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The Filipino Broadcasters As Agents For Facilitating Change

By

Ernesto I Songco
THE FILIPINO BROADCASTERS AS AGENTS FOR FACILITATING CHANGE

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Radio broadcasting in Philippines today is very much involved in development. The mass media, (and radio is one of the essential medium in the mass media), according to the editors of Philippine Mass Media in Perspective, serve development through the following functions:

1. As legitimizers of development programme - by focusing attention on them, giving them "a sense of rightness or righteousness" thereby enlisting social support for them;
2. As teachers of the new knowledge and skills demanded by the new technology;
3. As catalysts of change - by influencing attitudes and behaviour; and
4. As cathartic agents - by serving as escapist tools providing relief for the stress and strain concommitant to change.

For these significant functions mass media play in our society, more especially in human development, radio broadcasting, as an essential part of mass media, needs to be known better,
studied, and analysed so that its functions are directed towards greater service and responsibility in human development.

**Philippine Broadcasting System**

Broadcasting in the Philippines is an industry. It operates on a system of free enterprise. As a system of free enterprise the broadcast industry is primarily in the hands of the private sector. Ninety per cent of the industry is operated by private enterprises. And the broadcast stations compete with each other for audience listenership and the advertising money.

Since broadcast activities are financed by advertising, programming is largely determined by the advertisers. Before World War II, programming was entertainment-oriented. Later, after the war, new programme formats were introduced. These new programmes were content-oriented and have more emphasis on information and education. These new directions in programming found sharper focus during the martial law period when the Kapisnang no mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (KBP) and the Broadcast Media Council (BMC) supported and encouraged development broadcasting.

Geographically there is a wide dispersion of communities because the Philippines is made up of 7,000 islands, and the problem of linking these islands together through broadcasting
is compounded by 81 different dialects spoken throughout the country. The most widely used are: English, Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano and Panay-Hiligaynon.

The broadcast media (radio/TV) are serving a total of 46 million Filipinos, 32% live in urban areas and the remaining 68% live in rural areas.

Philippine's population, which is dominated by females, is largely composed of young people.

The system of broadcasting in the Philippines follows a pattern of regulation rather than direct control or operation by the government. Before September 1972 the pattern of regulation emanated solely from the Radio Control Office. Under martial law, the government created another regulatory body, the Broadcast Media Council. The operation of the Broadcast Media Council (BMC) is guided by the following general principles:

1. To assist and support the state in its projects towards the achievement of the advancement of the masses, through the massive dissemination of broadcast information and development broadcasting;

2. To provide for the development of education and culture in programmes directed at the family and children. It is likewise the responsibility of the industry to strive
for excellent and wholesome entertainment suitable for the entire family;

3. To help strive for community advancement by meeting its needs in the service of its citizens, through honest and substantial programmes, unique to the community needs and characteristics; and

4. To assist the advertising industry in the presentation of truthful and quality commercials for the benefit of the listening public.

The two agencies are not only cooperating to regulate and control the activities of the broadcast media but they work together to help improve the operations of radio stations.

Status of Radio Broadcasting

Radio broadcasting in the Philippines is carried on by a total of 248 radio stations as of May 1977. These radio stations are operated by broadcast media operators. These are individuals, offices, or corporations with operations permits granted by the Broadcast Media Council. The new Philippine Constitution requires that all operators are Filipino citizens or corporations/associations completely owned and managed by Filipino citizens.

The broadcast media operators are classified into three distinct sectors: the commercial sector, the non-commercial sector, and the government sector.
The **commercial sector** - is composed of private corporations or associations, private schools or civic institutions or independent business enterpreneurs. Stations under this category are business-oriented and their purpose is to gain profit.

The **non-commercial sector** - is made up of civic or religious organisations with specific target audiences for their programming.

The **government sector** - are radio stations operated either by a government department, agency, organisation or by a state/public university, or academic institution. They operate these radio stations to provide public service, information, cultural and educational programmes designed to motivate and reinforce development activities of the country. They also share information of government activities to the general public.

Of the 248 radio stations operating in the Philippines, 215 are commercial radio stations, 15 are non-commercial, and the government operates 18 radio stations.
Organisational Set-up

To be able to carry out the objectives of the radio stations effectively, each of the 248 radio stations operating in the country is organised according to a structural set-up. In 1975 the Broadcast Media Council formulated an organisational scheme for radio stations.

Under this prescribed organisational plan, the station manager is responsible for the overall set-up and the entire operation of the station. In addition, he implements goals and guidelines set up by the operators of the station.

Below the station manager are four directors who are responsible in the operation of the four major divisions of the station. These executives are the programme director, the sales director, the chief engineer, and the administrative officer.

Good radio broadcasting operation is a proper combination of all the best that each department can offer to the station so that its broadcast services are acceptable to the radio listeners.

Operating Costs

Aside from organising a work force for the station, another essential concern of radio broadcasting operation is operating costs.
Much of what the radio station can do in terms of serving the public interests and welfare depends on its financial capabilities in its operation.

According to some data provided by the Pre-Investment Study on Communication Technology for Education, conducted by the Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force, the average operating cost of a radio station in 1975 was three hundred thousand pesos per annum.

To get the present average operating cost is to add a 20% average annual increase in cost price.

Salaries of employees and talents make up 50% of the annual operating costs. Studio maintenance and repair, rentals of studio space and facilities, and depreciation account for 33% of the annual expenses. And the remaining 9% is credited for expense account like advertising, taxes, license fees, office supplies and equipment, plus Social Security and Medicare premiums.

A very significant conclusion can be made from these figures. Most radio stations cannot afford to venture into some production of developmental programmes beneficial to the community they are serving. Their financial capabilities are barely enough to keep the stations in operation and nothing more.
Revenue

It has been mentioned earlier that broadcasting in the Philippines is an industry. Because it is that, its main source of revenue is advertising.

With 215 commercial radio stations vying for their share of the advertising money, there exists a very keen competition among the stations. And the stations that make it are those which have listenable and acceptable programming and possess a proven background of service to the community.

There is a marked steady growth in the gross billings of commercial radio stations. However, while the economic picture of the broadcast industry seems to be hopeful, there is still that nagging fact that some radio stations in the provinces are not economically viable.

To determine what specific steps are necessary to help these provincial stations, the Broadcast Media Council, through the support of the Department of Public Information, commissioned the firm of Sycip, Gorres and Velayo to undertake a study of the economic performance of commercial radio stations.

The SGV claims that a primary problem in the industry is the unbalanced allocation of benefits from the market. In most
instances, the study pointed out, the problem is not traceable to market conditions but to the poor performance of individual radio stations resulting in the unequitable distribution of advertising money.

**Manpower in the Broadcast Industry**

The poor performance of some radio stations mentioned in the SGV Study is the result of inadequate competent manpower in the broadcast industry. Because at the very core of the radio broadcast operations are individuals on whose performance depend the survival and growth of the broadcast industry.

In the Philippine setting that performance, even from the very beginning of radio broadcasting, has never been adequate. As keenly observed by veteran broadcaster Francisco "Koko" Trinidad, ".... The training of most of the people engaged in the various phases of broadcasting has remained incomplete. It follows that the end results of their efforts will be wanting in something. That something will be quality."

In 1975 the Broadcast Media Council established a manpower profile of the radio broadcasting industry after conducting a broadcast staff study covering 233 radio stations in the country. Approximately 60% of the stations responded, and the total number of broadcast personnel is 895.
There are some significant data obtained from the study:

**Educational Attainment:**

1. Of the 895 employees studied, 40% are vocational graduates, and 27% are college graduates, while 2% are high school graduates. Two per cent are post-graduate students.
2. Of the 187 station managers studied, 50% are college graduates, while 31% are college students. Twelve per cent are post-graduate students while 3% are post-graduate degree holders. Only 2% are high school graduates.
3. Of the 414 announcers studied, 43% are college students while 37% are college graduates. Only 10% are vocational graduates, 6% are post-graduate students and only 4% are high school graduates.
4. Of the 94 scriptwriters studied, 44% are college students while 31% are college graduates. Thirteen per cent are vocational graduates, 6% are high school graduates, and 3% are post graduate students. Three per cent are post graduate degree holders.

**Training:**

1. About 10% of the broadcast media employees had attended media related training courses outside formal education, and 40% did not have any media related training outside formal education. Nine per cent had non-media training and 41 per cent did not have any non-media training outside formal education.
2. Thirty per cent of the station managers did not have any media related training outside formal education, and only 21% had. Similarly, 29% did not have any non-media training outside formal education, while 23% of the 414 announcers had media related special training outside formal education. And 25% did not have any media related training outside formal education. Only 17% had non-media training and 35% did not have any non-media training outside formal education.

3. Twenty-six per cent of the 94 scriptwriters have special training related to media outside formal education as against 24% who had none. Only 14% had special training not related to media outside of formal education; the greater number, 36% had done.

4. Regarding participation in media seminars, conferences, symposium and workshops, 10% of the 895 had attended broadcast media seminars. Among the 187 station managers studied, about 37% had attended media related seminars. Twenty-eight per cent had attended non-media related seminars and 22% had not.

5. Of the 414 announcers, 44% had attended media related seminars and 10% had not. Thirty-four per cent had attended non-media related seminars and 12% had not. Only 19% of the 94 scriptwriters have attended media-
related seminars; 30% had not. Fourteen per cent have attended non-media related seminars; 37% had not.

The findings of the study on the manpower profile conducted by the Broadcast Media Council give us a clear picture of the actual manpower status in radio broadcasting. The cold facts of the matter pose a challenge to the Broadcast Media Council for personnel development in order to maximise their effectiveness as communicators.

Programming in Radio Broadcasting

Equally important to radio broadcasting operation is the broadcast service of a radio station, its programming.

The status or condition of programming depends partly on the competence of station personnel, especially those in production, and on station policies.

Having discussed the manpower profile in the broadcast industry, it is not difficult to guess the state or condition of programming in our radio broadcasting industry.

For a better understanding of the structure of radio programming, let us classify and categorise the radio programmes. Our classification will embrace the following types: Educational,
and this category can be divided into formal and non-formal; information, and entertainment.

**Educational (Formal):**

These are radio programmes integrated within the regular graded school, from the primary grade through the university.

**Educational (Non-Formal):**

This category includes a variety of programmes assigned for training and learning experience pertaining to technical/vocational work activities and to good citizenship.

**Informational:**

These are programmes structured to develop and encourage public awareness and knowledge of information related to development. These programmes include a variety of formats like: news, public affairs, news analysis, interviews, speeches, lecturers, documentary, penal discussions, plugs, spot announcements, etc.

**Entertainment:**

These are programmes designed to entertain the general listening public. Programme types in this category will include: variety shows, drama, situation comedies, contests, and specials.
In 1976 a study had been made by the Broadcast Media Council to determine the programming patterns of the radio stations in the country. The council solicited fact sheets and programme descriptions/schedules from 226 radio stations. The fact sheets and programme schedules covered a period of one week. The following are the data gathered from this study:

Radio stations devote only 12 hours a week for formal educational programmes or .04%; and 244 hours a week for non-formal education programmes or .86%.

For informational programmes our radio stations give 5,662 hours a week or 19.88%. More broadcast hours are devoted to informational programmes than educational programmes.

The bulk of broadcast hours are allocated to entertainment programmes: 22,558 hours a week are devoted to entertainment or 79.22%.

The broadcast media programming profile for radio is quite clear: 3/4 entertainment and only 1/4 education and information.

If radio broadcasting is to play its role in development, something must be done to correct the imbalance in the programming services of our radio stations in the Philippines.
Broadcasters As Facilitating Agents of Change: Their Problems and Solutions

Much effort has been given in this paper to the development of background information so that you will gain adequate understanding of the problems of the broadcasters as agents of change, because their problems are closely linked to the broadcast system and its operation.

Radio has the highest rate of penetration in terms of circulation compared to other media. Because of the invention of the transistor, it is now possible for mountain dwellers to listen to information and educational programmes. It is also possible now for the farmers to get agricultural information while plowing their fields. The same is true with laundry women. They listen to the transistor radio beside them while washing clothes in the river.

Because of radio, men now share experiences as never before. Critical and significant issues that affect human lives are discussed intelligently before all people. The sufferings and pains of others are made known, alleviated, and minimised. Demands for access to the country's wealth and income are stimulated by interviews, discussions, and documentaries.
In short, radio broadcasting provides the climate whereby the broadcasters can touch the lives of people in the barrios and sitios, and mountain villages for enrichment.

Radio enjoys high credibility among the grass-root people because they hear the voices of people they accept, respect, and trust.

The broadcasters have every reason to be effective in affecting changes on the lives of people they serve. They reach far and wide. The credibility of their medium is high. And yet they are not as effective as they want to be! What are their problems? Let us consider first the problems in the industry which affect their effectiveness as agents of change.

The problem of all problems in the broadcast industry is organisation. It is either lack of organisation or a matter of being over-organised. In fact most of the problems, and their persistence, can be traced back to the problem of organisation. And corollary to this is the problem of leadership.

The past history of the broadcast industry in the Philippines is characterised by faltering steps, confusion, and no sense of direction. "To each his own" seemed to be the working philosophy of radio stations. As a result, competition became
very keen, and always, the rich stations survived, while the poor ones were eliminated.

In such a situation, it is impossible to expect broadcasters who are confused and with no sense of direction to be agents of change. Much more to be effective agents of change. Something has to be done!

Thus in April 1973 the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (Association of Broadcasters in the Philippines) was born. The newly organised body acted as an advisory entity for the Media Advisory Council.

In addition, it has formulated modest objectives to work for, like: setting-up standards for radio operation, especially in programming; thresh out common problems in advertising, and laying down policies and procedures that will regulate the activities of the broadcast industry, the advertising agencies, and the advertisers.

As years rolled on the KBP grew not only in membership but also in its concern and outlook as an organisation of an industry. It did not only work to strengthen the bargaining position of every member in the association, with regard to sales, but exerted every effort to upgrade the standards of
broadcasters, and to assist in the implementation of the developmental efforts of the Philippine government.

Then in November 1974, the Broadcast Media Council was created by Presidential Decree No. 576. This entity became the regulatory body of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas.

The Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas and the Broadcast Media Council compliment each other. They work together as a team in pursuing a common longing to improve the broadcast industry. It is no wonder that in a brief span of 4 or 5 years, the broadcast industry had witnessed an impressive progress that is more than the combined progress of the industry in the last 4 or 5 decades.

At the very core of these achievements of the KBP and the BMC is a "megapolicy" formulated by both for the broadcast industry:

"It is the primary responsibility of the broadcast industry to actively participate in the development of the country and its people. In the discharge of this responsibility, it becomes incumbent on the industry to provide for the continued well-being of the constituent broadcast companies and of its personnel..."
Now radio stations in the Philippines have a direction they can follow. Now they have a commitment to fulfill, an obligation to the people. Now they have prescribed for themselves a definite role to play in the development of our country and people as agent of change.

But direction is not everything. If the radio stations are not financially viable, even if they are committed to lead people to change through developmental programming, their major efforts in broadcasting will be directed, first and foremost, towards survival, and most probably will shy away from developmental programming which is not quite profitable.

Aware of this problem, and faithful to the megapolicy they have formulated, both Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas and Broadcast Media Council have adopted the policy to help small and struggling provincial radio stations to achieve security and viability in their operation.

In January 1978 an evaluation of station performances was launched by the Broadcast Media Council in the depressed areas to determine the service capabilities of the stations in these areas, their technical standards and their programming quality.
Where potentials are high, the Broadcast Media Council gave the stations its support to further develop their markets. However, where economic performance is not commensurate with the potentials of the market, the Broadcast Media Council tried to improve the station's ability to effectively project their markets to the advertising sector.

Now the radio stations are improving in their financial conditions, and are beginning to schedule developmental programmes for broadcast, creating the climate whereby the broadcasters can serve their tasks as agents of change.

While the broadcast industry can help to effect changes, the agents for facilitating change in the industry are the broadcasters. And they are important and significant components in the process of change. How can their effectiveness as agents of change be maximised?

As a basis for answering the question stated above, this paper would like to examine the problem within the context of what Dr. David Berlo of Michigan State University calls "the determinant factors within the source-encoder which can increase the effectiveness of this communication." These factors are: (1) the communication skills of the source-encoder, (2) his attitudes, (3) his knowledge level, and (4) his position within a social-cultural system.
Communication Skills

There are five verbal communication skills. Two are encoding skills: writing and speaking. The other two are decoding skills: reading and listening. The fifth, both used in encoding and decoding, is thought or reasoning. The important thing to remember about this factor is: the linguistic facility of the source-encoder increases his ability to express his purpose, and broadens the spectrum of ideas available to him in his thinking process.

Attitudes

The attitudes of a communication source to himself, his subject matter, and to the receiver of his message affect the ways in which he communicates. Does the source have enough self-confidence, enough faith in himself so that he communicates with responsibility and ease and so that others will not find it difficult to respect and believe him? On the other hand, over-confidence disturbs effective communication! What about his subject matter, does he believe in the value he says about his subject matter? It is difficult to communicate that which you do not believe yourself! What does the source think of the receiver of his message? When the receiver realises that the source like him, the receiver is much less critical of his message and much more likely to accept what the source says.
Knowledge Level

It is obvious that the amount of knowledge a source has about his subject matter will affect his message. One cannot communicate what one does not know. One cannot communicate content materials he does not understand. The source needs to know his subject matter thoroughly. He also needs to know how to express his subject matter effectively.

Social-Cultural System

No source communicates as a free agent, without being influenced by his position in a social-cultural system. Social and cultural systems partly determine the word choice the source makes, the purpose he has for communicating, the meanings he attaches to certain words, his choice of receiver, the channels he uses for his or that kind of message.

The Broadcast Media Council realises the need to develop the communication skills of the broadcasters if they are going to be effective agents of change in our society. Their competence must be developed and improved. Thus in 1975 the Broadcast Media Council launched a wide-range manpower development programme through workshops and seminars to raise the level of competence of the industry's manpower. This programme does not only include the principal personnel involved in the
broadcast operations, like announcers and technicians, but also those on the executive management level and the supportive personnel, like newswriters and scriptwriters.

Here is a break-down in the number of broadcast personnel trained in the various manpower development programme:

1. Management Component (Phase I and II) held in collaboration with the Development Academy of the Philippines trained a total of 213 management executives.

2. A total of 9 regional seminars were held for the announcers with a total of 385 announcers attending.

3. Broadcast Technicians Component. Sponsored in collaboration with the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung through its agency, the Asian Labour Union. This programme was held for 2 weeks in Cebu City and trained 56 chief broadcast technicians.

4. Sales Component. BMC in cooperation with the Asian Institute of Management trained some 113 broadcast sales managers and representatives.

5. Broadcast Journalists Component. With the assistance of the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies of the University of the Philippines System, the BMC trained 44 newswriters from all over the country.
6. Scriptwriters Component. Again in cooperation with the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies of the University of the Philippines System, the council trained 34 drama writers.

7. Seventy-four participants composed of Radio-TV programme managers, directors, performers-talents, scriptwriters and newswriters attended the seminar-workshop on Programme Code.

8. For the past 4 years - 1975, 1976, 1977, and 1978 - presidents and general managers of all broadcast companies have attended the Top-Level Management Conference to formulate policy recommendations to provide the directions of the broadcast industry.

In 1976 another dimension of the training programme of the broadcast Media Council was added. This is training by correspondence. The Distance Study System for Announcers has a total of 861 announcers receiving home-study instructions on: communication, social effects of radio, history of Philippine Radio, development communication, and oral skills.

The Distance Study system for technicians started in July 1977 with 1,350 technicians enrolled.
As of August 1977 about 320 or more participants registered under the Distance Study System for Managers.

In its programme of manpower training and development, the Broadcast Media Council has recognised a partner, the academe. There are 18 schools offering a general programme in communication or are offering special courses in communication. Fourteen of these schools are located in the Greater Manila Area.

In June 1977 the Broadcast Media Council sponsored a seminar-workshop for the academe in Metro Manila. The purpose is to begin a dialogue between the broadcast industry and the educators. Out of this seminar-workshop was organised the Philippine Association of Communication Educators. Another result of this workshop was a consensus on the standardisation of basic courses in mass communication as they are offered by the 14 schools. Such changes in the communication curriculum will help smoothen the adjustments of communication students assigned for internship to radio stations.

The Broadcast Media Council is not only interested in developing the communication skills of the broadcasters to make them effective agents of change, but they are also interested to equip them with the right attitude and with an adequate knowledge level on the varied subject matters they engage in their communications.
When broadcasters have adequate knowledge of what they are talking about on the air on such subjects like agriculture, nutrition, family planning, cooperatives, etc., then they develop confidence in themselves. Having self-confidence, they can communicate better and more effectively.

On several occasions the Broadcast Media Council had invited experts in various disciplines and endeavours to share their expertise with the broadcasters so that the latter becomes more knowledgeable and confident. A good example of this are the sharing sessions given to the broadcasters before the opening of UNCTAD V in Manila.

Experts on UNCTAD were invited to a series of sharing sessions so that the broadcasters can increase their inputs on what UNCTAD is, what it has already achieved, what it is still trying to achieve, and its possible demands and expectations. And all of this the broadcasters faithfully interpreted to their listeners. The broadcasters can only share what they have and know!

Finally, a significant factor in increasing the effectiveness of broadcasters as agents of change is their knowledge of the receiver of their message. His location in the social-cultural system, his role in the system, his expectations and demands, his customary modes of behaviour.
If the broadcasters are knowledgeable enough about the target of their messages, then they can relate their messages more effectively with maximum possibility of acceptance. But together all these bits of information means research. And researches are very expensive. Not only that, the over-riding concern of most media companies has been penetrating as large a part of the population as possible. Quantitative audience coverage is the primary consideration.

So far this is the only area where the Broadcast Media Council and the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas have not fully attended to. But recently it has become one of their priorities. Therefore there is reason to believe that in the near future, the effectiveness of the broadcasters as agents for facilitating can still be greatly improved through the acquisition of more information about the target of the development messages of the broadcasters.

One significant thing that happened in the Philippines broadcasting scene in the recent past is the emerging awareness in the industry that broadcasting is more than entertainment. That it is an essential part of development. Development of people. Development of country. And the acceptance of this new challenge in the mission of broadcasting has led the industry to restructure itself and re-orient its people so that the
broadcast industry can adequately play its prescribed role
in a developing society, and so that its broadcasters
can be effective agents to facilitate change.