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# Communication Education and Training

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Asian and Oriental philosophy, art and religion offer perspectives for an alternative (non-Western) communication model and theory. Asian values of harmony, consensus through encounter and dialogue, complementarity, integration, and emphasis on wisdom instead of knowledge provide the cultural for the restructuring of the traditional Laswellian model of communication process. An indigenous model or theory should be able to capture the dynamics of development and the social, political, economic and cultural realities. It should also place emphasis on the unintended effects of communication as these have, in fact been more significant in their impact on social change. An alternative model should be community-oriented, or what Teheranian (1985) describes as "communitarian," representing an ideal Third World alternative response able to contain most of the values found in the concept of a desired future. It should also be user-oriented and is more attuned to the needs of individuals and groups in the community rather than with the needs of the larger institutions which are now being served by the present communication system. However, it recognizes the need to link the community with the center through small media and traditional community centers.

An alternative model should address itself to the following:

- the narrowing of the gap between the urban and the rural sectors through mechanisms which improves people's capacity for learning, self-management and participation; mechanisms for bargaining and leverage; redistributive mechanisms; and non-formal training which upgrades labor's skills thus contributing to general productivity;

- strengthening of values and local institutions that promote cooperation, resource sharing and the use of local communication resources that are able to elicit people's needs and link them to national development planning as well as facilitating interaction and feedback between individuals and groups at various levels of society;
- support for alternative means of control of violence through non-confrontational conflict strategies between labor and management groups, support of objective and non-partisan peace movements;
- balancing the needs of the individual and the larger group including the global society; and finally
- strengthening mechanisms and institutions that enhance individual creativity, cultural identity and human dignity.

Communication scholar Dr. Ibarra Gonzalez (1998) noted that existing communication models and theories have been based on Newtonian physics and realities like the linear model of Shannon and Weaver. Now that we have moved to Quantum physics, what models and theories can articulate the new age, he asks. Gonzalez raises the possibility of developing a "Meta" communication model, a global communication model that encompasses the Western and Eastern realities and therefore transcends geographical determinism and cultural imperialism. While indeed new models and theories may have emerged, communication scholars and other social scientists are not talking about them, he added.

### **A New Development Perspective**

Globalization and the growth of the new information technology are the two revolutionary developments today. In fact, the information technologies have triggered the emergence of today's global society. Alvin Toffler in his *Third Wave* (1980) defined the features of the global village—the electronic cottage, telecommunity, Third Wave economics, crack-up of nations and the rise of global corporations. Kenichi Ohmae asserted as early as 1990 that we are now in the midst of a "borderless world" and the "end of the nation state" (1995). Commu-

nication used to be confined to smaller groups within the community. But not anymore. With globalization, one has to relate interculturally and across nations and this requires cultural sensitivity and tolerance.

At the national level, development concepts such as decentralization, devolution and communitarianism have redefined communication strategies to make them more consultative, participative and bottom-up. This also means that the public should have greater access to information as this would provide the public greater opportunities for participation and provide the venue for dialogue.

The role of communication in (community) development should be highlighted—mediating conflict, reducing tension, harmonizing diverse ideas and viewpoints, reducing learning gaps, improving productivity, among others. Toward this end, institutions such as the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) have included communication management as a course in the training of development managers. The role that communication has played in the peace process and in various development projects—environment, health, literacy, etc. underscores the need for communication training by development managers.

### **Introduction of New Specializations**

Communication schools and training institutions should gradually depart from specializations focusing on the traditional mass media and related fields (print, journalism, broadcasting, PR and advertising) towards the emerging media convergence and multimedia set-up. Communication/journalism students and professionals should not only prepare for a career in mass media but in other areas as well—Management Information, Design of Alternative Learning System (including distance education), Corporate Communication, Science Communication, among others.

Cutting-edge courses or those which will prepare the students for the cybercommunity (knowledge society), globalization and media convergence should be integrated in the communication curricula. Among these are Introduction to Communication Technology, Interactive Multimedia, Desktop (Web) Publishing, Electronic Newsroom, Computer-Assisted Reporting, Cross-Cultural Communication, among others.

Communication departments/schools should also take the lead in introducing innovative learning delivery systems such as the use of self-learning coursewares or modules, interactive multimedia, E-mail

and Internet, video/teleconferencing, distance education/open university, and others.

A comprehensive continuing education program for communication educators and trainers that will provide new knowledge and skills will be needed. Training will utilize both traditional approaches (seminar-workshops, internships, scholarships) and non-traditional systems such as distance learning using self-learning multimedia packs. Distance learning will address the problem of lack of faculty/professionals who will be allowed to go on leave to either pursue further education or attend short-term courses. Training content should give equal emphasis on knowledge, attitudes, values and skills. A liberal education should impart knowledge as well as critical thinking and analytical skills. This will enable participants to analyze issues, process events, discover interrelationships, make decisions, and be able to distinguish between right and wrong.

Knowledge areas are easily identifiable. It is in the realm of values and attitudes where some controversies usually arise. Among the desirable attitudes of the communicator in the 1990s are sensitivity and appreciation of convergence, interdisciplinary and holistic thinking, as well as futuristic orientation. Defining the values that should be "taught" is a contentious issue. Some insist that only professional values must be developed. However, some overriding values are worth mentioning—respect for the common good, peace and tolerance, justice and equity, morality, truth, among others.

Media critics point to current media practices as the strongest argument for values education—excessive crime, sex and violence, commercialism, "envelopmental journalism," self-censorship, among others, have become too widespread that many students and young journalists have come to accept them as realities in their profession.

Training programs will be based on results of regular training needs analysis (TNA) and analysis of environmental trends and industry demands. These programs will not only be skills-oriented but will provide a balance among knowledge, attitudes, values and skills/practices (KAVS).

### **Industry Linkage**

Through stronger linkage, industry will be able to help schools produce graduates who fit their manpower needs and requirements. Industry is not limited to mass media but other communication-related

sectors including cable television, telecommunication, community media, information technology, among others. To make the curriculum more relevant, industry leaders should be actively involved in curriculum planning and development. To narrow the gap between theory and practice, journalists and communication practitioners are now being invited to handle courses as professorial lecturers. This option often encounters some difficulty due to the busy schedule of practitioners. Some practitioners also appear to be unable to organize their teaching more systematically as teaching is done only on the side. In addition to students practicum, an internship program for teachers should also be considered to enable faculty members to update or acquire news skills while gaining actual media experience. This will also address the common criticism of lack of practical experiences by academics.

Closer linkage will enable industries to professionalize their ranks, gain access to better-trained graduates and cultivate a steady source for their manpower needs. Other strategies for closer linkage are collaborative training programs, media research conducted by schools, teachers and students as guest columnists, featuring in-depth and investigative articles of students, among others. Linkages will not be limited to media enterprises but other communication enterprises such as computer companies, telecommunication, movies, cable television, etc.

### **Indigenous Materials Development**

There is a need to encourage and sustain the development of local communication learning materials (books, modules, journals, other printed materials, coursewares, video lessons, etc.) to complement those produced abroad, particularly those from the west. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and organizations such as the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC) should support book publications and materials development projects.

PACE will also endeavor to exchange learning materials with its partners in the ASEAN. It is unfortunate that our students know more about the media system in the United States and Europe than those of our neighboring countries.

### **Communication Research**

Most communication departments/schools are still focused on teaching and have a limited research tradition. There is a need to give

equal attention to research not only to discover new knowledge and theories but also to develop new and indigenous communication strategies, introduce innovative communication programs or channels, and identify policy options.

Communication schools should plan and implement a research program distinct from those prepared by their students. A common research agenda, however, may be defined to provide common direction and maximize resources. Communication research agenda should depart from the traditional "process and effect" studies or awareness surveys to include policy research on current and emerging issues such as regulation (or deregulation) media convergence, and futuristic studies. There is also a need for action research where communication strategies and materials are tested and validated.

Even the dependence on empirical (quantitative) research methods is now being questioned. Participatory action research is recommended. Here, the research study in itself is secondary to the interaction and communication process of the participating individuals who themselves may be the subjects of the research (Ramirez 1986).

### **Communication Schools**

Communication departments/schools and training institutions would need support to be able to upgrade or acquire capital investment. Schools selected as Centers of Excellence may be provided with a Communication Center which will be made accessible to faculty and students from other schools. The government, through CHED, may also help arrange a soft loan or grant for communication schools to acquire these new technologies. This may be similar to a grant provided by the Asian Development Bank to selected engineering schools nationwide which enable them to acquire state of the art technology.

Professional communication (media) organizations should continue to advocate for reforms in our communication environment using various strategies and fora. In particular, it will continue to lobby for legislation which will democratize media access, strengthen public access to information, protect press freedom, among others.

Policy advocacy also includes lobbying for greater adherence to ethics and professionalism, adoption of guidelines on media coverage of women, children and other marginalized groups, and developing language sensitivity (in terms of sex, social origin, economic class, etc.) in reportage.

## Conclusion

This article traced the growth of communication and mass media over the past one hundred years. *Diwa ng pagiging isang Filipino* (Filipino spirit) and *kalayaan* (freedom) are the core values which provided the unifying theme in the analysis of the history of journalism, media and communication education.

The pursuit of *kalayaan* has been the single preoccupation of Filipino journalists starting with the nationalistic papers during the Spanish regime up to the alternative press during the Marcos era. *Kalayaan*, the official organ of the *Katipunan* was primarily responsible in mobilizing Filipinos to join the revolutionary movement. During the American regime, *Sakdal*, the newspaper advocated for social reforms on issues which continued to dominate the national agenda—agrarian reform, use of the vernacular as the medium of instruction, graft and corruption in “big government,” and regressive taxes. As mentioned in the Introduction, public disenchantment with the Marcos regime resulted from the writings of courageous journalists.

Press freedom, although constantly under threat unleashed the spirit of enterprise and creativity, competitiveness and vigilance. The spirit of enterprise was demonstrated when Filipino journalists and communicators discovered the use of alternative communication channels during the dark period of control and adversity. Thus, communicators turned to *talinhaga* or symbolism to express protest; propaganda was communicated in the *zarzuela* medium; underground papers were popular during the Japanese period and Marcos regime; and symbols such as yellow ribbons and confetti were utilized during the anti-Marcos rallies which culminated in the EDSA revolution.

One function which Philippine media has taken seriously is its “watchdog” role which evolved into an almost total adversarial relationship with government. The emergence of development journalism in the 1970s failed to inculcate a more balanced perspective of government-media relations.

The competitive spirit is manifested in the ever increasing number of media channels even though the economy could hardly afford them. While diversity of media channels is critical in ensuring press freedom, the situation has caused inimical practices such as sensationalism, commercialism, licentiousness, etc.

At some time, press freedom was narrowly viewed as the right of journalists instead of every individual’s right to seek, receive, impart



and share information. This is why there is now preference for freedom of expression to emphasize the universality of this right. In view of growing criticisms against "excesses in the exercise of press freedom" many sectors are advocating for greater self-regulatory mechanisms and higher standards of professionalism.

Growth and expansion characterized the development of the communication sector—as an industry, academic discipline and communication support in development. Such growth however appeared to be limited to quantitative rather than qualitative gains as the norm is primarily that of perpetuating the status quo. Communication science followed the course of objectivity and rationality, and until recently, was comfortable with its western orientation that did not match the ethos of Asian or Filipino reality. But this is not unique to the communication discipline. In general, the social science disciplines in the country were preoccupied with examining issues and events and publishing results in academic journals but still remained uncomfortable in advocating genuine reforms. Perhaps this can be explained by the scientific culture ingrained in the academic system which required objectivity and political neutrality.

The academe even up to now is preoccupied with producing graduates who would later seek employment in commercial mass media and advertising. It is also perhaps even unmindful of the danger that it might be perpetuating an irrelevant educational system. Concern has been raised regarding the capability of our educational system to provide analytical communication skills which would enable an individual to compete, survive and prevail in today's twenty-first century. This skill should begin with intrapersonal communication which would enable the individual to reflect and communicate with oneself. This is critical in order to enable one to relate with others in the emerging global society. The knowledge society brings with it an unquantifiable amount of new information which has quite a rapid rate of obsolescence. The challenge is to equip individuals with skills needed to organize, synthesize, process, package and utilize information in decision-making.

Another challenge highlighted in this paper is the search for an Asian philosophy reflected in art, religion and other forms of culture which offer alternative perspectives to western models and theories which for a century alienated us from our own cultural identity. Similarly, mere dependence on empirical and quantitative research is now being questioned. This orientation and the dependence on surveys,

content analysis, and other forms of popular methodologies have prevented us from undertaking more analytical and macro research which questions the status quo and raises policy concerns.

Meanwhile, applied communication has taken the support stance rather than the role of a serious critic of the mainstream socio-political environment (*Masagana 99, Oplan Alis Disis*, Philippines 2000, *Gintong Ani*, etc.). What eventually evolved were communication programs which promoted strategies and personalities but which however provided little attention to analysis and reflection. Applied communication can be more effective if it is based on historical analysis, socio-political and cultural critiques, as well as participatory planning and management. Among the priority areas for applied communication in the twenty-first century are: sustainable development, environment, global market competitiveness, productivity, peace and tolerance, social reform, agrarian reform, and ancestral domain.

It has been said that the 20<sup>th</sup> century is not only the period of "technological breakthroughs" but also of "breakdowns" particularly in terms of basic human values. To what extent has communication and mass media contributed to such a breakdown? Critics point to excessive commercialism (dominance of sex and violence), envelopmental journalism, self-censorship, among others as factors which have contributed to the deterioration of social values. The past decades have been characterized by polarization and tensions—between the individual and collective, between modernity and tradition, and between localization and globalization. How to maintain a healthy balance between these forces of change is a challenge especially for communicators. Communication (and community) comes from the Latin word *communis*, meaning to commune or to come together. Thus, our sector must play a lead role in preventing and resolving conflicts and harmonizing diversities. It must also help build a community where every member is "able to live together" in peace and tolerance.

The awareness of transcendental goals should be reflected in curriculum and communication programs so that communication will become a stronger force in society. Its transformative role will be shown in how it enables people to relate with one another; in humanizing bureaucracy and the workplace, in transforming knowledge so that it can be used to improve people's lives and finally, in enabling people to connect with the world around them. This transformative power can only come about by combining communication with values and spirituality.

Perhaps the shape of future communication science will depend on the boldness and political will of young communication scholars who would hopefully venture into some exciting areas of inquiry such as the communication challenge in the evolution of a pluralist culture, communication in the democratization of governance, communication for peace and tolerance, among others. Necessarily, communication must go beyond its links with the traditional social sciences as it must relate more closely with political science, economics, ecology, engineering and natural sciences. There is also the urgent need to evolve an indigenous communication model.

As a support to development, communication will continue to have a limited impact as what society needs today is an active, creative force that would unify, integrate and transform the many voices and interest groups. One important role is to mediate potential conflict among the three key sectors—government, capital and civil society—orchestrating their programs through continuing dialogue so that they can achieve consensus. The challenge for future communication scholars is to reflect on the main trends and draw lessons from the past. Communication as a science must continue to liberate and empower people so that they can attain their fullest potential.

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