

Chapter 23

The eAssessment of Key Competences and Their Relationship With Academic Performance

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ABSTRACT

Even though in the current information-rich environment information skills have become a key competence within school curricula, their transversal, sometimes marginal character is maintained in basic education. This research work intends to facilitate the teachers information-rich environment information skills have become a key competence within school curricula, their transversal, sometimes, understood mainly as the performance in language and mathematics. The sample of the study was composed of 258 secondary education students from Spain, who completed a validated questionnaire that evaluated information skills. The results show a significant positive relationship between information skills and academic performance. The authors conclude by discussing the importance of emphasizing the study of information skills as a factor associated with academic performance, aiming to foster their effective integration in formal teaching-learning processes.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, people live in a society which is run in every field by Information and Communication Technologies (Castells, 1999). These changes have led to the coining of the term Information Society, or Knowledge Society (Area Moreira, 2001; Cassity & Ang, 2006; Cebrián Herreros, 2009; Valimaa & Hoffman, 2008), and they have produced new educational needs in all sectors of society. Specifically, there are new needs related to the adaptation and utilization of this new environment rich in information (Diehm & Lupton, 2012; Grizzle, Wilson, & UNESCO, 2011; Pinto Molina, Cordón, & Díaz, 2010; Price, Becker, Clark, & Collins, 2011), aiming to put up barriers to the so-called information overload or infoglut (Jarson & Taub-Pervizpour, 2015; Levitin, 2014; Zelder, 2009).

These skills and knowledge related to the handling and treatment of information, are referred to as 'Information Literacy' within the fields of information science and library science (ALA/ACRL, 2000; Andretta, 2007; Bruce, 1997; Bundy, 1998). In these first few years of development, information literacy is understood as a group of key competences that every citizen must learn in order to properly handle themselves in the information society. It is also emphasized that the experts in charge of its transmission and development should be librarians and information professionals. However, the limitations and determinants of the concept of literacy in the field of education, along with the significance that digital competences and information literacy have achieved in a few years, lead to a reconceptualization of the term. The concept starts to be known in the field of Educational Sciences as 'Information Skills' (Area Moreira, 2010; Bielba Calvo, Martínez-Abad, & Herrera García, 2014; Martínez Abad, Olmos Migueláñez, & Rodríguez Conde, 2015; Rodríguez Conde, Olmos Migueláñez, & Martínez Abad, 2013). Thus, the name information skills provide the state of the art with a more educational, specific and definite approach to the term. On the other hand, the difficulties and biases related to the term 'literacy' are overcome (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Freire, 1981; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Wagner, 1998).

In this sense, the promotion of information systems based on competences (Delors, 1996; Halász & Michel, 2011) and the development of a common framework on key competences in plenty of countries (Official Journal of the European Union, 2006), has facilitated the integration of information skills as a key competence within the curriculum. However, we encounter the problem that teachers, who are experts in developing educational programs based on objectives and contents rather than competences, are not trained in the key competences. Also, they do not seem to have the appropriate knowledge to develop teaching-learning processes based on competences and to assess the level student achievement regarding these key competences. Thus, important efforts are made on an institutional level to clearly define the indicators, learning outcomes and assessment criteria related to the key competences, and specifically, information skills (Ferrari, 2013; Grizzle et al., 2011; UNESCO, 2015).

Given this state of the art, one might ask whether it is necessary to provide tools to facilitate the work of teachers regarding the objective assessment of key competences, specifically information skills. Likewise, it is necessary to consider whether high levels of information skills achievement among basic education students are related to better academic performances.

Therefore, the overall objective of this work is to shed some light on the topic of key competence assessment and their relationship with the student's main academic performance. Thus, we present a strategy for the assessment of information skills through a validated instrument which is implemented entirely on-line, and after that, we analyze the existing relationship between the level of information skills shown by the student and their academic performance in language and mathematics.

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