

Information Seeking Behaviour of M. Ed. Students in the University of Kerala

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(Received 24 November 2017; Revised 9 December 2017; Accepted 11 January 2018; Available online 15 January 2018)

Abstract - This paper deals with the analysis of information seeking behavior of M.Ed. students in the University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram. A sum of 169 M Ed students were drawn for conducting the study with an objective to identify the sources of information searched by M.Ed. students, need and preferences for e-resources and print resources. The study showed that M. Ed. students seek information mostly for general awareness, preparing for seminar paper, doing assignments and for preparing project work. The most essential reference sources for the sample is the encyclopedia, Yearbooks, Dictionaries and Manuals. E-resources are preferred more by the M Ed students than the Print resources. Google is most preferred search engine. The results of the study emphasize the need for better orientation about library resources and services among all categories of students for developing information seeking habits.

Keywords: Information Seeking Behaviour

I. INTRODUCTION

Information seeking is associated with institutionally set objectives. One important setting for information seeking is that of education. In schools at different levels, colleges and universities, the information seeking plays a central role. This role has increased dramatically over the last few decades, due to development of new information and communication technologies and an increasingly student-centered and problem-based pedagogical orientation. With some notable exceptions (e.g., Kuhlthau 1991; Limberg 1999), information seeking and learning in educational settings has not been explored to a great extent, despite the size of the educational sector and the development of student centered problem-based teaching methods.

For information seeking in the contexts of education the content of information is of vital importance. The objectives of information seeking in the contexts of education are to learn something the object of learning may concern the topic of an assignment or, as part of the research work. Kuhlthau has conducted empirical studies of students' information seeking behavior in libraries. Her model includes six stages: Task initiation, Topic Selection, Pre focus Exploration, Focus Formulation, Collection and Presentation. This model deals with three realms common to each stage, namely the affective, the cognitive and the physical. In this six stage model of search process (Kuhlthau, 1994) asserted that information professionals can intervene and help the users to identify as well as solve their information needs depending on where the users are in their

seeking process. Another theory of interest relevant to this present research is Limberg model. Limberg (1998a, 1998b) quoting Thorsteindottir (2001) posited that content is very crucial to how people seek and use information. Which he said it's contrary to the understanding that information seeking is a general process which occurs independently of the content in the information. Making reference to the aim of LIS which is to establish a general view of information-seeking, restrain the research and limits, understanding of the various ways in which people seek information.

This paper deals with the information seeking behavior of M. Ed. students in the University of Kerala which analyzes the information seeking activities of students. The results of the study emphasize the need for better orientation about library resources and services among all categories of students for developing information seeking habits.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Abraham, Tamizhchelvan and Sornam, (2015) [1] explored the present status of information needs and searching behaviour of engineering faculty of Tiruchirappalli district in Tamil Nadu. And found that preparation of lectures and publication of articles are the main purposes for accessing and referring information resources and also found out the problems affecting the information needs as support from library staff.

Kumar and Das (2015) [2] with a view to know the basic information needs and status of Information Seeking Behavior of rural population of Barak Valley which comprises of students, teachers, farmers, businessmen, etc. The study showed that the awareness about the rural/public library was more among the respondents.

Mohammed and Sheena, (2014) [3] demonstrated internet surfing addiction among Higher Secondary School students. The major purpose of the study was to find out the difference in Internet surfing addiction as well as moral maturity between male and female Higher Secondary School students.

Sudha, (2014) [4] conducted a study to examine the information seeking behavior of Undergraduate Engineering Students and found that majority of the respondents prefer to use both print & electronic information.

The doctoral dissertation of Elisabeth (2014) [5] entitled Information-Seeking Behavior and the Intercultural Learning Process: Experiences of International Graduate Students from China: A Qualitative Sense-Making Case Study seeks to investigate the information seeking behavior of one specific international student population to aid in identifying the information seeking behavior of a specific population of students and to aid in the development of evidence-based research for detecting student information needs.

In 2014 J.Ma [6] in his doctoral dissertation Interacting with health information for self-care: An exploratory study of undergraduate students' health information literacy says that developing effective self-care behaviors in college is an important factor affecting undergraduate students' academic achievement and overall adult health outcomes.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the percentage of M.Ed. students seeking information for various purposes
2. To identify the sources of information searched by M.Ed. Students.
3. To find out the need for the reference sources.
4. To find out the preferences for e-resources and print resources
5. To identify the M Ed students most preferred search engine
6. To find out the opinion of students regarding the library collections of their colleges.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study aims to find out the Information seeking behavior of M.Ed. students in the University of Kerala. They are future teacher educators and their professional preparation curriculum is designed with a view to bring out prospective teachers with high caliber. If this is so, their information seeking behavior is a determining factor in their professional development. The collected data were recorded in MS Excel and analyzed.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

A. Purpose of Information Seeking

The frequency of choosing the various purposes were counted and tabulated and then the percentages were worked out. The details are presented in table I. M. Ed. students seek information mostly for general awareness, preparing for seminar paper, doing assignments and for preparing project work. Their percentages are 81, 73, 72, and 70 respectively. Less frequently they seek information

for time pass and enjoy reading. The percentages are 17 and 43 respectively. It is also found that M.Ed. students seek information for preparing answers to questions (61%) and preparing for examinations (59%). It can be concluded that students used seek information for more than one purpose at a time.

B. Sources of information

The responses made by the sample against the appropriate key words indicating various sources of information both formal and informal were counted and their percentages were computed. The responses made against formal and informal sources were tabulated separately. From the table II it is evident that M. Ed. students mostly (86%) use formal information sources like the newspapers, Magazines, weekly's etc for seeking information. Text books as formal information sources are used by 85% of the sample. Seventy nine (79%) percent of the sample use internet and intranet sources for getting information Dictionaries and thesaurus are used by 78% of the sample as formal information sources.

Seventy nine (79%) percent of the sample use periodicals/ Journals as formal information sources. On-line journals/data bases are used by 75% percent of the sample. Encyclopedias and Library catalogue are used by 72% and 70% of the sample respectively.

Government orders, proceedings are used by 50% and Maps/ Atlas are used by 48% of the sample of M Ed students. Apart from formal sources the students rely on informal sources for getting informal sources. The frequencies of using informal sources were found out and percentages were worked out.

TABLE I PURPOSES OF INFORMATION SEEKING

| Sl. No. | Purposes of Information Seeking | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Time pass | 28 | 17 |
| 2 | General awareness | 137 | 81 |
| 3 | Preparing answers to questions | 103 | 61 |
| 4 | Enjoy reading | 73 | 43 |
| 5 | Examination purpose | 100 | 59 |
| 6 | Doing assignments | 121 | 72 |
| 7 | Preparing for seminar paper | 124 | 73 |
| 8 | Preparing project work | 118 | 70 |

TABLE II SOURCES OF INFORMATION

| Sl. No. | Formal Sources of Information | Frequencies | Percentages |
|---------|--|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | Text Books | 143 | 85 |
| 2 | Journals /Periodicals | 133 | 79 |
| 3 | Encyclopedia | 122 | 72 |
| 4 | Dictionaries / Thesaurus | 132 | 78 |
| 5 | Maps / Atlas | 81 | 48 |
| 6 | Government orders, proceedings | 85 | 50 |
| 7 | Online journals / databases | 126 | 75 |
| 8 | Internet / intranet sources as audio / video CD ROM /DVD | 134 | 79 |
| 9 | Library catalogue | 119 | 70 |
| 10 | News papers , Magazines/weekly's | 145 | 86 |

C. Need for the reference sources

From table III and figure 1, it is clear that encyclopedia is the most needed reference source by the sample (i.e. 83%). The year books (82%), dictionaries (81%), manuals (80%) are also essential reference sources as indicated by the percentages of responses in the brackets.

TABLE III NEED FOR THE REFERENCE SOURCES

| Sl. No. | Reference Sources | Frequency | Percentages |
|---------|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | Dictionaries | 137 | 81 |
| 2. | Thesaurus | 102 | 60 |
| 3 | Encyclopedia | 140 | 83 |
| 4 | Yearbooks | 138 | 82 |
| 5 | Manuals | 136 | 80 |

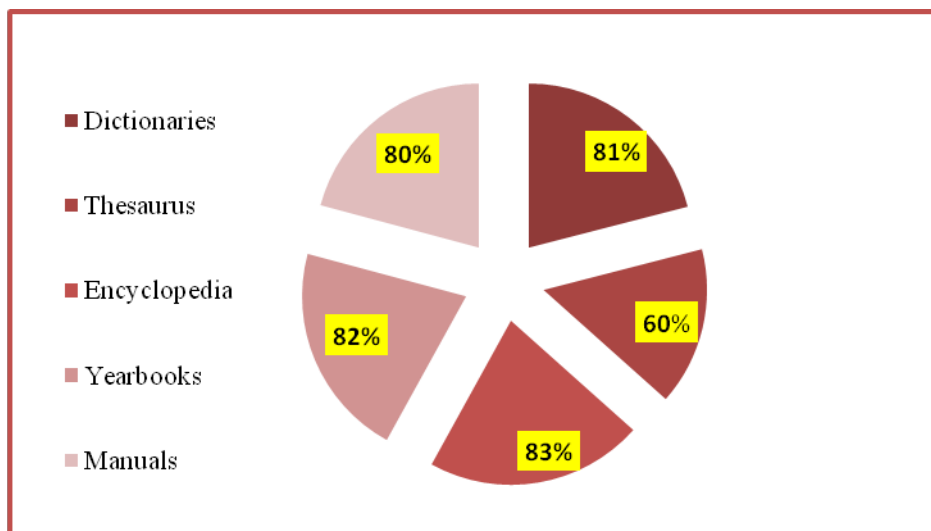


Fig. 1 Need for reference sources

D. Preferences for e-resources and print resources

The results of analysis presented in table IV shows that e-resources are preferred by 67% of the sample of M Ed students. Print resources are preferred by 33% of the sample.

E. Most preferred search engine

Now-a-days a large number of search engines are available for seeking online information. Table V reveals that Google is most preferred search engines by 86% of the sample of M Ed students. Secondly the search engine,

Mozilla Firefox is preferred by 10 % of the sample. Yahoo is preferred by 4% of the sample. Bing and Internet explorer are not selected by anyone in the sample.

F. Opinion of students on library collections

Table VI displays the opinion of students regarding the library collections of the college. Most of the students (73%) opined that collections of the college library are sufficient. 65% of the students reported that collections in the library meet the requirements of the students. Sixty nine percent of the students reported that library has adequate primary sources. Students (64%) also reported that the

library has indexing and abstracting services. 87% of the students reported that the library do not get documents from other libraries on loan.

TABLE IV PREFERENCES FOR E-RESOURCES AND PRINT RESOURCES

| Sl. No. | Resources | Frequencies | Percentages |
|---------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | E-resources | 113 | 67 |
| 2 | Print resources | 56 | 33 |

TABLE V SEARCH ENGINES, FREQUENCIES & PERCENTAGES

| Sl. No. | Search engines | Frequencies | Percentages |
|---------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | Google | 144 | 86 |
| 2 | Yahoo | 8 | 4 |
| 3 | Bing | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Mozilla Fire fox | 17 | 10 |
| 5 | Internet explorer | 0 | 0 |

TABLE VI OPINION OF STUDENTS ON LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

| Sl. No. | Questions | Yes | | No | | Don't know | |
|---------|--|------|----|------|----|------------|----|
| | | Fre. | % | Fre. | % | Fre. | % |
| 1 | Are the general collections sufficient enough? | 124 | 73 | 27 | 16 | 18 | 11 |
| 2 | If yes, does it meet your requirement? | 109 | 65 | 40 | 24 | 20 | 12 |
| 3 | Are reference collections strong enough? | 108 | 64 | 47 | 28 | 14 | 8 |
| 4 | Does the library have adequate primary sources? | 117 | 69 | 40 | 24 | 12 | 7 |
| 5 | Does the library have indexing & abstracting services? | 108 | 64 | 45 | 27 | 16 | 9 |
| 6 | Does the library get documents from other libraries on loan? | 0 | 0 | 147 | 87 | 22 | 13 |

VI. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

M. Ed. students seek information mostly for general awareness, preparing for seminar paper, doing assignments, for preparing project work, for preparing answers to questions and preparing for examinations. They rarely seek information for time pass and enjoy reading. It can be concluded that students used seek information for more than one purpose at a time. M. Ed. students mostly (86%) use information sources like the news papers, Magazines, weekly's etc. for seeking information. The most essential reference sources for the sample is the encyclopedia, Yearbooks, Dictionaries and Manuals. E-resources are preferred more by the M Ed students than the Print resources. Google is most preferred search engine. Second preference is to Mozilla Firefox A very few percentage of students preferred Yahoo. Bing and Internet explorer are not selected by any in the sample. The opinion of students regarding the library collections of the college, Most of the students opined that collections of the college library are sufficient. It was also reported that library has adequate primary sources.

The results of the study emphasize the need for better orientation about library resources and services among all

categories of students for developing information seeking habits.

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