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The Adhikarya And PACE Studies On Communication Education: Some Problems And Responses

By

Victor T Valbuena
THE ADHIKARYA AND PACE STUDIES ON COMMUNICATION EDUCATION:

SOME PROBLEMS AND RESPONSES

Victor T. Valbuena

The objective of this paper is to highlight findings from two related researches that bear on the subjects of communication education and development communication. Specifically, these studies are Knowledge Transfer and Usage in Communication Studies – the US-ASEAN Case by Ronny Adhikarya (1983), and the comprehensive survey of Philippine communication schools conducted by the Philippine Association of Communication Education (PACE) in 1984. The paper also aims to describe some of the developments in Asian, particularly Philippine communication education, that may be taken as responses to the findings of these studies.

The Adhikarya Study, supported by a UNESCO grant, sought "to understand how, and why, communication knowledge (theories, concepts, principles, or techniques) which has been developed and researched in the United States is being transferred to, and utilized in, countries that are historically, socially, economically, politically, and

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culturally different from the United States". The study focused on US-originated communication education at the university-level in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines, or the ASEAN Region.

More specifically, the study had the following main objectives:

1. To determine the nature and form of the US communication knowledge transfer, and the reasons for such a transfer;

2. To determine the selection and utilization process of US-originated knowledge by ASEAN communication scholars;

3. To examine whether, and how, US communication knowledge has been tested, adapted, or reinvented by ASEAN communication scholars to meet the specific needs and conditions of their countries;

4. To examine the role, function and usefulness of graduate training provided by major US communication schools to ASEAN communication scholars.
Data for the research were collected via personal interview questionnaires with 100 ASEAN communication scholars in ten communication schools in the five ASEAN countries. Additional information was also gathered from 12 major US communication schools through a mailed questionnaire sent to the dean, chairperson, or head of each of these schools. According to Adhikarya, "the purpose in understanding the advantages and disadvantages, as well as the potentials and limitations, of the process and effects of such knowledge transfer and utilization is important for improving the status of ASEAN communication education and scholarship".

The PACE Study, supported by a grant from The Asia Foundation, was conducted for the purpose of coming up with a state-of-the-art report on communication education in the Philippines. The study covered five areas: curriculum, instructional materials, facilities and equipment, faculty and opportunities for graduates.

For purposes of this presentation, only some of the significant and related findings of the two studies that have more direct relevance to development communication will be discussed.
RELATED FINDINGS

1. The Adhikarya Study establishes that there is a considerable quantity of US-originated communication knowledge transferred to, and utilized by, ASEAN communication scholars for their teaching and research. Much of this US communication knowledge acquired by ASEAN communication scholars during their graduate training abroad is American-oriented and therefore, might or might not be appropriate for use in ASEAN countries. The findings of the study point out that ASEAN communication scholars, almost two-thirds of whom are American-trained, depend heavily on US-originated communication knowledge for their teaching and research, even though the sources of this knowledge seem to be derived from a limited range of US communication publications.

The PACE Study’s survey component on the resources of communication institutions and training agencies in the Philippines (Lozare and Enriquez, 1984) provides a confirmatory finding: the largest number of Ph.D. holders teaching and researching in local communication schools graduated from American institutions, majority from Wisconsin and Michigan universities.
Given the natural human tendency to echo a former teacher's lectures and given the socio-economic difficulties that plague Philippine communication schools which hinder indigenization of knowledge (e.g., lack of funds and time to do research to test application of western-oriented theories and concepts), it is easy to understand why US-originated knowledge is in great use for teaching and research in the ASEAN Region. As the Adhikarya study points out: "The heavy dependence on US-originated communication knowledge can be attributed to the large number of ASEAN communication scholars who were trained in the US."

2. Adhikarya's study maintains that there is a heavy use of a limited range and variety of US communication materials. ASEAN communication scholars use American communication books most frequently. However, the relatively high cost of US communication books in the ASEAN countries prevents most communication scholars, practitioners or students from gaining access to a broader range of US communication books. "Consequently, most bookstores in ASEAN countries stock only a narrow range of such communication books, mainly the most basic and frequently-purchased titles. Such a situation thus limits the availability of a wider range of US communication books in ASEAN countries."
Corollarily, the PACE report on instructional materials (Maslog, 1984) points out that one of the most pressing problems mentioned by communication education administrators is the lack of indigenous teaching materials. According to this report, available foreign materials were in the main, not very relevant to the Philippine context; they were also very expensive. Maslog says that the problems regarding instructional materials for communication education which existed 15 years ago still exist today (see Maslog, 1971); he notes, however, that there are now more locally produced instructional materials.

The PACE survey show that "the bulk of instructional materials in print used regularly in these schools were foreign - written and produced by foreigners. Examples of such foreign materials are textbooks in reporting, editing, feature writing, photography, advertising, theory and research, by such authors as Wilbur Schramm, William Rivers, Everett Rogers, Daniel Lerner, John Lent, Edwin Emery, Carl Warren and Mitchell Charnley, to mention a few American book authors in the field of mass communication." The study adds that 1,217 book titles or 83 per cent of the textbooks and references used in Philippine communication schools were foreign. There was an even greater percentage of foreign
monographs used - 94 per cent. The study points out, however, that there are now at least 255 titles of local books in mass communication.

3. Adhikarhya also reports that most ASEAN communication scholars seldom use US communication journal articles as sources for their communication knowledge acquisition. He elaborates by saying that the very limited use of such US communication materials is attributed to the perception that they are overly theoretical and quantitative in nature. "Many ASEAN scholars think that often the cases, contexts and topics of such journal articles are US-specific and thus might not be of direct applicability to ASEAN communication issues."

In the case of the Philippines, it may be assumed that the problem is not so much the nature of the articles, but the cost of access to them. Foreign exchange restriction inhibits communication schools from subscribing to US communication journals. The University of the Philippines System, for example, had to suspend subscription to journals like Journalism Quarterly, Public Opinion Quarterly, etc., because of a government ban on dollar purchases of foreign books and periodicals.
If one were also to consider the fact that some of the journals do contain not critical, but only replicative research, perhaps the limited use, or non-use of such journals is really "no big loss" to Philippine communication education.

4. Adkhikarya's study says that "since a development communication orientation is favoured by many ASEAN communication scholars, there is a highly concentrated use of US books on the subject of communication and national development or modernization." Such concentration is attributable to two factors: (1) there is a limited range and variety of US communication books on the subject of development communication; and (2) very few communication publications on devcom have been written by Third World communication scholars. It is thus very common for many Philippine communication schools to still present Schramm's and Lerner's mass communication and development models as "the models" for communication and modernization.

This becomes particularly worrisome because many communication schools, according to the PACE Study, have followed the University of the Philippines in Los Banos and have started to offer either single subjects or even majors programmes in development communication. More so when
one realizes that many schools have not followed enough of the Department of Development Communication's example to periodically review their conceptualization as well as operationalization of "development communication" in light of changing societal and social conditions.

5. According to Adhikarya, the communication approaches espoused by the "critical school" (including the wholistic approach, redistribution of media resources, i.a.) might find utility in developing societies but many ASEAN scholars have not been influenced by them, for two reasons: (1) literature on the critical school's viewpoints and approaches have been published by lesser known publishers in Europe and America; (2) much of the literature is written in German, French, or Spanish which most ASEAN scholars cannot read. Add to these two, the factor of foreign exchange restriction on the purchase of books from abroad, and we have a compounded difficulty.

6. The PACE Study also describes the lack of qualified faculty, facilities and equipment as well as the seeming lack of cooperation among schools, specifically in the use of library materials and in the exchange of research titles (Quebral, 1984).
SOME DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

In spite of the seemingly bleak picture painted by the above findings, there are some recent developments in the Philippines and other Asian countries that brighten the communication education horizon; some of these developments, in fact, preceded the Adhikarya and 1984 PACE studies.

1. In an attempt to develop a faculty that is more attuned to the needs and realities of the Philippine situation, the University of the Philippines, for instance, has initiated joint doctoral programmes with American universities. These programmes call for a student to do the academic or thesis research component of the programme in either a Philippine or American university. This practice is intended, among other purposes, to ensure that at least part of the course work or research output is local and therefore more relevant to the realities obtaining in the native communication environment. This also ensures that the student is not totally exposed only to the US communication education package which in many instances produces alienated graduates who can only conceptualize theories and models in terms of the American context, and who cannot work in their own "poorly equipped" universities because of their enchant-
ment with the highly technological facilities and equipment and supposedly more sophisticated research traditions in US universities.

2. To develop faculty members with a more Asian and, therefore closer-to-home viewpoint, Asian mass communication institutions have also started to send their teachers to universities in the region, instead of the United States, particularly for graduate degrees in applied communication or development communication. The Department of Development Communication, UP-Los Banos, has produced a number of ASEAN graduates in their MA and Ph.D. in Development Communication programmes. Similarly, the Institute of Mass Communication, UP-Diliman, has also graduated from its MA in Communication or MA in Journalism programme, faculty members from universities and other communication training institutions in the region. UP-IMC has awarded MA degrees to communication teachers from Universiti Sains Malaysia and Institut Teknologi Mara in Malaysia, Thammasat University in Thailand, and several others from Indian universities like Poona and Kerala, as well as Indian social communication centres, like Amruthavani.
Communication schools and development-oriented institutions have also been afforded the opportunity to participate in the eight-week course on Communication Policy and Planning conducted by the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague. Initially held in the Netherlands, it has moved on to Africa, and will be institutionalized in Asia in 1987-1988. The course has a decidedly heavy slant on communication development and development communication policies. It also has a "critical school" orientation. More importantly, the course curriculum is now designed by Third World communication teachers to ensure greater relevance and utility to the countries participating in the programme. Its institutionalization in a regional training centre should provide another venue for articulating and examining the Asian viewpoint on communication and development policy issues.

3. A general system-wide and college-level review of the academic programmes of the UP System has also led to some curricular modifications in the communication oriented degree offerings in the University. At the UP-Institute of Mass Communication, for example, courses from the bachelor's up to the doctoral level were re-assessed by faculty and students and have been re-aligned and given updated descriptions to reflect reorientation towards the concepts of communication
development, communication and development, values in communication and society, and to some extent, development communication. Some of these changes have been stimulated by graduate thesis researches (Rimon, 1976, Tibayan, 1980, i.a.) encouraged by the Institute as a means of evaluating existing communication curricula not only of the UP-IMC but also of other communication schools. These curricular modifications have implications for producing a less-Western orientation in IMC graduates who together with those from UPLB's Department of Development Communication form the bulk of communication teachers in the country.

4. Research is also being encouraged, despite perennial budget cuts, to develop research methodologies more applicable to the Asian context. As Feliciano and Lozare (1974) point out: "without doubt, Western social research methods suffer many limitations in the Asian rural milieu." They add further that "if one ploughs through the writings on the subject, one notes the lack of books, pamphlets and other reading materials which have been done by Asian researchers and which have a distinctive Asian orientation. The little that one finds on the subject are usually written by visiting Western scholars, professors and graduate students." This was in 1974.
Today, it is heartening to note that there is an increasing number of studies that attempt to innovate or adapt these methods to the differing conditions, needs and goals of a developing society. To illustrate, there is the series of studies conducted by the UP-IMC in the 1970s called Travelling Experiments in Population Communication (Mercado, et al 1977). This consisted of five research experiments in response to some of the most important issues in population communication in the 70s: method of presenting population messages, type of reporting, motivational appeals to use, time to show films and type of publications to use.

The significance of these experiments lay in the development of an innovative research methodology useful in predicting the potential effectiveness of communication materials. Known as the travelling experiment, this new experimental technique is a compromise between the classical laboratory experiment and the traditional field experiment.

It is also noteworthy that AMIC has initiated some efforts to encourage theory building and adaptation/indigenization of Western-originated theories and research methodologies to the Asian situation. A seminar on "Communication Theory: the Asian Perspective" was conducted by AMIC in Bangkok last year. The seminar yielded some useful
insights on how Asian communication scholars can look into their own culture and attempt to develop new or to modify existing communication theories and models useful for research and development studies in their respective countries. It has also encouraged other Asian scholars to write papers that examine the validity and utility of Western communication theories in the Asian context. Some of the Bangkok seminar papers and recently written ones have been compiled by AMIC and are now undergoing editing for publication into a book on communication theories, by Asian communication scholars.

Two faculty members of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok are also currently engaged in a research to test the validity and utility of US family communication theories in the Thai context.

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) has also initiated a Curriculum Development Programme in 1983 to enable communication training agencies to improve (through research, among others) their methods of training in terms of two aspects: (1) new and appropriate training materials, and (2) a shift in emphasis away from an exclusive skills orientation to one that integrates cultural values within training and education (Failing, 1986). This pro-
gramme has led to a number of evaluative researches that look into the orientation of communication curricula in Philippine schools, as well as an examination of group communication processes and the development of alternative research methodologies more applicable to local societal conditions (Ramirez, 1986).

5. There seems to be a re-emergent mood to write communication books and other instructional materials in the Philippines today. This may be due in part to the moderate success of several communication books published by the Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA), like Arboleda's Communication Research, and Del Mundo's Writing for Film, for example. This may also be attributed to the fact that with foreign exchange restrictions local schools are left with little choice but to "get stuck" with outdated, oftentimes irrelevant textbooks from the United States, or to encourage their faculties to write manuals or textbooks that will have an Asian orientation as well as some inclusion of recent thinking on communication they have been exposed to by way of regional/international seminars.

This encouragement extends to graduate students who are also teachers in communication schools. They are encouraged to work on thesis projects that have potential as
school textbooks. Some of the recently published Philippine books on scholastic journalism, folk media, business communication, speech communication, news reporting, etc., started as thesis projects. Instead of doing basic researches that may only find themselves dusty and unused in library shelves, many students have opted to work on more practical, utility-oriented research-based projects.

6. Attempts are also being made to revive journals of communication studies. Some, like the DevCom Quarterly of UP Los Banos has been able to come out more or less regularly. Others, however, like the UP-IMC's Philippine Journal of Communication Studies was discontinued after four issues. Recent welcome news is that it has received a grant for revival. It is expected to come out in early 1987.

Media Asia, AMIC's quarterly, is able to carry many relevant articles on communication issues within its pages. Unfortunately, only a handful of the Philippine communication schools are members of AMIC. This fact limits the exposure of the journals contents to more communication-oriented audiences in the country.
7. In 1985, AMIC published *Development Communication Teaching: A Resource Manual*, an output produced by participants in an East-West Communication Institute seminar-workshop on devcom teaching. It is significant that it does not only add to the literature on devcom but also integrates materials from the "critical school" in Europe and Latin America. It is also noteworthy that the publication includes issues on communication policy and planning. (It must be stated here that this manual is only one of a series of AMIC publications on the subject of development communication).

8. Maslog (1984) has identified the Department of Development Communication, UP Los Banos, the Asian Institute of Journalism, and the Silliman University Department of Mass Communication as having taken greater initiative in developing and producing instructional materials for their academic programmes. One must mention the efforts of the Ateneo de Manila University and De la Salle University in encouraging research and publication in traditional media and popular culture, and of course the encouragement provided by the Communication Foundation for Asia for communication teachers and practitioners to develop books and other teaching materials. It is particularly noteworthy that these CFA publications are priced within reasonable reach of communication students.
9. To meet the problems of lack of qualified faculty, facilities and equipment, consortium arrangements have been entered into by a number of communication schools. There is, for example, the Inter-institutional Consortium Communication Arts Program of the De la Salle University, Philippine Women's University, Philippine Christian University, St. Scholastica's College, Manila and St. Paul's College, Manila in the southern end of Manila's University Belt (Munoz, 1985). These consortia maintain a common catalogue of library holdings and allow use of book and periodical collections by faculty, students and researchers from member-schools. The University of the Philippines in Diliman also has teacher-consortium arrangements with other universities that offer mass communication programmes. Thus, it is not unusual for a UP-IMC professor to be teaching in the Department of Communications of Ateneo de Manila University, or the Department of Mass Communication of Centro Escolar University.

10. Within the UP System itself, faculty exchanges between departments and colleges have also been encouraged. In the case of the UP-IMC, this has benefitted the Institute in several ways: (1) UP-IMC has been able to operationalize its avowed interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary orientation by calling on the expertise of respected pro-
fessors in other communication-related social sciences like political science, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, psychology and Third World Studies, among others; (2) it has been able to expose its faculty and students to the research being conducted by these professors in their departments and which could enrich communication research literature; (3) it has discovered the departmental libraries' holdings of books, periodicals and research literature that were otherwise unknown to them, thereby solving some of the problems related to lack of instructional materials; and (4) it has partly solved the Institute's problem of lack of qualified faculty members to teach certain courses. More significantly perhaps, the Institute's faculty and students have been exposed to other concepts and models, paradigms if you will, of development and modernization, certainly far removed from those described in the UNESCO-Schramm opus, Mass Media and National Development and Lerner's The Passing of Traditional Society.

Maslog is right when he says that the problems that faced Philippine communication education (and to a large extent Asian communication education) fifteen years ago are still the same problems confronting it today. But these problems will be there for many more years to come! The
thing to do is not to constantly cry and complain about them, or to pass out countless resolutions asking government and university administrators to do something about these problems.

Communication education institutions, their administrators and faculty members, can do something about these problems. The actions enumerated about should well demonstrate this. Certainly, these actions are small, and are not earth-shaking and global in impact; but they do contribute towards enriching and reorienting local communication education programmes. They reflect attempts, modest though they may be, of evolving more culturally relevant and useful communication education.

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