ABSTRAKTI

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Information literacy as a social phenomenon in the nursing environment

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In the field of health sciences, information literacy (IL) has become a universal educational outcome (Barnard et al. 2005). There is a great interest in health information and it is proactively sought because people are faced with questions about health in almost every aspect of their lives. There also is an increasing demand for information matched by an increasing choice in services and treatments. Bearing these factors in mind, it is no surprise that many people are unsure of which advice to follow and what treatments or products may be beneficial to them (Kickbusch 2008, 101-102).

However, information sourced from the Internet is not always clinically credible enough to facilitate a healthy lifestyle and effective treatment. It therefore represents a challenge to users who must assess quality criteria based on a mass of potentially useful, conflicting, and confusing information (Shilling, 2002).

The librarian's role is important in the development of IL among nursing students and staff. Nursing professionals have to deal with a growing amount and complexity of information. Library IL courses develop growing information competence. IL is the foundation of evidence based practice enabling nursing professionals to become literate information consumers in an electronic environment. Nursing staff should keep a step ahead of and be able to instruct their patients who are also very aware of health related issues and actively search for information in the Internet.

Socio-cultural approach in information literacy

IL is usually defined as a group of individually centered generic skills. IL competency standards thus defined consist of a set of attributes of an individual person separate from other people, and independent of cultural tools. In many situations, however, an individual cannot cope alone but instead benefits from the assistance of peers and available support services. Additionally, IL standards do not take into account that IL should reflect cultural values that are deeply rooted in specific time and place. Social practice in IL develops through the ability of the practitioner's physical and linguistic tools to deal with the world. This makes it important to study how IL forms in groups and organizations (Kapitzke 2003; Limberg, Sundin & Talja, 2009).

Sociocultural learning theories have appeared in library literature in recent years but not much has been written about how to apply the principles of these theories in IL teaching (Wang 2007). "From the Vygotskyan point of view, knowledge formation and the development of knowledge structures take place within a sociocultural context. Individual development derives from social interactions within which cultural meanings are shared by a group and eventually internalized by the individual. It is assumed that individuals construct knowledge in interaction with the environment and that in the process both the individual and the environment are changed" (Talja et al. 2005, 85). Using Vygotsky's method, information-literacy skills should be described as transferable, not generic.

In our research we are interested in the concept of the zone of proximal development, ZPD (Vygotsky 1978). The concept of the ZPD has been used to study the behavior of individuals of any age when confronted with an unfamiliar task or situation. It would be particularly useful in LIS research to explore information behavior associated with novice information seekers of any age or information activities occurring in a collaborative context (McKechnie, 2005).

We would like to present what we have done to promote information literacy in the nursing environment based on the implementation and impact of an Information Literacy Training Program within the Leading Nursing Competence in Kainuu -project that was carried out by the Joint Authority of the Kainuu Region, Finland, in 2006-2007. The findings of the project demonstrated that the IL courses had a positive impact on nurses' IL-skills. In particular, awareness of various information sources and the competence to evaluate such sources was identified in the research.

Networking and developing partnerships in working life is also becoming increasingly important and librarians must be seen as potential collaborators in the effort to achieve such goals. Cooperation in IL training with the Joint Authority of the Kainuu Region will continue. Besides developing IL teaching for nursing staff, the aim of the study is to increase understanding of IL as a social phenomenon through the concept of the ZPD.

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