

An information literacy practical approach in a secondary school

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Abstract.

It is not clear which is the proper age for a student to start learning knowledge and skill in the information literacy field. In our high school, with young learners from 11 to 18 years old, the target of our efforts is the second grade, with ages between 13 and 14.

The students are improving their information skill while learning another subject: spanish language and literature. Extra material has been added to the curriculum and the different learning tasks of the main subject are flavoured with requirements related to information literacy.

We have developed a competency rank to measure the competence of the students when dealing with information. This rank can be used to the first four years of high school and, more precisely, to the students of our second grade. They learn, firstly, to understand the library. After that, are introduced to the architectonical aspects of the Internet, including search engines, protocols and web structure. With that in mind, the main aspects of the bibliographical references are explained and they start working in the selection of sources. By the end of the year, students begin to check how some information are provided from different actors and its differences.

Keywords.

Young students, Information literacy, Media literacy, Secondary school, High school

Background.

We are a state secondary school located in Spain. We deal with young people from 11 to 18 years old. Most of our students are at secondary (compulsory) school (11 to 15) and some of them are at pre-university years (16-17).

Being aware that our schools are poorly developed in the IL field, we have made efforts and invested school funding to improve our library facilities. After several years, a complete school library was ready to be used (*IFLA, 2015*). It has more than 4000 books, including reference materials, research articles and multimedia references. Due to limitations of space and budget, there are only eight personal computers connected to two servers. Although it might look unimpressive, few school libraries in state secondary schools with these traits in the region of Valencia exists.

Situation.

We realised our students showed a significant lack of knowledge of how to deal with it. The youngest ones were certainly unskilled, but surprisingly, those who were at higher levels showed similar results.

Thus, despite our organised and well-equipped school library, our young learners could not take full advantage of it: they were not able to identify their information needs properly, locate sources, find access to them or manage information.

Aim.

In a long-term, we want to improve the information literacy skills of all our students but particularly focusing on the 11-15 years old.

We have developed a guideline including what aspects every student should know about information literacy depending on their school year.

It includes:

- Common activities in each level. Coordinated by the school librarian.
- Common activities in each group. Coordinated by the tutor, that is a teacher that accompany a particular group as an advisor and controller through a school year
- Special activities in each subject or field. Coordinated by the teacher of each subject.
- Ellective practical activities for pre-university students. Coordinated by the school librarian.

First year, a first approach to an information literacy program was implemented in a selection of four groups of 12/13-year-old students. A fifth group of the same level and age which was not included in the program. This selection is based upon:

- The size of the group, with less than 25 students per class.
- The number of groups, five groups from which four will participate in the program.
- The impact of the possibly acquired skills on its future studies (that can be compared with data from previous years and with those obtained from the fifth group).

The methodology includes the development of information literacy skills based on the teaching of one particular subject: Spanish language and literature. This subject was chosen due to certain advantages:

- The teacher skills, who is also responsible for the school library and has information literacy training.
- Common aspects between the goals, contents and activities of the curricula of the subject and those of the program.

What we don't need.

As a state school we have some drawbacks to take into account, most of them related to the number of lessons per week and the curriculum of each subject, which are regulated by law. Furthermore, as it has been stated, information literacy is treated as a competence in the curriculum and is integrated in different subjects in a general way.

Due to the facts above, we don't need:

- A survey and/or questionnaire to check the students' information literacy skills.
- An activity which is not included in the subject syllabus/curriculum (Spanish language and literature, in this case).
- An investment in time that would prevent a normal development of the subject.

What we do need.

Spanish and language literacy is taught on a three hours per week basis. It includes: speaking, reading, listening, grammar and literature. With that in mind, we need:

- A description of the level of IL competence required for a student in their second year of secondary school.
- An accurate method for an integrated measurement of the information literacy skills of each student while learning an specific subject.
- A way to improve information literacy skills while teaching another subject as an interdisciplinary field.

Development.

A student finishing his or her first year in our school should basically know:

- How a library is organized. How to access to books and journals in the library.
- How to use a computer, digital storage, what the Internet is, how a search engine works.
- How to name the information sources they used.

In their second year, per term, students should achieve (*American Library Association, 2000*):

First term.

Correct use of the reference section: internal structure of documents, differences among them, .

Advanced knowledge of search engines: operators and basic inner algorithms. Make a short document explaining the differences in scope, functioning and utility.

Accurate definition of their information need through a conversation with the teacher.

How to make a basic reference of a written or digital information source.

Second term.

UDC, Dewey and other classifications: functioning and logic.

Basic evaluation of the subject information sources (1-5 scale).

Usage of a minimum of information sources.

Make a reference of an information source according to ISO standards.

Third term.

Research of Spanish language and literature articles in journal databases.

Preparation of a repository of information sources in Spanish language and literature.

Tips about storage/disposition of the retrieved information. Licenses.

The library training should be developed with "ad hoc" time but the rest of the goals will be achieved through monographic researches (generally, in three sessions of one hour), both individual and in groups, with an oral presentation. (*Baró, Mañà, 1994; Calderón, 2005, Peters, Matthews, 2007*). This kind of work allows to evaluate both the content and the procedure.

That is the key: the evaluation of both aspects from a IL point of view allows to define the knowledge of the student in that skill. For instance, some of the evaluated indicators are:

- The number of cited references, its correctness and the value granted by them.
- The draft with the retrieved ideas and information.
- The part of the oral presentation where they defend the method used.
- The oral meetings to share information in the groups during the research.
- The final document, as a structured document without paraphrasing.
- A final test inquiring about the knowledge of the topic researched.

Taking all this into account, a measurement system based on a rubric could be successfully implemented.

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