, C., et. al., (2016). A collaborative approach in integrating information and academic literacy into the curricula of research methods courses. *The Journals of Academic Librarianship*. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2016.02.010>.
- Gross, M., & Latham, D., (2012). What's skill got to do with it? : Information literacy skills and self-views of ability among first-year college students. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*. 63 (3), 574-583.
- Jackson, C. M. (2006). *The High School Library Web Site: Scaffolding Information Literacy Skills*. Ph.D. thesis, Illinois State University, Illinois.
- Kong, S. C., (2014). Developing information literacy and critical thinking skills through domain knowledge learning in digital classrooms: An experiences of practicing flipped classroom strategy. *Computers & Education*. 78, 160-173.

- Kratochvil, J.,(2013). Evaluation of e-learning course, information literacy, for medical students. *The Electronic Library* 31 (1), 55-69.
- Montgomery, P. (1997). Use of information: The information Literacy Phenomenon. In A.E. Tepe & J. Calarco (Eds.). *A Handbook for Pathways to Knowledge*. I. F. S. Follett's Information Skills Model. McHenry: 8-10.
- Ross, C., Perkins, H., & Bodey, K., (2016). Academic motivation and information literacy self-efficacy: the importance of a simple desire to know. *Library & Information Science Research* 38, 2-9.
- Saidatul A. Ismail (2014). Factors affecting the implementation of information literacy education in Malaysian primary schools (Doctoral Dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand).
- Saunders, L., (2012). Faculty perspectives on information literacy as a student learning outcomes. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 38 (4), 226-236.
- Smith, J. K., et. al., (2013). Information literacy proficiency: assessing the gap in high school students readiness for undergraduate academic work. *Library & Information Science Research* 35, 88-96.
- Tan, M.H.M., & Theng, Y.L. (2006). *Building information literacy through project work: A case study in Singapore*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Asia-Pacific Conference on Library & Information Education & Practice 2006 (A-LIEP 2006), Singapore.
- Yu, H., Abrizah, A. and Mad Khir Johari, A.S. 2016. Information literacy through resource-based learning: Malaysian teachers' conception and instructional practices. *Malaysian Journal of Library & Information Science* 21, 53-67.
- Zurkowski, P.G. (1974). *The information services environment relationships and priorities*. Washington D.C: National Commission on Librarians and Information Science.