

Perspectives of Select Media And Information Literacy (MIL) Educators on the MIL Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This study is an in-depth analysis of the perspectives of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) teachers, who are also current or former media and communication practitioners, on the MIL curriculum. Seven participants were interviewed to share their perspectives on using the current Media and Information Literacy curriculum. The researcher utilized the Triple E (Explore, Engage, Empower) model by Alagaran (2015) to examine the perspectives of the study participants. The said model provides emphasis on the purposeful representation of the current reality of Media and Information Literacy understanding and practice, which is aligned with the MIL UNESCO definition. The study showed that MIL teachers have varied perspectives with regard to the Media and Information Literacy curriculum. In teaching MIL, educators see the importance of the current media environment. The participants also see that the current curriculum needs work since there are numerous concerns regarding content and resources. Therefore, this study recommends that educational institutions and professionals should allot time and resources for the improvement of the curriculum, keeping in mind that it is crucial to also coordinate with MIL-related groups to gain access to niche knowledge on the subject.

Keywords: *media and information literacy, triple e model, curriculum, k to 12*

Introduction

With the creation of the K-12 program in the Philippines, senior high school (SHS) became a required stage in the learning process (Banal-Formoso, 2016). Each SHS course was designed to empower every Filipino graduate with 21st-century knowledge and skills (Department of Education, 2019). One subject that has been added to the K12 curriculum is Media and Information Literacy (MIL).

The concept that a mediated society requires people who are media literate is central to MIL (Carlsson, 2010). MIL provides students with knowledge of media and information as instruments for development. It also aims to train learners to be critical thinkers, as well as responsible and competent media consumers and content providers (Department of Education, 2013). MIL also includes the manifestation of information literacy skills: identifying, knowing where to get information, obtaining, assessing, storing, and utilizing information (Wilson et al., 2011).

In the Philippines, MIL is covered in 17 sections in the Department of Education's curriculum guide (CG). When it comes to teaching challenges, Bautista (2021) discovered that instructors faced multiple hurdles, such as a lack of appropriate materials aligned to the CG, and a lack of teacher competency in teaching the subject. Teachers struggled to match DepEd's curricular goals, and lack of adequate training is also a problem.

This research intends to supplement the MIL program with the perspectives and experiences of MIL teachers who are also media/communication professionals. This can give insight into the workings of the MIL education currently experienced by learners and suggest prospective program modifications that can assist in the enhancement of the MIL curriculum implementation in the country.

Methodology

The field of Media and Information Literacy is one of the newer undertakings of the Philippine basic education system, having existed since the creation of the senior high school level. Due to its infancy, there have been multiple concerns and challenges within the premise of the subject content and lesson implementation. The forefront of these challenges is the utilization of the current MIL curriculum. With that in mind, this study aims to know:

"What are the perspectives of MIL teachers on the MIL curriculum?"

Concepts and Theories

The "Triple E's of MIL" model by Alagaran (2015) is a purposeful representation of the current reality of Media and Information Literacy understanding and practice. This model emphasizes the needed skills progression in MIL for students as part of lifelong learning to contribute to a person's holistic development. The E's stand for "Explore," (identify, access, retrieve) "Engage," (analyze, evaluate) and, "Empower" (create, share, use). The model highlights that this set of competencies must be mirrored in national education policies to drive the enhancement of curriculum and promote it as a framework for constructing educational institution program outcomes.

There are two main concepts in this study model: The Media and Information Literacy curriculum developed by the Department of Education and the instructor who applies the curriculum.

The MIL curriculum in this paradigm is seen via the Triple E model, which enables to view MIL instructors' perspectives on how the Philippine MIL curriculum adheres to the stipulated UNESCO MIL competencies. The MIL instructor is the next concept. This paradigm examines how the MIL instructor interprets the CG. Another aspect influencing their opinion on the curriculum is their understanding of the current Philippine media environment, as well as the encounters or obstacles they had when giving lessons about the course.

Research Design

Due to the nature of the study, in which there is a need for the participants to describe their experiences and thoughts about the MIL curriculum, a descriptive research design with a focus on the qualitative method was employed (Boudah, 2011). The qualitative research method was employed because MIL educators have various experiences in teaching MIL which is crucial to reflect on (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). These insights can be an influence that may affect the revision of the MIL curriculum.

Research Instrument

The in-depth interview was used to acquire qualitative data for this study. An interview guide was developed to explore the following:

1. The current media environment: how it operates and how it creates meaning.
2. The MIL curriculum through the Triple E lens.
3. The media environment and the process of exploring, engaging, and empowering.
4. MIL teaching challenges.

Participants

The researcher was able to gather seven media and information literacy instructors as informants that would give data for this in-depth investigation. Using the following criteria, the researcher was able to make sure that the informants were picked for their knowledge of the subject matter and their ability to articulate their perspectives: A media and information literacy teacher who is currently working in the media/communication field; and/or A media and information literacy teacher who was previously working in the media/communication field. These teachers should also be teaching either in public or private schools.

To validate the research instrument, the researcher was able to get the expertise of media and information literacy experts. The study data were gathered through personal interviews with informants.

Data Gathering Procedure

For this paper, an interview guide was utilized to gather data. The participants were initially asked to give their consent before actual interviews were conducted. The researcher conducted online interviews with the participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed before the data analysis.

Results and Discussion

The primary goal of this research is to learn about the perspectives of select MIL teachers on how they see the MIL curriculum through the lens of the Triple E model, as well as their knowledge of the Philippine media environment and the experiences or challenges they faced while teaching the subject.

The researcher was able to come up with four major themes that can help answer the study's objectives. Each theme has sub-themes that can further elaborate the perspectives of the participants.

THE CURRENT MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The Variety of Roles of an MIL Teacher

Teachers see themselves in a variety of roles when it comes to teaching the MIL subject. These roles range from being a “broken record” due to always teaching and repeating the consequences of using media, being a “facilitator” since there is a need to facilitate students as they navigate through their understanding of the media, and, being a “purveyor of right information” since the very idea of knowing MIL is bounded by the fact that you have to teach students about legitimate and illegitimate sources. The other roles the teachers mentioned include being the “role model”, being an “eye-opener”, and being a “guide.”

The Current Media Environment: It's All About Entertainment

Based on the interviews, it is noticed that most media consumers, both young and old, are more concerned about the entertainment aspect of media than getting information. People tend to use various media platforms to pass the time.

The Current Media Environment: A Not So “Safe” Media Space

The teachers have mentioned the saddening state of the current media environment in the country. This status is reflected mostly in new media (Macaraeg & Castro, 2019). Exposure to information disorders (misinformation, disinformation) contributes to the saddening state of the media environment being experienced by media consumers. Society is said to have become media-saturated. Infobesity, a state in which people ingest large amounts of information that can contribute negatively to their well-being (Awuor et al., 2019) is also evident.

The Current Media Environment: Media and the Influence of Stakeholders

The participants see that stakeholders and their influence are also evident in the current media environment. Political influence is seen as an issue in the media. This factor affects both national and local media operations. Instances of political pressure have resulted in several issues that affected the work of individuals working in the media (Estella, 2018).

A Look on Philippine Media Operations: On Media Ownership

The majority of media outlets in the Philippines are operated like a business and are privately owned (Estella & Löffelholz, 2019). It has been observed that for media companies to stay afloat, advertisements are a necessity. In the case of state-owned media, it was observed that there are restrictions on their content, especially on the creation of content critical to certain issues.

A Look on Philippine Media Operations: On Media Content Creation

It has been observed that money is one of the driving forces of media content creation and operation in the country. Currently, content creation is not limited to traditional media outlets, rather, it has also expanded to fame-driven individuals.

Another aspect of media content creation is the emphasis on creating content to help inform the masses of the issues currently happening in the country. This scenario is central to the idea of the “media as watchdog”.

Media and its Influence to Message Production and Construct of Meaning: Media Influence on Message Production

For the study participants, the influence of the media message depends on the people who produced it. This idea is explained by the statement of Blitz (2005) and Johnson (2014) when they said that if the reporter makes biased content, it can also affect the audience who consumes it.

Media and its Influence to Message Production and Construct of Meaning: Media Influence on the Construct of Meaning

It was mentioned that the “image” of the media content creator/producer can influence the audience on how they will construct the meaning of the media message. This construct of meaning can also be influenced by how the media frames its message and the elements it includes in these messages. Another factor that can influence is the “opinion leaders” who relay the media message.

THE MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY CURRICULUM

Perspectives on the MIL Curriculum: MIL is NOT ICT

The participants mentioned that one misconception about the MIL subject is that it is also about Information and Communication Technology. Although the two concepts are somehow connected, the MIL subject covers topics that are not covered by ICT (Empowerment Technologies: for the Strand).

Perspectives on the MIL Curriculum: The Curriculum is Lacking

There are concerns about how the Philippine MIL curriculum needs refinement, especially on its competencies. The curriculum focuses more on production, but not so much on critical evaluation of information. Inadequate misinformation and disinformation (information disorder) related topics are also issues. Public school teachers face challenges with complying with the learning competencies due to the lack of available resources.

Perspectives on the MIL Curriculum: The MIL Curriculum can be Better

According to the teachers, MIL curriculum improvements are possible. Multiple suggestions, such as the addition of essential topics related to media and collaborations with MIL-related associations can further enhance the current curriculum.

The MIL Curriculum and the Exploration of Media and Information Content

“Explore” is one of the E’s in the Triple E model. This involves identification, access, and retrieval of information and media content (Alagaran, 2015). In the case of the current MIL curriculum, It has been observed that although aspects of exploration are seen, inadequacies of the congested curriculum and ill-equipped teachers are seen as a challenge for its proper implementation.

The MIL Curriculum and the Engagement with Media and Information Content

“Engage”, which is the second E of the Triple E model, focuses on analysis and evaluation (Alagaran, 2015). With the MIL curriculum, engagement is seen in topics like media and information languages, etc. Another method used to integrate the “engage” aspect in the curriculum was the use of activities by teachers to achieve the needed competencies aligned with the analysis and evaluation of media and information. However, the incorporation of critical thinking skills was not given focus.

The MIL Curriculum and the Empowerment with Media and Information Content

Creation, sharing, and using information and media content is the premise of the last E of the Triple E model, which is “empower” (Alagaran, 2015). Topics related to the empowerment aspect are evident in the curriculum. Over-emphasis on production technicality and less on content formulation is a challenge for the effective implementation of this aspect.

UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND TEACHING THE PROCESS OF EXPLORE, ENGAGE AND EMPOWER

The Current Media Environment and the MIL Subject

The dynamic media environment is a crucial element in the development and improvement of the MIL subject. The consideration of the roles of the media (to inform, to entertain, to earn, and to express) can add greatly to the enhancement of the subject.

The Current Media Environment and the MIL Curriculum Content

For the teachers, considering the current media environment can help revise curriculum content. Focus on current social issues, media history, information, and library science, and the integration of the Triple E can further elevate the current subject content. Discussion on media analytics, media research, and media laws is also a good addition.

The Current Media Environment and the MIL Curriculum Performance Standards

Performance standards give content standards significance by outlining what students must show to indicate that they have met the needed competencies (McLaughlin & Shepard, 1995). Currently, the MIL curriculum has two performance standards, “the learner organizes a creative and interactive symposium for the community focusing on being a media and information literate individual”, and “the learner produces a living museum or electronic portfolio or any other creative forms of multimedia showcasing their/his/her understanding, insights, and perceptions of the different resources of media and information” (Department of Education, 2013). Adapting to the current media environment is seen as crucial to the improvement of the current performance standards of the MIL curriculum. Activities related to current issues and real-world experience in the media profession can be a good addition or change to these current standards.

Triple E and the Current Media Environment

Teaching and learning the process of exploring, engaging, and empowering can further improve with the integration of the understanding of the current media environment. By employing the developments in the current media environment, the teachers see further improvement in teaching the Triple E.

THE CHALLENGES IN TEACHING THE SUBJECT

Student Awareness with MIL

Teachers have observed that students have varying levels of awareness when it comes to the subject. Some students are aware of what MIL is all about. Some see it as a subject that only talks about the use of media and media content. There are also misconceptions, in which some

students think of MIL as a continuation of ICT (Empowerment Technologies: for the Strand).

Challenges in Teaching the Subject

Teachers face multiple different challenges in teaching the subject. Lack of suitable resources and adequate training plague MIL teachers (Bautista, 2021). There are also concerns about students' personal biases that may affect their views of the lessons. As for the teachers, there is a need for them to keep up with the current trends and issues so that they can keep up with the students.

Challenges in Creating the MIL Lesson Plan

The creation of the MIL lesson plan also comes with challenges. Some teachers find it hard to create activities that would align with the course objectives. For some teachers, the curriculum guide itself is the hurdle that they need to pass. Access to relevant lesson plan reference material and the incorporation of sensitive issues is also a challenge.

Challenges in Assessing Student Performance

MIL teachers also suffered from MIL assessment concerns. Concerns such as plagiarism are evident. The educators see the importance of appropriate rubrics for activity assessment. Some educators also mentioned the discrepancy in student learning and the application of this knowledge in real-life activities.

Conclusion

The study exposed that MIL teachers have varied perspectives about the Media and Information Literacy curriculum. These educators see the importance of integrating their knowledge of the current media environment whenever they are to teach MIL.

The curriculum needs improvement. There is a need to realize that many essential topics, like lessons related to misinformation and disinformation (information disorders), are not emphasized, whereas technical topics like media production are overly discussed, contributing to the congested curriculum. There is a need to upgrade the level of awareness of students about the subject to avoid misconceptions that may affect their understanding of the course. Inadequate knowledge of the subject, relevant resources, and even the personal bias of students can be a hurdle in the proper teaching and understanding of the MIL lessons. There are also challenges in the creation of the MIL lesson plan and the assessment of student activities.

Integrating the dynamic current media environment and collaborating with MIL-related associations can be an answer to the much-needed MIL curriculum improvement. Various aspects of the current media environment can be used as an inspiration for possible improvement of curriculum topics and performance standards. By incorporating the perspectives of the MIL teachers, further improvement of the curriculum is possible.

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