




The Ecosystem of Media Literacy: A Holistic Approach to Media Education

El ecosistema de la alfabetización mediática: Un enfoque integral y sistemático para divulgar la educomunicación

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ABSTRACT

This research article proposes a systematic way to disseminate media literacy education in Thailand, based on the UNESCO's media and information literacy competencies. A media literacy learning schema was constructed using a mixed-method research before it was verified for efficacy and practicality by the in-depth interviews of media literacy experts. The interview data resulted in "the Ecosystem of Media Literacy" as a holistic and systematic approach to disseminate media literacy education. The Ecosystem of Media Literacy posits that the learning schema works in an environment that supports media literacy, with each component operating interdependently and in parallel with each other. It consists of the Media Literacy Learning Schema (Learners, Facilitators, Curriculum, and Pedagogy), the Society (Community, Civic Sectors, Media, and Parents), and the Policy. It is believed that using the Ecosystem model can lead to a behavior change among learners, the ultimate goal of education. In other words, media literacy will become a way of life. The Interview data also resulted in a new finding that Thailand's media literacy components should consist of access, analyze and evaluate, reflect, and create, instead of access, evaluate, and create that the country has been using as a framework for over a decade. The findings of this research are applicable to other cultures with different groups of learners, with minor adaptations that can serve as a provisional policy guideline.

RESUMEN

Este artículo de investigación propone una manera sistemática para difundir la educación de la alfabetización mediática en Tailandia, basada en las competencias de la alfabetización mediática e informacional de la UNESCO. El esquema de aprendizaje de la alfabetización mediática se estableció aplicando un estudio de métodos mixtos antes de que su eficacia y funcionalidad haya sido comprobada por las entrevistas detalladas de expertos de alfabetización mediática. Los datos de estas entrevistas dieron lugar al «ecosistema de la alfabetización mediática» como un enfoque integral y sistemático para divulgar la educación de la alfabetización mediática. El ecosistema de la alfabetización mediática postula que el esquema de aprendizaje funciona en un ambiente que favorece la alfabetización mediática, donde cada componente opera de forma interdependiente y en paralelo: el esquema de aprendizaje de la alfabetización mediática (estudiantes, facilitadores, currículum y pedagogía), la sociedad (comunidad, sectores cívicos, medios, y los padres), y la política. Se piensa que el uso del modelo de ecosistema puede producir un cambio en el comportamiento de los estudiantes, la meta final de la educación. En otras palabras, la alfabetización mediática se convertirá en un modo de vida. Los datos obtenidos de las entrevistas también dieron a conocer un nuevo descubrimiento, al demostrar que los componentes de la alfabetización mediática en Tailandia deberían consistir en acceder, analizar y evaluar, reflexionar, y crear; en vez de acceder, evaluar y crear; un marco que el país lleva usando durante más de una década. Los descubrimientos de esta investigación son aplicables a otras culturas con grupos diferentes de estudiantes, que con pequeñas adaptaciones, pueden servir como una orientación política provisional.

KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Media literacy, media education, ecosystem, Generation Y, literacy, policy, media policy.
Alfabetización mediática, educación mediática, ecosistema, Generación Y, alfabetización, política, política mediática.



1. Introduction

This paper is a part of a doctoral dissertation titled “Media Literacy Learning Schema for Thai Generation Y” of which the ultimate goal is to find a way to effectively provide media literacy (ML) education to Generation Y in Thailand. Based on the final step of the complete research, this paper reports the ultimate outcome and proposes a holistic approach that the author calls “the ecosystem of media literacy”.

In South East Asia, media literacy is not yet part of the primary and secondary school curriculum, even with a country where the media technology has prospered and much developed like Singapore (Lim & Nekmat, 2009); or in the larger Asia, even though Japan does have ML in its school curriculum, there are also problems of educators lacking the skills to teach the recently developed subject (Sakamoto & Suzuki, 2007). In Thailand, there is currently neither a media literacy policy nor a clear definition of term and competencies to provide an operative framework. The Thai ML literatures and practices are being developed more slowly than the fast-moving media landscape, while people, Generation Y in particular, actively receive and create media messages in the participatory culture; contrary to the more well and consistently developed ML education in the Western countries where media literacy was already expanded to encompass both the protection and preparation of individuals for living in the 21st century media environment: Center for Media Literacy (2002), European Commission (2007), Hobbs (2010), Media Literacy Project (<http://goo.gl/PbhedO>), National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) (<http://goo.gl/RfqfbG>), Office of Communications (Ofcom) (2013), UNESCO (<http://goo.gl/aDHwR>), Zacchetti (2007). Thai ML still concentrates solely on the negative sides of the media, and to protect the young from the media, treating media users as passive receivers. Because of the unique characteristics shaped by technologies and the dynamic media use behavior, Generation Y was chosen to be the target for this research. In this context, Generation Y people refer to those who were born in early 1980s and 2000 (Beekman, 2011; Main, 2013; Stein & Sanburn, 2013).

Hence, this study was based on the concept of media literacy as a protection and preparation and the skills for living in the 21st century, using the UNESCO’s Media and Information Literacy components (MIL) as an operative framework as it has been used for over a decade. The UNESCO states that MIL components include access, evaluate, and create (Moeller, Joseph, Lau, & Carbo, 2011).

2. Research methods

In the earlier steps of the study, the author has conceptualized a model of media literacy learning schema consisting of five components as shown in graphic 1. This paper reports the verification process of the model and its outcome. This is to ensure the correctness, efficacy, effectiveness, and practicality in the Thai context. Note that the learning schema model was constructed from scientific research methods, including the needs assessment of ML competencies among Generation Y through a survey of 400 samples in conjunction with focus group discussions that resulted in the identification of Generation Y’s weak and strong competencies which provided the elements that constitute the Teaching & Learning component.

In the verification of the model, the in-depth interview approach was used to gather comments and opinions of the ML experts. A total of seven experts¹ were purposively selected based on their availability due to the limited timeframe of this research. The criteria for being an expert include their ML-related works, experiences, and their recognition in the field. The conceptualized 5 components, including Learners, Educators, Dissemination, Teaching & Learning, and Policy, were shown and explained to the experts during the interviews. The experts’ opinions and suggestions were audio recorded and transcribed in order to be codified into themes for data analysis, which led to the modification of the model and the ultimate outcome of this study, the Ecosystem of Media Literacy, elaborated in the next section.

3. Research results

The interview data can be classified into two themes: the ML competencies and the dissemination of ML education.

3.1. Media literacy competencies

Thai experts expressed concerns over the necessary life skills that learners must know. According to the experts, there are four life skills: analytical thinking, critical thinking, systematic thinking, and reflective thinking. While the first three skills were readily included in the UNESCO’s MIL components (access, evaluate, and create), the reflective thinking skill did not seem to be distinctively addressed. Therefore, the interview result indicates that the UNESCO’s MIL components are not sufficient in the Thai context, and that reflective thinking skill is to be added to the ML components. By including Reflective Thinking to the media literacy competencies, the global UNESCO’s concept has been localized to fit the Thai context.

3.2. The dissemination of media literacy education

For the dissemination of media literacy education, it is found that the majority of experts generally agreed to the learning schema's five components. Nevertheless, they suggested that it should focus on the implementation to achieve the goal of behavioral change, that is, how to make ML skills a practice in everyday life (S. Tripathi, personal communication, 2015-03-15). The experts agreed with the proposition that ML should be disseminated through both formal education (an obligatory curriculum) and out-of-school education (any ML-related activities that occur outside the academic premises). More importantly, the out-of-school education should eventually lead to the ML environment in the larger society (K. Wirunrapan, personal communication, 2015-04-16).

The experts also suggested that the learning schema indicate the priorities among the proposed components, with a simpler framework for the Thai people to better reflect the way to reach Generation Y, considering their self-learning behavior that could be a barrier to classroom learning (K. Wirunrapan, personal communication, 2015-04-16). According to the experts, it is important to create a clear understanding of media literacy concept among all stakeholders, from policymakers to educators, so that they deliver the right actions: the policymakers push forward a national media literacy policy, the educators use the right pedagogy. The experts agreed that the ML policy is the primary key to empower the promotion of media literacy as a way of life, through formal and out-of-school education; while educators need to understand that ML education is about practicing the skills, not another school subject to be memorized, so that they can design the appropriate learning process (K. Wirunrapan, personal communication, 2015-04-16).

The experts agreed on the proposition that educators need to be media literate, and added that they also need to develop their ML skills constantly to keep abreast with the changing communication technologies. Only when the concept and principles of media literacy are well understood can media literacy become a national policy and successful in both formal and non-formal education. One of the most recurring concerns among the experts was how to make media literacy a way of life, since it requires a tremendous chan-

ge in the educational system, from the traditional hierarchical method to student-centered.

There is a lack of a clear understanding on the concept of ML, as one of the experts stated: "There's a misunderstanding of what media literacy stands for, what media literacy is, and what media literacy scales are" (S. Gabai, personal communication, 2015-03-20); the principle of student-centered pedagogy; the traditional top-down teaching method, and the entire Thai educational system are major challenges for Thai ML education. As an expert maintained, "The disci-

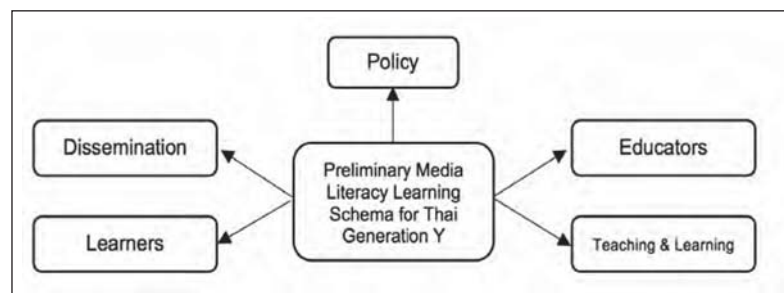


Figure 1. The preliminary Media Literacy Learning Schema for Thai Generation Y proposed to experts for verification.

pline of media literacy is trivialized by some administrators and teachers, who see this area of study as simply watching movies" (A. Silverblatt, personal communication, 2015-05-15). To accomplish the ML goal, teachers need to spend a lot of time preparing for class activities, but the traditional Key Performance Index (KPI) system for teachers normally focuses on the students' grades, which becomes a great barrier to engage in the student-centered teaching. Additionally, like several other countries, the traditional Thai teaching method with the teacher acts as an authoritative figure lecturing in front of the classroom causes the students to memorize for exams and never actually use their knowledge of ML skills in their everyday life. Furthermore, there are too many ML activities from the civic sectors, but too few lessons learned as most activities went by without proper evaluation and knowledge sharing among actors. More importantly, the government or policymakers do not recognize the importance of ML because there are always more urgent issues such as the economic issue to prioritize, particularly for such a developing country as Thailand.

Noticeably, the challenges come from both the system and individual stakeholders. The experts did emphasize that "media literacy as a life skill can be accomplished when the entire environment accommodates the learning process outside classrooms" (K. Wirunrapan, personal communication, 2015-04-16),

where Generation Y learn and practice ML skills, and that ML education is a continuous process that does not end when school is out.

The in-depth interview analysis leads to a modification of the proposed learning schema in accordance with the experts' suggestions: the learning schema must be clear and reflects the reach to Generation Y population, using a simpler framework for the Thai context with an emphasis on the learning process, and the building of the ML environment beyond the academic institutions so as to make ML a way of life. The result is "the Ecosystem of Media Literacy" (graphic 2).

Hence, the revised learning schema, in the form of the Ecosystem of Media Literacy, consists of three major components: the Media literacy learning schema, the Policy, and the Society. The Media Literacy Learning Schema is the core component that revolves around the education; the Society comprises the components that contribute to the building of ML environment, involving largely with the out-of-school education; and the Policy is the center of the Ecosystem in facilitating, enforcing, and mobilizing media literacy, both formal and out-of-school. All of these primary components need to operate in parallel, supporting one another, for media literacy to thrive as a way of life. The details of the primary components are elaborated below.

3.2.1. The Media literacy learning schema component

The Learning Schema consists of four elements crucial for education: the facilitators, the learners, the pedagogy, and the curriculum. These four elements directly involve in the learning process, both in the formal and informal out-of-school education.

a) **Learners.** In this context, the Learners are Generation Y which consist of high school students and young workers. The Generation Y students are present in the formal education, while the Generation Y workers are found in the out-of-school context. The characteristics of Generation Y are the primary variables that influence the other three components within the Learning Schema. According to the experts, Thai

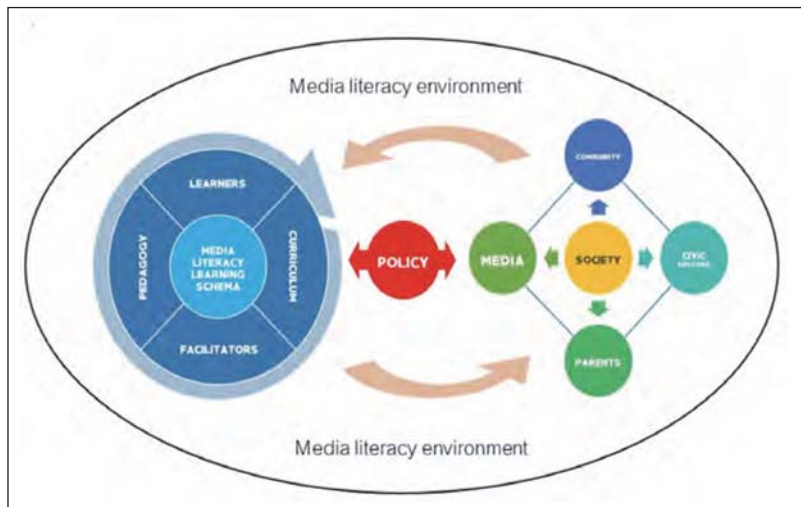


Figure 2. The Ecosystem of Media Literacy as a holistic approach to disseminate media literacy.

Generation Y people have the following characteristics:

- Confidence.
- Prefer self-learning approach, particularly from the Internet.
- Believe and trust people from their experiences, not their titles or authority.
- Believe what they have discovered and learned by themselves, as well as their peers, more than they do their parents or teachers.
- Cannot take criticism.
- Multitasking.
- Have short attention span, partially a result of multitasking.

These traits oblige the facilitators, or 'educators', to adjust their teaching methods in order to engage and motivate the over-confident, short-attention, multitasking, self-learning Generation Y in the classroom as well as to practice ML in their everyday life.

b) **The pedagogy.** The ML pedagogic attributes should be student-centered and enquiry-based to engage the short-attention Generation Y in the learning process. Since these two pedagogic attributes involve experiential learning, they respond to Generation Y's self-learning trait and value in experiences.

To fulfill these pedagogic attributes, such teaching strategies as textual and contextual analysis, case studies, translations, simulations, production, problem-based learning (PBL), and cooperative learning can be used.

Nevertheless, it is necessary for the Thai facilitators to truly understand the core principles of these strategies to achieve the desired outcomes. It is also important that the evaluation method be adjusted to include other means than the traditional paper exams,

for example, a peer review or self-assessment can also be used to practice reflective thinking skill.

c) **The facilitators.** The term 'facilitator' is used to replace the term 'educator' because in student-centered teaching, the teacher's role becomes more like a mentor or a guide who designs and facilitates the learning process that involves knowledge sharing, experiencing and discussion rather than pure lecturing. The changing role affects the qualifications of the facilitators. That is, the ML facilitators should:

- Understand ML core concepts, principles of student-centric and enquiry-based pedagogy.
- Have interdisciplinary skills, particularly when media literacy is an integral subject.
- Be media literate, in their teaching and practice, and constantly keep up with the media environment.
- Be competent in making the learners believe in the learning process.
- Be friendly enough so as to create a discussion and participation atmosphere in the classroom, not an authoritative figure.
- Have an open-mind and able to admit that they do not know everything and sometimes they might know less than the students in certain issues.

In addition, because Generation Y usually are technology-dependent, facilitators can use technology as a teaching aid as applicable. A simple task like assigning a research using the Internet, a texting application or social media for out-of-classroom communication will do. Technology can help make Generation Y learners feel more comfortable with the learning process. It is, however, crucial to realize that technology is only an advantage, not a necessity. For those who have access to technology, such as the computer and the Internet, technology can be used as the teaching aid, with guidance and how to use it right; while those who have less opportunity should not entirely rule out technology as part of the teaching. Essentially, the facilitators must keep in mind that media literacy is about teaching the skills and competencies in relation to consuming and producing the media, thus, the focus must be on the media, and the risks that come with them, not about using the technologies (Hobbs, 2010: 27).

d) **The curriculum**

Media literacy curriculum concerns how and what to be taught to the learners. ML should be taught both as a stand-alone subject and an integral subject. ML as a stand-alone subject can either be a core course or an (mandatory) elective course, depending on the students' ML background in earlier school years, which is not likely the case in Thailand as ML is not mandatory in school's curriculum yet. ML should be

taught in every level, with the content relevant to the students' lives or of their interests. ML as an integral subject is considered a more effective way by the Thai experts as it is more efficient in incorporating ML skills in daily practice. Infusing ML skills to such general subjects as history, Thai language, Buddhism, and so on, is an efficient way to demonstrate how these subjects as well as media literacy can be applied in everyday life.

The content of the curriculum should include Competencies and skills, Ethics and morals, and Digital Citizenship.

The competencies and skills include four components: access, analyze and evaluate, create, and reflect. Reflective thinking, as mentioned earlier, is added to the original UNESCO's three-component framework as a result from the interview data. Reflective thinking helps individuals make moral and ethical judgments when they create media content and information, which corresponds to James Potter's theory (2008) that maintains that people should have social responsibility and that to reflect is about applying critical thinking for external benefits, based on internal integrity, besides using it to focus on one's own good (Potter, 2008). It is also about recognizing how personal decisions affect the society and that one can contribute to the society by taking certain action. It also corresponds to the aim of media literacy to educate people to "reflect systematically on the processes of reading and writing, to understand and to analyze their own experience as readers and writers" (Buckingham, 2003: 41, cited in Martens, 2010: 2). Noticeably, the new Thai ML components are very similar to those of Renee Hobbs' (2010) proposed in the Aspen Institute's Plan of Action.

It is also noteworthy to mention that the create component is often overlooked by the Thai scholars. Based on the UNESCO's definition, to create is not just about teaching how to operate the software and applications to produce media content, but also about using it creatively and responsibly in order to make a difference in the society, as well as to participate in the civic society as a citizen. It is also a way to turn Generation Y's strength in using technology and tools into a power to do something good for the public. Therefore, this paper suggests that create is always more or less included when it comes to media literacy.

Ethics and morals are also an essential issue to be included in the curriculum. Because Generation Y were born with the Internet, the act of copy and paste has become the convenience at their fingertips. Plagiarism and copyrights violation have long become the Thai habits. Therefore, it is crucial that the ML

curriculum reinforces the significance of the issues so that it can change the learners' behavior.

Digital Citizenship is another key content. The term is defined as the norms of appropriate, responsible behavior with regard to technology use, and is believed to be "the essential first step to being media literate in the 21st century". More importantly, teaching digital citizenship fits the media use profile of Generation Y as it addresses the use to technology in all aspects, overlapping all of the skills mentioned in media literacy. Ribble (2015) suggests the nine elements of digital citizenship as follow:

- Digital access - full electronic participation. It is the first step to equality in digital rights, which also corresponds to the first ML component of access.
- Digital commerce - users like Generation Y should understand that electronic buying and selling of goods can be both legitimate and illegitimate in different contexts and cultures. Knowing what is legal and what is not makes them effective consumers in the digital economy, particularly when the digital economy policy is being promoted in Thailand.
- Digital communication – the communication technology both hardware and software can be overwhelming for some people, and thus, knowing how to make decisions and judgment amongst these options is essential.
- Digital literacy – includes the process of teaching and learning about technology and its use in both school and workplace environment. Digital literacy also concerns how to learn in a digital society - to appropriately learning anything, anytime, anywhere. This perfectly fits the self-learning behavior of Generation Y.
- Digital etiquette – concerns electronic standards of conduct so that people are responsible users in the networking society.
- Digital law – rules and regulations on electronic actions and deeds to comply with. In Thailand, the digital law includes the Computer - Related Crime Act B.E. 2550, and the Electronic Transaction Act B.E.2544.
- Digital rights & responsibilities – these are the major issues in Thailand. Technology users need to understand their rights as well as to recognize other people's rights, and understand that these rights must come with responsibilities.
- Digital health & wellness – knowledge in physical illnesses from using technology, such as eye pain, the so-called office syndrome, and back pain; or psychological illnesses such as Internet addiction.
- Digital security (self-protection) – how to protect the privacy and personal information while being online or while using digital technology.

Learners, facilitators, pedagogy, and curriculum are interrelated and should operate together in parallel. Learners, Generation Y in this context, are the primary variable that influence and affect the way the other variables – facilitators, pedagogy, and curriculum – operate. The characteristics of Generation Y influence how and what they are taught, which consequently oblige the facilitators to change and adjust themselves to deliver the new teaching methods. Without one component, the learning schema becomes incomplete.

3.2.2. The Society component

The Society is the societal process that helps establish the ML environment, leading to the awareness and the practice of media literacy as a way of life. Through social learning, from parents at home, teachers at school, to the youth influencer in a community, learners are exposed to ML materials in every step of everyday life. And since the learners, Generation Y, receive ML knowledge through experience, piece by piece, the same way they receive information –from here and there, concise, short, but constantly all day long– the Society component responds well to Generation Y's behavior and characteristics. The function of the Society, hence, involves cooperation and collaboration between individual elements within: the Community, the Civic Sectors, the Media, and the Parents:

a) **The community.** The Community should be treated as an academic institution asset in the ML learning process, not merely a community outreach project. A community can serve as the classroom as the students engage in learning outside the school premises, passing their ML learning experience to the community leaders or the local wise men who are powerful influencers in the process. In this way, the ML body of knowledge from the academic world is disseminated beyond the formal education, encapsulating members of Generation Y who are not in the system as well as other age groups including the parents.

This process can only be achieved when teaching and learning change, and when the academia recognizes the power of the community. Subsequently, the Community component becomes dependent on the academic institutions, which is dependent on the governmental or institutional policy. Disseminating media literacy to the Community by other means, such as the initiatives from the civic sectors makes the Community depend on such sectors, as well.

Communities have always played an important part in the Thai society, particularly in the rural areas.

They can be one of the most effective channels to disseminate media literacy to those who are not in the formal education system and be the first unit to serve as a media literate society.

b) The civic sectors. The civic sectors refer to the non-profits organizations, private and independent agencies, as well as media professional organizations. They are the key players in mobilizing, promoting, and advocating media literacy in Thailand. Non-profits organizations such as the Child Media, Thai Public Health Foundation, and the Family Media Watch networks should continue their missions. The key is for these organizations to share their knowledge and experiences, so that they can learn from each other, and use the knowledge to conduct and initiate future projects more effectively and efficiently.

The civic sectors, together with the academia, should be proactive in lobbying for ML policy. They can also use the media channels to publicize their activities and initiatives, which can be made possible if the Policy provides incentive for the media that promote ML.

c) The media. The media need to take part in disseminating ML through their channels, be it traditional or digital platforms. Prints, the Internet and the social media should do just fine in advocating media literacy, while the television stations might have a conflict of interest issue with their sponsors as they educate people not to fall for advertising strategies. Alternatively, TV stations can focus on the Internet or the social media literacy, while the public television like ThaiPBS can function as the key leader to advocate ML on any platforms as its revenues do not come from advertising. In addition, the media can promote ML on any of their platforms, such as websites or social media page, which would reach Generation Y even better.

The question of how to convince the media to commit to ML depends largely on the Policy, either through law enforcement, regulations, or incentives, which will be elaborated further in the Policy.

d) Parents. Parents are the closest people who can provide ML education to their children. In order to accomplish this, parents need to first become media literate, which makes this component dependent on all other components to educate them. Although Generation Y can access the media in their privacy through smartphones, tablets, personal computers, or

simply have a TV or a radio in their own room, the parents can still establish certain house rules to regulate and monitor them. For example, they can allocate the time that the entire family watch TV together, or limit the time spent on the Internet, games, or other entertainment media. Parents should also talk to their children regularly and monitor their media use behavior closely and regularly.

e) Policy. Policy is the most important component to the success of ML education, formal or informal. It

The researcher believes that the Ecosystem of Media Literacy can help enhance media literacy education to be more effective in changing learners' behavior as well as to create a media literacy society. It also offers a new knowledge that is applicable to other developing countries.

can enforce or provide supports as well as ensure that media literacy derivatives happen systematically with the works of all stakeholders from all sectors in the Society. In this context, Policy can be both national (i.e., government policy) and institutional (i.e., school or university policy). A governmental policy can play a part in both formal and out-of-school education:

In formal education (through the Ministry of Education):

- Mandate ML curriculum, from kindergarten to university levels.

- Adjust certain rules and regulations to support ML teaching, such as designating the KPI that does not rely on the students' exam outcomes, or providing grants and funds related to ML research and training.

In out-of-school education (through the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission):

- Provide incentives to encourage the promotion of media literacy, such as tax reduction for the media who contribute to ML promotion such as airing ML-related programming.

- Enforce ML as a part of media regulations; for example, designate the ratio of media literacy TV programming.

In addition to pushing ML in education and promotion through the media, the Policy can help guaran-

tee accessibility to the media and information by providing the infrastructure and technology. According to the survey results conducted earlier as part of this research, Generation Y who have easy access to the Internet (connectivity to home/work network, WiFi, or 3G) have higher Create competencies than those who do not have such convenience (have to go to a computer lab or Internet café). The result indicated that access to the Internet provides more opportunity to practice the skills and more exposure to ML information, and hence, empowers users to experience and learn about the effects of online information, such as cybercrimes, on the first-hand basis. The Internet helps open the windows to the world of information as it responds to Generation Y's self-learning habit. Essentially, access is the fundamental factor to equal rights to information. However, it is also important for policymakers to realize that technology must always accompany with the knowledge on how to use it safely, wisely and responsibly. The Policy component could be achieved by using the UNESCO's MIL country readiness as a guideline. The followings are the Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: Country Readiness and Competencies; there are five key areas to indicate if the country is ready and competent to be a media literacy nation (UNESCO, 2013: 51-53):

- Governmental aspect: Media literacy is a mandatory subject in the curriculum and teacher training curriculum.
- There must be a national ML policy to ensure systematic ML derivatives and initiatives.
- There must be supply mechanisms to guarantee access of media and information to the population.
- Academia and individuals aspect: The availability and quality of services must be distributed to the entire population.
- Public and private sectors aspect: There must be non-governmental organizations and entities actively engaged in the advocacy and promotion of media literacy.

Meanwhile, Policy at the academic level involves schools and academic institutions recognizing the importance of media literacy and providing necessary supports. It is crucial supporting teaching and integrating ML in the institution's curriculum, particularly when there is no ML policy from the government. The institutional policy can determine regulations that promote and support the teaching of media literacy; for example, establishing ML as one of the KPIs, offering incentives to teachers who participate in ML training, or providing funds and grants for media literacy

research or textbook translations and writing. Institutional policy can also help provide resources such as books and textbooks. The challenge lies on how to convince the school or university board that media literacy is essential to students in living in the 21st century that it should be taught in school.

The ML Learning Schema, the Society, and the Policy components are highly interdependent, with Policy serving as the main component that supports all others. Although they can occur independently from the Learning Schema and its components, the Society components are vital for the ML Learning Schema to be complete and accomplish its goal of being a way of life.

As an expert stated, media literacy is so sophisticated and multidimensional that it needs to be mobilized and requires efforts from many sectors. And because the formal education alone may not be able to lead to behavioral change, the out-of-school education in the surrounding environment becomes a necessity to complement the formal learning. With all components operating together as an ecosystem, it is possible for media literacy to become a way of life.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In Thailand, there have been a plenty attempts by media literacy advocates from various civic sectors during the past decade. Unfortunately, for a developing country, it seems that the policymakers are giving priorities to other important issues such as economics, while the politics in the country is very volatile and is currently in the verge of drafting a new constitution. The Ecosystem of Media Literacy involves multiple stakeholders to accomplish the goal of creating the media literacy environment with the Policy component as the most crucial unit that can secure such a national collaboration. With such obstacles, the top-down initiatives seems unlikely in the near future.

The prospect of media literacy, therefore, relies heavily on the Civic sectors, reflecting the notion that media education must be initiated by the people, not the authorities (Pungente, n.d.). However, although several civic sectors, both private and non-profit organizations, are already working vigorously to disseminate ML knowledge, they also need to collaborate with one another and learn through knowledge sharing to improve the ML projects. Convincing policymakers to get an ML policy should not be ruled out. In lobbying for a policy, it is essential that the ML advocates understand the language of policymakers, presenting practical solutions rather than lengthy scholarly reports. They need to clearly explain the potential of ML as a way to empower people to be active citizens

and participate in civil society (S. Gabai, personal communication, 2015-03-20). Scholars also suggest media literacy for the new media reform plan (Preetiprasong, 2008; Thai Journalists Association, 2015; Benjarongkij, 2011), as a recent study found Thai youths and adolescents lack media literacy skills (Thai Netizen Network, 2015).

The findings of this study, the ecosystem of media literacy, and the ML competencies for Thailand, address the concerns and practicality of ML education dissemination and provide a holistic approach to systematically implement media literacy education for policymakers. In addition, despite being conceptualized for the Thai context, the Ecosystem of Media Literacy can be applicable to different target groups and contexts with minor adaptations in the content of some components within the Learning Schema, while the relationship between each component in the ecosystem remains intact.

However, the implementation of the model is yet to be further examined, for example, through a pilot experiment, to test if the model works. Also, the details of each component within the ecosystem of media literacy are yet to be elaborated and studied, particularly in the Learning Schema, where curriculum design and teaching and learning strategies are involved, resulting in further investigation with the learners' perspective.

The researcher believes that the Ecosystem of Media Literacy can help enhance media literacy education to be more effective in changing learners' behavior as well as to create a media literacy society. It also offers new knowledge that is applicable to other developing countries.

Notes

¹ List of experts in the interviews: Dr. Pornpit Yenjabok, Assistant Professor. Deputy Director of Kasetsart University Research and Development Institute Bangkok Campus; Khemporn Wirunrapan, Director of Child Media Institute, Thai Health Promotion Foundation; Assoc. Prof. Suriyadeo Trepate, M.D. Director of the National Institute for Child and Family Development; Anothai Udomsilp, Director of Academic Institute, Thai Public Broadcasting Service (ThaiPBS); Dr. Warat Karuchit, Assistant Professor. Lecturer and Assistant to the President of the National Institute of Development Administration; Dr. Art Silverblatt, Professor, Webster University, USA; Sara Gabai, International Consultant of the Graduate Program in Communication Arts for ASEAN and lecturer at Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University.

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