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The National Educators' View on Information Literacy (IL) Implementation

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Abstract

For the past 25 years, IL instruction has been formally incorporated into the Malaysian curriculum. However, it appears that the implementation of Information Literacy Education (ILE) is developing and progressing more slowly than may be anticipated. Determining the elements influencing the adoption of IL education in Malaysian primary schools, and examining how these aspects are supporting or impeding the process, are the objectives of this qualitative study. The national primary schools representing one of Malaysia's two public school types were the subjects of case studies. For a deeper understanding of the implementation challenges that surfaced during the implementation, school teachers and other significant stakeholders took part in in-depth, semi-structured interviews that were followed by documentary analysis. The examination of the interview transcripts with the teaching staff has revealed a number of elements that both help and impede the implementation of IL instruction. According to interview data, the majority of participants had favourable opinions of IL education. They believed that IL education was significant and had the ability to increase the fun and engagement of teaching and learning activities. The participants did, however, also mention that there were issues with IL implementation; these issues appear to be related to the ecology of the school.

Keywords: Information Literacy, Implementation, Library Management, National Schools, Teachers.

Introduction

In our Malaysian educational system (MES), 21st century learning is now widely acknowledged. The 21st century competencies including adaptability, collaborative learning, effective communication and information use, entrepreneurship, futuristic and innovative learning as well as information literacy (IL) are all embedded in today's learning environment. IL therefore fits this kind of learning environment perfectly. In fact, now, our digital world is moving so rapid. The Malaysian society via schools, vocational institutions, and higher education has to educate the young generations with IL curriculum that is "digital and

culturally responsive" to information explosion and train their minds to trace bias information particularly in the digital, online world (Kontny, 2023).

IL is the capacity of a person to "recognise when information is needed and have the ability to search, evaluate, and apply the needed information effectively," according to the definition given by the (American Library Association (ALA), 1989). A "survival skill," information literacy (IL) helps people to access and use information to complete any activity, make decisions, and get ready for lifelong learning (ALA, 2006).

In fact, the idea of lifelong learning has frequently been paired with IL in numerous important articles (e.g. (ALA, 2006; Association of College, Research Libraries (ACRL), & ALA, 2000; Bundy, 2004). The promotion of IL activities is essential because Malaysia education system wants to provide students with the necessary learning and thinking abilities through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and information resources in the classrooms, in the library or media centre, and in any other school facilities. To do this, teachers and students should be encouraged to participate in planned learning activities that incorporate the resources and collections from the school resource centre (SRC). However, it appears that the adoption and advancement of IL education are occurring more slowly than anticipated.

This essay gives a brief summary of the research problem's introduction, a definition of IL, a review of the foundational studies on ILE, the study goal, its methodology, and its theoretical foundation. The findings of one case study, out of four, are then reported and discussed, and followed by the conclusion. The case study school is known by the codename Keris..

Problem Statement

The importance of IL education appears to be shared by policymakers, educators, and librarians in Malaysia (Ismail et al., 2012; Mohamad, 2002; Jusoh, 2002; Chan, 2002). Ironically, the Ministry of Education's (MoE) official documents appeared yet to acknowledge nor encourage IL education (Harun, 2006). For the aforementioned reasons, the majority of Malaysian primary schools did not appear to be implementing IL instruction, according to many research (Moore, 2000; Dorner & Gorman, 2006; Ismail, 2014; Tan, 2014; Tan, Gorman, & Singh, 2012; Singh et al., 2005). Most of these research used surveys and questionnaires and were quantitative in nature. Furthermore, many of the IL-related studies in Malaysia were conducted at secondary and higher education institutions, with little attention paid to primary education.

The discrepancy between the assertions made by the MoE official and the research data was obvious. The implementation of IL education could potentially be impacted by unknown circumstances. Therefore, this research attempts to find out the factors that are having an impact on the IL implementation at schools. The study's findings will be able to help with the creation of a better training programme for IL teaching and learning.

Literature Review

The factors influencing IL at school have been the subject of numerous studies (Moore, 2000; Dorner & Gorman, 2006; Ismail, 2014; Tan, 2014; Tan et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2005). The primary factor, teacher factor, teacher librarian factor, learner factor, and social and cultural factor are the five categories of factors that have been found in the research literature for this study. As a result, it appears likely that the school culture is a major element in facilitating IL education given the variety of factors that have been found. The school culture

has hardly been mentioned as a motivating or limiting element in IL education in the scant references to IL education advancement in the global education sectors. The majority of studies on IL in schools appear to be focused on trying to pinpoint specific factors, such as the principal or school head factor, teacher factor, or learner factor (Skav & Skaerbak, 2003; Henri et al., 2002).

Research focusing on the issues of shared school climate, beliefs, and culture as well as leadership factors which influence the implementation of IL in Malaysia education appears to be a “taboo” and were occasionally discussed. In Malaysia, the mentions of IL projects were really relatively uncommon, especially when referring to the primary education. The IL studies in Malaysia generally discovered three characteristics that influence IL incorporation into the educational system: (a) the implementation system; (b) the implementers; and (c) the setting (Henri et al., 2002; Tan & Singh, 2008; MoE, 2006; Yu et al., 2014; Ismail et al., 2011). Most of these investigations used surveys and questionnaires, quantitative in nature, and very few were conducted in qualitative research.

Theoretical Grounding

We built the preliminary model (see Figure 2.1) on three theories: Chen's Action Model (Chen, 2005), Fullan's Theory of Educational Change (Fullan, 2001), and Hall and Hord's Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall & Hord, 2005). We selected CBAM to serve as a manual for identifying the implementation stages and variables influencing the implementation within the schools. The other two theories were chosen in order to recognise and comprehend both internal and exterior, or micro and macro, elements of the school ecology. Other elements gleaned from the literature, such as teachers' lack of time and resources, were also added into the model.

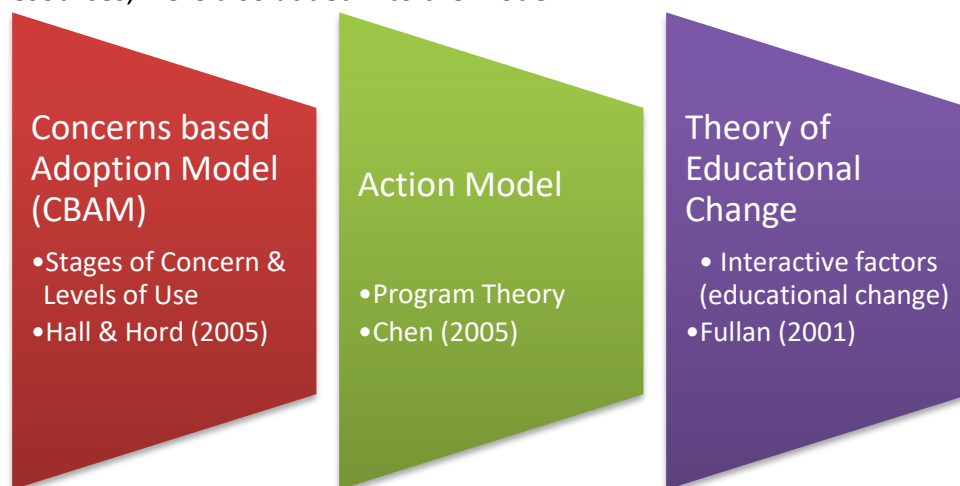


Figure 2.1: Three models used in the preliminary research framework to guide the study.

Method

Within an interpretive lens, we used the techniques and processes of the qualitative research tradition. The interpretive paradigm was adopted in order to generate significant insights into the poorly understood research problem. Four elementary schools from diverse school kinds in Malaysia were utilised as case studies in this study. In-depth, semi-structured interviews with educators and other important parties were undertaken, and documented evidence was gathered for a deeper understanding of the problems that surfaced throughout the implementation of IL education.

Miles and Hubermann (1994)'s interactive model of data analysis served as a reference. This interactive model guided the examining of the transcriptions from the audio recordings of the interviews as well as the copious notes and other materials gathered throughout the data collection served as the analysis of the data. The results were then coded and compared to the preliminary model and components of the implementation of IL education in Malaysian primary schools, which served as the study's direction.

Results and Discussion

This section reports the findings of the IL implementation which took place in one of the national schools in Perak, northern state in Peninsular Malaysia. This school known as Keris School chose as one of the research sites in order to understand the IL implementation process at primary school level, and thus, to identify the factors affecting IL education implementation. The discussion begins with a brief profile of Keris School, followed by reporting the stage of IL implementation, and the factors affecting in its implementation.

A Brief Profile of Keris School

The first case study for the project was named after a Malay traditional weapon [8], that is, Keris. The school situated in the rural north of the state. The medium of instruction is the Malay language. The five participants were carefully selected with the help of the principal, who included the school's principal and four teachers. These teachers appeared to be utilising the constructivist method of instruction, making them more likely to be familiar with or implement IL into the classroom. Of course, their openness and availability to talk were also crucial.

IL Implementation Stage

To ascertain the state of IL implementation, individual interviews were conducted with the Senior Administrative Assistant (SAA), who stood in for the new school head, the science teacher, the local studies teacher, the religious studies teacher, and the library and media teacher (LMT) (Ismail, 2014). Based on the interviews with the interviewees, it appears that IL was attempted to be taught to the students when it was first presented. However, because of how challenging it is to administer, Keris looked to be only at the beginning stage to implement IL education at the time of this study, indicating that at least one teacher or LMT was getting ready to do so (e.g., by attending an in-service course).

Factors Influencing the Implementation of IL

Based on the stage of IL education's implementation in Keris, this section reports and analyses the obstacles to or facilitators of IL education. The segment was categorized into four parts.: (a) qualities of IL education; (b) individual implementers; (c) implementing organization (school); and (d) ecological context.

(a) Qualities of IL education

In the beginning of this study, four interviewees were enquired their views on IL education. They appeared to agree that IL education was essential to the teachers and students (Ismail, 2014). However, the interviewees had varied understanding on the importance of IL in classroom. Science and local studies teachers indicated that IL provides opportunities for the students to gain knowledge from outside of the school syllabus. On the other hand, the library

and media teacher (LMT) saw IL education as a meaningful learning process, particularly with the introduction of ICT and the use of multiple educational resources.

However, the SAA had little interest in introducing IL instruction into her classroom. As she said,

I am simply a primary school teacher, she said during one of the interviews. I am not skilled in resource management or computer use. To pupils, I am not approachable... Students are ignorant in my opinion. The pupils must receive everything from the teachers (SAA).

She appeared to uphold the conventional roles of instructor and pupil.

(b) Individual implementers

All interviewees said that they had not participated in any IL training when questioned about it [8]. They claimed to have learned about IL education when taking IL-related courses as part of their pre-service training and in their "early years" as teachers or LMTs (Ismail, 2014). This was the LMT's comment regarding his or her lacked IL training,

Actually I learn a lot from other teachers. I never attend any courses on SRC... (LMT)

The interviewees voiced out their frustration regarding their appointment exercises, as one of them claimed,

I am not officially appointed by the State Education Department or District Education Office. At the moment, I have not received any appointment letter. (LMT)

It appears that the interviewees were neither received any IL training nor appointed properly, which led to a lack of IL knowledge and skills to implement IL in the classroom.

Furthermore, when asked about their teaching approaches, the responses varied. I discovered that interviewees with more than ten years of teaching experience preferred the teacher-centered approach over those with fewer than ten years of experience. Although the religious studies instructor agreed that IL education was important, she had difficulty in implementing it since she realised she had no control over her students. The junior teachers, on the other hand, chose a student-centered approach that is appropriate for IL implementation.

(c) Implementing organisation (school)

When asked about the administrative and leadership support for IL education, all interviewees expressed concern about the lack of tools and resources to aid in their instruction and learning, as well as the lack of funding for servicing and maintaining the facilities and equipment at the schools (Ismail, 2014). The interview subjects did, however, report that the school administrator was encouraging of all school activities, including IL education.

Most interviewees responded that they were not always able to incorporate IL education into their teaching and learning because they had to finish the curriculum and get their students ready for tests (Ismail, 2014). They claimed that the academic performance of the school was measured by these results. The size of the classes was another barrier. In Malaysian schools, a typical class consists of 40 to 50 kids. The SAA claims that it was challenging to integrate IL in such a sizable class. She claimed similar situation faced by her teachers. As she said,

Like myself as the SAA, I am also lazy to switch on the computer... The main hindrances are time spent and large students' population... (SAA)

She stressed her concern that

In one class, we have about 40 students. The teacher has to control the students first so that they can sit still [calm down students' behaviour before class began]... Then only the teacher can switch on whatever equipment or teaching aids that the teacher has [to begin the class]... The time flies very fast. (SAA)

The LMT also made a statement about the students' poor reading habits. She perceived it as a barrier to the implementation of IL education. The science teacher also expressed the opinion that "a quiet class is a learning class," which was an intriguing viewpoint. The adoption of IL education may be hampered by this notion among instructors. If a class is quiet, teachers may assume that the students are dependent and passive in their learning.

Thus, obstacles such a lack of time, money, or resources, a severe workload, a lack of technical support, or the need to accomplish academic or other school-related goals affected the readiness of the interviewees and hampered the implementation of IL education in Keris.

(d) School ecological context

Parents were the closest societal groups to the school, according to the interviewees, when questioned about the support of the neighbourhood (Ismail, 2014). The parents "did not come and help the school," according to SAA. Although the majority of parents had limited education, they all had comparable expectations for the school. Most parents want their children to receive largely As on their exams, according to the science teacher. SAA, however, argued that the parents' lack of participation in school activities was a result of their low socioeconomic status. The school had worked hard to get the best test scores. Therefore, every effort was made to reach this goal. It was believed that parents expected the same better exam outcomes from the school as the school did.

The science instructors asserted that both district and state administrations were results-oriented when asked about the expectations of the other two levels of educational administration (district and state). To reach the desired levels, numerous extracurricular activities, such as enrichment programmes, were developed at the school. Due to their extensive workloads and lack of free time, instructors were unable to fully adopt IL instruction as the MoE had hoped.

Discussions

The interview data revealed several characteristics that were closely related to social, cultural, organisational, and individual aspects of IL education implementation in Keris. This school's research revealed three key themes: (a) risk-taking against risk-aversion; (b) outside versus inside school support; and (c) shared understanding versus individual perception [8]. We discovered that the interviewees in Keris were prevented from taking risks by two factors, namely time and examination procedures. Regarding academic support, Keris participants had adequate in-class assistance, but they still required extra help to help them with their IL education. Most interviewees felt that IL education was necessary, but they lacked the confidence to put it into practise because of personal perceptions like the SAA's. She was meant to lead and gave direction for IL instruction, but she lacked the enthusiasm to put it into practise in the classroom. Nonetheless, to ensure the vision and mission of MoE realised, Keris school administrators had to build the IL competencies among the teachers as implementers and propagate a common understanding of the value of IL education.

Conclusions

In light of the aforementioned concerns, a variety of variables supporting and impeding the implementation of IL education were found in the interview transcripts. The findings indicated that most participants had favourable opinions of IL education [8]. They thought IL education was crucial and could make teaching and learning processes more interesting and enjoyable. However, the respondents also mentioned that IL implementation had issues. These issues appear to be connected to the characteristics of IL education as a whole, the school as an organisation for implementing, the individual implementers, and the environment of the school. The results presented here come from just one case study. The examination of the other three cases will shed more light on the issue covered in this study.

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