

The Importance of Information Literacy for Primary Students in 21st Century Education

By:

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Information is something that we have from various resources in a form of data or knowledge. It is also a process of adding direct or indirect knowledge through personal experience or someone else's experience, which is kept in printed, non-printed, or visual format. 21 Century education cannot be separated from the need of information. Learners should be able to demonstrate abilities to use the information based on their needs. In this case information literacy skills take a big role in learning process because information literacy gives an understanding and set of abilities which enabling individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the capacity to locate, use, and evaluate effectually the needed information.

The role of education is to prepare students for a successful future. Today we live in an information society; tomorrow is expected to be even more information-oriented, where information is essential for personal, organizational, national and societal success. To succeed in the future, students must learn how to recognize the need of information, and be able to access, evaluate and use information, in other word be information literate people. Developing information literacy among students is no longer an option; it is a necessity. Education for 21st Century must incorporate information literacy through formal means, starting in school and being reinforced and extended in college and university, as well as through non-formal education in the home and community. Libraries, through their collections, staffs and services, have an important role to play in developing information literacy skills.

Primary years are actually the starter point where students start to learn about everything. We must prepare them in this abundant era. They are not living in the time where information is not enough, it is just the opposite, they are now living in the time where Technology and information are too much and complex. Therefore it is our responsibility, as teacher librarians, to teach them how to deal with all of those matters. In this case that is the main reason why information literacy is important. This subject teaches us the strategies to find, use, and evaluate information and technology before we use it.

Information Literacy Strands

Teaching information literacy to primary students can be challenging and interesting. Students in this era are born as digital natives where their ability to take and use information are really fast and growing every day. Therefore they need to be equipped with understanding and responsibilities towards information. We should teach them how to use information and technology wisely. Pupils at the age of 6 to 12 years old need to know the basic skills of information literacy, which can be simplified into four strands; they are library skills, reading skills, research skills and ICT skills, to help them working with information.

Library skills give the opportunity for primary students to understand and use all the property in the library during their independent learning. They suppose to know how to use Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), catalogue cards or online catalogue when they are in the library. Moreover, library skills also give the chance to learn how to use encyclopedia, dictionary, or other non-fiction books as their resources.

Beside library skills they must be taught the ability to comprehend reading passage through reading skills such as skimming and scanning. In this process the students learn about the strategy to find main idea, supporting details, and other more. Throughout the reading skills they are also challenged to develop their writing skills such as doing note taking, paraphrasing or citing. If they are getting used to do these they will be able to sort information and use it effectively.

After they have two basic skills of information literacy which are library skills and reading skills, introducing research skills to young learners will also be the other benefit for them in the future because they are trained to use their critical thinking by questioning and finding out. Research will help them to be a life-long learner. The process of deciding, finding, recording, using, and evaluating in research enable them to be more aware of the information usage. Students will not accept anything without questioning the authenticity.

However those three skills above must be supported with ICT skills. There are thousands of information are made and kept in digital format. Internet is one of the examples. Internet gives chance to them to find anything that they need or like such as songs, games, sports, cars, and many others. They can take anything from internet so easy and for free, sometimes this makes them use internet inappropriately. Therefore the students should acquire the ability to use ICT suitably especially how to deal with internet. Through these skills students are taught to operate Boolean system, evaluate good websites, write correct bibliography, and take and record information based on their need.

By learning all the skills above it is expected that pupils will have strong awareness about all the things happen around them. They are getting used to see something critically and respond it wisely. All these abilities cannot be taught in instant ways therefore teaching information literacy earlier in primary age will construct better life-long learners in the future.