

Information Seeking and Evaluation Tasks to Enhance Multiliteracies in Health Education

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Abstract : This study contributes to the pedagogical discussion on how to promote adolescents' multiliteracies with the emphasis on information seeking and evaluation skills in contemporary media environments. The study is conducted in the school environment utilizing perspectives of educational sciences and information studies to health communication and teaching. The research focus is on the teacher role as a trusted person, who guides students to choose and use credible information sources. Evaluating the credibility of information may often be challenging. Specifically, children and adolescents may find it difficult to know what to believe and who to trust, for instance, in health and well-being communication. Thus, advanced multiliteracy skills are needed. In the school environment, trust is based on the teacher's subject content knowledge, but also the teacher's character and caring. Teacher's benevolence and approachability generate trustworthiness, which lays the foundation for good interaction with students and further, for the teacher's pedagogical authority. The study explores teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical authority and the role of a trustee. In addition, the study examines what kind of multiliteracy practices teachers utilize in their teaching. The data will be collected by interviewing secondary school health education teachers during Spring 2019. The analysis method is a nexus analysis, which is an ethnographic research orientation. Classroom interaction as the interviewed teachers see it is scrutinized through a nexus analysis lens in order to expound a social action, where people, places, discourses, and objects are intertwined. The crucial social actions in this study are information seeking and evaluation situations, where the teacher and the students together assess the credibility of the information sources. The study is based on the hypothesis that a trustee's opinions of credible sources and guidance in information seeking and evaluation affect students', that is, trustors' choices. In the school context, the teacher's own experiences and perceptions of health-related issues cannot be brushed aside. Furthermore, adolescents are used to utilize digital technology for day-to-day information seeking, but the chosen information sources are often not very high quality. In the school, teachers are inclined to recommend familiar sources, such as health education textbook and web pages of well-known health authorities. Students, in turn, rely on the teacher's guidance of credible information sources without using their own judgment. In terms of students' multiliteracy competences, information seeking and evaluation tasks in health education are excellent opportunities to practice and enhance these skills. To distinguish the right information from a wrong one is particularly important in health communication because experts by experience are easy to find and their opinions are convincing. This can be addressed by employing the ideas of multiliteracy in the school subject health education and in teacher education and training.

Keywords : multiliteracies, nexus analysis, pedagogical authority, trust

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