Curriculum Development of Information Literacy in University – Experience of Shih Hsin University (2009-2013)

CHIHFENG P. LIN

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION,

SHIH HSIN UNIVERSITY

TAIPEI, TAIWAN

.

CHIHFENG@CC.SHU.EDU.TW

Abstract:

Course of Information Literacy was originated as introduction of library's services as called Bibliography Instruction (BI), then it was included as required course by Department of Information & Communication which was transformed from Library and Information Science that contains with experts of LIS services as teaching force. The College of Journalism and Communication assigned the course as a required course for college students to enhance students' capability of collecting and organizing information. The course is now a required course campus-wide. Challenges and hurdles of imparting the course of Information Literacy in the university occurred and solutions were conducted. This paper describes the development of the course, the path of teaching and learning, and as part of university's curriculum development.

Keywords: Information Literacy, LIS Curriculum, Teaching & Learning;

I. Curriculum Development and Information Literacy Defined

Information Literacy Defined

- *Determine the extent of information needed*
- *Access the needed information effectively and efficiently*
- *Evaluate information and its sources critically*
- *Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base*
- *Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose*
- *Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally*

(ACRL Guideline of Information Literacy)

Instructors of Information Literacy were noted and committed via various meetings.   The course planners provided bibliographical list, course outline, common requirements of class activities, and evaluation methods.   Definition of *Information Literacy* was a base of understanding and indication of the course.

From Bibliographical Instruction to Information Literacy

In early 90's, university library, especially reference librarians, used to be assigned as supportive element to help students to understand library's function through Bibliography Instruction (BI) while instructors were implementing their teaching. Transforming "Bibliographical Instruction" into "Information Literacy", expanded the course into required course of students in each Department of the College of Journalism and Communication were the efforts made by the Dean of the College, the Department Head, and the University Librarian who noticed the importance of the fact that Information Literacy is the course helps to enhance students with proper knowledge, skills and attitude toward the pervasive and crowded information.   The course was enlarged and expanding the course objects to University-wide students by 1) Refinery of the contents of BI; 2) With inclusion of faculty members of Department of Information & Communications (before was Library &

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Information Science); 3) Re-name the course "Information Literacy" and gathered more professional faculty members in the teaching group of each Department; 3) Construction of common ground of the course through regular meetings to conduct quality assurance of the course.

The common ground of teaching process of *"Information Literacy"* was built through various meetings and discussions. The course "Information Literacy" has been expanded from required course of an individual Department into College-wide and University-wide required course during the past 6 years. The issues of information ethics in teaching Information Literacy were raised and came to attention due to commonly misuse of information by students (Lin, 2010).

Extending the course *"Information Literacy"* of an individual Department into a college-wide required course, and then, as a University-wide required course. With efforts of professional and administrative practices, "Information Literacy" successfully conducted through out the campus since 2009. It is an innovative practice among university settings in Taiwan. However, There are four colleges in the university, includes College of Journalism and Communications, Humanity and Sociology, College of Law, and College of Management. Students of different majors raise great challenges for instructors of Information Literacy, so as the curriculum planners of the course.   The previous study indicated that the course of "Information Literacy" benefits the students of different Colleges of the university, the common ground of the course was established while implementing the instruction toward students of different Departments of different Colleges. The preparation of the course instructors to carry out course activities properly in order to fulfill the goals of Information Ethics was planed and implemented through meetings and instructions.

II. Challenges in Teaching and Learning

Positive and negative feedbacks of Practices in IL Curriculum
There were positive feedbacks and negative feedbacks resulted from the

university-wide 2010 survey which is conducted every semester. The challenges in teaching and learning as from information gathered through the open-ending notes were categorized by Teaching Material, Teaching methods, Evaluation Methods, and others. Students have levels of consideration toward the difficulties of the contents, examinations, and class activities. Some considered contents were too easy and dull, others have opposite viewpoints. Examinations were given by instructors and the outcome showed that students have extreme viewpoints of the examination. As for classroom management, each and every instructor has his own teaching style. Instructors consider differently over class attendance, assignments, and participation in the classroom.

Requirement of Joint Examination University-wide

A new policy from the university to the *Information Literacy Course Planning Committee* that campus-wide required courses need common ground of evaluation in addition to individual instructor's course evaluation requirement. The course of *Information Literacy* has to submit a common joint-examination tool to fit in the policy. Through meetings of discussion, instructors agreed to conduct a joint-examination at the end of Semester. Each and every class will take examination respectively. The problems of examination will be designed by the instructors. The score counts 30 percent of the total score (grades). Schedule and process of developing examination problems database were set and implemented in end of 2011 Academic Year (The Summer of 2012). The policy was practiced in the Academic Year of 2012 (Started on September, 2012).

Problem Database of Information Literacy Joint examination

The process of establishing problems for examination was smooth. Instructors submitted problems to the Committee and the Committee reviewed the problems and classified problems into three categories, such as "difficult", "not difficult", and "easy" ones. Instructors received the databank from the Committee. Instructors could select problems with fair portion of problems, preferably 20/40/40 among "difficult", "not difficult", and "easy" problems. The Examination Problems then arranged into "Multiple Choice" style for students to choose. Instructors also received message from the Committee that students shall be informed directly or indirectly to view existing problems

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on-line which the Department of Information & Communications had put the data onto the web for reference.

The outcome of first year trial activity showed that students considered questions were too much of library-oriented.　Students of now-a-days google information easily and voluntarily.　Much of information was uploaded and retrievable from Internet instead of going to Library for information. This outcome has resulted another round of establishing problems for the joint-examination.　The process has been undergoing via meetings of instructors.

III. Teachers' Roundtable and Exchanges of Expertise

Teachers' Roundtable focused on the survey outcome of the course, especially the negative feedbacks.　Instructors exchanged their teaching experiences of class activities, classroom management, interactions with students, art of giving assignments, and skill of grading. Instructors had reached common ground on giving lectures and assignments.　There are four Colleges in the University and students focus on different areas of knowledge and skills.　The interactions between instructors and students vary and standards may bring troubles in teaching and learning.　The consensus of meetings stands out that the common ground of the course remains forty to sixty percent.　The rest of the sixty to forty percent leaves to individual instructor's decisions.　The portion allows instructors to be flexible in using the problem database.

The Roundtable has run several workshops to allow instructors to listen to speeches of specialists in knowledge management, digital learning, Internet marketing, and information literacy (perspectives from business firms). These topics expanded viewpoints and broaden landscape of educating and training of information literacy.

The sharing of teaching "Information Literacy" experiences of instructors allowed exchanges of expertise and philosophy of teaching.　For example, to assign students to state three topics that they wanted to explore the most, then,

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chose one to explore more in-depth and in-width.   Explain reasons why the one was selected, the other two were not. Students learned to use keywords and retrieval strategies toward information searching. The other example is to assign "History on Today – per each student's birth date" to guide and allow students to find information on time (chronicle) and space (geographical). This topic can be extended into utilizing references on directories, who's who, and related books of the subject. Students can then compose a essay according to the information gathered.   During the process, students learned to determine the extent of information needed, access the needed information effectively and efficiently, evaluate information and its sources critically, incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base, use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose as defined above ACRL's definition.   In addition, students also been required to write their essays according to APA style with correct citation and bibliographical information.

Conclusion and Suggestions

A course teaching is not an easy task, a group of instructors gathered and teach one common course in university is even harder.   The Information Literacy course in SHU has been practiced for years.   It is a practice of curriculum that covers educational philosophy, subject expertise, coordination, and cooperation.   The practice is unique in the university settings in Taiwan, probably few in other countries in the region.   It is worth to promote although it needs further improvement in process and practice.   Department of Information & Communications in Shih Hsin University has endeavored the efforts to put the course into practice.   The evaluation has been undertaken and adjustments will be made to turn the course become more valuable assets of the university and the profession. Suggestions will be the continuous support from the authority and the university and the share of the expertise as well as the experience onto the teaching and learning.

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