

# Post-EDSA Communication Media

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This article continues the history of Philippine Communication that was discussed in the earlier article on "Communication Media in the Philippines: 1521-1986" (*Philippine Studies* 47 [1999]: 291-318).

In the aftermath of the 1986 EDSA Revolution, the pro-Marcos "establishment" newspapers either retreated or closed shop while those which were considered "alternative press" became the mainstream media—*Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *Malaya*. The Aquino government sequestered the major establishment newspapers—the Journal Group of publications, *Bulletin Today* and *Philippine Daily Express*. Also sequestered were the broadcast stations owned and operated by the so-called Marcos cronies.

Pre-martial law media establishments were revived: The Roceses' *Manila Times* and the Lopezes' *Manila Chronicle* complete with their reacquisition of ABS-CBN Radio Television Network. The Elizaldezes established the *Manila Standard* to complement their radio network—the Manila Broadcasting Company. Ownership of these revived newspapers changed hands either due to economic reasons or the new policy which prohibited cross-media ownership.

Media ownership remained in the hands of individuals and families engaged in diverse business interests. This is expected considering the capital intensive nature of media and the low return-on-investment (ROI), if any, of newspapers. The new owners include the Prietos of *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Yap of *Bulletin Corporation*, Gokongweis of

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*Manila Times*, Go-Belmonte of *Star Group of Publications*, Coyuito of *Manila Chronicle*, Cabangon Chua of *Graphic* magazine, Locsins of *Free Press*, among others. In the broadcast media, the owners include the Lopezes for ABS-CBN, Jimenez and Duavit for GMA Radio Television Arts, and Tan of ABC-5. The new free (VHF) TV station, Channel 11, is set to join soon but its ownership is being contested by two religious charismatic groups—the Jesus is Lord Movement of Bro. Eddie Villanueva and El Shaddai of Bro. Mike Velarde.

The post-EDSA era was a period of transition—from decades of “guided newspapering” to free and responsible journalism. Undoubtedly, a smooth transition could not be expected. Despite greater credibility, charges of sensationalism, misinformation and disinformation were labeled against some newspapers and broadcast stations. The media was divided between the so-called Marcos loyalists and the then alternative media. The former became the mouthpiece of anti-government forces which launched a series of coup attempts against the Cory government. The Aquino government was in itself at a loss on how to deal with the media. Says then Press Secretary Teodoro Benigno, “if you move to control them (media), you are not practising democracy. If you don’t move against them, the very democracy you want to protect might just crumble.”

If the late sixties up to the seventies had its *bomba* films, the mid eighties to the 1990s had “ST” (sex trip) movies and “TF” (titillating films). Movie industry leaders claimed that movie producers opted for these types of productions for “survival” purposes. The industry is one of those most heavily taxed. Producers cannot also readily recoup their investment with stiff competition from Hollywood movies. In contrast, ST or TF films are low-budgeted and “sell.” The most popular movie personality was not a movie star but a movie producer, Mother Lily (Lily Monteverde), owner-producer of Regal Films.

In 1987, the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), the pre-martial rule association of newspapers and magazines nationwide was revived with journalists Adlai Amor and Alice Colet-Villadolid at the forefront. Its mission was to professionalize the Philippine press through continuing education (training), adoption of the Journalists’ Code of Ethics, publications, Community Press Awards, among others. The Philippine Press Council was organized by the PPI in 1998. It is composed of Readers’ Advocates or news ombudsmen who were to ensure higher ethical standards in the newspapers they represent. Today its chairman is Jake Macasaet with Ermin Garcia, Jr. as executive director.

In 1989, the Advertising Foundation of the Philippines was organized essentially as the "social development" arm of the industry through development advertising and human resource development projects. Among the "pillars" of the Ad Foundation are Luis J. Morales, Linda C. Gamboa, Marcial S. Carrion, Lourdes Ilustre and Andre Kahn.

## Media and the Constitution

The most significant development in the post-EDSA milieu was the adoption of the 1987 Philippine Constitution which contained an unprecedented thirteen communication-related provisions. A number of the constitutional commission members were communicators/ journalists—Dr. Florangel Rosario-Braid (who was chair of the General Provisions Committee where most of the communication-related provisions were included), journalists Napoleon Rama (now *Manila Bulletin* Publisher) and Vic Foz (also of *Manila Bulletin*) and movie director Lino Brocka.

The flagship provision is contained in the Declaration of Principles and State Policies which states that "*The State recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building.*" This provision intends to correct the past neglect of the communication sector. What was not recognized in the past is how communication can help achieve development goals such as creating self-reliant communities, redressing imbalances in wealth distribution, enhancing agricultural and industrial productivity, and promoting peace and national solidarity (Braid 1991).

The other concern is on the Filipinization of mass media, advertising and telecommunication (both in terms of ownership and content); democratization of ownership; promotion of two-way flow of information (within and outside the country); and the application of communication in development such as health, education, science and technology. The 1987 Constitution retained the provision on 100 percent ownership of mass media by Filipinos but allowed foreign equity in advertising entities through its 70:30 provision. The 1987 Constitution did not only re-echo but even improved the 1973 constitutional provision on press freedom by including "expression" as an expansion of the more traditional speech and press freedom of our former constitutions. The right to information found in the 1973 previous constitution was also expanded with the inclusion of the phrase "as well as government research data used as basis for policy development." The

1987 Constitution through provisions on anti-monopoly and 70:30 equity ratio in advertising, helped in leveling the playing field by mandating legislation which dismantled monopolies. However, since telecommunication and the cable industries fall under the 60:40 equity ratio in favor of Filipinos, present ownership of telecommunication and the new information technology consists of joint ventures between local owners and transnational corporations.

With the reconvening of an "autonomous" Philippine congress starting in 1987, several communication and mass media-related bills and resolutions were filed covering such areas as freedom of information, public access, public broadcasting system, support for community media, privatization of sequestered media, telecommunications rationalization, among others. Among the more active media policy advocates in the senate were Senators Agapito Aquino, Leticia Shahani, Nikki Coseteng, and Heherson Alvarez. At the House of Representatives, the advocates include Michael Mastura, Ramon Bagatsing, Leandro Verceles, Jr., Romeo Candazo, and Andrea Domingo. Since its re-convening, however, very few communication-related bills had been passed into law. Among these were Republic Act 7306 granting charter to People's Television Network, Inc.; RA 7925 or Public Telecommunications Policy Act; RA 8370 or Children's Television Act; and RA 8293 or Intellectual Property Code.

Why the slow media legislation? Many legislators are cautious in introducing media-related bills as these are immediately branded by some sectors as curtailment of press freedom. Legislation in this area is not perceived as urgent compared with economic, social, and political reforms. With the return of democratic space and a favorable constitutional framework, applied communication proved to be an exciting field. Communication was recognized as an integral part of development initiatives by the government and even by non-government organizations. It was no longer narrowly viewed as a "support service" but a process which permeates the total development process.

The most successful application of communication strategies was in the area of social development. With funding from such agencies as UNICEF, USAID, World Health Organization, AusAid, among others, the Department of Health was able to launch innovative communication programs in public health specifically on immunization, nutrition, maternal and child care, among others. The DOH employed social marketing techniques and its communication programs became the precursors of creative and innovative campaigns by the DOH in the

1990s. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) also launched its own information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns on such issues as child labor, street children, child abuse, etc.

Communication was also a component of other important national concerns especially national reconciliation and the peace process. Government spokespersons (mostly veteran journalists) actively participated in negotiations with various rebel forces, particularly with the National Democratic Front-CPP-NPA.

Professional communicators and media practitioners conducted a series of fora to examine the role of communication media in the peace process and national reconciliation. Spearheaded by People in Communication (PIC), the other participating groups were Philippine Information Agency (PIA), Sonolux Asia, Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), and local communication media organizations. The series which spanned from 1993 to 1995 resulted in the formation of the Alliance of Peace Communicators.

The AIJC conducted two major peace communication research: Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of the Peace Process (1994) and Perception of Sectoral Opinion Leaders on the Role of Mass Media in the Peace Process (1994). In 1994, the Institute in cooperation with the Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. Foundation held a dialogue on Media and the Peace Process. Participants included main actors in the peace negotiations—Atty. Haydee Yorac, Ambassador Manuel Yan, Undersecretary Honesto Isleta, NDF Spokesman Satur Ocampo, Prof. Carolina Malay, among others.

In terms of government information infrastructure, the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) was organized to provide development information requirements and to “de-politicize” government information. Practical information on agriculture, health, science and technology, education, etc. were to be given priority. On the other hand, the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) was mandated to handle the information requirements of the Office of the President. But unlike its predecessor (i.e. OMA-NMPC), the PIA is constrained by limited resources as its budget is allotted for personnel and operations. It relies on cost-sharing with other government agencies to be able to initiate information campaigns.

A major weakness in government information system is administrative communication which includes management information system

(MIS) for planning and decision-making, coordinating and networking among various government agencies, information storage and retrieval, and even effective technical writing. It may be said, however, that there has been considerable improvements in government networking with various multisectoral groups during the Aquino and Ramos administrations. But the efforts have not been sustained to ensure adequate and continuing dialogue among three key sectors—government, business and the civil society.

Two professional communication organizations were organized during the period: Philippines Communication Society (PCS) and People in Communication (PIC). The PCS is a professional association of communication practitioners and educators affiliated with the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC). Organized in May 1987, it was envisioned to be an umbrella organization for print and broadcast journalists, public information officers, advertisers and public information officers, communication educators, etc. Its articles of incorporation has these general objectives: (1) promote communication as a social science discipline; (2) promote use of communication as a resource in national development; (3) encourage cooperation among international and national professional organizations and media networks; and (4) promote the use of communication for peace, solidarity and understanding among peoples.

Since its inception, the PCS has convened policy forums on communication issues such as rationalization of sequestered media establishments, Filipinization of advertising industry, Public Broadcasting System (PBS), media ethics and professionalism. Regular *Kapighans* which examined the role of communication in culture and arts, economic growth, political development, etc. were convened. PCS remains a potent lobbying force as the views of its officers and members are sought by legislators and other policymakers. The Society also co-publishes a quarterly newsletter and a semestral journal. PCS founders include Dr. Florangel Rosario-Braid, Prof. Raul Ingles, Dr. Georgina Encanto, Ms. Alice Colet-Villadolid, Dr. Ibarra Gonzalez, Dr. Nora C. Quebral, Dr. Delia Barcelona, Dr. Ofelia Valdecañas, Dr. Nicanor Tiongson, Dr. Juan Jamias, Dr. Doreen Fernandez, Dr. Benjamin Lozare and the late Fr. Cornelio Lagerway. Today, it is headed by Lourdes Ilustre, president and Ramon R. Tuazon, vice president.

On the other hand, the PIC is a network of church-based institutions which is committed to rationalizing the communication sector through advocacy and lobbying, continuing education, seminars and

policy fora. Among its founders were Dr. Ibarra Gonzalez, Dr. Mina Ramirez, Mr. Nelson Abril, and Fr. Cornelio Lagerway. Other related organizations are the Philippine Association of Media Educators (PAME) and the Concerned Women of the Philippines (CWP). PAME aims to develop among teachers, parents and students a critical attitude towards media content rather than remain passive recipients. CWP is a sectoral group committed to women's project aimed at curbing sex and violence in media.

### Communicating in the Nineties

The 1990s saw the unprecedented growth and development of the communication sector in the country—mass media, community media, telecommunication, and information technology. Philippine communication can now be considered as one of the most well-developed in the Asian region. This can be attributed to the following factors: (a) communication technology revolution; (b) promotion and protection of the free enterprise system; (c) return of the democratic space after the EDSA revolution; (d) liberalization and deregulation of the telecommunications sector; and (e) move towards decentralization resulting in the growth of provincial media. The exponential growth in communication was not only limited to Metro Manila but in the regions as well. The Philippine Media Profile (1995–1996) reported that there are now 342 provincial newspapers nationwide. Of this number, 72 are dailies, 245 are weeklies and the rest are either monthly or quarterlies. In the 1980s there were less than ten provincial dailies located in the key cities—Dagupan, Baguio, Cebu, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, and Davao.

The increase in the number and growth of provincial newspapers, including the dailies, can be attributed to the following: (1) return of the democratic space after the 1986 EDSA revolution; (2) improvement in the political and economic environment in the regions which encourages investors to start a newspaper; (3) setting up of communication/journalism schools in the regions which provide a source for needed manpower; and (4) advent of new printing technologies, which are also accessible to provincial publishers.

The first commercial station to broadcast on the ultra high frequency (UHF) channel was the Southern Broadcasting Network (SBN Channel 23) which aired by mid-1992 featuring programs from World TV. This was followed by Channel 23 which originally carried music

TV (MTV) from Hong Kong's Star TV. After the initial success of these stations, other channels followed namely the Rajah Broadcasting TV 29, and the Radio Mindanao Network Channel 31.

The most phenomenal growth is in cable television. The growth of the first cable television introduced in 1969 was stunted during the Marcos regime because of a decree granting exclusive franchise to a business ally of the former president to install and operate cable TV nationwide. This decree was abolished by President Aquino in 1987. Today there are about 753 cable TV operators nationwide owned by more than 500 companies. It is estimated that some 430,000 households have access to cable TV.

One of the important developments in local television programming in the 1990s was the introduction of more quality educational and children's programs. PTV Channel 4 airs three telecourses for teachers—elementary science, chemistry and physics under the Continuing Education Program for Science via Television (CONSTEL). This is an inter-agency project of DECS, UP-ISMED, Philippine Normal University and People's TV Network. The Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC) in cooperation with GMA Channel 7 produced the award winning *Negosiete* and *Agrisiete*. The team of Zenaida Domingo and Rebecca Smith conceptualized and produced these programs. World class children's TV programs were made possible through the efforts of Fenny delos Angeles Bautista of the Philippine Children's Television Foundation (PCTVF) and Gina Lopez of ABS-CBN Foundation. PCTVF produces the award-winning *Batibot*, *Kalayaan 1896* (Freedom) and *Parental Guide*. ABS-CBN Foundation produces *Sine'skwela*, a school-on the air for elementary students which has been aired daily since 1994; *Hirayamanawari*, a values-oriented program; *Bayani* (about heroism and heritage) and *Math Tinik*, mathematics for primary and intermediate pupils.

Meanwhile, a National Information Technology Plan (NITP) 2000 was adopted for the first time in 1996. It embodies the national policy on information technology development and serves as a guide to all government agencies in the effective utilization of IT resources. *Agila II*, the first Filipino-owned and managed international communications satellite was launched in August 1997. It is intended primarily to serve the satellite transponder requirements of the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific Rim. Among the key actors in telecommunication is Undersecretary Josefina Lichauco.



## Mega Communication Enterprises

The new information and communication technology is restructuring media ownership pattern. What is now happening is both a "democratizing" and "oligopolitic" effect. New IT such as desktop publishing, cable TV, low-powered radio, etc. have promoted the growth of community media. Investment costs for these new technologies is on a decline, thus making them more accessible. Low-powered radio stations can now be set up in remote communities with a capital of only 50,000 pesos.

On the other hand, technological trends such as multimedia convergence has facilitated cross-media (communication technology) ownership by a single individual/family and entity. While current Philippine laws prohibit print-broadcast media cross-ownership, it is silent in the area of broadcast-telecommunication cross-ownership. But future trends will make this cross-media ownership prohibition impractical if not totally useless. With new IT, there is now a blurring of distinction among media channels. Thus, we will be reading our newspapers and watching television in our computer monitors. This cross-media (technology) ownership is best illustrated in the case of today's major broadcast networks (ABS-CBN and GMA Radio Television) which are also engaged in telecommunications services, cable television, cinema (movies), music recording, Internet service, among others.

But a feature which has remained over the past decades is the close alliance between those who own media and those who wield political and economic power. Just like in the past, media continues to be used to protect and promote the business and political interests of the owners rather than the common good.

## Communication and Politics

Like in the United States, the mass media and other information technologies have exercised tremendous influence in political campaigns. They are important vehicles in shaping a politician's image; in trending voting preferences and in disseminating political platforms. It has been shown that communication education and training can be an ideal preparation for a career in government service and even in areas outside of public information and in leadership roles in various sectors

of society. Here are examples of key leaders in government: Victor Ramos in environment; Patricia Sto. Tomas in civil service; Andrea Domingo in immigration; Benjamin Tayabas and Felix Sta. Maria in education; Lourdes Ilustre, Honesto Isleta, and Gregorio Cendaña in public information; Adrian Cristobal, Social Security System administrator and presidential spokesman; and former Press Secretary Rodolfo Reyes. Many of today's political leaders also started their careers as journalists—Jose de Venecia, Blas Ople, Francisco Tatad, Orlando Mercado, Feliciano Belmonte, to name a few. Among the former campus journalists who are now in government service are Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Franklin Drilon, and Roilo Golez.

What factors make communication and journalism an ideal training ground or launching pad for national leadership? Communication, in the perception of scholars and practitioners who have been tapped to provide technical expertise in development programs provide sensitivity to development needs of local communities. The skills needed of journalists and communicators—ability to write, verbal skills and sensitivity to feedback are prerequisites for careers in public service and politics. Communication, being a hybrid of diverse social sciences provides the breadth of perspective that other disciplines cannot give.

More and more media personalities enter politics and easily get elected and this can be partly attributed to high name recall. Conversely, politicians go into media (journalism) to ensure their political "sustainability." The former include vice president Joseph "Erap" Estrada, Senators Orlando Mercado, Ramon Revilla, Loren Legarda, Renato Cayetano, and Vicente Sotto. The latter include Senators Ernesto Maceda, Miriam Defensor-Santiago, to name a few.

## **Women in Communication Media**

In the 1990s, women's issues have been broadened to refer to gender equity issues. Still, there are two main issues involved in women and media: the role and status of women working in media and women's image in media. Over the past years, the role and status of women as journalists and media managers have been enhanced substantially. Many of the so-called hard beats such as politics, business, defense and police, etc., are gradually being "manned" by women reporters. When before the highest position women journalists could aspire for was the editorship of lifestyle and society pages, today a

number of national dailies have women as editor-in-chief—Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc of *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and Malou Mangahas of *The Manila Times*. Many other women communicators now occupy senior management positions including president or chief operating officer of advertising firms and even telecommunication companies. Among them are Barbara Gonzalez of J. Romero and Associates, Emily Abrera of McCann Erickson, and Marilyn Santiago of Philippine Wireless, Inc. While women are now perceived as “equal” to men in terms of roles and opportunities, there has been little improvement in terms of women’s image in media. There continues stereotyped images of women as weaker sex, sex objects or commodities, fragile, passive and even mindless individuals.

A concrete action plan to alleviate the plight of Filipino women is found in the Philippine Development Plan for Women. Its media section aims for a level playing field between men and women media practitioners, and advocates the following: (a) Images of women must veer away from the discriminatory and derogatory to what is realistic and positive in terms of women’s roles; and (b) Media must be used to advocate women’s issues and to promote further access to the urban poor, grassroots, and cultural communities.

## A Question of Ethics

The Philippine mass media scene has regained its image as the freest, liveliest and most irreverent, in the whole of Asia, so much so that there have been pressures from various sectors urging media associations (National Press Club, PPI and KBP) to impose higher ethical standards and social responsibility among their members. Many local media critics deplore the proliferation of so-called tabloid journalism (the negative aspects of which are present in broadcast journalism). It is simply applying the “success” formula of tabloids—crimes, sex and gossip in broadcasting. Tabloid journalism or “new news” highlights dazzling, adolescent, irresponsible, fearless, frightening, and powerful stories (Ehrlich 1996). Perhaps, these are the news values which attract today’s generation X.

The Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) headed by Sheila Coronel was organized in 1991 to promote investigative journalism through grants to journalists, training and publications. PCIJ stories, which focused on environment, politics and governance, judicial

system, human rights, peace process, among others, had considerable impact in society including legislative investigations, replacement (resignation) of public officials, etc. Another organization was the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) headed by Melinda Q. de Jesus. As its name connotes, it focuses on the upgrading of professionalism and responsibility of media workers. The Center publishes the *Philippine Journalism Review*, which monitors media performance and credibility.

Over the past few years, there have been incentives in the form of Awards given to communicators and journalists to encourage them to strive for excellence and professionalism. In print media, these Awards include Citibank Pan Asia Journalism Awards, Jaime V. Ongpin Award For Investigative Journalism, Rotary Club of Manila for Best Newspapers, KAF-PPI Community Press Awards, Philippine Geothermal-PPI Science Journalism Awards, and the Philippine Agricultural Journalists Awards. In the broadcast media, the Awards include Gawad CCP, KBP Golden Dove Awards, and the PMPC Star Awards. The PRSP honors world class PR programs and tools through its prestigious Anvil Awards while PROP honors outstanding public information programs and tools through its annual *Gawad Florendo*.

## Communications in the Nineties

In the field of applied communication, the 1990s will be best remembered by successful communication campaigns such as *Oplan Alis Disis*, *Araw ng Sangkap Pinoy*, *Yosi Kadiri*, among others, which became bywords among households. Other areas of concern were HIV-AIDS prevention and family planning, which enjoyed a revival of sorts. At the helm of these campaigns was health secretary (now senator) Juan Flavier.

The Ramos government launched a massive multimedia communication campaign for Philippines 2000 which present the government's vision for the 21st century. The campaign, however, seemed to have lost steam over the years. Many attribute this to the sloganeering tactic adopted by the campaign. Within this new communication environment, communication scholars and practitioners introduced the concept of social mobilization (and advocacy) as an alternative communication strategy. UNICEF, the concept's lead proponent views social mobilization as the process of generating and sustaining the

active and coordinated participation of all sectors at various levels to facilitate and accelerate the improvement of the quality of life of marginalized groups (Valdecañas 1996).

Communication scholars and strategists also focused their attention on environment and the peace process. Environment, or its broader concept, sustainable development, was considered a priority global concern needing innovative strategies. Information, education and communication (IEC) not only creates public awareness of critical problems but also mobilizes multisectoral participation in community-based programs are important factor in arresting the irreversible environmental crisis.

Actors from all sectors in the various peace processes are all in agreement that communication played a critical role in facilitating consensus and reconciliation. Peace communication, in its broadest definition, included such dynamics as: (1) dialogue between the protagonists; (2) media coverage; (3) institutional or administrative communication; and (4) use of informal communication networks (Braid 1997).

President Fidel V. Ramos, in his recent book, *Break not the Peace* (1996) noted that of the sixteen lessons learned from the Mindanao peace agreement in September 1996, at least eleven were specifically communication strategies while the other five depended on effective use of communication. Among these were use of constructive rather than adversarial encounters; emphasis on commonalities rather than disagreements; good administrative communication; continuing public information campaign; use of broad consultations with various groups; and use of third party mediator.

The most significant development in applied communication is distance education (open learning) which is expected to revolutionize education. The advent of new information and communication technology provided greater opportunities to use these technologies as alternative learning delivery schemes. The classroom of the future will undergo drastic transformation in that it will become a digital classroom where teacher and student will be in active interaction mediated by multi-media technology. The teacher's role will be transformed from teaching to facilitating. Communication skills in catalyzing and in transforming information to knowledge will be a priority need in human resource development.

Communication specialists active in development communication and educational broadcasting consultancy include Alexander Flor,

Rebecca Pestaño-Smith, Louie Tabing, Teresa H. Stuart, Mary Ebitha Y. Dy, Felix Libroero, Carlos Arnaldo, Cesar Mercado, Nora C. Quebral, Juan Jamias, Juan Mercado, Frankie Llaguno, Delia Barcelona, Benjamin Lozare, and Paulina Bautista.

Earlier communication studies have focused on the effects of communication on agriculture, family planning, voting preferences and consumer behavior. By the mid-eighties and nineties, there was a continuing interest on effects but added to the previous areas were environment, health and nutrition, women and children, and ethnic minorities. The more commonly used research methodologies were sample surveys, content analysis and descriptive historical analysis. Because of its orientation to empirical and quantitative research, most communication studies have not been able to undertake analytical and macro studies which question the status quo and raise policy issues. It was only in the early nineties when communication scientists ventured into domains influenced by the Frankfurt and European schools where the units of research centered on ownership, politico-economic alliances and policy issues.

### **Rewriting the Curricula for the Twenty-first Century**

A dramatic increase in the number of communication department/schools was recorded in the 1990s. The 1997 Directory of Communication Programs and Institutions of the Philippine Association of Communication Educators Foundation (PACE) listed a total of 102 communication departments/schools nationwide. Compared with 1985-1986 figures, the most dramatic increases were recorded in Metro Manila, from 19 to 44 departments/schools; Luzon, from seven to thirty and Mindanao, from only four to thirteen.

What makes communication programs popular to students? Why was there a significant increase in institutions offering communication-related programs? One factor was the return of the democratic space in 1986 as an aftermath of the popular EDSA People Power Revolution. The absence of press freedom during the Marcos regime made journalism (and communication) a high risk profession. Second, as media regained its fourth estate stature, journalism and communication again began to be perceived as a powerful and glamorous profession. Various surveys have shown that media personalities are among the role models of the young. PACE estimated that in schoolyear 1995-1996,

some 15,000 students were enrolled in communication departments/schools nationwide. Third, development communication (Dev Com) became an attractive option for schools outside Metro Manila, particularly state colleges and universities whose enrollments in this field have been increasing over the years. Fourth, with the information revolution, the youth began to realize the power of media to shape and influence the individual's attitudes, beliefs, values and lifestyles.

More and more communication scholars and practitioners are into writing and publishing of communication books. The Annotated Bibliography of Philippine Communication Publications prepared by the Philippine Association of Communication Educators (PACE) listed ninety entries which included books, journals, monographs, magazines and pamphlets published between 1989 and 1995. Volume II of the same bibliography published in 1997 had twenty-eight entries.

Many communication departments/schools recognize the need to introduce changes in their curriculum to reflect the changing media landscape primarily due to new information and communication technologies. Unfortunately, it seems that many of the ongoing changes are limited in scope. There is yet no serious effort to introduce major restructuring of communication programs to fit the emerging Knowledge Society.

Current communication programs (as reflected even in the CHED-approved curricula) still perpetuate the traditional media divide by arranging courses and specializations around the media—print, broadcast, public relations, and advertising. This is contrary to the trend towards convergence of media and technology brought about by digitalization, computerization and telecommunication (Tuazon 1997). With convergence, the communication graduate of the near future should be a multimedia specialist. The penchant for traditional specializations (or rigid departmental lines) while ensuring proficiency in a particular medium, will only render communication graduates inflexible and even obsolete. What accounts for the slow integration of IT and new communication technology in the communication education curricula?

First, we still do not have enough teachers who can develop course designs and learning-teaching materials and therefore, the expertise to teach IT-related subjects. As a recent PACE survey revealed, a majority of communication teachers are familiar only with basic packaged software programs. It is not surprising to see students more computer literate than their teachers. Second, even if IT courses are offered, we

still depend on foreign books and learning materials as we do not have enough indigenous materials. Third, to introduce changes, we do not only need to re-tool our teachers and school administrators but equipment and facilities as well. This means financial investment for schools which may not come easily.

The introduction of new information technology has also created new career paths for graduates. They will no longer be confined to career offerings of media enterprises. These new and more challenging career areas include science communication, educational technology, informatics, management information systems, distance education, multimedia courseware development.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) recently approved the Standard Curriculum for Bachelor of Arts (AB) programs in Communication, Broadcasting and Journalism. All three programs require a total of sixty-three units (excluding the general education units offered during the first two years of college education). The CHED Technical Panel which prepared the curricula after a series of nationwide consultations describes the curricula as a good mix of theoretical and skills-oriented courses. The ethical and legal aspects of communication was also given adequate attention. All three programs require the same core subjects—Introduction to Communication Theory (3 units), Interpersonal Communication (3), Internships (6) and thesis/Project (3 units).

The Internship program aims to expose the communication student to the real world of mass media where he acquires hands-on experiences to ensure a smooth transition from the four walls of the classroom into the workplace. But the program has encountered serious constraints. Media organizations cannot readily accommodate students because of limitations such as lack of full-time personnel to supervise the interns; limited space; no systematic work program for students, etc. Students complain that they are merely assigned to do menial jobs. PACE has initiated dialogues with KBP and PPI to systematize and standardize the internship requirements. It also plans to link with cable TV operators association and IT-related companies to broaden the choices of communication students.

AB in Communication requires 33 units of major subjects and fifteen units of electives. The major subjects provide basic communication competencies expected of a "generalist" communication practitioner. Among the major subjects are Communication, Values and Ethics; Print Media Principles and Practices; Radio and TV Principles and



Practices; Advertising and Public Information; Development Communication; Media Management and Entrepreneurship; and Introduction to Communication Research. Electives include "advanced" subjects such as Advanced Writing for Print; and Advanced Public Information and Advertising. Also included are "specialized" courses such as Desktop Publishing; Organizational Communication; Educational Broadcasting; Technical Writing and Editing and Environmental Communication.

The AB in Journalism program requires thirty-six units of major subjects and twelve units of electives. The major subjects are basic writing and editing courses (including photojournalism) as well as Newspaper Management; Research in Journalism; Press and Society; Press Law and Ethics; among others. The electives consist of specialized journalism techniques applied in specific beats—Business and Economic Reporting; Science Reporting; Sports Writing; Environmental Reporting; Reporting the Arts; and Reporting Philippine Ethnic Communities. Also included are subjects in Advertising Principles and Practices; Community Press, Film Criticism, Technical Writing; among others. AB in Broadcasting also requires thirty-six units of major subjects and twelve units of electives. The major subjects range from Program Planning and Building to Audio/Video Procedures and Operations and Radio/TV Production Direction. Electives include specific (advanced) competencies such as Radio/TV Speech and Performance; Music in Broadcasting; Video Post-production; and TV Production Design. Broadcast Management; Educational Broadcasting; Broadcast Advertising and Introduction to Communication Research are also included.

The challenges and excitement in communication education are affected by changes in the overall education sector. Perhaps the most dramatic change is the emergence of "virtual classrooms" as virtually all environments become learning opportunities. New information and communication technology (ICT) continues to change the landscape of the university. School campuses (physical facilities) will no longer be the most important consideration in opening and managing a university/school. There will be unlimited channels and strategies of delivering and acquiring knowledge and skills which are flexible, interactive and needs-specific.

In many schools throughout the world, lessons are now being delivered through a combination of CD-ROM and internet/video conferencing. Students meet with their teachers in cyberspace. "Schools

on the Net" have been initiated in a number of countries. It utilizes multimedia applications and access to telecommunications networks linking schools all over the world. Communication systems such as modems, telephones, fax, and dialers have been integrated in existing networks (Medado 1997).

Open universities and distance education have become popular and are now accepted as important delivery systems. The entry of more information technologies will facilitate closer linkage between centers of learning and work stations (industries). Former De La Salle University president and now DECS Secretary Bro. Andrew Gonzalez foresees schooling as interspersed with exposure to the world of work and to actual practicum rendering the traditional arrangement of school calendars and scheduling of classes obsolete. Universities will be like service stations for learning (Gonzalez 1997). They will continue in re-tooling and re-certification of new knowledge and skills. Among the pioneer institutions in distance education are the Open University of the Philippines, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, St. Louie University, Visayas State College of Agriculture and College Assurance Plan (CAP) College.

## **Challenges and Options in Journalism and Communication**

Journalists and communication educators now realize that the need to go beyond events reporting as it does not sufficiently cover complex issues and concerns. Events reporting deals with concrete events using the five Ws and one H (i.e., who, what, where, when and how) as standard news writing formula and sometimes focuses on the unusual, sensational and bizarre. It favors reporting on the so-called "hard stories" or those which highlight conflict such as politics, crime and violence.

Process journalism which is emerging as a complementary formula examines issues in relation to other issues and events within the larger socioeconomic and political environment. It examines the whys and hows of events and issues in relation to other events. Process-oriented stories look back at the past, examine the present and provide options for the future. It focuses beyond what is manifest or visible. Process journalism was first introduced by international development agencies,

particularly the UNICEF which realized that development issues cannot be sufficiently addressed by the traditional "he said, she said" journalism.

The communication professional of the future will be both a specialist and a generalist. A specialist is able to apply general skills or competencies in a particular field cognizant of the distinct requirements of the area. Thus, we have environment and science communicators, health communicators, historian-journalists, peace communicators (conflict negotiators), among others.

The generalists would include IT workers trained in specialized skills such as multimedia courseware development, distance education, educational technology, computer assisted reporting, and management information systems although the application of such skills can be very focused on a particular area. The communication professional of the future may not even be a communication graduate but a professional from another discipline who can function as one. In the 1990s and beyond, information processing skills will be as basic as the 3Rs to all the professions even as the challenge is greater among communicators and journalists. The individual must be able to *select, organize, synthesize, analyze, translate* and *apply information* for productive and profitable uses. He should have the requisite skills to sift useful information from a mountain of trivia and be able to use it for strategic decision-making. Today's communicator must be able to use present audiovisual tools and effectively combine visual images and soundbites.

In journalism, the trend is towards specialization in specific beats—science, environment, government and politics, agriculture, etc. The emergence of cable TV brought about the need for specialization among broadcast communication graduates such as educational broadcasting, children's programming, science and technology, among others. Gaining popularity are investigative and advocacy journalism. New IT such as desktop publishing, handycam recorder, and even "xerox," machine have spurred business/ entrepreneurial opportunities. With adequate skills trainings, students can offer professional production services using these technologies. To inculcate this "entrepreneurial spirit" the communication curricula should be able to offer relevant courses such as management of media enterprises and communication management.

Other career options for communication graduates include policy research/studies and futuristics. "Think tanks" in many countries, for example, have evolved from communication departments or schools. Communication scholars have the advantage of examining issues from a broader perspective due to the multi-disciplinary nature of their training. Applied communication has also provided communication professionals an opportunity to work in a variety of development programs. Futuristics involves providing options and scenarios based on scientific trending and analysis. Pioneer futurists John Naisbitt based his best seller, *Megatrends* on content analysis of over a thousand newspapers throughout the United States over a three-year period.

In government (public) information, while the PIOs appear to have "excelled" in packaging information dissemination and image-building programs/projects, there is a need to improve their information management skills. PIOs will be more actively involved in visioning, conflict management and negotiations advocacy and social mobilization in their communication activities.

More and more disciplines will also realize the benefits of offering communication-related courses in their curriculum. For example, some teacher training schools now offer courses in educational technology, media education, distance education via broadcasting and multi-media. They will be the managers of learning resources for the schools of the future. Sociology, anthropology and political science service students would benefit from courses such as cross-cultural and international communication.

Linkage with social science and liberal arts disciplines is no longer adequate. Our communication departments/schools should also work closely with Information Technology-related departments/schools (e.g. computer science, engineering). This will ensure optimum use of resources, co-production of multimedia learning materials and coursewares, and cross-fertilization of ideas/concepts.

The advancement of satellite communication has transformed the global village from vision to reality. The emerging global economy, relentlessly being pursued by GATT-UR, APEC and other regional economic blocks, has further cemented this global village. With this, communication students should be taught to "think global." They should be made aware of global issues and events and should understand the culture, values, and political and economic systems of other countries. International communication and cross cultural communication should no longer be electives but core subjects.

In 1998 the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication released its UNICEF-commissioned study entitled *Megatrends: The Future of the Filipino Children*. This study examined issues and trends in ten development areas including communication and mass media.

## Communication Challenges in Today's Global Village

With the advent of new information technology and globalization new issues and challenges have emerged such as: How do we balance globalization with indigenization? The MacBride Commission (1980) has warned of the dangers of cultural homogenization with western lifestyle as model or standard. The one-way flow of images and messages in favor of the west (and urban centers in developing countries) endangers local identity, values and traditions.

UNESCO recommended various courses of actions such as: strengthening community communication. This will allow the local people to plan, manage and produce their own programs. A model project is *Tambuli*, a network of low-powered community radio stations in remote Philippine villages nationwide. UNESCO's Memory of the World and Heritage Projects illustrate how new IT can be used to preserve and promote indigenous resources and traditions. In their desire to "leapfrog" into the IT society, some nations may have neglected the traditional (including folk) and small media leading to their eventual demise. These "old" channels are very much part of the culture and tradition of indigenous communities and have been found to be effective IEC channels.

The dominance of the English language in the cyberspace especially the Internet has likewise fanned debates in global communication fora. The use of the English language has effectively marginalized or limited access of IT to English-proficient countries and has become a barrier to attaining cultural pluralism.

With the end of the nation-state and the emergence of global society, every individual is expected to have a more broadened worldview which would include global issues and concerns. Knowledge of the local community is no longer adequate in understanding economic, environmental, political and social issues as the latter are primarily influenced by world affairs and events. Thus, global media networks such as CNN play a critical role in moulding public opinion. The local audience must be able to "process" information from these foreign sources.

The advent of new information technologies necessitates a review, amendment and revision of existing laws and policies. Technological trends may have rendered some policies obsolete. Laws on libel, obscenity, and pornography were passed long before the advent of the Internet which is now emerging as a major purveyor of sex and violence. With satellite communication and the emerging borderless world there may be a need to examine information technology's impact on individual and nation-state's security and privacy to prevent deliberate or inadvertent access to private and confidential information. With greater access to electronic and digital communication, there is a need to ensure a balance between fair use and intellectual property rights. New laws are needed to protect the rights of information creators and providers vis-a-vis the public's right to their outputs.

Technical, financial and political inequalities embodied in advanced technologies are more likely to widen economic gaps and the structural basis of dependency. This underscores the need for continuing education of the impact of information technology on individuals and society.

The UNESCO has called upon governments worldwide and multilateral agencies to convene meetings to examine issues and identify policy options related to legal, ethical and societal impact of new information and communication technology. These concerns include ethical and legal approaches which could encourage multilingualism, pluralism and cultural diversity, moral obligations of information providers, prevention of violence, pornography, racism and intolerance.

The most important skill needed to cope, survive and prevail in today's knowledge society are information-based skills. The individual must be able to select, organize, synthesize, analyze, translate and apply information for strategic use. This has become a complex task considering the amount of information being generated with the advent of new information technology.

The recently concluded study of the International Commission on Education for the twenty-first century otherwise known as Delors Report (1995) suggested adding a fourth pillar to educational philosophy, *learning to live together*, which is essentially a communication function to the three earlier pillars: *learning to know*, *learning to be* and *learning to do*.

This new pillar is considered the most important learning goal today because the emerging global society requires that all cultures must be able to live and work together. Cooperation, peace, harmony and

tolerance are values that we merely pay lip service to, but which are essential in ensuring the survival of both the present and future generations. It also emphasizes the need to equip the individual with communication competencies which will enable him to relate and function in an increasing interdependent and interrelated world.

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