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Article

Teaching Media and Information Literacy in Philippine Senior High Schools: Strategies Used and Challenges Faced by Selected Teachers

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Abstract

In the Philippines, the most recent and significant achievement in media and information literacy education is its inclusion in the senior high school (SHS) curriculum. However, since MIL is still relatively new, it remains to be seen how this subject can be effectively taught in the Philippines' SHS. This qualitative case study studied and explored how SHS teachers taught MIL in the early years of its implementation. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted among seven SHS teachers of MIL. The participants believe that there is confusion and misunderstanding about teachers' competencies to teach MIL. Furthermore, teachers are inadequately prepared to teach the subject due to a lack of proper training and availability of materials. The informants also agree that they did not have a deep understanding of the subject's meaning, significance, and scope when asked to teach MIL. To compensate for the lack of preparedness and inadequacy of materials, the teachers used familiar strategies. Despite these limitations, participants are open and willing to teach MIL, recognizing its importance and relevance to their students. However, there is also a need to review the curriculum guide prepared by the country's Department of Education. In addition, teachers found it challenging to finish the topics within the prescribed timeframe.

Keywords
Media and Information Literacy, Qualitative Research, Teaching practices, Senior High School Education

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Introduction

The 21st Century Competencies Framework by the United Nation's Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (MOE, 2010) has detailed the desired outcomes of the education system for the 21st century. Among the competencies listed down was the ability for a student to be both information and media literate.

UNESCO's development agenda places importance on several fundamental goals for equity, inclusion, and relevance in education (Wilson & Jolls, 2015). Some of these goals include the need for education and professional development for teachers, inclusive access to learning technologies and the Internet, and access to knowledge and skills development for all citizens (UNESCO, 2015).

The emergence of digital technologies enabled the convergence between different media devices and forms, which led to a democratized production and circulation of information. People are now required to have multiple competencies to succeed in this constantly changing environment. It is no longer sufficient for people only to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic (Tuazon, 2015). Thus, the importance of media and information literacy (MIL) has been highlighted to empower individuals with knowledge of the functions of the media and information systems that will make them more responsible media and information consumers and producers. Since most of the youth, if not all, have been going online, particularly on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as live streaming and video sites such as YouTube and Netflix, there have been a lot of efforts advocating for MIL.

While public and policy awareness about the importance of MIL has been progressively growing in recent years, there is still a seeming inadequacy in teacher training in MIL and MIL pedagogies (Earp, 2009; Hobbs, 2007; Kovalik, Jensen, Schloman & Tipton, 2011). For example, Ružić (2016) questioned the lecturers' professionalism that affects the delivery of Media Literacy (ML) in Montenegro's education system. Meanwhile, Tiede et al. (2015) found that media literacy education was not consistently integrated into teacher preparation at more than 300 universities in the United States. Inadequate training did not provide the teachers the necessary skills to properly teach the subject that policymakers and educators must address to ensure that MIL is taught appropriately (Tiede et al., 2015; Ruzic, 2016). UNESCO emphasized that the "initial focus on teachers is a key strategy to achieving a multiplier effect: from information-literate teachers to their students and eventually to society at large" (Wilson et al., 2013).

In 2011, UNESCO released the MIL Curriculum and Competency Framework for teachers that would help them develop a greater understanding of the role of media and information technology. The framework combines two distinct areas – media literacy and information literacy – under one umbrella term: MIL. An essential recommendation for teaching MIL is that teachers see it not as a form of protection but as an opportunity for preparing students for their roles as citizens and consumers and effective participation in democratic discourse (Wilson, 2012). Teaching MIL should engage students in critical analysis, production, and dialogue, rather than a process where the teacher controls the outcome and interpretation. UNESCO's MIL Curriculum (2011) further identifies ten pedagogical approaches for the teaching of MIL. These include the issue-enquiry approach, problem-based learning (PBL), scientific enquiry, case study, cooperative learning, textual analysis, contextual analysis,

translations, simulations, and production.

The Philippines has been a pioneer in MIL education, with its beginnings traced to the 1960s when elementary students attended Good Manners and Right Conduct classes (Alagaran, 2011). In the late 1970s to early 1980s, several organizations introduced media education but are closely linked with religious establishments (Kubey, 1997). The Jesuits then introduced media education in the Philippines through the Media Education Project (Hernandez, 2007; 2010)

MIL, formerly (and previously) known as media literacy, was only taught in tertiary institutions, narrowly viewed only for communication educators. However, a mini-survey among 17 communication schools in 2013 revealed that all except one claimed, "Media literacy is integrated into their communication curricula" (Alagaran, 2013, p. 268). Moreover, the study showed that while communication schools in the country have recognized the need for media literacy, non-communication courses also integrated the subject, "especially in understanding the impact of media in different disciplines."

In the Philippines, the most significant achievement in MIL is its inclusion in the K-to-12 curriculum for senior high school (SHS). MIL was added as an integral core subject for Grade 11 or 12 students. The subject aims to introduce the students to a basic understanding and preview of media and information as a platform or channel of communication (MIL Curriculum Guide, n. d). The program aims to help young learners to be creative and responsible users and producers of media platforms. In the curriculum guide (CG) released by the DepEd, 17 topics on MIL were included, as follows: Introduction to Media and Information Literacy, The Evolution of Traditional to New Media, Information Literacy, Types of Media, Media and information Sources, Media, and information Language, Legal, Ethical, and Societal Issues in Media and Information, Opportunities, Challenges, and Power of Media, and Information, Current and Future Trends of Media and Information, Media and Information Literate individual, People Media, Text Information and Media, Visual Information and Media, Audio Information and Media, Motion Information and Media, Manipulative Information and Media., and Multimedia Information and Media.

Since MIL is a relatively new subject, it remains to be seen it can be effectively taught in the Philippines' SHS. UNESCO believes that teachers should become media and information literate to enhance MIL among students (Wilson, 2011). For this reason, this paper explores the strategies or materials used by teachers who first taught MIL in senior high school and the challenges they faced while teaching MIL.

Method

Research Design

The study focuses on the practices of Filipino SHS teachers in teaching MIL. To achieve the study's objectives, the researcher employed a qualitative technique, a type of social inquiry that involves conducting interviews or focus groups to learn about people's attitudes, behaviors, and experiences. In-depth interviews were utilized to gather the needed data from the participants of the study. To address the researcher's question, selected senior high school teachers from schools, either public or private, who have been teaching MIL, were interviewed. Based on the preliminary research by the researcher, only a few schools have started offering MIL since the nationwide implementation of Grade 12 begun by the end of 2017.

Respondents of the Study

In acquiring the needed participants, letters of interview request were sent to several SHS teachers of MIL from different senior high schools. Likewise, the researcher asked for referrals from his colleagues and former students who would have known someone who handled MIL in senior high school. The researcher also used Facebook to identifying possible participants based on referrals and recommendations. As a result, seven teachers from seven schools in Metro Manila and Bulacan, Philippines, volunteered to participate in the study.

Four teachers were from public senior high schools, while three are privately employed. They are first-timers in teaching MIL but have been teaching other subjects for at least two years. The oldest in the teaching profession has been teaching for nearly 20 years. The teachers had different degrees, namely home economics, technology and livelihood education (TLE), information technology, mathematics, social studies, education, and mass communication.

Data Gathering Procedure

Interview guides were used to equip the in-depth interview, which was the primary data generation method of the study. The first part of the interview guide is an icebreaker that focused on the socio-demographic and work profile of the participants. The second part concentrated on their basic knowledge of MIL, including the concept and definition of MIL, essential characteristics of a media and information literate person, and competencies they believe MIL students should acquire. The third and fourth parts consisted of questions on the materials used and strategies employed in teaching MIL. Finally, the participants were asked to identify the challenges they faced in teaching MIL and how they cope with those challenges.

An audio-recording device was used during the interview, with permission from the participants. The researcher transcribed the interviews based on the recorded audio.

To guide the data analysis, the researcher used the seven phases of analytic procedures or data analysis as described by Marshall and Rossman (2011) to reduce data, allow for interpretation, and find meaning in the words of the participants. The seven phases included organizing the data, immersing in the data, generating categories and themes, coding the data, offering interpretation, searching for alternative understandings, and writing the report. First, the researcher immersed himself with the data through extensive reading of the interviews to better understand the responses. As pointed out by Marshall and Rossman (2011), "reading, rereading, and reading through the data once more force the researcher to become intimate with the material." The researcher created a summary of notes through MS Excel to quickly refer to the original data as needed. Finally, themes emerged for each of the research questions.

Participants were not coerced or forced to participate in this study. However, to protect their identities, code names were assigned per participant during the processing of the data (P1 to P7).

Results and Discussions

Results

The primary research question for this study is how the teachers taught MIL in senior high school. However, the researcher realized it is essential first to consider their experience when they started teaching MIL. The primary themes that emerged from the data analysis are: (a) Teachers were assigned to teach MIL, and they cannot say no, and (b) they self-learned with only a limited amount of time to prepare.

Teachers were assigned to teach MIL, and they cannot say no. The teachers were assigned to teach MIL by their academic and subject coordinators, who oversee the distribution of teaching loads. When pressed why they were assigned to teach MIL, two common answers emerged: background in teaching computer and ICT-related subjects and knowledge on and experience in working in the media and communication field. Interestingly, these participants admitted they have little or no prior idea of what MIL is as a subject. Surprised and challenged are two characteristics to describe their reactions when they were assigned to teach MIL.

According to the teachers, the vital consideration why they were assigned to teach the subjects is the technical aspect of the curriculum – text, visual, and multimedia. The teachers admitted that they did not have adequate knowledge of MIL when they were first given the subject, although some of them have been teaching other subjects for several years.

They self-learned with only a limited amount of time of preparation. Teaching a subject for the first time is a challenging task, which requires adequate preparation. Unfortunately, the participants admit they were not technically and academically prepared to teach MIL. They also did not have any materials to use. Thus, they were forced to undergo a "self-learning process." Five participants could not attend any seminars due to lack of time and available training or seminars. "There was no preparation. The subject was given, maybe, a week before we started our second semester (P2)". To compensate for the lack of formal training, participants resolved to do their research. P1, P2, and P5 looked for online resources due to the lack of printed materials and books. P2 found a personally designed website on MIL containing videos and sample lessons. The website was prepared and designed by P4. P2 and P3 worked with teachers from other schools in looking for references they can use in teaching MIL.

The Department of Education included Media and Information Literacy as part of the Core Subjects under the Communication Learning Area for Senior High School at Grade 11 or 12 with one-semester allocation. Based on its curriculum description, "the course introduces the learners to the basic understanding of media and information as channels of communication and tools for the development of individuals and societies." The analysis of the data also shows a loophole in the assignment of subject loads. Principals, subject coordinators, and other school officials play a crucial role in the proper implementation of MIL. A wrong premise on the underlying concepts and competencies required by a subject resulted in, as shown in the study, assigning teachers who did not have adequate knowledge to teach the course. MIL-related [for the SHS subject] orientations and training should include these officials.

UNESCO also stated that teaching MIL among students requires that teachers become media and information literate. However, participants in

this study were not sufficiently trained. They did not have adequate resources to study and understand the concepts and competencies required in teaching MIL. Furthermore, the senior high school program aims to produce holistically developed graduates equipped with 21st-century skills (Senior High School Manual of Operations, 2016). However, this cannot be achieved if the teachers are ill-equipped with proper knowledge of what they should be teaching.

Nonetheless, it was fortunate to note that these teachers tried their best to fill in their learning gaps by conducting their research and developing their resources. But this does not overcome the downside of putting teachers without adequate knowledge and training to teach a competency-based subject.

Teaching Materials used by MIL Teachers

The materials used in teaching MIL included books, PowerPoint presentations, videos, handouts, and other materials such as music and news articles.

Teachers stated several books from various publishers. Some of the teachers were provided books by their schools, while others have to ask colleagues and search the Internet for other reference materials. However, P1 preferred to use online sources since she sometimes does not understand the book's explanations. P2, meanwhile, chose to use a particular MIL book since it was "very much aligned with the DepEd prescribed MIL curriculum" and was easier to use. Meanwhile, P5 did not use the book from another publishing house because "it would be difficult to use [the book]" since "there are some missing topics [in the book]. [And] Topics were also not properly arranged."

Aside from books, other participants relied on the Internet for references that they can use in teaching MIL. However, not all were able to mention specific sites or online sources of materials. Also, only two teachers said they used UNESCO-related materials. P7 specifically stated that "While I was teaching, I used online sources. UNESCO already launched MIL before it was launched here in the Philippines."

Other traditional forms of teaching-learning materials were also mentioned, such as PowerPoint materials and handouts. All teachers used PowerPoint presentations that they prepared using content from the books and online materials they have or using PowerPoint materials created by other MIL teachers. Teachers prepare their PowerPoint Slides or Presentation every week based on available books and other sources or reference materials. These presentations are then distributed to their students as handouts for easy reference. Teachers from public SHS, for example, admitted it was hard to teach MIL because of the lack of materials that they and their students can use - thus, providing them the handouts is valuable. Meanwhile, P4 prepares his PowerPoint presentations following the curriculum guide of DepEd, which he uploads in SlideShare so that other teachers can use them as well. He also ensures that his presentations contain cartoon analysis, videos, or news articles to enable the students to understand the lessons.

Some teachers incorporated other learning materials in teaching MIL, such as videos, music, cartoons. One primary reason is the need to leverage the visual learning capacities of their students. Meanwhile, by using cartoons, students could harness their critical and analytical thinking skills relevant

to MIL. For example, P1 and P6 believe their students are visual learners. Thus showing videos would quickly reinforce the topics discussed during the class.

P2 used these materials as an opportunity to explain the lesson clearly. "Students are visual learners. So, when they see something, the more that they learn. And then I stop it, I pause it, to give a more in-depth explanation that was not cited or given by the video," she explained. P1 and P5 believe videos help the students appreciate the concepts discussed and enjoy the class, although it sometimes takes away their attention from the topic.

A key finding from the interviews is related to the materials participants used in teaching MIL. Some teachers got the materials from their fellow teachers. Others took the materials online, specifically a Facebook group for MIL teachers. The teachers had difficulty looking for relevant reference materials.

However, many MIL materials are available online, such as open educational resources (OERs) that refer to complete courses, modules, course materials, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, and software. UNESCO also introduced MIL Clicks (Media and Information Literacy: Critical thinking/Creativity, Literacy, Intercultural, Citizenship, Knowledge, and Sustainability), a social media movement that aims to identify credible sources and evaluate information (About MIL Clicks, 2016). Teachers might need to be trained and guided to identify websites that provide OERs and other online resources, which can help them better teach MIL.

Strategies used in teaching MIL.

The instructional strategies used by the teachers in teaching MIL were categorized into four groups: whole group instruction, small group discussions, collaboration, and student-centered strategies, performance tasks, and critical thinking.

The most mentioned instructional strategy was whole group instruction, which included lectures and discussions. These are mixed with other activities to make the lectures and discussions livelier and more enjoyable, described as a primary strategy used by the teachers. For example, P4 stated: "Lecture by nature is very traditional… but you can do lecture with discussion… you can make lecture a way to engage students into discussions."

Another strategy discussed was the small group discussion. For example, P3 asks her students to form small groups and brainstorm to discuss the assigned topics. "The students will have some discussions about the topic, and after the brainstorming activity, they will present [their ideas])," she explained. P5, on the other hand, used case studies during small group discussions to help students articulate their views and engage their critical thinking skills. He also included round-robin discussions that allow students to discuss their opinions and answers with other groups within the class. P2, meanwhile, shared that she asked her students to work by group and prepare a PowerPoint presentation on a specific topic for class reporting. However, she ensures that after each group work, she meets each group to discuss the content of their materials.

Collaboration was another emphasized strategy. P2 described activities

involving collaboration and cooperative learning as the means of teaching her students. P3 shared that she groups students with similar learning styles to collaborate and work to accomplish specific tasks during the class. Finally, P5 provided his students with case studies to analyze as a group, which helps them appreciate the topics.

Other strategies mentioned by the participants included *student-centered approaches and performance tasks*. For example, P2 applied performance tasks such as role-playing. She also highlighted the need for a student-centered method using technology. P4, on the other hand, emphasized that the current K-to-12 curriculum requires teachers to focus on performance tasks and student-centered approaches. For this reason, he applies cartoon and video analyses and reaction paper activities during class lectures and group discussions. He also believes that MIL was designed as a "student-centered lesson." "You do not tell them, but you ask questions," he said. On the other hand, P5 believes it is essential to assess the students' abilities before employing the appropriate strategies.

Although the teachers described various teaching strategies, most often using multiple types simultaneously, each teacher only mentioned two to four strategies. Furthermore, they did not identify other UNESCO-recommended techniques in teaching MIL, such as a thorough issue-enquiry approach, simulations, and translation. Only case studies, cooperative learning, textual analysis, and production were mentioned and utilized by the teachers. When asked if they were aware of any UNESCO-prescribed pedagogical approaches in teaching MIL, four teachers could not identify one.

Furthermore, results reveal that the teachers' strategies subscribe to a constructivist point-of-view, which treats learning as an active process, usually deriving meaning from the students' experience (Overbaugh, 2004). The participants also believe that the strategies they used in teaching MIL met both students' needs and DepEd requirements.

Challenges while teaching MIL

The teachers discussed seven different challenges they experienced while teaching MIL. The interviews showed that (a) the teachers faced various challenges in using the curriculum and the availability of the instructional materials and (b) that teachers should consider the students' abilities and the availability of facilities and equipment in teaching MIL.

The challenges related to the MIL curriculum were categorized into three: knowledge of the curriculum, teachers' competency, and meeting the requirements of the curriculum guide.

Four teachers described the difficulty of teaching a subject they are not familiar with, especially the content of the prescribed DepEd curriculum. P1 added, "The very challenge is that it's my first time to encounter [MIL], so I had to study every time I teach them."

Three participants described the curriculum as "confusing." P4, for example, described teaching MIL as "starting from scratch" and pointed out the lack of enough guidance from the curriculum guide prepared by DepEd. P1 said the curriculum guide was hard to understand, especially for a teacher who will teach the subject the first time. P7 also expressed disappointment that there was no person available to seek guidance on how to teach MIL. "It's

different when someone trains you, and there's someone from DepEd who will say what they want," she said.

Three participants pointed out the need to identify who is competent to teach MIL. P3 said, "if teachers who don't know MIL will be asked to teach it, what happened to us will still happen. So, it's better to conduct proper training for the teachers." P4 specifically explained the need to identify who is eligible to handle the subject. Finally, P6 had a similar opinion and believes that communication graduates should teach the subject.

Other teachers described their difficulties in conceptualizing strategies and activities to meet the objectives of the prescribed DepEd curriculum. P6, for example, said that it was challenging to come up with relevant and appropriate performance task activities that will meet the competencies specified in the curriculum guide. P7 also had a similar problem, and only after attending a seminar post-semester that she realized there are other strategies and materials she can apply and use while teaching MIL.

The time needed to prepare and teach the subject was also another issue since there are many topics to cover based on the curriculum guide. P4 emphasized that it was impossible to cover all the learning competencies if the primary objective is to make the subject student-centered. P5 added that he could not complete the discussions because "there are topics that cannot be covered for one week or one day. Sometimes, two weeks are not enough to cover the whole topic."

The participants also shared that they had a hard time using available instructional materials such as books that were not aligned with the content of the curriculum. Some of the widely available local textbook references do not follow the flow set by the curriculum guide (P5 and P1). One teacher even shared that they must edit the existing module prepared by other teachers in their school to ensure it follows the proper context of teaching MIL (P6). Furthermore, relevant materials and technologies are limited, especially for teachers from public SHSs (P5, P2). P4, on the other hand, stated that many materials are available online. However, these materials are not designed for Filipino learners. Some teachers were lucky to use TV monitors to show their PowerPoint presentations. Some show video clips and films to help the learners appreciate the lessons.

It is also essential to note that since several teachers describe MIL as more ICT-oriented, they believe using computers and other technologies is very relevant. It was evident that the participant's felt technology is vital in teaching MIL. The latter part of the curriculum guide requires teachers to teach computer-related topics such as editing and production.

Various literature has identified specific competencies that teachers must possess to teach MIL (Gretter & Yadav, 2018; Kovalik, Kuo & Karpinski 2013; Thompson, Schmidt-Crawford and Lindstrom 2015; Wiseman 2012). Meanwhile, Gretter and Yadav (2018) emphasized the need to understand the teachers' identities as digital educators and how their attitudes towards mass media, digital culture, and social media influence their motivations as teachers. Therefore, school administrators and policymakers should consider these aspects to ensure the effective delivery of MIL as a subject.

Conclusions

SHS teachers who participated in this study have an urgent need for additional training on the content of the MIL subject. In addition, subject coordinators and school administrators are critical to the success of the MIL curricula since their lack of understanding of the subject results in a mismatch between the teachers and their assigned subjects.

Furthermore, the lack of adequate materials to be used in MIL is prominent. There were few books aligned with DepEd's curriculum guide. Even those from private schools found it difficult to teach the subject because they felt that their books were inadequate. Other participants relied on the Internet searching for materials, although not all could use UNESCO-prepared learning resources. Results also revealed the risk of using inappropriate materials due to a lack of guidance and knowledge of the MI curriculum.

Teachers who participated in this study rely on traditional strategies in teaching MIL, mixing them with constructivist learning methods such as collaborative group works and case studies. However, despite the abundance of effective instructional strategies in teaching MIL, particularly those suggested by UNESCO, the teachers only mentioned few pedagogical approaches.

Teachers also faced significant challenges, including the lack of relevant materials aligned to the curriculum guide, lack of competency of teachers to teach the subject, and confusion on who should handle MIL classes. Aside from the materials and training needed, meeting the desired goals of DepEd's curriculum guide and covering all topics was also challenging for the teachers. Lastly, teachers enjoyed teaching MIL. Despite the lack of preparedness and adequate knowledge of the subject, participants are open and willing to teach MIL, recognizing its importance and relevance to their students for as long as there will be adequate preparation and materials to be used.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the profiling of MIL teachers in the country, including their expertise, experience, and educational background. DepEd should also release a guideline containing the qualifications of teachers who can handle MIL classes, including the educational background, competencies, and skills. An assessment of MIL teachers using proper assessment tools, such as tools recommended by UNESCO, can also be conducted. DepEd may map available teaching-learning resources used and accessed by MIL teachers and students to determine if the resources are aligned with the prescribed criteria of the curriculum guide. DepEd may also consider reviewing the curriculum guide based on UNESCO's universally accepted framework. The three core competencies of MIL (access, evaluation, and creation) may be used as indicators if the curriculum guide is assessed.

Several other recommendations for future studies emerged from this study. This study was restricted to seven SHS teachers who taught MIL in AY 2016-2017 from selected institutions that first offered the subject. The first recommendation would be to expand the study locale. Classroom observations can be conducted to gather more data on teachers' practices. Studying the teaching practices using this approach would be beneficial to deepen the understanding of the actual strategies used inside the classroom. Future researchers can also conduct a quantitative survey among the students to evaluate how their teachers teach MIL.

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