Information Literacy in Portugal in an European Context

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Contribution

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Information Literacy importance in modern world has been increasing in most developed countries, specially in USA, UK and Australia. Searches for "information literacy" on bibliographic databases and on Internet each year show more and more entries in research, academic intervention projects and even at work. We have some conferences at european level with information literacy axes, like ECER and since 2013 we have European Conference of Information Literacy, a conference entirely dedicated to information literacy. In Portugal we have a few studies about information literacy, conducted mainly by librarians and almost all related to students at colleges and universities. Information Literacy research shows that freshman students at colleges and universities have big difficulties to deal with information (PIL, 2012). Students learn better information literacy when it is integrated in a curriculum. In order to improve students information literacy we need to teach them through all grades. Students at Middle Schools have already developed their basic skills on reading and writing, so it is a good moment to introduce information literacy instruction, if it hasn't happened before.

Information Literacy is a prerequisite to participate effectively in information society and it is part of the basic human right of Lifelong Learning (US National Commission on Library and Information Science, 2003). Prague Declaration (NCLIS/NFIL/UNESCO, 2003) recommends the development of strongly interdisciplinary programs to promote information literacy at each country and considers that information literacy has an essential role to reduce inequalities and to promote tolerance and mutual agreement.

Information Literacy is a key element to lifelong learning in our knowledge society (Gaunt, Morgan, Somers, Soper, & Swain, 2009, p.80), and it is important in all subjects and grades and it is better developed in curriculum context (p.81).

Incorporation of information literacy into the curriculum makes easy teaching methods focused on students, including problem based learning, learning based on investigation or based on learning evidences with opportunities to auto-direct learning and reflection (ACRL, 2000). Gaunt, Morgan, Somers, Soper and Swain (2009) said that are evidences that suggest that incorporation of information literacy into the curriculum depends on collaborative work partnerships among all teaching and learning process stakeholders.

What do students know about information literacy? What is the relationship between information literacy and scholar achievement? What do teachers know about information literacy? How can we start an information literacy instruction program engaging teachers and students? Is Guided Inquiry a good way to learn information literacy integrated in curriculum?

To answer those questions we started an information literacy research project at one Portuguese middle school. In a first study in 2011 we assessed students information literacy knowledge. In a second study in 2012 we made a first try to teach information literacy to students. They did some activities such as to prepare an essay and a computer and oral presentation at Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) based on information searched on Internet. Those activities was made in collaboration with subjects and teachers of nature sciences and history. This time we assessed students information literacy before and after information literacy activities.

We will develop an instruction program of information literacy (ILIP). We will align Standards for the 21st-Century Learner (AASL, 2007) with the Portuguese curriculum. We will use Information Seek Process (Kuhlthau, 1991) and Guided Inquiry (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, Caspari, 2007; 2012) as a main theoretical support to ILIP. We cannot use Informatio Literacy European standards only because doesn't exist yet.

Method

To assess student's IL we use tests adapted from TRAIL's project (Tools for Real-Time Assessment of Information Literacy Skills, n. d.) and SLIM toolkit (Todd, Kuhlthau, & Heinström, 2005). These choices were based on a previous work (Lomba, 2013) that will be complemented with a systematic review of literature using meta analysis (see Field & Gillet, 2010). This is very important because we need to find all relevant studies, even non published ones, and then assess the quality of the methodology and of the design and execution of each study. Based on these results we can make some adjustments and improvements to our first ideas and design ILIP accordingly.

We chose an experimental research design with experimental and control groups of teachers and their students. Teachers from experimental group will be attend an information literacy course. In that course teachers will learn Guided Inquiry methodology (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, Caspari, 2007; 2012) in practice. Teachers will learn about information literacy in a collaborative way using Information and Communication Technologies and they will create a teaching unity integrating information literacy concepts that make sense to integrate into curricular contents. Both groups teachers will do IL-HUMASS survey before and after training course. Both group students will do a pretest and a posttest of information literacy.

With a pretest and posttest design we can have an idea of students learning with ILIP. SLIM, inquiry journal, and students reflections will give us an in-depth information of students learning that can be used to help students and to clarify investigation.

Expected Outcomes

Pretest results will show us students information literacy knowledge before and after ILIP. Through comparing tests results from both groups of students we will know if ILIP was effective or not in terms of student learning of information literacy. Through comparing students achievements of experimental and control groups, we will could also evaluate if students learn better curricular contents using Guided Inquiry. SLIM and inquiry journals will be used to gather qualitative data that will be important to guide the inquiry and maybe to help clarifying quantitative data at the end.

IL-HUMASS data will show us motivation and self-effective of teachers before and after ILIP.

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This proposal is part of a master or doctoral thesis.

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