



## Textbook Tasks for Social Change: Instantiation of Development Debates and Interposition of Pedagogical Interventions in Media Literacy Education

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### Abstract

As materialization of their discursive stance as instructional communicators and media producers, textbook authors instantiate various development debates as well as interpose a wide range of pedagogical interventions for critical reflection and adoption by learners. This qualitative study sought to situate these development debates and the counterpart pedagogical interventions within the context of textbook task design as an application and embodiment of social justice communication. The development debates serve as the proposed contexts for media text analyses, reflective exercises, case studies, and media production, among others. Correspondingly, the interposition of interventions allows students to make sense of and act upon the instantiated development debates. Intrigued by the intricacies of textbook task design, I undertook this media education inquiry to contribute to the goals of foregrounding pressing development and policy issues and applying appropriate critico-creative pedagogies. By employing critical thematic analysis, I was able to extract, code, and interpret the qualitative data that revealed the diverse but interconnected socio-sectoral issues and the dialectical categories of pedagogical interventions. As contextual themes, the following development debates surfaced: poverty-related, governance-related, election-related, migration-related, tourism- and sports-related, women- and gender-related, misrepresentation- and marginalization-related, information- and media-related, and technology-related issues. As forms of intermediation, the interposition of pedagogical interventions to development debates can be classified into the following dialectical categories, namely: traditional versus critical, individual versus collective, isolated versus intersectional, personal versus structural, and academic versus more than academic.

**Keywords:** *development debates, pedagogical interventions, critical media literacy education, social change*

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## Introduction

The social situatedness of the researcher when this critical inquiry was conceived and pursued coincided with a raging global pandemic and an intense national electoral battle that are both characterized by massive disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation. All of these exacerbate an economic condition rendered underdeveloped by decades of malgovernance and a political climate that is highly polarized due to intense social and economic contradictions. Both of these global and national events (i.e., unsettling pandemic and dysfunctional elections) along with the prevailing development challenges are complex forms of disruptions that will detrimentally define and influence Filipinos' collective future. Within this context, the role of critical media and information literacy education is indispensable in empowering the vulnerable public—especially the youth—in dealing with the destabilizing and disabling media and information pathologies. More than ever, it is in this “age of spectacle and distrust” (Mihailidis, 2019) that the youth and the broader section of the Filipino population are in dire need of being equipped with critical and civic media literacy skills and competencies (Kellner & Share, 2007; Mihailidis, 2019) as viable countermeasures and counterstrategies. Within this context, the role of instructional materials is therefore pressing and indispensable in engendering well-developed and sustainable societies as well as creative and critical citizenries.

## Literature Review

### Unpacking Textbooks and Textbook Tasks

Textbooks remain a staple component of the educational experience, appearing from pre-elementary years even up to graduate studies. However, because of their ubiquitous and default presence in our academic ecology, we take these instructional resources for granted as subjects of critical examination and inquiry. The commonplace nature of textbooks and the high regard accorded to these pedagogical devices leave many stakeholders uncritical of their conceptualization, adoption, and evaluation. This is even more serious in the case of a textbook task, considering its crucial role in learning application and assessment.

The institutional encounters of individuals and their experience of being subjected “under their authority” encompass an “extended period of time and/or critical periods of life” (Bonvillain, 2008, p. 396). Within the context of formal education, these so-called “extended and critical encounters” conceivably include using textbooks and responding to textbook tasks. More specifically, this totality of institutional experience covers the students' exposure to the textbook's content and format along with the constitutive development debates as cases and contexts and the corresponding proposed pedagogical interventions. The regularity, frequency, and intensity of these institutional and instructional encounters, as a result, create a pattern and impression of normalcy, naturalness, and ordinariness—a condition that can potentially render educational stakeholders undiscerning, uncritical, and dismissive.

### Mainstreaming Social and Sociological Issues

Anderson-Bakken et al. (2020) in their textbook research in the field of natural sciences sought to evaluate how textbook tasks mediate the view of science to Norwegian learners. The study indicated that the textbook tasks were “closed” and aimed only at requiring the learners to repeat and reproduce already well-established facts drawn straight from the instructional materials and other available sources. In addition, the research also revealed that there were observable distinctions in the style in which the textbook tasks were rendered within and across textbook chapters. For instance, while there are textbook tasks in some chapters which are of repetition and reproduction types only, there were also other learning activities that allow students to “explore and evaluate evidence,” specifically in chapters featuring “socio-scientific issues.” The research concluded that the textbook tasks in general are not promotive of “scientific inquiry” and do not engender higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), except for textbook tasks that covered socio-scientific dimensions.

Within this context, it can be inferred that the mainstreaming of development debates in media and information literacy, or in any subject area for that matter, can potentially contribute to the promotion of the learners' critical and evaluative skills.

Within the context of the current study, the absence of development debates, whether as foreground or background socio-sectoral issues in the textbook tasks of chapters dealing with textual, visual, audio, motion, and multimedia information, for instance, will forego the opportunity of making critico-political sense of the technological and technical dimensions of media and information. In Anderson-Bakken et al.'s study (2020), it was discovered that in the chapters of the natural science textbooks where socio-scientific issues were instantiated, the textbook authors employed open-ended, divergent questions promoting higher-order thinking skills.

## Framework and Methodology

Media scholar Len Masterman (1989) points out that representation is the “central unifying concept of media education,” arguing further that “media do not reflect but re-present the world.” As a specific form of media, textbooks perform the same function based on how the authors, as active agents, depict, project, and communicate their ideas and ideals about the social world. Overtly or covertly, such is manifested in the manner textbook lessons as well as student tasks and learning activities are designed, formulated, and put together as a coherent whole. Within the context of this research, representation pertains to how the development debates were depicted and instantiated as cases and contexts in the textbook tasks as well as what interventions were interposed to unpack and act upon these contemporary social and sectoral issues.

A politico-communicative and structural perspective is necessary in revealing the “universal structures underlying the surface differences of apparent randomness of cultures, stories, and media texts” (Branston & Stafford, 2010, p. 12). For instance, a critical scrutiny of the seeming differences in terms of codes and conventions among mainstream(ed) texts would apparently reveal commonalities that are reflective of the same underlying political and cultural ideology that they generally represent. Conceivably, this is also the case when we critically look at specific media forms such as advertisements and video games that only manifest “surface differences” but are proven to be cut from the same cloth, so to speak. A critico-structural perspective will also allow the students to apprehend the overt and covert connections between the text and the context, the substructure and the superstructure, and the self and the society. Within the parameter of this study, the units of analysis are the textbook tasks containing the instantiated development debates in dialectical relation to the interposed pedagogical interventions. My objective in this research is also to surface the task exemplars in terms of critically and creatively interlinking the cases and contexts with alternative interventions and initiatives. By systematically employing critical thematic analysis, I was able to extract, code, and interpret the qualitative data based on the foregrounded development debates and the dialectical categories of pedagogical interventions that emerged.

Media is commonly perceived as a “conveyor belt of meaning between the world and audiences, producing images about or from this or that debate, event, or place” (Branston & Stafford, 2010, p. 11). However, media do not act as mere channel of messages. As such, media must be apprehended instead as communication agents performing an active part in rethinking and reconfiguring social realities. This is also particularly the case with respect to textbook tasks when they render, represent, and mediate social realities to learners through the communicative practices of formulating questions, instantiating contexts, and interposing interventions. For instance, viewed from the lens of orthodoxy, the conditions of poverty and underdevelopment are rendered only as a backdrop and hence already accepted as natural and normal. This outlook that perceives the reality of poverty as a “societal given” only brings about proposed initiatives and interventions that merely placate and pacify people and hence do not contribute to the problem's critical unraveling and successful eradication.

If the main course objective of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is to gain an “understanding of media and information as channels of communication and tools for the development of individuals and societies” (Department of Education, 2013, p. 1), it is not possible to achieve these goals without seriously considering the social and sectoral issues where individuals, institutions, and communities are rooted and/or entangled. Moreover, if the aim of the course is to “develop students to be creative and critical thinkers as well as responsible users and competent producers of media and information” (Department of Education, 2013, p. 1), this is also not attainable without situating media education in its specific geographical, ecological, economic, political, and cultural milieu. Within the context of this study, development debates refer to the broad social and sectoral issues (e.g., chronic poverty, bureaucratic corruption) as well as media-related problems (e.g., digital divide, media monopoly) in the Philippines and the world over.

In carrying out this qualitative study, I followed this set of procedures:

1. Referred to the existing curriculum guide of the Media and Information Literacy subject area that was developed and provided by the state’s education department.
2. Produced a list of commercially available Media and Information Literacy textbooks and identified the textbook titles with a broad base of circulation. The materials covered for this politico-communicative inquiry were the following:
  - *Media and Information Literacy: Empowering the Discerning Audiences* (J. R. Alagaran II, 2019, Abiva Publishing House)
  - *From Cave to Cloud: Media and Information Literacy for Today* (P. Campos, 2016, Phoenix Publishing)
  - *Media and Information Literacy* (O. Cantor, 2019, Vibal Group)
  - *Media and Information Literacy* (B. Liquigan, 2016, Diwa)
  - *Media and Information Literacy: Enhancing Education Through Effective Communication* (C. M. Magpile, 2016, Intelligente Publishing)
  - *Media and Information Literacy: Being a B.E.S.T. Digital Citizen for Senior High School* (J. Yuvienco, 2017, C&E Publishing)
  - *Media and Information Literacy* (M. J. Zarate, 2016, Rex Bookstore).
3. Procured the short-listed textbook titles and ensured the completeness of the pages.
4. Carried out a close and critical reading of the textbook tasks and examined each item according to the instantiated development debates.
5. Proceeded using critical thematic analysis to identify the interposition of pedagogical interventions that take stock and act upon the instantiated development debates.
6. Identified the dialectical categories of the interposed pedagogical interventions and initiatives that emerged from the analyzed data.

## Result and Discussion

### Development Debates and Pedagogical Interventions

In dealing with the lessons in each chapter, the textbook authors mediated learning by incorporating development debates at the local, national, and/or global levels within the context of the interanimating economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Given the intended action orientation of the textbook tasks, the

academic authors, as media producers and curriculum implementors, also interposed pedagogical interventions to make sense and act upon the instantiated development debates and policy issues.

### **Poverty-Related Issues**

In a chapter on values and ideology, Zarate (2016, p. 90) featured a news article about chronic poverty, the peasant class, and land reform and went on to ask the students about the implications of its content, specifically with respect to the following considerations: target readership, values system, privileged perspective, subdued voice, and ideological standpoint. This is a notable learning activity that will help guide the students in critically analyzing (a) the political slant and ideological underpinning of the news story, (b) the multiple positionalities of the interest groups involved, and (c) the unequal power relations between social forces. Concerned about the prevailing discourse on poverty being forwarded by the news story, Zarate (2016) raised this reflective question as a follow-through.

Do you agree with the premises of the main informant—that persistent poverty is largely due to the breeding of large families? (Zarate, 2016, p. 91)

This is the one and only task that touched on land reform in relation to poverty despite being a contentious politico-economic issue in Philippine historical and contemporary realities. Inspired by the encouraging initiatives of Zarate (2016), a sustained need exists to sustain the mainstreaming of social and sectoral issues that reflect the country's rural political and economic conditions.

### **Governance-Related Issues**

On the controversial issue of corruption occurring in various levels and dimensions of governance, Zarate (2016) foregrounded this social pathology and structural malaise as part of an in-depth analysis. Specifically, she instantiated corrupt practices within the context of employing public power for private gain (i.e., bureaucratic capitalism) where she asked students to research whether specific media organizations have owners or their close relatives holding public office. Part of the task requires tracing the ownership structure of their media and non-media conglomerates. Essentially, this complements the task of Campos (2016, p. 69) requiring students to find out “if the owners of the leading media networks have political connections like relatives, allies, and patrons.” The other corruption-related tasks include Magpile’s (2016) situational analysis about public sector corruption and acts of rebellion as well as Liquigan’s (2016) supplementary reading material on corruption and the people’s indignation as a collective response.

Zarate’s inclusion of a case study about fiscal mismanagement within the context of disaster rehabilitation is commendable for integrating two pressing and recurring issues in the Philippines for critical analysis, i.e., calamities and bureaucratic pathologies. This successive pattern (that is, a vicious cycle) can be accurately described as “*double disaster*,” “*disaster within a disaster*,” or “*disaster in disaster management*.” For this development debate, Zarate (2016, p. 50) asked the students to develop a diagram that will expose the “interlocking problems that led to the slow distribution and inefficient use of huge amounts of funds meant for the rehabilitation and recovery of areas ravaged by Typhoon Yolanda.”

### **Election-Related Issues**

Despite the regularity of Philippine elections, which take place every 3 years, only a few tasks were formulated that relate to this political exercise and, exceptionally, they came from only one textbook. Given the controversies and dysfunctions associated with how this political practice is carried out, Magpile (2016) instantiated the following socio-pedagogical initiatives and interventions into the textbook tasks: (a) website development for voter’s education, (b) campaign ads for a presidential contender, (c) reflection question about the use of media resources for biased campaigning, (d) multiple choice question and situational analysis on media ethics in relation to electoral politics, and (e) documentary film to promote *alternative* candidates. The lineup of activities is commendable for including tasks that involve self-reflection, media production, and advocacy work in various levels of engagements (i.e., personal as well as institutional).

Textbook tasks must contribute to the goal of mainstreaming the people's development and policy agenda by broadening and deepening the political conversation in public fora and electoral debates. However, as already pointed out, very few tasks are devoted to election-related social and sectoral issues. The age group of senior high school students is near the voting age (that is, Grade 11) or these students are, in fact, already part of the electorate (i.e., Grade 12). As such, media and information literacy must contribute to the improvement of their level of socio-political consciousness so they can become responsible voters and engaged citizens. This is even more pressing in view of the general observation that disinformation and misinformation have become most prevalent in the last three election seasons, that is, 2016, 2019, and 2022.

Under the prevailing communication regime dominated by “disinformation establishments” and “architects of networked disinformation” (Ong & Cabañes, 2018), media education must therefore be consciously designed as a countervailing measure in combatting these information pathologies and a proactive mechanism in preventing them from emerging in the first place. Relatedly, this qualitative research works on the basic premise that all the lofty societal goals of deliberative dialogue, social justice education, and rights-based development cannot proceed and succeed without democratic access to truthful information and its ethical, empowering, and transformative use.

### **Migration-Related Issues**

The Philippines is considered a *remittance economy*, thus the tendency of some advertisements to capitalize on this socio-economic and socio-cultural phenomenon as a recurring narrative. For instance, in a commercial advertisement featured by Zarate (2016, p. 73), a transnational beverage company cleverly depicted the longing of overseas Filipino workers (OFW) for their families. Zarate then interposed a question asking learners about the “implications of this media text to the issues of OFWs, to corporate social responsibility, and to having Coca-Cola products generously displayed in several scenes in this media text?” It is a well-thought-out reflective question that simultaneously deals with the issues of media representation of out-migration as well as the ethical-moral dimension of *corporate social responsibility* and *cause marketing*.

In 2012, Coca-Cola launched an extended advertisement featuring the plight of overseas Filipino workers who did not have the means to come home for Christmas. (Zarate, 2016, p. 73)

What are the implications of this media text ... to having to see Coca-Cola products generously displayed in several scenes in this media text? (Zarate, 2016, p. 73)

In another media text analysis task by Zarate (2016, p. 51), a Coca-Cola soft drink advertisement instrumentalized the “notions of happiness and family life” in relation to “OFW phenomenon and Filipino family values” to promote and sell products. The students were then asked if such a “take on selling a product” (i.e., anchored on the “OFW phenomenon”) and the attempt of advertising “to be socially relevant” was advantageous or not as an innovation in marketing? This divergent and open-ended question on a social and sectoral issue allows learners to delve deeper and become more evaluative on matters pertaining to *social marketing* and the *emotion economy*.

### **Tourism- and Sports-Related Issues**

Quite commonly, textbook tasks require students to employ their skills and competencies in media and information literacy to promote local tourism and travel. Among these interventions and initiatives are adapting sample voice scripts in the specific context (i.e., unique value proposition) of a local tourist destination (Yuvienco, 2017, p. 129), promoting local tourism through a photo essay (Cantor, 2019, p. 265), interviewing local tourists for a radio talk show (Cantor, 2019, p. 268), and contemplating the use of a personal camera to boost local tourism (Magpile, 2016, p. 119). However, there was no attempt to apprehend tourism from the critical perspective, considering the issues and debates that it entails as a business practice in the culture industry. From the standpoint of critical tradition, greater effort must be exerted in making

sense of tourism as a social practice and in employing media and information literacy to serve the industry's social, ethical, and ecological objectives.

The long-standing business model that is traditionally employed in valuing, representing, and rendering the *place* is now being challenged by the ecological and community-oriented praxis of *critical tourism*. Consistent with the discourse of suspicion, the critical tourism approach seeks to *challenge* and *change* the traditionally commercialized and disruptive character of its mainstream counterpart (that is, mass tourism). It likewise supports alternative perspectives and practices that are associated with and promotive of (a) job and justice, (b) economy and equity, and (c) sustainability and social development.

Meanwhile, in a culminating task formulated by Liquigan (2016, p. 119), students are assigned to produce an audio-visual presentation that will feature the Philippine sports breakthroughs and underscore the importance of sports development. The task posited that sports is a field that “lacks media attention” in the community and that “sports news is normally written for sports aficionados thus failing to capture a greater audience.” This media production task specifically aims to (a) mainstream sports reporting in media, (b) correct the elitist perception about sports as a social practice, and (c) promote the understanding and appreciation of the less subscribed fields of sports. Apprehending sports from the critical, ethical, and place-oriented standpoint, the audio-visual presentation about sports must also be rendered as *gender-fair* and *culturally sensitive* and should possess strong *community rootedness* (e.g., through the popularization of inclusive and indigenous games). Crucial also in this enabling social and media advocacy is incorporating the health and wellness dimensions of sports.

### **Women and Gender-Related Issues**

Women and gender issues featured for media text analysis in the textbook tasks included: body shaming, body politics, distorted beauty standards, gender stereotyping, patriarchy, objectification of women, victim-blaming, rape jokes, and gender misrepresentation (Cantor, 2019; Zarate, 2016). These instantiated women and gender issues were interposed to be problematized through media text analyses of magazines, comic strips, song lyrics, gag shows, news reports, films, advertisements, and public debates.

Within this context, education plays a crucial role in the gender justice movement by confronting the dominant gender ideology that is based on prejudice and discrimination against the *socially* and *sexually* minoritized. For instance, through the *gender-sensitive* and *gender-responsive* textbook tasks in media and information literacy, students become aware of how computer technologies through photoshopping may promote the “distortion of beauty standards” and render women “ashamed of their bodies” (Cantor, 2019, p. 206). The same is true of how language can be instrumentalized to encourage sexist attitudes, especially in a country with a “predominantly patriarchal culture,” by a liquor brand that adopts a “double entendre” with sexual connotation in its commercial advertisement” (Cantor, 2019, pp. 248–249).

### **Misrepresentation- and Marginalization-Related Issues**

Subaltern groups experience a “double whammy” when they are exposed to the injustices of social systems and victimized by inaccurate and unfair media representation. Within this context, the role of media education becomes even more pressing and indispensable. Regarding the issue of rampant misrepresentation of groups and subgroups in mainstream news reporting and advertisement, the following portrayals are foregrounded and instantiated by the textbook authors for critical analysis: similarities in depiction of gender, ethnicity, race, age, and religion (Alagaran, 2019, p. 92); “inaccurate representations of Filipino women, religious groups, or cultural communities” (Alagaran, 2019, p. 91); dominant and muted perspectives in representations (Alagaran, 2019, p. 92); traditional portrayal of the poor (Campos, 2016, p. 62); perception of the public regarding how women are represented (Zarate, 2016, p. 86); perpetuation of the dominant “image and beauty standard” (Zarate, 2016, p. 95); consequences of how “other races, ethnicities, genders, classes and social groups” are represented (Campos, 2016, p. 104); use of “politically charged labels, adjectives and verbs” (Alagaran, 2019, p. 141); and use or non-use of “politically correct and gender-sensitive language” (Alagaran,

2019, p. 141). Such a set of diverse but interconnected approaches and renderings can generally be categorized into the following: (a) consistency in the pattern of representation/misrepresentation across social variables, (b) consequences of the representation/misrepresentation, and (c) use of language to empower or undermine marginalized groups. However, in accordance with the action-oriented character of critical praxis, the initiatives and interventions must also include proposing *concrete* and *actionable* measures to counter misrepresentation, hatred, and prejudice, especially in the structural and collective level.

In mainstreaming the development agenda of the marginalized, Campos (2016, p. 68) put forth a task that questions the crowding out of the “pressing social issues” that concern the *subaltern* from the media and public consciousness. This issue is parallel with the situation instantiated by the same author about the case of an oppressive corporation that can afford expensive media mileage to marginalize (and drown out) the voice of the workers it exploits.

What are the implications if an exploitative company can afford airtime and column space, but the people that this company exploits cannot afford the same media means to be heard? (Campos, 2016, p. 68)

An instance where worker rights and welfare were incorporated into a textbook task is in an activity presented by Campos (2016, p. 68) that made a compelling depiction of how the working class is marginalized in both the *substructural* (economic) and *superstructural* dimensions (communicational) of their precarious existence.

If constructing and making available media messages are very costly and are influenced by sales, how will the faces, lives, and relationships, say, of illiterate cave miners, who have no other means of living but working for multinational companies for a pittance in exchange for imperiling their lives, ever compete with Roliet for costly airtime, column inches, and the attention of the public? (Campos, 2016, p. 68)

In Cantor’s case studies (2019), a long list of individuals and groups who have been marginalized and stereotyped in many television episodes, commercial advertisements, and mainstream films was instantiated to let the learners reflect on the prevailing decadent and depraved values in the commercial media industry. Among the common victims of stereotyping and subjects of ridicule are the “dark-skinned people,” “people with speaking disabilities,” and “people regarded as average in looks, singles, gays” (Cantor, 2019, pp. 226 & 231). In Cantor’s (2019, pp. 277–278) narrative and documentary film tasks, she instantiated the following individuals and groups as prospective subjects for media production: youth groups, students, persons with disabilities, OFWs, athletes, victims of bullying, teachers, workers, LGBT, artists, and senior citizens. Observably, these segments and sectors in society are vulnerable to various forms of structural, systemic, and symbolic violence, such as discrimination, exclusion, marginalization, misrepresentation, oppression, objectification, and subservience.

Generally, the textbook tasks were able to capture many expressions and embodiments of social hierarchies in Philippine development realities. Among these are the following: “precarious lives of disenfranchised cave miners” (Campos, 2016, p. 68), “persistent poverty” among peasants (Zarate, 2016, p. 91), structural violence experienced by indigenous people (Campos, 2016, pp. 108–109, 115–121), startup companies being marginalized in airtime (Campos, 2016, p. 67), “knowledge monopoly” (Campos, 2016, p. 38), literacy gap (Campos, 2016, p. 38), unequal power over and access to new technologies and inventions (Campos, 2016, p. 33), privileged and muted stories (Cantor, 2019, p. 258), contestants “portrayed as needy and poor” (Campos, 2016, p. 62), and hegemonic and subdued voices (Campos, 2016, p. 105). Given the cases and contexts provided, the manifestations of social hierarchy can therefore be classified based on their economic, technological, political, and symbolic dimensions. Based on this list, Campos (2016) has shown to consistently particularize as well as connect both the economic and non-economic dimensions of marginalization



throughout his textbook tasks. In general, it can also be inferred from the instantiation of social inequalities how economic subordination and technological control restrict the avenues and mechanisms of the marginalized to achieve political autonomy and agency.

In problematizing how the privileged sectors are represented, Campos (2016, p. 62) asked learners to reflect on the authenticity of the media's social construction of the identities of television and movie "stars."

Who are the stars? Do we really know who they are beyond their media-constructed identities?"  
(Campos, 2016, p. 62)

The same can be said also of Zarate's (2016, pp. 47–48) attempt to ask students about the "implications of reporting on military operations" based on how the state's defense establishment was depicted in relation to its socio-ideological and politico-military adversary. This question also involves evaluating the "objectivity displayed by the writer of the story" and determining if all sides and perspectives were fairly presented, thereby underscoring the complexity and multidimensionality of the issue in question (Zarate, 2016, p. 48).

Were all sides presented? What are the implications of reporting on military operations against the Bangsamoro? (Zarate, 2016, p. 47–48)

### **Information and Media-Related Issues**

Years prior to 2016 and the following years saw the proliferation of disinformation and misinformation. These information pathologies were methodically employed in various political communication and electoral campaign strategies by unscrupulous groups to undermine democratic processes and structures. Add to these dysfunctions the spread of online scams and pseudo-investments that are preying on unsuspecting and vulnerable victims, defrauding them of their hard-earned income and savings. In fact, this researcher has served as a resource person of TV Patrol Palawan, a regional television program, in several news reports about proliferating pseudo-investments in the province in 2016 (Palatino, 2016). Due to the employment problem brought about by the ongoing pandemic, pseudo-investments also became more prevalent, thereby making critical media and financial information literacy an even more compelling need.

Disinformation and misinformation undermine the community's social fabric and the nation's democratic ideals, institutions, and processes. In interrogating and confronting these information dysfunctions, textbook authors interposed various courses of action and modes of intervention, that is, making sense of disinformation and misinformation by developing one's own definition based on actual experience (Liquigan, 2016, p. 34), enumerating hoaxes and cases of misinformation that circulated in/through media (Campos, 2016, p. 4), identifying the "potential dangers of misinformation and disinformation" (Liquigan, 2016, p. 34), apprehending the role of ethics in preventing disinformation and misinformation (Liquigan, 2016, p. 34), and reflecting on the role of media in a democratic society and in the era of "post-truth" (Yuvienco, 2017, p. 23). To combat these information pathologies, Cantor (2019, p. 208) specifically requires students to explore the list of fake websites that "mimic legitimate" online sources to expose what she appropriately refers to as "merchants of misinformation." In addition, she provided a set of tips to expose "fake news websites appearing as legitimate ones." Towards this end, an effective approach in promoting critical media pedagogy is introducing students to various propaganda techniques (e.g., cherry picking, glittering generalities, over-simplification, etc.) that are commonly employed in "pushing a particular bias or agenda in a message," such as the one instantiated by Liquigan (2015, p. 111). The above-cited interventions and initiatives can be classified into the following, each with its own contribution to effectively dealing with disinformation and misinformation: (a) definition and sense-making, (b) risk identification and precaution, and (c) critical reflection and resistance. Definition and sense-making are critical in particularizing and understanding disinformation and misinformation based on the learners' personal encounters with these information disorders. Risk identification and precaution help in avoiding or reducing harm associated with these information pathologies. Lastly, critical reflection and resistance embody the process of concretization and collectivization to attain critical praxis.

Correspondingly, the concern about risk and hazard may be attributed to ambivalence towards media (i.e., media's good and bad side) as well as the protectionist stance against it (i.e., mainstream media's association with many forms of social dysfunctions). Among the potential hazards associated with media that are foregrounded by the textbook tasks and that are used as bases for self-reflection and textual analysis are the following: risks connected with one's own created and disseminated media content (Campos, 2016, p. 82), overdependence on "crowdsourced information" (Liquigan, 2016, p. 140), "use of multimedia presentations ... reportedly dumbing down students" (Liquigan, 2016, p. 205), "cyberthreats" (Alagaran, 2019, p. 113), pitfalls in using "social media site/app" (Campos, 2016), "abuse and misuse of media and information (Magpile, 2016, p. 95), "format and content of government-controlled channel" (Zarate, 2016, p. 123), and "harsh (or draconian)" provisions of the cybercrime law (Liquigan, 2016, p. 94). From this lineup, the potential risks and hazards can then be categorized as those that originate from oneself, other individuals, private institutions, and, most worryingly, state agencies.

More particularly, through the textbook tasks in media and information literacy, learners are afforded the opportunity to apprehend and problematize media and information disorders and pathologies such as "click bait" (Yuvienco, 2017, p. 45), "untruths" (Campos, 2016, p. 26), "thought control" (Campos, 2016, p. 26), historical manipulation (Campos, 2016, p. 27), state control of media (Magpile, 2016, p. 14), "fallacies" (Liquigan, 2016, p. 115), "hidden motives" (Liquigan, 2016, p. 115), social decadence (Zarate, 2016, p. 96), and "troll bots" (Yuvienco, 2017, pp. 2526). These media and information dysfunctions are threats to the people's collective well-being by undermining truth, reason, autonomy, agency, and historical sensibility. Under the regime of methodical disinformation, the critical skills of analyzing media texts and evaluating information sources become even more crucial in protecting the democratic rights of the public in accessing credible and reliable news and information.

Trustworthy news and truthful information are critical building blocks in establishing and sustaining a democratic and developed society. The instructive question below that invokes Philippine national hero and propagandist Jose P. Rizal possesses a very powerful message regarding the use of information literacy in confronting and dealing with structural challenges and issues in the past and in the present:

In referring to the social task of "fighting a great deal to defeat the enemy (colonizers)," how does Rizal conceive of "fighting" as a form of information literacy? (Campos, 2016, p. 152)

Against this backdrop, critical media literacy will enable students to analyze and examine media and information dysfunctions by interrogating (a) the associated risks to which the vulnerable sectors are exposed, (b) the underlying motives of the social forces behind the media and information pathologies, and (c) the interventions and initiatives in countering the media abuse and misuse. The list of guide questions that follows is very instrumental in pursuing this set of intersecting objectives.

Who will be at risk if the power of media and information is abused and misused?  
(Magpile, 2016, p. 95)

Why do people abuse the power of media and information? (Magpile, 2016, p. 95)

How can we prevent the abuse and misuse of media and information? (Magpile, 2016, p. 95)

What are some of the cyberthreats? How do you intend to overcome them? (Alagaran, 2019, p. 117)

Disturbingly, people now live in a surveillance society where closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs) are instrumentalized by the business/government sector against its own customers/citizens. The same can be said with the so-called "dataveillance society" where the data/metadata that were monitored and mined from the

public are strategically employed to target them as prospective consumers or are weaponized to undermine their democratic rights and interests.

The discourse on hazard and how it relates to media use aligns well with Buckingham's (2019) exposition on media education's "defensive/protectionist" stance against media abuse and misuse. While it is true that the risk and harm associated with media exposure are legitimate issues, educators as well as parents should not do away with media altogether in the socialization and education process of students. In relation to this, media pathologies must be apprehended and tackled in the structural dimension (i.e., holding the private and public sectors accountable) and not merely in the individual realm of engagement (i.e., elevating the change agenda at the collective level; Buckingham, 2019).

The learning activities by Campos (2016, p. 4) that center on hoaxes cannot be more applicable than in today's era of massive disinformation and misinformation. By asking students about how "particular historical contexts ... have to do with believability of the hoaxes," they will be able to analyze the historical conditions, social forces, and political dynamics that brought about and perpetuated the widespread and deep-rooted deceptions. His question asking students which media forms could mount hoaxes with the same effect as those of the past will allow learners to profoundly reflect on the conspirators' believability, the public's credulity, and the complex set of interacting factors that could explain this pattern of collective behavior. Hoaxes tend to perpetuate further when even supposedly educated individuals and groups believe and espouse these outright lies and half-truths. Given the social, symbolic, and cultural capital that they possess, some unprincipled intellectuals also contribute to the faster spread of disinformation, thereby making those within their sphere of influence, who already have poor media and information literacy, more vulnerable and at risk.

As a prelude to a set of reflective questions, Campos (2016) invoked the argument of political economist Harold Innis that "each medium creates its own knowledge monopoly," citing as a case in point that only the "religious elites" possessed the literacy skills when the system of writing first emerged in history. This social reality of unequal access and control over knowledge resources appeared over time in many knowledge systems and regimes, encompassing the interconnected stages of creation, circulation, and consumption. Questions of this nature are instrumental in making critical sense of the recurring pattern of monopolies that manifests and perpetuates each time a new knowledge and media system emerges and develops. The following guide questions highlight this institutionalized power difference in the context of the so-called "information and knowledge-industrial complex."

"What was the implication of this knowledge monopoly for the rest of the community who could not read or write?" (Campos, 2016, p. 38)

"What was the relationship of the few who could read and write and the many who could not?" (Campos, 2016, p. 38)

Mainstream mass media has rendered the vulnerable public as *ideological captives*, depriving them of the *agency* and *autonomy* to critically analyze and evaluate media contents, structures, and processes. Through the homogenous messages that orthodox media convey and propagate, the public are made to wrongly assume that there is no alternative and viable communication and information order to challenge and replace the mainstream arrangement. This hegemonic relationship places the public in a compromised position of *ignorance, vulnerability, fear, superficiality, and even addiction*.

### **Technology-Related Issues**

In a nation characterized by wide wealth and income inequality, it can be argued that the digital divide is also a glaring social reality. As such, this social and sectoral issue must also have a prominent part in the textbook tasks as a subject of critical analysis and intervention. In the instructional materials covered, the following interventions and initiatives were proposed to deal with digital divide: (a) researching the phenomenon to help

address it (Liquigan, 2016, p. 83), (b) comparing the set of researched information about this access divide (Alagaran, 2019, p. 68), (c) determining the repercussion of internet speed to information processing (Liquigan, 2016, p. 195), (d) reflecting on the personal need for internet access (Magpile, 2016, p. 67), and (e) contemplating internet connectivity in relation to the digital divide (Magpile, 2016, p. 93). While this set of information is relevant in understanding the digital divide, there is also a need to examine the extent and impact of this information pathology at the structural level and reveal what sector/region is the most deprived of access and hence the most *digitally marginalized* or, in the words of Palatino (2020), the most “*digitally oppressed*.” There is also no interposition of viable strategies that will deal with this resource divide at the collective level.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the foregoing critical analysis, the pedagogical interventions and initiatives of the textbook tasks can be classified as (a) *traditional or critical*, where the distinction centers on the capacity to expose unequal power relations, (b) *individual or collective*, where the difference lies on the imperative to situate the responsibility of tackling the social and sectoral issue in the collaborative and institutional realm, (c) *isolated or intersectional*, where the contrast is based on the multidimensional understanding of the complex development and policy issue in question, (d) *personal or structural*, where the divergence is grounded on the propensity to associate the root cause of the development debate in question with macro-sociological factors, and (e) *academic or more-than-academic*, where the departure lies on the emphasis on the social justice orientation of the latter.

**Table 1.** Summary of Development Debates, Pedagogical Interventions, and Dialectical Categories

Development Debate	Pedagogical Interventions	Dialectical Categories
poverty-related	media text analysis	critical, intersectional, structural, more-than-academic
governance-related	ownership map reading task self-reflection research	critical, individual, structural, more-than-academic
election-related	self-reflection media production advocacy work	both traditional and critical, both individual and institutional, both personal and structural, more-than-academic
migration-related	media text analysis self-reflection	critical, intersectional, structural, more-than-academic
tourism and sports-, and leisure-related	media production self-reflection	both traditional and critical, both individual and intersectional, both personal and structural
women- and gender-related	media text analysis self-reflection	critical, structural, more-than-academic
misrepresentation- and marginalization-related	media text analysis self-reflection media production	critical, intersectional, structural, more-than-academic
information and media-related	media text analysis self-reflection research	critical, collective, personal and structural, more-than-academic
technology-related	self-reflection research	both traditional and critical, individual, both personal and structural

Media and information literacy has an important role to play in the socialization of learners in becoming responsible political communicators and community actors. As such, it must enable students to understand which issues are truly pressing and of global, national, and/or local interest. Many social and sectoral issues, in fact, do not form part of the typical conversations in families and schools. The role of media and education therefore becomes indispensable in initiating critical conversations and debates. By performing this *informational* and *political* function, media and education then become instrumental in mainstreaming development and policy issues in the public consciousness, especially among youth. The vital role of the textbook authors, therefore, goes beyond the period of instructional materials production because of the continuing need to accommodate substantive feedback “from the ground”/“from below” (that is, from the students as end-users and the local communities as interlocutors), especially with respect to the interanimating dimensions of curricular counter-ideologies, pedagogical counter-imperatives, and counter-discursive frames on development and underdevelopment. Within this context, the textbook project must be conceived as an emergent and ongoing dialogical exchange and dialectical engagement with the critical stakeholders. Correspondingly, the potential of counter-textbooks and counter-textbook tasks can only be accomplished when these alternative pedagogical devices are employed and maximized in the actual learning process.

Media education scholar David Buckingham underscored that the conceptual emphasis in the creative and critical formulation and production of course requirements must center on “representation.” Representation within the parameter of this research pertains to the academic tasks and learning activities that “break with the norm or address underrepresented groups or issues (Buckingham, 2019, p. 70).” The “norm” refers to the conventional approaches to knowledge acquisition while the “underrepresented groups or issues” in the specific case of the Philippines would conceivably pertain to the compelling development debates and the social sectors involved that are not traditionally foregrounded in mainstream media and education such as (a) land dispossession of peasant communities, (b) physical dislocation of indigenous peoples from their ancestral land, and (c) economic displacement of municipal fisherfolks from their sources of livelihood.

Given the potentials and limitations of the instantiated development debates and interposed pedagogical interventions in the textbook tasks, the following recommendations are earnestly proposed.

1. The various communicable diseases (e.g., HIV, dengue, polio, Zika virus and avian flu, among others) that imperiled Philippine public health should have also been featured as instantiated cases and contexts in the textbook tasks. The ongoing pandemic made media and education stakeholders painstakingly aware of the worsening two-pronged public health challenges, that is, the continuing threat of contagious diseases alongside the increasing prevalence of non-communicable illnesses (*double burden of disease*). However, considering the ongoing public health emergency, the pattern may change in a manner that will accord more attention to contagious diseases, thereby possibly sideswiping the equal urgency of dealing with non-communicable illnesses. In maximizing media and information literacy’s potential in health promotion and education, the *triple burden of disease* must also be foregrounded as a case and context in media text analysis and media content production. The triple burden of disease pertains to the co-existence (and compounding effects) of infectious diseases (e.g., COVID-19, tuberculosis), non-communicable diseases (e.g., cardiovascular and metabolic diseases), and accidents/injuries (including mental health illnesses and other infirmities associated with modernization and urbanization) experienced by a given population—a trend that is increasingly becoming common in many developing regions (Ortiz & Abrigo, 2017). The ongoing pandemic provided media and information literacy a rich context (e.g., vaccine hesitancy among specific population segments, health myths in social media) to apply both sociological and media text analysis in the teaching-learning praxis. As such, the textbook revisions, as well as the subsequent new publications, necessitate the inclusion of cases and contexts related to health, wellness, disaster, risk, and science communication. Considering the recurring environmental problems on a global and local scale, academic authors also need to incorporate more *ethico-ecological* themes in the textbook tasks because this discursive mainstreaming

will provide a contextual application to critical pedagogy and promote environmental communication praxis among youth.

2. Commendably, Zarate (i.e., secessionism in Mindanao), Campos (i.e., development aggression experienced by the *Lumad*), and Liquigan (i.e., cultural practices of the *Lumad*) instantiated Mindanao-related social and sectoral issues albeit in varying levels of inquiry, (i.e., media text analysis for the first two and mere identification of the preferred information source for the third). The inclusion of Mindanao public affairs is a welcome development in veering away from the traditionally Luzon-centric and urban-oriented rendering in news reporting and contextless representation in media education in general.
3. Indigenous and folk media must also be considered and mainstreamed as an alternative mode of rendering and presentation. This seriously takes into account the varying socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts of the learners.
4. In textbook writing then and now, it can be argued that *terrorism* and *population issues* are among the most controversial themes. As contentious matters, these topics can potentially create discord among stakeholders from various ideological persuasions and political standpoints, especially between *conservative*, *liberal*, and *progressive* groups. However, this should not prevent textbook authors from including these development debates as issues for learners to examine and discuss. Zarate's task that seeks to critically interrogate the contentious linking of rural poverty to population increase through a media text analysis of a news article is a step in this direction.
5. In supplementing the existing lineup, the production of subsequent textbook editions and the publication of new titles necessitate the inclusion of electoral campaign strategies and election survey reports as cases for media text analysis and social criticism considering the rich dialectical context that these situated practices provide.
6. The existing curriculum in media and information literacy opens the possibilities for students to get introduced to information and communication technology (ICT) but very limited opportunity to be acquainted with and develop deeper appreciation and understanding of ICT4D (*ICT for development*). Therefore, a set of reading tasks and guide questions by Campos (2016, p. 31) about ICT4D is a welcome initiative, especially for students in the Global South as in the Philippines, where a sizable number are situated in rural and urban poor communities or in localities characterized by *economic dualism*. While the set of guide questions allows students to situate their answers in the context of Third World realities, some refinements can still be implemented. As such, there is a need to incorporate (a) additional tasks requiring the students to research the broader socio-economic context surrounding technological innovations as well as (b) guide questions inquiring about the need for an alternative vision of an inclusive *socio-scientific* and *socio-technological order*. Along this line, adopting James Smith's (2009) *Science and Technology for Development* as further reading will be very useful in introducing learners to the dialectics of technological change and envisioning an alternative socio-scientific and socio-technological future. It will also serve as a viable preparation for students who will eventually take *Science, Technology and Society (STS)* in higher education.

In addition to the pressing socio-technological issues covered above, textbook authors must also incorporate the evolving information and communication pathologies to make the students fully aware of the dysfunctions' ever-increasing level of complexity and, correspondingly, the public's growing degree of vulnerability, that is, the intrinsic bias of machine learning, digital distraction, digital diversion, commodification of the user, and weaponization of information and communication, among others (Ong & Cabañes, 2018; Flor, 2022). Aside from exposing and problematizing this set of media and information disorders, there is also a need to enjoin learners in proposing sustainable solutions that employ intersectoral, interdisciplinary, and interprofessional approaches. Considering the problems' level of seriousness, the questions in the textbook tasks must then be re-oriented towards (a) identifying and holding the social forces

behind the media and information dysfunctions accountable (i.e., media responsibility), (b) countering these media and information pathologies by employing multi-pronged and multistakeholder strategies (i.e., *media education* to heighten public consciousness, *media regulation* to protect public interest, and *moral reform* to fight cultural decadence), and (c) proposing a transformative and emancipatory communication and information order (i.e., media and communication activism).

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