Chapter 1
The Inclusion of Information Literacy and Skills Course in the Core Curriculum at the University of Namibia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the inclusion of an information literacy skills course in the UNAM's core curriculum. The research study adopted a case study design that employed a qualitative approach and used interviews and content analysis as data collection methods. Interviews were conducted with the three key informants who were chosen purposefully. The findings of the study revealed that the introduction of the IL course is in line with the university's vision and the national and international aspirations. UNAM employs the embedded approach when delivering the information literacy skills course which is offered within the module called Academic Literacy. The study showed that the IL programme at UNAM faces challenges since Academic Literacy is supposed to be a compulsory module, but some students were exempted from undertaking the module. The study recommended that UNAM should not leave out every registered student to participate in the IL skills course since it is the basis of the knowledge economy.

INTRODUCTION

Information and knowledge are seen as critical factors in a knowledge-based society. Ahmed (2017) opined that an information literacy skill is a very important part of growing economies in this global world. It enables people to know the needed information, the quality of information needed, search and locate, as well as analyze the information and being able to keep the desired information for future use. Fessl, Simic, Barthold, and Pammer-Schindler (2019) argue that information literacy and the access to and use of knowledge are becoming a precondition for individuals to actively take part in social,

economic, cultural, and political life in societies of the 21st century and must be considered as a fundamental competency in our digital lives. The UNESCO (2013) considers it a basic human right while the American Library Association (ALA) (1989) calls it a survival skill in the information age. It is therefore necessary in this information age that information literacy must be considered and projected as a fundamental competency like the ability to read, write and enumerate.

The term information literacy is sometime mistaken for information and communication technology (ICT) literacy as Rockman (2004: 47) compares information literacy as *"truly a new instructional pedagogy and a change agent for learning"*. Shapiro and Hughes (1996) considered information literacy to be an often-misunderstood concept. While this may have held some water in the olden days, there are still many definitions and understandings of the term, however a consensus of a kind has emerged. According to Chingono, Moyo and Rotich (2015) information literacy includes: library literacy; media literacy; computer literacy; internet literacy; research literacy; and critical thinking skills. Therefore, the need to integrate all the tools together will foster and equip the university student with the relevant skills of accessing information and meeting his or her information needs.

Concepts such as information overload, information highway, information explosion, etc., have become relevant in the information age. Due to information explosion, it has become increasingly clear that students cannot learn everything they need to know in their field of study, within a few years, at school or the university and therefore information literacy equips them with the critical skills necessary to become independent lifelong learners.

The general understanding of words such as 'information society' or the 'knowledge based' society reflect the view that future economies are going to be driven by the amount of knowledge or information which a society or enterprise or an individual possesses. The "Asian tigers", which include countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan have used information and knowledge to their advantage to develop their economies and enjoyed almost double-digit economic growth rate each year from 1970 to 1990 (Dong-Ching, 2021). Hepworth (1999) observed that the Singapore government realized that information literacy skills are important for the longevity of the Singapore economy. The author adds that similar initiatives are evident in the United States, Europe, Australia, and South Africa where information literacy as well as a more collaborative and constructivist approach to learning is considered an economic necessity as well as helping to achieve personal fulfillment.

The University of Namibia took a bold step in 2021-2023 to revamp the whole UNAM curriculum following the viability report, which evaluated all the programmes offered by UNAM based on the country needs and the development drivers such as Vision 2030, Harambe Prosperity Plan (HPP) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In line with Namibia's vision of becoming a knowledge-based society, the University of Namibia streamlined all its programmes to support its vision, which is "…to be a sustainable international hub of excellence in higher education, training, research and innovation by 2030" (UNAM, 2023). Thus, this paper investigates the inclusion of information literacy course in the UNAM's core curriculum.

Statement of the Problem

Much research has been conducted over the years in IL programme design and development, assessment and evaluation. These research studies focused on areas such as: designing an IL programme (Maguire,

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