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Views On The Training Of Media Personnel

By

Oranuj Lertchanyarak
Country Paper: Views on the Training of Media Personnel
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The Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications at Thammasat University is the first institution of higher learning in the country which has successfully implemented a degree program in journalism and mass communication.

The Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication was established in 1954 as a department in the Faculty of Social Administration. In 1970, it became an independent department and with the expansion of academic curriculum in various areas of journalism and mass communications, it became a faculty in 1979.

At present, there are 39 faculty members, and over 600 students. Over 2,000 graduates of the Faculty are currently working in newspapers, radio stations, television stations, advertising agencies, public relations firms and other related firms.

General Objectives and Policies

The Faculty is now developing five academic sequences, namely print journalism, broadcasting, cinematography, advertising and public relations, and social communications. There are also four education support sections (Thammasat Radio Station, film and TV studios, editorial and printing laboratories, graphic arts) and a communication research center.

The Faculty aims to educate and train journalists, mass communicators and communication researchers who will be qualified to work effectively and responsibly for social and professional interests. Academic services to the communities and the practitioners in the field of communication are also the objectives of the Faculty.

To reach the mentioned objectives, the Faculty is always developing the curriculum, teaching staff and methods, material
aids, and the relationship with internal and external communication institutions.

With their knowledge and practical experiences, the graduates with a B.A. in journalism will be able to work in any field of communications. They can be either journalists, radio television producers, or programmers, film-makers, personnel in advertising agencies, public relations officers or media researchers. They are trained to be well-equipped for both public and private sectors.

The Faculty offers about 75 courses in five academic sequences for students. Most of the courses emphasise practicing a professional career. To support the objective of journalism and mass communication profession, the Faculty has set up the Thammasat Radio Station, film and television studios, editorial and print laboratories, and graphic arts for training the students.

Moreover, the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication views that training is very fruitful and important not only for the students but also for those who are interested in or those who are already in the profession. For this reason, a professional training program was organized to provide continuing education in this profession to the community at large. The Faculty provides several short training programs in mass communication such as newspaper, advertising, broadcasting, public relations, and photography to the general public, institutions and groups of individuals each year.

The training puts a focus on how to use each media effectively to fulfill the objectives of their respective institutions or individual needs. To achieve the results, the training courses will provide subjects on concepts and characteristics of each medium as well as subjects on how to skillfully operate apparels. Finally, we expect that the trainees will be able to apply their knowledge of what they have learned in producing programs (radio, television or film), slides, newspapers, editorials, books, magazines, photographs, advertising copy, public relations materials, dramas, etc...

Problems and Recommendations

There are two problem areas: equipment and media personnel.

Concerning equipment, we all know that the equipment needs for training in journalism and mass communication are very costly. Since the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications is a public school, it is difficult to get additional funding from the government to buy new or repair old equipment. Most of the equipment is obsolete and not adequate for the needs of the students. Due to this problem, some courses, such as television
production, film production and radio production has to limit the number of its students.

It is clear that the Faculty needs more money to buy new and modern equipment to serve students more effectively.

Concerning the media personnel, the problem is the number of trainers. There are a few institutions in the country that offer courses in training of trainers. Such courses are often available in foreign countries. It is rather difficult for trainers to go abroad for training. It is not only time consuming, but it is also difficult to get funds. Even if we have the funds, candidates may not be the right persons that should participate in such courses because they are not trainers. Some trainers learn more theories but lack practical experience. Trainers of this type need to brush up on their practice. Some have problems with the English language. These are the kinds of problems are faced in the training of trainers.

Because of all these problems, it is imperative to arrange courses in training for trainers in each country by institutions which are responsible for training. The institutions must find the funds or the know-how to train the trainers in the country. The studios and laboratories may be rented from the private sector. As a result, many trainers in that country can participate. The language barrier can be solved by using translators. We can get the right candidates. The institution will pay less or work within the same budget, but it will have better results.

In the meantime, the courses offered for trainers in foreign institutions must also be continued. This way, the training of media personnel will continue to progress.

Summary

The Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications, Thammasat University views the training for media personnel (students, trainers, other individuals) as necessary and important. The Faculty aims to educate and train journalists and mass communications personnel who will be qualified to work effectively and responsibly for social and professional interests. Academic services to the community and practitioners in the field of communications are also the faculty objectives.

A lack of adequate equipment is one of the obstacles in this field. We can solve this problem by urging the government, foreign and private sectors to contribute. Finally, training people in this profession needs institutional support, funding, and the know-how in training trainers both in the country and out of the country.