

Laidlaw Scholar: Rwan Elmileik | Trinity College Dublin | Summer 2026

Introduction

Over four weeks, I ran a media literacy programme with Grades 7, 8, 9 and GED students at Fugee School – an alternative learning centre for refugee and stateless students in Malaysia

Malaysia is not party to the UNHCR Refugee Convention, in turn they do not recognise refugee status, resulting in the exclusion of refugee youth from the national education system.

The goal of this program was to equip students with skills that give them greater critical agency in how they interact with media narratives, in particular those which directly affect them including immigration rhetoric.

What Did This Programme Cover?

- How to identify misinformation, disinformation, malinformation and hate speech
- Online safety, how to identify and avoid risky internet behaviour
- Self-expression through person media outputs on a topic of choice, and open discussions
- Lessons on how to research, and use AI assistance ethically
- How to identify bias and critically analyse different media perspectives e.g understanding the difference between different types of press



Key Achievement!

In collaboration with students across all grades, we wrote an open letter sharing students' perspectives and lived experiences at the intersection of refugee life and media narratives, including a call to action to leaders at large. This letter was published in Youthtopia, a globally recognised youth advocacy forum on World Refugee Day.

Read the Article [Here](#)



Voicing the Refugee Student's View

Editor's Note

This guest contribution was written by Rwan Elmileik in collaboration with students from Fugee School, an alternative learning centre serving refugee and stateless students in Malaysia.

The article emerged from a four-week media literacy program exploring media narratives, online behaviour, misinformation, and digital citizenship. Through guided discussions and reflective exercises, approximately 50 students shared their perspectives on migration, online spaces, belonging, and the role of leaders in creating more inclusive communities. Student quotations are published anonymously and shared with consent.

Key Learnings

- 01** Creativity thrives with constraints. The school was mid-reorganisation with already stretched resources when I joined. Understanding what was available to me and equally what was limited helped me adapt quickly.
- 02** Meeting each student where they are and letting them drive the lesson with their curiosity was when I saw the greatest engagement. This also meant creating activities where students at all levels could engage similarly. No single lesson plan survived contact with every grade. I recorded greater engagement when I incorporated one on one check-ins with students during activities. Students especially enjoyed sharing their opinions openly.
- 03** Acting with ethical consideration for the cultural context of the environment was the best way to smoothly integrate with the class. This meant respecting when students would speak their own language amongst themselves, and sharing their lived experiences. This also meant facing the reality of the hardships of many students, without letting it be their defining feature.
- 04** Communicating with delicacy yet absolute truthfulness meant students could critically engage with ideas and narratives that they had not critically thought about before. This attitude allowed me to create a space where students could agree and disagree safely. Equally, I had to keep an open mind to their views and consider them with equal respect.

Two Moments Which Have Stuck with Me

Moment 1: Reading this Student Quote from the Article for the first time - "I believe that the labels I am given as a migrant are always based on the basis that my existence should not be allowed. Simply living and existing here makes the locals think that they are doing us a favour. So mistreating us is the price of their favour (simply letting us breathe in their land)."

Moment 2: One of my favourite moments had nothing to do with media literacy at all. It was a school musical, every single student in the school took part, performing traditional dances and songs from their own cultures. It was a reminder that education isn't only literacy and worksheets. Play, performance, and joy are rights too

A Look into Refugees' Struggle Accessing Higher Education:

For 2 weeks I assisted the Higher Education department with their scholarship applications during their eligibility phase. This involved evaluating applications against a rubric of requirements, and often involved rejecting applicants. These interactions required a certain sensitivity and understanding approach to a population who are already severely deprived of opportunities and access to education, for reasons beyond their control. This experience was challenging, and forced me to see the strong levers organisations like the UNCHR have on peoples' lives, and even more the impact governments' disregard for refugees' lived realities. These are people with a desire to contribute, grow and learn but they face a ceiling only leaders with power can lift.

How will this be sustained in the future?

Over 4 weeks, I ran 17 lessons. Throughout the programme, I tracked each lesson plan detailing goals/objectives, activities and custom materials/resources per lesson. See the a sample lesson plan image.

Following each lesson, I wrote a detailed report of what went well, and what could be improved. At the end of the program, I gathered each student's feedback on what they enjoyed and what they would change.

By combining the lesson plans, custom resources, sample media outputs, and feedback gathered throughout the program, this program can be re-run and even improved upon in the future.

Week	Class	Topic	Objective	Activities	Materials/Links
Week 1	7/5 Grade 9 & GED	Introduction to media literacy: misinformation, disinformation and bias	Identify different types of press/media, critically assess media. Learn the difference between Misinformation vs Disinformation vs Malinformation. Types of bias, SPIT framework	Icebreakers - 2 Buths 1 Lie, Hangman, Identify Different Types of Press (Group), Reading comprehension and critical analysis (Individual and Group), Confirmation Bias exercise (seceding order pattern), Class discussion types of bias and their effects	Week 1 Activity Materials First Output Example
	8/5 Grade 7 & 8	Introduction to media literacy: digital identity, and online safety	Be able to identify different types of press/media, identify safe and unsafe online communication	Icebreakers - 2 Buths 1 Lie, Hangman, Identify Different Types of Press (Group), Digital Safety (Group), Rules for Online Behavior (Group & Class)	Week 1 Activity Materials
Week 2	11/5 GED	Digital identity and online safety	Identify the difference between safe and unsafe online communication. Understand appropriate and inappropriate behaviour	Digital Safety (Group) Worksheet, Rules for Online Behavior (Group & Class) Worksheet	Week 1 Activity Materials
	11/5 Grade 7	Misinformation and Disinformation	Learn the difference between Misinformation vs Disinformation vs Malinformation. Types of bias, SPIT framework	Misinformation vs Disinformation vs Malinformation Worksheet, Confirmation Bias exercise (seceding order pattern), Class discussion types of bias and their effects	Week 1 Activity Materials
	12/5 Grade 7	Research and Fact Checking Workshop - Media Output	Begin research on media output, with goal of completing roughly half of research in the session	Researching Output - Cinva	Week 1 Activity Materials First Output Example
	13/5 Grade 8	Misinformation and Disinformation	Learn the difference between Misinformation vs Disinformation vs Malinformation. Types of bias, SPIT framework/ objective vs subjective	Confirmation Bias exercise (seceding order pattern), Class discussion types of bias and their effects, misinformation sheet, objective vs subjective sheet	Week 1 Activity Materials First Output Example
	13/5 GED	Research and Fact Checking Workshop - Media Output	Begin research on media output, with goal of completing roughly half of research in the session	Researching Output - Cinva	Week 1 Activity Materials
	14/5 Grade 9	Digital identity and online safety	Identify the difference between safe and unsafe online communication. Understand appropriate and inappropriate behaviour	Digital Safety (Group), Rules for Online Behavior (Group & Class)	Week 1 Activity Materials
	14/5 Grade 9	Research and Fact Checking Workshop - Media Output	Begin research on media output, with goal of completing roughly half of research in the session	Researching Output - Cinva	Week 1 Activity Materials
	15/5 Grade 8	Research and Fact Checking Workshop - Media Output	Begin research on media output, with goal of completing roughly half of research in the session	Researching Output - Cinva	Week 1 Activity Materials First Output Example

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