Self – Assessment on Media and Information Literacy Competencies among Communication Professionals in Philippine Information Agency and Philippine News Agency

Monica P. Ornopia, Polytechnic University of the Philippines & Open University, Philippines

Abstract

This research paper entitled 'Self-Assessment on Media and Information Literacy Competencies among Communication Professionals in Philippine Information Agency and Philippine News Agency' aims to determine if communication professionals employed in Philippine Information Agency and Philippine News Agency are media and information literate. The study employed the descriptive method through quantitative research. The researcher used a two (2) stage sampling technique; the first level is quota sampling technique, wherein, the researcher targeted a total of 100 respondents from this study, while the second level is purposive sampling technique, wherein, the researcher selected only the communication professionals employed in Philippine Information Agency and Philippine News Agency. The researcher found out that communication professionals employed in Philippine Information Agency and Philippine News Agency are media and information literate. Based on the findings of this study, the Media and Information Literacy level of the respondents is in advanced level. This means that the respondents have best level of knowledge and skills acquired from practice and training on Media and Information Literacy in terms of Explore, Engage, and Empower adopted on the Triple E's competency level of Alagaran (2015) It is recommended that both communication agencies should conduct continuous seminars and workshops to maintain the advanced level on media and information literacy skills among communication employees of the both agencies. Moreover, enhancement trainings and proper information dissemination to improve the MIL skills not only to the agency itself, but also to its viewers are also recommended.

Keywords: Media and Information Literacy, Philippine Information Agency, Philippine News Agency, Triple E's Competency Level

Introduction

"Media and Information Literacy consists of the knowledge, the attitudes, and the sum of the skills needed to know when and what information is needed; where and how to obtain that information; how to evaluate it critically and organise it once it is found; and how to use it in an ethical way. The concept extends beyond communication and information technologies to encompass learning, critical thinking, and interpretative skills across and beyond professional and educational boundaries. Media and Information Literacy includes all types of information resources: oral, print, and digital. Media and Information Literacy is a basic human right in an increasingly digital, interdependent, and global world, and promotes greater social inclusion. It can bridge the gap between the information rich and the information poor. Media and Information Literacy empowers and endows individuals with knowledge of the functions of the media and information systems and the conditions under which these functions are performed" (IFLA, 2011).

"We live in a world where the quality of information we receive largely determines our choices and ensuing actions, including our capacity to enjoy fundamental freedoms and the ability for self-determination and development. Driven by technological improvements in telecommunications, there is also a proliferation of media and other information providers through which vast amounts of information and knowledge are accessed and shared by citizens. Adding to and emanating from this phenomenon is the challenge to assess the relevance and the reliability of the information" (UNESCO, 2011).

In the Philippines, there are issues we need to address concerning the media literacy competencies of majority. Elemia (2018) suggested to address the root of proliferation of fake news and information in the Philippines, it is important that our social norms and values need to catch up with technology, focusing on five ideas for media literacy: social etiquette in interaction; the moral responsibility not to abuse its anonymity; to foster critical thinking; strengthen the paradigms of constructive debate; and put in place respect for plurality of ideas. Besides, with the rapid rise of digital technology and its increasing use in business, education and culture, it is very important to ensure that everyone can understand and engage with digital media because at the end of the day, media literacy is vital for economic growth and job creation. As what Frank Baker, author and Media Literacy expert, once said that "those who are not media literate or do not question media messages, or do not seek out reliable, trustworthy information, are destined to be tricked, misled and fooled by advertising, politicians, propaganda and more."

In the case of the Philippines, we definitely have shown great progress. Per Literacy Statistics, Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) of 2013, 96.5 percent of Filipinos were literate, an improvement from 95.6 percent in 2008. Almost all Filipinos ten years old and above were basically literate, while nine out of ten Filipinos 10 to 64 years of age were functionally literate. At least in terms of reading, writing and comprehending, Filipinos have come a long way. But as we may all know, we are in an era of rapid change. The age of Web 2.0 continues to thrive and Filipinos have embraced it wholeheartedly. We know that we have been once called the social media capital of the world, with every study on the matter

ranking the Philippines as among the top countries spending the most hours on social media platforms.

As these advancements widen their reach on our soil, the dangers they entail also spread like wildfire, and their worst target is the youth. According to the DQ Institute, an average Filipino child now spends 34 hours in front of digital screens every week, two hours higher than the global average of 32 hours. While this happens, 73 percent of our children are exposed to cyber-bullying, inappropriate active searches, gaming addiction, meeting strangers online, online sexual content, inappropriate adult images and inappropriate sexual talking. Filipino children have become increasingly vulnerable online and such problem requires us to know more about what we're dealing with. There is a need to spread a new kind of literacy. (pia.gov.ph, 2018)

Coincidentally, the Philippine Information Agency has been tapped by ASEAN to develop and implement a media and information literacy campaign, that is why the researcher aims to find out how competent the Communication Professionals in Philippine Information Agency and Philippine News Agency when it comes to media and information, specifically on how they Explore, Engage, and Empower its audience based on the theory of Dr. Alagaran (2015). It is very vital to study first the competence of those who are inside the PIA and PNA since they are the one who is tasked to initiate the media and information literacy campaign in the country and they are the official news and public information arm of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. Aside from being the key communication agencies of the country, it is also important to determine the level of MIL competencies of the two agencies for the individuals must be able to recognize when information is true or false and understand how to locate, accurately evaluate, effectively use and clearly communicate information in various formats. According to Renee Hobbs, Professor, Harrington School of Communication and Media at the University of Rhode Island, "few people verify the information they find online — both adults and children tend to uncritically trust information they find, from whatever source." People need to judge the credibility of information.

To reiterate the history of Philippine Information Agency posted on its website, the Department of Information was created with Press Sec. Francisco "Kit" S. Tatad as the head in 1972 after the declaration of Martial Law. DPI later merged with the National Media Production Center (NMPC) with Gregorio S. Cendena appointed as Minister of the Ministry of Information. The Ministry of Information was also later renamed as the Office of Media Affairs (OMA). While in 1983, OMA and NMPC both transferred to the media center building now known as the Philippine Information Agency Building in Visayas Avenue, Quezon City. Meanwhile, in 1986, a government-wide reorganization was implemented, part of which abolished the Office of Media Affairs – National Media Production Center (OMA – NMPC) to streaming government bureaucracy and redirect and reorient the government information system.

The Philippine Information Agency was then created out of the defunct NMPC through Executive Order No. 100 promulgated on Dec. 24, 1986 by former Pres. Corazon Aquino until the office of the Press Secretary (OPS) was created through Memorandum Order No. 32 on September 1, 1986 followed by issuance of Executive Order 297 in 1987 leading to reorganizing of OPS and its attached bureaus, agencies,

and units until PIA as also attached to the OPS from 1987 until 1989. On July 2010, the OPS was reorganized and renamed as Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) of all media organizations, assets, and components units under one Department, PIA was one of the 11 agencies now under control and supervisions of the PCOO Secretary.

On the other hand, the Philippine News Agency was merely an initially teletype newswire service that replaced the Philippine News Service (PNS) which was established in 1973 until the agency launched its online presence in 2003. Just like PIA, the PNA is one of the many agencies supervised by the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) by virtue of Executive Order No. 4 issued by President Benigno S. Aquino III in 2010 and is also located at the Philippine Information Agency Building in Visayas Avenue, Quezon City since they are just both under the PCOO.

The PIA works with the Office of the President through PCOO, national government agencies, and other public sector entities in communicating their programs, projects, and services to the Filipino people. It is tasked to establish and maintain regional and provincial information centers to identify community needs for use in planning and providing communication programs and services; plan and implement information programs of national scope; and provide assistance to government agencies through capability-building and consultancy services. (www.pia.gov.ph). Meanwhile, PNA is a web-based newswire service of the Philippine government under the supervision of the News and Information Bureau (NIB) of the Presidential Communications Office (PCO).

This study aims to examine the Self – Assessment on Media And Information Literacy Competencies among Communication Professionals in Philippine Information Agency and Philippine News Agency answering the following questions:

1) What is the socio-demographic profile of the communication professionals in Philippine Information Agency and Philippine News Agency in terms of:
      1.1 Age
      1.2 Sex
      1.3 Educational Background
      1.4 Length of Service

2.) What is the self – assessment on media and information literacy competencies among the respondents of Philippine Information Agency and Philippine News Agency in terms of the following:
      2.1. Explore
            2.1.1. Identify
            2.1.2. Access
            2.1.3. Retrieve
      2.2. Engage
            2.2.1. Analyze
            2.2.2. Evaluate
      2.3. Empower
            2.3.1. Create
            2.3.2. Share

3.) What is the overall level of media and information literacy competencies of Philippine Information Agency and Philippine News Agency?

Conclusions

Since the researcher wants to determine the self - assessment of media and information literacy competencies among the communication and information professionals in Philippine News Agency and Philippine Information Agency, the survey questionnaire was divided based on the questions found in the statement of the problem. By the results found on the Summary of Findings, the researcher has concluded that most of the communication professionals who are employed in PIA and PNA range from 20 to 30 years old, and most of them are female and graduated bachelor's degree. In addition, most of them stayed in the company for 5 years below only.

Meanwhile, the researcher also concluded that the communication and information employees in Philippine News Agency and Philippine Information Agency are already both advanced in terms of the level of media and information literacy according to Explore, Engage, and Empower. Previous research has found that media literacy indeed gives citizen the tools to effectively analyze and understand the messages around us, besides, as an increasing numbers of citizens turns to technology, the media literacy would also grow increasingly important. (Hoffman, M. E., 2016). On the article entitled "PCOO staff undergo social media, journalism training" on September 2017, it stated there that Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) conducted an intensive three-day-social media and journalism training two years ago for its staff, including Philippine News Agency and Philippine Information Agency, to hone their skills in public information and to explore the key principles and practices of digital content and journalism, that's why the study supported the advanced results of the respondents.

The researcher has also concluded that the staff of Philippine News Agency and Philippine Information Agency have applied the media trainings offered by China through the memorandum and understanding on media exchange and cooperation which was signed on May 15 2017, plus the media training conducted by PCOO for its staff on September 2017 leading to advanced result on media and information literacy competencies. Besides, on the article which entitled *"Help empower communities thru responsible sharing of info – PIA Chief"* released on September 11, 2018, PIA's Director Harold Clavite reiterated that as responsible citizens, we must share the right information that can help empower people and communities towards the country's goal of bringing a better life to every Filipino family, progress to all communities and nation building.

References

Alagaran II, J. R. (2015). Explore, Engage, Empower Model: Integrating Media and Information Literacy (MIL) for Sustainable Development in Communication Education Curriculum. Retrieved from https://www.amic.asia/.pdf

Abengoza, A. E., Becerra, T. D., Loque, S. G., Simon,I. V. (2014). MIL Competences: from theory to practice. Measuring citizens' competences on Media and Information Literacy. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275041884_MIL_Competences_from_theory_to_practice_Measuring_citizens'_competences_on_Media_and_Information_Literacy

Alargon, J. (2012). Media and Information Literacy as a key: Developing an Outcome-based Curiculum Content fo Bachelor of Arts in Communication Program. Retrieved from https://milunesco.unaoc.org/mil-articles/media-and-information-literacy-as-a-key-developing-an-outcome-based-curriculum-content-for-bachelor-or-arts-in-communication-program/

Akyempong, K., Cheung, C.K., Grizzle, A., Tuazon, R., and Wilson, C. (2011). Media and Information Literacy: Curiculum for Teachers. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192971/PDF/192971eng.pdf.multi Anonymous (2015). Media Insights 2015 – The Top Five Media of Urban Philippines and Emerging. Retrieved from http://pana.com.ph/media-insights-2015-the-top-five-media-of-urban-philippines-and-emerging-trends/

Birdsong, L. (2009). Information literacy training for all?: The outliers. *Searcher, 17*(8), 18-23,54. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/221087832?accountid=47253

Boekhorst, J. et. Al (2001). Information Literacy and Learning. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228411535_Information_Literacy_and_Learning

Bulger, M. and Davison, P. (2018). The Promises, Challenges, and Futures of Media Literacy. Retrieved from https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/DataAndSociety_Media_Literacy_2018.pdf

Cristobal, L. (2015). Literacy in the philippines: the stories behind the numbers. Retrieved from https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/literacy-daily/2015/08/06/literacy-in-the-philippines-the-stories-behind-the-numbers

CMFR. (n.d.). Why Media Literacy. Retrieved from https://cmfr-phil.org

Dai, S. L. (2014). *Why should PR professionals embrace infographics?*(Order No. 1568841). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1624861377). Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1624861377?accountid=47253

Elinon, L. (2018). Media Literacy in 'Fake News' Era. Retrieved from www.pressreader.com

Hernandez. B. (2017). Media and Information Literacy. Retrieved from https://opinioninquirer.net

Hermann, H. (2018). Five laws of media and information literacy by unesco. Retrieved from https://iiciis.org/international/2018/07/24/five-laws-of-media-and-information-literacy/

Livingstone, S. (2004). What is Media Literacy? Retrieved from http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/1027/1/What_is_media_literacy_(LSERO).pdf

Martisson, J. (2013). Media and Information Literacy is Gaining Momentum. Retrieved from https://blogs.worldbank.org

National University Library (n.d.). Media and Information Literacy. Retrieved from https://nu.kz.libguides.com

Philippine Information Agency. (2018). Literacy in Age of Social Media. Retrieved from https://pia.gov.ph

Philippine News Agency. (2018). PCOO Bats for Media and Information Literacy Programs. Retrieved from www.pna.gov.ph

Rappler (2016). A profile of internet users in the Philippines. Retrieved from https://www.rappler.com/brandrap/profile-internet-users-ph

Reineck, D. and Lublinski J. (2015). Media and Information Literacy: A human rights-based approach in developing countries. Retrieved from https://m.dw.com/downloads/35932528/media-information-literacy.pdf

Roser, M. & Ortiz-Espina, E. (2018). Literacy. Retrieved from https://ourworldindata.org

Russo, D. (2016). Competency Measurement Model. Retrieved from http://www.ine.es/q2016/docs/q2016Final00276.pdf

Unesco (2011). Media and Information Literacy: Curriculum for teachers.

Unesco (2009). UNESCO: What it is? What does it do? Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000147330/PDF/147330eng.pdf.multi

Yap, J. (2017). One MIL a day keeps the (IL) literate away. https://www.slideshare.net/PAARLOnline/one-mil-a-day-keeps-the-il-literate-away

F Tucho, A Fernández-Planells, M Lozano, M Figueras-Maz (2015): "Media Literacy, unfinished business in the training of journalists, advertisers and audiovisual communicators". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 70, pp. 689 to 702. Retrieved from 10.4185/RLCS-2015-1066en

Hoffman, M. E. (2016). *News media literacy and social media usage* (Order No. 11015319). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2164740357). Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/2164740357?accountid=47253 Media and Information Literacy for the Sustainable Development Goals (2015). Retrieved from https://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/publikationer-hela-pdf/milid_yearbook_2015.pdf

Philippines: PCOO staff undergo social media, journalism training. (2017, Sep 25). *Asia News Monitor* Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1941979839?accountid=47253

Philippines: PCOO bats for media and information literacy programs. (2018, Feb 06). *Asia News Monitor* Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1994022342?accountid=47253

Philippines: Help empower communities thru responsible sharing of info - PIA chief. (2018). *MENA Report,* Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/2102130223?accountid=47253

Philippines/China: Media cooperation with china further strengthens PHL gov't media -- andanar. (2017, May 18). *Asia News Monitor* Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1900088478?accountid=47253

Philippines: Media ethics cores DRRM training for communicators. (2016). *MENA Report,* Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1830670014?accountid=47253

Poliquin, A. (2015). *Media literacy education: A media literacy campaign on the social significance of media literacy and its educational need* (Order No. 10007483). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1762246823). Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1762246823?accountid=47253

UNESCO (2013), Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: Country Readiness and Competencies, Paris: UNESCO

Contact email: monicaornopia@gmail.com