

## Speech

# Impressions on Media and Information Literacy Education in the Philippines

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Good morning everyone!

So much has been said about Media and Information Literacy; that its significant role cannot be dismissed or brushed aside. First, as a matter of continuing discourse, and second, as an evolving academic or scholarly framework and a tool for ensuring that pedagogy becomes more relevant and engaging. There are three operative words: media, information, and literacy, that each one cannot do without the other.

Media practitioners, communicators and educators play a pivotal role in a democracy like the Philippines, in nation-building, in an imperfect educational system like ours. To say the least, sadly, as a technical term, media literacy is not popular among journalists or those in the business of churning out news. Media education, which by and large, is akin to or is media literacy by or in itself. Nonetheless, whether it is literacy or education, it involves the publics and how citizens can empower themselves through truthful information. I cannot overemphasize TRUTH.

In this age of unwieldy DISINFORMATION, HALF-TRUTHS, ALTERNATIVE FACTS, PROPAGANDA and whatnots, media literacy is all the more essential in helping the public make sense of just about everything. That it is a necessary tool or appendage (like one's mobile phone) in dissecting and deconstructing realities, is another story. And here lies the challenge: to laymanize (and not juxtapose) concepts and frameworks in more bite-size derivatives so that both originators,

producers, and consumers will have more comprehension. And there lies another challenge or problem: to comprehend.

There is a dwindling or declining readership locally and globally. Access to information is yet to see the light at least in this part of the world. Socio-political and media landscapes are fractured elsewhere. There is a push-and-pull between traditional and legacy media and new media platforms. Everyone is now a content provider regardless of platform or technology – or the lack of it. There is an eroding trust in legitimate sources of information. Virality and trending-ness rule in social media. Artificial intelligence and algorithms seem to be the name of the game.

So what is the narrative? What is your narrative or playbook? We have to reshape narratives and rethink about universal values of truth, justice, social equity, inclusiveness, and the like, so that these values become ingredients for a principled life.

Information usually stays as such. What we do with information, in my case as a journalist, is called journalism. What educators and communicators do with truthful and guided information, is called literacy or education. At the heart of it is a discerning or critical publics that enable other publics to be more circumspect in challenging the status quo and prevailing convoluted cultures and sub-cultures.

To prove this point, may I quote Bill Nye, an American science communicator and TV presenter, who says, that :“ The information you get from social media is not a substitute for academic discipline at all.”

A British-American author, motivational speaker and organisational consultant, Simon Sinek supports Nye by saying, “Academic experts may not be good at doing what they are experts in themselves, but they are good at explaining the subject matter to others. They write books, teach courses and offer lessons and give steps others can follow.”

He further elaborates and avers: “More information is always better than less. When people know the reason things are happening, even if

it's bad news, they can adjust their expectations and react accordingly. Keeping people in the dark only serves to stir negative emotions."

On a more hopeful note, I see stronger engagements and collaborative efforts between the media and the academe, bearing in mind that constant collaboration in whatever form will help bridge gaps, foster networking of sorts, and make our presence felt in the public consciousness. Academe and media have always been siblings in both familiar and peculiar terrains and territories. Both need to veer away from their comfort zones and spheres of influence to be able to build "better communities", to borrow from our PPI slogan. We surely do not want to preach to the same choir.

Just when we thought everything is a worlds apart, we can actually work on a common platform, and this is our unflinching pursuit for truth and excellence towards a more media and information literate society and a citizenry that does not only see silver linings in confusing trails and paths but (does) work towards truth and nothing but the truth.

## **About the Contributor**

**Ariel C. Sebellino** is former President of the Philippines Communication Society (PCS) and currently the Executive Director of and a Trustee at the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), also known as the national association of Philippine newspapers. A journalist, events organizer, and media trainer, he lectures about journalism, press freedom, disinformation, and media and information literacy (MIL) to media practitioners, students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. He occasionally contributes for Vera Files and other PPI-member newspapers. (Correspondence: [hans\\_chance@yahoo.com.ph](mailto:hans_chance@yahoo.com.ph))

