<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>I teach what? You want what? Matching the training needs of media and media-related industries and needs of academe.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Syed Arabi Idid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10220/2354">http://hdl.handle.net/10220/2354</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By

Syed Arabi Idid
I TEACH WHAT? YOU WANT WHAT? MATCHING THE TRAINING NEEDS OF MEDIA AND MEDIA-RELATED INDUSTRIES AND NEEDS OF ACADEME.

by

SYED ARABI IDID
MALAYSIAN COMMUNICATION EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA

Seminar on Communication Education and the Needs of the Media
Ming Court Hotel, Kuala Lumpur
September 29 - 1 October 1994.
The situation is somewhat different in Malaysia, or in the other developing countries. Seldom do we find lecturers from the other faculties (there might be a few) who would not equate mass communication programmes as high as the other academic programmes in the university. In Malaysia, there are five professors and about 30 lecturers holding Ph.Ds in mass communication which indicates a strong programme comparable to the other academic programmes. The programme suffers from the criticism, mildly put but mild, from the industry at some of the programmes and orientation that are currently offered by the universities, but otherwise, the programmes have been well-received. One reason for the present situation is that the communication programmes were established at about the same time or slightly later, together with the establishment of the university, thus providing the lecturers in communication seniority with lecturers from the other faculties.

In this paper, I would like to dwell on several issues, such as equating the demands of academe with the varying needs of media and media-related industries, the problems in identifying media and media-related needs and, finally to offer some suggestions to bridge the differing demands of academe and media and media-related industries.

The beginning

The Institute of Technology MARA was the first to establish the School of Mass Communication. The next communication programme was followed by Universiti Sains Malaysia. Two years later, in 1976, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia set up the Department of Communication, followed later by the Department of Development Communication at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Agricultural University of Malaysia) and the Department of Writing, Universiti Malaya. Presently there is a Department of Communication at the International Islamic University, a communication component in Universiti Utara Malaysia (Northern University) and the latest, a communication programme, at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (University of Malaysia Sarawak).

The School of Mass Communication at ITM and UKM’s Department of Communication have a similar set up in that there are sequences for students to specialise, such as in public relations, advertising, broadcasting, or in development communication. The International Islamic University has courses in journalism,
Organisational communication and public relations besides the other courses in communication. The Department of Development Communication at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia began by offering post-graduate courses.

The courses offered by nearly all the departments/programmes in communication have, in one way or another, mainly tailored to meet the demands of the media or media-related industries. The programmes in communication are programmed to contribute toward the growth of the country, and toward the growth and appreciation of media and media-related industries.

The communication programmes in all the universities have a strong liberal arts base which is in line with the normal demands of communication courses in the United States. At Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, students take three departments in the first year, two departments in the second and third year and only specialise in communication in the honours year.

Communication Programmes.
Compared to the United States, the academic communication programme in Malaysia is relatively small. There are more than 10,000 graduates enrolled in 160 graduate programmes in journalism and in mass communication in the United States. (Soloski, 1994). There are more than 900 Ph.D. students enrolled in 32 doctoral programmes throughout the United States (Soloski, 1994). The figures in Malaysia pale in comparison. There are no more than 25 students in the masters programme throughout the country, and less than 10 enrolled as Ph.D students. One should, however, appreciate that this is the beginning as there is potential for post-graduate expansion. A factor to notice is that the post-graduate programmes have attracted foreign students from Indonesia, Zimbabwe, Nepal, Nigeria etc. In the future, the Malaysian post-graduate communication programmes will attract more students from other countries, given the quality and facilities that are available in the local universities.

Unlike the masters programme in the United States, the programme in Malaysia is academic in orientation. In the United States, there is a tendency for the programme to be "specialised and that students are taught skills that limit rather than expand their opportunities" (Soloski, 1994:6).
The doctoral programme in Malaysia is recognised to be a research and not a teaching programme. The majority of postgraduate students want to obtain the degree to enable them to be lecturers or to improve their current careers but not to enter the world of media. In UKM, one student took a Master of Arts degree in Advertising only to quit the advertising industry and to join the world of insurance.

The post-graduate degree programmes in Malaysia do not seem to capture the full attention of media management as, presently, management is more interested in the under-graduate degree programmes. Hopefully in the future, media management will give due attention to the post-graduate communication programmes that are offered. Many management personnel, in particular, that in the government sector, have realised the potential benefits of their officers acquiring post-graduate degrees. It is to be admitted that there are presently several personnel in media and media-related organisations in Malaysia who possess post-graduate degrees but the number is still small. But, for today, the focus is on under-graduate training.

What the media want
Like in other commercial organisations, media management wants to recruit the best students, brilliant, fast and on immediate recruitment, to begin working as if they had been in training for several years in the university. When personnel in a particular newspaper organisation find that graduates from mass communication require training to be a journalist, it crossed their mind that if such was the case then management would start its own training programme and recruit the best from the interview, only this time, there was no limit in the choice of subjects. These new journalists would come from various backgrounds such as law, biology, chemistry, accountancy, and, in limited numbers, from mass communication. Subject matter of courses, taken by the students at the university, became primary consideration.

We therefore come to the second subject matter, namely management's requirement of potential reporters that are well versed in a certain subject over the training provided by mass communication departments. One can construe initially that there is a "mismatch" between what the communication programme can offer and what the media organisations want.
A mass communication programme, unlike the other disciplines in social science, has a backup industry, that is the media industry (newspapers, broadcasting, film) or media-related industry such as public relations and advertising. It is similar to engineering that has an engineering industry, the computer science with its computer industry, or the medical science with its medical industry. It is something also like the education faculty that supplies manpower needs for the teachers required by the Ministry of Education. But the comparison ends there. Unlike the medical faculty that supplies the medical industry's qualified manpower or that the medical industry requires people qualified from the medical faculty, the same does not hold true of the communication industry. It has been history that the communication industry has taken many people based on experience rather than wholly knowledge-based in communication.

There are three main media "industries", namely the print media, the electronic media (radio and television) and the film industry that the departments of communication can target their students for. There is also the media-related industry such as public relations and advertising. But the communication departments can offer courses more than that required by the media and media-related industries judging by the courses offered, examples being international communication, political communication, information technology, communication development, organisational communication and various communication subjects grouped as human communication or non-media communications. The scope of communication programme encompasses more than meeting the needs of media and media-related industries.

The same is true of the requirements of media organisations. As complex organisations, they require engineers and technicians to run them, the accountants to see to the accounting system, the security guards, etc., that makes it apparent that only a small part of their requirements, namely the requirements in the editorial staff, can be met by the programmes offered in communication programmes. Despite that, media organisations find that they do not have to depend on the communication programmes in the universities to supply them with the reporters, as they can recruit them from the other disciplines. The recent exercise by one media organisation indicates this precisely. Recently one media organisation recruited some 30 reporters but not one of the
successful applicants were journalism or mass communication graduates.

Now let us turn to the programmes in communication. The programmes produce people to choose careers in journalism, public relations, advertising, film, radio, television among others but over the years it is evident that very few of these students land themselves in media and media-related industries. If they did so they would be more likely to be in advertising, public relations, and broadcasting, and journalism but few would choose a career in filming. In the United States, a recent study indicated that only eight percent of the journalism students in 1992 made their careers in journalism. In Malaysia, the call to enter the film industry is simply not there as many consider it a sunset industry. But the same cannot be said of the potential growth in the other media and media-related industries. If at all, recent indicators show a healthy growth of the media and media-related industries in the future (Investors Digest, Mid-Aug., 1994).

Media organisations therefore demand more than what the departments of communications can offer and, on the other side, departments of communication also offer courses that are not wholly geared to meet the specific needs of media and media-related industries.

The Match and Mismatch
In the first place has anything gone wrong? Are resources wasted? Does manpower planning in estimating the needs of the media industry fail to meet the requirements of the industry? Is there a lack of communication between the media industry and the universities that the universities do not produce the right type of people required? Or is the media industry's requirement outside the objectives of the communication programmes? Are we producing the wrong personnel for the industries?

Academics seldom plan the curriculum in isolation. They have to bear in mind that the curriculum must meet the strict requirements of academe. The Senate, as the watchdog of academic standards, must be satisfied that the overall requirements, the contact hours, the books recommended, the types of lecturers must meet the minimum academic standards. Thus, in the West, when lecturers are appointed on the basis of experience alone, the credibility of the department is placed on the chopping board as
other academics, after strenuous struggle for their Ph.D. and other degrees, begin to question whether experience alone is a good substitute for academic merit.

Experienced lecturers in the communication departments will often tease lecturers who have degrees after their names but do not have the years of experience in the field that they teach. You encounter also this dilemma in the Faculty of Education. Can a lecturer after obtaining a Ph.D. in education be appropriately placed to teach when the person has no experience in teaching at all? On the other hand, can a person who has several decades of teaching career but without any degree at the back of the name be appointed to be a lecturer in the faculty of education? I propose all these as I (with some years of experience in journalism and public relations but also acknowledging that these are dated experience.) begin to search for an answer after teaching journalism and public relations (and research methods) for nearly two decades. Several years ago a colleague (and former student), Raja Ahmad Alauddin was taken in to teach film although he had no practical experience in that subject. He had only a bachelor’s degree in communication and a masters degree in film but a few years ago he was declared the best potential film director. He has since directed several films that have been well credited by those in the film industry. Despite his experience (now), the academic degree in film, his dedication, and the facilities provided by the university in film and video productions, yet not many students would want to specialise in film at the honours year or make filming a career. Nevertheless filming is taught at Universiti Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia and also at the Institut Teknologi MARA. A professional level course is offered by the Film Academy but the number of students is very limited.

The media-related industry, namely public relations and advertising, is slightly better in accepting graduates in communication. The ACT (Advertising, Communication, Training) School and the Lim KokWing School of Technology and several others run courses related to advertising because of the realisation that there is a shortage of qualified people in the advertising industry. The Institute of Public Relations Malaysia offers courses in public relations at the certificate and diploma levels and these courses are franchised to Stamford Colleges, PAAC Management, ACT in Petaling Jaya, and IBMS in Kuching. The shortage of manpower needs at the non-university level are felt and are being
met by these educational institutions. At the university level, courses in public relations and advertising have been popular. The demand for public relations and advertising at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia far exceed the total demand for the other communication sequences. The same popularity holds true of advertising and public relations courses in Indonesia compared to the other courses in communication.

The popularity of advertising, public relations and news-editorial far exceed the other sequences in communication among universities in the United States. For example in 1992, there were 4565 students who received their degrees in advertising, compared to 3801 in public relations, 2058 in journalism and 259 in film/cinema. (Becker & Kosicki, 1993). There is therefore an imbalance in demand for communication courses at the universities despite the quality lecturers and programmes. The popularity of advertising and public relations exist at both the tertiary and non-tertiary levels.

Several features on the demand side among communication students will be listed as this paper will go on to suggest some other characteristics of the demand and supply side in the open market.

There is one difference between the media-related industry and the media industry in echoing the manpower training needs of the industry. The advertising and the public relations industry have their professional associations to "suggest" and "sense" the manpower requirements and the types of manpower requirements. You see little evidence of this in journalism, television and broadcasting except for efforts made by FINAS and AIBD to promote broadcasting and filming. The efforts made by FINAS materialised in the formation of the Film Academy and attempts are currently being made by AIBD to enhance the quality and level of teaching at that institution.

Efforts to promote the study of public relations have lead to several discussions at conferences organised by International Public Relations Associations, and other national associations to conceptualise in terms of a public relations body of knowledge. The concept of a body of knowledge is helpful to universities in planning their curriculum.
In the United States, United Kingdom and, becoming evident too in Malaysia, the advertising and public relations courses have been associated with the business sector. In the university, students feel that, on graduation, they can make meaningful applications to join the advertising and public relations sectors that have, so far, not been identified as a sunset industry. The salary is relatively good and the facilities offered are better than the other media-related industry.

Planning the advertising and public relations curricula in Malaysia is made on the basis of studies made on them by other professional bodies elsewhere in the world. Such professional and international associations make suggestions from the ideas forwarded by their international affiliations. For example, in public relations, the International Public Relations Association (Anderson, 1984; Oeckl, 1978) take note of the suggestions by national bodies like the Public Relations Society of America, the Public Relations Institute of Australia, the Institute of Public Relations United Kingdom, that academics could think in terms of a universal parameter of public relations knowledge.

Departments of communication need to have more open dialogues with representatives of the industry and their professional bodies after which sectors within the industry can have their own training programmes to meet the needs of individual organisations. The departments of communication can only cater for a broad need of the industry, not to meet the specific individual needs of organisations. Universities also have to match against the needs of students who enroll in communication studies with the intention to eventually join the media and media-related industries as against those who enroll to have a knowledge of the social-science based department to enable them to join any job sector. There are also students who enter the communication department because it is the only department that they are allowed to do their honours. There are students who take communication because they want to have a knowledge of, not to work with, the media or media-related industries. Other students enroll with the department but after their practical training at the end of their third year, feel frustrated with the industry as they found it not to be as glamorous as they initially made themselves to believe. This is the serendipity role of the departments of communication in that they weed out those who initially hold fallacious ideas of journalism, public relations, advertising, film and broadcasting that, on going
through the courses in communication, they decide that it is in their best interests to refrain from joining any media or media-related organisations.

Are there other reasons why students do not prefer joining the media and media-related industries? Some students prefer to stay out because of the pull by the other industries. As the country is now enjoying a boom period, the other sectors are offering salaries and incentives that media and media-related industries can hardly match. Thus despite the strong encouragement by lecturers, very few students in communication would, on graduation, join a media industry or media related industry when another job industry offers a higher initial salary with the person allocated a room, a chair and an executive desk, and a secretary supplied to do all the typing outside the young officer’s air-conditioned room.

The poor starting salary in media and media-related industries could perhaps be a factor that have failed to attract the best communication students. However, students do realise that if they continue to stay long enough in the media and media-related industries, the opportunities and salary levels in the future will be much higher than being the ordinary mundane administrative officer.

Conclusion and Discussion: What then?
Both the departments of communication, the media and media-related industries are here to stay. In fact there are strong indications that the media and media-related industries will continue to grow in Malaysia, thus creating more employment opportunities for graduates and non-graduates in all sectors of the communication field. The two institutions (academic departments of communication and media and media related industries) should work things out. The media and media-related industries have given their best cooperation since the beginning of the communication programme. No one can ever deny that. The cooperation of the media and media-related industries toward practical training and other forms of support implied that both need the other, perhaps with the universities needing the industry more. There is an advantage of recruiting a student with a background in journalism, public relations and advertising or in communication over the other disciplines because of their orientation toward the industry that students have received their education. A study in United States found that students of communication who enter the
world of communication are more satisfied in their career than the other students who went to do non-communication careers (DeFleur, 1992). Yet another study suggests that although advertising is a talent business, yet at the end of the day those who major in professional programmes in advertising (and in marketing) conclude their careers in the top 50 advertising agencies (Donnelly, 1992).

Communication departments do not just produce students to enter the media and media-related industries, but the students, having a good grounding in social science also make their way as research assistants in marketing research companies, with the banks or with insurance companies. Quite a number obtain employment as teachers and not a few find themselves as public servants (or masters). Lecturers find this phenomenon both a sense of satisfaction and sorrow that their students are gainfully employed but not in media or media-related industries.

Earlier, reference was made to the poor reception among students to enter the film industry, despite the strong commitment by film lecturers to do so. The examples set by Raja Alauddin and Dr. Nor Arai, another film lecturer in Universiti Malaya, indulging themselves to direct films and getting the students to be involved in these film productions are positive steps in contributing toward the revival of the film industry. Eventually it is hoped that they would be able to kindle interests high enough among students to want them to make film a career. As yet, not many students are motivated to take a plunge in a long-life film career.

While acknowledging some deficiencies in academic training because the majority of communication students do not land up in media or media-related industry, we also wish that there would be improved facilities offered to attract (and retain) the best into the media and media-related industry.

One of the characteristics that is observed in the media and also media-related industry is the rapid turnover of staff. Perhaps a study can be conducted on the large and constant turnover of personnel in the media and media-related industry? Perhaps this is one contribution that communication departments can offer.

The basis of planning must take into account the conceptual definition of the field called communication. Scholars have yet to come out with a definitive stand on what constitutes the parameter of communication (see the whole issue of Journal of Communication,
Summer 1983, and Summer 1993, 3) which some scholars say is hampering communication education itself in its theory and methodological developments (Bostrom and Donohew, 1992; Benigner, 1993; Rosengren, 1993).

Setting aside the polemics on the communication field, the situation of communication programmes in Third World countries is somewhat on a better field than that in the West. Planners in Third World nations have accepted communication in a very practical way. They tie the need of communication programmes in the universities with the supply of manpower as much as they see other tertiary forms of education in that light. Thus in the introduction of the communication courses in Southeast Asia, namely in the Philippines, development communication was the current fashion then, with the notion that communication would assist and spurt development efforts. Thus Gloria Feliciano (1974), an early communication scholar, said that communication was useful for development. Things have changed over the past years as media-related communication industry has taken over in popularity over development communication and journalism education.

There is an alternative perspective to communication studies in that scholars would want communication programmes to take a critical stand at the media institution. The power relationship between the media institution and other power institutions vis-a-vis their relationship with the masses should be studied. Communication studies are not just for the imparting of skills for "vocational" training, but an intellectual pursuit to critically appraise the media institution and its role in society.

But communication industry and indeed the communication education is dynamic as new developments take place. Issues on information superhighways have now been very popular to teach and to do research on. The developments in communication and its future direction indicates a trend toward moving from media industry to greater media-related industry and, being as before, technologically influenced. To apply the analogy alluded earlier, the A-train carries fast the development of technology in this Information Age. This is a fast trend that both the communication professional industry and the professional academics in communication acknowledges. There is a need to keep track of the fast development of technology that is affecting the media and media-related industries.
The growth of departments and programmes in communication in Malaysia is fast and receives much public support. This is in contrast to what is happening with the communication programmes in the West. In the United States, there has been proposals at restructuring and eliminating journalism/mass communication programmes, even at well-known universities such as the University of Michigan, Ohio State University and at University of Arizona at Tucson (Beasley, 1994). This has raised the question whether journalism and mass communication is an endangered species. An interpretation is that journalism and mass communication have mushroomed rapidly in the United States over the past decades far exceeding the supply, that downsizing some of the departments is a process in regression.

The situation in Third World countries is in contrast to what is happening in the United States and also in some countries in Europe as more communication developments continue to develop. In Malaysia, the latest was in the establishment of a communication programme at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak in 1993. We should, however, be cautious in planning for the future lest we experience the same regression forces that are presently operating on the communication programmes in the United States (even in Canada and in Europe). As the situation is at present, communication planning at the university level must express its ability to offer ideas, and communication scholars and students able to participate in national development and monitor the demand of the sectors in the communication field.

Some sectors of the communication field such as public relations and advertising, as part of media-related industry, have their professional associations either at the international and national level to resource for and in developing and making current their planning. Scholars would want more input from the professional associations in all sections of the communication field as together it would be able to develop eventually into a professional calling such as education, or even the medical sector would call it, a professional industry. To meet that objective, the academe and the media and media-related industries can assist one another and can move together. The future is bright for communication education as it is for the media and media-related industries. If properly managed and planned, it is a train that could come "my way".
REFERENCES


Journal of Communication (Summer 1993). 43:3; 4-361.

Ferment in the Field. (Summer 1983). *Journal of Communication.* 33:3; 3-238.


Rosengren, Karl Erik (Summer 1993). "From Field to Frog Ponds." Journal of Communication. 43:3;6-17.


Special Issue: Public relations education. (Summer 1982). Public Relations Review. VIII, 2.