Title: Explore, Engage, Empower Model: Integrating Media and Information Literacy (MIL) for Sustainable Development in Communication Education Curriculum

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Abstract:

This conceptual paper offers a new set of perspectives in understanding and adapting UNESCO's composite concept of media and information literacy (MIL) to support post-2015 development agenda in communication education curriculum. The Explore, Engage, Empower Model recognizes the need for communication educators and school administrators to understand, appreciate, and implement MIL across the curriculum as we navigate the digital age. This explains the importance of critical, creative, and reflective thinking processes in lesson development, implementation, and assessment, especially to sensitize and empower future media practitioners to support human rights, respect for others, and equality. This also focuses on the need for skills progression in MIL of today's students to fully embrace it as important set of competencies to contribute meaningfully to personal, professional, and societal development. Likewise, this paper offers strategies for Global Alliance for Partnership on MIL (GAPMIL) to consider in developing learning and development programs for formal and non-formal education. Most importantly, this highlights empowerment, rather than protection, for informed decision-making in the knowledge society.

Keywords: Triple E's of MIL, media and information literacy, MIL integration in the curriculum, MIL for sustainable development, MIL models, MIL in the digital age, MIL competencies, curriculum, sustainable development

Introduction

Curriculum development has always been challenged with the emergence of new ideas and perspectives on how to best train students. These new perspectives are not only brought about by the developments in information and communication technologies, but also changes in the content and pedagogy of subject courses. The Bachelor of Arts in Communication curricular program is no exception, especially in the formation of future media practitioners who are expected to be the game-changers in the promotion of free, independent, and pluralistic media.

With the ushering in of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, there is a need to review existing curricula to make them more responsive to sustainable development goals. As future media practitioners, students need to access, understand, use and share needed information to promote sustainable development. How then should media and information literacy (MIL) in communication curriculum be taught so that it reflects the ideals of the Post-2015 Development Agenda of the United Nations? This conceptual paper attempts to provide some new perspectives on integrating media and information literacy in the communication curriculum through a new model – the Explore, Engage, Empower Model.

The Explore, Engage, Empower Model

Since its inception as a composite concept by UNESCO, media and information literacy has come of age. Apart from the pioneering MIL Curriculum for Teachers (UNESCO, 2011), UNESCO has developed a set of indicators to assess how MIL is developed as part of national policies and programs and a set of competencies to guide lesson development, implementation and assessment in schools. Education, through formal and non-formal means, is instrumental in promoting freedom of expression and access to information as necessary preconditions to achieve the goals of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

As defined by UNESCO, "Media and information literacy is a set of competencies that empowers citizens to access, retrieve, understand, evaluate and use, create as well as share information and media content in all formats, using various tools, in a critical, ethical, and effective way, in order to participate and engage in personal, professional, and societal activities" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 29).

This definition implies that there is a need for skills progression in MIL for today's students as part of lifelong learning to contribute meaningfully to personal, professional, and societal development. This set of competencies must be reflected in national education policies to guide curriculum development and promote it as a framework in crafting institutional and program outcomes among educational institutions.

The skills progression has been simplified as illustrated in the author's Explore, Engage, and Empower Model, or the "Triple E's of MIL Model" for easy recall.
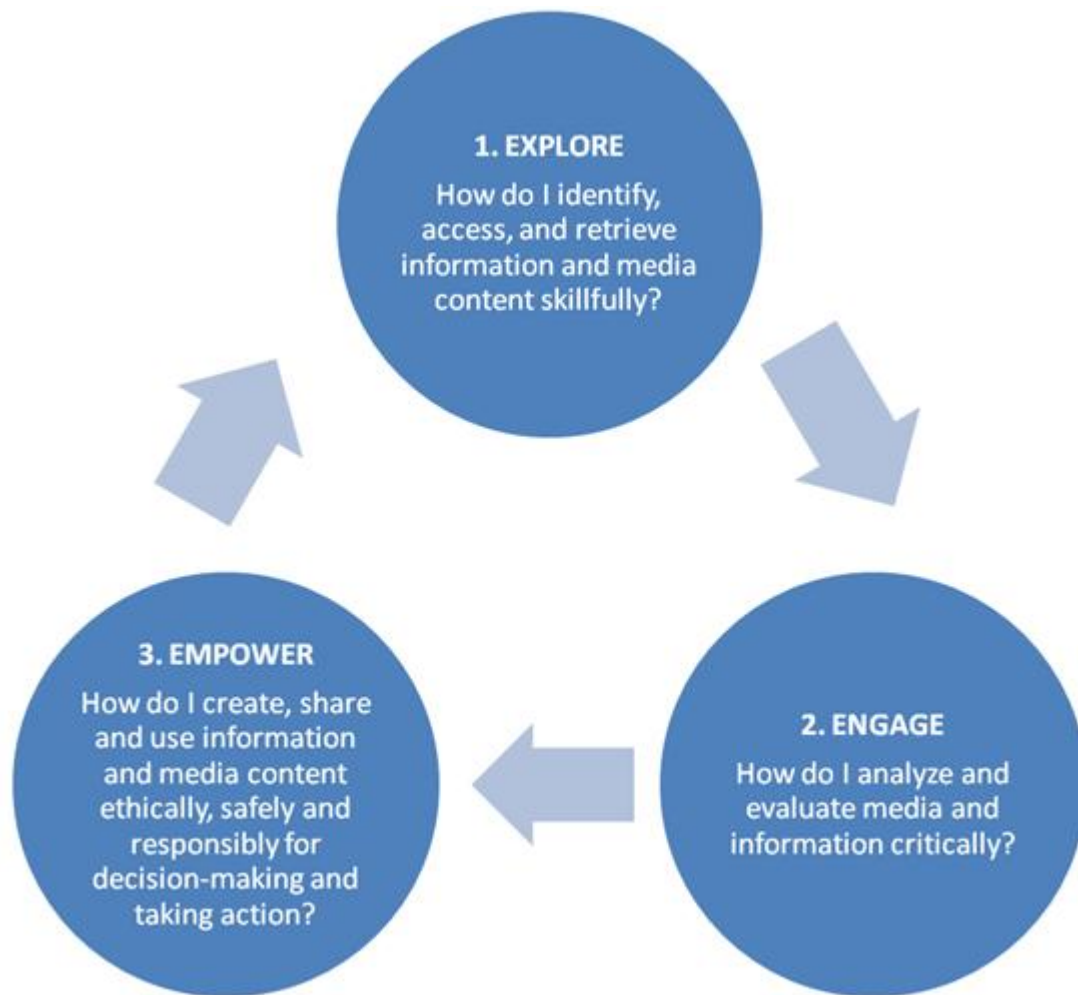
Fig. 1: Explore, Engage, and Empower Model of Media and Information Literacy (MIL)

The media and information literacy competencies can be grouped into three major practical applications: explore, engage, and empower.

1. To *explore* is to identify, access, and retrieve information and media content skilfully;

2. To *engage* is to analyze and evaluate media and information critically; and

3. To *empower* is to create or produce, share or communicate, and use information and media content ethically, safely, and responsibly for decision-making and taking action.

The **Explore, Engage and Empower Model** (The Triple E's of MIL) provides a general process framework for understanding and practicing media and information literacy. When teachers and students **explore** media and information, they search or find out how they can locate, access, and retrieve information and media content using different tools and techniques. This requires functional skills in the use of technologies. Likewise, teachers and students need to recognize and identify a need for information to make sure that this is going to be useful and relevant for them and for their audience before they search for it.

When teachers and students **engage** with media, they critically analyze and evaluate media and information content in terms of media language through codes and conventions, and representations of gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality or religion. They need to evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and reliability of media information and content by checking its authorship, purpose, and the techniques used to entice audiences. Finally, they **empower** themselves when they create, share, and use information and media content wisely, ethically, safely, and responsibly to improve their personal, professional, and social lives. They produce media materials and messages for different media platforms within the bounds of legal and moral orders to aid decision-making for most of life's concerns (Alagaran, 2015). This model encapsulates all the relevant competencies that students in the digital age must be able to acquire in a more concise and straightforward fashion. Likewise, this highlights empowerment as the ultimate level of practicing MIL skilfully and applying it in our everyday lives, especially in the exercise of our universal rights and fundamental freedoms.

How then do we integrate this model of MIL skills progression in the development of communication curriculum? How will this contribute to the achievement of the goals of Post-2015 Development Agenda?

Integrating MIL in the Curriculum to Promote Sustainable Development Goals

MIL can be both a content area and a process in the communication curriculum. It can be a topic for discussion in subjects like communication issues, communication and society, and communication research. It can also be a process through activities introduced in media production and management courses.

As a content area, MIL can be discussed as a concept and discussions may focus on why it is relevant. On the other hand, MIL as a process enables students to explore websites, libraries, archives, popular media and other information providers, analyze and evaluate media and information content, and produce and share communication materials, campaigns, plans, and strategies.

Specifically, MIL may promote sustainable development goals through awareness and understanding of development issues such as education, governance and human rights, poverty, climate and energy, health, women empowerment, water and sanitation, food and agriculture, peace and stability, and infrastructure and technology. These issues can be addressed as part of class activities that encourage students to explore traditional and new media, engage with media and information, and empower themselves thru the creation and sharing of media messages and information products.

The succeeding matrix provides some class activities which may guide communication educators and students in the use of MIL to promote sustainable development goals. The communication course subjects are clustered into four major groups: theory (including fundamentals); research; production; and management (including media laws and ethics).

MIL Skills	Communication Courses			
	Theory (Including Fundamentals)	**Research**	**Production**	**Management** (Including Laws and Ethics)
Explore (access and retrieve)	Discuss Post-2015 Development Agenda in introductory courses and the role of communication in promoting it as part of national development. Access the different genres or traditions of communication models and theories through different search engines and share to class the experience.	Access studies based on positivist, interpretive, cultural and critical communication research traditions. Discuss why these research studies are important in the development of national development policies for education, ICT, governance, business, and civil societies,	Search for Youtube videos on development issues. Check which organizations produced these videos and find out what other materials are available in the library, through archives, or other sources on these issues. Share with class what you have discovered in terms of sources on these issues and how they	Interview media managers about access to information as it applies to development stories. Find out if they are having an easy or difficult task in accessing this information and how they manage such situations. Ask them about their experiences in accessing government data and other information.

	Then search sites for lecture videos and other multimedia materials on development issues and programs and create web folders.	among others.	can be accessed.	Write an interview story and submit this as an article for publication.
Engage (analysis and evaluate)	Discuss the communication dimensions of these development programs. Find out whether there are information, education, and communication (IEC) campaign materials produced. Relate them with	Analyze print and audio-visual campaigns, news stories and online materials about development issues based on media analysis questions. Find out how the development issues are presented in terms of codes	Assess these materials in terms of authenticity and reliability of information. Determine the sources of information used, how the issues are presented in the videos and the purpose on why they have been produced	Based on the interviews, evaluate stories based on the experiences and practices of a media person and a government representative about access to information. Check what are considered public and

	the communication models and theories retrieved and discuss how the development issue and program is framed and communicated based on existing communication theories.	and conventions and media representations. The findings will form part of a broader study on deconstructing development issues.	for a particular audience. Evaluate both content and technical aspects of these videos from a human rights lens.	private documents and reflect how the nature of the documents will affect a media person's desire to report the truth in line with freedom of expression.
Empower (create, use, and share)	Produce another set of materials on the same development issue or program. Compare the existing with the proposed and revised	Use the results of this study to develop action plans on communicating sustainable development programs. Write an article on what you have	Attempt to produce these materials in another platform or medium. Reflect on what you have discovered about understanding the medium as a	If you found out that media managers are denied access to certain records, check the existing laws on access to information and freedom of

	communication materials. Use and share these materials with colleagues through social media. Get feedback from friends and colleagues of other cultures and review topics that they consistently talk about and why.	found out and post this on Facebook or send this to media organizations.	source of media messages and information content. Invite your classmates to express their views on the issue and how a change in platform affects the presentation of the development issue.	expression. Then reflect on how such laws or the lack of them influences decision-making in the monitoring and implementation of development programs.

Implications to GAPMIL learning and development activities

The Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy (GAPMIL) must regularly meet to discuss areas for partnerships in learning and development, specifically formal and non-formal education activities. MIL experts in different regions and countries must work together to address specific development agenda that should be covered in international conferences or workshops on MIL to be organized in the regions. Even diploma, college or graduate programs must include discussions on MIL as it relates to sustainable development. This is important as every region has specific development concerns to be prioritized especially on issues related to human rights, governance, climate change, poverty, health, among others.

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