"That's Not My Job": Supporting Academics to Develop Information Literacy Skills in Content Courses

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“That’s not my job...”

Supporting academics to develop information literacy skills in their content courses.

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Supported by: AKO Aotearoa PhD Scholarship
Universities in New Zealand

- 8 National research/teaching universities.
- 3 year bachelor degrees; honours; postgraduate degrees.
- Mostly open entry
- No general education year
- No established writing programmes.
- Large numbers of distance, mature and international students.
- Massey University – 34,000 students (27,250 undergraduate; 16,000 distance students; 4,000 international students; 3,100 staff; 3 campuses).
“Integrating Information Literacy and Academic Writing Development into the Disciplines in the NZ Tertiary Context”

Purpose:
- To conduct a participatory action research (PAR) PhD project focused on integrating (embedding) the development of information literacy (IL) skills and improving academic writing in a particular discipline at a New Zealand university.
Focus of this presentation...

- Brief overview the research
- Introduce the characteristics of the participating faculty
- Outline the lessons learned – supporting faculty to embed skills development into content courses.
... that success in developing IL skills depends on attitude and willingness of faculty to engage with and promote skills development within their courses.
Research Challenges

- How to convince and support faculty to actively promote IL and writing skills development within their content courses.
- How to ensure IL is developed as a way to enhance learning at university.
Methodology

- Participatory Action Research
- My role – researcher, facilitator, mentor, learner
- 5 faculty – 6 core courses in a 4-year Bachelor of Resource Planning – professional degree.
- Student data – surveys, focus groups, reflective email journals
- Collaboration with librarians and academic support staff (teaching and learning advisors)
We designed, trialled and modified interventions to embed IL and writing skills development into the courses and assessment process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>SEMESTER</th>
<th>INTERVENTION</th>
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| 1    | 1        | • Library Session – 2 hour introduction to information searching and evaluation  
          • Source Justification |
| 1    | 2        | • Reflection on Values – draft writing submission, group discussion  
          • Imap – research and writing process - visual model  
          • Writing Workshop – Essay  
          • Worksheets for oral presentations – active listening |
| 2    | 2        | • Writing Workshop – Planning Report to a Client  
          • Reading and Learning Log – critical review |
| 3    | 1        | • Voluntary Library Session  
          • Writing workshop – Non-traditional essay  
          • Reflective Logs – learning process |
| 4    | 1        | • Assessment to support Group Project Report – Reflective Practitioner, Client Folder |
| 4    | 1/2      | • Library Session – 2 hour advanced information searching and evaluation for research (modification of existing course component)  
          • Writing Workshop – Research Report / Clear writing strategies |
Where did we start...

- Faculty lacked awareness of the term IL, and how it contributes to learning.
- Some faculty believed students:
  - Were lazy, lacked engagement
  - Were unable to learn independently; Wanted to be ‘spoon-fed’
  - Were not adequately being prepared for university at High school
  - Needed remedial support in key academic skills
- Faculty expected students to develop academic skills independently via:
  - University support services
  - Feedback on assessment
The Participating Faculty

21 YEARS
Professor
GEORGIA

15 YEARS
Professor
FRAN

2 YEARS
Associate Professor
CARL

1 YEAR + 6 yrs pt
Adjunct Lecturer
JACINTA
The challenge ...is to manage the demands on our time from changes to our courses to allow for new IL skills development. Aside from the initial 'start-up' costs of the time involved in liaison with Angela and re-design of assessment packages, there is the more significant demand associated with new, more labour-intensive forms of assessment. Any lecturer has a finite amount of time for professional development, for marking, for delivery of course material. If more time is needed for IL skills development, even with 'economies' that come from the use of technology, then other aspects of teaching may be compromised.
A: I think it's fair to say you were a bit resistant at first. F: Not enthusiastic at first, no... I think it has been good because I think I’ve been here a long time, 16 years and I have always tried to keep changing my stuff, keeping up to date and changing the approaches, but you do get to a point I suppose after a certain length of time where you run out of ideas... also the first time you do anything is really a pain in the neck because it does take such a lot of time.

I think now I'm more in stride because I'm keeping my eye open for things I might use ... it has been a good thing and I'd like to thank you for your efforts, because it must have been a pain in the neck to deal with people who didn't really want to do things. But look, I did do it. I did do it.
The project has definitely made me think much more about IL ...

I struggle somewhat, in that I am teaching third and fourth year students, and I think that much of this work should have been already undertaken earlier in the students’ programmes, so that they could be developed and applied earlier.

If anything, I should be developing more advanced and sophisticated IL strategies for them in my classes built on this knowledge and skill base...
J: At the beginning I knew nothing, and now I feel like I have a basic understanding of IL.

A: How about your responsibility for developing these skills in your students?

J: I hadn't consciously thought about that before becoming involved in the research and now I see that I have quite a clear responsibility in terms of their learning to teach them about IL, and how to be information literate, and how to actively incorporate that into the lectures.
Lessons Learned
Supporting faculty to embed IL requires:

- Situating Information Literacy
  - Emphasise the importance of IL in learning
  - Place of IL within the curriculum

“To be information literate, a person must be able to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.”

ALA- 1989
Lessons Learned
Supporting faculty to embed IL requires:

- Recognising and working within time constraints
  - Workload
  - Limited time for marking and feedback
  - Semesterised course structure (30 hours over 12 weeks to teach a course)
  - Lack of time for professional development on teaching
Building relationships
- Effective communication - listening
- Maintaining trust and confidentiality
- Understanding the programme
- Understanding what faculty value
  - Insights gained from student feedback
  - Research-based professional development
Lessons Learned
Supporting faculty to embed IL requires:

- Having on-going conversations
  - Discussing effective teaching and learning
  - Discussing the role of ‘assessment of learning’ and ‘assessment for learning’
  - Encouraging regular reflection on practice
  - Creating opportunities to share practice
Thanks for listening...

I welcome any questions.

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