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**In Between Rock and a Hard Place:
How Teachers Navigate Internal and External
Pressures of the 21st Century Classrooms in the
Context of Lived Experiences of Select Teachers
of Media And Information Literacy Curriculum
In The Philippines**

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List of Abbreviations

Street-Level Bureaucrat(s)	SLB
Media and Information Literacy	MIL
New Public Management	NPM

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT -----	3
KEYWORDS-----	3
RELEVANCE TO DEVELOPMENT STUDIES -----	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT-----	5
CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION-----	6
1.1 <i>Nature of the Problem</i> -----	6
1.2 <i>Justification and relevance of this research</i> -----	9
1.3 <i>Background to the Proposed Study</i> -----	10
1.4 <i>Research objectives and question</i> -----	12
CHAPTER 2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK -----	13
CHAPTER 3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW -----	18
3.1 <i>Curriculum Standardization</i> -----	18
3.2 <i>Teacher Autonomy</i> -----	21
3.3 <i>How Accountability Influences Teacher Autonomy</i> -----	25
3.4 <i>What is a “Good Education” in the 21st century classroom?</i> -----	27
CHAPTER 4.0 MEDIA & INFORMATION LITERACY-----	30
4.1 <i>Overview of Media and Information Literacy</i> -----	30
4.2 <i>Media and Information Literacy in the Philippines</i> -----	30
4.3 <i>Changes in the Curriculum of MIL in the Philippines</i> -----	32
4.4 <i>The Education System in the Philippines</i> -----	33
CHAPTER 5.0 METHODOLOGY -----	34
5.1 <i>Research Methods</i> -----	34
5.3 <i>Limitations of the Method</i> -----	36
5.4 <i>Ethical Dilemmas and Research Challenges</i> -----	37
5.5 <i>Situating Positionality</i> -----	39
CHAPTER 6.0 FINDINGS -----	41
6.1 <i>Lack of Resources</i> -----	42
6.2 <i>Psychological Threat</i> -----	44
6.3 <i>Role Expectations</i> -----	46
CHAPTER 7.0 DISCUSSION -----	51
CHAPTER 8.0 CONCLUSION-----	54
CHAPTER 9.0 RECOMMENDATION -----	56
<i>Recommendation for future research</i> -----	56
<i>Recommendation for education sector</i> -----	57
REFERENCES -----	58
ANNEXES -----	64

Abstract

Teachers are navigating the pressures of the 21st century classroom brought by the rapid obsolescence of the curriculum and the shifting power dynamics with students in the context of Media and Information Literacy curriculum in the Philippines.

This research aims to understand the challenges of teachers and depicts their coping strategies in this era of technology given the changes in their external environment (student and technology) and the long-standing internal bureaucratic institution that defines their role and actions (curriculum and structures).

This research then intends to contribute to the practical and academic literature—providing clarity on where teacher tensions are coming from, which can be a tool to help determine how to address them, and contribution to the literature of street-level bureaucracy (SLB) theory situated within the context of technology as it illustrates the challenges that teachers face in the 21st century setting, especially within a developing country where education is highly bureaucratic.

The research was conducted through qualitative interviews with teachers who are teaching or have taught Media and Information Literacy in the Philippines. There are two key findings in this research—(1) despite the changes in time, the core challenges of SLB's (as explained by Lipsky's theory of Street Level Bureaucracy) have persisted from lack of resources, (mainly psychological) threats, and uncertainty in role expectations, and (2) technology has a great impact not only in the implementation of the curriculum but the shifting power dynamics of the teacher-student relationship.

Keywords

street-level bureaucracy, teacher autonomy, curriculum implementation, accountability, media and information literacy, technology

Relevance to Development Studies

When talking about development, education plays an important role as it provides foundations for the economy of the country to prosper. Equipped with a good quality of education, citizens are more prepared to meet the demands of the labour market and the needs of the community. As such, education is also instrumental for creating more productive and participative members of the society.

A participative citizen is vital as they advocate for upholding democracy and responsible digital citizenship in the 21st century, to ensure that human rights are protected and fought for, that wealth of knowledge is widely dispersed and that the economy flourishes, especially among developing countries. In so doing, it is vital to not only develop technical skills but also shape soft skills that hone the individual's collaboration, creativity and critical thinking that are necessities in today's digital era.

With social media platforms filled with disinformation, the critical thinking skills of children are more important than ever and the role of teachers in producing critical thinkers should therefore be a priority. Hence this research sheds light on understanding teacher's challenges and coping strategies in teaching media and information literacy in the Philippines. This can be a tool to bridge the gaps in improving teacher resources, where necessary.

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Chapter 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Nature of the Problem

Technology has been a catalyst of progress for different industries, and the education sector is one of them. It facilitates growth and transformation of the education landscape through using it as a tool for teaching and learning. As we entered the digital era, technology is now highly integrated to education, and some would even argue that it is the other way around.

A study by Negrín-Medina & et.al. (2018) highlighted how the young generations (Z and Alpha) of today are strongly tied to technology, which can have its merits and drawbacks. The education sector admits that technology could turn into a setback for said education sector because not all teachers could catch up with the students, who are digital natives (Han and Nam, 2021). Nonetheless, they acknowledge that this can be addressed with proper training and resources for teachers who can still adapt with the pace of technology.

Negrín-Medina & et.al. (2018) also discussed that teacher's awareness towards the risk of technology among students due to "lack of effective competency (...) to contemplate the (technologies) they use to acquire other competencies". Being digital natives does not equate to being equipped to digital and media competencies that are the necessities of 21st century digital citizens (Mesquita-Romero & et.al., 2022).

This leads to the question "what a quality curriculum should look like in a digital era" (Twining, 2020). According to Biesta & Priestley (2013), it should focus "not in terms of what the students should learn but in terms of what they should become" (p.4). The curriculum should then follow its intentions, what learning the topic is for and what skills it aims to develop. Consequently, Twining (2020) suggests moving beyond the traditional way of teaching, specifically being too content-focused, to also incorporate harnessing the kid's competencies and shaping their dispositions so they can apply what they have learned from school to their day to day lives. (p. 2303)

That said, the role of teachers is key to executing the curriculum the way it is intended to. Teachers are expected to implement the curriculum that is provided by the higher bureaucrats they are accountable to.

However, their understanding of the curriculum and their perception on their role also influences how a curriculum is implemented. Teachers have their own agency that they could willingly follow if perceived as necessary. In fact, Boote (2006) says, “*Even supposedly ‘teacher-proof curricula’ require some degree of interpretation.*” (p.463).

Hence it is no wonder that tensions between control & accountability subjected by the curriculum & multiple mechanisms and defined & perceived teacher autonomy are still an on-going debate. While Boote (2006) mentioned that “curriculum policy almost entirely ignore the abilities of the people who occupy roles”, they couldn’t expect teachers to not have their own opinions and to embrace the autonomy delineated to them as street-level bureaucrats.

While teacher agency and belief are a strong point of contention, this study will focus on how teachers cope amid these tensions on control and accountability, specifically how teachers navigate the internal (i.e. curriculum, structures) and external (i.e. students, technology) pressures of the 21st century classroom brought by the rapid obsolescence of curriculum and shifting power dynamics with students in the context of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) curriculum in the Philippines. Hence this research will be a case of SLB’s coping mechanisms in light of technology in the 21st century and slow bureaucracy.

Choosing the MIL curriculum will not only add context but also layered tension towards the research. This is because curriculum in general does not change often but there is a pressure for MIL curriculum to evolve due to the fast-changing nature of technology.

Disinformation is a 21st century problem that touches upon information disorder not only as a personal issue but also economic, political, social and cultural. (Ms Kim, Head of UNESCO Myanmar Office, in *Journalism, Fake News and Disinformation 2020* convention).

Equipped with Media and Information Literacy, the Philippines should’ve been ready as intended by the curriculum. However, Maralit, the current under-secretary of the Presidential Communications Office, admits the lack of training for Media and Information Literacy teachers (PCO, 2023). While slow adaption towards technological changes is unavoidable, it is still worrying and more so to this day when disinformation can no longer be contained.

A systematic review by Rojas-Estrada & et.al. (2023) backs this, wherein policies and efforts all over the world are likewise too slow to address the issues of MIL because of the slow allocation of resources for it. This then results into a backlog of needs but also highlights the same slow pace in improving the approaches and content of the curriculum that vastly changes with time. In the Philippines, for instance, the curriculum still allocates time to discuss traditional and indigenous media.

OECD Report (2019) narrates the uncertainty of a future brought by technological advances, which would strongly demand that skills, competencies and knowledge then need to be able to acclimate with it. With the passing of time and the emergence of AI, this appeals for faster adaption of curriculum in schools and possibly more fundamental changes in education/training.

Technology will not stop to evolve and produce technologically smarter kids with their lives integrated to digital media as the years go by. Teachers are then caught in the middle of a decade old curriculum and the impact of technology that changes in a shorter time.

Using Street-Level Bureaucracy theory of Lipsky, I will explore the impact of technology towards teachers by situating how their working conditions and core challenges, specifically on lack of resources, physical and psychological threats and the role expectations, changed or remained the same given the internal and external pressures of the 21st century classroom, in the context of the Media and Information Literacy curriculum in the Philippines.

Further, this study will bring forth the changing dynamics between teacher and student inside the classroom. In doing so, it will shed light on the extent of the impact of technology towards their relationship and how teachers deal with it.

Lastly, it gives attention towards accountability in curriculum implementation and questions the idea of intermingling not only between curriculum and teachers but the inclusion of students themselves in the discussion of curriculum.

1.2 Justification and relevance of this research

The slow-to-adapt curriculum is a concern in the Philippines because while the impact of the curriculum is yet to be seen, the technology has already changed multiple times over. This also means that the exposure of kids towards digital space has increased immensely.

UNICEF released the 2019 Global Online Kid report, showing that one out of three kids globally are internet users, with 50% of Filipino kids accessing the internet at home on a weekly basis. The year after, country specific report shows how “children in the Philippines tend to equate the Internet with social media, rather than viewing social media as one distinct aspect to being online and the Internet” (UNICEF: Philippines Kids Online, 2020, p. 6)

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic which was a game changer not only in technological behaviour but also information consumption. A lot of people turned to the internet to get updates for global to local news and their social networks. While there are no reports yet as to how the pandemic has disrupted the education system, a regional director of the country’s education sector is anticipating a negative impact on top of the already challenged sector. *“Even without the pandemic, our youth are already struggling. If they’ve been struggling when pandemic wasn’t here yet, how much more [now] that they were out of classrooms.” -DepEd-6 Regional Director, Dr. Ramir B. Uytico (lifted from news article by Tayona, 2022)*

Nonetheless, it wasn’t until the pandemic that the gaps between the expected kid’s digital skills and their current literacy, given their ever-growing online presence, have been more apparent and recognized. Kids are becoming both media consumers and producers.

This drew concerns towards the importance and expected prioritization of Media and Information Literacy in schools. In fact, several NGOs and individuals started online campaigns on how to detect fake news, protect self and privacy online, to name a few.

However, little is explored in terms of the impact of the design and execution in curriculum towards media and information literacy. When asking a few students who completed the curriculum, they mentioned they learned about the different devices or gadgets, or were asked to watch movies that are unrelated to the curriculum. (Elizabeth, Lanie, & Jamie, 2023, Informal interview)

Moreover, this research will also contribute to SLB's growing literature, specifically the challenges and coping mechanisms of teachers as SLB's in the 21st century classroom.

1.3 Background to the Proposed Study

UNICEF describes Critical Evaluation Skills as one's ease of ability to check online information as true or otherwise ("I find it easy to check if the information I find online is true.") (UNICEF, 2019). In their Global Kids Online report of November 2019, this is one of the skills that is being monitored among kids because of the ever-growing presence of kids online.

Being critical in how one communicates is not a new undertaking in the global scale. This goes way back to 1982 with Grünwald Declaration that recognizes the need for "critical understanding of phenomena of communication" (p.1). Soon after, being information literate is acknowledged to be important and has been more frequently included in global discussions that eventually transitioned to media and information literacy (UNESCO, 2018).

With the recognition of the increasing presence of kids online, media and information literacy has been recognized as a composite concept by UNESCO in 2008. There is an acknowledged need to put together both fields of media, in all forms, and information, in all medium and provider towards the goal of enabling people to hone a set of competencies ("to search, critically evaluate, use and contribute information and media content wisely") as they become digital citizens (UNICEF, 2019). Later on, UNESCO introduced media and information literacy curriculum and framework that can guide teachers in teaching the topic. (Bautista, 2021, p. 23)

The Philippines, like the rest of the world, followed suit in creating a curriculum around media and information literacy and schools started adopting the curriculum in 2016. Because it was new, teachers reportedly had a difficulty teaching the subject brought by lack of resources and training. (Bautista, 2021)

This discussion was felt across the globe with teachers coming from the US and other countries claiming a lack of training to teach the subject. As such, UNESCO stressed the importance of ensuring that teachers are information-

literate themselves in order to pass on the same level of literacy towards the students. (Bautista, 2011, p. 23)

Despite this, a study by dela Cruz in 2016 to evaluate improvement of grade school students in a specific school after going through a media instruction program to improve their information literacy shows that there was a significant increase in their performance and information literacy. Another study by Rusiana and Naparota (2021) conducted in another school showed different results wherein the students lack skills to research, find references and other information.

Global Online Report released by UNICEF (2019) showed that the Philippines is among the lowest performing countries in terms of critical evaluation skills among kids aged 9-17 (p.45). This agreed to the results of the local academic study by Rusiana and Naporato (2021) while contradicted the study by dela Cruz (2016). This could mean three things-- (1) how critical evaluation skills is being evaluated is different from how it is being taught, (2) perceived learning of students is different from teacher instruction, and (3) a pedagogical approach highly affects student performance and literacy.

Pedagogical approaches affecting student performance might not be a surprise given that UNESCO recommended several different pedagogical approaches in teaching media and information literacy, from “issue- inquiry approach, problem-based learning (PBL), scientific inquiry, case study, cooperative learning, textual analysis, contextual analysis, translations, simulations, to production.” (Bautista, 2021)

This then begs the question how MIL is currently being taught and the mechanisms that controls curriculum instruction.

1.4 Research objectives and question

Main question:

How do teachers navigate the internal and external pressures of the 21st century classrooms amidst the rapid obsolescence of curriculum in the context of lived experiences of select teachers of media and information literacy curriculum in the Philippines?

Sub questions:

- What are the challenges of teachers amid internal and external pressures of the 21st century classroom in the context of Media and information Literacy in the Philippines?
- How do teachers cope with the internal and external pressures of the 21st century classroom in the context of Media and information Literacy in the Philippines?
- How much has technology changed the educational landscape in the perspective of the teacher in the context of Media and Information Literacy curriculum in the Philippines?

Chapter 2.0 Theoretical Framework

Lipsky's (1969) theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy aims to determine important dimensions of the engagement between bureaucracy and client, specify characteristic behaviour that exceeds single bureaucratic situation, and explains the influence of "public service bureaucracies" towards the citizens. He describes Street-Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) as government employees whose job entails constant interaction with the general public, has independence in their decision-making, and massively impacts the lives of the people they interact with. (p. 2)

Teachers can be then defined as a street-level bureaucrat as they deal with a large number of students on a daily basis and affects their education. Considering the extent of their role and the number of people they work with and work for, it is of no surprise that their working conditions are affected by (1) lack of resources both personal and organizational; 2) physical and/or psychological threats; and 3) unattainable and unclear role expectations (Lipsky, 1969, p. 1).

Lack of Resources

The lack of resources that SLBs experience are primarily shortages on manpower/client ratio, time and information (Lipsky, 1969, p.14). For instance, teachers, especially those teaching in public schools, lack resources for classroom instruction (i.e. too many students or classes for one teacher, too little time to teach the whole curriculum) but also for teaching support (i.e. teacher training, teaching materials).

In order to make ends meet due to the inadequacy of resources, SLBs improvise based on the available resources that they have to perform their responsibilities. (Lipsky, 1969, p.14) According to Guimarães & et.al. (2022), in reality, they do not have existing power, and it is not having any choice but to proceed with the "least harmful" one to attain the goal. While this may have both positive and negative implications, the intention behind it was nonetheless good.

Physical or Psychological Threats

SLBs also experience threat in their role, with some experiencing it more than others. Lipsky (1969) argues that “*threat may exist independent of the actual incidence of threat materialization.*” (p. 6) This sheds light on the psychological threats that SLBs also undertakes regardless of clear threat wherein the feeling of threat is dependent on how one process the circumstances they are in. For instance, psychological threat in terms of workload may vary per person, depending on how they handle workload and their perspective of a heavy workload.

In fact, threats will always surround their role regardless of if they encounter it or not, or if it was instigated by the people round them or they themselves did so (Lipsky, 1969, p. 6). This then highlights the layers from where the threat can come from, specifically from their superiors or the people they deal with. For instance, threats can be in the form of expectations to meet certain standard whether it is demanded by someone from a higher position or their expectation for themselves.

Personal or role authority, according to Lipsky (1969), resolves the issues on threats. An individual at the middle of threat will look for ways to address it the soonest they can. If role authority does not help them address the situation they are in, their personal authority can kick in. Nonetheless, to protect SLBs, increasing the degree of authority of SLBs will help them minimize threats they encounter. Further using the example on lack of expectations, if teachers are caught at the middle of a deadline for grade submission and deadline for lesson plan of the week, they will prioritize one over the other. This then will yield to an unfavourable output for the lesson plan or ‘shotgun’ grading.

Unattainable Role

On top of the shortage of resources and (in a way connected to) the threats surrounding them, SLBs are also prone to feeling short of their role. This is because of the unclear and conflicting expectations set for them.

There is an overwhelming sense of lack of control attributed to dealing with people and working for their superiors. This leads to frustration because of their defined roles that limits them from performing. (Lipsky, 1969, p.8) Not to mention the tension created by the different expectations coming from all sides—

the people they work with (i.e. peers), work for (i.e. superiors) and work to (i.e. general public). In this light, SLBs then choose to work towards satisfying expectations of one because of uncertainty, leading to creating a “zone of indifference” for them.

Having created a “zone of indifference” for SLBs, they allow themselves to act freely and practice discretion based on their own set of values and beliefs. As Lipsky (1969) suggested, “In times of value polarization, we may suggest that the zone becomes wider, but that indifference and, as a result, discretion is diminished as bureaucratic performance.”

Reducing These Working Conditions

Simplification, Routine and Mechanisms are three coping strategies that SLBs employ, according to Lipsky (1969), in order achieve their goal in their roles. These three coping strategies work hand-in-hand with the goal of making SLB’s tasks faster and easier given the underlying challenges faced.

Simplification and routinization alleviate working conditions that take too much time to resolve causing bogged down cases to pile up, which could eventually lead to anxiety caused by tensions from people they deal with. (Lipsky, 1969)

In fact, having routine also helps to easily identify any issue they encounter because they do the same thing over and over. Vis-à-vis, it is difficult to demand improvements if they need to follow the rule book (Lipsky, 1969) because they can justify that they only followed their responsibility. This means that while assessments are a way to evaluate what the teacher taught, it is also possible to defend low scores of students when they followed the curriculum, more so if it’s prescriptive and mandated.

Moreover, routinization also creates disassociation for teachers to be accountable for the student learning, because, in their defense, following a curriculum shouldn’t be punishable especially if it came from the higher authority.

Despite that, *organizational mechanisms* keep the systems in place and protect SLBs when threats in their roles arise. *Personal mechanisms* on the other hand are mechanisms they unconsciously adapt, influenced by how they defined their own role. (Lipsky, 1969)

These coping mechanisms are ways in which teachers deal with concerns, but only looking at the short-term resolution. It is then the responsibility of schools and of the education sector to look for ways to improve their working conditions for a long-term impact, and not just pass on the responsibility to teachers and let them cope.

Moreover, situating these coping mechanisms in the challenges of the 21st century classroom, teachers may be struggling to look for ways to cope due to conflicting situations; this will be discussed in Chapter 6 (Findings).

There is also the layer of gravity or severeness of the situation they are in. This then spotlights on other pre-conditions that surround the challenges of SLBs, specifically SLBs in developing countries.

Conditions and Ways of Coping in Developing Country

Lotta & et.al. (2021) argues that SLBs in developing countries experience the same challenges but on a bigger scale due to “weak institutional environment, public service gaps, and severe resource constraints”. Working in these conditions, the challenges create tendencies for “wider divergence” between the mandate and the implementation, which could lead to positive or negative turnout. As such, divergence (or improvisation as commonly referred to) is not merely a coping mechanism amidst their working conditions in a developing country, but it is part of what they are expected to do or how they should perform (with autonomy) because of gaps in service (p. 6).

In a way, it is considered a “maximized version of discretion” that pushes situations forward due to SLB’s working conditions that can cause paralysis and limits them. However, not discounting that it can also cause negative implications or consequences. (Lotta & et.al., 2021)

Gofen & et.al. (2021) claims that this “divergence is inevitable and deliberate” (p. 74) in SLBs. It is *inevitable* because (1) policies are vague and are not informative enough to notify implementers on what they need to know to execute the policy; (2) SLBs are influenced by their own “perceptions, emotions, attitudes, experiences, and values” (p. 74), and their relationship with other SLBs. Whereas it is *deliberate* because of how it questions ethical concerns and professional considerations of SLBs (p. 74).

Moreover, May & Winter (2009) adds that because it is inevitable, “it is well-accepted that the actions at the frontline of policy do sometimes, if not often, differ from the intentions of higher ups” (p. 453). In fact, the “willingness” of SLBs to diverge from the rules is associated to their perception of how much their higher ups also do the same (May & Winter, 2009). This highlights the influence of people that SLBs are accountable to. As Lotta & et.al. (2021) puts it, “*understanding the ethical grounds for SLB action requires not only socially situating them in this specific social environment but also recognizing the influence of institutional limitations*” (p. 8).

Taking a step back, how do structures in an institution affect SLBs? Specifically, how does the educational structure in the form of curriculum and policies affect teachers?

Chapter 3.0 Literature Review

3.1 Curriculum Standardization

Fifty-five years since Freire’s Banking Model of Education (1968) has been coined, teaching is still more often practiced as a reproduction of knowledge, more so in primary and secondary schools. A study by Strandler (2017) on the tensions between teachers teaching social studies and an outcome-based curriculum shows how education now (still) leans more towards “reproduction of knowledge” through acquiring knowledge rather than the critical application of it.

The educational system cannot seem to veer away from reproduction of knowledge for various reasons from (1) economy (the demand to meet the labour market through equipping people with specific technical skills needed for the job); (2) politics (the interest or motivations of some politicians to push for a specific curriculum or part of it) and culture (emphasis on cultural narrative that can be both beneficial or harmful towards the society).

In order to further understand how a mandated curriculum has remained steadfast, it is vital to be acquainted with its origins and unravel its value that made it surpass the test of time.

What does having standard curriculum entail?

Resnick & Resnick’s (1985) afforded us a historical overview of Standards, Curriculum and Performance, prompting that the purpose of having a standard curriculum was to ensure accessibility and equal learning regardless of gender and social classes; leading to have the same opportunity to meet the demands of the labour market.

A study by Gamoran (1996) affirms this in the context of Scottish Secondary Education. Having a standard curriculum decreases inequality in learning—there is a noticeable improvement in skills and increased participation of students who usually don’t perform. It is important, however, to keep in mind that these differences in performance were noticeable for those who had poor performance before. This then means that this resulted in positive initial indications in the efforts to close the gap.

For the same reason, policies such as No Child Left Behind were instigated all over the world. “No Child Left Behind” in the Philippines or the Act of 2008 aims to ensure equal education for all. While “No Child Left behind” may have worked for other countries, it doesn’t have the same result for all as it depends on the country-context, the type of education system—centralized vs decentralized – and even the type of governance (McCluskey, 2010).

Moreover on a practical perspective according to Sparapani and Perez (2015), having a standardized curriculum is a result of looking for ways to ease up to the assessment student performance and measure teacher accountability (p.83). This is because it becomes easier to map out and evaluate which students are having a harder time. Moreover, it’s more convenient to compare what students learned and what teachers were supposed to teach as written.

What does having standard curriculum mean for teachers?

Having a standard curriculum, however, has implications for teachers. It limits their autonomy and opinion, especially for media studies. This means that their role as teachers is defined and while they have control of the classroom management, they do not have power to decide what to teach.

Similar to the political reasons behind standardization of curriculum, this ensures that teachers are developing the student’s critical thinking instead of pushing their own agenda and shoving their opinion to their students. Moreover as Patrick Supes (in English, 1978) argues: *“It is often thought and said that what we most need in education is wisdom and broad understanding of the issues that confront us. Not at all, I say. What we need are deeply structured theories in education that drastically reduce, if not eliminate, the need for wisdom. I do not want wise men to design or build the airplane I fly in, but rather technical men who understand the theory of aerodynamics and the structural properties of metal”* (p. 24).

In this era where mental health is fortunately being talked about, I also do not discount the value of having a curriculum that can turn teacher’s work into a routine as it helps them lighten some of their work. This, however, might beg to redefine the role of teachers and revisit the work that are expected from them.

Flipping the mandate

Having a standard curriculum is being debated on in multiple fronts by different literature. While having its own merits, its negative implications are also worth-nothing by looking at teachers and students.

Looking at the perspective of *students*, one of the arguments Sparapani and Perez (2015) is the changing landscape of 21st century wherein people now have varying needs. Having a standard curriculum assumes that what one needs is the same as the other person's (Sparapani and Perez, 2015, p.82); this includes not only their needs by their learning styles and approaches. This translates to teachers being unresponsive to the needs of individual students (Sheldon & Biddle, 1998). Aristotle (in Peters, 1966 in Anderson & Boyle, 2020) said, "*Injustice results just as much from treating unequals equally as it does from treating equals unequally*"(p. 16).

Another study by Bybee (2010) emphasizes, on the other hand, its negative implications towards *teachers*. He argues that there is a dimension of having standard curriculum that is being ignored—dimension of contradiction, objectification, dehumanization, domination/violence and death, as discussed by Freire. In Bybee's (2010) paper, he underlined these happens because teachers relieve their humanization and freedom of critically engaging with students, their ontological vocation as described by Freire, for a personhood that acts on behalf of private corporations that advocated for accountability, privatization and corporate education reform.

They do so because of additional benefits they get out of ensuring that their students score high in exams—from increased salary, possibility of tenure and so on. (Bybee, 2010, p. 422) In effect, there is an expectation that teachers need to follow the objectives that were stated in the policy documents and school (Imants, Wubbels, & Vermunt, 2013) to subscribe to the benefits offered to them. This then follows putting up mechanisms to ensure accountability of teachers when implementing curriculum and policy documents.

Despite the strictness of a curriculum, Boote (2006) claims that even a mandated curriculum requires discretion of teachers. This is because curriculum, even the teacher-proof ones, is innately ambiguous and would lead to different interpretation, even to a small extent. This cuts across not only for centralized curriculum but also for decentralized curriculum where there is different

mandated curriculum because the execution will differ. Further, teachers will not be able to cover all topics of the curriculum, which then forces them to choose which ones to touch upon. (p.463) That said, having to go through all gaps in the implementation and tensions from expected roles, teachers will assert autonomy¹ to decide how to move forward by going back to their values and their own perception of themselves in their role.

Because teachers would and could not inhibit autonomy regardless of extent and reason, what does it really mean to afford teachers with autonomy and why are discussions pushing for teacher autonomy even more today?

3.2 Teacher Autonomy

Teacher autonomy has been monitored and controlled for the same reason that standardized curriculum has been endorsed and patronized—education needs to improve the quality of education not only for a few but for all. And in doing so, equality in education should be aimed for by making sure that teachers deliver the common good, in this context education.

To achieve the said “education as a common good for all”, Ranson (2013) argues that “*the curriculum would no longer be the “secret garden” of an autonomous professional community detached from public scrutiny*” (p. 459) This means that curriculum has to be a written document that the teacher has to follow instead of the teacher fully exercising their autonomy without any guidelines. This is because as Helgøy & Homme (2007) adds, “*teachers as an autonomous professional community detached from public scrutiny have become publicly accountable mostly through a loss of trust... This implies that trust has dissolved and public dependence on professional, authoritative judgement is replaced by trust in mechanisms of explicit, transparent, systematic public accountability designed to secure the standardization and quality of professional practice.*”

In fact, Olson & et.al. (1999) and Kirkwood (2001) on separate studies contributed to the increasing arguments for the negative implications of increasing teacher autonomy wherein teachers will likely challenge the norms and practices

¹ Tummers & Bekkers (2014) use the concepts of Autonomy and Discretion interchangeably, whereas Yuan & et.al. (2022) describes the overlapping nature of the concepts wherein discretion is the zone where autonomy can be exercised. Thus, in this research, they are interchangeable.

of their co-teachers and seniors. Standards and control in education are then acceptable to be embraced as tools to ensure that teachers still have their professional knowledge and status intact (Helgøy & Homme, 2007).

Another study by Jerrim & et.al. (2022) shows that having teacher autonomy does not really affect the student learning—assessment score or interests towards the subject, which is the goal of education. However Guraganious (2017) disputes this through his study where he found out that allowing teacher autonomy to decide their own teaching practices and the curriculum in the classroom yielded to increased student achievement scores.

So why is teacher autonomy important when there's polarizing findings on its impact towards student progress or learning?

Teachers are not void of needs unlike how standardization, to an extent, sees teachers as technical executors of the curriculum. This means that they have a need to feel that they have a sense of control or autonomy. Having a sense of autonomy produces more satisfied teachers who are then more effective teachers (Bédard, 2015) as (1) they feel they can exercise creativity and (2) they are motivated, (3) collectively resulting into lower turnover rates.

A stringent curriculum disrupts teacher pacing, practices and creativity (Gurganious, 2017), so having a space to practice autonomy for teachers allows creativity to flow results into an innovative mindset wherein teachers can find (new) solutions for their problems (Boote, 2006).

The long-term goal of an autonomous teacher, according to Boote (2006) is to *“go beyond merely choosing among established and sanctioned curriculum options to creating new curricular–instructional practices that ameliorate the dilemmas of their domain of curriculum practice. The innovative teacher will recognize the strengths and weaknesses of particular curriculum practices, be able to develop, design, implement, and assess curricula that overcome the weaknesses of their particular domain of curriculum practice.”*

Being satisfied in their role because of autonomy also results into lower turnover rates. As Gilet & et.al. (2012) found out that work motivation is positively linked to autonomy and organizational support. In parallel, perceived support and autonomy are associated with satisfaction. The discussion of turnover

comes up when there is less organizational support and autonomy and limited motivation.

At the end of the day, being a teacher is a work that one assumes into and for them to stay, they need to have reason and motivation to do so. Yildiz (2021) revealed that teacher motivation and curriculum autonomy have a positive and significant relationship. This means that improving one can also affect the other.

Another study by (Ertürk, 2023) showed that having teacher autonomy, (from choosing the pedagogy suitable for the needs of their students, changing the content of the curriculum and choosing their own references) improves the “quality of educational activities”, “dedication of teachers” and “student success” (p. 501).

Is teacher autonomy really necessary?

Autonomy, regardless of the degree that is allowed to teachers, will arise when needed. According to Guimarães & et.al. (2022), it is not a choice or a space, but it is a necessary reaction to challenges faced by the teacher to manage lack of resources, threats and unmet expectations.

It surfaces when there is not enough or contradictory guidelines to execute their role and responsibility and lack of resources, causing gaps for interpretation. (Guimarães & et.al, 2022) In a way, autonomy exists with or without permission of people from a higher authority.

A reflective study by Costello is a good example of this. Costello (2012) emphasized on how he tried to congregate his students’ needs with the curriculum and in doing so he needed his agency and autonomy to teach, *“I came into this research thinking that my reading instruction was based on decisions made by people outside of my classroom and that my students’ needs were not being considered. I was neglecting the idea that I was the classroom teacher and that I made countless instructional decisions each day”* (p.58).

How limited and controlled is teacher autonomy?

A study by Mausethagen & Mølstad’s (2015) revealed that the teachers embrace their diminishing autonomy and focus their efforts on their role as

“deliverers of prescribed content” and classroom managers instead of being developers. They posit that teachers safeguard “what is left” of their autonomy amidst assessment, outcomes and accountability.

Nonetheless, a study by Marchand & et.al. (2016) on understanding the relationship of “professional space” and “agentic behavior” of teachers show country and school context contributes to the differences in the notion of teacher autonomy and their behavior. This means that teacher autonomy varies depending on the structures and systems in place in a country and school.

For instance, some countries such as Japan and Korea have highly standardized education system which means that the central government standardizes the curriculum, learning and assessment (Han, 2015, p. 105). Countries such as Brazil and Norway have the same centralized education system but Brazil has higher characteristics of accountability than Norway wherein there is economic incentives depending on student performance for teachers while Norway doesn't have such incentives. Nonetheless, teachers in both countries are satisfied with the autonomy they hold (da Silva, 2021, p. 115).

Bedard (2015) argues that having additional pedagogical autonomy would be harmful for kids as it allows bad choices to not be penalized. He claims that is especially true for less accountable school systems that are inefficient such as Peru, Indonesia and Qatar. Bobbit also argues that teachers need to focus on specific aspects of their role because identifying the best methods to teach is “too large and too complicated” to assign to them. Their role is to ensure that students achieved the knowledge that is expected of them and to do that, teachers need to focus in doing so (in Au, 2011, p. 27).

Gaining autonomy or control for teachers is then rooted towards how much trust there is between stakeholders. This means that higher trust equates to lower control (hence high autonomy) and lower trust equates to higher control (Levitt & et.al., 2008).

Seemingly like a see-saw, is there a possibility to autonomy and trust in accountability it?

As Boote (2006) discusses that it boils down to “interplay and trade-offs” of autonomy and accountability, and not the “limitation or enhancement” of

autonomy within the institution. There is more to see than looking into the “dual imperatives as paradox”.

This then means that teacher autonomy and accountability may not necessarily be on opposite ends as both scenarios wherein there’s high autonomy with low accountability and vice versa but also high autonomy and high accountability is plausible. This begs the question, what is the relationship of autonomy and accountability? Who defines the roles of teachers?

3.3 How Accountability Influences Teacher Autonomy

When talking about accountability, Au (2011) describes “school as a factory assembly line where goods are produced—students as the “raw materials” that need to meet the determined standards, teachers as the workers who utilize the “most efficient methods” to produce students who meet the standards, and administrators as managers who provide to teachers “the most efficient methods.”

Some authors also see accountability as a positive mechanism. In Poulson (1998), some teachers agree with accountability because it led to more self-regulation for them-- *“The whole issue of accountability ... it’s forced us to define our practice, not in a defensive way, but ... to make it clearer and more accessible to parents and governor”* (p. 423) Eliot (in Poulson, 1998) takes this further on who teachers should be accountable for (p.423). Who has the right—is it the school, parents, state? Or maybe students?

Nonetheless, this emphasizes the value of transparency towards the public—of how education is currently taught in schools, and it opens it for debates that can be advantageous in a democratic governance. In fact, Levitt and et.al. (2008) adds that accountability allows opportunities for improvement to flourish as it has a “catharsis function” when probing for issues or problems in education or specifically in the classroom.

Poulson (1998) himself argues, however, that accountability is (still) political; who determines it is based on their chosen standards and guidelines.

What is lost when there's too much accountability?

Even when accountability is branded as a positive mechanism, some teachers admit that there is pressure of conformity towards what was expected from them and defined for them (Poulson, 1998). Teachers revealed that pressures from work are not always easy to endure because there are a lot of stakeholders involved (Oosterhoff, 2020).

The study by Oosterhoff (2020) adds that fear facilitates accountability. This happens when organizational mechanisms make them doubt their personal mechanisms to “reflect deeply held beliefs” and what they believe is good teaching (p. 147).

This leads to less human connections because the only reason they depend on each other is to ensure that the standards are met. They do so by setting defined and distanced relationship with stakeholders, created multiple versions of themselves and shaped their identities to fit in. (Jeffrey, 2002). This is described as a “performativity discourse” (McWilliam, Meadmore, and Hatcher, 1999). This means that while being “passionate about excellence and high performance” is plausible (Ball in Jeffrey, 2002), this resulted in a decline in relationships.

Moreover, the excessiveness of accountability also gave rise to dissatisfaction and great deal of concern because teachers don't think they have sufficient time for the more essential things such as training and class preparation (Negrín-Medina & et.al, 2018).

Cumulatively, this entails a circumstance wherein evaluations and assessments are the goal of education instead of a way to improve learning. As Biesta (2015) puts it, “*a situation where measurement has become an end in itself rather than a means to achieve good education in the fullest and broadest sense of the term.*”

Accountability to whom?

Bottery (1996) presented the importance of adapting to New Public Management especially having managers for short- or long-term plans as they are perceived as “bridgehead between managerial and professional cultures.” NPM exhibits (1) being seen as professionals of their field, (2) clients, in this case

parents, observes improvement in quality of education because long-term relationships are developed and maintained instead of having “legislative mechanisms”, and (3) NPM managers are more diplomatic which influences perception towards institution’s “openness, efficiency and trustworthiness.”

However, Biesta challenges the limiting concept of accountability that focuses only towards upwards hierarchy: *“While accountability in itself is a good and important idea — professionals need to be accountable both to the immediate clientele they serve and to the wider public.”*

Guimarães & et.al. (2022) takes it further takes it; that while teachers deliver and are aware of their accountability towards the higher bureaucrats, it is “their working conditions and contexts” that really affects how they decide (and teach) as street level bureaucrats. Some authors (Porter, 1981; Hjern and Hull, 1982) that there is an advantage at looking at the “target population” for whom the service is for—“bottom-up implementation” (Mutureko, 2009). It is then vital to look at the students and their needs, what is *good education* for students of the 21st century?

3.4 What is a “Good Education” in the 21st century classroom?

The discussions and debates on teacher autonomy and accountability revolved around the result—what does a good or a quality education looks like?

Biesta (2015) argues that in order to define and describe a good education, we need to take a step back and ask the question “what it is for” to determine its purpose. Clear purpose of what the education will be used for determines what how it should be taught and what should be taught.

Anderson & Boyle (2020) adds that when talking about the purpose of education, it is essential to frame it within the context of the individual and the community—what is the need of the individual? What are the needs of the individuals within the community they live in?

Thinking in the same logic, this somehow questions and circles back to the debates of standardization. Wherein it is argued that students are expected to achieve the same knowledge and skills based on the set of standards provided to

them regardless of their personal situation (Anderson & Boyle, 2020, p. 5). However, not all students have the same circumstances and learning abilities. This then posits that “a good education” is highly subjective and relative towards the context, and this includes time.

So in the 21st century classroom, what does education look like?

In the context of digital era, OECD (n.d.) highlights the importance of preparing the kids for the further advances of technology—this means equipping them with skills that are useful in the future, using technology as a tool to acquire new knowledge and skills. This is, as being predicted, technology will be used one way or another to solve problems.

The role of teachers in this scenario of the future, according to Grand-Clement (2017), will be as administrators or as a guide to direct students where they can access the resources that they need to retrieve knowledge on their own. Acquiring technological skills, then, to adapt to the needs of the future justifies and supports the standardization debate. It is because it is important to ensure that every student can adapt to the demands of technology. And if the role of teachers as administrators or guides to access knowledge, there is no role or debate on the need for autonomy or accountability.

However, Salas-Delgado & et.al (2022) refutes that while technology and hard skills are measures of competence for the future and employment, it is vital to develop soft skills just as much. This is because by the time the students have graduated tertiary, technology has evolved and changed. Having soft skills will guarantee they can carry out responsibilities that machine couldn't and allow them to adapt faster to technological changes.

Moreover, respondents in the study by Grand-Clement (2017) argue that soft skills are needed to “function in the society at large”. In fact, as they mentioned, with the schools trying to catch up with technology by focusing on technological and hard skills, it is becoming a challenge because these soft skills are showing to be more essential than what schools are teaching: *“The group agreed that key skills are moving away from a performance that can be measured and improved, towards more intangible aspects. They felt that this was in contrast to the current education systems, which are still working on performance-based quantitative measures and do not, in*

their opinion, take into account how necessary soft skills are to people's ability to function in employment and in society at large."

Resnick (2002) adds maximizing the advantages of technology would require more than just technical skills because technology is already available. Having a creative mindset (for instance), pushes society forward and reinvents the world we live in (p. 36). This then complements what Starkey (2016) mentions that accessibility by itself will not facilitate the learning that the kids need in this technological age. And in developing these soft skills, Ellah & Azmi (2023) weighs on the importance of teachers as they affect development of soft skills.

Hence this further highlights the central role of teachers in developing media and information literacy of kids in light of today's affinity with the digital space.

Chapter 4.0 Media & Information Literacy

4.1 Overview of Media and Information Literacy

UNESCO coined the term Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in 2007 for universal usage. The growing digital presence necessitated the emergence of the concept wherein media literacy and digital literacy were combined to adapt to the changes in media and digital space. Its origins can be traced back to the 1960's when UNESCO arranged different conferences and published reports that focus on the critical approach when looking at cinema and television. As such by 1978, a curriculum for Mass Media Education was released (Carlsson, 2019).

However, it was only in the 1980's when the stronger support for MIL emerged through the Grünwald Declaration on Media Education. This signifies the acknowledged growing global concern to the need to increase critical awareness and stronger competence towards all types of media. (Carlsson, 2019)

Fast forward to the present day, MIL serves as a “fundamental human right” of every citizen who strives to be part of the digital world in a global mindset. In this light, UNESCO circulated the Media and Information Literacy in 2011 to serve as a guideline for the countries and their education sectors in light of the importance in integrating it with the education process, through pedagogical methods, syllabuses and resources (UNESCO 2011).


4.2 Media and Information Literacy in the Philippines

In the Philippines, Media and Information Literacy curriculum was rolled out in 2013 but enacted in the country between 2015 to 2016 as part of the education reformation in the country, adapting K-12 program through Republic Act 10533.

The K-12 program aims to extend the number of years in basic education, from 10 years to 12 years, to catch up to the demands of the 21st century employment. In so doing, new subjects were introduced that focus on technology such as “Empowerment Technology” and “Media and Information Literacy.”

The main objective of MIL curriculum in the country is to provide basic awareness of media and information channels. As lifted from Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Basic Education Program, DepEd Order No. 021 s.219: *“This subject introduces the learners to basic understanding of media and information as channels of communication and tools for individual and social development. It also aims to develop learners creative and critical thinking skills, and encourage them to be responsible users and competent producers of media and information.”* (p.59)

Despite its integration in the curriculum since 2015, it is only in 2020 that policy makers of the country were trying to formalize MIL as part of Basic Education through Senate Bill No. 1593 (2019) and House Bill No. 9482 (2021). The intent of the bill is to acknowledge the impact of technology towards the kids and ratify the need for the kids to have the skills to navigate the digital landscape and uphold responsible citizens online.

<p style="text-align: center;">Upper House (Senate)</p> <p>EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES Second Regular Session</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SENATE S. No. 1593</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Introduced by SENATOR RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AN ACT INTEGRATING MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EXPLANATORY NOTE</p> <p>The advancements in technology made information readily accessible to many. With one click and quick google search, information is literally at our fingertips. But without proper tools and mindset, one can easily be misled and be misinformed.</p> <p>Schools in different countries have already adjusted their educational methods in response to the ubiquity of the Internet and the corollary deluge of available information to the youth. In Finland, a multi-platform, cross-subject information literacy program was introduced to primary schools where students are trained to detect false information or spot manipulated content. In the USA, several states require media literacy education in elementary and secondary schools.</p> <p>In the Philippines, the Department of Education through its Education Futures Unit has already started efforts on reframing the curriculum to prioritize essential and cross-cutting knowledge and 21st century competencies and to embed multiliteracies in information, health, finance, civics, among others.</p> <p>This bill recognizes and embraces the digital transformation of our time and proposes the integration of media and information literacy programs into our basic education curriculum. It seeks to equip our young students with the necessary skills to properly navigate the vast universe of social media and digital landscapes, which have become so well-entrenched in our lives. This measure also aims to incorporate</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Lower House (Congress)</p> <p>Republic of the Philippines HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Quezon City</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS Second Regular Session HOUSE BILL NO. 9482</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Introduced by HON. JOY MYRA S. TAMBUNTING</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EXPLANATORY NOTE</p> <p>Digital technology has become a vital part of our lives. Through our smartphones, laptops, computers, tablets, and other technologies, we have at our fingertips a vast source of references and information which we could utilize to improve our lives. As useful and beneficial digital technology has been to our day-to-day transactions, it is also however used for harmful and unscrupulous activities. One pressing problem with the overwhelming amount of information readily available on the internet (and the widespread misinformation in social media) is knowing the veracity of data.</p> <p>As such, there is a need to introduce media and information literacy to the younger generations to encourage the responsible, productive, and ethical use of the internet. This measure proposes for the integration of media and information literacy programs into our basic education curriculum. Under this proposal, media and information literacy shall be incorporated as an essential component into the teaching of core subjects and enrichment activities of the students. It aims to incorporate in their daily learning routine exercises on content analysis, fact checking, information validation, among others that will be useful as they deal with the overwhelming amount of information online. Through this proposed measure, we hope to develop a generation of creative and critical thinkers, and dynamic participants in our democratic processes.</p> <p>In addition, it seeks to re-establish the social media, through education, as powerful platforms of intellectual exchange of ideas, source of empowering information and meaningful discourse, rather than channels of hatred, disunity, and confusion.</p> <p>On behalf of the people of Parolaque City's Second District, and for the common good of the Filipino people, the approval of the said measure is earnestly sought.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"> REP. JOY MYRA S. TAMBUNTING 2nd District, Parolaque City</p>
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This bill defines Media and Information Literacy as a “set of cognitive and practical skills in finding, accessing, organizing, evaluating, interpreting, and creating information across mass media and online platforms. Evaluation involves the analysis of the context, value, reliability, accuracy, and truthfulness of available information, reports, content, data, and images.” (SN 1593 / HB 9482)

That said Media and Information Literacy, as defined, highlights access, analysis and production of information for all media platforms, with the goal of “having active citizenship, respect for others, socio-cultural diversity and

honestly; train and develop creative and critical thinking; and encourage responsible use of online platforms.” (SN 1593 / HB 9482)

In so doing, the bill specifies the inclusion of learning activities around “source verification, content validation and analysis, fact- checking, information appreciation and comprehension, among others.”

4.3 Changes in the Curriculum of MIL in the Philippines

Since its publication, MIL Curriculum has been revisited once last 2021 due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic to the education. There was a call to improve the current learning set-up as students were experiencing higher stress, depression and general decline of mental health.

As a resolution, all the subjects were compressed in order to give time for more modular approach wherein students will have a mixed experience of attending online class and doing tasks in replacement some of the online classes. In effect, students will only have to be online attending classes in a limited number of hours to improve their mental health and adjust to other resource issues that hinder them from learning.

Like the rest of the subjects, MIL curriculum was compressed but most of the topics were retained and only the coverage per topic were crammed. (See Annex 1.) However, some of the interviewed teachers made a comment on the shortened version that while this cut down some of the topics and made it seem like an improved version, it didn’t make a lot of difference and impact towards the kind of change that they hoped for and needed in order for the subject to cope with the changing technological trends.

Clearly, each stakeholder (from department of education to policy makers and teachers) has different perspective and goal for the curriculum of media and information literacy. But who is the main decision maker in the education?

4.4 The Education System in the Philippines

The education system in the Philippines is considered centralized with two major structures—the Central Office and the Field Units (Department of Education, n.d.) The central office is then in-charge of the development of curriculum and monitoring of curriculum implementations, whereas field offices are tasked to approve any suggested changes in the teaching materials from schools.

Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Basic Education Program, DepEd Order No. 021 S.2019 states that: *“The curriculum shall be flexible enough to enable schools to localize, indigenize and to enhance it based on their respective educational and social contexts. The production and development of locally produced teaching materials shall be encouraged, and the approval of these materials shall be devolved to the regions and divisions, subject to approved standards and monitoring at the central level.”* (p. 5) This means that the curriculum of MIL is a created by the central office of the education sector and passed on to schools so subject teachers or leaders can create lesson plan. After, the school principal will approve the lesson plan; then the subject teacher will carry out the lesson plan.

This centralization of the curriculum guide is expected to standardize learning and to ensure the same quality of education is taught across institutions, regardless of school a student is enrolled in (i.e. public or private).

Chapter 5.0 Methodology

5.1 Research Methods

This research will borrow the lens of interpretivist paradigm wherein it aims to have a better grasp of how media and information literacy teachers in the Philippines navigate the internal and external pressures of the 21st century classroom. This paradigm emphasizes on how reality is socially constructed based on one's experiences and context (Henink, 2020, p.15), stating that truth or reality depends on the person's viewpoint and its origins.

As such, the study was conducted through a qualitative in-depth interview of teachers because each teacher has their own way of teaching a subject and their perception of the best pedagogy. Their answers are personal and lies on their version of truth—specifically their personal experience specifically their challenges, coping mechanisms, opinions, thoughts and feelings of the respondents; giving them voice to share their versions of truth—from how they created their realities, gave meaning to it (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022, p.11)

The twelve teachers, who are teaching and who taught the subject Media and Information Literacy, were individually interviewed. According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2009), interviews are interpersonal dialogue between two people on a specific topic of interest. (p.123)

Semi-structured approach was followed wherein a list of questions was drafted and asked, but not in sequence on how it was written. The interview flowed and the respondents were allowed to take control based on how they answer. Letting the respondent share information that they think is vital to the question (Bernard, 1994, p. 160) by letting them continuously share and checking with the list of questions if some of them were already spontaneously answered by the respondent.

Its structuredness lies on the same questions, also known as interview guide, that were asked for all respondents to be able to compare the answers. Having an interview guide allows answers to be reliable and comparable (Bernard, 1994, p. 158), and easier to conceptually structure the data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.131).

Moreover, conducting the interview through a semi-structured approach is also advantageous in situations when one is dealing with respondents who have time restrictions. (Bernard, 1994, p. 156) In essence, the respondents can allot specific time in their day for the interview.

The Respondents

The interviewed respondents are teachers of Media and Information Literacy in the Philippines. They come from different demographic backgrounds—(1) teaching in Metro Manila, northern and southern Philippines, (2) private and public schools, (3) male and female, and (4) years of teaching from 1 – 6 years.

Having this diversity in the set of teachers interviewed is both intentional and unintentional. Purposive sampling and snowballing was used to recruit respondents, looking for a specific pool of respondents which are difficult to reach out to otherwise. This was done through two primary sources/channels: tapping acquaintances, specifically my high school teachers and acquaintances who are teaching in schools.

While this was helpful and teachers willingly agreed to participate brought by immediate connection, their participation was a different story. It was difficult to get hold of some of them for final schedule; this could be an indicator of uneasiness to participate in the study, in the first place. As such, some respondents were then reached out through LinkedIn.

While Facebook is the primary social media platform that Filipinos use, LinkedIn was preferred because of its image of credibility towards people in the platform and also, it's easier to filter the profile of people looked for, specifically teachers. The key phrase "Media and Information Literacy" was used to limit the search to people in the Philippines. From there, profiles were screened before messaging them.

Other Sources of Data

Aside from in-depth interviews with teachers, documents were also used to compare some of the data gathered from the interviews. These documents include (1) the Media and Information Literacy curriculum from the country's education bureau, (2) bills related to Media and Information Literacy that

lawmakers wrote and passed, and (3) two lesson plans from teachers. These first two documents served as the fixed point of truth where teachers create their versions of truth, based their interpretations on and point of departure for their execution of the curriculum.

5.3 Limitations of the Method

As Saunders & et.al (2012) says, “there is often more than one truth because of the complexities of individuals and social subject.” Hence this research does not aim to generalize any findings or validate prior literature.

There are three other limitations and implications of the data collection.

- (1) Considering the goal of the study to understand how technology affects how teachers teach Media and Information Literacy, the aim of the data collection was to gather different stories about this and how they cope. As such, the quantity of interviews has nothing to do with reaching a specific quota or number, but it was based on the answers gathered from respondents. No new information was elicited starting from interview number 8 and patterns of answers were observed from one respondent to the next. Hence, knowing that answers were saturated at that point, the data gathering was concluded.
- (2) The teachers and students come from different schools. As such, the anecdotes of students were general experiences of how they experienced Media and Information Literacy class and does draw from the same experience.
- (3) The language of the interviews was dependent on the language that the respondent was most comfortable in and which language they can express themselves the most. They were asked to freely answer the way they wanted to. As such the interviews were conducted in English, Tagalog or a combination of English and Tagalog. Given this, some Filipino verbatims are translated to English. While it was of no intention to change the meaning of the answers of the respondents, it is possible that translations shaped or minimally changed the intention of their answers.

5.4 Ethical Dilemmas and Research Challenges

Fujii (2012) describes ethics as “an ongoing responsibility, not a discrete task to be checked off a “to do” list.” (p. 717) This definition became the guideline all throughout the research process— from choosing my topic to interviewing my respondents and writing the research.

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) also cautions that it is highly “encouraged to consult experienced members of the research community” (p.64). A number of people were consulted (from professors to peers) to ensure that selected interviewees were approached within the bounds of the ethical board. The respondents were also included in the conversations about the ethics of the research by guaranteeing that their privacy and personal ethical limitations will not be evaded. If they feel uncomfortable or discomfort was noticed, they can choose to end the interview, or the researcher will end it..

Pre-Interview

Before every interview, permissions were solicited of the respondents to participate in this study. Each one was asked for consent for audio-recording. The recording will only be used for note-taking purposes to ensure that nothing shared was missed. As agreed, this will be kept confidential considering that their voices are identifiable information which might harm their privacy.

Further, while the set of questions for the in-depth interview was deemed harmless, it is acknowledged that personal perception and definition of ethical and sensitive issues can be different from the respondents. There might be social ethics that the researcher might not be unaware of, but the respondent could experience. If so, this is unintended. As Fujii (2012) stressed, “research ethics matter for the simple reason that social scientists can bring real harm to study participants and collaborators. These harms can be social” (p. 717).

One teacher who agreed to participate in the interview kept moving the schedule of the interview instead of saying “no.” Instead of proceeding, the interviewer did not initiate any rescheduled interview as the respondent might have not felt safe to share her experience. While there is an attempt to create a safe

space by communicating everything that the respondent needs to know before the interview, their perception of “safe” may still differ.

During Interview

Ethical dilemmas are not only about possible issues on divulging personal information, but it also is also about acquiring them specifically how the interview questions were conducted.

A technique called “phased assertion” (Kirk and Miller 1986), or baiting (Agar 1996, p.142) was applied several times during the interview as it was easier for respondents to open up about certain issues they might have experienced. This was used to aid them to answers that were not at the top of their head but turned out to be the main insights gathered from the other interviews.

After Interview

Ethical issues can still happen after the interview, specifically during “publication and dissemination of written work” (Fujii, 2012, p. 721). After the interview, the confidentiality of their answers was reiterated, specifically on not disclosing their names, the school they taught at or are teaching at, the name of the town/city and the transcript from the audio-recording. As such, respondents’ names are replaced with pseudonyms to hide their identity but will also help structure the flow of my findings.

Moreover, the “off-the-record” answers of the respondents are honoured. These are their shared information at the height of sharing sentiments and personal views. They either mention that what they will share or shared are off-the-record. To keep the flow of discussion and honour their request, the researcher reiterated and guaranteed that these off-the-record answers will not be included in the processing of the information nor will be quoted in this paper.

5.5 Situating Positionality

According to Henink (2020), “interpretive paradigm questions the notion that research is truly value-free, and that researchers have no influence on data collection or interpretation” (p.15). I agree with this statement as thinking of a research problem is a motivation in itself to explore curiosity and investigate on a certain issue that drives the researcher. Motivation could then affect the questions that will be asked, and the interpretation of the data gathered. It is then vital to “(make) visible and open to debate the relationship between the researcher and the research” (Rose, 1997).

I am a passive advocate for minimizing disinformation in the Philippines and I have strong sentiments about this issue as it is spreading like wildfire in my country. I see how it has penetrated social and political debates, but I am more distressed seeing how it influences and tries to rewrite our history, for instance the narrative of people who suffered during Martial Law. As such I find it vital that Media and Information Literacy must be taught as it is intended to and as I interpreted it—to improve critical thinking skills of the youth so they can properly evaluate information that are packaged as “facts”. While I agree that truths are relative and there is more than one version of truth, facts however are black and white—they either happened or they didn’t. It is up for people react to facts, but it shouldn’t have any versions.

I believe that minimizing disinformation should be a responsibility of the state and therefore must be addressed by the state, and not led by private organizations. Private organizations or communities can only do so much. To see the impact of minimizing disinformation, it has to be done in a wider scale and early on. I believe that schools can bring the scale of impact in order to even make a small dent towards minimizing disinformation.

Situating education at the forefront of this advocacy, it is then possible to safeguard the future of the youth. While difficult and seemingly impossible at this point, I believe in the role of teachers to teach Media and Information Literacy and develop critical skills of the students. I believe also that their role is bigger and more important than what is written in the policies and curriculum. It is then the obligation of the state to ensure that they have the up-to-date

resources and support they need to do create better foundations for the students of this generation.

Despite my position, I did not elicit or shown proclivity towards my opinion to the issue when I conducted my interview. I let the selected interviewees talk about their opinion and experiences. I did, however, agree to some of their statements but managed to keep mum on things I disagree. In so doing, I tried to avoid the narrative of “false neutrality” for I am a human with my own proclivity.

Nonetheless, I acknowledge my subjectivity but also my determination to process the information I gathered as a fact rather than truths in order for me to separate and minimize any biases towards writing the findings of my research.

Chapter 6.0 Findings

When the Media and Information Literacy (MIL) curriculum was first published in 2013, it took 3 more years after that before it was rolled out in classrooms (year 2016) as part of the K-12 educational reform and as part of the UNESCO's initiative brought by the anticipated effects of the digital era. At that time, the subject was so new that no one knew how to teach it or what to teach. Hence the curriculum guide rolled out by the education sector served as the “*bible*” (teacher Faye, 2023, in-depth interview) of all institutions when teaching the subject as it contained the objective of the subject, number of hours to teach it, the topics/content, learning competencies, objective of the topic and suggested activities through performance standards.

In a way, some of the natural problems of teachers as street level bureaucrats (SLBs) when facing with uncertainty has been resolved— (1) resources were provided so there was minimal need to source resources elsewhere or improvise (through suggested references, assessments and activities), (2) the roles of teachers were defined so they don't experience uncertainty in their roles (specifically to teach the provided content), and (3) controlled psychological threat was expected (through the detailed curriculum so teachers would be less anxious about what to teach).

However as with any topic that relates with technology in any way, things evolve and shift faster than expected. The core issues of teachers as SLBs from inadequate resources, physical or psychological threats to ambiguous roles took on a different shape in the face of technology, and seemingly on top of the other non-technological issues for some.

As such, the curriculum that once addressed the core issues of MIL teachers can no longer meet the pace and impact of technology. The majority of the interviewed teachers lamented on how technology has changed many times over since the rollout of the curriculum they are using, but they are still using that same curriculum. The problems now are already different, but they are still teaching topics that are passed their time (see annex 2). As such, they described an obsolete curriculum in terms of its relevance and purpose in the present time. *“Technically, the content isn't wrong, but it might have veered away from the real goal of the subject especially that we are in the 21st century already. The challenges are already different.*

For instance, the topic on the evolution of media is no longer relevant because the problem in the present is the digital media” – Andrew, Private School Teacher, 2023, Online In-depth interview

This validates Lotta & et al.’s (2021) claim that SLB’s actions are not only influenced by “social environment” but also by the “institutional limitations” (p.8). The MIL curriculum that comes from the department of education is slow to adjust to the current changes in technology, but teachers are still compelled to follow it. However, as the challenges have evolved to 21st century problems, this demands 21st century solutions.

As such, this chapter will illustrate how the twelve interviewed teachers undergo the same core issues within the context of 21st century classrooms through their experiences and coping mechanisms.

6.1 Lack of Resources

As Lipsky (1969) described lack of resources, it spans from resources in manpower or time to accessible information (p. 14). Interviewed teachers who are teaching MIL curriculum in the Philippines still experience the same problems more than five decades in, from manpower, time, accessible information and materials to teach the subject.

In fact, the current administration acknowledges the shortage in resources and trainings and even the “misconceptions” of teachers who teach (PCO, 2023). As such, the problems they are going through are acknowledged but the resolution is yet to be achieved. Given that, teachers are improvising and looking for ways of their own to deal with these challenges.

(Time) Some of the interviewed teachers shared that breezing through topics they think are not as important for the students is how they cope with having too little time. Teacher Olivia also admits that targeting to teach all the competencies in one topic is not possible because aside from teaching topics, there are a lot of things going on inside the classroom; for instance student’s behaviour and competency. This then highlights the manpower ratio of students to teacher.

(Manpower) More often, interviewed teachers had to bear with the situation they are in. Luckily for teachers who are in private schools like Teacher Ian, the

decision to add more people is faster. He mentioned how the school added another teacher in the following term because he was teaching five classes already. However, it is a different story for public school teachers where they depend on the pool of teachers that they already have; so the subjects they teach can be inevitably diverse. Teacher Olivia for instance teaches Mathematics on top of MIL; when asked if there's any difference when teaching both subjects, she emphasized there wasn't any. This could be an indication of how heavily reliant they are in the curriculum because as it is prescriptive, they only need to think about the activities.

(Materials to teach) However, despite only thinking about activities to teach the curriculum, teachers still improvise because of the lack of resources inside the school to teach topic or execute the activity. This is mostly observed in public schools. Teacher Faye shared that despite wanting to practically teach students on *how to search information and evaluate URLs* in Google, they couldn't because of the lack of infrastructure, specifically internet that can reach classrooms. They also couldn't rely on student's internet connection because not everyone has the money to load their phones with it. As such they ask students to do it at home instead, however they couldn't verify if students did it correctly.

(Trainings) Moreover, as MIL curriculum in the Philippines is naturally prescriptive, trainings generally provided to teachers then are focused more on classroom management and pedagogies. This is because the expectation is to teach the topics in the curriculum. Only a few schools, mostly private schools, offer learning opportunities for their teachers to expand their knowledge on the topic through content trainings and certifications. *“Trainings are available during vacation but not necessarily for the subject—more on teaching strategies, teacher management. Though I know some (private) schools offer google certification.”* Laura, Private School teacher, 2023, *Online In-depth interview*.

These overburdening lack of resources in turn create psychological threat to teachers because of the multiple holes they need to fill in from looking for alternatives themselves, and simplifying to attain the curriculum's objective. Thus, they rely on their autonomy to improvise when deemed necessary to minimize psychological threats of having no clear guidelines on how to proceed in such situations. Nonetheless, functioning accountability mechanisms play huge part in providing relief as seen when another teacher was added to distribute the

class load. As such, it is important that accountability measures do not only work as evaluation mechanisms or an avenue to find the gaps but also a medium to bridge them.

However, these psychological consequences are not only caused by a lack of resources but also by the impact of technology towards the students they deal with. Students now are technologically smarter and while this has its advantages, it can also pose as threats to teachers and their ways of teaching.

6.2 Psychological Threat

Teachers deal with changes in students from (1) their values and mindset (i.e. wanting things to be instant and forward-looking), to their behaviour (i.e. short attention span) and language (i.e. jargons), and to their preference (i.e. strong preference towards digital). This means that teachers need to manoeuvre not only their pedagogies but also interaction with the students. While it is not new that teachers adapt to the needs of students, its pace, impact, and reactivity of the teachers to adapt to the changes is an interesting finding in this research.

The changing values and forward-looking mindset contribute to the difficulty in teaching part(s) of the curriculum, for instance its history, specifically traditional media. Most interviewed teachers noticed that students are too over entrenched with technology that even the attempt to introduce other types of media to the student was completed in a digital way. *“Although I utilize [traditional] newspaper as in the curriculum, they use online newspaper instead of the traditional newspaper. What they do is to print the news they find online to pass as traditional newspaper.”*—Linda, Private School teacher, 2023, Online In-depth interview

In fact, almost half of the interviewed teachers also raised the concern of students outsmarting the assigned activities by using the technology. As such, most teachers, especially teachers Bryan, Ian, Laura and Sandra, divulged that they put so much effort in coming up with examples and activities that do not require technology. Teacher Sandra shared that she needed to create activities that while relevant, leaned more towards collaborative activities in school. This then required their presence and face-to-face contribution because students would otherwise use technology as soon as they can. *“Especially now that there is*

ChatGPT, AI, that's why I stir away from essay activities because if I require them to submit essay assignment, they will just use Chat GPT.” –Sandra, Private School teacher, 2023, Online In-depth interview

This shows that teaching with technology in general is shaping more and more as an impossible task for (some topics of) MIL. Some claimed that they *know* students used technology to do their homework but mainly relied on instinct and gutfeel, because there were no resources or platforms that they could rely on predicting whether the homework was copied or not. *“It’s easier to teach because they can easily absorb what I’m teaching but it is challenging in terms of giving activities. This is because you know that they get their answers a 100% from online. They don’t do it themselves.” –Jacky, Private School Teacher, 2023, Online In-depth interview*

Aside from the need to adjust assessments of students, pedagogies adapted to the impact of technology towards the students that shortened their attention span. The interviewed teachers then veered away from heavy lectures and allocate only at least 15-20 minutes.

Teachers Ian and Laura also shared that they changed their teaching deck every semester so students remain interested and to fulfil their perceived expectations of themselves that they could address disinterest from their students. Not to mention that some schools, such as where Teacher Ian teaches, required teachers of MIL to change the perspective of the subject depending on the strand (i.e. STEM, Humanities, ABM, etc) they are teaching. For instance, if the student was of ABM (accounting, business and management) background, they cover the ethical aspect of MIL to incorporate copyrights and patents; it is then different for IT background.

Changing teaching materials too often to keep the attention of students and creating multiple versions of the subject to address differences in field are burden for teachers. This is most prevalent in private school teachers I interviewed. This shows that technically, routinization and simplification are thrown out of the window because simplification is being avoided to provide students with “customized” needs (based on student path). Hence, this could lead to even more psychological threats for the teachers because of additional workload.

However, teacher Ian disclosed that there was an instance that he used the same material as the one he used the semester prior because it can be exhausting

and there was just not enough time. This is an indication that teachers work around their defined autonomy to meet their own expectations of their role, but they prioritize satisfying expectations from the people they are accountable to before meeting their own expectations for themselves. This then circles back to the debate of what should be the role of teachers and the scope of their work. It also heavily points to the expectations placed on them by people they are accountable to (internal vs external) and the expectations they put on themselves that add pressure and psychological threat. So where specifically is their psychological threat coming from? How is it affecting them?

6.3 Role Expectations

Teachers are in constant state of trying to reconcile expectations coming from external (i.e. students), internal (curriculum and subject leaders) and themselves.

External Pressure (Students and Technology)

The shifting power dynamics between teacher-student relationship is becoming more apparent through the years as evident by studies that explore teacher roles as administrator or facilitator rather than the banking model, as coined by Freire.

This research, on the other hand, saw indications of how external pressure can also be more subtle that its almost negligible and more widespread, specifically on how teachers are more careful in their language and how they spend their time outside of work to still do “work”. While this can be perceived as commitment, it can also be seen as the need to relate to their students and to be competent that adds, yet again, to their overburdening tasks.

For instance, while teachers are expected to know the needs of their students, they are finding themselves exerting more effort to understand their students by immersing more often in social media than they prefer and used to. Teachers argue that they do so in order to relate so their students listen to them. Teacher Irene, for instance, felt strongly about initially not wanting to immerse herself in social media but felt that she needed to out of duty: *“If you want your*

students to listen to you, you have to also from their point of view, from where they are at.”
2023, Online In-depth interview

Moreover, teacher Ismael opened up how they try to be a bit more careful with the terms they use because as teacher Sandra anticipated, they could get “cancelled” otherwise. In a way, they are expected to be more cautious of the language and words they use and issue they speak about because as teacher Zain said, students now are more “woke” and sensitive to issues. This psychological threat got the best of teacher Sandra as she resigned two years after dealing with different personalities and needing to be cautious all the time.

Catching up with the trend also has to do with technology. Teacher Faye felt she needed to constantly be in-the-now to effectively teach the subject and meet the expectations in her role and her IT background: *“If you are in IT, you shouldn’t be left behind. You need continuous learning because the topics you teach are IT topics. You need to cope up because what I learn I need to teach.”* (2023, Online In-depth interview)

From Internal Pressure (The Curriculum & Subject Leaders)

The internal structure that puts pressure towards teacher’s role are coming from the curriculum and subject leaders of MIL.

The Curriculum

Teachers are expected to follow what’s in the curriculum to ensure the same learning across students. This could mean that teachers are expected to limit their role as executioners of the curriculum. As such, it is not surprising that teachers could assume the same role for themselves.

(Technical Implementers) Less than half of the interviewed teachers do so. *“It is what’s in the curriculum”* or *“I need to follow it”* are the phrases they, most frequently from public school teachers, automatically responds when asked about the curriculum. According to Lipsky (1969), these phrases that emphasizes on following what’s written are avoidance strategies to “evade involvement”. (p.15) Teachers who only stick to what’s in the rule could also lead to issues of their own. While routinization allows teachers to simplify and ease up on their

workload, this is also a problem because routinization leads to reproduction. Reproduction of a curriculum that is outdated would not yield to the kind of education or learning that is envisioned for the kids specifically for the students of the 21st century. This is because the students are not learning but merely acquiring information that are of no use to them.

However, Teacher Faye justified this protocol because as she argued, the curriculum is created by curriculum developers, experts, researchers and teachers of the subject. As such, they already crafted the best curriculum for teachers to use it only makes sense to follow it from top to bottom.

However, more interviewed teachers disputed this and claimed that they think and feel that teachers of MIL were not consulted at all when MIL curriculum was crafted. They stated that the curriculum looked like a copied version of mass communication curriculum; not to mention that the topics are already past their relevance.

(Exercising Autonomy) Thus, more than half ascertained that they should then exercise their autonomy because of the gaps in the curriculum. They then improvised through adding topics that they think were important for their students with 21st century needs and quickly going through topics that they deemed irrelevant. *“In the curriculum guide, there was no mention of “fake news. There is no topic about misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. Those are the problems we have today. The technology we have right now is far from what the curriculum covers.”* –Andrew, Private School Teacher, 2023, Online In-depth interview

Subject Leaders

On top of the curriculum, institutional mechanisms allow teachers to decide minimally for their students to reduce the burden of making decisions and track student learning (p. Lipsky, 1969, p.19) This is in the form of subject leaders who are employed to control the increase or decrease of teacher control towards what or how to teach, and sometimes even the references that teachers use. They exist on top of the principal or headmaster, as quality managers to ensure uniformity of learning by the students as multiple teachers are teaching the same subject in one school. *“We’re allowed to change a bit but it has to be approved by the subject leader. It goes through tedious process and should have planned one term before*

the start of the next. We need to make a proposal, get their approval and use it in our classes.”
 –Ian, private school teacher, 2023, Online In-depth interview

As such, teachers are expected to answer to subject leaders. However, they can also posture as a psychological risk because their presence meant excessive regulation and even minimized autonomy.

(Excessive regulation) Some subject leaders for MIL regulates in a weekly basis by checking the activities and examples used in class. This can be psychologically exhausting for teachers as it is threat in their already too many workloads. Not to mention if their activities were not approved and they have to change it. Teacher Sandra argues that while this mechanism exists, most of the time it doesn't materialize, at least in their school, because they also have lives outside of school.

Nonetheless, this puts into light Lipsky's view on how mechanisms or procedures are deliberately made to be “irritating to use and financially or psychologically costly” put in place in order to limit the demands of SLBs. It is no wonder some teachers implement the curriculum by the book because it would make it easier to get away with having to go through psychological exhaustion caused by multiple layers of gatekeepers who need to review their activities, assessments and references.

(Minimized teacher autonomy) On the other hand, this excessiveness creates a tension for some teachers who are in dilemma about their autonomy as teachers as acknowledged by Twining (2020), “there is an existing tension between curriculum in terms of freedom and regulation”. (p. 2293) Teacher Sandra mentioned finding herself uncertain of her role—should she be teaching based on what's expected from her as a teacher (i.e. what her students should be learning) or perform based on what's written in the lesson plan created by the subject leader. It is then unsurprising that this can lead to disregard wherein teachers can choose not to honor some of the limitations of their minimized autonomy, especially when they feel they have lack of support and they have strong beliefs of what and how they should be teaching. *“When I taught, for instance the topic photography, I didn't use the activity (that was included in the lesson plan)”* –Sandra, private school teacher, 2023, Online In-depth interview

For this reason, the topics they added that they think their students need to learn may be deliberately unwritten in the lesson plan that subject leaders need to review. This means that they follow the minimum expectation based on what was written as a form of agreement; else, they exercise their autonomy based on their perceived student needs.

This means two things—(1) they value the importance of accountability to guide them based on their defined scope and limitations from the curriculum (and/or school policy); but (2) they expect a degree of autonomy for what is unwritten and this autonomy has been deemed vital as they went beyond the curriculum and prescribed materials to understand and relate to their students by immersing themselves with the student’s behavior and preferences.

However, because they can only do so much brought by the limitations in their role and unfulfilled expectations for themselves, these triggers “performative anxiety” (Kilderry, 2015) for some. Their perceived “lack of space” to change the current circumstance diminishes their motivation (Oosterhoff & et al., 2020), leaving teachers to feel powerless in this situation due to seemingly prescriptiveness curriculum, defined roles, stringent mechanisms in place and conflicting expectations. As Boote (2006) adds, “when there is a significant mismatch between what teachers value and what they are able to accomplish, they are much more likely to burn out or disengage.” Hence as expected, teachers such as teacher Irene and teacher Sandra left teaching due to dissatisfaction. As Teacher Irene puts it: “*For me that is the reason why I resigned because I felt that with that kind of attitude among school leaders, we won’t make any progress if we only keep the status quo. That’s the problem.*” (2023, *Online In-depth interview*)

Chapter 7.0 Discussion

This chapter will directly answer the sub-questions of this research.

Sub-question #1: What are the challenges of teachers amid internal and external pressures of the 21st century classroom in the context of Media and information Literacy in the Philippines?

The core challenges of teachers are not new. Lack of resources, psychological threats and unmet expectations are still very much apparent and now transformed to adapt to the digital era. This means age-old problems on the lack of resources in time, manpower, materials to teach and training have been carried over and situated in the technological context. However, as these problems evolved with time it became even more difficult to resolve because the problems, when you take out the technology, are still there. Teachers are then piled with both technological and non-technological dilemmas—overwhelming workload and classroom management that are now categorized as psychological threats because the list doesn't end.

Moreover, the need to adapt and use technology as a tool is not the only concern of teachers but also its impact towards students who are technologically more advanced than they are. This means that pedagogies and student needs are changing faster than a curriculum that was supposed to serve as their anchor.

All in all, these challenges create tensions for they are psychological threat in itself as a teacher's psychological need to feel competent, knowledgeable and relatable strengthens when these aren't met.

To overcome these issues, teachers then revert to coping mechanisms as their automatic response to challenges and latch on accountability measures in place to anchor them. However, accountability mechanisms such as subject leaders can also derail conditions that were meant to improve working situations by putting up excessive regulation and further minimalization of the teacher's autonomy (which could seem like non-existent).

Sub-question #2: How do teachers cope with the internal and external pressures of the 21st century classroom in the context of Media and Information Literacy in the Philippines?

In coping with the challenges, the narrative of teacher autonomy often comes out to tackle the learning needs of students as perceived by the teacher and the need to meet their own expectations of themselves and their role. They do so by (1) improvising areas that have clear gaps in their mandate and the needs of their students, (2) simplifying and routinizing their work in order to deal with workload, and (3) honoring the mechanisms in place that define their role.

Having dependable accountability measures is also key to improving challenges of teachers. For instance, private schools review manpower ratio of teacher to students and provide trainings for teachers to widen their knowledge of the subject. It is then important to set the purpose of accountability measures, not only as a one-way mechanism but as a mechanism where needs are discussed and resolved.

Sub-question 3.0: How much has technology changed the educational landscape in the perspective of the teacher in the context of Media and Information Literacy curriculum in the Philippines?

Teachers are in constant need of catching up with technology for it has become pervasive in their ways of teaching (i.e. pedagogies), their students (i.e. changing behaviour, values and preferences), and more importantly, the policy or the curriculum they need to follow. As such, it doesn't help that the current curriculum they are using is a decade old and has already passed its relevance. While it is inevitable to lag behind technology, it is a different story when teachers are lagging behind students.

While it is not new that teachers try to meet the needs of their students, it is however interesting to notice that the extent of the influence of student's behaviour, values and preference contributes to changes in teacher's personal digital behaviour—some teachers admit being more present online than they prefer because of the need to know the trends and jargons in social media in order to

relate to their students. Moreover, teachers are being more cautious in their language and choice of words in fear of “being cancelled” by students (online).

Some would argue that this is part of the scope of unwritten responsibilities of teachers, where they are expected to exercise their autonomy towards further understanding the needs of students. However, the impact of technology is creating a wider and deeper gap between curriculum and role. It then kept adding to the long list of unwritten responsibilities where accountability mechanisms could’ve provided support for teachers. However, because the purpose of an accountability mechanism is also too defined as quality managers of teachers, it lessens its value and opportunity. Contrary to the debates, accountability and autonomy can co-exist healthy when accountability mechanisms are in place not as a test or (checklist) evaluation but as a feedback mechanism to improve working conditions.

Chapter 8.0 Conclusion

This research put into perspective how teachers navigated the internal (i.e. curriculum and structures) and external (i.e. students and technology) pressures of the 21st century classroom through teacher autonomy and accountability mechanisms in the context of Media and Information Literacy curriculum in the Philippines. Moreover, it uncovered the pervasive impact of technology towards teachers from the rapid obsolescence of curriculum and shifting power dynamics of teacher-student relationship.

Twenty-first century problems demand 21st century solution that involves changes in the curriculum and the education sector that are appropriate for its time. A prescriptive curriculum anchors on bureaucratic governance that Hanson (1976) describes as “well-defined hierarchy of authority, power is centralized in the role of the chief executive, rules stipulate expected and prohibited behavior, a specific division of labor exists, experts are hired for these positions, and a precisely defined workflow is established”. (p.3)

High centralization affects the common goal of producing good education in the context of 21st century education because having a prescriptive curriculum assumes the same results for all within the timeframe it is mandated. This is contrary to the visions for the skills that a 21st century student should be developing and too slow to adapt to digital age.

In the context of Media and Information Literacy curriculum in the Philippines, the (suggested) pedagogies in teaching is not shaping kids to be critical thinkers or media and information literate and is already obsolete to be found relevant. This means that the whole curriculum necessitates to be revisited more frequently because teacher rely on them heavily as seen in this paper.

However, it is not realistically feasible to revisit the curriculum in the frequency that is demanded by the pace of technology. It is then encouraged to provide more opportunity for other mechanisms and roles to flourish such as autonomy and accountability.

Autonomy is seemingly minimized on paper with the restrictions provided by accountability mechanisms such as subject leaders. However, it may not be as controlled as they wanted to as things can go unwritten. It is then important to acknowledge that teacher autonomy is here to stay despite mechanisms that

intend to limit it. While it may be debatable whether its implications are good or bad, autonomy has to be rerouted towards the good implications. Honouring that it exists and guiding how teachers should harness it to be beneficial for student's education.

In doing so, accountability works hand-in-hand with autonomy in bridging the gaps of the curriculum that are becoming wider as time goes by. Accountability mechanisms could be more participative than hierarchical, which seemed to mimic the linear or banking approach of education itself. Nonetheless, this research has only scratched the surface of the relationship of accountability managers, in this case subject leaders, and teachers themselves. It would be interesting for future researchers to explore this in more depth.

Teacher autonomy and accountability mechanisms are vital because of the vicious cycle that the education sector and teachers are in. This research also observed how there seems to be lack of a more permanent solution to alleviate core issues of teachers—lack of resources, psychological/physical threats and role expectations. However, these challenges have just evolved and piled up with non-technological issues. By now, we could have been better at anticipating the problems or resolving these issues given the mechanisms in place for assessment and evaluation.

But because teachers are in that cycle, this also means that they will keep being reliant on their teacher autonomy and accountability mechanisms. It is then fundamental to improve their role in the scope and limitations of teacher's work.

Chapter 9.0 Recommendation

Recommendation for future research

Technology is not only heavily present but has changed and influenced the environment that teachers are in as presented and observed in this research. That said, it offers a few possible points of departure for future studies.

- (1) The relationship of teacher and student dynamics could be explored more. This research has established how technology impacted students leading to changes in behavior and attitude. It would be interesting to explore further what this means for the teacher, its implications not only the changes in pedagogies given that education sector is at the middle of polarizing generations wherein teacher and student are of different generations and different sets of values. While it is not new, the impact of technology adds context and layer towards this research.
- (2) A deeper understanding of curriculum implementation can be further studied, specifically the alignment of policy and purpose. It is clear that the Media and Information Literacy curriculum aims to provide a basic understanding of the media and communication channels for the students. However its intention, specifically why it was created, has a different aim—developing critical thinking skills in the digital age. As such, it is interesting to explore teacher understanding and how it affects how they teach considering the curriculum and their own beliefs and perception. As Twining & et.al. (2020) and Butler (2018) found in their students, there is a misalignment of curriculum interpretation among policy (constitutive order), school arena and classroom setting.

Recommendation for education sector

While it is understandable how education sector is slow to adapt and adjust to technological changes and impact considering all other priorities, the sector needs to be a bit more sensitive towards this. This is because while it can be argued that the changes and its impact is just too fast to cushion the blow, it might be faster in the next few years as traditional means will be far from obsolete and close to extinct.

A decade old curriculum of Media and Information Literacy is only the tip of the iceberg and the curriculum's obsolescence could potentially go faster in the next coming years considering the pace of technology. This also means that they need to shorten curriculum review cycles that take more than 10 years to undergo. While it definitely is not easy feat, it has to move faster than it is at the moment.

The traditional forms of education might and could've evolved but not because of how education led it but as a response to the changes in technology. Not only will it be a question of the forms of learning but if learning is even necessary considering that technology and the generation who grew up with it is moving faster than schools. As such, the education sector then needs to find better mechanisms to address these challenges and adapt sooner than later.

This includes governance in education and shying away from harnessing teacher autonomy. Teacher autonomy is here to stay whether it is defined or otherwise as found in this research as teachers improvise when they deem vital. Giving more room for teacher autonomy and defining it can help alleviate the challenges teachers because of the fast pace of technology and slow response to the curriculum. It is then vital to find mechanisms to find its middle ground, not only to contradict.

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Annexes

Annex 1: These are topics of the curriculum that was directly lifted from the original documents. Lifted in order to easily compare the two versions.

2013 version <i>Source: https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SHS-Core_Media-and-Information-Literacy-CG.pdf</i>	2021 version <i>Source: https://www.studocu.com/ph/document/sultan-kudarat-state-university/bsed-english/mil-melcs/37701198</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to Media and Information Literacy (Media, Information and technology literacy) 2. The Evolution of Traditional Media to New Media 3. The Evolution of Traditional to New Media (Prehistoric, Industrial, Electronic, New Information Age) 4. Information Literacy 5. Types of Media (Print [books, newsletter, magazines, journals, and other printed materials], Broadcast [radio, television, and film], New Media [internet]) 6. Media and Information Sources (Indigenous, Library, Internet, Others) 7. Media and Information Languages (Codes, Conventions, and Messages, Audience, Producers, and Other stakeholders) 8. Legal, Ethical, and Societal Issues in Media and Information (Copy Right/Fair Use/ Plagiarism, Netiquette, Digital Divide, Addiction, and Bullying, Virtual Self, Others) 9. Opportunities, Challenges, and Power of Media and Information (Economic, Educational, Social, and Political; Threats, Risks, Abuse, and Misuse) 10. Current and Future Trends of Media and Information (Massive open online content; Wearable technology (i.e. Google glass, iPhone watch, etc.); 3D Environment (i.e. 3D printer, 3D films, holograms, etc.); Ubiquitous Learning; Others) 11. Media and Information Literate Individual (Improved quality of life; Greater political participation; Better economic opportunities; Improved learning environment; More cohesive social units; Others) 12. People Media (People as Media and People in Media- Definition; Characteristics; Format and Types; Advantages and Limitations; Value; Others) 13. Audio Information and Media (a. Definition, characteristics, format and types, sources, advantages and limitations, value; b. Hearing vs. Listening, Learning Out Loud; c. Selection Criteria; d. Design principle and elements) 14. Motion Information and Media (a. Definition, characteristics, format and types, sources, advantages and limitations, value; b. Selection Criteria; c. Design principle and elements) 15. Manipulative Information and Media (a. Definition, characteristics, format and types, sources, advantages and limitations, value; b. Selection Criteria; c. Design principle and elements) 16. Multimedia Information and Media (a. Definition, characteristics, format and types, sources, advantages and limitations, value; b. Selection Criteria; c. Design principle and elements) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how communication is influenced by media and information • Identify the similarities and differences between and among media literacy, information literacy, and technology literacy • Discuss responsible use of media and information • Explain how the evolution of media from traditional to new media shaped the values and norms of people and society • Compare and contrast how one particular issue or news is presented through the different types of media (print, broadcast, online) • Contrast indigenous media to the more common sources of information such as library, internet, etc. • Present an issue in varied ways to disseminate information using the codes, convention, and language of media • Cite practical situation when to apply knowledge in intellectual property, copy right, and fair use guidelines • Create a campaign add to combat digital divide, addiction, and bullying • Cite an example of an issue showing the power of media and information to affect change • Describe the impact of massive open on-line • Discuss the implication of media and information to an individual and the society • Describe the different dimensions of text information and media; visual information and media; audio information and media; motion information and media; manipulative information and media; multimedia information and media • Analyze how the different dimensions are formally and informally produced, organized, and disseminated • Evaluate a creative multimedia form (living museum, electronic portfolio, others) • Produce a creative text-based, visual-based, audio-based, motion-based, and manipulative-based presentation using design principle and elements

Annex 2: These are topics from Annex 1 but emphasizes on the topics that are obsolete or passed its relevance. Added in 1 table for emphasis.

2013 version <i>Source: https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SHS-Core_Media-and-Information-Literacy-CG.pdf</i>	2021 version <i>Source: https://www.studocu.com/ph/document/sultan-kudarat-state-university/bsed-english/mil-melcs/37701198</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Evolution of Traditional Media to New Media • The Evolution of Traditional to New Media (Prehistoric, Industrial, Electronic, New Information Age) • Media and Information Sources (Indigenous, Library, Internet, Others) • Current and Future Trends of Media and Information (Massive open online content; Wearable technology (i.e. Google glass, iPhone watch, etc.); 3D Environment (i.e. 3D printer, 3D films, holograms, etc.); Ubiquitous Learning; Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how the evolution of media from traditional to new media shaped the values and norms of people and society • Contrast indigenous media to the more common sources of information such as library, internet, etc.

Annex 3: List of respondents and information that are allowed to disclose.

#	Pseudo name	Gender	Private or Public	Position	Metro Manila or Province
1	Zed	Male	Private	Teacher / Subject Leader	Metro Manila
2	Faye	Female	Public	Teacher	Province
3	Olivia	Female	Public	Teacher	Province
4	Laura	Female	Private	Teacher	Metro Manila
5	Linda	Female	Private	Teacher	Metro Manila
6	Jacky	Female	Private	Teacher	Province
7	Ian	Male	Private	Teacher	Province
8	Ismael	Male	Private	Teacher / Subject Leader	Metro Manila
9	Irene	Female	Private	Teacher / Subject Leader	Province
10	Andrew	Male	Private	Teacher / Subject Leader	Province
11	Bryan	Male	Private	Librarian	Metro Manila
12	Sandra	Female	Private	Teacher	Province