A case study of year eleven students and their information literacy process: The role of the teacher librarian.

Marilyn D. Ralph

2004

Being a report of an investigation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Research) at Murdoch University.
I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.

Marilyn D. Ralph
ABSTRACT

Research (Macpherson, 2002; Todd, 1999; McKenzie, 1994a) has found that, although students may appear confident, they commonly experience difficulties with locating and selecting quality information from online information sources. The purpose of this case study was to investigate the defining, locating and selecting stages of the information literacy process, used by year eleven students during an independent research assignment, before and after guidance from the teacher librarian. The action research involved co-operative and collaborative work between the class teacher and the researcher (teacher librarian), who, as a participant observer in the study, guided the students through a conceptualised search process, using an online presentation and a simple search scaffold. The theoretical framework for the study was developed from a critical review of the literature regarding contemporary process and experiential models of information literacy (Marcum, 2002; Kuhlthau, 1993, 2001; Todd, 2000; Bruce, 1997), and their shared emphasis on the principles of a constructivist approach to learning. A blended model of information literacy was developed, guided by Todd's (2000) identification of the relationship between the experiential model and the process model. Data were collected, relating to students' development of information literacy, using questionnaire, focus group interviews, individual interviews and observation. Findings from the study indicated the students lacked a conceptual understanding of the information literacy process, particularly when using the Internet as a source of information, and their information literacy process hindered their development as lifelong learners. However, following interaction with the teacher librarian, many students improved their ability to locate, select and use authoritative information, evident in improved assignment outcomes.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr Dorit Maor and Dr Irene Styles for their professional advice during the completion of this dissertation. I also thank Dorit for her kind and patient support at all times. My warmest thanks to Catherine, whose expertise and enthusiasm was of great benefit to this project. Finally, to Alan, my deepest thanks for your forbearance and good faith during this long period of time.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page
i Declaration
ii Abstract
iii Acknowledgement

Table of Contents
List of Tables
List of Appendices

1 Chapter One: Introduction to the Study: Contemporary Information Literacy Models
   1 Overview of Chapter One
   1 Main Focus of the Research
   3 Aims of the Study
   4 Research Questions
   4 Context of the Study
   5 Theoretical Framework
   5 Definitions of major terms
   6 Process and experiential models of information literacy
   7 Constructivist principles of learning
   7 Significance of the Study
   8 Summary of Chapter One
   9 Structure of the Dissertation

10 Chapter Two: Review of the Literature Regarding Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning
   10 Overview of Chapter Two
   10 Lifelong Learning
   12 Graduate Characteristics
   16 Information and Communications Technology and Information Literacy
   17 Information Literacy programs
   19 Review of Methodology of Contemporary Research
   22 Theoretical Framework
   22 Critical Review of Models of Information Literacy
   24 Towards a Blended Model of Information Literacy
   26 Elements of the Blended Model
   29 Constructivist Learning Principles
   31 Summary of Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning

33 Chapter Three: Methodology of a Case Study and Action Research
   33 Overview of Chapter Three
   33 Research Design
Chapter Three Continued

34 Role of the Researcher
34 Role of the Senior English Teacher
35 Case Study
35 Action Research
36 Plan Action
37 Act Thoughtfully
38 Research Action
39 Reflect on Action
39 Interpretive Qualitative Methods
41 Participants in the Study
41 Ethical Considerations in Accessing the Participants
43 Method of Selecting the Participants
43 Senior English Teacher
43 Year Eleven Class
44 Data Collection Using Mixed Methodology
45 Survey
46 Interviews
46 Focus Group interviews
47 Individual Student and Teacher Interviews
48 Analysis of Data
48 Survey Data
49 Open Responses and Focus Group Interviews
50 Teacher Interview
51 Summary of the Methodology

53 Chapter Four: Findings About the Information Literacy Process
53 Overview of Chapter Four
54 Research Question One: In Comparison to the Blended Model
56 Students’ Experience of the Information Literacy Process
57 Affective Domain of the Information Literacy Process
59 Assignment Structure and Confusion
59 Reading and Writing Skills of Students
61 Time Constraints
62 Summary of the Affective Domain of the Information Literacy Process
62 Cognitive Domain of the Information Literacy Process
63 How do Students Define Their Information Need?
68 Student Preferences for Locating Information
72 How do Students Select Pertinent and Authoritative Information?
75 Summary of the Comparison to the Blended Model
76 Research Question Two: Developing as Lifelong Learners
77 What Importance do Students Place on Lifelong Learning?
79 Students as Information Problem Solvers
81 Using Information and Communications Technology
84 Locating, Evaluating and Using Information Well
86 Critical Self-awareness in the Students
Chapter Four Continued

88 Having a Desire to Learn
90 Summary of Students' Development as Lifelong Learners
91 Research Question Three: Interacting With the Teacher Librarian
93 About Defining the Dimensions of an Information Problem
96 Reducing the Frustration in Locating Information
100 About Selecting Pertinent and Authoritative Information
102 Student Attitude to the Internet as a Source of Information
104 Summary of Students' Interaction With the Teacher Librarian

Chapter Five: Discussion of Students' Information Literacy Process

106 Overview of Chapter Five
107 Research Question One: Regarding a Match to the Blended Model
107 Student Responses to the Information Literacy Process
108 Affective Domain of the Information Literacy Process
109 Cognitive Domain of the Information Literacy Process
109 Do Students Clearly Define Their Information Problem?
110 About Locating Information
112 Do Students' Select Authoritative and Pertinent Information?
113 Summary Regarding the Match to the Blended Model
114 Research Question Two: About the Students as Lifelong Learners
114 What Importance do Students Place on Lifelong Learning?
115 Are the Students Information Problem Solvers?
117 About Using Information and Communications Technology
117 About Locating, Evaluating and Using Information Well
118 Are the Students Critically Self Aware?
119 Do the Students Have a Desire to Learn?
119 Research Question Three: Following Interaction With the Teacher Librarian
120 Towards Defining the Dimensions of an Information Problem
120 Scaffolding the Locating Process
122 Guiding Students in the Selecting Process

Chapter Six: Conclusions About Year Eleven Students and Their Development as Information Literate Lifelong Learners

124 Limitations of the Study
125 Developing Information Literacy in Year Eleven Students
127 Year Eleven Students as Lifelong Learners
128 Benefits of Constructivist Learning Principles
128 Students' Concerns About Reading and Writing Skills
129 Students' Concerns About Time Management
129 In Answer to the Research Questions
130 Recommendations for Future Research

Reference List
LIST OF APPENDICES

PAGE

148  Appendix I
   The Information Process, (Education Department of Western Australia, 1997)

149  Appendix II
   Comparative Table of The Information Process (Education Department of
   Western Australia, 1997) and the Information Search Process (Kuhlthau, 2001)

150  Appendix III
   Letter to Principal

151  Appendix IV
   Informed Consent Letter to Participants - Survey

152  Appendix V
   Informed Consent Letter to Participants - Focus Groups and Interviews

153  Appendix VI
   Survey Instrument

155  Appendix VII
   Student Focus Group Interview - Standardised Open-Ended Schedule

156  Appendix VIII
   Individual Student Interview - Standardised Open-Ended Schedule

157  Appendix IX
   Teacher Interview - Standardised Open-Ended Schedule

158  Appendix X
   Search Scaffold Worksheet
LIST OF TABLES

PAGE

14  Table 1
    Eight Characteristics of a Successful Learner (Johnson, 1995)

14  Table 2
    Characteristics of a Lifelong Learner (Candy et al., 1994)

15  Table 3
    Characteristics of a Lifelong Learner (George, McCausland, Wache, &
    Doskatsch, 2001)

27  Table 4
    *The Information Process* (Education Department of Western Australia, 1997)

27  Table 5
    *Information Search Process* (Kuhlthau, 2001)

28  Table 6
    Brief Comparative chart of *The Information Process* and the *Information
    Search Process*

29  Table 7
    *Seven Faces of Information Literacy* (Bruce, 1997)

52  Table 8
    Summary of research questions, data collection and data analysis strategies

65  Table 9
    Assignments

69  Table 10
    Student Experiences With Information and Communications Technology

78  Table 11
    Total Mean Scores for Importance of Lifelong Learner Characteristics to Year
    Eleven Students

82  Table 12
    Student Use of Information and Communications Technology