

**TEACHING AND LEARNING OF INFORMATION LITERACY IN
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN KWAZULU-NATAL
PROVINCE AND MALAWI.**

by

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the Degree of
Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS)
In the Department of Library and Information Science at the
University of Zululand**

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DECLARATION

I, GEORGE THEODORE CHIPETA declare that this thesis is my original work except where proper referencing is made in the text. The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree to any other University.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the following people:

Florence my wife, for her undying love, understanding, patience, care and support, my children, Lisa and George Jr, for their love and support, my mother Ms E. Chilinda for raising and educating me, my late father Mr. W.W. Chipeta, my brothers, sisters, uncles and aunties for their support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt indebtedness and gratitude to the following people for their contributions in making this work a success.

God the creator who gave me the ability, wisdom and strength to undertake and produce this thesis.

My supervisors Dr. D. Jacobs and Dr. B.J Mostert for tirelessly and patiently supervising my research, their advice, encouragement and guidance.

Professor D.N. Ocholla, for his overall guidance and advice.

All the respondents who gave up a lot of their time to respond to the interviews and questionnaires.

My employer, the Mzuzu University, for the financial support especially Professor J. Uta for initiating further studies and for his support to enable me study.

All people whose work has been used in the research, without which this work would not have been possible.

All colleagues for sharing of ideas.

ABSTRACT

This study has defined Information Literacy as the teaching and learning about the whole range of information sources and formats. Information literacy enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as users of information sources and it also enables them to become producers of information in their own right, and thereby to become more powerful participants in society. Information Literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments and to all levels of education.

The aim of this study is to investigate the teaching and learning of Information Literacy in institutions of higher learning in KwaZulu-Natal province and Malawi. It was assumed that Information Literacy presents a broad approach that offers the opportunity to educate students to understand the importance of information, and have the competence to locate, evaluate and manage it. In that way, Information Literacy contributes towards a higher level of literacy and lifelong learning. It can be argued, therefore, that students become information literate when they are comfortable in using all information formats independently, when they are able to evaluate and base decisions on information obtained. It is in this vein that students should be empowered to be literate and comfortable in using information available in printed and in electronic formats.

Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used that involved largely surveys by use of questionnaires, observations and interviews for data collection. A document study was also used in the form of literature review to examine trends and patterns in study guides and course outlines. The study targeted four hundred and twenty two (422) students as follows: Durban University of Technology, two hundred and twenty nine (229) students, University of Zululand one hundred and three (103) students and Mzuzu University eighteen (18) students. Six members of staff were targeted as follows: One (1) Lecturer from the Department of Library and Information Science and One (1) Librarian from each institution under study.

In order to test the reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study was carried out at the University of Zululand and necessary adjustments were made to the instruments before the final survey commenced.

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), a computer-aided software. The results were represented qualitatively and quantitatively using tables, graphs, and percentages.

Problems encountered included difficulty in collecting preliminary information on the number of registered students at the Durban University of Technology; the late release of the research funds which affected the time frame of the research and a slow response to request for permission to conduct study at the institutions under study especially at the University of KwaZulu-Natal which was initially targeted, but later dropped in preference to Mzuzu University in Malawi.

The study revealed that Information Literacy is offered at the University of Zululand and Mzuzu University as a module or course. The Durban University of Technology does not offer a module or course in Information Literacy, but the library does teach Information Literacy to all the students in the university during the library orientation programme.

The study also established that a handful of students were aware of the availability and attendance of the module or course of Information Literacy at the University of Zululand and Mzuzu University, probably because the module or course is not offered across the whole universities. The mode of teaching includes lectures and learning guides, whereas the learning mode includes both theoretical and practical modes. The results also indicate that all students that had received formal information literacy training had the perception that they had the ability to independently identify, locate, retrieve and use information sources. Similarly, it was found that all respondents that had received formal Information Literacy had the perception that they had the ability to do so by using the OPAC.

It was established that Information Literacy equipped students with information handling skills such as correctly writing citations and references. The majority of the respondents that had not received formal information literacy training indicated not using citations and references in their academic works. Problems encountered in the teaching and learning of Information Literacy include inadequate time, lack of computer skills by the students, inadequate venues and equipment for teaching and students' practicals, lack of cooperation overcrowding of classes and erratic network connections due to power disruptions.

The study recommends that the three institutions should harmonise their syllabi on Information Literacy and that the module/course should be embedded into the whole university curricula and that the DUT should introduce a dedicated module/course in Information Literacy and embed it into the students' course materials. The three universities should also publicise to academic staff, students and the decision makers the importance of having module/course of Information Literacy. The study also recommends that Information Literacy should be introduced into various modules/courses published and presented online in WebCT modules and delivered in lecture modes with the help of tutorials, and workshops. Academic staff should reinforce students' use of indexing and abstracting journals by collaborating among themselves in giving the students more work, assignments that require searching and the use of indexing and abstracting journals. In addition, academic staff should collaborate among themselves and with library staff by devising a uniform citation style to be used by students and reinforce, the students' use of citations and references and that they should give assignments to students that entail the use of citations and references.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Curriculum: An aggregate of courses of study given in a school, college, university, etc.

Institutions of higher learning: A higher level of educational institution, in which students study for their diplomas, degrees and academic research is done. In South Africa, that includes Universities and Technikons. In Malawi it includes Universities and Colleges.

Learning: Entails to acquire knowledge or skill

Lifelong: Means lasting or continuing through all or much of one's life.

Literacy: Means the condition or quality of being literate, especially the ability to read and write.

Skill: Means proficiency, facility, or dexterity that is acquired or developed through training or experience.

Teaching: Means to impart knowledge or skill.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACRL	Association of College and Research Libraries
ALA	American Library Association
CA	Chemical Abstracts
CAUL	Council of Australian University Librarians
CILIP	Chartered Institutes of Library and Information Professionals
CQU	Central Queensland University
DUT	Durban University of Technology
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INFOLIT	Information Literacy
LIASA	Library and Information Science Abstracts
LIS	Library and Information Science
MARC	Machine Readable Catalogue
MOSAIC	Making Sense of Information in the Connected Age
MZUNI	Mzuzu University
OPAC	Online Public Access Catalogue
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
SADC	Southern Africa Developing Community
SAFARI	Skills in Accessing, Finding And Reviewing Information
SCONUL	Society of College, National and University Libraries
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TILT	Texas Information Literacy Tutorial
UNISA	University of South Africa

UNIZUL

University of Zululand

UW

University of Washington

