Information Literacy and the Use And Misuse of Information Resources among Students

Martina Klierova, Eva Uhráková

eva.uhrakova@stuba.sk, martina.klierova@stuba.sk

Slovak University of Technology (Slovak Republic)

Abstract

Fast progress in ICT and the constantly transforming face of the Internet environment sets new goals in education. The education needs to develop the capability of the students to deal with information and increase their independence in learning. This paper discusses the issues of information skills of student in the context of using information and communication tool – the Internet. Additionally, the paper presents the results of survey about the use of ICT among the students of the Faculty of Material Science and Technology. The students use different information sources of the Internet in the learning process; we are interested in the relevance and quality of information resources. We also consider the influence and use of ICT as important aspect in academic dishonesty. The use of ICT on the one hand develops and increases the information skills, improves education techniques and other activities related to gathering, sharing and saving information on the other hand permits several cheating activities and misuse of information. The relevance of information literacy and developing information skills and knowledge is in the centre of current discussion. The aim of this paper is to bring the reader not only into the complex issue of using information in learning process but also into the misuse of information in academic dishonesty.

Introduction

Expansion of use of ICT and especially easy availability of new technologies is reflected in the society also with various negative activities, which often violate the law. The main problems are copyright misuse, distribution of prohibited materials, various violations of privacy or personal data abuse and many other serious activities. Misuse of ICT is also reflected in education and did not avoid universities. The Internet and other ICT are often considered as reason for the increase and expansion of plagiarism among students.

Research of authors Baruchson-Arbib and Yaari [1] pointed out the different perceptions of misuse of information from the Internet and from the print resources; students find the information on the Internet free of use and plagiarism as less dishonest as from printed resources. Plagiarism is only one of cheating activities. For cheating not only the Internet is used, but also other technologies such as mobile phones, mp3 players or calculators and various other technologies available to students. The mass availability and ease of use of ICT, which requires relatively little technical knowledge, provides many new possibilities for cheating. It is logical to assume the extension of online services and electronic communications, also a quickly move of socialization processes in virtual environments (integration into groups, e-learning, etc.).

The virtual environment opens new possibilities for academic dishonesty, which can be difficult to identify. The students try to find simple and fast way to get through studies. Students try to find new ways to share materials, papers and information about exams, results or about teachers' style. Websites, called "Papers Mills", offer a variety of materials such as finished work (seminar papers, essays, reports, bachelor or diploma works), lectures, or documents to the tests (for example answers of final bachelor or master exam). The existence of these websites is mainly based on the principle of solidarity between students, uploading of own work is voluntary and usually the provider of the original text does not get financial benefits from this activity, several sites offer small benefits for the uploaded works. Download of work can also be freely available without registration, available only if the user creates the user account or for a fee. The downloaded material may not be necessarily used for

plagiarism. Dobrovská *[2, p.1]* indicates "*that 60% of students in technical fields are familiar with sites offering free student works, 44% of students are informed about providers of student works on a commercial basis*". More serious problem that has appeared is called Ghost-writing, this word describe offers from authors for writing a complete work of other authors, often it is a commercial activity, but can be as well act of solidarity or reciprocity between students. For example one of the websites of this kind in the Czech and also in Slovak Republic provides offers for complete writing of documents such as articles, seminar works, bachelor or diploma thesis, the quality of work is guaranteed by being prepared by professionals. Other provider which offers works, what is paradox, appeals as one of the reason for using this service, protection against plagiarism in customer work. The price for one page of text depends on type of work. These offers of ghost-writing are legally clearly defined, the providers pretending to offer only base papers, which shall be used as resources for future work. There is also no problem to find students offering to write diploma, bachelor or seminar works on website with advertisement.

One of the reasons for plagiarism, that students give, is overload of information. Searching and working with information is the first step towards good school paper. Teachers and professionals try to increase quality of learning process with the help of new technologies; the fast growth and progress in ICT opens the opportunity for change in education, introducing methods that increase student independence in learning. In order for this to happen students need to develop the capability to deal with information. Information skills and abilities are a system of methods, procedures and techniques for resolving school and study assignments, work tasks, scientific and research tasks and other information problems. It is the ability to precisely identify and formulate information needs, the ability to locate, obtain, the ability of active creative process of work-out, and functional application and adaptation of information [3]. From content structure point of view the information literacy the necessary knowledge, skill and habits are [4]:

- knowledge of the primary sources of information, in classical (traditional) documents, in electronic resources in electronic media, or network resources,
- knowledge of the secondary sources of information, in library catalogs, bibliographies, filing cabinets, in electronic data bases and information systems,
- knowledge of the libraries and the use of library services,
- methods of communication for independent study and lifelong learning
- creating a personal information system,
- transformation of information in creative cognitive processes,
- the presentation of the knowledge - learning the methods and technologies needed for presentation of information,
- the use of modern information technology in solving tasks, assignments, problems (studying, work, personal life).

Progress and Results about the Use of Information Resources among Students

The survey was conducted on a sample of university students from the Faculty of Material Science and Technology in the year 2010/2011. The survey involved 66 students of study program Personnel Policy in Industrial Plant. The survey was anonymous, the questionnaire contained closed questions requiring one or multiple choice responses. Our survey is focused on the function of the Internet in students' use of information.

At the beginning of the survey, we focused on the students' perception of their searching abilities on the Internet. According to the respondents' answers most students (75%) can find almost everything. The results show Fig. 1.
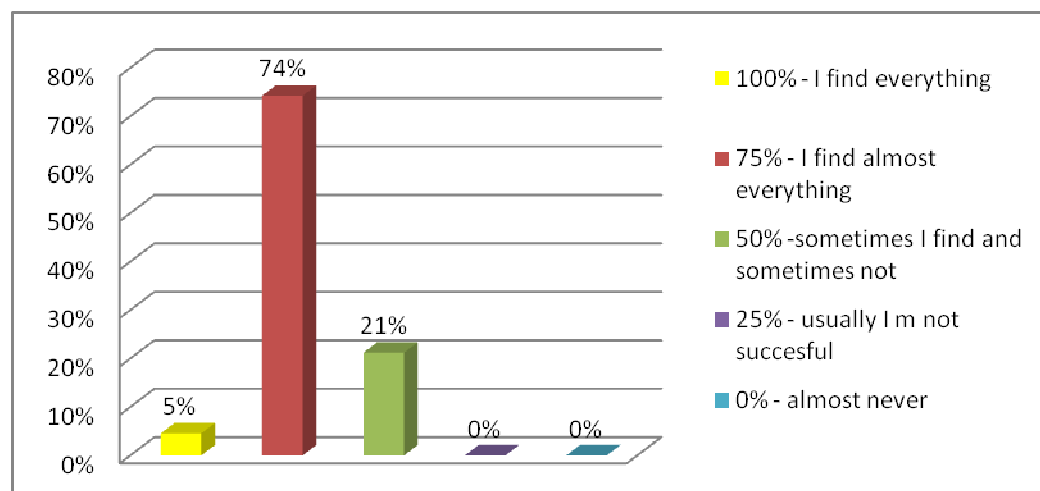
Fig. 1 If you try to find some information on the Internet, how often are you successful?

We were also interested for what study purposes students use the Internet, this question has multiple choice possibilities. Students not only search new information and use it for school projects; they also share learning information. The student responses are shown in Fig.2:
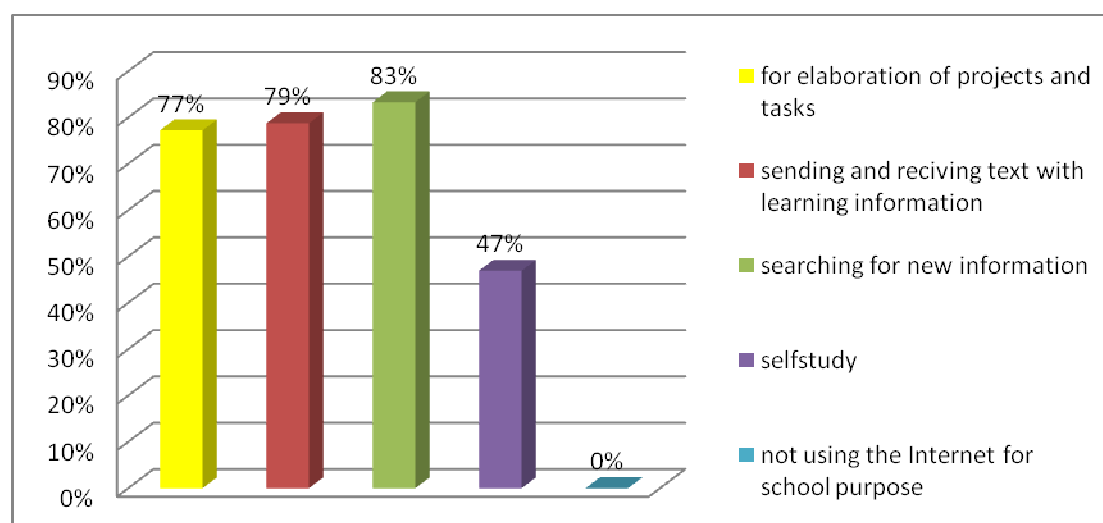

Fig. 2 For what study purpose you use the Internet?

In the next question we asked the respondents what information they share with other students. The most respondents (85%) share information that can be misused, 24% of respondents think that students share whole papers. The results show fig. 3.
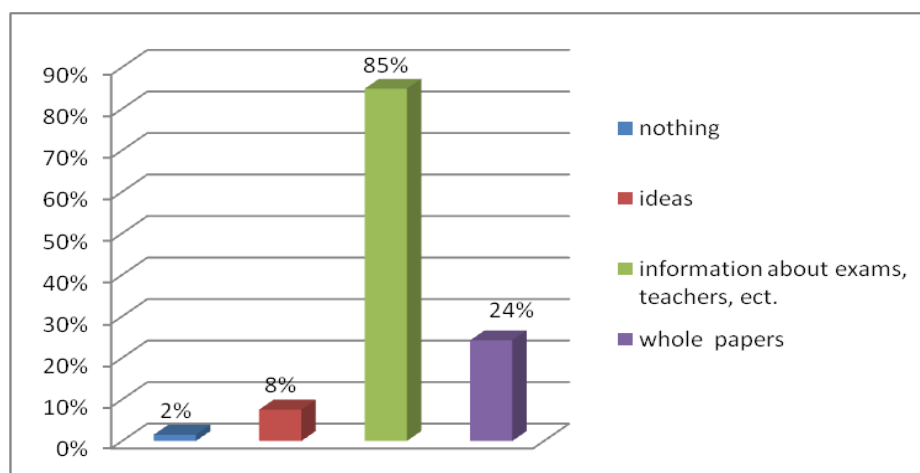
Fig. 3 What students share between themselves?

We focused also if the students misuse the Internet sources in study task. We ask for what purpose students use the Internet by fulfil the study tasks, 78% of the respondents often look for some information, 20% of respondents use materials from papermills with their own modifications, not significant part of respondents marked option "I use whole work from others". Fig.4 shows the answers of respondents.
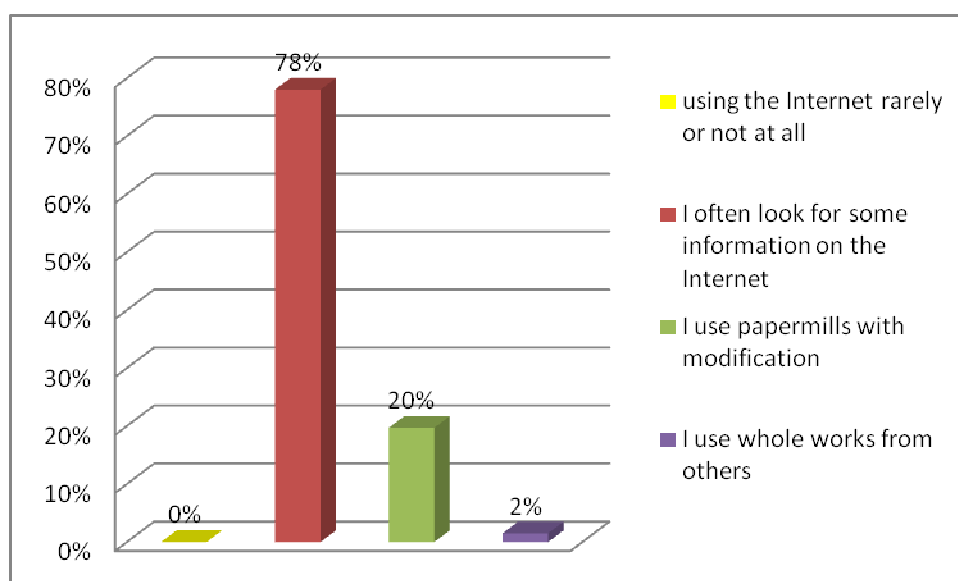

Fig. 4 How you use the Internet for fulfil the study task?

In the end we asked also why students copy from the Internet. The majority of the respondents (80%) answered that the Internet is a fast source of information.
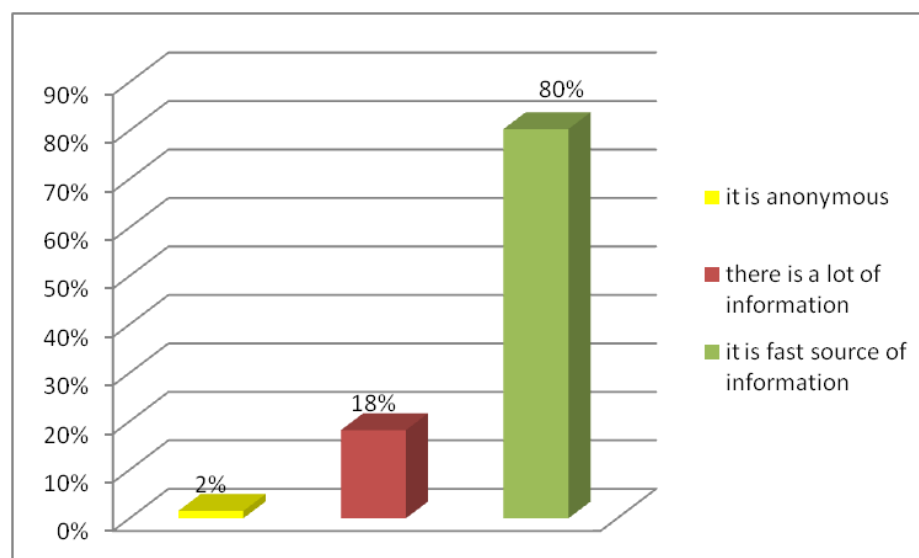
Fig. 5 Why students copy from the Internet?

Conclusion

The use of new IT methods and practices in the school system will be one of the most watched and most discussed topics of this issue. From different sources results, academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism and collusion) among students is increasing globally; therefore this problem must be addressed in a complex way, putting emphasis on prevention strategies. The important factor is also student's behaviour and perception of academic dishonesty. It is equally important to understand the consequences and implications of unfair practices of sharing information in reference to the ethical side. Information literacy as a skill in the 21st century comprehensively develops human personality from the side of knowledge, skills as well as from site of building attitudes.

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