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**Communication Training In Malaysia
With Special Reference To ITM**

By

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Country Paper: Communication Training in Malaysia
With Special Reference to ITM
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Communication training at tertiary level in Malaysia began in 1971 when the Universiti Sains Malaysia introduced its communication program. The communication courses, which include journalism, broadcasting, advertising and public relations, are part of a broader humanities studies. In 1983, the communication program was elevated to the Centre of Communication Studies.

The full professional training of communicators at higher learning institutions, however, began at the Mara Institute of Technology, Shah Alam, when it formed the School of Mass Communication in July 1972. Four areas of specialisation were offered: journalism, public relations, advertising and broadcasting.

With the recognition of the growing importance of the role of mass communication, the National University of Malaysia (UKM) in 1975 established a department of communication in its Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities.

The Agriculture University of Malaysia (UPM) then followed suit by forming the department of development education in 1979. The department began as a unit under the Development and Extension Education Centre of the university. Other than the four specialisations, UPM also offers development communication.

Another institution which also provides this type of training is the University of Malaya. The University offers a creative and descriptive Writing Program under its Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

The program in the University of Malaya was started in 1977. It focuses on the four major sequences i.e. journalism, advertising, public relations and broadcasting.

Mass Communication Training at ITM

The School of Mass Communication, ITM, which started off with 44 students, produced its first batch of 26 graduates in 1975. A total of 412 students have now graduated from the School. The majority of them are now working either with the press, broadcasting stations, advertising or public relations agencies.

In view of the increasing demand of these graduates, the School started a double intake of students per academic year in 1982. The student population is expected to increase to 360 by January 1985.

Admission has always been very competitive and is granted to students who either hold the Higher School Certificate with two strong principal passes or MCE/SPM with at least four years of relevant experience in the mass media.

The Diploma in Mass Communication Program at ITM is a three and a half year course. Students begin with any one of the four specialisations after having attained a set level of proficiency in the English language. An intensive six-month course is organised and conducted by the Language Center for this purpose. This program was introduced in 1981 to help increase the English proficiency of students who come from Malay medium schools. This has increased the duration of the course from three to three and a half. However, those who are already proficient in the language may proceed straight into the first year subjects.

Students need to complete a minimum of 130 credit hours to graduate. Each semester, a student is required to fulfill a minimum of 21 credit hours. However, this does not include the Institute's general requirements and the six-month intensive English programme, Islamic Studies and a co-curriculum.

The three-year program stresses three areas of content, i.e. language skills in both Bahasa Malaysia and English, a broad background in the humanities and social sciences, as well as an intensive communication and professional component.

The language base is uniform across all the three streams. It consists of an intensive study of Bahasa Malaysia and English. A lot of attention is given to

language studies as language is the basic tool of mass communication.

If language skills are essential, so are the liberal arts and social science subjects. This is to enable the students to understand the local, regional and international environment in which he and his audience live and work.

The professional component of all sequences is divided into a small number of courses common to all streams and other courses unique to each stream. It comprises about 40 percent of all subjects offered to the students. The mass communication subjects which are common to all sequences are a mixture of theory-oriented subjects such as communication research, interpersonal communication and mass media and society. There are also a number of practical subjects such as news writing, editing, copy writing and public relations consultancy.

Thus, the Diploma in Mass Communication of the Mara Institute of Technology, is a well-knit course offering a mixture of theory as well as practical subjects.

Practical Training

It is compulsory for every student to undergo a practical session lasting six months in the fifth semester. This forms one of the most important course requirements and constitutes a total of 12 credit hours.

The main objective is to give an opportunity to students to apply the knowledge obtained in classrooms to practical situations so as to gain the right exposure and experience. Another objective is to equip students with the relevant expertise and understanding of the job in the field he or she is expected to be in.

Students are also required to submit an internship report when they complete their practical training. The School has been sending students to do their practical training at various mass media or media-related organisations in the country. These include newspapers, public relations, advertising and broadcasting organisations.

Response from organisations which received these students has been good.

The other higher learning institutions also have a fairly similar practical training scheme. The University of Malaya program requires their undergraduates to do a two-month practical after their second year examination. The UKM program also requires their undergraduates to do a

two-month practical training at various mass media organisations.

The School of Mass Communication, ITM, implemented an Asean practical training program in 1980. The purpose of the program are:

** To give incentives to students who are potential leaders to develop their professional knowledge and experience outside Malaysia.

** To prepare students for future careers which involve foreign news bureaus as well as other media agencies.

** To enhance the image of the School as one which has various communication connections in the Asean.

** To raise the spirit of cooperation among Asean countries and, at the same time, encourage organisations in Asean countries to participate actively in educational programs.

So far, the School has sent 20 students to undergo their practical training abroad i.e. seven to Jakarta, one to Bangkok, five to Manila, two to Bandar Seri Begawan, one to Singapore and three to London. We are also arranging for students to be trained at the Agence France Presse (AFP) in Paris.

Facilities

The School has a typewriting laboratory with 40 typewriters. Due to the limited number of typewriters, the laboratory is constantly in use.

The School also has a micro-computer. This is especially used by the journalism students to type in and edit stories. Edited stories are printed out before being sent to the typesetter.

It is the School's plan to acquire a computer system where stories can be punched in and edited on the computer. The edited text can be composed so that typesetting time can be reduced drastically. The whole process of newspaper production can be done more efficiently.

The School set up a small photography laboratory in 1976. Although it has all the equipment necessary for developing and printing in monochrome as well as colour, it could only initially accommodate six students. The laboratory was renovated in 1980 to accommodate 12 students at a time. A recent addition to the laboratory is a

processing equipment for slide films. The School also has 12 cameras for the students to use.

For minor printing work, the School utilises a Rex-Rotary Offset Machine donated by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC). Major printing work is handled by the centralised ITM Printing Centre, which was initially under the School's jurisdiction, but now comes directly under the administration.

For the production of the School's laboratory newspaper, Dimensi, there is a Graphics Room. This room is used by the students for paste-up, proof-reading and layout of the newspaper. The room is also used for magazine and publication production courses and the editorial management course.

Dimensi is not only circulated in the main campus but is also available in the branch campuses, Shah Alam, Klang and the Federal Territory area.

Journalism students in Part 4 are also required to take a course in publication production. Students in this course are involved in producing various publications such as Piawai, Kampus 80, Kampus Intekma 81 and Kampus Intekma 82. Since last year, the group has been producing a quarterly magazine called Sasaran. Sasaran is also circulated outside the school.

In 1974, BERNAMA, the National News Agency, installed a teleprinter machine at the School. This has enabled the School to monitor the latest news.

The School's request for its own building was granted in 1983 but due to lack of funds, this project has been delayed.

Broadcasting students, however, utilise the facilities at the Institut Penyiaran Tun Abdul Razak (IPTAR). We are grateful to have easy access to these facilities. These services are at present provided without cost to ITM.

The School has a small departmental library housing about 2,260 books, 13 different journals, 179 working papers and term papers, including students internship reports. The library also subscribes to about 100 periodicals on mass communication and world affairs. The library supplements the central Tun Abdul Razak Library and serves primarily as a centre for quick reference. It is also used by the staff as a repository for reading and reference materials for specific courses.

The library collection is being catalogued into the School's micro-computer for easy reference and retrieval. If not for budget constraints, the School could achieve their publications on computer data bases to form an electronic library system. This system offers on-line retrieval of information.

The School also plans to acquire a computer system for its reporting library together with a copy processing equipment.

Last year, the School set up an audio visual room equipped with video and recording units. The video unit comprises of a video recorder, two colour cameras, a monitor, an electronic editing system and various other related VHS outdoor recording items.

The School also has a temporary radio studio, comprising of a turntable, recorder, mini-compo and speakers. The equipment is used for classroom work for broadcasting as well for other sequences.

Faculty

The School has 18 full time faculty members comprising of two senior lecturers, 4 senior time scale lecturers and 12 lecturers. Out of these, nine are masters degree holders, while the rest hold bachelor degrees. To be well-informed on current developments in the media, faculty members participate regularly in seminars, workshops and courses in mass communication.

The School has a number of communication practitioners from the government and private sectors serving as part-time lecturers.

The School is also represented in a number of mass media organisations in the country. The Head of School is a board member of BERNAMA, while several members of the faculty are in the various committees relating to mass communication. Faculty members are also represented in Pemadam, the Radio Malaysia Advertising Code Panel and the Panel on the "Study of the Effect of Television on Society."

Research and Consultancies

The School frequently carries out research in cooperation with various public and private organisations. Among the recent ones are a study of the relationship between politicians and civil servants in Sabah, a project financed by the Sabah Foundation. Prior to that, there was an audience study carried out for TV3 and a content analysis study for BERNAMA.

Conclusion

While the market demand for mass communication graduates has been good, observations and discussions indicated that as readers' requirements become more specialised, higher learning institutions should focus their training on certain specialisations.

It was generally agreed at a recent seminar on Science Communication--organised by the School of Mass Communication, ITM, and co-sponsored by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)--that subjects like science should be popularised to meet the needs of a developing nation like Malaysia. But before the training could be focused on certain specialisations such as science, the trainers themselves should be trained.

Except for ITM, which two years ago introduced a specialisation in economic reporting, training in the other institutions has always been for the normal five sequences, i.e. journalism, advertising, public relations, broadcasting and development communication.