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Pre-service teachers and information literacy: a screencast-based exploration

Luca Botturi, Chiara Beretta

SUPSI-DFA, Switzerland

All current Digital and Media Literacy models consider Information Literacy (IL) as a key dimension, and indeed, IL is today integrated in many compulsory education school curricula, including in Switzerland. A pre-requirement for the effective integration of IL in the school curriculum is of course equipping in-service and pre-service teachers with sound IL competences. Such education should be informed by evidence about teachers' pre-instructional conception of information search.

Research so far suggests that, despite declarations of intent about the importance of IL, the integration of IL in teachers' preparation is a goal yet to be achieved (Duke & Ward, 2009). Pre-service teachers perceive the importance of helping students become information literate, but do not feel they have the necessary preparation to do so (Lee, Reed & Laverty, 2012) or do not demonstrated solid skills (Godbey, 2018); in some cases, some seem to be even overconfident in their IL competences, despite their poor results in IL tests (Shannon, Reilly & Bates, 2019).

This study explores the naïve pre-instruction concept of online search of pre-service teachers: What concept of online search do pre-service teachers demonstrate? Is it articulated in different dimensions? What type of search instruments and web documents do preservice teachers consider? How do they assess their quality or credibility?

The participants in this study are 92 pre-primary and primary pre-service teachers enrolled in the second year of a Bachelor program at a Swiss University of Teacher Education. They were asked to record a screencast to illustrate to their pupils how to search information online. The screencasts were coded by the two authors using an original coding scheme based on the Big 6 IL model (Big6, n.d.). Cohen's k for inter-rater agreement was calculated for the two sections of the scheme and indicated almost perfect agreement.

The analysis suggests that pre-service teachers think of searching online as a technical skill: learning to search online is learning to use a search engine and to perform basic internet navigation tasks. Mental tasks, like defining the information needed, are overlooked or scarcely elaborated. Google Search is the search engine for our pre-service teachers, who only marginally consider both other generalist search engines and domain-specific search instruments.

Such results suggest interesting and challenging venues for the development of effective IL education for pre-service teachers, which will be discussed during the presentation.

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