

# EXPLORING MIL OPPORTUNITIES IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN GHANA: PERSPECTIVES FROM TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

As young people increasingly conduct both academic and personal activities online, curriculum and extra-curriculum content in the school system are evolving to address their media and information literacy (MIL) needs to position them to become responsible creators and consumers of online content. While this trend is common to the economically advanced world, the same cannot always be said for less-endowed countries. The aim of this study is to explore opportunities available in the senior high school system in Ghana for MIL content infusion. Using in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of supply (school heads, teachers and librarians) and demand side elements (students), the study attempts proposals for interventions in schools and extends the growing MIL scholarship with practical guides for increasing the MIL skills of young people in developing countries.

**Keywords:** Media and Information Literacy (MIL), Senior High School (SHS), Ghana, Youth

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## INTRODUCTION

Globally, the content of educational curricular is changing to meet the needs of the information society. As information consumption and use increasingly takes on a digital tone Polizzi (2020), the ability to use technology to access, create and share information has, arguably, become a critical skill requirement. Despite the ever-growing dependence on online content by young people, available literature shows that secondary students are faced with a number of challenges in their use of online content; prominent among them being the inability to identify false information (Polizzi, 2020). Scholars advocate media and information literacy (MIL) training to help young people to navigate and survive the current information ecosystem (Mingoia et al., 2019; Xie et al., 2019).

Not surprisingly, there is a growing drive towards using educational curriculum to address MIL skills needs of students, particularly those in secondary education who are increasingly gaining freedom of access to digital technology for both educational and personal purposes. As noted by Wilson (2019:7), “teachers are making use of new technologies for professional development, and using social media platforms to share best practices, recommend resources, and engage in critical discussion and debate”. MIL has been made part of the academic curriculum of secondary schools in developed countries such as Sweden and the United States (List et al., 2020).

The same can, however, not be said of much of the developing world where digital technologies remain inaccessible to significant numbers of youths, and where existing resource challenges in the school system means novel and emerging needs are seldom treated with urgency in school curricula (Adjin-Tettey, 2022). Accordingly, it is imperative that alternative pathways for enhancing the MIL skills of youth in developing countries be explored to empower interventions by advocacy and other interest groups. The present study is an attempt in this direction, seeking to discover the opportunities (particularly, extra-curricular) in the secondary school system that could be leveraged by interventions targeting improvements in the media and information literacy skills of the youth. The study is guided by the following questions:

- In what ways is MIL being addressed in classrooms in spite of its absence in curriculum?

- What initiatives have been introduced in schools to address the MIL needs of students?
- What extra-curricular opportunities exist for teaching young people MIL skills?

### **MIL Capacity Building Ecosystem in Ghana: A Background**

In Ghana, senior high education curriculum is more and more emphasizing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), leading school-going youths to increasingly complete academic tasks that require them to engage with (online) media content. In 2018, the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NaCCA) published a new standards-based curriculum for senior high schools in the country. Five main specialization pathways exist from students spanning Science, Humanities, Business, Language Arts, and Technical and Vocational (Ministry of Education, 2018). Courses carried within these pathways are listed in Tables 1 and 2 below:

#### **SHS 1-3 Programmes and Elective Courses**

<b>Sciences</b>	<b>Humanities</b>	<b>Technical and Vocational</b>	<b>Language Arts</b>	<b>Businesses</b>
Advanced Mathematics	Economics	Agriculture	Literature in English	Accounting
Biology	Geography	Home Economics	Ghanaian Language	Business Management
Chemistry	Government	Performing Arts	French	Business Mathematics
Computer science	History	Technical and Visual Arts	Arabic	
Physics	Religion and Moral Education			

## SHS 1-3 Core Courses

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### Core Subjects for Science and Technical Programmes

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English Language

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Mathematics

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Ghanaian Language

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History

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Geography

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Computing

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### Core Subjects for Language Arts, Humanities, Business, Vocational Programmes

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English Language

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Mathematics

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Ghanaian Languages

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History/Geography

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Science including Agriculture

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Computing

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Across the programmes and courses on offer within them, there is no designated course to address media and information literacy. However, a close look at the content to be covered suggests opportunity for relevant issues to be covered in courses such as Computing.

In the absence of MIL being proactively addressed by the SHS curricula, academics, civil society and some stakeholders in education have taken up the responsibility of equipping young people with MIL skills. The School of Information and Communication Studies (SICS) of the University of Ghana for instance, has had a series of events and engagements that sought to educate the general public as well as engage stakeholders on MIL.

A MIL Stakeholders meeting in 2017 brought together academics, librarians, educationists, policymakers and actors as well as young people and the media to deliberate on what needed to be done to ensure young people became ready for the digital ecosystem. The meeting, among other things, identified the need for more research into the digital life of young people, their MIL levels and what can be done to remediate existing MIL gaps among the

youth. Participants also identified the need for a two-step process to ‘train the trainers. Following this, the SICS has organized training for SHS teachers on how to infuse MIL into their classroom teaching.

The SICS in collaboration with Dubawa, a fact checking organisation, also held an inter-tertiary MIL quiz dubbed “Spot the Fake” to sensitise young people on the information disorder they are exposed to.

In 2020, the Department of Communication studies, a unit under the SICS run a public education campaign called Media and Information Literacy and Election 2020. Messages on different MIL issues (fact-checking, echo chambers, how algorithms work, protocols for sharing information ethically etc.) were produced in different languages using celebrities who young people identified as credible sources. The Department is also leading the drive towards knowledge production on young people’s digital lives as identified in the stakeholders meeting. Its faculty is collaborating with colleagues in the Department of Information Studies on a research project to gauge MIL levels of Ghana’s youth. The Department also hosted an international conference on the digital lives of Africa’s youth in 2021 which is culminating into a special issue publication on the same theme.

Civil society organizations have also been instrumental in the quest to improve MIL of Ghanaians. Notable among these are the activities of organizations like Penplusbyte, Dubawa and DW-Akademie who regularly organize MIL programs, develop MIL manuals and conduct training for stakeholders to improve MIL levels. For instance, Penplusbytes in 2020 organized election programmes on picking information and fact-checking to educate the general public on how to spot fake news. They also developed training manuals for influencers to use as part of their campaign to combat fake news during the period. Similarly, DW-Akademie has over the years organized trainings for young people on media and information literacy.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century poses challenges to learners as a result of the complexities that come with the changing information landscape (Lin et al, 2015). Educators are therefore focusing on providing added knowledge from other disciplines aside the core curriculum of formal education (Bucher, 2000). MIL is part of such initiatives carried out by schools to improve on the well-being

of students and make them global citizens. MIL also, challenges teachers to use technology to teach and teach about technology (Wilson, 2019).

List et al. (2020:2) see MIL as the cognitive and socio-emotional competencies associated with digital literacy. According to them, “the cognitive dimension encompasses the skills students need to search for, evaluate, and create digital information as well as students’ abilities to critically analyse this information. Finally, the socio-emotional dimension of digital literacy requires that students are able to use ICTs for responsible communication, collaboration, and other social goals related to learning”. Moeller et al. (2011) see MIL as a fundamental skill to help people succeed at every stage in life. It also helps to meet needs and improve on the quality of life. MIL provides people with knowledge on information and the systems that are used to share it, the circumstances under which the systems are used to perform specific information task and how citizens are to assess the quality of input and output of such systems. MIL equips citizens with required competencies to help them engage with media and information systems in addition to ICT. Active and participatory citizenship is enhanced through the acquisition of skills that empower them to access and assess information and also give voice to their ideas.

MIL is essential for senior high school students, given that they are heavy consumers of online content and need the ability to think critically about such content (Ku et al., 2019). Wilson (2019), however noted that despite the high dependence on digital platforms by young people, they lack adequate knowledge on the benefits and risks that come with it. According to Polizzi (2020), MIL helps young people to understand the nature of the internet and its content, how it is shared and evaluated. UNESCO compartmentalises MIL into the following competency dimensions:

The ability to

1. Define and Articulate Information Needs
2. Locate and Access Information
3. Assess Information
4. Organize Information
5. Ethical Use of Information
6. Communicate Information
7. Use ICTs Skills for Information Processing

Evidence from existing literature indicates that in countries such as Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore, MIL has been introduced as part of their educational curricula. The strategy of the adoption of MIL has been of various formats (Chen et al., 2018) Singapore has responded to the fast-changing media environment within the educational sector. A large-scale study was conducted in Singaporean schools to establish the norm of Singaporean students' new media literacy. This was based on a conceptual framework of new media literacy (Lin et al., 2013. Canada is regarded globally as a leading country in MIL education. Media literacy became a compulsory component of education curriculum in Canada in 1987. Canadian MIL education is aimed at equipping learners with skills ready for the electronic environment with three broad components; media production, media text and networked platforms, and media audiences. MIL instruction in Canada is "part of English or Language Arts Curriculum, Social Studies, or Communications Technology courses, and sometimes as a stand-alone course"(Wilson, 2019:5). In Singapore, MIL is part of educational policies and not taught as a subject on its own. Singapore has also formed a Media Literacy Council with a core mandate towards children and young adults. Singapore has taken further steps to conduct a large-scale survey among students to help formulate media literacy curriculum in pre-university schools that reflect the actual need of the children (Chen et al., 2018) Singapore has responded to the fast-changing media environment within the educational sector. A large-scale study was conducted in Singaporean schools to establish the norm of Singaporean students' new media literacy. This was based on a conceptual framework of new media literacy (Lin et al., 2013.

Lin et al. (2015) also noted that Singapore introduced a framework for 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies in which MIL was included. This framework sought to inculcate in students, skills to create and use information as responsible citizens. The framework however did not state how the curriculum was to be implemented clearly and the concept itself was unclear as various operational interpretations had been provided. In the UK, MIL has been part of formal curricula at GCSE and A levels for long (McDougall & Sefton-Green, 2014) digital and information literacy as defined by the European Commission (EC. School libraries or school information resource centres have also been used as a means of delivering MIL content to students. Gildersleeves (2012) and if so, to offer case models and approaches which may be used to inform strategy and practice. The paper also aims to discuss

the pilot phase of the research and explore the nature of impact assessment for school libraries adopted in American studies and UK literacy research, weighing their advantages and drawbacks. Consequent on this, it seeks to define a mixed-method approach for this study, combining multiple surveys and more detailed interviewing and focus group research within a selected and balanced sample of schools across the four home nations, and a correlation with school performance ranking. Design/methodology/approach: An online survey has been developed for circulation to secondary school students in all four of the UK home nations, mapping their perceptions and expectations of the place of the LRC and of the librarian within their school experience. Secondary schools in all four home nations were ranked according to Ofsted evaluation and league table performance. A sample of schools was selected from each nation and interviews are currently being conducted with management, teaching staff, librarians and with focus groups of school pupils. This is complemented by a survey of a sample of higher education students in different disciplines to identify their view of the contribution of the school library to preparedness for university study. Findings: Findings from the pilot phase of the research tend to support the hypothesis that a correlation may be traced between good library provision and positive pupil engagement with reading and information skills. Should the full research project discover positive stories in schools without an active library or librarian, this will complement the identification of critical success factors, towards informing possible library advocacy action and policy approaches. A key issue identified from the pilot phase for impact research in schools is that pupils and teachers both have considerable difficulty in articulating how they experience the differences that libraries and librarians contribute. A case bank of good practice material collected is being developed at University College London. Research limitations/implications: For ...", "author": [{"dropping-particle": "", "family": "Gildersleeves", "given": "Lucy", "non-dropping-particle": "", "parse-names": false, "suffix": ""}], "container-title": "Library Management", "id": "ITEM-1", "issue": "6", "issued": {"date-parts": [{"2012"}]}, "page": "403-413", "title": "Do school libraries make a difference?: Some considerations on investigating school library impact in the United Kingdom", "type": "article-journal", "volume": "33", "uris": [{"http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=87767143-d579-4a77-a861-d185247e1768"}]}, "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "(Gildersleeves, 2012 for instance, investigated the impact of school libraries and discovered that the school library played a major role in meeting the “digital fluency” needs



of students in addition to their information needs, thus, making the school library a major channel for delivering MIL education.

Different approaches have been used in different parts of Africa for teaching MIL to young people. For example, according to a study by the DW Akademie in Uganda, young people were given the opportunity to speak up publicly, to raise their issues and voice their opinions on radio stations. The goal of this intervention was to give the young people a voice on air. They used their mobile phones to record information which was shared on air. The study also noted that in Burundi, a MIL intervention involved young people in high school analysing a survey on media use among the youth in the country, learning about radio broadcasting and making their own broadcasts (Reineck & Lublinski, 2015) defined as the ability to access, analyze, and create media, is a prerequisite for citizens to realize their rights to freedom of information and expression. A rights-based approach is pursued to define MIL in general, and Digital Media and Information Literacy (DMIL. However not much has been done on the African continent to include MIL as part of the main educational curriculum as evident in the works of Saleh (2012) with a level of quality and relevance that will empower disadvantaged groups. However, it is a challenging, time-consuming process, as well as requiring considerable and consistent expenditure and partnerships between many donor agencies. There is little research on the causes behind unequal access to technology, or comparative studies of the barriers that impede the diffusion and adoption of media and information literacy in South Africa. It is thus not surprising that the media and information literacy component is still missing from the agenda that lists Africa's myriad problems, as well as the absence of qualified teachers, training for the trainers and the presence of IT literacy in the curricula, all of which are essential elements for any future development. The UNESCO model of curricula could help close the digital divide and promote social inclusion. As a contribution to that goal, this study investigates some of the pertinent issues related to media and information literacy via a sample of students at the University of Cape Town. This research offers some practical solutions on how to help raise the levels of media and information literacy among the disadvantaged, in the case in South Africa.,"author":{"dropping-particle":"","family":"Saleh","given":"Ibrahim","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""},"container-title":"Comunicar","id":"ITEM-1","issue":"39","issued":{"date-parts":["2012"]},"page":"35-43","title":"Media and information literacy in South Africa: Goals and tools","type":"article-journal","volume":"20"},"uris":["

<http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=fa00786e-435a-4d54-a86e-1ea00b197325>”]],”mendeley”:{“formattedCitation”:(Saleh, 2012 who noted the lack of qualified MIL teachers as well as the absence of MIL in school curricula in South Africa and called for the adoption of UNESCO’s model of curriculum. Idiodi (2005) from Nigeria also suggested that MIL training should be incorporated into academic programmes in Nigeria.

Despite the initiative of introducing MIL in some schools, there is a drawback as MIL does not form part of the final assessment for a child’s grade. Also in countries where such guidelines exist on MIL, some educators are not even aware of them (Bucher, 2000). Wilson (2019) also noted that teachers need to be continuously trained to equip them with adequate skills on information privacy, algorithms, and fake news among others. To address the issue of absence of MIL in main stream educational curriculum in some African countries, Adjinn-Tettey (2022) called for the incorporation of MIL in mainstream educational modules and Tettey (2013) also called for all major stakeholders in the information ecology to ensure that people in Africa have the requisite skills to access information in a wholesome manner.

## **Outcomes of MIL**

In a study to assess the relationship between social media news consumption and critical thinking, Ku et al. (2019) found out that, MIL of an adolescent affected how critical the adolescent thought of online content. Ku et al. (2019) therefore suggested that it was very important to include MIL in secondary school curricula. This effort, according to them, would help develop a future population of adults who would have the requisite skills to think critically about online content, which would lead to the use of credible information. Zou’bi (2021) indicated that MIL equipped learners with the skills to understand media content and enabled them evaluate information before use. In another study, Tamplin et al. (2018)  $SD = 3.7$  proved that young people with low social media literacy had reduction in body satisfaction while those with high MIL had no change in body satisfaction after exposure to images on social media. Also, Adjinn-Tettey (2022) in a study carried out in Ghana found that when participants had MIL training, it increased their ability to identify fake news and they were less likely to share inaccurate stories.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted through the qualitative lens and relied on interviews with teachers and students. This is because the research sought to find out the varied opportunities that exist in senior high schools for imparting MIL skills in students. This called for detailed conversation with instructional mediators and beneficiaries to bring to bear the different opportunities for teaching MIL. Qualitative research design helps to discover people's experiences and thoughts on issues (Harwell, 2014) and in-depth interviews are recommended by Kvale (2011) as the best means to get to know about the experiences of people.

The study population was made up of teachers and students. Forty-two teachers who participated in a 2017 MIL training organised by the SICS formed the teacher population. The participants from this workshop were presumed to have had some level of exposure to MIL training and, therefore, were well positioned to observe and provide information to help answer the research questions.

The research team attempted to reach all the participants to seek their participation in the study. In all, 13 in-depth interviews were held with each averaging about 15 minutes. The 13 who participated in the study were from 11 senior high schools in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

In selecting students for the study, a convenience approach was used due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time of data collection which made access to students in schools difficult. A total of eight interviews were held (six in person and two via phone). All interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

### Data Analyses Procedure

Interview recordings were transcribed ahead of coding and analysis. The data analyses began with a perusal of the data for completeness and consistency (Kothari, 2004; Kumar, 2011). The researchers read through the transcripts repeatedly to identify broad themes. The themes were revised after further reading. Codes were assigned to the identified themes and the responses were classified under the codes. This was followed by the establishment of relations between the themes. The themes and responses were then interpreted and integrated into the report on findings presented

below (Kumar, 2011; Creswell, 2014)). According to Creswell (2014), these stages of analyses of qualitative data also serve as a means of ensuring the validity of the data.

## FINDINGS

This study set out to explore alternative opportunities in Ghana's senior high school system for infusing media and information literacy into young people's education. This was premised on the fact that MIL has become a critical competency that young people's increased access to and participation in the digital information space necessitates, and the fact that the current school curriculum does not directly address this need. Below, we present the findings from the interviews as regards the questions below:

- In what ways are MIL skills being addressed in classrooms in spite of its absence in curriculum?
- What initiatives have been introduced in schools to address the MIL needs of students?
- What extra-curricular opportunities exist for teaching young people MIL skills?

### Teacher Initiatives for MIL Training

The research determined three main innovative ways by which teachers have been introducing MIL to their students in the class room – examples, practice assignments and advice. Given that no direct opportunities exist in curriculum, the main modus operandi, it appears is by drawing linkages from classroom topics to MIL issues through examples.

**Teacher Respondent 2** ...*When I am teaching them a topic, for instance we did science and technology as a topic in social studies. I have to bring in example from what we came to learn over there. I even told them that what they do online are being monitored by the cyber-crime unit, so they should be mindful of the things they put online.*

This is corroborated by a student respondent who had the following to say about his own teachers' strategies:

**Student Respondent 5:** *Sometimes the social studies teacher uses news headlines to explain some things to us. I remember*

*when it was election time. He brought some newspapers to the class and told us a story about John Mahama was fake news and he showed why it was fake. And that it's not everything that we hear in the news that is true.'*

A second strategy discovered is the use of classroom advisory sessions. Teachers indicated that they spend part of their scheduled time to advise the students on things they consider important even when such things are not part of the curriculum. Some interviewees indicated that they advise the students during class periods on pertinent issues on MIL such as how to avoid cyberbullying or abuse, trending issues in the news and not sharing information from sources they do not trust.

***Teacher Respondent 2...*** *Sometimes even if you're teaching either social studies or any other subject and then as children, you need to create some room or time for you to advise them on things that are happening in the country. And not strictly what the book says you should teach them.... you plan it in such a way that you cover the topics you set for the day, make sure you cover it and the remaining time, you may have like 10 minutes. That 10 minutes, you can use it to give them assignment or homework. In this case, you can use the 10 minutes to advise them.*

Thirdly, the teachers appear to use the opportunity for giving assignments to force the students to learn MIL skills through practice and demonstrations. Particularly for teachers of computing, assignments present opportunity to teach skills for finding and accessing information online as well as using such information to create and share content. This point is articulated by Teacher respondent 11 who explains that:

*... "we give them work online and they have to go and research so they know more about it".*

A similar point is made by Teacher respondent 6 who explains that:

*Well, we normally tell them to get to the library, get the information for themselves, analyse it and come back for us to discuss it. What did you read? What do you understand by*

*what you got? Then we also give them the platform to share the information they got after assessing. Whatever information they get, something could be added...*

### **School-Level Initiatives for Teaching MIL**

Aside the personal initiatives from teachers, the research determined if there were school-based initiatives on MIL. For the most part, it appeared schools relied on indirect curriculum provisions to address the MIL needs of students. All the respondents indicated that MIL was not directly included in any of the subjects being taught in senior high schools in Ghana. However, it appeared some subjects provided opportunities. ICT, Social Studies, English Language, Government were the ones identified as imbued with such opportunity. Teachers take opportunity of such courses to teach some MIL skills to their students as demonstrated below:

**Teacher Respondent 3** *...democracy and nation building. As one of the characteristics of democracy which is freedom of the press or the media. So when we get to that point, we explain a little about the usefulness of the media and how information is assessed better and that can be channelled also for their academic work. So it is not something that we intentionally teach but when we get to that aspect. And there is this topic on globalisation that is taught in form three. Also that aspect has something to do with the internet and the media so we educate them a little about that*

**Teacher Respondent 4:** *You see, we have such topics like science and technology in social studies. Usually in most of the subjects, when they are doing topics that have to do with current affairs like government, history, economics and those ones, they can find room to search for information.*

Like the teachers who were interviewed, students corroborated that there was no direct teaching of MIL and that teachers infused it in their teaching of certain courses.

**Student Respondent 6:** *'We do not have MIL as a subject by itself but from the way you explained it to me, I can say there are small, small things in other subjects that I can say'*

In particular, schools rely on the ICT course as the main pathway for teaching MIL. It is important to note that even that pathway is only pursued to some meaningful extent for students who take a keener interest in the course by opting for it as their elective.

**Teacher Respondent 4...** *Hmmmm...just a little. You know, when they come to form one, they do a little computer skills. That's all, but getting into the thing itself, it's the elective. So if you are not offering it as an elective subject...*

Besides this curriculum-based opportunity for teaching MIL, it appears another intervention at the school level is library-focused. Some schools seem to rely on the limited resources in their libraries as well as on teaching sessions in school libraries to teach students how to access and evaluate information etc. In the first instance, some schools have some resources that students can use to educate themselves about the media and information ecology. There are also library hours on timetables that some schools take opportunity of for MIL training as shown below::

**Teacher Respondent 6:** *We have three days we use in the week for general assembly...use internet and newspapers from the library... Members of the literary club are groomed to use the internet to look for information on current affairs which they come and share with their colleagues during general assembly*

**Teacher Respondent 8:** *Once in a while you know the students alone go to the library. When it is an organised class, the librarian takes them through some of these things.*

**Teacher Respondent 10...** *Yes I know the library organise a program like that... mostly every week*

Some school libraries also organise educational visits to media organisations as a means to helping students understand the workings of the media and its effects on their lives:

**Teacher Respondent 3:** *What the school librarian normally does is organise students for a tour to Ghana Broadcasting Cooperation and other media houses... when students come for first year during orientation, she takes the advantage to educate them on how to access information.*

Interestingly, student perspectives on the issue raise questions about the viability of this pathway as it appears students either find school libraries to be either poorly resourced or not conducive to their learning of MIL.

**Student Respondent 8:** *‘Our library does not have computers... we go there to read our text book’*

**Student Respondent 2:** *‘We have a few computers but we don’t have library period so I use my free time to go and use the computer but the internet does not work and we also have to queue to use it because only 3 are working now’.*

## Extra-Curricular Activity-Based Opportunities for Teaching MIL

The findings of this study show that the educational structure at the senior high school level in Ghana provides opportunity for the formation of school clubs as an extra curriculum activity. Clubs currently in operation in schools include Science and Technology club, Robotics club, Debate club, Culture club, Drama club, French club, Writers’ club Wildlife club, Literary club and religious groupings.

Of note here is how among students, there is an indication that MIL learning is taking place for students who are parts of clubs. One student explains that, s/he had noticed their classmates who belonged to certain clubs were better positioned or have some knowledge that they gained within the club. The account below from *student Respondent 3* gives a clear indication that opportunities outside the regular teaching and learning can be effectively explored for the benefit of teaching MIL

*‘The debaters club use the computer labs a lot when they are preparing for competitions. So a lot of them in the club are better than us, they are the ones who mostly teach us because the teachers have already taught them how to look for things because they look for things on the internet for their debating.*

Besides the opportunities in club-based activities for teaching MIL, the study finds potential in educational visits and announcements. Two (2) respondents indicated that their schools have benefited from talk shows on



MIL. This is an indication that schools can leverage on such opportunities as well. School announcements during school assembly and sporting activities were also mentioned as good MIL exposure opportunities.

## DISCUSSION

Increasing access to digital technology and an ever-evolving media and information ecology have combined to increase the urgency to empower Ghana's youth through MIL education. In this study, we sought to explore the opportunities that exist in the secondary education system for achieving this. Though evidence from existing literature shows that MIL education is highly formalised in some countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom (Chen et al., 2018; Wilson, 2019), our evidence shows a contrarian state of affairs. In the schools sampled, MIL teaching is largely a function of individual teacher industry and inventiveness. Findings point to the fact that, at the macro level, generally, MIL education is more of an afterthought rather than the result of deliberate effort. School curriculum only addresses MIL in passing such as ICTs, Government and Social Studies. Even in these cases, the onus is on teachers who are interested to find inventive ways of infusing MIL into their teaching. The study finds that such inventive ways include the use of examples, assignments and advice sessions in class. The finding corroborates those of Wilson (2019) who show that teachers actively take an interest in their students MIL skills and take steps to address them in spite on challenges.

The study also finds that school libraries present some of the most viable means for infusing MIL content into young people's education. Through teaching sessions in libraries, provision of MIL-related learning materials and resources, and the organisation of field visits by school librarians, libraries and school librarians are found to be likely effective allies that MIL agents could leverage in their intervention efforts. Libraries provide information resources and services that help users gain intrinsic skills for information search and access as well as learning the rubrics for information storage and use. Our study shows that these opportunities can be further amplified by additional efforts of librarians when carefully guided as suggested by Gildersleeves (2012) and if so, to offer case models and approaches which may be used to inform strategy and practice. The paper also aims to discuss the pilot phase of the research and explore the nature of impact assessment for school libraries adopted in American studies and UK literacy research,

weighing their advantages and drawbacks. Consequent on this, it seeks to define a mixed-method approach for this study, combining multiple surveys and more detailed interviewing and focus group research within a selected and balanced sample of schools across the four home nations, and a correlation with school performance ranking. Design/methodology/approach: An online survey has been developed for circulation to secondary school students in all four of the UK home nations, mapping their perceptions and expectations of the place of the LRC and of the librarian within their school experience. Secondary schools in all four home nations were ranked according to Ofsted evaluation and league table performance. A sample of schools was selected from each nation and interviews are currently being conducted with management, teaching staff, librarians and with focus groups of school pupils. This is complemented by a survey of a sample of higher education students in different disciplines to identify their view of the contribution of the school library to preparedness for university study. Findings: Findings from the pilot phase of the research tend to support the hypothesis that a correlation may be traced between good library provision and positive pupil engagement with reading and information skills. Should the full research project discover positive stories in schools without an active library or librarian, this will complement the identification of critical success factors, towards informing possible library advocacy action and policy approaches. A key issue identified from the pilot phase for impact research in schools is that pupils and teachers both have considerable difficulty in articulating how they experience the differences that libraries and librarians contribute. A case bank of good practice material collected is being developed at University College London. Research limitations/implications: For ...,"author":[{"dropping-particle":"","family":"Gildersleeves","given":"Lucy","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""}],container-title":"Library Management","id":"ITEM-1","issue":"6","issued":{"date-parts":["2012"]},"page":"403-413","title":"Do school libraries make a difference?: Some considerations on investigating school library impact in the United Kingdom","type":"article-journal","volume":"33"},"uris":["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=87767143-d579-4a77-a861-d185247e1768"]},"mendeley":{"formattedCitation":"(Gildersleeves, 2012. School clubs, particularly those tending towards information search and use such as debate clubs also present possible avenues for teaching young people MIL skills.

Given evidence that young people are increasingly getting drawn into the media and information ecosystem (Ku et al., 2019) and lack the skills to navigate it effectively (Wilson, 2019), our findings of the limited proactive provision of MIL in the Ghanaian educational curriculum is a challenge. The findings from this study also supports existing work on MIL from some parts of Africa such as the works of Adjin-Tettey (2022), Saleh (2012), Idiodi (2005) that indicates that MIL is not part of formal education curriculum. The current situation where MIL is overtly absent in the educational curriculum even at the senior high school level is contrary to what is happening worldwide as reported by Chen et al. (2018) Singapore has responded to the fast-changing media environment within the educational sector. A large-scale study was conducted in Singaporean schools to establish the norm of Singaporean students' new media literacy. This was based on a conceptual framework of new media literacy (Lin et al., 2013 and Wilson (2019). It also shows that Ghana is lagging in the attainment of MIL as prescribed by UNESCO (Moeller et al., 2011) .

There is a silver lining however, in the discovery that individual teachers, libraries and librarians and club activities present opportunities to address the challenge indirectly. However, we draw attention to the particular case of libraries as avenues for MIL training. It was noted that the library as a resource for MIL education generated mixed sentiments among students. This was because while some schools have well-resourced libraries, this was not the case in other schools. Additionally, some schools have library periods within their curricular while others did not. Thus, while libraries present a lot of opportunities, it will take better resourcing and dedication of time for library use to make its full potential for MIL education attainable.

Also emerging from the finding was the opportunities that extra-curricular activities such as clubs present. Clubs such as Science and Technology clubs, Robotics clubs, Debate clubs, Cultural clubs, Drama clubs, French clubs among others afford students additional learning opportunities for knowledge and skills building in ways not catered within the current curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

While generally not directly addressed in secondary school curriculum, the outlook for MIL education is far from bleak, this study finds. Teachers see its importance and consider themselves as agents for MIL education which they employ creative ways to address both in and outside the classroom. In class, they infuse MIL through demonstrations, assignments and advice to students about the dos and don'ts of the current media and information ecology. Outside the classroom, club activities and library-based interventions are being used in the school system to enhance the media and information literacy of Ghana's youth.

Besides these largely micro-level efforts, the study concludes that Ghana is lagging behind in MIL education as it is not proactively pursued in the current curriculum. In other words, Ghanaian secondary school students are lacking in opportunity to acquire one of the most essential skills needed by 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens, limiting their opportunity to be globally competitive. However, opportunities for teaching MIL through the school library and extracurricular club activities may help in addressing this.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, the study recommends to MIL advocates and agents to increase training of secondary school teachers of indicative courses as well as club facilitators in MIL. Given their baseline recognition of the need for MIL and their actions in that regard, teachers present a useful ally that MIL training interventions can take advantage of. Empowering them with better MIL skills will further enhance their capacity for infusing richer MIL content in their students in and out of the classroom. Training efforts should also target school librarians who the study finds as critical to MIL training of youths.

Finally, and given the macro level gaps identified, it is recommended that the Ghana Education Service should engage stakeholders towards the development of a national strategy on how the school librarians, teachers and club patrons can work together to provide a holistic MIL education.

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