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# A Needs Assessment for Promoting Active Citizenship and Media Literacy Skills among Pre-service Social Studies Teachers

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to analyze the need to promote active citizenship and media literacy among pre-service social studies teachers. Questionnaires were distributed among 327 social studies lecturers and pre-service teachers, and structured interviews were conducted with six participants, the Dean of the Faculty of Education, and other academic experts at a Thai university. The quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Modified Priority Needs Index. Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using content analysis. The results revealed a very high level of need to enhance both active citizenship and media literacy skills among pre-service teachers. Specifically, the “attitudes and values” characteristic of active citizenship and the “ability to analyze media” characteristic of media literacy were of the utmost importance.*

**Keywords:** Needs Assessment, Characteristics of Active Citizenship, Media Literacy Skills, Social Studies Students, Active Citizenship

## Introduction

Globalization has extensively changed the digital world in aspects such as lifestyles, attitudes, values, and behaviors. Teaching and learning in Thailand must adapt to these changes in alignment with the National Education Plan 2017–2036 (Office of the Education Council, 2017). To improve teaching and learning in the digital age, Thailand’s education management should establish human resource development goals, set development plans, prepare students to enter the job market upon graduation, design flexible and diverse curricula, and adopt innovative teaching methods to enhance students’ competency in preparation for the fourth Industrial Revolution. Therefore, Thai teaching and learning institutions should equip learners with the knowledge and skills necessary for adapting to changes. Hence, promoting active citizenship and media literacy skills is essential and necessary.

The significance of promoting active citizenship is evident from UNESCO’s concept of education, which underlines the need to promote and develop responsible citizenship for the development and well-being of the nation. Citizenship education has three main objectives: 1) promote knowledge and understanding of citizenship and human rights through the principles of

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institutions; 2) promote decision-making abilities and thinking skills to realize individuals' full potential; and 3) promote self-responsibility and social responsibility (UNESCO, 2018). Zyngier (2012) and Westheimer (2015) also suggested that democratic citizenship traits should be instilled in citizens, starting with responsibility toward themselves, the community, society, and then, the nation. The ultimate goal of learner development is for learners to actively engage in national events as members of society in order to create a fairer society, solve problems, and participate in social movements that influence social change.

The Thai government and its educational policies have emphasized the importance of promoting strong citizenship. The 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan B.E.2561–2580 (2017–2021) and the 20-Year National Strategy 2018–2037 (B.E.2561–2580) aim to make Thai people of all sections and ages be good and competent citizens. Specifically, the desirable characteristics include being disciplined citizens who engage in lifelong self-learning; having knowledge, skills, and good values; being physically and mentally healthy; actively pursuing spiritual growth; having an open mind and a fraternal attitude for helping others; and possessing a sense of Thai, ASEAN, and global citizenship (National Economic and Social Development Plan No. 12, 2017–2021). The National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 (2017–2036) and the 2018 National Education Standards also addressed the promotion of citizenship. Active citizenship is a desired outcome of education, with a major emphasis on love for the nation and community, the ability to discern right from wrong, building an awareness of being good Thai and global citizens, developing public consciousness, building ideology, and active involvement in developing the nation with justice and equality. This will help them manage environmental resources sustainably and promote peaceful coexistence in Thai society and the global community (Office of the Education Council, 2018).

UNESCO (2011) and Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009) have also recommended developing media literacy skills in learners. Young learners and citizens should be equipped with these

skills because they live in a technology and media-driven environment. Therefore, they should have the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and understand media to critically discern unreliable information. The necessity of promoting media literacy skills among Thai citizens have been outlined in the 20-Year National Strategy B.E. 2561–2580 (2018–2037). Media and mass communication have been encouraged to strictly adhere to media ethics. Similarly, constructive use of online media and social networks to set examples of integrity, ethics, and public consciousness is encouraged (National Strategy Secretariat Office, 2018).

Educational policies aiming at promoting media literacy skills in learners are outlined in the National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 (2017–2036), 2018 National Education Standards, and Higher Education Standards. Learners are expected to become innovative co-creators, possess twenty-first century skills and entrepreneurial attributes, integrate various disciplines to solve social problems, become aware of changes in society and the world, create opportunities, and add value to themselves, communities, society, and the country (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2018).

The 2018 Higher Education Standards and the 2019 Qualifications Standards for Four-Year Teacher Preparation Program have also indicated the desirable characteristics of graduates—being active citizens who can co-create innovation. The aforementioned standards also focus on developing graduates' twenty-first century skills, such as analytical and higher-order thinking skills as well as strong digital, media, and technology literacy (Ministry of Education, 2019).

Needs assessment is a contextual assessment to understand the status quo and how needs can be met, which can help identify real problems. Since the results provide valuable information about the needs of those involved and context of the problems, a tailored solution can be devised easily. The assessment result is therefore an important basis for planning problem-solving strategies based on the actual problem (Wongwanich, 2019).

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which lecturers and pre-service social studies teachers need to promote

active citizenship and media literacy skills to their students. The researcher recognizes the importance of research to promote active citizenship and media literacy skills in accordance with governmental education policies, the Higher Education Curriculum Standards, and Qualifications Standards for Teacher Preparation Program.

### Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the a fore mentioned research question. Qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated to strengthen findings (Jogulu & Pansiri, 2011) as the results from the structured interview threw further light on the findings from the questionnaire.

### Participants

Participants were divided into three groups as follows:

Fourteen social studies lecturers and educators teaching courses that promote active citizenship and media literacy skills were recruited through purposive selection with two specific criteria: a master's degree or equivalent, or an academic position of an assistant professor or higher in lieu of that; and at least three years of teaching experience in civic education or related subjects.

Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size tables with 95% confidence level and  $\pm 5\%$  error, 269 of the 894 pre-service social studies teachers at a Thai university were selected. It was foreseen that some might not complete the questionnaire. Hence, the researcher increased the number of questionnaires distributed to the sample group by 5%, totaling 313 samples by stratified random sampling, which were classified by the year they enrolled at the university.

Six interviewees were selected through the purposive approach, which included the Dean of the Faculty of Education and five academic experts. The two specific selection criteria included: holding a doctoral degree or equivalent, or an academic position of an assistant professor or higher in lieu of that; and having at least five years of teaching

experience in civic education or related subjects to promote media literacy skills among pre-service social studies teachers.

### Research Instruments

Questionnaires about the need to promote active citizenship and media literacy skills among pre-service social studies teachers: Two sets of questionnaires (one for educators and one for students) were developed in a dual-response format with a 5-point rating (Wongwanich, 2019) that also included an open-ended question divided into three sections with a total of 48 questions. They were validated by five experts, with the validity result of the Index of Congruence (IOC) between 0.8–1.

Interview questions about the need to promote active citizenship and media literacy skills among pre-service social studies teachers: This was a four-part, structured 12-question interview. The IOC value was between 0.8–1.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using online questionnaires over a one-month period. Each interview lasted one hour and was recorded through detailed note taking.

Quantitative data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics (mean scores and standard deviations), while the needs were ranked using the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI<sub>Modified</sub>). Qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis.

### Results

This section presents results of the needs of lecturers and pre-service teachers acquired from the questionnaires and interviews.

#### Needs Analysis of Pre-service Social Studies Teachers' Active Citizenship Characteristics

A modified priority needs index was performed to analyze the rank of needs perceived by lecturers and pre-service social studies teachers. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: PNI<sub>Modified</sub> Analysis of Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers' Active Citizenship Characteristics Assessed by Lecturers**

Active Citizenship Characteristics	Current state			Desired state			PNI <sub>modified</sub>	Rank
	M	S.D.	Interpretation	M	S.D.	Interpretation		
Knowledge	3.785	0.587	high	4.625	0.477	very high	0.222	2
Skill	3.900	0.636	high	4.757	0.385	very high	0.220	3
Attitudes and values	3.714	0.544	high	4.750	0.427	very high	0.279	1
Overall	3.824	0.544	high	4.707	0.394	very high	-	-

As illustrated in Table 1, the overall results revealed a very high desired level of active citizenship characteristics in pre-service social studies teachers in all aspects (M = 4.707, S.D. = 0.394). Their current level of active citizenship characteristics was high in

all aspects (M = 3.824, S.D. = 0.544). Considering the PNI<sub>Modified</sub> value, the citizenship characteristic of "attitudes and values" was ranked first (PNI<sub>Modified</sub> = 0.279), followed by "knowledge" and "skill" with PNI<sub>Modified</sub> = 0.222 and 0.220 respectively.

**Table 2: PNI<sub>Modified</sub> Analysis of Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers' Active Citizenship Characteristics Assessed By Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers**

Active Citizenship Characteristics	Current state			Desired state			PNI <sub>modified</sub>	Rank
	M	S.D.	Interpretation	M	S.D.	Interpretation		
Knowledge	3.544	0.912	high	4.203	0.733	high	0.186	2
Skill	3.676	0.860	high	4.299	0.707	high	0.169	3
Attitudes and values	3.711	0.878	high	4.382	0.754	high	0.181	1
Overall	3.669	0.816	high	4.279	0.684	high	-	-

As illustrated in Table 2, the overall results obtained revealed the desired level of active citizenship characteristics in pre-service social studies teachers at a high level in all aspects (M = 4.279, S.D. = 0.684). In addition, their current level of active citizenship characteristics was high in all aspects (M = 3.669, SD = 0.816). Considering the PNI<sub>Modified</sub> value, the citizenship characteristic of

"attitudes and values" was ranked first (PNI<sub>Modified</sub> = 0.181), followed by "knowledge" and "skills" with PNI<sub>Modified</sub> = 0.186 and 0.169 respectively.

### Needs Analysis of Pre-service Social Studies Teachers' Media Literacy Characteristics

A modified priority needs index was performed to analyze the rank of needs perceived by teachers and students. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: PNI<sub>Modified</sub> analysis of Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers' Media Literacy Characteristics Assessed by Lecturers**

Media literacy Characteristics	Current state			Desired state			PNI <sub>modified</sub>	Rank
	M	S.D.	Interpretation	M	S.D.	Interpretation		
Ability to access media	3.678	0.723	high	4.678	0.504	very high	0.272	3
Ability to analyze media	3.333	0.691	moderate	4.690	0.461	very high	0.407	1
Ability to evaluate media	3.428	0.755	moderate	4.642	0.456	very high	0.354	2
Ability to create media	3.690	0.821	high	4.642	0.461	very high	0.258	4
Overall	3.528	0.664	high	4.664	0.448	very high	-	-

As illustrated in Table 3, the overall results revealed a very high desired level of media literacy characteristics in pre-service social studies teachers in all aspects (M = 4.664, S.D. = 0.448). Their current

level of media literacy characteristics was high in all aspects (M = 3.528, S.D. = 0.664). Considering the PNI<sub>Modified</sub> value, the media literacy characteristic of "ability to analyze media" was ranked first among

the four abilities ( $PNI_{Modified} = 0.407$ ), followed by “ability to evaluate media,” “ability to access media,” and “ability to create media” with  $PNI_{Modified} = 0.354$ , 0.272, and 0.258 respectively.

**Table 4: PNI Modified Analysis of Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers’ Media Literacy Characteristics Assessed by Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers**

Media literacy Characteristics	Current state			Desired state			PNI Modified	Rank
	M	S.D.	Interpretation	M	S.D.	Interpretation		
Ability to access media	3.615	0.979	high	4.246	0.768	high	0.175	4
Ability to analyze media	3.515	0.909	high	4.294	0.750	high	0.222	1
Ability to evaluate media	3.730	0.961	high	4.385	0.752	high	0.176	3
Ability to create media	3.664	0.751	high	4.353	0.758	high	0.188	2
Overall	3.623	0.815	high	4.320	0.708	high	-	-

As illustrated in Table 4, the overall results revealed a high desired level of media literacy characteristics in pre-service social studies teachers in all aspects ( $M=4.320$ ,  $S.D. = 0.708$ ). Their current level of media literacy characteristics was high in all aspects ( $M = 3.623$ ,  $S.D. = 0.815$ ). Considering the  $PNI_{Modified}$  value, the media literacy characteristic of “ability to analyze media” was ranked first among the four abilities ( $PNI_{Modified} = 0.222$ ), followed by “ability to create media,” “ability to evaluate media,” and “ability to access media” with  $PNI_{Modified} = 0.188$ , 0.176, and 0.175 respectively.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the analysis and prioritization of the need to promote active citizenship characteristics show that both lecturers and pre-service teachers agree that promoting “attitudes and values” should be the first priority. This characteristic emphasizes the need for students to be aware of the multicultural society they live in, fairness, creative problem-solving, and awareness of one’s role as a good citizen. Additionally, pre-service teachers need to be self-reliant and responsible for their own actions, with the primary aim of promoting awareness of the responsibility to oneself, community, and society, which is consistent with one of the three main objectives in education management to build citizenship according to the conceptual framework of UNESCO (2018). The results are also consistent with Khaenamkhaew et al.’s (2020) study, which found that graduates’ identity should be shaped based on three aspects according to the framework of National Education Standards: learning, co-creating innovation, and active citizenship. Given that the

aspect with the highest average is strong citizenship, guidelines for the development of graduates’ identity should focus on cooperation with all sectors for the benefit of the community and capacity to accept differences in a democratic manner. Graduates should complete assigned duties and take responsibility for the development of the community. According to Kaewhanam and Kaewhanam (2020), people are highly aware of their political rights and roles. Three approaches to raising citizens’ awareness about civic consciousness include emphasizing culture, communities, and freedom/progress in the community. The integration of all three approaches can build strong citizenship. Thus, the citizenship characteristic of “attitudes and values” is necessary to encourage students’ civic consciousness.

With regard to the analysis and prioritization of the need to promote media literacy characteristics, results show that both lecturers and pre-service teachers agree that the ability to analyze media should be the top priority. This entails encouraging students to examine the format, structure, content order, and presentation of ideas before interpreting the content of the specific media. In line with Suvachittanont’s (2019) study, most Thai people still have low media literacy because of their lack of domain knowledge. For example, most of them do not know the concept of copyrights. Further, they rarely analyze the information they receive, lack the skills to differentiate between facts and opinions, and believe the information provided by the media without deliberating upon the sources or considering multiple perspectives. Additionally, Prakrongjai and Punpong (2019) suggested creating a learning process for media literacy through activities like



teaching and learning via the analysis of case studies or personal experiences. These activities should include posing questions about the reliability, sources, and purpose of information; verifying the reliability of the information with other sources; and practicing critical and analytical thinking. It can be concluded that analytical skill, which is an important attribute of media literacy, is vital and should be promoted among students.

### Implications of the Findings

This study has the following implications:

Both lecturers and pre-service teachers are in agreement about promoting the strong citizenship characteristic of “attitudes and values.” Therefore, learning activities and extracurricular activities should focus on raising awareness and appreciation for active citizenship values among students.

Both lecturers and pre-service teachers are in agreement about promoting the media literacy characteristic of the “ability to analyze media.” Therefore, when designing academic and extracurricular activities, lecturers should provide students with the opportunity to practice analyzing the media by examining patterns, structure, content order, presentation of ideas, and the interpretation of content.

There should be continuous monitoring and evaluation to establish best practices for learning activities that promote and develop strong citizenship characteristics and media literacy skills based on changing social contexts.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for further research. Additional data from other sample groups, such as students and lecturers from other disciplines, should be collected in order to obtain a wider variety of information. This can lead to the development of teaching methods or guidelines for organizing various activities to further promote active citizenship characteristics and media literacy skills among pre-service teachers effectively and efficiently. In addition, other methods such as group discussions, observations, and student reflections should be used to assess the needs and learning outcomes related to active citizenship and media literacy

skills. Finally, curricula and instructional models should be developed to promote active citizenship characteristics and media literacy skills among pre-service teachers from all disciplines.

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