

A survey on the Information Literacy Skills of School Students Studying in Phudmuri Presbyterian Secondary School of Shillong

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Abstract - *The core idea of this survey was to explore the existing level of information literacy skills of school students studying in Phudmuri Presbyterian Secondary School located at Mawlai in Shillong. A structured-interview schedule was employed for collection of data from the respondents. Out of the 304 total numbers of students from class vii, class viii and class ix which form the population of the study, only 65 (21%) of them were randomly selected from each class. The result of the study showed that school students under study are still lacking of these skills which are very crucial for this age.*

Keywords: Information Literacy, Information Literacy Skills, Information Skills, School Students, Secondary Schools

Background

Information literacy plays a vital role in education. Information literacy skills help the students to be able to handle the surplus information available due to information explosion. Dealing with variety information sources in their daily activities it becomes pertinent for them to be fully empowered with these skills which are considered to be the basic skills of the information society. Students with information literacy skills are more efficient information punter. They are competent in handling the information sources available in different formats, know the right source and channel of information, know how to evaluate the good and the bad information, and are able to use it at the right time in respect of its ethical and legal issues. Realising the important of these skills in education, assessments on information literacy skills of students right at the school level (Foggett, 2002; Rehman and Alfaresi, 2009; Julien and Barker, 2009; Chu, Yeung and Chu, 2012; Kovalik, 2013; Foo et al, 2014; Majid et al, 2016; Yeboah, Dadzie and Owusu-Ansah, 2017; and many others) are being conducted by researchers in different parts of the world. But, poignantly many studies did not give favourable results in this aspect. And from the literature, it was also quite apparent that the information literacy skills of students at school level are not satisfactory. Thus, considering the significance of these skills for the school students in this part of the world and to be at par with the trend, hence identifying the existing level of their information literacy skills is deem to be very crucial. This is the main reason which motivates for this survey to be conducted and reported here in this article.

Information Literacy

Information Literacy is a phrase which consists of two words – ‘Information’ and ‘Literacy’. Even after 43 years or four decades of introducing of this term by US educator Paul Zurkowski in 1974, but till now many of us are still confound about it.

American Library Association (ALA, 1989) defined information literacy as “the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand”. The Prague Declaration (2003) includes a definition of information literacy, positioning information literacy within lifelong learning namely: “Information Literacy which encompasses knowledge of one’s information needs and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively use information to address issue or problems at hand, is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the information society, and is part of the basic human right of lifelong learning”.

According to the UK’s Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP, 2005): “Information Literacy is, knowing when and why you need information; where to find it and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner”.

Information Literacy Skill

Competency in handling information-related problems which include- ability in identifying and accessing to the required information available in various sources and channels and in various formats, ability to evaluate available information and fruitful utilization of the information with complete understanding and appreciation on the ethical and legal issues.

Literature Review

In Australia, Foggett (2002) attempted a case study on the information literacy at the primary school level and the purpose of the study was to explore how well primary school children can assimilate the information process skills of locating and selecting. The result of the study revealed that though students at primary school level understood the theoretical concepts of the terms locating and selecting when applied to the information process. But practically only some students from the group under study were able to put their understanding into actions. In 2009, Rehman and Alfaresi conducted a survey on information literacy skills of female Kuwaiti high school students and the result of the survey demonstrated that the students under study lacked the skills of catalogue search and use, selection of information sources, formulation of search strategies and in selection of pertinent sources. Julien and Barker (2009) carried out a study on how high school students find and evaluate scientific information in Cannada, the result of the study revealed that many students under study were unable to demonstrate sophisticated information searching and critical evaluation skills.

In Hongkong, it was found that the secondary school students were able to identify potential sources of information, evaluate the sources as well as the information and to develop search strategies for the needed information. Further, it was also found that they failed to use the information responsibly, ethically and legally (Chu, Yeung and Chu, 2012). Another study by Chu (2012), on assessing information literacy: a case study of primary 5 students in Hong Kong confirmed that even though information literacy has been emphasized in Hong Kong school curriculum but still the students under study have not achieved high information literacy level.

A study conducted by Kovalik (2013) on Information Literacy and High school seniors: Perception of the Research Process found that students under study were able to use library resources to locate and use information and that they use a variety of resources. In 2014 in Jamaica, Rodney-Wellington carried out an experimental examination of information literacy instruction on the information seeking skills of grade six primary school children. The data were collected from the controlled and experimental groups as pre-test and post-test data after the information literacy instruction was provided to the experimental group. The pre-test result showed that the students in the sample were lacking in the information seeking skills. But after treatment with the information literacy skills instruction it was found that there was a great improvement in the information seeking skills of the experimental group. Thus, it was proved by the study that using of information literacy skills instruction can improve the information seeking skills of the students.

Objectives

The present study is conducted based on the broad objective to find out the information literacy skills of school students in terms of:-

- The sources consulted when they are in need of information regarding their course of study
- The reference sources mostly referred by the students
- Use of the internet/online sources for finding information
- The types of search engines mostly used by them
- The types of the Television Channels mostly watched by the students under study

Methodology

Research site – The Phudmuri Presbyterian Secondary School located at Mawlai in Shillong was selected for the study.

Sample – The students of class vii, class viii and class ix formed the population of the study. Out of the 304 total numbers of students from all the three classes only 65 (21%) of them were randomly selected from each class to form the sample.

Tool used – After extensive reading of relevant literature, a structured-interview schedule has been developed which was able to provide the researchers with the apt information required for the present survey. A structured-interview schedule was selected for data collection because it was considered to be more appropriate than any other tool to collect data from the school students.

Data Analysis

Chart 1: Age Distribution

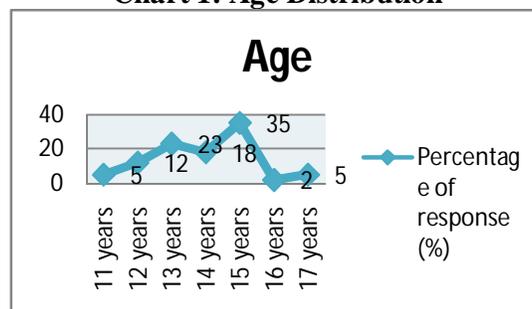


Chart 1 shows that 35% (23) are of the age of 15 years, 23% (15) are at the age of 13 years, 18% (12) of them are 14 years and another 12% (8) are at the age of 12 years; only 5% (3) are at the age of 17 years (N=65).

Chart 2: Gender Distribution

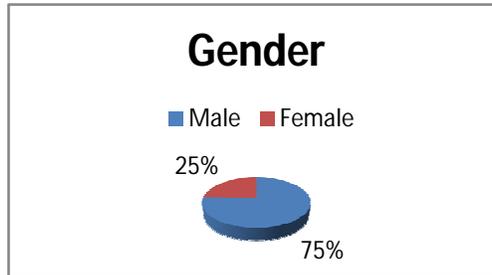


Chart 2 reveals that 75% (49) of the respondents are male and only 25% (16) of them are female (N=65).

Chart 3: Sources consulted by the students when in need of information for study

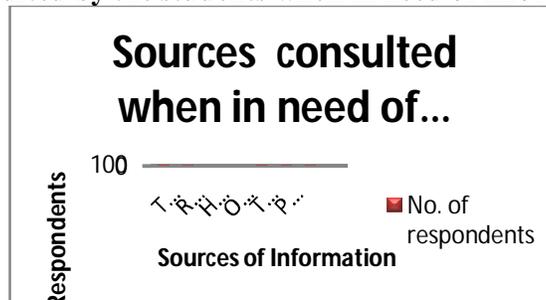


Chart no. 3 shows that 85% (55) of the respondents used text books as a source consulted whenever they need information, 71% (46) of them said that teachers are their source of information, 43% (28) of them said that they do use reference books as their source of information, 52% (34) of them they do consult their parents, 54% (35) of them said that they consulted their friends, 12% (8) of them consulted other sources such as uncles, sisters, aunties and brothers . Only 15% (10) of them who use help books as a source for information (here N=65, but the respondents were allowed with multiple choices).

Chart 4: Reference sources used by the Students

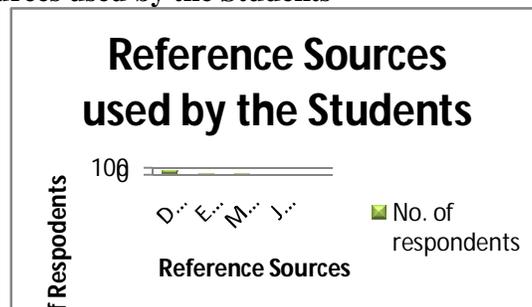


Chart no. 4 shows that 85% (55) of the respondents use dictionaries as their reference source, but only 7.5% (5) use encyclopaedias and another 7.5% (5) use magazines (N=65).

Chart 5: Full form of WWW

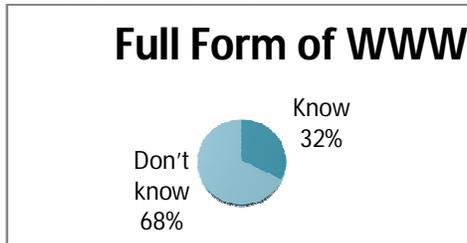


Chart no. 5 shows that 68% (44) of the respondents do not know the full form of www and only 32% (21) of them who knows it (**N=65**).

Chart 6: Use of internet/online sources for getting information

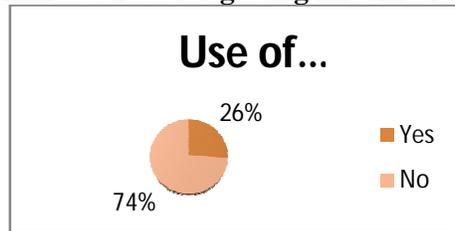


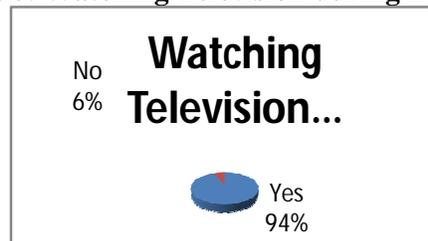
Chart no 6 shows that 74% (48) of the respondents said that they never use internet/online sources for getting information and only 26% (17) of them said that they are using it. From the data analysis it was found that all class vii students said that they are not using internet or online sources for getting information (**N=65**).

Chart 7: Search engines used for browsing the internet



Chart no. 7 shows that 100% (17) of the respondents use Google search engine for browsing the internet. This result shows that Google is the only search engine known to the students under study (**N=17**).

Chart 8: Watching Television during free time



Television is one of the information sources from where students can learn and expand their knowledge as well as they can update their information if not misusing it. **Chart no. 8** shows that 94% (61) of the respondents said that they do watch television during their free time and only 6% (4) of them said that they do not watch television even in their free time (**N=65**).

Chart 8.1.1 Educational Channels



Chart 8.1.1 reveals that even though not many but some of the students under study do watch the television educational channels. 45% (5) of them watch Discovery channel, 27% (3) watch Animal Planet and very few of them do watch others educational channels like Fox Life, National Geographic and TLC (Travel and Living Channel) (N=11).

Chart 8.1.2 News Channels



Chart 8.1.2 depicts that only 3% (2) students out of the 65 students who watch CNN and another 3% (2) students watch BBC News (N=4)

Chart 8.1.3 Sports channels



Chart 8.1.3 exposes the favourite sports channels of the respondents in television. 31% (20) of them watch ten sports, 9% (6) of them watch Ten Action, 5% (3) of them watch Star Sports, 3% (2) of them watch UTV Action and 2% (1) watch Ten Cricket (N=32).

Table 8.1.4 Entertainment Channels

Favourite TV channels (N=65)	No. of respondents	Percentage of response (%)	Favourite TV channels (N=65)	No. of respondents	Percentage of response (%)
Star Movies	22	34	Star Gold	2	3
HBO	19	29	Disney XD	2	3
Cartoon Network	13	20	Zee Studio	2	3
Zee TV	10	15	Disney Channel	1	2
Movies Now	9	14	HBO Hit	1	2
VH1	9	14	HBO Refined	1	2

Pogo	7	11	Oscar Movies	1	2
Sony Max	6	9	Romedy Now	1	2
9XO	5	8	Local video channel	1	2
Sony Pix	5	8	Star 1	1	2
Sony TV	5	8	Star 2	1	2
Hungama	4	6	Star 3	1	2
Colors	3	5	Star 4	1	2
Life OK	3	5	Star Plus	1	2
Sonix	3	5	WB	1	2
Zee Cinema	3	5	Zee TV Action	1	2
Sony 6	2	3	MTV	1	2
Sony Mix	2	3	-	-	-

Table no. 8.1.4 shows that 34% (22) of the respondents watch Star Movies channel in their free time, 29% (19) of them watch HBO. 20% (13) watch cartoon network. 15% (10) of them watch Zee TV, 14% (9) of them watch Movies now and another 14% (9) of them do watch VH1. As it is seen in the above table that, they also watch different entertainment channels available in television (N=65, but respondents were allowed with multiple choices).

Findings and interpretations

The study reveals the following major findings:-

1. Textbooks were the first option as a source of information mostly consulted by the students under study when they are in need of information regarding their study. They also consulted their teachers, friends and the reference sources. But besides these sources, some of them they do consult their sisters, brothers, uncles and aunties. Few of them they also consulted their help books (readymade Questions and Answers books available in the market).
2. Dictionary was the only reference source mostly consulted by majority of the students under study. Very few of them who also use the encyclopaedias and magazines.
3. The students who use internet/online sources for getting information were only 26% and majority of them that is 74% never use it.
4. The students who use the internet, they mainly use it for downloading music, videos and games. Sometimes only they use it for finding information for their school projects.
5. Regarding the search engines, Google is the only search engine used by the students because they are not aware of the availability of other search engines on internet.
6. 94% of them watch Television in their free time and only 6% who never watch it because some of them said that they like playing games with their friends. One student said that he never watch Television because he don't have Television set at home. He said that he is staying in a rented house with his elder sisters and brothers who are also studying in higher education and his parents are living in the village.
7. Out of the total number of the sample students that is 65, it was found that only 11 of them who watch the educational channels like Discovery channel, Animals Planet, National Geographic, Fox Life and TLC (Travel and Living Channel). Actually watching these educational channels in their free time they can learn something and expand their existing knowledge.
8. Unfortunately, it was found that out of the 65 students under study, only 4 of them who watch News channels like CNN and BBC World. In fact, the news channels are

the main sources of information from where they can update their information and current awareness.

9. At least 49% (32) of them are interested in watching sports channels like Ten Cricket, Ten Sports, Ten Action, Star Sports and UTV Action.
10. But it was found that 100% of the students under study who watch TV, they watch the entertainment channels; and all of them watch more than two or three entertainment channels during their free time.

Conclusion

The aim of the survey was to assess the information literacy skills of the school students from class vii to class ix of the selected school. Here, Information literacy skills are considered in terms of the sources consulted when in need of the information, awareness and use of different reference sources, knowledge and use of the online sources from the internet for getting the required information, expanding their existing knowledge and updating their information by watching the different educational and informative Television Channels. But the result of the study revealed that the information literacy skills of the students under study are not satisfactory. In today's world of information, these skills are considered to be the fundamental skills for students right at the primary level of education. These skills can help them to be prepared for higher education as well as for future workplace, to enable them to survive with the trend, to be able to focus on their careers and to become success in life. Therefore, taken into account of all these factors, it is high time that we should not wait till when they are in higher level of education, but actually these skills should be imbibed to students right from scratch of their education, say at school level.

Recommendations

Based on the result of the survey, the following recommendations can be put forth:-

- Awareness on the availability of different reference sources should be made to the students under study
- They should be trained on how to search and access the online sources of information
- They should also be trained on how to evaluate carefully the online information
- They must be made aware of the availability of the different useful search engines which can be benefited for them
- Awareness must be conducted on the beneficial of different educational and informative television channels, news channels etc which the students should watch them to expand their knowledge and update their information
- Therefore, considering the current situation, the researchers would like to add this suggestion that integration of the information literacy programs as part of the school curriculum is needed in order to encourage and enhance the information literacy skills especially of the students under study.

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