Information Literacy and Life Long Learning: Inter-Relationship

Abstract

The paper is based upon the assumption that information literacy and life- long learning have a critical role to play in the human progress and education. Information literacy is the best ways to promote the use knowledge and information across the frontiers. The paper also explains the concepts of information literacy, inter-relationship between information literacy and life-long learning and the differences between the both. The paper focuses on Empowering 8 model of information literacy and Information Literacy Standards.

Keyword: Information Literacy, Inter-Relationship, Empowerment.

Introduction

Information literacy (IL) "enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as users of information sources, as well as to become producers of information in their own right. Information literacy means information awakening in person about the needed information. Information literate people are able to access information about their health, their environment, their education and work, empowering them to make critical decisions about their lives, e.g. in taking more responsibility for their own health and education". Government of India has planned to run many programmes to make people information literate. There are projects like e-government project playing a amazing role in information literacy and the social, economic and cultural relevance and its immense potential to improve the society in which it functions.

Various approaches to IL have been adopted since 1974 when Zurkowsky used the term for the first time. The spectrum of IL is rich in rhetoric but poor in practice in diverse contexts in the developing countries. In the Western idiom, IL has been defined as stake holder's ability to ascertain his information needs, and then to access, evaluate and use that information for problem-solving and decision-making efficiently and effectively. But this definition provides a very limited view of IL. Libraries, web, and educational institutions are not the only sites for information, knowledge and learning. Information comes from graphic records, physical structures, and social- cultural contexts as well. Hence, the concept, process and practice of IL must be perceived holistically in view of the diversity and complexity of formal and informal settings at home and work. Exploration, analysis and sense-making of information ecology and socio-cultural diversity are essential components of the information literacy process.

With the ascent of digitisation, databases, and networks, information has become fluid and transcendental. Moreover, information today is available in variety of formats. Hence, perception of IL must be based upon media, computer and network literacies as well. Engagement, empowerment, enrichment, and embodiment are the essential attributes of the info-literate stakeholders.

Different people may have different viewpoints of IL, but it is a hard fact that only info-literates can stay ahead, in this era of discontinuous change and fierce competition by developing and using IL skills to support lifelong learning and knowledge management. This learning must include: learning to know, to do, learning to work together, and learning to be better than the best. Similar views have been put forward by the UNESCO report entitled "Learning: The Treasure Within". This paper deals with the hidden contours of IL to sensitise the stakeholders to think out of the box and look beyond blogging and chatting. The perception that 'one size fits all' can't be valid in the case of IL. It is true that IL is a tool for lifelong learning and knowledge management, but all human beings are not equally intelligent. Hence, one must learn to take cognizance of individual information gaps and

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learning disabilities. Moreover, the cultural context of learners also plays a pivotal role in this regard. The core cultural assumptions provide lasting bond strength to the norms, values, and visible behaviour on the one hand, and thinking, learning, working, and communication styles on the other. The core assumptions of cultures do not change easily. Therefore, proper care must be given to the cultural context before designing, delivering, and evaluation the IL programmes. Socio-economic inequalities, self-concept of stakeholders, gender status, attitude towards information gap, and core assumptions of given cultures are critical components to be considered with regard to IL

The Need of Information Literacy

1. To develop information literacy skills in learners.
2. To become independent learners.
3. To make the common people part of IT revolution.
4. World Wide Web has taken the new shape. Hence, there is need to promote information literacy.
5. To provide knowledge and motivate people to acquire IT ability.
6. To help librarians to develop, assess and improve their information literacy Programmes.

Purpose of Information Literacy

The basic purpose of IL is to develop sense-making ability among the stakeholders. Once the information seeker becomes aware of the information gap and its critical consequences, he would try to define his information need. Task, time, interest, and information are some of the other parameters that influence end-user's information behaviour. The end-result of the whole exercise is independent learning and critical thinking.

Concepts of IL:

It is important to know the different concepts that are related to information literacy to identify a clear direction for an information literacy program. This section contains a brief definition of relevant terms followed by the key concepts of information literacy.

What is Information?

Information is a resource that has varied definitions according to the format, and media used to package or transfer it, as well as the discipline that defines it. Case (2002) provides a broader definition. Here the term is synonymous with: • Encapsulated knowledge • Packaged human experience • A source that can provide a myriad of data •A resource that takes different formats, packaging, transfer media, and varied methods of delivery • People: family, friends, tutors, fellow students • Institutions, i.e., national health service professionals or help facilities

The Need for Effective Use of Information.

Information by itself does not make people information literate. Information is certainly:

1. A vital element for creativity and innovation
2. A basic resource for learning and human thought
3. A key resource in creating more knowledgeable citizens
4. A factor that enables citizens to achieve better results in their academic lives, with regard to health, and at work
5. An important resource for national socio-economic development

What is literacy?

The basic definition of literacy is "the condition

of being literate" according to the Chambers English Dictionary (2003). This reference work, on the other hand, defines literate as "…learned; able to read and write; having a competence in or with" In education parlance, "Basic Literacy" means the classic or traditional literacies of learning how to read, to write, and to perform numeric calculations and operations; basic literacies in almost all societies are learned in basic and secondary formal education

Other "Literacy"

Concepts related to information literacy. Information literacy is linked with other types of related literacies, but it should be differentiated from them, especially from information technology, media literacy, network literacy, digital literacy, network or Internet literacy, "Computer Literacy" and "Media Literacy" (Bawden, 2001). These last two literacies are clearly defined by Horton (F. Horton, Jr., personal communication, December, 2004) in the following terms:

Computer Literacy

The knowledge and skills necessary to understand information and communication technologies (ICTs), including the hardware, the software, systems, networks (both local area networks and the Internet), and all of the other components of computer and telecommunications systems.

Media Literacy

The knowledge and skills necessary to understand all of the mediums and formats in which data, information and knowledge are created, stored, communicated, and presented, i.e., print newspapers and journals, magazines, radio, television broadcasts, cable, CD-ROM, DVD, mobile telephones, PDF text formats, and JPEG format for photos and graphics.

What is Information Literacy Concept

There are several definitions assumed by associations and authors. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a precursor in the IL field, and the Association for Educational Communications and Technologies state that "information literacy is - the ability to find and use information – is the keystone of lifelong learning" (Byerly/Brodie, 1999).

Under the component of information literacy, AASL states that: "information literate student accesses information efficiently and effectively, evaluates information critically and competently, and uses information accurately and creatively" (Byerly/Brodie, 1999). Users "should have both information-gathering strategies and the critical thinking skills to select, discard, synthesize, and present information in new ways to solve real-life problems" (Byerly/Brodie, 1999).

A Generally Used Definition

The most commonly cited and used IL definition is the one adopted by the American Library Association (ALA), 1998: "To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. The information literate individuals are those who have learned how to learn". They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, know how to find information, and know how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them (Byerly/Brodie, 1999).

Information Competencies

A competen t citizen, whether a student, a

professional or a worker is able to recognize her/his information needs, knows how to locate, identify access, retrieve, evaluate, organize, and use information. To be an information literate person, one has to know how to benefit from the worlds of knowledge, and incorporate the experience of others into one's background.

The Synonymous of Information Literacy

Following are the synonymous

Information Literacy; User Education, Bibliographic Instruction, Information Fluency, Development of Information Skills, Library Orientation, Other concepts, Information Competencies, User Training ,

Lifelong Learning:

In view of fierce competition and discontinuous change, one has to look beyond formal education and information management. Lifelong learning is the only way to stay ahead of change and competition. Most important thing today is to be a face in the crowd. Only lifelong learning can facilitate this. Learning is a lifelong process for knowing, understanding, being, working together, decision-making, and problem- solving. IL is a critical link between knowledge management and lifelong learning. Hence, it is incumbent upon the learning organisations to promote learning at all levels. Learning must start from the centre, with learner's interacting with local sources and then expanding his access to information sources across the globe. Collaboration, leadership, and synergy with the techniques of technology (ICT) are critical for learning to learn, unlearn, and re-learn for staying ahead of time and competition.

Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Harnessed together, information literacy and lifelong learning substantially improve the:
1. Set of personal choices and options opened up for, and offered to, an individual in the context of personal, family and societal matters.
2. Quality and utility of education and training in both formal school settings preceding entry into the workforce, and later in informal vocational or on-the-job training settings.
3. Prospects of finding and keeping a satisfying job and moving up the career ladder rapidly and with appropriate rewards, and making cost-effective and wise economic and business decisions. Participation of the individual effectively in social, cultural and political contexts, both at the local community level and at higher levels, and n identifying and fulfilling professional goals and aspirations.

Inter-relations of the IL and Lifelong Learning: Both of these concepts:

Are Largely Self-Motivated and Self-Directed.

They do not require the mediation of an outside individual, an organization, or a system beyond the individual himself or herself, although advice and assistance from a respected friend such as a mentor or coach can be helpful.

Are Self-Empowering

They are aimed at helping individuals of all age groups to help themselves, regardless of their social or economic status, role or place in society, gender, race, religion or ethnic background.

Are self-actuating

The more information literate an individual becomes, and the longer the individual sustains good information literacy learning and practices those habits, the greater the self-enlightenment that will occur, especially if practiced over an entire lifetime.

Theoretically one could pursue the goal of becoming more information literate but not continuously over one's lifetime. Conversely, one could pursue the goal of lifelong learning but without having first become information literate. Taken alone, neither path maximizes the potential of the individual to "learn to learn."

Differences of the IL and Lifelong Learning

Information literacy is a "set of skills" that can be learned. That set of skills includes a certain attitude toward learning itself, the use of tools, such as online tutorials, the use of techniques, such as working with groups, and the use of methods, such as a reliance on mentors, coaches and ombudspersons.

In contrast, lifelong learning is a good habit that must be acquired and accompanied by the adoption of a positive frame of mind. The willingness to change and a curiosity or thirst for knowledge are very helpful pre-conditions to lifelong learning.

Empowering-8 Model of Information Literacy

There are many models of IL, but the Empowering- 8 Model has been developed at an IFLA-ALP sponsored Information Literacy Workshop hosted by National Institute of Library and Information Sciences (NILIS), University of Colombo in 2004 specifically for the stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific Region. Reference has specifically been made to this model because it has not been reported and discussed comprehensively in the professional literature. Prof. Russell Bowden, in his keynote address published in the Proceedings of the Information Skills for Learning: Part II "Empowering- 8" International Workshop Sponsored by IFLA- ALP, UNESCO-IFAP5 in 2005 has beautifully described the eight steps of this model in the following words:
1. Identify—subject, audience, keywords and plan strategy;
2. Explore—resources required, information available;
3. Select—relevant information; stages of work, appropriate citations;
4. Organise—information earlier selected, between fact, fiction and opinion;
5. Create—information in your own words, revise and edit and create bibliography;
6. Present—share information with appropriate audience; display in appropriate format;
7. Assess—feedback; self-assessment and assessment with teacher;
8. Apply—review feedback and apply to next learning activity. An information literate person must learn to know, to do, to be and to work together. He should be able to make sense, ensure quality, learn independently, think critically, and use information ethically and strategically.

Structure of The Standards:

The information literacy standards for becoming effective learners include three basic components: access, evaluation and use of information. These core goals are found in most of the standards created by library associations, such as the relevant

contributions of AASL, ACRL, SCONUL and the Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy, followed by the work of other countries, like Mexico, and individual educators (Byerly/Brodie, 1999; Kuhlthau, as cited in Stripling, 1999). The IFLA information literacy standards are based on these international experiences and contributions, and are fully described in the bibliography at the end of the document. The IFLA standards are grouped under the three basic IL components.

Access

The user accesses information effectively and efficiently

1. **Definition and Articulation of the Information Need**

Defines or recognizes the need for information; Decides to do something to find the information; Express and defines the information need; Initiates the search process

2. **Location of Information**

Identifies and evaluates potential sources of information; Develops search strategies; Accesses the selected information sources; Selects and retrieves the located information

Evaluation

The user evaluates information critically and competently

1. **Assessment of Information**

Analyzes, examines, and extracts information Generalizes and interprets information Selects and synthesizes information Evaluates accuracy and relevance of the retrieved information

2. **Organization of Information**

Arranges and categorizes information Groups and organizes the retrieved information, Determines which is the best and most useful information

Use

The user applies/uses information accurately and creatively

1. **Use of Information**

Finds new ways to communicate, present and use information, Applies the retrieved information Learns or internalizes information as personal knowledge Presents the information product

2. **Communication and Ethical Use of Information**

Understands ethical use of information, Respects the legal use of information Communicates the learning product with acknowledgement of intellectual property Uses the relevant acknowledgement style standards

Information Literacy Competency Standards and Performance Indicators

Standard One

IL person determines the nature and extent information of the information needed

Performance Indicators

1. IL person defines and articulates the need for information
2. IL person identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information
3. 3 . IL person considers the costs and benefits of acquiring the needed information.
4. IL person reevaluates the nature and extent of the information need.

Standard Two

IL person accesses needed information

effectively and efficiently.

Performance Indicators

1. IL person selects the most appropriate investigative methods or information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information.
2. IL person constructs and implements effectively designed search strategies.
3. IL person retrieves information online or in person using a variety of methods.
4. IL person refines the search strategy if necessary.
5. IL person extracts, records, and manages the information and its sources

Standard Three

IL person evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge baseand value system.

Performance Indicators

1. 1 IL person summarizes the main ideas to be extracted from the information gathered
2. IL person articulates and applies initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources.
3. IL person synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts.
4. IL person compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, or other unique characteristics of the information.
5. IL person determines whether the new knowledge has an impact on the individual's value system and takes steps to reconcile differences.
6. IL person validates understanding and interpretation of the information through discourse with other individuals, subject-area experts, and/or practitioners.
7. IL person determines whether the initial query should be revised.

Standard Four

IL person, individually or as a member of a groupuses nformation effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

Performance Indicators

1. IL person applies new and prior information to the , planning and creation of a particular product or performance
2. IL person revises the development process for the product or performance.
3. IL person communicates the product or performance effectively to others.

Standard Five:

IL person understands many of the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of and information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Performance Indicators

1. IL person understands many of the ethical, legal , and socio-economic issues surrounding information , technology. information
2. IL person follows laws, regulations, institutional . policies, and etiquette related to the access and use of information resources.
3. IL person acknowledges the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance.**(Source:www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/standards.pdf Last Accessed on 13/5/14)**

Conclusion

We must adopt a holistic approach to IL. It should start with the learner at the centre stage interacting with local sites of information and then extending his reach to the sources of information available across the globe. IL must include media literacy, computer literacy and network literacy.

Sense-making should be the heart of the matter. The info-literate persons must be able to attach meaning to their thoughts and actions. IL standards, models and rubrics must be culture specific. Learners and mediators should also be careful about the zones of intervention. Internal and external factors affecting learning and IL programmes must be taken into consideration before passing on value judgments and initiating innovations.

TK management and its strategic and ethical use must be facilitated by the concept and practice of IL. In the formal settings, IL programmes should become essential components to facilitate lifelong learning and putting knowledge to work. But IL must be used to contain the twin perils of "digital exclusion" and "digital determinism" to bridge the "info-divide"11. UNESCO celebrated the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-12) as well as promoted the Education for All Programme (EFAP) and the Information for All Programme (IFAP). Independent learners and critical thinkers are the expected outcomes of information literacy. But the success of IFAP is dependent upon the success of EFAP, because there can be no information for all without education for all. In fact, the bottom line is that IL programmes must be based upon the complexity and diversities of learning communities; and cultural hegemony and intellectual imperialism must not be allowed to prevail in these programmes. IL must serve as backbone of self-actualisation and learning.

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