



IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM: A STUDY ON KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT:

Information literacy is now one of the “Basic Competency Requirements” for school education. The main purpose of this paper is to present a broader systematic insight to the information literacy concept. Information literacy is a set of skills necessary by a children ability to find, evaluate, organize, use and communicate information in all its various formats, most notably in situations requiring decision making, problem solving or the acquisition of knowledge. An information literacy programme, curriculum and assessment methods are also elaborated in this study, with their practical approach in relation to the school curriculum. The present study reveals that information literacy is important for academic success, effective functioning in the workplace and participation in society as knowledgeable citizens.

KEYWORDS: *Information Literacy, Information Literacy skills, Competency, Literacy programmes, School Education, Secondary School Students, Karnataka State.*

INTRODUCTION:

The word ‘Information literacy’ was conceptualized by Paul Zurkowski, in 1974. The conceptual foundation was made by the American Library Association (ALA): “in order to have information literacy, a person needs to be aware of the information necessity, to be able to locate it, assess and use it efficiently. Information literacy is plays a significant role in today’s learning system, it promotes problem solving approaches and also enhance thinking skills – asking questions and looking for answers, finding information, forming opinions, evaluating sources and making some decisions fostering successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals. Students who are information literate are able to locate and use information resources (Singson, 2012).

They are also able to use these information resources effectively at each stage of a school assignment, from defining a topic to critically evaluating the information found. But beyond the functional level, literacy plays a vital role in transforming students into socially engaged citizens. Being able to read and write means being able to keep up with current events, communicate effectively, and understand the issues that are determining our world. The role of information literacy is vital for lifelong learning as it enhances the quality of education both in learning environments and in educational settings.

School Teachers' plays an important role in bringing up individuals who are life-long learners and who improve themselves constantly. Literacy skills allow students to seek out information, explore subjects in-depth and gain a deeper understanding of the world around them. This is why it is so important to think about your strategies for teaching literacy skills in classroom (Matthew, 2015). Information literacy in an academia world may not be a new phenomenon but to a chunk of digital divide and the digital privilege still remains the big word. It is no doubt very important that students becomes information literate, it may be even more critical for those students planning to become teachers since they need to be able to model and teach information literacy skills effectively to their future students.

In recent century information is growing at surprisingly fast speed in the society every person whether men or women, rich or poor, adult or child needs information for their work. If you have information at every step then only you can proceed in your life. In today's scenario information is compulsory. Information Literacy is the process of knowing when and why information is required, where to find it and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical way. It is the combination of all the skills that required for the effective and maximum sue of information. Information literacy is one of such key competency essential in the present century. The information literacy has been used as collective term covering all or several of literacies viz. Computer literacy, digital literacy, hyper literacy, information technology literacy, interactive literacy, multiple literacy, network literacy, oral literacy, internet literacy, reading literacy, water literacy and visual literacy etc. Here each of this literacy is necessary to understand specific process has special importance. The users who inculcate in themselves with new and updated methods obtain the quality of creating meaningful work. The whole concept of information literacy is to move from text-based learning to resource-based learning (Jorosi, 2002).

Children not only need to be able to read for information; they also need to be able to work out what trust they should place on the information and to identify when and how people are aiming to persuade or influence them. They need to be able to identify what is real and relevant not just for school but for learning, life and work.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of the study was twofold. First, it intended to determine the levels of information literacy skills among high school students in selected schools in Karnataka State, that is, student's general proficiencies in information managing skills in accordance with some of the established generic information

literacy competencies. Second, the study also sought to gain a broader understanding of the information literacy practices in selected schools, i.e. to develop a deeper insight of how information literacy skills are delivered and their position in school curriculum.

OBJECTIVES OF INFORMATION LITERACY:

Education in information literacy is one of the priorities of the learning process. Information literacy consists of:

- Creating a thinking style that is appropriate to the demands of the contemporary information society expressed by information access capacity, analysis of the information environment and development of alternative information systems.
- Creating skills and working abilities with information sources; and
- Independent solution for each problem by accessing, processing, storing and sending information.

BRIEF HISTORY OF KARNATAKA STATE EDUCATION SYSTEM:

Education is a platform in which young generations are trained and make them future-ready. Education provides knowledge and skills which help the person to be employable. The Indian education system is very popular and diversified among other countries education systems due to its change in the evolution from ancient to the modern education system. During the ancient and medieval periods of education, students were trained by teachers in such a manner that they can survive and live in that era (Wikipedia, 2022).

The education system is classified as school education, graduate education, technical education and higher education. There are a total of 62229 schools in the state, including government and private. There are 25278 junior primary schools, 36951 senior primary schools and 15867 secondary schools. The Karnataka Government which has implemented “The Right to Education Act” for all children is in force. Statistics show that the education sector is making significant progress in the Karnataka State. In 2001, the literacy rate was 66.64%, which increased to 75.60% in 2011. Currently, Karnataka is ranked 9th overall in the literacy rate, the literacy growth plans reflect the prospects for the future.

Till the latter half of the 19th century type of education system existed in Karnataka in the form of Agraharas, Shivapuris, Brahmapuris, Ghatikasthanas and Mutts etc. They were almost of residential type with the close teacher-pupil relationship. At Agraharas and Brahmapuris scholars lived in colonies. They used to teach higher traditional texts like Upanishads and Ancient philosophies. Separate arrangement was there to teach reading writing and mathematics. Ghatikasthanas were like present universities where higher education was provided by highly learned Acharyas (NIC, 2022).

However, as British Rule took hold of India, ‘School System’ in education replaced the traditional system. That was a gradual shift. English language teaching commenced and people were also attracted towards that as it was practically more beneficial than learning oriental subjects. But even though Ghatikasthanas and Brahmapuris vanished, Coolimathas continued to exist where a single educated person

used to say in a temple or in a rich man's house and teach a cluster of children whom he could get in the vicinity. Parents of those children used to provide him with necessary food, shelter and some money for his expenses.

During ancient education, there were 5 big well-known universities like Takshashila, Nalanda, Vallabhi, etc., which focus on the all-round development of students and those in the medieval period there exists 2 institutions Madrasah and Maqtabas which mostly focus on building student religious and leaders of the future. In modern education, there are well known autonomous institutes like IITs and IIMs which are famous all around the world (Department of Public Instruction, 2015).

INFORMATION LITERACY AND THE SECONDARY EDUCATION CURRICULAM:

The traditional idea of school as a place where teachers teach and students learn is replaced by a paradigm where teachers are themselves constantly challenged about their own information literacy and their ability to learn through emerging information environments. The information literate school places focus on teacher and student learning as a complex interrelated endeavour (Dipetso, 2019).

In appreciating the importance of Information Literacy Skills, the Directorate of Secondary Education has Since the early 1990's, trained some teachers in school librarianship at Certificate level, with the hope of later manning the school libraries. Unfortunately, the trained teachers later progressed to different Directorates within their respective secondary schools as the library was not then declared a Directorate. Needless to point out, the expertise and knowledge of trained Teacher Librarians was lost as it could not be used in those Directorates (Cajetan, 2018). Thus, libraries continued to be run by people not trained in librarianship. Consequently, students were not taught library skills and the few library resources were lost and/or underutilised.

In realising this loss of resources, the Directorate of Secondary Education in 2000, Called for the need to revisit the provisions of section 11 of the NPE and an immediate implementation of recommendations in section 101, sub section e, f and g of the Revised National Policy on education (RNPE) of 2004 by turning libraries in secondary schools into a department to be headed by a Teacher librarian or Library officer whose main responsibility was, and still is, to ensure that students become information literate.

Another milestone was the establishment of Colleges of Education in the 1980s as a result of the recommendations of NPE, where library studies were introduced as a minor subject. Teachers who graduated later helped in manning the library but not enforcing ILS. Communication and Study Skills was, and still is, also taught at Colleges of Education. In the early 1990s in an attempt to produce information literate graduate teachers who should produce information literate students. Upon completion, these teachers were expected to infuse ILS in their teaching subjects, but this never saw the light of the day because there was no implementation strategy for the integration of ILS into secondary school curriculum. This was further compounded by the congestion of their teaching subjects. The teacher to student ratio of one teacher to 45-50 students also makes it difficult for teachers to infuse ILS into their teaching subjects as well. Furthermore, limited budgets and lack of implementation strategies and capabilities still hinder the integration of ILS in secondary schools (Ajeemsha, 2013).

Information literacy should occupy an important in the school curriculum. Although most schools in the developed countries have considered this skills in their curriculum, but those who are yet to attain a minimal level of information society are still lagging behind.

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR PROMOTING LITERACY:

1. National Policy on Education (NPE):

In 1951 India's literacy rate was only 18.3 percent. Today it stands at 64.8 percent. The National Policy on Education (NPE) provides a broad policy framework for eradication of illiteracy. NPE and programme of action, 1986 (updated in 1992) envisages a national system for education for the universalization of primary education and the spread of adult literacy. The policy stresses widening of opportunities for the masses. It emphasises the need for a much higher level of investment in education of at least six percent of the national income.

2. Right to Education Act:

From 1950 onwards free and compulsory education enshrined as one of the Directive Principles of the state Policy in the Constitution. The 86th amendment to the constitution in 2002 states the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age 6 to 14 years in such a manner as the state may by law determine. Nearly eight years after the amendment the government implemented the law on 1st April 2010.

3. Right to Information Act:

The right to information act passed by the parliament in the 2005 budget session is a path breaking endeavour in giving legal rights to seek information from the government. On a query the concerned authority has to provide information within 30 days, extendable up to 40 days. If the authority fails in providing information, there is provision to penalise him/her. The aim is to create a civil society that makes fully informed choices to ensure full development of each individual.

4. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was the GOI of the very first initiative the improving the quality of education in India, this program was launched to provide free elementary education to all the children in India in a time-bound manner.

5. Akshaya Project:

The Akshaya project, first started in the rural areas of Malappuram district of Kerala, India, and now spread all around the state, was the first district-wide e-literacy project in India and one of the largest known Internet Protocol (IP) based wireless networks in the world. Malappuram is now what is said to be India's First E-literate District. The mission continues to make Kerala the First E-literate state in India (Press Information Bureau, 2022).

NATIONAL SCHEMES ON INFORMATION LITERACY:

Universal access to quality education is fundamental for developing an equitable and just society, promoting national development, scientific advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation. Department of School Education and Literacy through its autonomous/Statutory bodies, i.e. CBSE, KVS, JNV, NIOS and NCTE and its centrally sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha, PM Poshan, Padhna Likhna Abhiyan and central sector scheme of National Means cum Merit Scholarships is committed to create a quality education system, with particular focus on historically marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups that acts as a great leveller and is the best tool for achieving economic and social mobility, inclusion, and equality.

The brief details of the schemes implemented by the D/o SE&L are as follows:

1. SAMAGRA SHIKSHA:

An integrated scheme covering all classes from pre-primary to senior secondary and PM POSHAN scheme have been aligned with the recommendations of NEP 2020. Samagra Shiksha covers 11.68 lakh schools, around 15.62 crore students and 57.67 lakh Teachers of Govt. and Aided schools (up to senior secondary level).

2. PRADHAN MANTRI POSHAN SHAKTI NIRMAN (PM POSHAN):

Scheme is aimed to improve the nutritional status of children studying in Bal vatika (just before class I) – VIII in Government and Government-Aided Schools. It encourages poor children belonging to disadvantaged sections to attend school more regularly and help them to concentrate on classroom activities.

3. NATIONAL MEANS-CUM-MERIT SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME (NMMSS):

The 'National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme' (NMMSS) is a Central Sector Scheme to provide scholarships for meritorious students of classes IX to XII. The objective of the scheme is to award scholarships to meritorious students of economically weaker sections to arrest their drop out at class VIII and encourage them to continue their study and complete secondary stage. The scheme envisages award of one lakh fresh scholarships every year to selected students of class IX and their continuation/renewal in classes X to XII for study in a State Government, Government-aided and Local body schools under the scheme.

4. NEW INDIA LITERACY PROGRAMME:

A new centrally sponsored scheme on Education for All (erstwhile known as Adult Education), "New India Literacy Programme (NILP)", has been approved by the Government of India with a financial outlay of Rs.1037.90 crore for implementation during FYs 2022-23 to 2026-27, in alignment with the recommendations of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The scheme is targeted at all non-literates of age 15 years and above (Ministry of Education Government of India, 2023).

Different programmes undertaken by the Department to bring back the out of school children were:

Secondary Education is the most significant stage in the educational hierarchy as it prepares the students for higher education and the world of work. The policy at present is to make secondary education of good quality available, accessible and affordable to all young persons in the age group of 14-18. At present, the following schemes targeted at secondary stage (i.e. class IX to XII) are being implemented in the form of Centrally Sponsored Schemes:

1. Sarva Shikshana Abhiyana (SSA)
2. Nali-Kali- A recipe for joyful learning
3. Chinnara Angala- A course to the Mainstream
4. Baa Bale Shalege and Beediyinda Shalege Campaign.
5. Cooliyinda Shalege Programme (Labour to School)
6. Listen and Learn and Mobile schools
7. Tribal Education- Special Drive in a Forest
8. Program for the backward districts of North east Karnataka (NEK)
9. Providing Textbooks
10. Integrated Education
11. Distribution of Uniforms, School Bags, and Textbooks under Vidya Vikas Scheme.
12. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
13. Girls Hostel Scheme
14. National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education
15. Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage
16. Scheme of Vocational Education

PROBLEMS FACED WHILE IMPLEMENTING INFORMATION LITERACY TRAINING PROGRAMMES:

School Libraries should organize Information Literacy Training Programmes for their students to help them to navigate their information by creating pathfinders and offering training sessions on how to formulate their search strategies, use various electronic resources, databases, etc. The students must be encouraged and deputed to attend continuing education programmes for their skill enhancement to be able to use ICT skills to the fullest extent in developing digital collection and delivering qualitative library services (Gekara, 2021).

Some of the problems while implementing Information Literacy Programme:

1. Lack of resources to organize information literacy programmes:
2. Librarians cannot come out of their routine work.
3. No guidelines and instructions from the government for implementing information literacy programmes.

4. To propagate and create information literacy programmes in this way Implementing information literacy to fresh users by designing national information.
5. Literacy policies, standards and framework. Preparing a model curriculum for information literacy frequently conducting workshops/seminars to upgrade the information literacy.
6. Knowledge and skills of both librarians and students carrying out surveys and studies about the usefulness of information literacy.
7. Collaborating efforts between librarian and students to promote information literacy programmes (Williams, 2006).

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM:

Based on the literature surveyed, it is recommended that the Government of India should take the following measures while preparing Information Literacy/Guidelines for School.

1. It should form a National Advisory Committee (NAC) to develop framework/guidelines for information literacy for lifelong learning at school level.
2. The NAC should consist of a representative from the Ministry of Education, senior school librarians, and principals of schools, teachers of schools, senior educationists and legal advisors.
3. The NAC should seek help from international organizations/associations like UNESCO, IFLA, IASL, AASL etc., while framing information literacy guidelines/framework.
4. It is the responsibility of the Task force to bridge the communication gap between policy makers and the implementation team (librarians).
5. Finally, the librarians and teachers should collaborate and implement course related/integrated information literacy curriculum.
6. Introducing Literacy skills as a core subject in secondary schools.
7. Live orientations and presentations related to IL sessions should be conducted on regular basis.
8. IL training has certainly increased the ability of school children in the use on various electronic library resources (Mutula, 2009).

CONCLUSION:

Developed nations with resources to invest and develop Information Communication Technology infrastructure are reaping huge benefits, while developing nations are trailing along at a much slower pace. In knowledge driven society it is very important to bridge the digital divide between information rich and information poor citizens. The librarians can play a vital role in this context. Librarians and other information specialist should be promoters of information literacy and also collaborate with others to provide instructions, learning strategies and practise in using the skills. For that everyone should become independent learners, and every student must acquire skills dealing with how to learn. Librarians can do a lot in this context. So there is need for sustainable information literacy programmes to respond to these realities. The literacy rate of Karnataka is 75.36% which is more than the literacy rate of India i.e. 74.04%. We have to prepare a phased programme for developing information literate children so that access to information can be made easily available to them.

The present study concludes that training information literacy skills to secondary school students may lead to effective and efficient use of school libraries and increase educational achievements hence turn around the dwindling standards of our educational sector. The study recommends that information professionals should be in the forefront in advocating for the inclusion of information literacy at all levels of education and for the incorporation of information literacy in the secondary schools' curriculum. It also recommends for teacher-librarian collaboration in planning information literacy issues.

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