Malaysian Media Studies

Editors
Azizah Hamzah
Amira Firdaus

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA PRESS
KUALA LUMPUR
2015
# Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Amira Firdaus</th>
<th>vii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Factors Affecting Communication Studies in Malaysia</td>
<td>Syed Arabi Idid</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Demystifying Skills: The Early Years of Journalism Education in Malaysia</td>
<td>Ahmad Murad Merican</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Media Curriculum as a Panacea for Malaysian Society</td>
<td>Azizah Hamzah</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Media Education and Training in Thailand</td>
<td>Siriporn Peters</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Reflections on Creative Media Pedagogy</td>
<td>Harold Thwaites</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia: Industry and Academic Perspectives</td>
<td>Fadli Abdullah &amp; Md Sidin Ahmad Ishak</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Trials and Tribulations of Developing New Media Programs</td>
<td>Amira Firdaus</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Destroyer of Sacred Time and Local Culture: The Role of the Media in Indonesia
Deddy Mulyana

Peace Journalism and Peace Communicators: New Challenges in Journalism Education and Professionalism
Faridah Ibrahim

Media Consumption in Malaysia: A Hermeneutic Practices Perspectives
Tony Wilson

Closing Reflections on Media Training and Education at a Crossroad
Drew McDaniel & Chalisa Magpanthong
Introduction

Amira Firdaus
University of Malaya, Malaysia

Introducing Transformed Media Environments into Media Studies Curricula and Research Agenda

The media world is anything but stable. Media technologies are in a state of constant flux, evolving and transforming both in terms of its hardware and software. The transformation of the media has become defining characteristics of our globalized world. For the past two decades, the internet has increasingly played a pivotal role in facilitating informational, communicational, interactional and intrapersonal exchange and archiving. Media educators have been grappling with the problem of becoming experts in, and teaching, a subject that must keep up with constant transformation in the real world.

Rapid advances in media and communication technologies and accompanying developments in social, cultural, political, and economic realms pose unexpected challenges to the curricula of long-established media and communication schools. In particular, programs established prior to the sudden explosion of network-based communication technologies are faced with the challenges of keeping up to date with the ever expanding spheres of media and communication, and ever changing technologies and social-political-economic landscapes. Programs that have been traditionally nationalistic in nature must now find ways to reconcile structural constraints with the realities of
a new media environment. As opposed to rigidly structured nation-based mass media systems of the past century, the new global media sphere celebrates the breaking down of borders – whether spatial, cultural or social, and this is the media economy in which media and communication graduates will seek employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Today, in the second half of the second decade of the 21st century, this problem translates into what, and how to teach students of media, who in all likelihood, are more adept media consumers and producers, than are their teachers. In a region where educational institutions and educators don’t transform as fast as media technologies do, this is a situation to problematize, and reflect upon.

This edited volume comprises contributions examining critical issues related to media studies in institute of higher learning, including sampling of research charting new directions in Malaysian media scholarship.

This volume comes at a critical time of transformation. These transformations involve exciting network-driven advances in the sphere of media and communication, but also challenges brought about by a new rankings-driven landscape that universities must now compete in. These transformations in both the media and higher education are globalized transformations – occurring in all regions and affecting media schools in nearly all countries, whether developed, developing, or even on the brink of economic and political dissolution.

We revisit developments in the field of media education and media studies at a time when human society is experiencing a ubiquitous networked, digital media environment. Being connected is not a way of life in a civilization where digital networked technologies are no longer simply tools or a ‘medium’, but are the foundations of an all-encompassing ecosystem.

It is important to address the ways in which media and communication programs negotiate the complexities of providing useful and relevant education to its students, within the many structural constraints that inform current realities of the higher education landscape. This book thus seeks to address similarly pertinent questions:

- What path and trajectory has media education and research taken in Malaysia?
- What can we learn from media education as well as media and society, in culturally-similar developing countries in the Southeast Asian region?
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia

- How do we prepare students for a networked, globalized media environment?
- What are some new directions in research currently emerging from existing media scholars in local media schools?

These are questions that contributors of this volume strive to address. Their efforts reflect the concerns of media educators and researchers in Malaysia and two neighboring countries, Indonesia and Thailand. It brings together both established academicians and early career researchers in the media studies, providing a historical examination and current analysis of media education and practice, and specimen of current media studies research.

Three main themes underscore this volume, reflecting their importance to the evolution of media education, and to a certain extent, research as well:

- Historical development of media education and training
- Current developments and future trajectories of media education in a globalized digital media environment
- Analysis of media and society

Fittingly, some of Malaysia’s most established media professors provide us with a collective overview of the history of media education and training in Malaysia, particularly the development of media and communication from pre-independence and post-independence eras all the way through to the 21st Century. (Syed Arabi Idid-Chapter 1; Ahmad Murad Merican-Chapter 2, and Azizah Hamzah – Chapter 3). Each of these established professors discuss not only the historical development of media and communication studies in Malaysia, but also the pivotal roles of major schools of communication in advancing the field of media studies locally. Syed Arabi’s extensive experience in Malaysian higher education, in particular in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and culminating as recently-retired Rector of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) is reflected in his overview of communication schools in Malaysian public universities. He discusses American and later British, and more recently Australian influences on Malaysia’s communication schools and their academics. Ahmad Murad examines the development of the field and makes special mention of the establishment of journalism training in Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and UiTM. Azizah’s chapter also pays homage to historical development of the field, and she does so by noting current efforts in UM to meet the needs of future media practitioners.
Syed Arabi Idid’s chapter which is a detailed historical overview of communication studies in Malaysia examines factors affecting communication studies in Malaysia, and highlights the importance of a historical perspective on media and communication. Due diligence to history is important for new scholars of communication to understand historical underpinnings of their present-day academic careers. For both emerging and established scholars alike, a historical perspective provides local-grounding for Malaysian scholars who are increasingly encouraged to view their field from a global perspective. Last, but not least, according to Syed Arabi, the historical perspective facilitates observation of the development of the communication field as technology transforms the country’s media landscape.

In similar analytical and historical vein, Ahmad Murad Merican focuses the discussion to the sub-field of journalism training. Ahmad Murad invites readers to demystify Malaysian journalists’ skills by examining the early years of journalism education in Malaysia. He traces the roots of Malaysian journalism education to its press-led, trade-school beginnings in the 1960’s, and discusses the influence and defining decisions of players in government, higher education, and the press. The chapter analyzes the decisions and actions of key players such as Royal Professor Ungku Aziz, and academic activist Tan Sri Arshad Ayub, in charting the direction of journalism training and media education in Malaysia, and in shaping the higher education landscape in the field. The chapter highlights the importance of journalism education, and Ahmad Murad ends the chapter by reminding readers that “Skills alone cannot produce the scribe...journalism [is] integral to the forces of social thought and history – forging much of what we are today.”

Moving forward in time, and fully cognizant of historical antecedents, Azizah Hamzah’s chapter ponders upon media curriculum as a special panacea for Malaysian society. Azizah discusses the development of media schools in Malaysian universities, and examines the public university’s current trends in moving forward with media and communication studies in a changing media landscape. She argues that a “revitalized curriculum” encompassing theory and practical elements is needed not only to nurture creativity and critical thinking, but to foster cultural understanding in a multicultural country like Malaysia. Media literacy, ICT, and new media are enablers to help Malaysia realize its National Philosophy for Education (NPE). Azizah highlights UM’s efforts to revitalize the local media studies curriculum by developing new undergraduate and postgraduate programs designed to equip future media practitioners with the skills and values needed to contribute effectively to Malaysia’s media and cultural heritage.
Our earlier-mentioned journey through time across the Malaysian media and communication educational landscape is complemented by a comprehensive overview of media training and education in neighboring Thailand by an emerging scholar from Thailand. Combining history and current trends, Siriporn Peters (Chapter 4), discusses media education and training in Thailand. Siriporn’s chapter details the issues and challenges facing media educators and the general media public in Thailand. Despite provision of access to information and communication technologies (ICT) for all students, teachers and lecturers, along with ICT training for educators to create a teaching workforce able to integrate ICT into teaching curricular and pedagogies, media literacy among the general population remains very low. Media literacy training, according to Siriporn, is misunderstood, and the need for it is underestimated. Nonetheless, current efforts to step up media literacy training and new policies to further integrate ICT into higher education suggest that both the Thai government and its educational fraternity are working together to head in the right direction.

The second part of this volume moves beyond history of media education and training, to examine current and future directions in media studies education.

In similar vein to Azizah’s call for new curricula for a new media environment, Harold Thwaites, a self-professed advocate of ‘digital humanities’, draws upon his four-decade-long experience in teaching media and communication in Canada and in Malaysia to provide an overview of the range of pedagogical strategies for global media educators. In particular, he writes of his experience at Concordia University in Canada as part of a long-established media program, at MMU’s multimedia school, and most recently at a special center in UM dedicated to digital content and innovation in the field of humanities. Harold highlights student’s learning styles and capacities, and discusses pedagogies to address and enhance four basic learning processes among media studies students, involving information, skill acquisition, decision-making and interaction learning in group dynamics. Harold addresses long-time debates regarding generalists vs. specialists by proposing a program of study that provides students with both a broad overview of the field, as well as specialized skills. The take-home message of Harold’s chapter is the importance of arts and humanities to the teaching and learning of media studies and communication technologies.

Furthering the arguments forwarded earlier by Azizah and Harold, is a chapter on developing animation curricula for Malaysian higher learning institutions, co-authored by emerging scholar Fadli Abdullah
Malaysian Media Studies

and established professor Md Sidin Ishak. This chapter moves beyond
the general overview provided by earlier chapters and narrows the
discussion to a specific media curriculum. The chapter takes off from a
discussion of graduate employability and human resource development
to examine the situation of animation education at the tertiary level.
Based on expert interviews with academics and key personalities
in the Malaysian animation industry, Fadli and Md Sidin examine
essential elements for developing a university program of study to meet
industry expectations, and ensure employability of graduates. They
identify and elaborate upon five elements essential for a successful
animation program at the undergraduate level, namely: fundamental
knowledge and technical skills in animation; emphasis on practice-
based experiential learning; screening of applicants to identify students
truly interested and motivated to pursue a career in animation; close
cooperation between academia and industry; and injection of industrial
practical experience into the academic program.

Finally, to close the first part of the book is a chapter by Amira
Firdaus on the process of developing new curricula within the context
of changes in both media and higher education landscapes. Amira
highlights transformations in higher learning institutes’ ecosystem,
wherein emphasis is placed upon student-centred learning and
documentation of quality standards. Her chapter presents an
autoethnographic account of her experience as part of a team tasked
with developing new programs of study for a small media studies
department in a large public university. This chapter draws links between
ideal aspirations and practical realities of designing media studies
curricula to satisfy student desires, industry needs and higher education
institutional structures and quality standards.

The next part of this collection of chapters touches on ethics and
society. In addition to providing us with a historical look at developments
in the field, chapters by Malaysia’s established media professors provide
important analysis of media and society in Malaysia.

An equally well-respected media scholar from another neighboring
country, Indonesia, complements the Malaysian analyses with an
examination of the negative impacts of media on Indonesian society.
(Deddy Mulyana–Chapter 8). Deddy Mulyana critically examines the
role of media in Indonesia in threatening local culture, providing us
with a critical appraisal of the indirect impacts of media education and
media development on society. While acknowledging the important
role of media in society, Deddy reminds us of the negative implications
of a media-saturated society in his chapter, aptly titled “The destroyer
of sacred time and local culture: The role of the media in Indonesia”.

xii
Deddy discusses various threats wreaking havoc upon Indonesian culture and values, suggesting that much of the destructive effects of media are unintended consequences of a media-saturated, information-focused global culture. Having diagnosed the problem of media and society, he offers prescriptions to possibly address the corrosive effects of global media on local culture, specifying the need for insightful action on the part of government, media researchers, as well as individual media consumers.

Faridah Ibrahim, an established professor of media studies, echoes Deddy’s call for a more socially responsible media. Faridah presents a sort of meta-analysis and literature review of peace journalism as an alternative to conflict-themed war reporting practices and research. She invites us to analyze the role of peace journalism and peace communicators, as new challenges in ethics to journalism education and professionalism. Faridah discusses how peace journalism offers a new dimension to reporting of conflict and war globally, and highlights the importance of peace journalism from the perspective of professionalism and ethics. This is an important chapter, bridging the nation-based analysis of media education with a discussion of important global issues in a conflict-ridden world. This chapter is particularly pertinent to heighten media educators’ awareness of the importance of ethical issues in the training of journalists, as well as in media literacy training for the general news-consuming public. Journalism educators must pay special attention to the essence of Faridah’s argument – the peace-building via ethical journalism – and encourage media practitioners to live out important universal human values of compassion and love for humanity, in their practices, be it as reporters, editors, media managers, public relations practitioners, or even as future educators and trainers.

Touching upon media consumption in an altogether different dimension from Deddy’s chapter, well-known media scholar Tony Wilson offers a unique discussion that delves beyond the technologies and the content of media, to explore the hermeneutics of human behavior in media consumption. Wilson shares his interpretations from a phenomenological study of media savvy teens’ visits to shopping malls. Based on a focus group discussion (FGD) with Malaysian university students Wilson provides an interpretive account of how media and marketing influence the narratives of their everyday practice of visiting shopping malls. He explores how these students story telling of the mall as a “second home”. Tony’s chapter invites media researchers to move beyond media content as text, to examine consider and media consumption as text.
The concluding chapter by internationally-known media professor, Drew McDaniel weaves together the main themes and issues visited in earlier chapters, into a coherent narrative highlighting the implications of media transformations upon media education, and vice versa.
Factors Affecting Communication Studies in Malaysia

Syed Arabi Idid
International Islamic University Malaysia

Introduction

Scholars have written about Communication Studies in Malaysia but much more is needed and, perhaps, it needs to be rewritten as events develop and as new materials are found to provide different perspectives. Among the early scholars touching on the subject was Mohd Hamdan Adnan (1988) who wrote about mass communication and journalism education programmes in Malaysia. Hamdan commented that mass communication and journalism had gained acceptance and recognition in institutions of higher learning and professional organisations. He described the growth of communication education and training at the university level then as “astonishing” (p. 67). Other scholars (Asiah Sarji & Idid, 2003; Idid 2000, 2003s, 2003b, 2013, Merican, 2005, Vincent Lowe, 2005) have also written on communication studies in the past and those have become rather dated, though the accounts serve as historical references. A conference paper on communication studies (Idid, 2013) touching on the generation of lecturers in the various communication departments gave emphasis on the public universities. This paper is yet another attempt to update our understanding of communication studies in Malaysia.

Over the years there has been a tremendous growth in the number of communication studies programmes in Malaysia. This is to be
expected because communication studies has been in existence since 1971 with Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), being the first to offer it followed by Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), and many other institutions since then. Communication studies in its formal form, has been with us for 42 years. And along the way we have seen changes in several areas: in the course contents, in the institutional set up, in the perspectives and in the acceptance of communication studies itself among our academic peers.

Several Scholars have discussed communication studies see it exploding as a field worldwide (Peters, 2008). New departments in media studies or mass communication have been established in many countries, such as in China, Greece and in Latin America. Communication studies was “afoot” in the United States in the 1930s (Sproule, 2008) or as claimed by Arul Aram (2004) in India by 1920. By 1990, a scholar opined that communication studies has emerged as a discipline, drawing its strength from the numerous traditions and institutions (Sproule, 2008).

The growth of communication studies is affected by political, social, legal and institutional changes. In Malaysia, the legal framework in which the universities operate, the relaxation in the 1990s to allow for the growth of private universities, the establishment in 2004 of the Ministry of Higher Education, and the quest for global ranking has affected the development of universities and, by extension, communication studies in Malaysia.

**Perspective**

The history of communication studies in Malaysia is best reflected in various perspectives. Like Collingwood (1963) who called for the need to study historians to better understand the history that is being studied, one could also posit that one need to understand the communication scholars to understand communication studies. Scholars write (and say) and what they write best reflects their views of the communication field. Their views of communication have always been part of a bigger scenario that they are consciously or are unconsciously aware of. In tracing the development of the communication studies in Malaysia, one cannot isolate the developments in Malaysia from what is happening in other parts of the world.

There are several reasons why a historical perspective on communication studies requires some serious reflection. A historical perspective providing the grounds on which the present communication
field is based would be important for the new communication scholars to understand their academic career. The second reason is to enable Malaysian scholars to view communication studies within a global perspective without inadvertently neglecting their home-based history.

The third reason is to see how the field itself has developed over a period of time. In that development process, new technologies have been included as communication. Mass communication has been accepted as an integral part of the modern industrial and post-industrial society. In some eras or in some communication studies, it is still debatable to include or to exclude cassette or videos to be part of the field. In recent times, satellites, computers and internet have been included as part of communication studies. The development of the media in Southeast from the colonial past to the present time is well documented by McDaniel (2002) who has traced the advent of radio and newspapers before many nation states achieved independence to the advent of the internet.

With that hindsight, I would like to begin by looking at the development of communication studies in Malaysia and, would also draw on the relevant developments of communication studies in other parts of the world, i.e. mainly the United States.

It is important to discuss the concept of communication as it determines what constitutes communication and what technologies determine or shape the field. It also means what technology is accepted to be studied in the communication field.

The communication field can be divided into many viewpoints, but as a start, among others, it is shaped by two perspectives. On one side, we have the rhetoric whose premise is the development of communication based on speech. The other side would be the mass media whose premise is technology-based. Both have their strengths and weaknesses. Both have their histories to tell. However, one has to acknowledge that the rhetoric has a longer history. In the United States, both rhetoric and the mass media have chartered their own course of history in the development of communication studies. Rhetoric has emphasized speech, interpersonal communication, and writings, while the mass media have ventured into journalism, advertising, public relations, and broadcasting. The two have remained apart, each with its own proponents and viewpoints but recent discussions have accorded a common appreciation of the respective viewpoints (Sproule, 2008).

Communication can also be seen within the theoretical spectrum, with the understanding that they be functionalists/positivists or critical/cultural. We are again guided mainly by the debate between the two
schools of thought with different methodologies, and also among players from two continents.

Earlier it was charted that the different periods in the growth of mass media and journalism studies were means to update our understanding of communication studies in Malaysia (Idid 2003, 2013). Recently, more factors have been posted to enrich our understanding.

The First Phase: British Colonial Period to Rise of Nationalism

It would be appropriate to begin the study of the history of communication by looking at events during the British colonial period. The scholars were mainly British administrators, and some Malaysians taking a historical approach, trying to unearth the development of newspapers, the ownership, and the technical aspects of the media. It was often descriptive.

If one were to study the writings on the press within the context of the social science, one would notice the progressive phase of the development in society. Tham (1988) wrote that the early phase of social science development in Malaysia was seen in the writings of British administrators who were keen to understand the natives and other peoples, in order to administer the country well. Much of these early writings on Malaysian society can be found in the Journal of Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS).

JMBRAS was a prestigious journal that published research about the history, the geography, and medicine of the ordinary people. It also contained articles on journalism. Malaysia had much to offer to the British and they gathered materials for others, including the other natives, to understand society at that period of time.

But one native stood out. He was Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad (Zaaba), the well-known writer who later rose to become a lecturer in the School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London. He wrote, among other topics, of journalism on growth of Malay journalism. There are certain characteristics of Malaysian journalism that should be noted: Malaysia was one of the earliest pioneers of journalism in the region; beginning under colonialism to the days of independence till today.

Zaaba (1941) wrote a piece on the early development of the Malay press, and Cheng Mong Hock (1967) on the Chinese press reflecting the early state of journalism in the country. William Roff’s (1957) book on early Malay nationalism was based on the contributions of the press for independence in the country.
Scholars and practitioners, writing on the early development and practices of journalism, have noted the growth of communication as an study and as a field of occupation. Writings on early journalism and media came in two forms. One was the product of extensive research by researchers and doctoral students who delved in-depth into the documents in the archives and conducted meaningful interviews with the surviving members of pre-independence Malaysian journalism (Asiah Sarji & Halimahto Shaari, 2006; Mohd. Safar Hasim, 1996, 2006; Mohd. Dhari Othman, 1989).

The troubled days shaped the writings of the media under the first phase. The rise of nationalism and the march against colonialism reflected the uncertainty of the time. This early phase of journalism included print and broadcast media. Instead of merely describing the growth and development of print journalism, writings of the day linked journalism with political institutions, wherein the Malay press was supporting the independence cause. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, journalism became linked with development.

The print media as an institution was in collaboration with the political institutions, one friendly to the Malaysian based political institutions but antagonistic to the British administration. Safar Hasim (1996) and Cheah Boon Kheng (1987) illustrated well this relationship between the press and politics. The reasons are obvious. The press people were politically conscious and the politicians knew the importance of the press as a vehicle to express their political sentiments.

The administration was not to remain idle. The rise of nationalism was viewed as a threat to the British administration. The British, however, were not able to understand it yet because they were preoccupied with the events in Europe, because matters affecting London were more significant than the events threatening Malaya or Singapore then.

The appointment of G.L Peet as the Director of the Department of Information, in 1939, and later with Victor Purcell as the Director of Information and Publicity paved the way for the growth of government information services. It would later follow with the appointment of personnel in broadcasting and public relations such as Mubin Sheppard on 1 April 1946 as the First Director General of Public Relations. The institutional development in Malaysia was part of the British Empire’s preparedness for the Second World War when Britain established the Ministry of Information in London and various Departments of Information in its respective colonies. Malaysia was no exception (Idid, 2005).

The development of communication studies in the United States and in other parts of the world including Malaysia appears to be similar.
In the United States, the setting up of the Committee on War Information (succeeding in spirit and action of the Creel Committee during the First World War) and subsequent events thereafter, consolidated the growth of communication studies. Scholars began to speak about the blessings of the Second World War that gave rise to a more structured way to the study of communication. Scholars learned the usefulness of communication as a field of study and also how important it was as a practical subject. The research endeavors and tribulations of communication pioneers shaped communication study in the United States. It was to give rise to a field with its strength in multiple methodologies but inherent weakness in theory. As Lang (2013) says, field studies share common characteristics, weak in theory but strong in methodology. But there have been differences in opinion on who were the fathers of communication studies, ranging from Schramm’s perspective to Pooley (2008). Schramm was basically American but Pooley appropriately included scholars from Europe. But what about scholars from Asia? And Africa?

The Second Phase: 1957 to early 1970s

The first phase coincided was the rise of nationalism in the midst of troubled times an it also marked the uncertainty of the time given the rise of Hitler and Mussolini in Europe, the Japanese incursion into China and Southeast Asia during the 2nd World War. The war was also an impetus for the rise of nationalism in Asia. The second phase saw the growth and development of print journalism, with studies linking journalism to political institutions and national development. Tham (1988) quoted works by Nik Hassan (1963); Balakrishnan (1971), Coats and Dyer (1972), Glattbach and Anderson (1971); and Coats (1973) on dealing with media development in the country. The second phase still focused on journalism, the print and the broadcast media, but such writings were descriptive. These included Ghazali Ismail’s Wartawan and Tempat Jatoh Langit di Kenang. (For further insight on this period see Adnan Hussein, 1999). The press was closely linked with the early political awakening of the country. The relationship of journalists and politicians were close. Cheah Boon Kheng wrote of A Samad Ismail, a veteran journalist. “Samad Ismail’s professional role as a journalist is difficult to separate from his role in politics” (Cheah, 1987, p. x). Again politicians were also eager to cultivate the friendship of journalists, but were also eager that they (the journalists) were no threat to the politics of the day. It was this close link that saw media organizations developing and later
being incorporated as part of organisational political control and caused many to moan the inability of the press to play a meaningful role in society (Zaharom, 1992, 2002).

The second phase saw the rise of Kuala Lumpur as the new media capital, away from Singapore. National newspapers like *Utusan* and *Berita Harian* were to have their circulations from Kuala Lumpur. The formation of Malaysia in 1963 was an added impetus to the growth of Kuala Lumpur as the media capital of Malaysia. Malaysia felt the need for more manpower and trained journalists and allied communication practitioners in public relations, advertising, broadcasting and film. More universities were set up which greatly influenced the setting up of communication departments under the third phase.

**The Third Phase**

The establishment of communication programmes, departments, faculties in universities marked another milestone in the institutional development of communication studies in Malaysia. It was obvious that more varied areas could be studied about the mass media and its societal concerns than merely describing the existence of media institutions. The setting up of academic institutions justified the need to send Malaysians to obtain higher degrees at the masters or doctoral level to become lecturers upon their return. In the early days, the United States was the natural destination as journalism and mass communication was new and regarded as the “in thing” there. But to Malaysians, communication is communication, not realising that in the United States there were communication schools that emphasised on the media and others that emphasised on interpersonal communication or rhetorics. When mass communication was discussed it implied “mass media”, and interpersonal communication was referred to as communication between and among individuals.

There was also the growth of components within the communication field itself. This meant that communication scholars accepted that there are sub-fields like public relations, advertising, journalism, film, and others to be studied under the rubric of communication. The exposure to communication studies in the United States led to the accepted idea of a professional orientation in Malaysian communication studies programmes.

The communication course offered in USM was the first inkling of what communication was all about. Communication was structured in streams: Public Relations, Development Communication, Journalism and Broadcasting. In UKM, UiTM and UPM, courses on Journalism,
Advertising, Broadcasting and Development Communication were offered. What was evident was that the public universities were offering courses directed at the professional dictates of the field. The Government, in turn, was delighted that courses were tailor made to produce graduates for the industry.

The outlook of the early scholars was mainly American due to their training. On top of that, the pioneers who set up communication programmes at USM and UiTM were from the United States: John Lent and Leslie Sargent were some of the pioneers in communication programme in USM that brought along an American approach to studying communication.

Malaysians were mainly sent to the United States to obtain their post graduate degrees. The early scholars in USM like Vincent Lowe, Ramli Mohamad, Mansor Ahmad were also US trained; in UiTM, those sent to US included Bebe Chooi, Hamidah Karim, Shariffah Mariam, Mohd. Hamdan Adnan, Kiranjit Kaur; in UKM Samsuddin A Rahim was sent to the University of Wisconsin; Rahmah Hashim to Ohio State University; in UPM, Yusoff Hussein, Mohd Fadillah Kamsah, and Saodah Wok were Wisconsin graduates.

In addition to the expansion of communication programmes at older Malaysian universities, new institutions such as Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) also offered communication programmes of their own. USM’s communication programme grew into the School of Communication; at UiTM, the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies was established. In UPM, what was formerly a department graduated to semi faculty status, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication. The same thing happened with UUM’s School of Multimedia Technology and Communication. In UKM, a department grew into a School within a faculty, School of Communication and Media Studies. In UM, a writing programme developed into a Department of Media Studies. The programmes at USM, UPM, IIUM and UiTM continued to place emphasis on academic and professional programmes, with majors in journalism, public relations, advertising, broadcasting. This is indeed relevant when students decide on their career and are then sent for their practical training.

Within that given framework narrated above, the direction of the communication programme in both the public and the private universities in Malaysia took a different direction. Two points can be made here; one, the legal institutional framework, and two within the universities, the arrival of trained scholars graduating from non American universities. The change in government policy in allowing the setting
up of private universities and the increased difficulty of entering the United States following September 11, induced Malaysians to study elsewhere. We are, therefore, entering into the fourth phase where events are directly affecting communication studies in Malaysia.

Current Scenario: The private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1966 and the Setting up of Private Higher Educational Institutions

The educational landscape changed with the setting up of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. Under a change in government policy, the University and University Colleges Act, 1971 (UUCA) was amended and the introduction of the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act, 1996 allowed for the setting up of private higher educational institutions.

An early sign in the change of the government’s educational policy was seen in the setting up of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in 1983 under the exemption provisions of the UUCA to be registered with the Registrar of Companies and enabling it to conduct its courses in English. More private institutions of higher learning were to be set up with the introduction of the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act, 1996. In 2009 there were 20 Private Universities, 20 College Universities and five Branch Campuses and 470 Colleges. Malaysians were very innovative, offering various twinning programmes (0+3, 1+2, 2+1 and 3+0) with foreign universities. 1+2 meant that the education was in Malaysia for one year, after which the students would go abroad for two years and be awarded a degree by that foreign university. Later it developed into a programme with two years in Malaysia and one year abroad to get a degree from the foreign university. Recently there have new options where a local educational institution offers a diploma and the student, upon completion would go abroad for a year or even for several months, to be awarded a degree from an overseas university.

The tie up was mainly with British or Australian universities as distance and cost worked against the Americans. For example Kolej Damansara Utama (KDU) had a tie up with Murdoch University in Australia on a 3+0 basis for degree programmes, that awarded Bachelor of Communication degrees in Communication and Media Studies, and in Public Relations.

There are many types of private institutions of higher learning. The University Colleges could offer courses and the degrees would be
awarded by foreign universities. There were also foreign universities with branch campuses in Malaysia, such as Nottingham University, University of Technology Sydney and Monash University that offer courses similar to parent university, and their degrees awarded by the parent institutions abroad.

**Setting up of the Ministry of Higher Education**

The setting up of the Ministry of Higher Education in 2004 had a big impact on the status and direction of higher education in Malaysia. The Ministry instituted several changes, among which are the setting up of research universities, Global Ranking status for Malaysian universities and the intake of foreign students. Four universities were elevated to Research University (RU) status, with each given extra funding for their research and efforts to become globally ranked universities. They were UM, USM, UKM and UPM. (Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, UTM, was the most recent to be elevated to the status of a research university in 2011).

Besides being research universities they were expected to be globally ranked and among the criteria were the intake of foreign students, foreign lecturers, and the ratio of graduate to undergraduate students. This meant that communication departments had to find more foreign students and more postgraduate students. This also meant that undergraduate classes had to have two modes, the power point presentations were in English and the lectures in Malay. As for assignments and examinations the students were allowed to use either English or Malay.

Communication lecturers in RUs had greater access to research funding than lecturers in other universities. One would imagine the growth of research in the five universities given the fund and the encouragement. Several ministries such as the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) also provided funding to stimulate research among universities in Malaysia.

**Effect of September 11**

As mentioned earlier, in the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of Malaysians were sent for undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes in the US. September 11 caused a big change. Malaysians, especially Malays, felt unsafe going to the US, and preferred instead to go to UK, Australia, New Zealand and some even decided to do their degrees at home.
Another factor was the encouragement by the Malaysian Government for the public universities to develop postgraduate programmes. Government grants were given to Malaysians and to foreigners to do their postgraduate degree programmes in Malaysia. It was also another point to gain for Research Universities to develop their postgraduate degree programmes and to produce as many postgraduates as possible to help the universities achieve Key Performance Indices (KPIs) set by the ministry. The overall effect was a dilution of ties with US universities, and strengthening of ties with universities in UK and Australia. The locally trained postgraduates had another advantage in that they were able to do more research in the Malaysian context, but this was offset by their lack of overseas exposure.

The effect of September 11 and the growth of postgraduate programmes in Malaysia resulted in more Malaysians getting their degrees locally and from universities in U.K, Australia and New Zealand than from U.S.

**Conclusion**

This paper took into account the four periods in the development of Communication studies in Malaysia, beginning with the colonial period, independence to the 1970s, the formation of Communication Schools from 1970s to 1990s; and the current phase starting with the growth of private higher educational institutions, the effects of September 11 and the setting up of the Ministry of Higher Education. There are various factors affecting communication studies during the four periods that were discussed, among them are the political, the legal and the institutional factors. Each of the factors contributed differently during of the four periods.

Sproule (2008) made an observation on the growth of Communication studies in the United States “... on its having safely metamorphosed from loose concepts in the 1930s to the borderline field in the 1950s to full-fledged discipline at the beginning of the twenty-first century” (p.174).

The first period was the beginning of communication consciousness brought in by the British because of the events relating to the Second World War and also relating to their own colonial interest. Studying the newspapers and using the media was in the best interests of the Colonial Power. The events preceding to Independence saw journalists and the politicians in close relationship in pursuit of a common interest and this close relationship was to continue immediately after independence until it was too close for the journalists to exercise their professional writings.
It was in the 1970s with the growth of universities that communication departments came into existence. With the need for training and the training was made available in the United States, Communication studies was American oriented. This American dominance was also evident in the communication studies offered by Asian universities. Events in the 1990s and 200s changed the scenario. The promotion of private educational institutions in Malaysia, the September 11 event in the United States, and the creation of the Ministry of Higher Education resulted in the dilution of American dominance in communication studies in Malaysia. Private University Colleges establish links with more universities from the UK, Australia and New Zealand, as compared the US. Malaysians pursuing studies abroad also choose these countries. More lecturers are receiving their post graduate education in these countries.

Now there are less American trained communication scholars in Malaysia compared to those trained locally or in UK and Australia. This orientation of training would influence the development of communication studies in Malaysia as there would be various viewpoints, as scholars research on the various aspects of the communication process and phenomena in the country. The methodology and theory courses offered are becoming less functionalist/positivistic, and more cultural critical in approach.

If Sproule (2008) talks of communication being a discipline in U.S in the 21 Century, can the same be said of communication studies in Malaysia? Merican (2005) has his own opinion on the shaping of the communication discipline in Malaysia.

The blending of American and UK/Australian communication scholarship in Malaysia is an exciting phenomenon to observe. Some universities, for example, UKM, IIUM and UPM, offer two method classes, qualitative and quantitative. This opens up discussions to theories functionalist/positivists, critical and cultural. The “debate” in the communication field is conceived as being fought between two camps: the critical/cultural school and the positivists. In Malaysian communication studies there could also be a debate between the foreign oriented and the local orientation of the courses, and the courses being practical or academically inclined (COHECS, 2010).

Communication studies will see a mixture of positivistic/functionalism, cultural, interpretative and critical input as there will be greater input from the local scholars.

While public universities concentrate more on research, less is said about private universities in research activities given the resources available to them. But research would go a long way in evolving a
Factors Affecting Communication Studies in Malaysia

Malaysian perspective as well rather than functionalist/positivistic, critical or cultural that is mainly foreign in outlook. Moreover, the historical roots of these perspectives are different from the Malaysian historical background. Given this standpoint, the communication studies perspectives that are being debated need more input from other countries. Malaysians graduating from various universities are expected to reflect on this issue in the coming decades to add greater depth to communication studies in the future.

References


Malaysian Media Studies


Factors Affecting Communication Studies in Malaysia


**Selected Seminars On Communication organised in Malaysia.**

+ July 15-16, 1975: Seminar on Communication organised by the School of Mass Communication, Institute of Technology MARA, Kuala Lumpur Hilton, Kuala Lumpur

+ 1979 Malaysia hosted the Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Asia-Pacific. Malaysia became the signatory to the 21-point Agreement.

+ 2-3 March, 1987. Communication Education Seminar, UKM 1987 held at UKM. with the following objectives:
  • to identify the status and development of communication education in Malaysia
  • To review systematically and effectively the teaching approaches
  • To review and identify the development of communication education from aspects of research, findings and publications

+ 3-4 September 1991 Communication Research Seminar 2. “Consolidating Knowledge Through Communication Research.” Organised by Department of Communication, UKM.

7 & 8 September, 1993. Communication Research Seminar 3, UKM.


+ 1997 Women in the Media. Organised by Unesco, the Unesco National Commission of Malaysia and the Department of Communication, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

+ 26-29 April 1999: International Conference on Communication in the Asia-Pacific Region. Towards the 21st Century. The conference was organised by Unesco, the Unesco National Commission of Malaysia and the Department of Communication, UKM.
2

Demystifying Skills: The Early Years of Journalism Education in Malaysia

Ahmad Murad Merican

Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS, Malaysia

Genesis

After more than four decades, it is time to reflect and reinterpret the nature of journalism education that was first introduced in higher education in Malaysia in 1971. This is significant in light of the practice/theory debate and apparent dichotomy in approaching the field. From Minden to Shah Alam, the exposure to the corpus of communication in Malaysia began with journalism. This paper highlights the nascent years of journalism education in the aftermath of the May 13 1969 incident, especially in the first two years of the 1970s decade where Malaysia, as a young nation, was consolidating itself vis-a-vis democracy, development and modernization, economic and professional development. It suggests that what had been trained was not only skills, but context in the enrichment of thought and values.

The teaching of journalism in Malaysia grew out of Minden in Penang and Shah Alam. From the first few courses beginning June of 1971 at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM, then Universiti Pulau Pinang) through July of 1972 at the School of Mass Communication at Universiti Teknologi MARA (then Institut Teknologi MARA), Journalism as a field of study in Malaysia has never looked back.

In the formal sense, education in, and exposure to the corpus of communication in Malaysia began with journalism – then, and to
some extent, presently, include all aspects of mass communication. In the thinking during the decade of the 1960s, it was quite futile to distinguish and make fine distinctions between journalism, mass communication and communication. Media as in Media Studies was yet the nomenclature of the day, although ‘media research’ was used, at least at the University of Malaya in the 1970’s.

In October, 1963, Malaysia’s first journalism training with the founding of the ‘Journalism Training Project’ was launched with the help of the Asian Program of the Zurich-based International Press Institute (IPI), the Asia Foundation, the Malaysian government, and the press. Its goal was modest, i.e., to provide short-term extra-vocational training for beginning mass communicators.

That year saw Ahmad Rejal Arbee from Kedah joining the profession. At Berita Harian, Ahmad Rejal was tutored by two Journalism Laureates - the late Tan Sri A. Samad Ismail and the late Tan Sri Mazlan Nordin when he joined Berita Harian in 1963. Samad was editor and Mazlan was news editor. It was Mazlan who was dishing out assignments to the cadet journalists. Journalism teaching in Malaysia was a six-month full-time course beginning Oct 1, 1963. It was initiated by the first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, who in his speech spoke of the government’s intention of setting up a national news agency with the assistance of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This news agency that eventually crystalized into the Malaysian National News Agency (BERNAMA) officially came into being by a 1967 Act of Parliament, and became operational in May 1968.

According to Ahmad Rejal, Ong Kim Hoe, the then Head of the Press Division, Department of Information, assisted the IPI course director with the setting up of the Journalism Training Project. Ahmad Rejal remembers receiving a prize in the form of a book voucher from the Tunku for Best Malay Language Trainee. P. C. Shivadas, formerly of the New Straits Times, was awarded the best trainee. More than 60 people attended, half of whom were from the Information Department, including from the newly minted Radio Malaysia (from Radio Malaya). Television was about to appear not too long after.

1 Datuk Ahmad Rejal was my editor-in-chief in the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) in the early 1980s. Before joining Bernama, he was news editor at the New Straits Times (NST). In recent years, I had picked up fragments of his experience as a journalist and the earliest instance of the teaching of journalism in Malaysia through our involvement in the Malaysian Press Institute (MPI)-Petronas Journalism Awards. We sit on the panel of judges under the auspices of the MPI. (Correspondence with Datuk Ahmad Rejal Arbee, 15 May 2011.)
The 74-year-old Ahmad Rejal, who was a columnist with *Berita Harian*, recalls some of the participants who attended Malaysia’s first Journalism course. The course had lectures on Journalism and “we also had to take typewriting” which enabled many like him to develop the skill of “touch typing”. But it was not all on skills. Participants were also exposed to The Press and the Law by the then Attorney-General, Tan Sri Abdul Kadir Yusof.

The year 1963 also saw the establishment of the Institut Kewartawanan Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. According to Kliesch (1971) an associate professor and director of the School of Journalism, Ohio University, Athens, it offered ‘courses’ ranging from one to five years in duration in ‘journalism and related fields.’ The Institute’s director was one Muslim Nazmi, without a university degree and without substantial professional experience. Kliesch describes the entire operation as inadequate. There was a staff of four, including two Indonesians who held bachelor’s degrees, and a secretary. The latter was in possession of what is apparently the only typewriter in the institute. Housed in the upstairs of a two-story residential-type building, the facility essentially comprised of the director’s office, secretary’s office, library and one classroom, which could seat about 15 people. Library holdings consisted of perhaps 200 volumes of which less than 10 per cent dealt with journalism or related fields. Educationally, the school may charitably be termed as pathetic. Kliesch recalls: “When one pauses to consider that students spend $300 a year, and one or more years of educational commitment to pursue the school’s miscellaneous awards, the entire operation might better be termed criminal.” Kliesch’s (1971) report was accepted as the basis for the establishment of the School of Mass Communication at Institute Technology MARA in 1972.

That was more than five decades ago. By 1966, the earlier ‘Journalism Training Project’ grew into the South East Asia Press Centre.  

---

2 They included the late Datuk Salleh Pateh Akhir (former Director-General of Broadcasting), the late Zahari Saad and the late Mokhtar Shuib. *The Straits Times* sent 10 people including Shivadas, Charlie Chan (who later joined *The Star*) and Samad Mahadi, former Utusan group editor-in-chief. Also from *Utusan Melayu*, we saw the likes of Subky Abdul Latif, who later held several senior editorial positions at *Utusan*, including editor of the monthly *Mastika*, and later led *Suara Rakyat, Suara Merdeka, Harian Watan* and *Sarina*; Mohd Noh Padidin, Rosli Deli (who later joined *Radio Televisyen Malaysia*) and the late Abu Bakar Ihsan. Among the Information Officers were the late Shariff Burok who later became Director Press Division and Press Attache in London, and Othman Said, who later became the Director-General of the Community Development Department. There were also participants from Sarawak and Sabah. One such was Dr Peter M. Kedit, who was to become a University of Sydney-trained ethnologist, and Director of the Sarawak Museum (Dec 1991-April 1996).
For a time, the Press Centre was the mainstay of journalism education in Malaysia.

**Prospects as Conceived**

John Glattbach, then director of the Southeast Asia Press Center, and Mike Anderson, an American Peace Corp Volunteer in 1971 concluded that the outlook for the press in Malaysia as ‘an independent agent for development and freedom of expression in a democracy was not bright.’ The authors were referring to the period preceding and the aftermath of the May 13, 1969 incident. They reasoned that the political unrest showed that institutions and values borrowed from the British were not meeting the needs of an “independent, developing Malaysia.” Anderson (1973), who later conducted a study on the first decade of journalism education in Malaysia, relates that the country had a comparatively late start in formal instruction in journalism or mass communication, attributing this to the influence of the British colonial rulers.

While many countries in Southeast Asia then were starting their own journalism schools, Malaysia favored the practical on-the-job ‘Fleet Street and British Broadcasting Corporation’ type of training rather than formal classroom study. Robert Van Niel, who was dean at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (formerly University of Penang) in a paper titled “Communication Education in Malaysia,” delivered at the Communication Teaching and Training Seminar organized by the Singapore-based Asia Mass Communication Research and Information Center (AMIC) (now renamed Asia Media Information Center) and the University of Indonesia at Denpasar, Bali in 1972, observed that:

> Following the British and continental European tradition which sees journalism in the limited sense as a guild into which one is initiated rather than educated, the Malaysian scene is not wildly enthusiastic or receptive to the education at the university, or post university level in communication. It is especially in the print media which is longest established that the tradition is most deeply entrenched.

Indeed, until 1971, journalism or mass communication education was not received well in the eyes of Malaysian planners and academics. The University of Malaya (UM) then one of the three universities in Malaysia (apart from USM, the other being the just established Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia set up in 1970), had for several years debated whether a ‘trade school subject’ like journalism be taught at the
Demystifying Skills: The Early Years of Journalism Education in Malaysia

institution. By 1970, a decision was made not to establish a journalism school at UM.

Although an undergraduate journalism program was rejected, UM begun a modest two-year, postgraduate pilot project of media research. In that sense, in represented the beginning of formal inquiry into the subject. It was entrusted to the English Department. An interdisciplinary program leading to a Master of Arts degree was planned with the Southeast Asia Press Centre and Survey Research Malaysia (SRM). At the time, the latter was the only organization in Malaysia conducting research on the media, examining patterns of media literacy and media content.

The person primarily responsible for the decision not to establish a school of journalism at UM was the university’s Vice Chancellor, now Royal Professor Ungku Aziz. That decision was based on what this author feels is a narrow concept of journalism; and if one could understand the mindset then, journalism was conceived as only comprising reporters and sub-editors of newspapers. That conception ignored the whole gamut of related communication functions within government, business, and society at large. Kliesch in referring to UM’s decision as “an unhappy one,” argued:

Thus limited in both scope and time, the outlook grossly underestimated the acutely real need for improved mass communication in Malaysia, a need to be articulate shortly thereafter in the Second Malaysia Plan. That document concerned with nation-building, both in terms of economic growth and in terms of modernizing the attitudes of Malaysia’s citizenry, has considerable implications for mass communication (Kliesch, 1971).

To Kliesch, Ungku Aziz made the wrong decision. Being a major university located at the hub of professional mass communication activities, UM was a most desirable home for such a mass communication program. Kliesch believes that any other place outside of Kuala Lumpur, however good it may be, is something of a compromise. As soon as UM opted out of the field, it was replaced by more willing suitors.

USM filled the vacuum. USM’s Vice Chancellor, Hamzah Sendut, had a different idea in mind. He instructed that a communication program be put together, and it began operations in June of 1971. Designed by UNESCO Regional Broadcasting Training Advisor for Asia, Alan Hancock, the program was first located within the School of Cultural and Community Studies, which later became the School of Humanities. John Lent later joined as program director in 1972.
Arshad Ayub and ‘Kajian Sebaran Am’

When Arshad Ayub visited Ohio University at Athens, Ohio, on June 23, 1970, he made known his interest in establishing a journalism and communications program at the then Institut Teknologi Mara (ITM), now upgraded into a full-fledged university, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM). The early syllabus was based on language, liberal arts and professional specialisation. Even before he visited Ohio’s College of Communication and its School of Journalism, Arshad had advocated the teaching of journalism in Malaysian higher education as far back as the mid-1960s.

Graduates, especially in journalism from what began as the School of Mass Communication (popularly known in Bahasa Melayu as Kajian Sebaran Am) and now the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, should realise that their intellectual “father” is Tan Sri Arshad Ayub. This dawned upon me some years ago while combing the UiTM archives to research the beginnings of journalism education in Malaysia. Many know of Arshad as a pioneering educationist who was instrumental in ITM’s growth. And as a paradigm basher, he opened up minds, identities and values. Many know him as a task master.

But perhaps not many know him as an early advocate of the liberal arts and the humanities in Malaysian higher education, which was brought to life in and through ITM/UiTM’s system of core and elective subjects, and its School of Mass Communication. He introduced Russian, French and Arabic. Mandarin was made compulsory for business courses, and Tamil for plantation management. Then there was Logic, Literature, and History, not forgetting Asian Politics, Sociology, Psychology, and International Relations. In one of his speeches some years back, resonating a liberal arts sentiment, he stated that education is not a special copyright of any one individual organization. It knows no boundaries. (Arshad Ayub, telephone conversation 7th Feb 2014).

Arshad once recalled Tun Razak’s message in the first issue of Utusan Pelajar, an Utusan Melayu publication in 1970. Tun Razak stated that “The present young Malaysian must be developed into a scientific race.” The words “scientific race” caught Arshad’s attention. Arshad takes the term “scientific” to mean “educated” – middle-class professionals and entrepreneurs that could transport Malays into more viable occupations in the private sector. “Scientific” could also mean that it was “incumbent on us to change mind sets” – from accepting a general education system to a more precise and analytical one that can help develop the country’s resource with its nation building interest at heart. To change mind sets, Arshad developed strategic alliances with foreign universities and funding bodies in the United Kingdom, the
United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Human capital assistance came from the participation of Australian Services Abroad, the US Peace Corp, British Volunteers and the Canadian University Service Organization.

Courses like accountancy, architecture, business administration and management, engineering, hotel catering and management, library science, and mass communication were initiated – the first of such courses offered in Malaysia at that time.

Arshad pioneered the pragmatic “hands on” approach to meet industry, manpower needs and economic advancement of the nation. At the same time, Arshad was the first to introduce the concept of the humanities in Malaysian university education. ITM’s Journalism Program then was conceived within the domain of the Liberal Arts – the development and the enriching of thought and intellectual skills with its simultaneous application to nation and society. The little known journal *ITM Quarterly*, published in the early 1970s, contains some invaluable discourse in the intertwining nature of education in nation building, Arshad’s vision in the development of higher education in Malaysia and his ideal of the student as the new Malay intellectual. The Journalism program resonated the ideal. In a larger context, Tan Sri Arshad Ayub liberated the Malay psyche. (See also A. Murad 2014).

**Concluding Remarks**

Gone are the days of American Peace Corps volunteers who have etched much of the template for the Journalism and Mass Communication curriculum in Malaysia in the early 1970s. Their ghosts still linger in much of the teaching and texts. Journalism education — some call it media education — since then is offered in both public and private universities and university colleges. The debate (and apprehension) between theoretical knowledge and practical skills still rages on, at varying intensities (See Preface, Introduction and Chapter 13 in A. Murad 2008). What I have attempted is a reinterpretation on the approach toward conceptualizing journalism education. What was brought into Malaysia from the United States may be suggestive of a liberal arts approach, and not, as perhaps erroneously conceived, as a vocational skills approach.

I am quite sure we are still debating on the difference between journalism education and journalism training; or between producing the thinker and producing the technician; or delving into a redefinition of Journalism and the Journalist. I suppose we have to “touch” the past of the enterprise, craft, profession and vocation of journalism, and on
hindsight, how a humanities and liberal arts approach may have been appropriated for journalism education. And in that sense, viewing the intimacy of nationhood to nation-crafting and nation-building, we cannot separate ink from newsprint, nor voices from radio, nor images from television. And, today, multimedia (both the medium and the message, as well as the messenger) from journalism. Skills alone cannot produce the scribe. We see Journalism as integral to the forces of social thought and history — forging much of what we are today.

References
Introduction

Media Studies is a large and continuously growing interdisciplinary study which includes cultural studies, discourse analysis, sociology, management, and political science. The formation of the Malaysian media and communication schools in the 1970s were assisted by US and British scholars. Therefore, the curriculum reflected the Western-centred approach to media education. The review of curriculum is always encouraged as part of the strategy to promote the ethos of media and communication schools as panacea to the expectations of the National Philosophy of Education (NPE) to meet the challenges of governing the complex Malaysian society. With rapid advances in the Malaysian media with regard to the progress in multimedia technology and the introduction of digital services, Malaysian higher education providers (HEPs) in media and communication studies feel the need to reconfigure and revitalize the curriculum. It is suggested that HEPs renew efforts to exert the Asian and other local voices and presence in Media Studies. The new emphasis in curriculum include reminders to strive towards a balanced approach to theory and practice to address the growing importance of creative thinking skills and creating cultural understanding within the disciplines of humanities and social sciences. The whole approach to the teaching of media education also needs new
strategies to engage the traditional mass media and the new interactive and converging media.

Overview

Bearing in mind the overall process and forces of on-going globalization, economic and technological challenges, Governments all over the world have come to the realization that the time is right for further enhancement of the education and higher education curriculum. Governments agree that there is urgent need for highly skilled and competitive human capital, a workforce for the future which is increasingly centred on innovation and technology not only for digital natives and digital immigrants but also for the global masses.

The Malaysian Government has always regarded education as one of the the key foundations for nation-building and sustainable economic growth. This is in tandem with the Malaysian objective of transforming the nation into a world-class information and communications infrastructure and towards a better, world-class education. The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2015 reiterated the need to produce graduates that can thrive and compete in the global marketplace.

Malaysia has been one of the major recipients of media training, most of which came in the form of short-term courses. As early as the 1970s UNESCO conducted seminars, workshops and training sessions in Malaysia. Author of this volume’s closing chapter, Ohio University’s Drew McDaniel was also involved in training sessions in 2001 and published a manual for media trainers. UNESCO has also initiated a number of studies into how the rapid development of information and communication technologies has transformed countries around the world into information and knowledge societies. In this aspect, institutions of higher education are set to play a fundamental role in establishing knowledge societies based on a radical review of the traditional patterns of production, diffusion and application of knowledge. The oldest institution of higher learning in Malaysia, the University of Malaya (UM) was established in 1905 when the British established the King Edward VIII College of Medicine in Singapore. Modeled for the most part on British universities, other new universities were established in the 70s, the National University of Malaysia (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, UKM), Science University of Malaysia (Universiti Sains Malaysia, USM), the Agricultural University of Malaysia now University Putra Malaysia, (UPM). Now, with government and private sector funding, the country has a network of public and private
Media Education in the Malaysian Context

The central question at this point is what actually is media studies in the Malaysian context. Syed Arabi Aidid, (2013) Adjunct Professor at the School of Media and Communication Studies (UKM) and Professor at the Department of Communication, International Islamic University Malaysia, (IIUM) in his paper presented at the International Conference on Media and Communication (MENTION 2013) provided a comprehensive chronological study on the development of media education in Malaysian higher education institutions. The Science University of Malaysia (USM) was the first higher education provider (HEP) to offer the communication course in 1970. UM started on a slightly different mode in the 1977/78 session when it admitted the first intake of students into the Creative and Descriptive Writing Programme under the Department of Malay Studies, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

When the Creative and Descriptive Writing Programme began in UM, the academic staff comprised of lecturers from the Malay Studies Department who were trained in UM itself, the US universities in Boston, Ohio, and California. The second batch of appointments was trained in the UK traditions in Stirling, Scotland and Westminster in London. The latest appointments at the department include young academics from UM, Melbourne and RMIT in Australia and one from the University of Denver, US.

Two academicians from the second batch of appointees were sent to the Scottish University of Stirling to pursue their doctorates at the Centre for Publishing Studies situated in the English Department because the Department of Media Studies at UM was preparing to offer the postgraduate diploma and later Masters in Publishing Studies by coursework and research. The British Council was instrumental in setting-up this programme and awarded slots for exchange of academics by the British Council’s Committee for International Cooperation in Higher Education (CICHE) and awarded the author its Fellowship to pursue the Masters in Publishing Studies in Scotland.

Following the traditions of the Malay Studies Department, the Creative and Descriptive Programme maintained the emphasis on the writing process as a priority at all levels of teaching and learning across the curriculum. Great writers create an alternative world, either via a digital or the printed source (Farhi, 2013). Students were required to
produce and refine various types and forms of writing creative media messages and narratives for different audiences in the disciplines. Creating media messages is crucial in media studies. Writing is the first step towards making of any media or video or online content. Teaching writing on various topics like the impact of media on youth, children or the elderly, integrating media with language, environment and global warming, understanding advertising, social media are of utmost importance. By refining the writing skills, the programme aimed to provide students with the means and opportunities to enhance their creative expression and the ability for aesthetic appreciation. The programme was later re-established as a full Department, the Department of Writing and again in what is seen as a significant shift in the curriculum review, reinvented itself as the Department of Media Studies during the 1993/1994 session in its effort to upgrade the programme in tandem with the rapid development of the media and communication schools at the global level. The department conducts periodic reviews of its programmes every few years, coming up with revised and improved course offerings. One flagship programme developed by another author in this volume, Harold Thwaites (inaugural Director of UM’s Centre for Creative Content and Digital Innovation), in collaboration with the Department of Media Studies, is a Masters in Digital Humanities. By being listed in the QS-Top 200 World Class Universities, UM has been granted the status of self-accreditation for its courses. Nevertheless, this new programme had to be rigorously vetted by a series of quality controls in the form of meetings and review by the Board of Studies comprising of academics and representatives from the industry and another round of review by three external programme assessors, consisting of international and Malaysian media academics.

An Appreciation for Western Input in Foundation of Media Education

Malaysian media and communication academics tend to think that the media are the most influential and continuously growing interdisciplinary field of study and research in today’s world. At the societal level, media construct and disseminate information and knowledge and form perception through their content in the form of print, visual or online. Media shape our sense of self and identity and our links with society and the world at large. Therefore, media academics need to continually enhance curriculum to reflect the most important developments in academic inquiry. Procedures such as internationalizing course content and enhancing teaching and learning through multimedia are often
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia

evaluated in review of academic programmes which must be executed every three years.

Furthering Syed Arabi’s contention in Chapter One that Malaysian communication studies is now less influenced by American functionalism due to our exposure to UK, Australia, New Zealand and local Malaysian perspectives, I argue that upper most in our thinking as well as the nagging feeling is that we should relook into the very foundation of media and communication studies since its inception in the western world which inadvertently lead us to the foundations established by European scholars such as Marx, and the Frankfurt scholars Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse in the 1920s and 1930s to the British Cultural Studies in the University of Birmingham under the leadership of Stuart Hall in the 1960s. These are all part of the Western ideology used to organize western society as it approached modernity and later to the ideas of postmodern thinking of Foucault, a French intellectual. These ideas arose out of the Western attempt to deal with capitalism, democracy and personal liberty, the rule of law and the rapid onset of technology impacting upon their society (Rosenberry and Vicker, 2009). These very same founding fathers greatly influenced the social sciences and formed the basics of communication studies. Over the Atlantic, early communication scholars such as Lasswell (1902-1978), Lazarsfield (1901-1976) Schramm (1907-1987) and Shannon (1916-2001) remained influential among Malaysian media academics.

There are many more historical examples of scholars who set the foundations of social sciences leading to the onset of European imperialism and colonial settlement in the final centuries of the last millennium. An anthropological perspective is necessary to understand the impact of Western-oriented approach to media and communication studies in the Asian and Malaysian contexts. Many scholars point out to the assumption of hegemonic and taken-for-granted commonalities that the North had been the aspired leader to every society everywhere, the universalizing discourses of modern Europe and the United States (Said, 1995).

Therefore, the early Malaysian school was founded and developed along the lines of Western-Libertarian philosophy of the media and for good measure elements of the Developmental Communication was injected to explain the differences in the way the local educators chose to divert from the Western model. Of course this is an ingenious way of amalgamating the best of the West and the East, a local player’s ability to adapt to Western ideals and orientation. There is always a readiness for local players to exhibit willingness to immerse and merge into a
whole new philosophy and system of the media, one that takes into account both Eastern and Western elements.

Malaysian roots in media education

A number of studies (Lent, 1988, 2004; Mohd Hamdan, 1988; Syed Arabi, 2013) indicated that media education in Malaysia began as a response to a call from the Government to establish media studies courses in the Malaysian universities. Syed Arabi alluded to a request for UM to initiate courses but somehow it did not take off, leaving USM instead with the task. A well-known media scholar from US, Professor John A. Lent was instrumental in forming the first media and communication school in USM in the early 70s. He reported that at the point of inception there was some element of academic selectivity by certain quarters who felt that media and communication studies may not be suitable for the ivory towers (2004). But to be fair, there are certain issues that need further deliberation when offering new courses, especially when trying to ascertain its status in the disciplinary traditions, questions about the mix between theory and practice and the nature of vocationalism that is attached to some of the media and communication courses.

Two British academicians, Professor David Buckingham of Loughborough University and Professor James Curran of Goldsmiths also discussed the need to defend Media Studies or media education. Professor Curran defended Media Studies as an academic discipline and claimed that British work in this field is well-accepted and recognized beyond its shores. Professor Buckingham looks at media education from the school to the university levels and speaks about the failures and successes of media education. The writer is deeply encouraged that both academics speak of the increasing importance of Media Studies and education because the media are central to society and life in the modern world. The intake of students, especially at the postgraduate level into the British Media Studies schools has been increasing steadily compared to other areas (Buckingham, 2013).

UM had chosen to approach media education as a study about the media, educating students for critical analysis of the processes of the media, from traditional to electronic and digital media, especially in the construction of media texts, the narratives, and process of construction and finally how these constructions reflect and impact on Malaysian society. Skills in writing for the media are very important because the quality and compelling content contribute towards the development and quality of life.
Therefore UM’s vision of media and communication studies in 1974 was to offer it as a major/minor degree programme with the writing component as a disciplinary subject, teaching amongst others, writing for the various forms of media in the tradition of creative and descriptive writing in Malay and English language. This approach looks at cultural production as artefacts that reflect and shape social forms and identities. The cultural industry nurtures fuller understanding of us and our pursuit of knowledge. This move marked the formal establishment of media and communication studies as a field of inquiry within the arts, humanities and social sciences of UM.

The establishment of the USM School of Communication led to the launching of similar courses in many other universities. The formula of the Western-centred curriculum for developed countries was duplicated in the local HEPs including University of Technology MARA (UiTM) in 1972, UKM in 1975 and UPM in 1996. The newer universities including UUM and universities in the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak too established similar schools. The private HEPs began establishing media schools after an amendment to the University and University College Act of 1971 and the 1992 amendments, paving the way for courses at amongst others, Taylors University, Segi University, UTAR and branches of foreign universities like Monash, Curtin and Nottingham.

Towards a Malaysian Input: Media Education as Panacea

In trying to explain the complexity of governing a country, most scholars conducting research on Malaysian-centred topics begin with the perfunctory introduction to the background of the country, that it is multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultured. Then only would they provide the demographics and the psychographic details. But it is perhaps pertinent to point out the racial composition of the country, of which 63 per cent are the Malay majority indigenous group with large minorities of Chinese and Indians in Peninsular Malaysia. In the East Malaysian state of Sabah, the Kadazandusuns are the majority and in Sarawak, the Ibans are the majority. Malay is the official language while the Chinese speak Cantonese, Hokkien and Hakka dialects and the Indians speak either Tamil, Malayalam, or Telegu. After the ethnic breakdown, there is a further breakdown according to religious beliefs, about the major religions, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Christianity and Sikhism. Despite these vast differences the communities live in racial harmony but Malaysia does face real challenges in sustaining racial harmony and stability due to the religious differences.
and the ethnic wealth gap. Our diversity is a blessing as well as a source for potential rifts. As a federation of 13 states under a constitutional monarchy, the Head of State is the King, Yang Dipertuan Agong who is appointed for five years from amongst the nine states with hereditary rulers. The King is also Head of the Armed Forces and all laws and appointments of cabinet ministers require his approval.

To get a picture of the development of the country, the 2014 KOF (from the German word Konjunkturforschungsstelle or Business Cycle Research Institute) in Zurich published the Globalisation Index which may provide a clue. The Index ranked Malaysian globalisation at number 22 out of 207 countries. A further breakdown in category shows that Malaysia is ranked at number 34 in the Social Globalisation Index while the Political Index ranked Malaysian at number 46. The Social Globalisation Index, for instance, looked at the data on information flow such as Internet users, television ownership and trade in newspapers in the countries profiled.

Such indicators show that the Government’s hard work and commitment to developing the country has paid off. But there is still an obsession about nation-building, ethnicity and national unity. The Rukun Negara (RN), the ideological framework of the nation was formulated in 1969 after the May 13 riots. This national framework is to be adhered to in all its political, economic, cultural and educational policy in the country. Since education is one of the main focuses for nation-building, the RN is also the guide for the 1988 National Philosophy for Education (NPE).

The NPE states that education should produce citizens who are “intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and have firm belief and devotion to God”. Along with this policy, a number of other legislative reforms were introduced, including the Education Act, 1996, the National Council on Higher Education Institution Act 1996, the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act, 1996, the Accreditation Board Act 1996 and the Universities and Universities Colleges (Amendment) Act, 1996.

There is a national obsession to create a nation of Malaysians. This is certainly not a simple matter. In fact, it would need a fresh injection of ideas and a major review of the ethos of media education by the policy makers and media educators at all the HEPs. The Government has also recognized the challenges of implementing the ICT as an enabler in delivering the NPE. The new media is seen as the key to educating the nation. Indeed, usage of new media certainly helps the Malaysian society to be kept informed and educated. The growing awareness of the new communication and multimedia technologies remained one
of the achievements of the country and paved the way towards the era of digitalization.

As part of the new emphasis on communication and knowledge creation, the Ministry of Education, for instance, initiated the formation of the Council of Higher Education Communication Schools (COHECS) in August 2006 to refine the various objectives in the review of media and communication HEPs. In 2003, the Media Studies Department of UM convened the first International Conference on Media Education and Training (ICMET), bringing together media academics from US, Southeast Asian Universities as well as local scholars. In August 2014, a second ICMET was convened with over 100 local and international participants paying close attention to the new education paradigm. Essentially the second ICMET looked into the latest status of transformations of various media schools due to the rapid advances in media and communication technologies. Media HEPs need to develop and keep up-to-date with the advances and find ways to reconcile current shortcomings in the educational curriculum with the new realities for obvious reasons. The current students are digital natives which differentiate them from the generations before. These so-called digital natives are most versatile in the digital environment and are skilled multi-taskers, very technology savvy and able to contribute to the creative industries and new frontier of digital platforms and businesses. The media academicians as well as the media practitioners have to initiate a transformation of their work culture as they face one of the toughest challenges. Most of these organizations have realized that they either evolve and innovate or fail in their aspiration to meet the demands from the market on technological transformations of their organizations.

Transformation Landscape and Readiness
Essentially, we are aware that we need a new and revitalized curriculum that is able to guide students to navigate within the normative and ideal ways of the media system. The learning outcomes must adhere to the principles and style of professional writing for the media, the ethical and principles of mass media and communication. The concept of the free flow of information needs to be emphasized.

Similarly, the NPE needs a curriculum review that makes an attempt to think through the requirements of harnessing the creative potential of young people and firmly elbowing them in the process of attaining cultural intellectualism, knowledge and understanding between the complexity of beliefs, culture and language. We need to reflect on
current priorities in the structures of emerging media and how to induce the ideal form of media education in the networked, globalised media environment. The HEPs need to redefine the structures they operate within, the needs of the stakeholders and the media industry.

The reviews should prioritise creative teaching and learning, nurture creative thinking skills and more importantly for Malaysia, media education should foster cultural understanding. It is therefore imperative that curriculum review focuses on key media education concepts including text, theory, production and evaluation, thus empowering students to gain media literacy and autonomy in applying key concepts with full ethical responsibilities in the media professions.

In his address after accepting the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humanities at the University of Malaya, President Daisaku Ikeda (2010) of Soga University, Japan, acknowledged that Malaysia is a pioneer as well as a model for building a harmonious society rooted in deep respect for diversity and plurality. He also noted that the University of Malaya itself has the mission “to advance knowledge and learning through quality research and education for the nation and for humanity.” This approach reflects the Soka kyoikugakaku taisei, (The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy) of Josei Toda (1900-58) and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944). Soka Gakkai values the lives and social development of societies and is totally opposed to the rise of ultra-nationalism of Japan which led to the Japanese occupation and disruption of Asian societies.

Asian-centred values as well as media perspective may be seen as discourse of local empowerment, for Asians to talk to other Asians in a language that mutually support and strengthen each other. At a deeper level of consciousness, Asians hope to be free from Western-centred narrative, in other words, to be free to express ‘Asianly’.

We have noticed that every time a new “new” media and information technology is introduced, the HEPs need to address the ‘new’, such as the shift of focus from individual media, from print culture to television. The convergence of the various media in recent years has changed the very dynamics of each medium. This new dynamics needs to be addressed and brought into the classrooms. A whole new approach needs to be devised so that a critical interpretation of the traditional and the new “new” media could be harnessed as valuable sources of information and knowledge.

Keenly aware of not trying to be the mirror image of developed and industrialised countries, Malaysian media studies need to think seriously about the shift from Western-centred models and try to reconfigure and revitalize the local curriculum. And there is also a standard question that media academics have: If there is irrelevancy, what is the actual
irrelevancy? What do we do with it? How do we make use of information that we get from media, especially the new “new” media? How does it impact on our senses, beliefs and norms? Academics have to think about how we can approach this in a more meaningful and effective way in the classrooms. How do we decide the limits on self-expression? Do we allow “stuff” that the digital natives and the digital immigrants have read in online magazines, chatrooms, YouTube, Twitter and FB to reach them without prior imbedding a sense of self-censorship? We do not want some person on TV talking about militancy and being jihadists as the true path in Islam. Also, we wonder whether our students are able to have easy answers to the complexities of the struggle between the Sunnis and the Shias that is dividing the Arab world and creating the impression that the Middle East is in such a bad state and that Islam is a threat to the non-Muslims all over the world.

In fact, one of our External Assessors for the new programmes suggested that the Department instil some local and Islamic values in the curriculum. We have abided to the request by including topics on addressing Islamic or Muslim prejudice in the communication theory paper, especially in discussions on forming a theoretical framework for studies on Anti-Muslim prejudice and Islamophobia (Johnson, 2011).

This leads us into our mind-mapping because we should be able to guide students to value what is in their mind after we guide them with teaching and learning and delivering the learning outcomes. The outcome should really be about value in students’ own minds, individuals that consume media. This approach puts creativity of students’ first, individuals who are exposed and influenced by certain bits and pieces of the media. Therefore, the question about what approach to take is connected to media books, journals, magazines and other media literature. But what books? By whom? Do these literatures reflect their own sense of themselves? Do these cultural and intellectual products teach them about how to use media and to communicate?

Students need to be motivated to explore the new media and to be versatile with the new tools, such as blogs, Yahoo and Google groups, Skype etc. As all students are digital natives, media is the most important part of their lives. They are constantly on the move and on the Internet and other mobile appliances. New “new” media is an important feature and would shape the future of new journalism and the new fully converged newsroom culture shall undergo change in the technological, institutional and cultural sense.

Due to this total immersion into the online, it is crucial for media education to develop students’ conceptual understanding of the media, encompassing critical reception and interactive production via the
media. They need to be equipped with the armour to analyse all data, or Big Data as it is now referred to, and become discerning consumers of media, skilful in deconstructing media content and able to produce their own creative input.

UNESCO initiated a set of curricula for journalism education to address the demand for trained journalists in developing countries. In July 2010, the World Journalism Education Congress was held in Rhodes University to discuss the UNESCO model. One of the subjects included media technology and media culture. Cases on multimedia technology and online journalism stress the need to provide journalism students a broad knowledge and practical skills in the emerging forms of journalism based on the Internet and other digital platforms.

Presented at the Congress were papers from the Philippines, which proposed elective courses from the Humanities such as Contemporary Asian History and research on Asian Journalism. There was a reminder to overcome a Western orientation by countering it with Internationalisation, Asianisation or if need be, De-Westernisation which need to be addressed in order to provide a balanced curriculum and insight for media scholars.

In relation to the national requirements as well as a firm belief that change is urgent, we have as mentioned earlier on, presented to UM Senate our two Masters programmes for approval. We have identified all the new priorities for creative and cultural education in the Department of Media Studies within the social sciences and humanities education. The new programmes try to provide a balance between theoretical and practical learning. In the new structure, there are courses on theory that would develop analytical and critical understanding of, for example, the new convergence, understanding of key concepts relating to text and production and creation of online networks and audiences.

It is imperative to look for and provide indigenous solutions so that a higher level of local problem-solving can be executed. In doing so, media academics all over should respect the individual circumstances that shall over a period exhibit ability to localise as well as to globalise, and in doing so media academics should be mutually respectful and acknowledge the efforts of trying to understand the continuously advancing and changing media education. The news organizations and the newsrooms have to try to keep up with the latest developments in new media technology. Students and journalists have indicated strong inclination to embrace the wired world and realized the importance of continuous learning and adjustments process. New “new” media is an important feature and shall shape the future trends of new journalism.
and the new newsroom culture shall be undergoing change in the technological, institutional and cultural sense.

**Conclusion**

The picture emerging from this analysis of local media education is that of a transformation and interactive system that respond to major changes over different historical phases and going through the various reinventions and reviews culminating in major changes.

If we are to look at media reconfiguration as an academic journey from one different restructuring point to another, then at this particular point we appear to reach a most current destination. The continuous enhancement of course content as responsive products to specific demands from historical, cultural and political contexts is tantamount to a sense of a good fitting, a good mixture of the application of Western-centred theories to non-Western, Asian and our local needs.

**References**


Media Education and Training in Thailand

Siriporn Peters
Southwestern Oklahoma State University, USA / King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Thailand

Introduction

Media education and training in Thailand is in a progressive stage. Thailand was among the first of the Asian nations which embraced new media (Ginsburg, Abu-ughod, & Larkin, 2002). In Thailand, the creation of an ‘official’ national cultural identity has been an explicit project of the Kingdom for at least the past ninety years. The mass media have been central to that project, which includes the extension of a single public education system and mass literacy in spoken and written Central Thai as the national language. People in Thailand have been “trained” to participate in nonindigenous rituals of consumption through media, both print and broadcast (Ginsburg et al., 2002).

According to literature, the rapid political, social, and economic transition in various parts of the world is producing critical demand for creating effective, equitable, and socially acceptable communication strategies that help to solve social problems. Entertainment and education media has been introduced in Thailand to produce social change. An entertainment-education communication strategy has been introduced and developed in order to overcome “boredom-education” programs. Entertainment is considered 1) perennial, 2) pervasive, 3) popular, 4) personal, 5) pleasurable, 6) persuasive, 7) passionate, 8) profitable, and 9) practical. Therefore, many education media producers are seeking to
create programs that are entertaining, educational, socially responsible and commercially profitable (Deman & VIIInnmnath, 1999).

Thai media industry has grown significantly. Print media, broadcast media, internet, and mobile service are the current media which Thai people consume daily. Media education is important for the young because it is concerned with teaching and learning about the media (Buckingham, 2003; Cheung, 2009). The goal of media education is media literacy (Buckingham, 2003).

Media literacy is the ability to interpret, analyze, evaluate, and create personal meaning of verbal and visual symbols we take in everyday through television, radio, computers, newspapers and magazines, and advertising, as well as produce communication in a variety of forms as Elizabeth Thoman, a pioneering leader of the media literacy field, explains (Thoman, 1993). However, media literacy is not a finite body of knowledge, but rather a skill, a process, a way of thinking. It is always evolving. To become media literate is not to memorize facts or statistics about the media, but rather to raise the right questions about what you are watching, reading or listening to (Stein & Prewett, 2009; Thoman, 1993).

The main goal of media literacy is not all about preventing students from negative influence of media as we all understand. It also empowers them to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of image, language, and sound. It is skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages. As communication technologies transform society, they impact our understanding of ourselves, our communities, and our diverse cultures, making media literacy an essential life skill for the 21st century (Cheung, 2009).

This paper, has four main sections. The first two sections will review Thai education system and education policy in order to help readers to have a better understanding of the current status of Thai media education. The other sections will discuss issues and future challenges of media education and training in Thailand.

**Thai Education System**

The Thai education system composes of formal, non-formal and informal education (Chyi & Sylvie, 2001). According to the Ministry of Education, the current Thai education systems is based on reforms introduced by the 1999 National Education Act which implemented new organizational structures, promoted the decentralization of administration and called for innovative learner-centered teaching practices. The Thai education
system provides nine years of compulsory education, with twelve years of free basic education guaranteed by the Constitution (Chyi & Sylvie, 2001). The twelve years of free basic education includes: six years of “Prathom” (primary education, P.1 to P.6) and six years of “Mattayom” (Secondary education, M. to M.6). Enrolment in the basic education system begins at the age of six.

Higher education is predominantly provided at universities and colleges, at two distinct levels of educational attainment, the diploma level and degrees level. Admission to the higher education sector is through the High School Entrance Examination taken at the end of Mattayom 6. Recent reforms have increased the importance placed on Grade Point Averages (GPA) for final university entry (Thailand Ministry of Education, November 2008).

There are over 37,000 educational institutions and over 2.2 million students enrolled in the higher education sector. Participation rates of university age students have increased significantly over the last few years from an average of 26% to the current average of 40%. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in higher education opportunities with 78 public universities and 89 private higher education institutions (Thailand Ministry of Education, November 2008).

Non-formal education is offered as a means of providing lifelong learning opportunities to the out-of-school population. Strategies include developing a range of life skills through distance learning, establishing workplace and community learning centers and promoting the sharing of resources with the formal school sector. In order to support the promotion of a lifelong learning culture in the non-formal education sector, internet connections have been made increasingly assessable in rural areas and system improvements have been implemented to provide recognition of prior learning and facilitate credit transfer (Thailand Ministry of Education, November 2008).

Informal education is part of the vision of developing a learning society which includes a clear need to promote the idea that learning can also take place outside the formal space of the classroom. Support for informal education in reinforced by a network of over 800 libraries, at district and provincial levels, together with a network of 15 science museums. Educational television and radio programs providing direct teaching as well as enrichment activities are broadcast nationwide through seven satellite transmitted channels from the Royal Sponsored Project and the Ministry of Education. In addition, every school is connected to the internet, with the aim of serving their local communities, and computer to student ratios are target to fall from 1:46 to 1:20 (Thailand Ministry of Education, November 2008).
Thai Education Policy

The Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016) emphasizes people-centered development, and participation in development process. Development is intended to generate resilience in each dimension of Thailand’s development for balance and sustainability by strengthening and utilizing capital endowment. (National Economic and Social Development Board, 2012).

As global trends continue to influence the Thai economy and society, the government of Thailand recognizes the importance of information and communication technology (ICT) for achieving broader social and economic objectives. To utilize the full potential of ICT, Thailand’s National ICT Plan has set three agendas. The first agenda is to invest in an equitable information infrastructure to empower human ability and to enhance life quality. The second one is to invest in people to build a literate populace and an adequate informational technology manpower base. The last agenda is to invest in good governance (Belawati, No Date).

The global expansion of ICT in education has ushered a growing concern about its effectiveness to improve the quality of instruction and to improve overall student outcome measures. There is widespread belief that ICT empowers learning through a transformational effect leading to new student-centered educational paradigms that help foster intellectual creativity, problem-solving abilities, communication skills and other forms of higher-order thinking. This belief is often reflected in a national policy to integrate ICT across the curriculum (UNESCO, April 2014).

As Narongsak Boonyamalik of the Monitoring and Evaluation Division, Bureau of Policy and Planning, Ministry of Education stated in Thailand’s country paper, the 1999 National Education Act forms the core of the education reform movement. The direction points toward the philosophy of education provision for the purpose of lifelong learning and societal participation. The goals and objectives of ICT for Education Programme are as follows. Firstly, give all teachers, college lecturers and professors, school children and college students opportunities to learn to use ICT. The goal is to employ ICT as an enabling tool to access information and gain knowledge through self-paced learning, or through interactions with teachers and fellow students.

Secondly, link schools, colleges, universities, and libraries electronically to provide students, teachers and lecturers an enriched environment in which distant resources can be made available remotely at their fingertips. Finally, make full use of ICT and distance education to
meet the needs and aspirations of all citizens for continuous education and skills upgrading without regards to age, profession, distance, or geography (Boonyamalik, No Date).

**Current Situation of Thai Media Education**

Thailand has been relatively active in promoting one-to-one computing, adopting the One Tablet Per Child (OTPC) scheme which provided one tablet per child in Grade 1 by 2013. Beginning 2014, this scheme is also being extended to cover Grade 7 students to achieve one-by-one computing in secondary education (UNESCO, April 2014). However, the highest proportion of computer and internet users were in the higher education level (Figure 1). (Thailand National Statistical Office, 2012)

![Figure 1: Percentage of population aged 6 years and over that use computer/internet by education level](Source: National Statistical Office, 2013 (Thailand National Statistical Office, 2012))

As Len Masterman asserts (2005, p. 2), media’s prime functions are to provide news, information or entertainment for their audiences. It also goes beyond the view that the media exist to promote or sell products, as the media are constantly changing and expanding and developing, frequently in the direction of an increasingly sophisticated management of their audiences. Sometimes the media open up more democratic possibilities. Media education and educators need to be equally flexible and open to change (Masterman, 2005).
Masterman also points out that media education is essential because of the following seven reasons: 1) the high rate of media consumption and the saturation of contemporary societies by the media; 2) the ideological importance of the media, and their influence as consciousness industries; 3) the growth in the management and manufacture of information, and its dissemination by the media; 4) the increasing penetration of media into our central democratic processes; 5) the increasing importance of visual communication and information in all areas; 6) the importance of educating students to meet demands of the future; and 7) the fast-growing national and international pressures to privatize information. (Masterman, 2005).

According to the results of the Information and Communication Technology Survey in Households in 2012, the number of household having information and communication technology devices went up from 2008 to 2012 (Figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of household (Per thousand)</th>
<th>Percentage of households having information and communication technology devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>18,279.8</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>19,060.2</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>19,644.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>19,786.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>20,025.4</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2: Number of household having information and communication technology devices*

According to the same survey, the total number of Thai population aged six years and above was 62.9 million in 2012. Of this number, the number of computer users was 21.2 million and the number of internet users was 16.6 million.

Every child in school today will spend most of her/his adult life as a citizen of the 21 century as a media consumer, creator, or manager (Masterman, 2005). As the survey of Thai population revealed, children aged 6-14 years old use the computer and internet mainly for studying while the young adults aged 15-24 years old use the computer and internet for all activities, namely for study, knowledge, games, entertainment, and internet access. People aged 25 years old and over
use the computer and internet heavily for their work. Those aged 6-14 and 15-24 years old use the computer and internet mainly at place of education while those aged 25 years old and above use the computer and internet more at home than at work.

Teachers are frequently considered to be the most important influence on classroom learning and play an invaluable role in ensuring that students use ICT effectively in school. Training of teachers and related personnel in ICT is a critical step in any effort to promote the use of ICT in classrooms, since teachers determine how it will be used in instruction. Thailand views the ICT personnel skill training as an important project and has allocated a large budget for training programmes. To date, 71,442 out of the country's total of 358,781 teachers and education personnel in the primary education level have already been trained. Moreover, 25,000 out of 125,983 in the secondary education level have also been trained (Boonyamalik, No Date).

However, there has been little research on exactly how much teacher training is required, how often it should take place, what kind of training is most appropriate and affordable, and what it should cover, to create a teaching workforce that is motivated to use ICT in the classroom in the context of new curricula and new pedagogies (UNESCO, April 2014).

Nonetheless, media literacy education is not the domain of K-12 educators alone. The educational system at the primary, secondary, and university level play essential roles in facilitating and enabling students to become effective media consumers and communicators. Moreover, college-level educators in all disciplines also play an essential part in developing student's competencies. It is also important to consider new ways to adjust, adapt and integrate new media better into existing curricula (Schmidt, 2012).

Media literacy and information literacy have always been linked. Information literacy emphasizes the importance of access to information and the evaluation and use of such information. Media literacy emphasizes the ability to understand, evaluate and use media as a leading purveyor and processor, if not producer, of information. UNESCO considers information literacy and media literacy together as Media and Information Literacy (MIL). MIL also equips individuals and communities with the essential competencies required to engage effectively with information and media systems as well as ICT (Moeller, Joseph, Lau, & Carbo, 2010).

The research of Chutima Sachanand, Professor in the School of Liberal Arts, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Bangkok, Thailand in 2011 states that information literacy skills are the core
competencies of individuals, especially students, in the 21st century due to the driving force of ICT. The research also revealed that to improvements to information literacy among Thai students requires collaborative partnership of teachers, school administrators, teacher-librarians, and families and communities. Moreover, integrating information literacy in the curriculum, subject course study and teaching learning process is one important strategy to create information literate students and enhance information literacy in the school environment (Sacchanand, 2011).

**Issues and Challenges**

Media literacy involves possessing the ability to access, evaluate, understand, and to use or communicate effectively via good writing and in a wide variety of forms (Chen, 2007; Moeller et al., 2010; Schmidt, 2012). Media literacy education is a requirement for today’s digital citizens. The change from being a media consumer to a media creator has profound implications for individuals, governments, companies, societies, schools, and for media literacy education (Belinha, De Abreu, & Mihailidis, 2014). Citizens of all ages have access to the computer and internet, especially the 15-24 years old group. Media literacy has not had to deal with the ethics and responsibilities of young students as media creators before. This has become an issue and challenge for media education not only in Thailand but also globally.

Teaching with media is reflected in the instructional method of practical work, which provides hand-on activities that give students experience in designing, creating, and producing a media message to experience how these concepts are articulated in practice (Chen, 2007). To teach students to become media literate, teachers need to understand the key ideas associated with assessing, analyzing, evaluating and communicating the idea that all media messages are “constructed”. Each media has different characteristics, strengths and a unique “language” of construction. Media messages are produced for particular purposes. All media messages contain embedded values and points of view. People use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meaning from media messages. Media and media messages can influence beliefs, attitudes, values, behavior and the democratic process (Chen, 2007).

According to the National Association of Media Literacy Education (2013), the purpose of media literacy education is to help individuals of all ages to develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that
they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active citizens in today's world. The core principles of media literacy education are as follows.

1. It requires active inquiry and critical thinking about messages we receive and create.
2. It expands the concept of literacy from merely reading and writing to include all forms of media.
3. It builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive and repeated practice.
4. It develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society.
5. It affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meaning from media messages.

Media literacy education is not about teaching students what to think. It is about teaching them how they can arrive at informed choices that are most consistent with their own values. (See Cheung, 2009; National Association for Media Literacy Education, 2013).

According to John Langer and Nuntiya Doungphummes (2006), there is no real evidence to suggest that there is any concrete effort to introduce media education in Thai schools. Moreover, teachers’ resistance has also been problematic. As there is no educational policy that addresses the issue of media literacy and curriculum development, teachers tend to see media education programs as an additional burden on their already demanding work tasks. Many teachers misunderstand media education. They seem to think and use media only as a teaching tool (Langer & Doungphummes, 2006), rather than as educating students to become media literate.

However, media education is offered as formal education in higher education level. The Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Thammasat University was the first higher educational institution in Thailand that offered media programs and trained students professionally to conduct research in journalism and mass communication. Thammasat University currently offers a Bachelor of Arts program in journalism and mass communication and media studies, in both Thai and in English, a Master of Arts program in mass communication, mass communication administration, and corporate communication management and a Doctor of Philosophy in mass communication.

The Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University has a of Department of Mass Communication, Department of Journalism and
Malaysian Media Studies

Information Technology, Department of Public Relations, Department of Speech, Communication and Performing Arts, and Department of Film and Still Photography. These departments offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs for both Thai and international students.

The Faculty of Mass Communication, Chiang Mai University has been offering a bachelor’s program since 1964. At first, Mass Communication was a Department under the Faculty of Humanities, but later it was developed into a stand-alone Faculty; on 27th August 2005. Chiang Mai University offers both a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree in Mass Communication.

There are two universities which offer education programs for teaching and training students to become media teachers. The first is the Faculty of Education at Kasetsart University in Bangkok which offers Mass Media in Education as a formal program to teach and train students to become teachers who possess media literacy. The second is the Faculty of Industrial Education, King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL), Bangkok. KMITL offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs to teach and train students in industrial design, and architecture as well as to become teachers and trainers in interior design, information and computer technology and engineering, and agriculture.

Recently, the Commission on Higher Education, Ministry of Education for universities has introduced and promoted University Network and Thailand Research and Education Network (UniNet/ThaiREN) in higher education in Thailand. There are 24 Thai universities in this network, including 1) Chulalongkorn University, 2) Kasetsart University, 3) Mahidol University, 4) King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang(KMITL), 5) King Mongkut’s University of Technology, North Bangkok, and 6) King Mongkut’s University, Thonbury, 7) Ramkhamhaeng University, 8) Silpakorn University, Srinakharinwirot University, 9) Thammasat University, 10) Chiang Mai University.

According to the Ministry of Education, King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Bangkok offers international distance learning in collaboration with Bull State University (US) as well as Tokai University (Japan) via Internet2 (an exceptional community of U.S. and international leaders in research, academia, industry and government who create and collaborate via innovative technologies) and Tokyo Institute of Technology (Japan) via JGN2 (Japan Gigabit Network II).

Thailand Media education and training in higher education is gradually flourishing in different disciplines. Media educators in
the age of participatory culture must begin by addressing three core concerns. Firstly, Thai media education should be concerned about the participatory gap. Teachers should ensure that students have access to the opportunities, experience, skills and knowledge that will prepare students for full participation in the world tomorrow. Secondly, teaching and learning processes should facilitate and enable students to understand problems and challenge them to recognize the ways that media shape perceptions of the world. Finally, the ethics challenge in higher education is essential to prepare students for their increasingly public roles as media makers and community participants.

Students are expected to achieve and demonstrate the following in communication abilities: 1) communication skills which include reading and writing skills 2) analysis 3) problem solving 4) valuing in decision making 5) social interaction 6) global perspectives 7) effective citizenship and 8) aesthetic response and creativity (Christ, 1996). To achieve these, educators must work together to ensure that all young students have access to the skills and experience needed to become full participants, have the ability to articulate their understanding of how media shapes perceptions, and are socialized into the emerging ethical standards that should shape their practices as media makers and participants in online communities (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009).

Conclusions

Media literacy of teachers and students is the key for developing media education and training in Thailand. The Thai education system and education policy has been reformed and open up for media educators to develop their curriculum. The current situation is proof that the government and media educators have recognized the potential and opportunities to develop media literacy even though there are still issues and challenges of media education and training in Thailand that need to be resolved.

References


Reflections on Creative Media Pedagogy

Professor Harold Thwaites
Sunway University, Malaysia

Introduction

“All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better.”

(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Within this paper I discuss some of my ideas and observations regarding education in photography, film, sound, television, multimedia, as well as for generalists in the fields of communication and media theory, analysis, research, programming and creative digital media. My reflections and remarks are based on 31 years of teaching in the Communication Studies Department at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, six years as Dean of the Faculty of Creative Multimedia at the Multimedia University in Cyberjaya, Malaysia, (2006-2012), at University of Malaya (2012-2015) as Director of the Centre for Creative Content and Digital Innovation and currently as Professor of Creative Digital Media, at the Faculty of Arts, Sunway University in Kuala Lumpur.

Over my past forty-two years in media, communication and arts education I have taught and/or created over twenty-five different courses on the undergraduate and post graduate levels in the fields of television, sound, multimedia, research and writing and many more as listed below. They have given me insight into the various styles and
modes of teaching “think” media and “practice” media that I will discuss in the pages that follow.

Undergraduate Courses at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

* Courses that I designed and originated.

- Introduction to Digital Communication*
- Communication Analysis
- Communication Programming
- Biocybernetic Research
- Seminar & Practicum in TV II
- Seminar & Practicum in TV III
- Seminar & Practicum in Sound I

Post Graduate Courses at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

- Introduction to Holography*
- Sound Production
- Television Production
- Media Research Laboratory
- Virtual Reality*
- Definitions of Media and Technology
- Directed Study/Internships
- Media Research Methods II

Undergraduate Courses at Multimedia University, Cyberjaya, Malaysia

- Virtual Reality Design 1 (June 2006)
- Experiential Studies (June 2006 - June 2011)

Basic Learning Processes

“All the arts are brothers; each one is a light unto the other.”

~ Voltaire

Generally, four basic learning processes occur within the field of media education:

1. Information ~ acquisition, selection, retention
2. Skill acquisition (mental and motoric skills alike)
3. Decision-making process (perfection and specialization) learning
4. Small group dynamics and interaction learning or, “team-ship”
The first two areas, 1 & 2, are usually situated exclusively within a formal school curriculum. Areas 3 & 4 are explored by students in various schools or within industrial enterprises such as studios, in-house training programmes, and internships. Sometimes, in optimal conditions, all four processes can be combined into a comprehensive media education programme.

**Information Acquisition, Selection, Retention**

Students need to acquire two kinds of information during their course of study:

1. Direct (Field) Information
2. Indirect (Generalist) Information

Under the area of direct information belong data, artworks, biographies, and theories closely pertaining to the field of media study (courses such as: Documentary Film, History of Media, Foundation of Animation). The relevance of these courses comes from the similarity of media, the similarity of the creative or critical thinking and execution process, or the similarity of their aesthetical information impact on audiences.

Here information acquisition follows many common pedagogical practices, such as classroom lectures, discussions (seminars or screenings) or viewing sessions. Less common, but more intensive approaches, are sometimes applied such as tutorials and individual viewing sessions, or programmed courses with audio-visual modules reviewed in a controlled environment such as a Learning Centre or a Media Resource Centre or even via distance or e-learning applications.

At Concordia, in the Communication Studies Department, we had such a facility called the Learning Centre, where materials were stored for student access and use in various courses, in a self-paced customized instructional manner.

Due to the nature of multimedia information modules, the danger of a fluent information cascade is always present (presentation of the content), drawing the student’s interest momentarily to the content of artworks instead of to the formal or critical phenomena. The presentation of excerpts or repeated screenings does not always solve such cases. Experience with individual viewing sessions in a Learning Centre environment showed a higher level of information retention than in student group screenings. Generally, a student is capable of following a lecturer’s introduction and comments for no longer than 1-3 minutes
with a piece of content presented on a screen, if he/she simultaneously makes some written notes. From a 15 minute-long screened film, students usually make 9-12 notes in the classroom session, compared to 20-25 notes in a Learning Centre viewing session (although the number of notes is not important, they do help for later information retrieval from a student’s memory).

There is an interesting effect present in an audio-visual (multimedia) learning mode, that of *skimming* of information by students. If during the school day class lectures contain many films and/or video clips, the student begins to *read*, to follow the material more quickly, but with significantly less retention of information. If such a period lasts several days (as in intensive seminars or compressed teaching time), students in the end are capable of following twice as much material per lecture than at the beginning. Sometimes, the ability to narrow the scope of observation (to the formal properties of a film, video or to the structure of plot, etc.) is also enhanced.

In the above cases, the student is faced with two major modes of learning:

1. To follow the structure of the presented materials, or,
2. To follow the thinking process of the professor, as it is presented in a class.

Skilled lecturers know intuitively and often from long teaching experience, that they must intermix these two modes in a short duration of a few minutes, otherwise the attention of the students will drop. A specific problem arises when the professor’s explanation collides with the natural flow of the artwork’s content. Experience shows that the professor’s dominance over the presented material enhances information selection, but hinders the students’ ability to construct concepts. Similarly, the attractiveness of the material content very often enhances information retention (content cues), but the information retention is low or unsystematic (due to the content’s flow).

There is a good approach to address this issue. Learning can be divided into the following phases:

1. The student (if possible) individually views the course media material without the professor’s comments and lecture (such as in a Learning Centre environment).
2. The professor (in the classroom) comments on the material and the relevant theories applied, and rarely and/or occasionally, shows selected excerpts from the material.
3. The student compiles an essay or written summary from his notes taken during the viewing sessions and lectures.
4. The student has the option of discussing his/her conclusions from both sessions with the professor or teaching assistant.

This approach works best if the student has the option of consulting the professor after each segment of the course (after no more than two lectures in a row). Consultations with the professor are short if the student prepares questions beforehand, and if the professor has relevant supporting materials at hand (reading lists, references, other media). In this way, a student has personal contact time with the professor to address their subject learning.

It is very important that the student has privacy for the initial comprehension of information. The professor's lecture serves as a critical evaluation of the student's experience, and subsequent written notes of issues, problems, questions, serve as the necessary synthesis. This can be further facilitated in tutorials or individual consultations when or where needed.

Among the indirect forms of information belong vast quantities of data generally useful for the education of multimedia makers or a communication media theorist, vaguely termed as an enhancement of their intellectual niveau. General courses from history, arts, sociology, psychology, and exact sciences are within this area.

Such courses are generally available within the university curriculum, or within other departments, so on the surface it is not a huge issue to acquire the necessary information. If the University environment cannot provide such supporting academic disciplines, then it results in much shallower student learning or in the need to develop specific supporting courses within the individual programme or faculty. This was the case at Multimedia University (MMU) in the Creative Multimedia Faculty (FCM), where the University did not have any Arts and Humanities Departments. FCM was thus forced by necessity to create and offer its own courses as needed in these areas.

However, a difficulty arises with the question of time spent for information acquisition. Usually, courses of this type or supporting nature are either too general or too narrow. Each faculty of the university maintains a certain cohesiveness of its discipline, often rejecting the students seeking to take electives, through a system of prerequisite courses, or demanding study in only selected topics (group of topics) from the content of the discipline. Very often, the preference for a more generalist approach is disregarded by lecturers within the discipline as
being “too watered down” or non-professional to meet the requirements of the field.

My experience has led to two possible suggestions:

1. The faculty or department establishes its own courses such as the Psychology of Communication, Media Aesthetics, or Philosophy of Media and other such general subjects. Under such courses selected topics from the discipline pertinent to the field of creative media or media studies can be grouped and/or the content customized as needed.

2. Special disciplines (political science, commerce, sciences, philosophy, etc.) establish courses within their own curriculum design with an emphasis to the field of media studies (such as: Physics of Light, Applied Sound Theory, Management of Media Enterprises, Media Law) and open the course university-wide or to the creative and media students.

The first solution visibly duplicates teaching expertise and content within university programmes, but assures the pertinence of topics for the media students. It is a relatively costly proposition, and it works well with an ample student cohort. The second solution holds the danger of generality or the lecturer’s inexperience in particular media practices.

A good approach for this indirect information acquisition is an individual, programmed study course. It works best if it is organized not within the cohesive course, but as a complex study approach, dispersed over a period of 2-3 years of an academic programme, with the following stages.

1. Student’s intellectual niveaux is assessed by a series of tests (if possible, during a programme entrance examination/session and/or interview).
2. During the first year of study, students should complete several modules with self-instructional characteristics, pertinent to the lacunae of his/her case. (Equal to 3 credits).
3. In the second year of study, the students complete several review tests. The results will then reveal their progress or their particular learning proficiencies. Then further follow-up modules can be assigned (Equal to 3 credits).
4. During the last year of study, the student has the option of consulting individually with professors regarding the need for readings or further studies, pertinent to their level of achievement and enhancement.
There arises a question pertinent to information selection and retention. Usually a student is required to complete certain written assignments, essays, or tests at the end of the course as the basis for evaluation (marking and assignment of a course grade). There is an easily forgotten situation whereby the level of knowledge gained from learning usually stabilizes within the course of 6-18 months after the initial learning has occurred. Therefore, what is measured by most tests or the typical final examination, is the maximal learning gain, and what is omitted is the permanent learning gain. The latter one has great importance for practical life or professional success for students in the media and creative industries.

Also when a student finishes a course, he/she stops most of the recalls of the course content and structure, a typical result of the study for the exam approach. These recalls are eminently important at the level of permanent learning gain. Pedagogical practices have shown that an occasional recall (say, once during the week) may increase the storage in permanent long-term memory. Such recalls are important during the primary memory fixation period, which extends 3-4 months after the initial learning process.

The sophisticated and often insistent references of lecturers to previously learned course content can only partially solve such problems. From experience teaching across 31 years in courses such as Television Production 2 and level 3, I may say that typically 50-60% of information gain is lost in the post-course period before the next academic year begins (the summer break syndrome).

A utilitarian solution can be found in courses dealing with the perfection of skills - the information gained in previous courses serves as content for the students’ practical skill exercises, for example Design for VR 1, leading to Design for VR 2, etc. There is also a danger in such an approach, being that the limitation of themes for practical exercises may impose stylistic or semantic limitations. Quite often students consider this approach as an obstruction to their own creative freedom and personal ideation.

Skill Acquisition (Mental and Motoric Skills)

“Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”

(Arthur C. Clarke)

Under the term “skill”, I understand the mastering of a stereotype, either related to a piece of technical equipment (video camera, audio
recorder, computer), or a human behavior (acting) or thinking, such as in scriptwriting, directing or post-production courses.

There are three basic types of skills:

1. **Operational** skills (students learn to operate a piece of equipment, or to interact with it).
2. **Action** skills (students learn or imitate modes of behavior of an actor/character or a member in the production crew)
3. **Combinatory** skills (students learn to organize thoughts, ideas into some intricate plot, structure, information cascade, or multimedia design, in order to influence the audience).

The learning of operational skills is usually associated with the term *vocational* learning or training. It should be noted that there are several levels within mastering an operational skill, and not all of these belong to vocational/craft schooling and are essential in media education.

For instance, a cameraman learns to operate a digital video camera. The learning of the technical procedure, maintenance rules and procedures surely belong to the *vocation* of the media. But when it comes to shooting video the emphasis is also placed on the motoric aspects of framing, movements to pan, tilt, or dolly, then the motoric abilities of the student are of considerable importance, and their physical stamina and abilities may contribute or deter from the necessary learning gain.

It should be noted that a small percentage of students possess excellent physical motoric coordination abilities for such learning tasks. Furthermore, there is a more esoteric stage: *composing* the cinematic image which constitutes not only framing, but thinking within a sequences of images, wherein the camera and its operation serves as a necessary expression mode for the process itself that goes on in the student’s mind (courses such as Media Aesthetics, Media Production Process, and Information Design are examples.).

Some lecturers maintain the approach that the vocational level is really what can be learned and that all levels above the *craft* are a matter of creative talent of the student. In the past, most polytechnical or trade institutes followed this model. In opposition to this are lecturers who emphasize the thinking approach and disregard the technical operational level of knowledge acquisition, a typical division between “think” media and “practice” media approaches. They are often labeled as amateurs or *diletants* from the professional’s standpoint. An approach that embraces both the “think media” and “practice media”, is one that
has been adopted widely across many media education programmes around the world.

Both approaches are in reality now highly interwoven as a mix of media theory and praxis. Unless you attain a certain perfection of operation, the result cannot have a proper aesthetic impact on the audience. But if only technical perfection is attained, the skill may be disregarded as a gimmick, special effect, or trick and appear as not artistic or look mechanical in execution, most often lacking an aesthetic quality and artistic flare.

Within the practicality of a University curriculum there is a nearly insurmountable difficulty. The majority of motoric skills for the operation of media production equipment require a substantial, but uniform, amount of time. A motoric skill is attained better if practiced without interruption (which is impossible within a normal 60 minute lecture period, where demonstrations may consume 1/3 of the time). Thus, the importance of studio/lab courses and blocks of time for work rehearsals and experimentation become very important.

Furthermore, if the practicing is done by trial and error, there are vast differences of time between “fast” and “slow” learning students. My experience has revealed that wherever the technical instruction can be modularized and the student can learn individually, the results are better than in group instruction and subsequent individual trials. It is wrongly assumed that the student learns by “observation, or looking” at a demonstrated procedure, or at a fellow student performing the operational task. The student cannot keep more than 4 - 6 steps in their short-term memory for a performed operational task. After such segments, more than two trials are needed to fix such a process permanently in memory, but even if the second trial is successful, the student needs a controlled recall (repetition of an operation in their mind or in praxis) within the next 5 - 8 hours time from the initial demonstration. Thus a follow-up exercise or assignment should be given relating to the skill or technique taught.

Some professional schools hold most of the demonstration sessions during the morning hours, thus enabling students to practice with equipment in the afternoon. In some Japanese schools, students are reminded to carry out “mind recalls” for picture composition or operational tasks the next morning after the lecture.

There is an interesting phenomenon of close interaction between a student and a piece of technical equipment. After repeated use of the equipment (camera, sound recorder, lights, computer etc.), the student begins to ‘tune-in’ to the range of possibilities of the tool. He/she already remembers the best framing, compositions, shots, sounds, music, menu
choices or settings - which resulted in previous favorable, or positive results. Such interaction avoids most of the failure so students grasp for such stages that involve an even attainment of certain technical ranges of the tool. Usually such stages are accompanied by very fast and effective operation of equipment. Although such a stage may be favored by the student’s future initial employer, (students are asked within the first few weeks of employment to show “their bag of tricks” to the rest of the crew or creative team), it creates a dangerous technical stereotyping. When the student begins to see the surrounding reality only through the lens of his digital camera, or hears sounds of nature through a parabolic microphone recording, such experiences significantly distort the artist’s sense of reality.

Sometime ago the whole approach was maintained in media schooling where the student’s perception was a priori attained through the technicalities of the tools (the teaching approach was known as audiovideography and was attuned to the student’s vision and hearing via the range of available lenses for cameras or audio equipment, etc.). Even though on the surface such schooling yielded fast and effective results in operational skills, it did not significantly enhance the creativity of the student. It may be important for the role of an audio-visual (multimedia) technician, but it may be distractive for a film or video cameraman, and not at all usable for a future editor, director or producer, or scriptwriter.

The learning of action skills can be accomplished generally by two basic methods:

a. Experiential method (Stanislawski Acting School)
b. Scenographic method (Svoboda-Craig-Appia approach)

In the well-known approach of the experiential (Stanislavski) school, a student learns by a holistic approach to copy the desired role/character. This school is based heavily on an environmental approach (the actor is placed in a real environment for several weeks or months in order to learn all possible variants of behavior by interaction with the members and pieces of surroundings) to the action, and excludes long and tiresome rehearsals or trial recording. In praxis, only a very few schools apply the Stanislavski approach exclusively. The usual solution is a compromise between the (initial) experience from the environment and conducted rehearsals, following a very close praxis of stage and theatre.

The scenographic method, pioneered by Jacques Polieri, relies heavily on space notation, a kind of systematic, condensed experience,
which is fixed in signs or diagrams for further actor’s rehearsals and trials. The student performs many fictional (in the mind) rehearsals, in order to attain behavioural synchronization with the observed samples of characters. This approach is much more suitable than the environmental schooling and feasible in time and space. The pitfalls of the scenographic approach may be a low level of involvement of the student, resulting in schematic and plain action in a film or television scene.

The learning of combinatory skills is one of the toughest teaching tasks in media pedagogy. Such skills are pertinent to the education of directors or editors and production team members. In most cases, the technical competency occupies a relatively small amount of time and students master the technical process quickly. The difficulties lie in the mental level of skills, which are only rarely methodically taught. Throughout the history of media schools, it was believed that directors or editors would be able to transfer their Mastership to the students (VGIK Soviet school employing Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Vertov approaches, the American Film Institute following Alfred Hitchcock and Leni Reifenstal traditions). Although partially successful, only a few students were able to follow their masters and the drop out level was incredible.

Furthermore, several methodical approaches were developed (in Europe and the Americas), where directorial or editing skills were copied from outstanding films, sequences, and given to the students for practicing, copying, or re-editing. As an offshoot of such approaches, several anthologies of the “master” styles or modes were compiled and screened to students.

Generally none of these systematic approaches worked well. The narrow selection of styles, of the various writers, directors, and the few re-editing combinations possible did not enhance a student’s creative opportunity. Most contemporary schools skip ahead to the practicalities, that a student should direct or edit his own full film, television or multi-media production, in order to master the combinatory skills. Such praxis is a very costly proposition, although favored by students (who get their demo with the financial assistance of the school) and it yields a very low educational gain. The situation is more clouded with the emergence of many student film and video festivals where a jury, with members of professional or semi professional caliber, evaluates submissions differing in both production standards and styles. Serious professional schools avoid a low level of praxis by setting a ladder of exercises (from a very “short sequence” or etude, to the “lights, camera, action” etude, to the “style” etude, and finally, the “diploma” film or video production). Sometimes the student uses the material from several exercises to complete the final work.
A very special case of media education is in the area of scriptwriting or creative writing. Here the combinatory skill is practiced through writing, but the results, a film, video or multimedia script, is very far from a novel or any other literary form. It is more of a scenographic notation of the future artwork that may contain a few verbal lines of spoken dialogue. The clarity of expressions toward the director and crew is more important than the general appeal to the readers/audience.

Here the combinatory skills of plotting, character, conflicts, tensions or catharsis are multi-layered, e.g. some parts of the plot may be presented by the actor, others in the visual composition of the countryside, others in accompanying music, others in intricate intercuts of situations, times, actions. The formal and semantic calculations are the keys for the scriptwriters’ education. Most of the courses in scriptwriting are taught as courses in “writing for media” when in fact the scriptwriting business in the media industry is very far from the literary praxis. It may seem strange, but graphical or mathematical calculations can be extremely beneficial to a future film or television scriptwriter. Many large film and television networks employ 20-30 writers with specialized functions on one show, where the final assembly is typically a complicated, system-theory computer based editing job.

Some professional schools employ the notion of “dramaturgy” (in the American context it is known as program development) where education is aimed at the author steering various modes of ideation toward media-usable scripts. European schools, where a similar praxis exists in the stage and theatre fields, often favor the dramaturgic approach.

Learning the Decision-making Process

“All media exist to invest our lives with artificial perceptions and arbitrary values.”

(Marshall McLuhan)

Within the field of creative media education (film, sound, video, photography, multimedia), there is a large area of decision-making processes and skills. However, it is usually included in some imbedded or pragmatic context - only rarely taught as a separate discipline.

The decision-making process can be considered basically as a branched programming approach (of thoughts, tasks, interactions, situations, actions) and more appropriately belongs to the discipline of
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia

System theory. It can be practiced on verbal, visual, audio and situational (spatial) models, and is most precisely expressed in mathematical terms. Many schools define this stage of education under courses with prefixes, such as advanced, special topics, or creative, and teach basically the repetitive models of media production routines. In many cases, there are not many models, but instead the one that is usually favoured, practiced and believed in by the instructor. So the result may be a very narrow, artificial view of the actual production situation in the rapidly evolving creative media industries. It can often result in the alienation of students from current media production practices.

Generally, it is very difficult to teach students the decision making process through the use of comparative examples. Even if the lecturer has access to the models of production from different media companies, studios or networks, the actual materials usually cover the administrative side of a decision process, leaving the most important mental preceding process untapped. Also, many variables are retained on the studio/network side, being considered as trade secrets and thus they are rarely revealed to lecturers in order to be used in a university teaching and learning environment.

Another side effect of a comparative examples education approach is the one sidedness of the decision (usually looked upon from the supervisor’s point of view, rather than the employee’s point of view) that often provokes adverse motivations in young students adept at film/video or multimedia content creation.

Probably the best alternative approach is a modeling teaching mode (with manual or computer approaches), where a full case study with all possible alternatives is revealed in a class and the students can then select the steps of decision-making in a programmed sense by their own choice. The more advanced approach to decision-making education is the mathematical modeling of the variants in the production process, (some schools call such courses “media programming strategies”).

If we take into consideration that in the media industry this process is mastered over a time span of typically 5-8 years (going from the role of a production assistant up to a producer or an executive producer), then it becomes apparent that such education cannot be accomplished within a one or two semester course structure found in most university programmes. Contrary to this fact, nearly all media schools feature courses such as Film and Video Production, Multimedia Practicum, Advanced Radio/film/television Production Studies, among many others that involve the overall decision-making process experience.
Small Group Dynamics and Interaction

“No man’s knowledge can go beyond his experience.”

(John Locke)

In this section I refer to the mastering of teamwork or embracing teammanship usually within the context of film, video, sound or multimedia productions of various kinds. At a certain point in the media education process, students are grouped into small units, each a member with a specialized function (camera work, directing, editing, programming, design etc.) for an outlined task (such as actual production of student’s media final assignment).

In some schools, students from the junior classes are used as helpers to the senior students for their final productions and in other places the approach is for students of the same year to rotate through all of the functions of the production crew. Sometimes the students have free choice for grouping and role assignments, while at other times the professor prescribes the team assembly or the production routine to be used.

In nearly all cases, the hard learned experiences are for the team and the final output can be very costly. Learning by experience usually entails many repetitions with different variables, subsequent analysis and decisions on the best choices and routines. But when the final creation of a film, video or multimedia production is finished, it is usually already the end of the school year and the other half of the learning process is quietly forgotten. Experience has shown that it is not uncommon that some productions may still be unfinished at the time of marking or the start of exam periods. This often results in extensions, often into the summer semester in order to complete the work due to a wide variety of circumstances, or it results in inferior work being produced due to rushed deadlines within the course structure.

Such learning has a very low value and may misguide the students. It is impossible that each student can try several approaches to the role he is assigned. At best, the student may try major roles in the team once per year (under the assumption that the students have to produce a minimum of five shows, films, productions, exercises, etc. per given year), and at best, can only once receive a critique from their peers and the professor. Another aspect lies in the students’ competitiveness for marks. Such competitiveness very often contradicts the rules of teamwork, and further contradicts the final outcome of the produced work.

Finally, there is often little resemblance between the mode of work students choose and the real situation in the media industry.
At best the lecturer may set the rules, or run the production from an industrial routine perspective, but young people do not behave as their professional counterparts in the media industry. Overall it takes extremely accurate planning and a very experienced media educator to manage the students’ work, essentially acting in the role of an executive producer to assure the completion of a production in a timely manner.

There is a model for the accomplishment of this task, but we must accept the interlocking of several courses in a curriculum with tandem productions and seminars such as the following:

1. The production of the piece is accomplished within the framework of a course, such as “Advanced Video Production”, during the first term.
2. In tandem, the same students take another course of a seminar nature (such as “Psychology of Communication”, or “Teamwork in Media Production”), wherein theoretical principles are discussed and applied from a previous course.
3. In the subsequent term the same students take seminar/critical courses with the emphasis on the evaluation and critique process of media artworks.
4. In tandem, the same student cohort attends seminars with guest lecturers from the industry, where case studies can be discussed in detail.

Another model (such as the one from the American Institute for Advanced Film Studies) uses professionals as tutors and evaluators of student productions in a phased sense: a student is not allowed to take another step in media production until the previous one is agreed upon and critiqued by several of his tutors. This model, although very effective and beneficial to the individual students, is a lengthy one, and for the student, often a boring procedure. Typically, students just want to get on with their “work” in order to graduate.

**Nurturing the “talented/creative” student(s)**

“Every artist was first an amateur.”

(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

There is another, perhaps more sensitive issue in media pedagogy - the assessment, prediction and cultivation of *talent* and *creativity*. At first, many lecturers prefer to consider this educational aspect as a mysterious, inborn ability of a student, which appears miraculously when the
artwork is made in or out of school. Secondly, it is often claimed that such ability is not possible to assess and cannot be taught in school. Finally, lecturers are afraid to predict or push such students via different, informal ways of education in order to cultivate his talent.

I would like to say that talent or creativity can be assessed and within a certain range, can be predicted. But it may be seen as an unusual, non-pedagogic methodology that would not fit into the conventional educational structures and fixed curricula of most higher education institutions. However, with some effort and considerations, it can be explored when students of great potential apply to a creative media programme. Below are some suggestions.

1. At first, students with an inclination to be talented could undergo an assessment. There are many tools available, for perceptual, information processing and memory abilities (In most cases, a creative person will show above average results in one or more tests).
2. Secondly, such a person could then be assigned an academic advisor or mentor with knowledge of development psychology (adolescent stage), and the same or another faculty member with a critical ability in media.
3. A creative dossier, with information about the student’s program choices can be established so that all staff are aware of high potential, talented students in their class.
4. A talented student should be evaluated for his/her mental or motoric abilities (after at least each 3-4 weeks of study), and the results of such checks should lead to adjustments of certain portions of courses. (Creative, talented people often have periods of great instability or hypertension from an overdose of teaching loads that may kill the further development of talent; personal or emotional problems may also influence them).
5. A talented student should be allowed to do special projects regardless of the time schedule of the school. The most important phase in the nurturing of creativity is the practicing of stimulations and insights, which cannot be done on command, or within the framework of lecture hours, and can be caught up with the missed courses or lectures.
6. A talented student should be exposed gently but steadily to the response of the audience to his/her artwork. The audience does not mean another student, peers or the same age group but an actual audience sample for the intended artwork or production.
It often happens that a student is labeled as promising or talented when he enters the school, but the latent talent evaporates within a few months. There can be many reasons for this: an unresponsive environment, a rigid school or programme structure, mismatched teams of people or inappropriate curricula. A talented student is a very precious person and we should really take care of them. However, without early and solid assessment of these students, such abilities can easily be misjudged or even go unnoticed.

Media Pedagogy is in many ways a more difficult field than the teaching of exact sciences, liberal or fine arts. It is composed of straight information acquisition, learning of highly individual motoric and mental skills, involves manifold decisions inside a person and within the creative team. So it is no wonder that we face daily difficulties with our students, and why the media industry often complains about the university educating future employees “outside the real world”.

Conclusion

“There are no failures. Just experiences and your reactions to them.”

(Tom Krause)

Teaching media must be well founded and focused in the fundamentals and firmly based in the arts and humanities. Story-telling and communication skills are key for the student as is the understanding of the - Message – to their audience(s) of the intended media production.

Media pedagogy must make every effort to be attuned to the rapid industry shifts and needs, without “catering” solely to the established industry models. Creative media departments and schools need to keep up to date in applications and media technology with the scope and scale of their financial resources. Students will always want the latest and greatest tools and technology. It is a balance of what is needed against what would be great to have. Most often, it cannot be both. However, the challenge for students is to tell a good story, be clear about their message and then think about how they will create and communicate it.

A media curriculum must make every effort to be able to evolve swiftly and adapt to change in order to keep courses and teaching current with the industry expectations. The gap will always exist, even with best intentions from the stakeholders both academic and industry, and there can rarely be a “perfect match or fit”. Industry always asks, “why can’t you teach them more, so we don’t have to finish your job”. Truth be told, industry praxis shifts fast and much of what is done in industry
is not always available to an educational institution, due to copyright proprietary software or processes and other restrictions.

Teaching the media is a constant evolving undertaking, especially in the post-digital age where quite often students come to the university thinking they know far more than the professors who will be teaching them. It is our responsibility to keep up-to-date and provide the richest learning environment possible in order to empower the next generation of media professionals and scholars.

“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity”
~ Albert Einstein

Note
The content of this chapter is based on my experience of teaching media for over forty years in different programmes and universities. These reflections are presented in order to share my journey of teaching and interaction with my students.

References
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia


Malaysian Media Studies


*** Photos – to be captioned and incorporated into the text where appropriate, if allowed by UM Press, or other visuals can be submitted if approved and needed. Please advise.
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia: Industry and Academic Perspectives

Fadli Abdullah & Md Sidin Ahmad Ishak
University of Malaya, Malaysia

Animation is an important subsector in the creative industries, and the need for qualified personnel is crucial for the growth and development of the industry. In Malaysia, the interest in animation and the number of higher learning institutions offering animation programs is increasing. Discussions related to the development of higher education in the context of meeting the needs of the industry is often a heated debate among academia and industry. Current growth in the animation industry contributes to this debate as there is concern over the quality of graduates produced by local universities, especially with regards to their knowledge, skills and abilities. Overall, this chapter discusses the essential elements required in the development of curricula for animation programs from the perspective of both animation industry players and academicians. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 informants; five from the industry and five from academia.

Introduction

Animation is an important subsector in the creative industries, and the need for qualified personnel is crucial for the growth and development of the industry. Discussions related to the development of higher education in the context of meeting the needs of the industry is often a
heated debate among academia and industry. Graduate employability is often used as a yardstick for measuring the education sector’s success in meeting industry needs (Tiwari & Kaushik, 2011; Ambigapathy & Ratna Roshida, 2009; Lee, 2004; Noble, 1999; Weert, 1996). With rising consumer and market interest in animation and a corresponding rise in the number of higher learning institutions offering animation programs, the quality of animation graduates produced by local universities has become a point of contention. According to Hassan (2007, p. 288), “a common complaint among producers is that animation graduates are only trained in animation techniques, but lack knowledge in areas such as story, mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing and acting.” Seamus (2008) sees this drawback as being caused by many factors such as the lack of teaching resources, and lack of experienced trainers, and also shortcomings in the structure of the programs and facilities. Two important questions need to be asked in order to address these issues:

1. What do higher learning institutions need to do to develop animation programs that meet market needs?
2. How do higher learning institutions realize their role in enhancing graduate employability among their students?

The Concept of Human Resources Development

According to Nadler (1979, p. 3), human resource development can be defined as a series of planned activities, organized in a certain time and designed to produce behavioural change. In this definition, he sees behavioural change as an important element that requires attention, since the main goal of learning and training is to increase the understanding and skills of an individual with regards to his or her work.

Werner and DeSimone (2009), consider human resource development as “a set of systematic and planned activities designed by an organization to provide its members with the opportunities to learn necessary skills to meet current and future job demands” (p. 4). This definition also illustrates the importance of the elements of learning and the effort to systematically design the learning activities to develop individual work-related skills. Therefore, human resource development can be understood as planned and systematic learning and training activities designed to improve individual knowledge and skills that are related to their work.

As argued by Ganihar and Nayak (2007) and Werner and DeSimone (2009), knowledge, skills and ability are the main objectives
in developing human resource. These three elements are often used in evaluating the outputs after the activities of human resource development are completed. According to Werner and DeSimone (2009), knowledge is the understanding of the factors and principles in certain subjects, while skill is the capability of the individual in performing tasks related to the work. To obtain skills, training is required. As for ability, it is a general capacity one has in doing a task.

As for Blanchard and Thacker (2004), a good output can be evaluated through three elements, namely knowledge, skills and behaviour. They see behaviour as one of the important elements, as the main goal of human resource development activities is to instil positive behaviour towards one’s job. Through knowledge and skills, output requires certain behaviour and this element is imperative, especially in evaluating the success of the development of human resource which is an essential asset in strengthening the management of organizations. This process involves the ability of the individual with regards capabilities to access information, knowledge, and training (Md Sidin & Amira, 2007).

Research Methodology

To address the questions regarding the development of animation curricula that meets industry needs, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 informants; five from the industry and five from academia.

To select industry informants, potential publishers and directors of animation companies were identified. And after decisions were made, they were contacted through the help of the Animation Society of Malaysia (ANIMAS). The society was formed by local animation practitioners, with the mission of improving the animation industry of Malaysia (http://animas.org.my). As for informants from academia, the selection criteria was set based on their involvement as the head of animation or media-related programs and lecturers in higher learning institutions that offer animation programs.

After identifying the potential informants, appointments were made through e-mail to set the interview date, time and venue. All interviews were conducted within the Klang Valley, where there is a high concentration of higher learning institutions. Interviews were conducted from May 2011 until September 2011. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. Nine interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the informants. However, one academician declined to be audio recorded, and hence the main points from that interview was recorded in written form.
The following sections discuss curriculum development of animation programs in the higher learning institutions from an industry perspective. Interviews with players in the animation industry highlight the importance of practical aspects in developing animation programs,

**Basic Knowledge in the Field of Animation**

According to Informant 1, it is important for courses to emphasize the artistic aspects of animation. In commenting about recent graduates, he said that most students were taught to focus on technical aspects involving computer software. Consequently, graduates of such programs excelled in the usage of software but lack knowledge of the basics of animation such as drawing, animation principles, cinematographic skills, and storytelling techniques. According to him, “one should not be like a mechanic, to only know how to fix the problem. Rather, animation practitioners should focus on the production.”

Apart from that, Informant 1 also stressed that the inculcating of basic artistic elements related to animation production should be given priority. In 2D animation courses, for instance, subjects such as figurative drawing should be made compulsory as of these skills and knowledge were crucial to being a 2D animator. Other than that, the basics of animation such as Disney’s 12 basic principles of animation, should also be highlighted. The same applies to the learning of 3D animation because these basic principles emphasize the elements of
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia

an object’s movement which aims to make the deployed objects seem alive. To Informant 1, the learning of 3D animation requires a high level of focus as it is not something simple. As for the involvement of computer technologies, one is required to demonstrate a high level of seriousness and sensitivity towards the constant changes in technologies. Hence, the acquiring of the basics is most fundamental in producing a good animation.

Regarding the issue of emphasizing the basic technics as the core to animation education, Informant 2’s views were similar to that of Informant 1. With reference to the basic techniques, it is the drawing technique that should be emphasized in the teaching. According to him, once a person is interested in the field of animation, the main skill one should master is drawing. Therefore, the skill of visual communication is also among the basic techniques of animation.

For this, understanding the theoretical perspective is needed as visual communication skills require understanding of basic concepts of visual arts and communication. Informant 3 and Informant 5 also agreed with the idea of empowering the learning of animation through a focus on the basics of animation. According to Informant 5, “what is important is the fundamentals”. According to this informant, mastery of basic elements should be taught at the early stage of study before moving on to specializations that require practical aspects.

**Emphasis on Practical Elements**

With regards to the elements of skill, Informant 1 suggested that the institutions of higher learning should emphasise the practical aspects of animation, instead of taking an examination-oriented approach in assessing their students. This is because animation requires technical work and skills in the production process, not memorizing of facts. He believes that the examination system which involves memorizing is irrelevant, as doing well in examinations does not guarantee that students are able to perform well in animation tasks. Agreeing with Informant 1’s opinion, Informant 5 stated, “...in fact, graduates who get employed most easily are those from universities that teach and apply more skill-based, practical and teamwork tasks than lecture-based.”

Informant 1 believes that students should be exposed, from the early stages itself, to the environment of the animation industry, including the pressure of time, the skills of using software, and the quality of work produced, for the field demands hard work and lots of creativity. The higher learning institutions should, therefore, place
emphasis on practical aspects of animation studies so that the graduates would be well trained when entering the industry.

In addition, the informants agreed that the one way to improve the students’ skills is for the lecturers to provide more hands-on assignments as this is an effective method to train the students and to fine-tune their practical skills.

For Informant 5, animation programs should either place equal emphasis on theoretical and practical elements, or place slightly higher emphasis on practical instead of theoretical elements of the curriculum. He suggests a weightage of 60 percent for practical aspects and 40 percent for theoretical. Informant 5 stated that understanding of theoretical aspects would enhance students’ practical work.

**Early Screening of Students**

Informant 3 suggested that the students should be screened in the early stages of the animation program to ensure that they have selected a course that suits their interest. Two other informants support this view, noting that the industry is a challenging one that demands quality skills and keen interest.

Informant 3 also stated that students with a keen interest are easier to train as exposure can always be given to those who are motivated but lack the basics. However, without passion for the field, it can be difficult to excel based on just technical skills.

Informant 2 concurred that students should be screened in the early stage in order to identify their potential. However, to be chosen for the programme, it is not necessary to have drawing skills. This is because the most important criteria for entering the animation programme and subsequently the industry is one’s interest and enthusiasm. Without them, it is hard for a person to survive in the industry as hard work and focus would not exist without interest and motivation.

**Connection with the Industry**

In expressing their opinions about industry-academia links, all the informants agreed that it is imperative that good relations exist between higher learning institutions and the industry. Informant 2 raised an issue related to new graduates, saying “the most crucial issue is whether lecturers have provided their students with sufficient and appropriate knowledge about the industry.” In order to do so, higher learning institutions need to engage with the industry.
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia

Higher learning institutions should also improve the skills of the lecturers teaching animation programs. According to Informant 5:

It is important that the higher learning institutions improve the skills of the lecturers. Lecturers should not be ‘too academic’ as we are teaching practical matters and from that only we can sharpen the skills of the students.

As lecturers are the main source in equipping students with sufficient and updated knowledge, Informant 2 in supporting the opinions of Informant 5 added that, lecturers should be provided ample training besides cooperating with the industry.

Moreover, as stated by Informant 4, cooperation through joint involvement in activities related to the field of animation can also be carried out. For example, the industry can become involved with higher learning institution’s discussions, forums, and workshops. Informants 3, in expressing the same opinion, said that higher learning institutions need “to see what the industry needs and to stay ‘close’ to the industry.” All of this is crucial to ensure that the courses offered match the industry requirements as well as create opportunities for the students.

**Real World Elements**

For Informant 3, students need to familiarize themselves with the terms used in animation production, right from pre-production to post-production. With that, it would be easier once they enter the industry where these terms are used widely. Even though the terms used might differ among animation publishing companies a clear understanding of the processes can facilitate their understanding when they enter the industry.

In addition, Informant 1 also believed that industrial training is an efficient approach to train students to develop their abilities and capabilities. The university environment is different from the real world environment of the industry, and students need to be trained to be able to survive in an industry environment. Time factor is everything to the industry and often times, a project has to be completed within a short period of time. This is very different from the university where ample time is given for each assignment. For Informant 2 who agreed with Informant 1, industrial training is seen as an excellent approach as students can experience the authentic working conditions and learn to adapt to the actual job environment. Furthermore, Informant 1 indicated...
that in designing the animation programs, special emphasis should be
given to the needs of the industry to address and resolve issues such as
skills gap and graduates’ inability to perform on the job.

According to Informant 3, who agreed that practical industry
training is essential, problems arise when some higher learning
institutions send their students for industrial training in the midst, and
not at the end, of their studies. Industrial training functions as a practical
component of the curriculum and “the time for us to look at the overall
results of their learning.” Therefore, it defeats the purpose of industrial
training if students who have yet to complete their studies are sent out to
the industry. As for the duration of three months for industrial trainings,
Informant 3 claimed that, “the three-month period is more than sufficient
to identify whether a student has potential in the field or not.”

Academic Perspectives

After discussing the industry perspectives, the next section discusses
academia’s perspective on curriculum development of animation
programs at higher learning institutions. It will include the opinions of
the head of programme and animation lecturers regarding the issues
related to curriculum development of animation programs offered by
the higher learning institutions in fulfilling the needs of the industry.

Market Demand

All the academics agreed that market demand, namely what the
industry needs, is the main factor in curriculum structuring. Informant
1 asserted that the higher learning institutions have always provided the
best in ensuring the students meet industry needs. As stated by him, “in
structuring and developing the curriculum, I too, looked at the industry
by putting similar expectations according to what the industry wants.”

Informant 2, agreed that the needs of the industry is seen as an
important element. However, there are problems in fulfilling the needs
of the industry. He stated, “The real scenario is for the universities to
meet their needs. But, to do so is actually quite difficult.”

Informant 2 then elaborated on the factors that complicate the
task of the universities in trying to meet industry needs. The first hurdle
is the cost of providing the necessary infrastructure. He stated, “If the
university is to meet the industry’s expectations the concern is that the
cost would be beyond our means.”
According to him, it is difficult for the higher learning institutions to provide all the facilities and resources. For instance, some animation software cost up to millions of dollars. Hence, higher learning institutions focus on basic aspects; thus, students are provided the fundamental knowledge that will later help them use these software when they enter the industry. The second factor is expertise.

Informant 2 claimed that the higher learning institutions lack expertise in the field of animation. “It is very difficult for us to get experts in the field of animation and that is the problem we are facing,” admitted Informant 2.

According to him, the lack of expertise is a problem faced by the higher learning institutions and due to this, they are unable to offer sufficient animation programs to provide adequate manpower to meet the industry’s needs. Similar to Informant 2, Informant 4 stated that, the current problem is getting lecturers who know about and understand the industry.

Informant 2 indicated that time factor is another setback faced by the higher learning institutions. According to him, “the high expectations of the industry are very challenging to meet. Moreover, the duration of three years for teaching and learning is not enough.”

Therefore, to produce graduates who are properly equipped with knowledge, skills and abilities within the time frame is a real challenge for the higher learning institutions. Informant 1 in supporting this, said:

To fully depend on the lecturers is not sufficient as only two to three hours are allocated every week for the process of teaching and learning and there are only 14 weeks in a semester.This three-month period is not sufficient

Informant 5 agreed that the time factor is a real challenge and a struggle for lecturers to produce what industry wants. Apart from that, Informant 5 added that lecturers are bound by policies and regulations of the Ministry of Higher Education, especially in developing curriculum. Courses are not only structured and designed according to the needs of the industry but they have to strictly follow the guidelines set by the Malaysian Qualification Framework (MQF).

**Fundamentals of Animation**

In discussing this aspect, the solution suggested by Informant 4 is to focus on the fundamental aspects of animation. He stated:
When you get the correct foundation, you can go on your own. That is how we should teach. One must have an understanding of the overall process, then one can specialize in it and that is the way it has to be.

To Informant 4 who has extensive experience in the industry, “the reality of the situation is different. In the United States, one can specialize in a field because there is demand for the specialists.” However, the situation is different in Asian countries as the demand is lower. To him, “We should look at the reality of the places we are in” and as a solution, “we should emphasize on the basic aspects so that we understand the basics, particularly animation for film.”

In supporting the idea, Informant 2 stated, “We prepare students by providing the opportunity and exposure to all important aspects related to the concepts and domains of animation.”

**Academic-Industry Relation**

For Informant 3, being connected to the industry is the best way to overcome short comings related to producing graduates to meet industry needs. “We should create the strategy and team up with the industry. Where lecturers are unable to manage, we could get the real experts from the industry to do it”.

Through this strategy, discussions and sharing of knowledge between the lecturers and the industry can be undertaken, thus helping institutions of higher learning to deal with issues related to meeting industry needs. Among the issues is the lack of knowledge as stated by Informant 3, “the knowledge we have is merely from texts and some might be slightly more experienced. But this is insufficient as the technology is constantly evolving.”

Therefore, according to Informant 3, the involvement of the industry is critical. He stated, “As much as possible, we will invite the industry to help in training the students, either in the class, workshops or seminars” and this was supported by Informant 5 who felt that inviting guest lecturers from the industry is an essential and effective method to expose students to the realities faced in the industry. This combination of knowledge sharing and reality exposure is viewed as very effective for the process of learning.

According to Informant 3, this knowledge sharing benefits human resource development for the animation sector. Supporting the argument of Informant 3, Informant 1 too reiterated that greater attention should be given to fulfilling the needs of the industry.
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia

**Strong Curriculum**

Given that one of the goals of higher learning institutions is to increase graduate employability, Informant 2 supported the need for a strong curriculum. According to him, it is important to strengthen the animation program structure in order to produce employable graduates.

Thus, the relevance of the courses should be a priority, and from time to time curriculum reviews should conducted to keep the content updated. Besides, he added, “We try to get closer to our neighboring countries to provide exposure to our students.” Informant 2 contended that through this method, students can be exposed to different environments and useful experience. In addition, such exposure would help to upgrade the abilities and skills of students.

As for Informant 5, the structure of animation programs must include comprehensive knowledge and skills through emphasis of basic elements and this can only be done with the involvement of the industry.

Based on the discussion, it is apparent that higher learning institutions are having problems in producing graduates who are able to meet the industry needs. For Informant 1, the issue is the students themselves. He stated that students should strive to improve their employability. He stated that it is each individual’s responsibility and duty to undertake self-improvement and not wait to be “spoon-fed”.

Informant 4 on the other hand, stressed the need for lecturers to inspire and motivate the students, and at the same time be inspired to teach the students.

**Conclusion**

The findings of in-depth interviews with industry players and academics showed that both the industry and academia consider it important for animation programs to emphasize basic elements such as basic animation, drawing, and film. Other than fundamental knowledge, interest and technological skills are taken seriously by the industry. The industry players listed another five aspects that should be taken into consideration in the development of animation programs. These five aspects are basic foundational knowledge of animation, emphasis on practical elements, screening of students in the early stages of the animation programs, cooperation and links with the industry, and the application of real life situations into the courses taught.

On the part of the academics, meeting the needs of the industry is seen as a vital goal. However, to meet these needs academicians also face many challenges. Chief among them are the financial
constraints, time factor, and the students’ attitudes towards learning. As for the implementation of curricula, the majority of the informants acknowledged that they did and would consider the needs of the industry when formulating and implementing the curriculum including emphasizing the basic elements in animation.

References
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia


Earlier chapters in this volume expounded upon macro-level issues relevant to the development and evolution of media and communication schools, followed by a couple of chapters that delved into more micro-level discussion of specific programs of study within the general field of media studies. This chapter shifts the discussion to examine the implications of transformations in the higher education ecosystem upon the development and delivery of media studies curricula. Specifically, this chapter presents the autoethnographic account of one so-called “young” lecturer’s experience as part of a team assigned to develop three new programs of study for a small media studies department in a large public university.

Since the mid 2000’s, massive changes have continually taken place in Malaysia’s higher education sector. Possibly the most profound transformation has been the gradual and ongoing inculcation of corporate values and ensuing corporate processes and practices. Globally and locally in Malaysia, university operations mirror that of large, corporate businesses. Alongside altruistic aspirations to educate the nation’s youth and to provide the nation with a highly-educated workforce capable of realizing national aspirations, corporatization of higher education since the new millennium injects into the altruistic ideals a range of utilitarian objectives.
These objectives revolve around several major foci. From the perspective of an academic, these foci appear to be a focus on students (rightly so), and a focus on quality, defined in very specific, measurable terms.

**Student-Centred Education & Blended Learning**

In its focus on students, higher learning institutes aim to provide a learning experience that is student-centered, by offering courses designed to ensure graduate employability, and inculcate entrepreneurial skills, as well as life-long learning mindsets. “Education” and “teaching”, words that are educator-centric, focusing on the educator’s role in teaching the student, are gradually being replaced with terms that focus more on the student’s learning. What matters is not so much what the teacher teaches, but what the learner learns and takes away with them when they complete a course or graduate from university. Hence the increasingly common use of terms like “higher learning institutes, HLI” in preference over “higher education”. For media and communication schools, student-centred learning involves developing curricula that not only prepares graduates for work in a rapidly transforming media environment where many of the work that students will one day undertake don’t even exist yet, but it also encompasses developing media and ICT courses that leverage upon students’ digital and networked lifestyles.

Given that university students today are “digital natives” for whom the networked devices and social media are not “new technologies” but simply a way of life, the challenge is for educators, particularly media and communication lecturers, to keep up with today’s “born digital” students. This problem of keeping up with technologically savvy youth is not only an issue for today’s corps of “digital immigrant” lecturers who most likely had to learn how to use the internet and computers in their late teens or even their thirties, but will also remain an issue for tomorrow’s lecturers, as history has shown that “new” media cultures – no matter the shape or form of the media technology, has always been led by the young, with older generations struggling to keep up.

Given this situation, how then can media and communication schools provide students with a truly student-centred media studies education that will prepare them for jobs or entrepreneurial livelihoods in future environments where current technologies may be obsolete and current work and business practices may have evolved beyond recognition? (For example, who would have thought twenty five years
ago smartphones would be indispensable for many jobs, and that mobile apps could be a billion dollar business?)

Today’s (and tomorrow’s) lecturers can best assist students to achieve their dreams by facilitating learning and not by teaching content. Educators provide course structure, learning resources, and guidance, with some basic foundational knowledge. Lecturers thus act as “facilitators” of learning who “guide from the side” instead of than the traditional expert “sage on the stage”.

To facilitate learning in an environment that is natural to the student, lecturers can design courses that blend naturally with students’ out-of-class lifestyle (e.g. online presence via social media) and communication cultures (e.g. using emojis and sending text messages more than face to face or voice calls). Efforts to “blend” face-to-face class activities (or “offline” learning and teaching) involves incorporating digital devices and social media applications into the course, but also adopting students’ communication practices into the delivery of course content and assessment of student learning. For example, written essays can be replaced with multimedia interactive storyboards incorporating written passages with images, sound, video and hyperlinks to external content or appendix material. (cite Prof Aziah ADeC seminar 2015)

Such efforts to make the most relevant use of information and skills learned from their formal classes are likely to make learning an ongoing and engaging process for students.

In such technologically-enhanced student-centred learning environments, face-to-face class meetings where the teacher delivers content as students listen can be supplemented, or even replaced by instructional material made available online, namely e-learning.

Harold Thwaites’ chapter in this volume provides ample examples of e-learning and blended learning, particularly in the emerging field of digital humanities.

But in a fast-changing field like media and education, ultimately it is students who must take ownership of their learning. To the extent that “teaching” involves delivery of “knowledge” or course content, the “teaching” that university lecturers do is less important than the actual learning that students engage in. Particularly so in a field like media and communication in which young people led in innovative creation and use of new technologies.

As mentioned above, the educator’s role in field like media and communication, is thus not so much to deliver content, but to facilitate student’s learning by providing clear outcomes intended from a course, and a framework for students to use as a guide and curated learning
resources for students to learn concepts and practice skills vital to mastery of the subject matter of the course.

Today’s academic development experts propose Outcome Based Education (OBE) as a viable educational approach to providing students with the opportunities to master knowledge and skills needed to survive and thrive in constantly changing future work and business environments.

The main thrust of OBE is identifying specific outcomes desired at the end of a course or program of study, and constructively aligning all Learning and Teaching (L&T) activities and assessments to achieve the course or program’s planned outcomes.

**Quality Objectives**

To monitor “quality” of courses and programs designed according to OBE principles, the entire L&T process needs to be documented, and audits conducted to evaluated to ensure compliance to planned processes and evaluate the achievement of stated outcomes.

On the one hand, this very corporate approach to defining and ensuring quality education for university students is an effective way of helping universities and lecturers to self-monitor and align teaching practices with students’ learning needs as well as with the higher aspirations of nation and the university. Everything is documented and standardized, making it easy for universities to track a courses’ progress and measure lecturer and student performance, and to thus implement Outcome Based Education (OBE) in an organized and efficient manner.

On the other hand, the actual quality of these structures and processes aimed at ensuring quality education is up for debate. Some major questions related to the issue of quality is how quality is defined and measured, and the extent to which educators are adequately informed and trained on how to comply to quality standards.

The abovementioned transforming environments within which media and communication schools exist and operate simultaneously provide direction as well as constraints that impact upon such schools’ attempt to develop relevant curricula for their students. One of the challenges is for curriculum designers in media and communication schools to develop programs and courses that are able to keep up with rapid technological changes in media and technology, whilst complying to predefined institutional structures and processes that ensure “quality” in higher learning institutes.

The following sections and pages of this chapter presents a case study of the challenges and learning opportunities encountered by
a small group of adhoc untrained curriculum designers assigned to
develop three new programs for a small department in a large public
university, under conditions of major globalized transformations in
both the global and local media spheres and the Malaysian learning
ecosystem.

The specific school that this case study is based on is not specified,
in part because the conditions and environments described are relevant
to all media and communication schools in Malaysia, and possibly
also relevant not only to other schools and fields both in the country
and internationally. There is no discernible advantage to specifying the
actual program or school as the lessons learnt from this case study is
useful for all.

**Authoethnographic account of emerging scholars developing new media content within a student-centred and quality-emphasized academic ecosystem**

For over ten years, the department of media studies offered two programs
of study based on courses, namely a three-year bachelor degree program
and a ‘mixed mode’ masters program. The bachelor program prepared
students for entry-level careers in the media industry through a mixture
of courses providing exposure to journalism, broadcasting and film,
public relations, publishing as well as writing. Students were given
flexible options to focus on one of four ‘streams’, namely journalism,
publishing, writing, and broadcasting and film. The masters program
was initially developed as a postgraduate degree for career advancement
in the publishing industry, emphasizing coursework and a publishing
project. In the mid 2000’s, when the university became a Research
University (RU), as designated by the Ministry of Higher Education, the
masters program evolved into a ‘mixed mode’ program with a significant
research element. Students were required to produce a dissertation
based on a research study. (In addition these taught-courses programs,
the department also offered full-research masters and doctoral programs,
two highly popular programs attracting large numbers of postgraduate
candidates, including international students. The department is an
important contributor to the faculty and the university in terms of the
number of postgraduate research students and international students,
both important performance criteria for Malaysia’s RUs.)

In 2012, the department of media studies was issued a directive
to develop a new bachelor degree program. At around the same
time as this directive was issued, the university was also encouraging
departments and faculties to develop new postgraduate programs, to increase postgraduate intake, in line with RU mandate to narrow the ratio between undergraduate and postgraduate students. The department of media studies took up the initiative to also begin work on developing a new masters program, while concurrently collaborating on another masters program with newly formed centre for digital content innovation, the latter also a directive from university management.

A meeting was scheduled towards the end of 2012 to introduce the director of the new digital content innovation centre to the department’s academic members. Given the overall impression of department members that the director was sent by management to dictate the department’s future directions and the fear that the newly form centre might take over or overshadow the department, initial reception to the meeting was somewhat cool. However, during the meeting the director of the new centre assured members of the department of media studies that he was there to support the department in whatever way that the department wished, and greatly improved the atmosphere and reception.

A workshop was planned and held in the final weeks of 2012 to flesh out the structure of the new program. The two masters programs were not thoroughly discussed at the workshop, but were fleshed out later on through individual proposals and working group refinements. All academic members of the department attended the workshop, and actively brainstormed and debated components of the new program structure. The day-long workshop ended on a high note, with a new program structure that promised students a strong foundation in media and communication studies and in-depth knowledge and skills one of four streams: journalism, public relations, screen studies, and professional writing. Everyone seemed very satisfied and excited with the future possibilities.

In the coming months, however, much of the satisfaction and excitement dissipated as new, unexpected directives came in, and as tedious documentation work sapped time and energy from the handful of departmental members who undertook the work.

Department members took for granted that the structure planned during the workshop would be endorsed by the university. However, not long after the workshop, a new directive arrived instructing the department to close down the existing undergraduate degree program and to replace it with two new programs deemed more viable for producing skilled graduates. The program was to be offered immediately in the coming academic session in September 2013:
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia

- Digital Journalism and Publishing
- Inter Media and Screen Production

A committee was formed to develop the two bachelor programs as well as one masters program. Within the intersecting contexts of the media and higher education backdrops described above, ideally the committee was tasked to develop and offer innovative programs of study designed to equip students with both intellectual and technical skills for the industry.

- The two undergraduate bachelor’s programs, with emphases on digital and networked technologies.
- One postgraduate program, with practical real world emphases on content creation and the media industry, i.e. a masters in media studies.

The university-level centre for digital content innovation, led by its director, took responsibility for the masters program that he himself proposed:

- One cutting-edge postgraduate program infusing technology and the humanities, with an emphasis on technical skills, masters of digital humanities.

At the department of media studies, a committee was formed, to coordinate the development of program structure and development of the individual curriculum for each course (subject) to be offered in each program. This task consist mainly of collating separate documents for each course, and ensuring alignment between the list of things students can expect to be able to know or do upon completion of a course (Learning Outcomes, LO’s), and upon completion of all courses of the program, i.e. upon completion of the program of study, (Program Outcomes, PO’s). The documents needed to build a curriculum for each course include the following five documents:

- LO-PO Alignment: A document that maps LO’s to PO’s, teaching and learning activities and learning assessment methods.
- Student Learning Time (SLT): A document that details the breakdown of the total number of hours and types of learning activities in the course throughout the semester.
- Course Pro-Forma (Bahasa Melayu): This document provides important course information, including course learning outcomes.
(LO’s), transferable skills students can expect to be able to use outside of the course, synopsis of the course, learning strategies (types of learning activities), and how students are assessed in the course.

• Course Pro-Forma (English): This is an English version of the Pro-Forma.
• Semester Course Information: Weekly schedule, recommended text and instructor contact details

Over 50 courses were prepared for the two bachelor degree programs and the master of media studies program. These consisted of about 20 program-specific courses for each bachelor program, five shared courses between the two programs, and 12 masters program.

In total, to prepare the five documents needed for each course, around 250 separate documents had to be prepared, compiled and collated.

In addition to collating approximately 250 separate course documents, the committee members were also responsible for preparing the compliance and quality documents required to propose and gain approval to offer new programs of study, as specified by the Malaysian Quality Assurance (MQA) Framework, and the university’s quality management centre:

• Proposal paper for MOHE Higher Education Committee (Jawatankuasa Pengajian Tinggi, JKPT)
• Programme Self Accreditation Report (PSAR)

MOHE’s JKPT working paper is needed in order to ensure that an academic program is registered with MOHE. Registration with MOHE facilitates recognition of accredited programs, important for students applying for studying funding, particularly the PTPTN loan, and later if applying for jobs or postgraduate entry at organizations that only consider graduates of accredited programs from recognized institutions of higher learning.

Programme Self Accreditation Report (PSAR) is a comprehensive documentation of all aspects of an academic programs, based upon the more widely-known Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (CoPPA), used by both public and private institutions. The PSAR is used by self-accredited institutions in place of the CoPPA to apply for accreditation of a program. The PSAR/CoPPA consists of nine chapters, or “Areas”:  

94
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia

i. Area 1 Vision, Mission, Educational Goals and Learning Outcomes
ii. Area 2 Curriculum Design and Delivery
iii. Area 3 Assessment of Students
iv. Area 4 Student Selection and Support Services
v. Area 5 Academic Staff
vi. Area 6 Educational Resources
vii. Area 7 Programme Monitoring and Review
viii. Area 8 Governance
ix. Area 9 Continual Quality Improvement

The process of applying for approval to offer a new program required that the above two documents be approved at a numerous levels, beginning from the faculty, the university quality/curriculum centre, university-level approval committees, and university senate, and presentation to MOHE for registration.

In early 2013, when the department of media studies was tasked with developing two new programs to be offered within less than a year, along with the one voluntary masters program, the new programs committee embarked upon the task with a sense of urgency coupled with some trepidation brought upon by the massive documentation work that needed to be done.

Early in the year in 2013, the committee expected to be able to complete and submit all documents in time to offer the new programs in September 2013. However, by the time the documents were all finally provisionally ready for submission, it was already August 2013. The department then targeted to offer the new programs either in the second semester of the academic year in February 2014, or latest in September 2014. Unfortunately, due to both the lengthy time required to prepare the documents, as well as the time needed to revise the document after it was tabled at various levels, this did not happen.

Much of the revisions involved refinements to the constructive alignment between program PO’s, course LO’s, learning activities, student learning time, and assessment strategies. While the PSAR document was likely formulated according to the principles of Outcome Based Education (OBE) and constructive alignment of all processes and activities in the design and delivery of a course – principles that emphasized documentation and measurement of the teaching delivery and the learning process, the new program committee members approached the new programs from a more subjective qualitative perspective designed to allow room for creative ongoing development of individual courses based on ongoing developments in the field of media and communication.
Conclusion
Finally, to close the first part of the book is a chapter by Amira Firdaus on the process of developing new curricula within the context of changes in both media and higher education landscapes. Amira highlights transformations in higher learning institutes’ ecosystem, wherein emphasis is placed upon student-centred learning and documentation of quality standards. Her chapter presents an autoethnographic account of her experience as part of a team tasked with developing new programs of study for a small media studies department in a large public university. This chapter draws links between ideal aspirations and practical realities of designing media studies curricula to satisfy student desires, industry needs and higher education institutional structures and quality standards.
8

The Destroyer of Sacred Time and Local Culture: The Role of the Media in Indonesia

Deddy Mulyana
Universitas Padjajaran, Indonesia

Introduction
There are two kinds of media that have historically played significant roles in human civilization, namely television and the internet. Indonesia is probably one of many countries where the role of television and internet has been significantly influential, both favorably and unfavorably. The favorable influence of television and internet cannot be ignored. However, in Indonesia, the unfavorable influence of television and internet is more apparent and more easily observed, albeit not in systematic scientific ways. Television, in particular, through programs broadcast by private TV stations, has molded the contemporary culture of Indonesia to a considerable degree.

As in other countries, television in Indonesia has been used mainly for entertainment. However, a defining characteristic of television in this country is the overwhelming entertainment component at private TV stations. Some observers maintain that the content of television broadcast by private TV stations in Indonesia is worse than cable television programs, although it is hard to make generalizations.

For the past several years, two influential TV news stations, Metro TV and TV One, have supported opposing political parties and presidential candidates. In the 2014 presidential election, Metro TV
promoted Jokowi as a Presidential candidate while TV One promoted Prabowo Subianto. Surya Paloh the owner of Metro TV supported Jokowi, while Aburizal Bakrie the owner of TV One supported Prabowo Subianto. As reported by Republika (June 24, 2014), 70% of TV One’s news content was about Prabowo, 30% was about Jokowi, while Metro TV’s news content was the other way around.

Each TV station reported different results of quick counts, with Metro TV suggesting that Jokowi was in the lead, and TV One suggesting impending victory of Prabowo Subianto. This was disturbing since both TV stations use the public domain (frequencies) that should uphold the interest of the society rather than the interest of a political candidate or a political party. Indeed, theoretically, there is not and never will be independent or neutral media that convey objective messages, since the media owners and practitioners always construct the media contents based on their socio-cultural backgrounds and immediate situations. However, when media become politically partisan, as in the case of Metro TV and TV One in Indonesia, the media ultimately fail in politically enlightening their audiences.

**The Destroyer of Sacred Time**

In Indonesia, both television and internet have played the role as “the destroyer” of the sacred time of Indonesians, at least as conceived by Muslims. Using the perspective of Edward T. Hall (1983), sacred time refers to the period of time imagined as holy and suitable to conduct religious worships such as reading the Quran, prayers, and contemplation. During the fasting month of Ramadan, for over 10 years, Indonesian television has been flooded by comedies, soap operas, variety shows, and other trivial programs, even in the early morning that is supposed to be used for prayers and contemplation. Up until the 1980s, people used to read the Quran at Islamic schools, mosques, or homes after the sunset, especially in villages. However, for the last several decades Quranic recitations in the evening has become a rarity.

Some research indicates that private TV programs are captivating the young. Recent data indicated that the most favorite activity for children has been watching television after school. On average, they spend seven hours a day using media: television, computer, video games, etc. (http://www.kidia.org/panduan/tahun/2010/bulan/11/tanggal/01/id/171/). On average, children watch television between 30-40 hours per week, or at least four hours a day. Studies on children’s TV viewing in Yogyakarta and Bantul conducted in 2013 indicated the longer the
duration of watching TV, the higher the risk of becoming obese. Long TV exposure led to a lack of physical activity and commercials promoting food on TV affect children’s food choices (http://stikes.almaata.ac.id/).

TV viewing also leaves implications on children’s education. Children and young people are immersed in viewing private TV programs so much that their school duties are neglected; some children fall asleep when attending classes. Long TV exposure (more than three hours a day) may reduce children’s language and mathematical skills. Television has been accused of inhibiting children’s imagination and creativity so that they are not able to develop their intelligence to the best of their abilities. The orally-oriented Indonesian people with minimum reading habits have jumped into a visual culture without their reading habits being established. Consequently, people are not fond of reading as they used to be. Novels and literary works in particular are not as popular as in the past, although their quality remains the same or even better, since people prefer watching stories on screen rather than reading stories on paper. Due to their new TV watching habit, students in particular do not study as hard as they should.

Many people use the Facebook between the middle of the night and sunrise. For Amatullah (Jyly) Armstrong (1993), an Australian Muslim, the silence in the middle of the night and in the early morning when people should contemplate is the most beautiful music in life. So, the question is whether communication media has made our lives better physically, socially, and psychologically, and whether we are more content with our lives. Why has the emergence of sophisticated communication media not stopped the agony of human beings, and why has it not overcome intergroup conflicts and wars between nations?

Today, there are 270 million cellular phone users in Indonesia. This number surpasses the Indonesian population, meaning that each person uses more than one cellular phone on average, with the highest rate in Jakarta, that is, 1:8 cellular phones per person (http://ugm.ac.id/id/berita/8776-). Compared to other countries, including developed countries, Indonesians spend more money on cellular phones, although they need other things deemed more important. Young people change their cellular phones many times. They may have two even three cellular phones at the same time. To show their affection to their children, parents give expensive cellular phones as gifts, although the children do not use all the features in the phones. For some people, expensive smartphones symbolize social status. In brief, children are spoiled by sophisticated media that are not their priorities.
Malaysian Media Studies

There is an anecdote that Indonesian young people prefer being hungry to being isolated socially by others. Interestingly, they often share their cellular phone numbers with other people, even strangers. This custom is different from people in individualist countries who only give their phone numbers to those whom they deem special or important. Again, this indicates the collectivist cultural orientation of Indonesian people. It is better for them to have many friends than a few friends although they do not know them well. This is in contrast with a German proverb which may also apply to other Western culture: “Everybody’s friend is no one’s friend.”

It is my contention that no matter how sophisticated the media is, it will never replace interpersonal communication. Media is just an extension of human senses. As Pace and Faules (1994, p.163) maintain, the advancement of communication technology does not make face-to-face communication unimportant, since this type of communication is the most perfect for yielding closeness and empathy among human beings. Face-to-face communication can help overcome feelings of alienation, dissatisfaction, marginalization, or a feeling that “this place has really gotten impersonal”. Unfortunately we often underestimate the importance of interpersonal communication while over-valuing communication technology. Thus, Hofstede et al (2010, p.426) are right in saying that:

While we are clever about technology and are getting more so each day, we are still naive about ourselves. Our mental software is not adapted to the environment we created in recent centuries. The way toward survival is getting to understand ourselves better as social beings, so that we may control our technological cleverness and not use it in destructive ways.

Certainly, we can communicate with others through cellular phones or computers. Yet, this technological means, no matter how sophisticated it is, will not be able to replace face-to-face communication. Some aspects of nonverbal communication, such as touch and smell can be conveyed naturally in face-to-face communication and will remain important. Therefore, no matter how intensive the use of technological communication is, people still need to communicate in face-to-face situations. In business communication in particular, the successful twenty-first century managers, as Lewis (1996) argues, are those who are culturally sensitive and possess strategies to get over cultural differences when communicating with people from different cultures.
The Destroyer of Sacred Time and Local Culture

Indonesia has had television for over 50 years. According to Indonesia’s Article 3 of the Broadcasting Law, the objective of Indonesian television broadcasts are, among others, to strengthen national unity, to foster religious identity, and to educate the people. Yet, in the context of television, religious and educational TV programs have merely become complementary to the mainly entertainment-oriented TV programs.

During the New Order, while Soeharto was in power (1967-1998), the state television station (TVRI) was used by the government as an instrument of propaganda, to preserve and strengthen their power, and especially the power of the then president, Soeharto, and to guarantee the victory of the ruling Golkar party, backed by the government in the general election. Indonesia embraced what Dominick (2009, p.420) calls the developmental theory, which would fall more toward the authoritarian side of the spectrum in which the government mobilizes the media to serve national goals in economic and social development. In the context of Indonesia, TVRI’s narrative offered a new symbolic universe to Indonesian people to define themselves, others, and their social environment. In brief, at that time the media was afraid of the government.

That TVRI was solely the government’s instrument of propaganda was particularly clear in its (national) news programs and its special reports. The news was full of reports on the government’s daily affairs such as the president’s official reception of foreign leaders, the president’s reception of his ministers (who reported their accomplishments to him), the inauguration of the government’s (central or provincial) development projects, etc. Such TV political portrayal fits Larson’s observation (2006, p.2) that media (entertainment, news, and their hybrids) represent reality in a way that promotes certain meanings and interpretations of how the world works and why. These representations, according to Larson, are selected and constructed in ways that consistently promote the status quo — the current beliefs, structures, and equalities. Thus, events captured by TVRI, even in the form of straight news, and also in terms of its sequences and duration, are not actual events.

Due to the economic and political crisis in 1997, Soeharto resigned from his presidency the following year. Soon after that, the Ministry of Information and the licensing system were abolished. Since that time the media has enjoyed much freedom. Yet, lacking professional expertise, many journalists have worked as “envelope journalists” receiving bribes to publish certain news stories. Many of the media in Indonesia, including television, convey provocative, sensational, and bogus news.
Malaysian Media Studies

stories, including character assassination, pornography, verbal and physical violence, misleading advertisements, and cheap infotainment (see also Yin, 2008). The president was once also depicted and insulted as a fat buffalo in a broadcast by a private TV station (January 28, 2010). So, the question is, “If we Indonesians do not respect our own president, who else would respect him.”

Since the beginning of the 1990s, at least 10 private TV stations have been operating solely for profit. The stations broadcast imported soap operas, reality shows, variety shows and commercials which promote hedonistic lifestyles based on loose moral values. All the TV stations broadcast their programs from early in the morning until late at night, including imported children’s programs containing violence such as Power Rangers, Batman, and Sinchan. The messages conveyed by various private TV programs seem to be that the source of success in life are wealth, power, good looks, and popularity; firm religious beliefs are old-fashioned; and extramarital sexual relationships are common in modern life. On the contrary, self-reflection and contemplation, and even socializing with neighbors are seen as wasting time. Melvin DeFleur’s (1970, pp. 129-131) Cultural Norm theory which posits that mass media highlights certain themes and values, is still relevant today. In his perspective, mass media influences norms by strengthening or challenging them, for example, by presenting a life style that is able to change the attitudes of society in that direction, whether the life style is authentic, trusted, accurate, or misleading.

To some extent, private television programs have contributed to what Hamelink (1983, pp. 5-6) calls cultural synchronization or what Straubhaar and LaRose (1996, p.136) term cultural imperialism, two versions of what is now termed globalization. According to Hamelink (1983, p. 6), if cultural autonomy is defined as the capability of society to decide the allocation of their own resources in order to properly adapt to their environment, cultural synchronization is clearly a threat to the cultural autonomy of the society. Social patterns and values are dictated by the metropolises based on their own desires and needs, not on the desires and needs of the receivers. Products and cultural values of the metropolises are exported, reproduced, distributed, and consumed by satellite countries, competing with and even destroying local products and values.

Cultural synchronization implies that the metropolises, especially the United States, offer cultural models followed by satellite countries, undermining all local cultures in terms of values, norms, behaviors, languages, clothing, food consumption, recreation, etc. Whether they...
are aware or not, private TV stations in Indonesia function as agents of the metropolises in extending their liberal cultures and promoting their products and services (entertainment). Thus, the disappearance of local cultures (local languages, traditional food, traditional music, etc.) cannot be avoided in Indonesia. In big cities like Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya more people now use foreign words and phrases often without comprehending what the words and phrases really mean.

Shopping centers use English words in important signage, often without Indonesian words, although most of the shoppers are local people. For instance, in the Paris van Java (PVJ) shopping center in Bandung, names of stores, restaurants, or entertainment outlets are written in English, as if they were in a native English speaking country. Phrases and sentences like the following are commonplace: *Now Open, Grand Opening, Smoke Free Zone, Free Salad Come & Melt with Us, Get your card & register now, Friday I am in Love, Buy 1 Get 1 Free, 20 % off valid on Saturday and Sunday, Are you ready to test the cloud?*, etc. In a big banner in front of restaurants it is common to see English phrases such as: *New Look New Card, You wouldn’t want to miss out, Bigger & Better Benefits, Special Birthday and Anniversary Offer, Ask our service staff for further details*. Many restaurants offer menus partially or even entirely written in English. In one shopping center I found such menus in many eateries, one of which offers: *Beef Pepper Rice, Classic Tomato Pasta with Chicken, Curry Rice with Sliced Beef, Curry Chicken Pepper Rice with Cheese, Curry Rice with Chicken & Mushroom*, etc. At that time, I found no foreigner eating in the cafeteria or restaurant. This is ironic. Some of the locals probably ordered the food or drinks by looking at the pictures without comprehending the written words.

The names of many residential complexes and apartments in big cities are also in English. How can Indonesia become the master of its own culture if we have names such as: *Angel Residence, Green Ville, Sunrise Garden, Central Park, Tower Sky Garden, dan Park Residence* (in Jakarta), *Green Hills, Green Valley Residence, D’casa Grande, Grand Panoramic, Sariwangi City View, Jatihandap Regency, Gateway*, dan *Buahbatu Park* (in Bandung). This contrasts with the more culturally-sensitive practices in Saudi Arabia, France, Russia, People’s Republic of China, Korea, and Japan where names of stores, restaurants, apartments, etc. are in their own languages and script.

Most ironically, prominent figures such as high ranking officials, professionals, academics, and artists have been mixing the Indonesian language with English when they speak with other Indonesians. Even the former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) in a 30-minute
speech inserted 24 foreign terms (mostly in English) at the opening ceremony of the first trade share at Bursa Efek Jakarta (January 3, 2011), including the phrases correct measurement, minimizing the impact of the global economic crisis, and close to six percent (www.skalanews.com). On August 16 2012, in a joint meeting with parliament members in the Parliament Compound in welcoming the 67th anniversary of the Republic of Indonesia, SBY used 30 English terms and phrases such as: founding fathers, nation building, joint communiqué, code of conduct, part of the solution, what does Indonesia think?, financial inclusion, platform, growth with equity, and emerging economy. Some terms were repeated again and again (www.bahasa.kompasiana.com).

Through the media foreign food and beverages have been promoted in Indonesia. People like eating McDonald’s hamburgers and Kentucky Fried Chicken and drinking Coca Cola and Starbucks coffee, not because Indonesians prefer them to local food and beverages, but because they consider such consumption as prestigious. Celebrities are fond of obtaining and showing off luxurious and expensive foreign brand bags such as Hermes, Gucci, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, etc. Women who cannot afford to buy those bags are happy to buy the fake ones. In West Java, local music and cultural performances once considered as noble, such as degung (gamelan), kecapi-suling, calung, reog, and pencak silat, slowly disappear, replaced by standard live performances similar to TV programs. For the last two decades Korean dramas and the K Pop music have become highly popular on Indonesian private television.

Furthermore, people’s appreciation of success, prestige, and heroism, has changed. In the past, Indonesians admired heroes and heroines who struggled for independence, and those who contributed greatly to development in Indonesia. However, those brave heroes and heroines have been replaced by media heroes and heroines who have popular images as film actors, singers, fashion models, TV anchors, sportsmen/women, and other celebrities, although their contribution to the is relatively small. Some of those media heroes/and heroines are fictional characters such as Batman, Superman, Spiderman, etc. who are worshiped globally. In the wake of this cultural synchronization, local cultures that ought to enable its society to survive peacefully, are now confused, weak, and suffering from culture shock in their own country. What Taufik Abdullah (Kompas, April 14, 1997) said long ago is still relevant; that television culture is a popular culture that dissolves our identity into a shallow uniformity that we lose our capability to define the identity of our nation.
Almost all of the existing private TV stations broadcast programs about celebrities, whether they are film stars, singers, models, even their spouses. What they say and do, albeit unimportant, are reported. In contrast, people who have had high achievements are seldom promoted to inspire audiences. With 13 hours of infotainment a day, these TV “garbage” are complemented with dramatic and sensational narratives as long as the camera shots are clear. Basically these programs are about celebrities, especially artists, who have normal and even routine activities. But these activities are portrayed in such a way to attract viewers such as when they fall in love, get married, give birth, get divorced, celebrate birthdays, go on holidays, even trivial activities such as when they take their cars to a workshop or go to beauty salons. The artists’ conflicts with spouses or partners, or with other celebrities, especially their extramarital affairs, usually attract the highest attention from TV viewers.

From 2002 to 2005 alone the number of infotainment programs increased from 24 episodes (3 episodes per day) to 180 episodes per week (26 episodes per day), (see Nugroho et al., 2005). As of 2013, there were 116 episodes of infotainment per week (Syahputra, 2013). Any TV program, including infotainment, even if it is morally bad, is broadcast by a TV station as long as many people watch the program and ratings, as measured by a multinational company. If there are large audiences, the program attracts businesses to insert commercials in the program.

Clearly, television offers its own ideology. Through its news, soap operas, music, sports programs, commercials, and other entertainment slots, television has practiced “black magic” on its audiences. Television has penetrated the life of its audiences more deeply than conventional ideologies, but in a very subtle way difficult to detect. The effect of television cannot always be immediately observed, but continual television exposure will ultimately influence audiences. No research method whether it be experiment, survey, interview, or participant observation can really detect the actual effects of television programs. Television effects may be very subtle and long-term; they may appear years after the audience watch the program. For example, due to their long exposure to violent programs, children may have become immune to violence when they become adults. To summarize, the negative impact of television is based on the following propositions:

- TV as a system of production, distribution and consumption is profit-oriented. Thus, humans are a commodity.
Malaysian Media Studies

- TV (as "the Second God") collapses of the concept of time: time priorities, time duration and frequencies, meaning of time (sacred time), and changes human time schedules.
- Through its Agenda Setting- TV highlights the unimportant and ignores the important things of life.
- TV sharpens differences and conflicts (effects of drama and violence) for rating purposes.
- TV labels the underdog, belittles and blames them, and idolizes the elite.
- TV cultivates banal, artificial and hedonistic values.
- TV cultivates cultural uniformity, that our individuality is lost, weakening our critical thinking.

The Role of Internet

As for the internet, as of 2014, there were 82 million people who use the internet in Indonesia, the 8th largest in the world, 80 percent being young people from 15 to 19 years of age. In using Facebook, Indonesia is ranked as number four in the world (http://kominfo.go.id/index.php/content/detail/3980/Kemkominfo). This number increased from 71 million in 2013 and 63 million in 2012 (http://techno.okezone.com/read/2014/05/13/55/984151/). The number of Facebook users in Indonesia is over 41 million people, ranked as number two, after the United States with 157 million users (https://www.facebook.com/ITpaint.Corp/posts/544067545627681).

Like television, the internet has had negative impacts. Since the downfall of Soeharto in 1998, the media has enjoyed unfettered freedom to criticize the government and prominent figures. Many online media readers, detik.com’s readers for example, make impolite and insulting comments on certain people’s, statements and behaviors. Most recently, the internet, especially through social media, has spread smear campaigns as part of the political campaigns about presidential candidates, Jokowi and Prabowo Subianto. A lot of stories in the internet about these political candidates are just lies. Simply speaking, high ranking officials and politicians are now afraid of the media.

In mid 2009 when Facebook and Twitter were gaining popularity, a research team in the United States made public their research findings. They concluded that Facebook and Twitter can destroy values of humanity (Pikiran Rakyat, July 20, 2014). Research has indicated that the use of internet in general and the social media in particular causes loneliness, invades privacy, powerlessness, a feeling of insecurity, a lack
of empathy, a decline in reading, writing habits and job productivity, tendency to use drugs (especially among the youth), cyber bullying, pornography, and sexual relationships outside marriage, increase of interpersonal conflicts and intergroup conflicts. Facebook in particular has contributed to extramarital affairs in many countries. In Indonesia, extra marital affairs between old friends or old lovers (each of whom is married to another person) are often referred to as CLBK (Cinta Lama Bersemi Kembali), which means “Old love is blooming again.” Facebook may not be the cause of such affairs, but it certainly facilitates them. The use of social media, whether for good or bad purposes, depends mainly on the moral integrity of the users.

The negative impact of the internet also includes the exchange of obscene pictures and videos, especially by young people. Some people have also set up pornography sites in the internet enabling internet users to subscribe to such obscene sites. This kind of irresponsible act may motivate them to be involved in illicit sexual relationships, although further research needs to be conducted to corroborate this negative impact.

People from individualist countries are more likely to suffer from a lack of privacy due to their membership of social media than people from collectivist countries. Although American celebrities are followed by more people in the social media, I believe common people are less likely to be. On Twitter, Lady Gaga may be followed by more than 20 million people, the highest number in the world, yet an average American may have fewer people than an average Indonesian due to their different cultural orientation. No wonder, some American celebrities have terminated their accounts in social media to protect their privacy, such as Bill Gates who terminated his Facebook account, and Keira Knightley who quit Twitter.

Recently I met Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, a professor of Intercultural Communication from Indiana University USA. She said: “I am not a member of social media Facebook and Twitter, as I cherish my privacy, and I do not want to waste my time either”. Yet, Carolyn is a cosmopolitan and successful scholar. She is the President of the World Communication Association (WCA). She produces scholarly works and speaks at international conferences.

One likely motivation for Indonesians to use Facebook seems to be their interest to show others their social status, who they are and what they are doing. Based on Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective (1959), Facebook can be the extension of front stage to show others that they are special people worthy of being admired in that they are
good looking (through pictures), rich, intelligent, members of happy families, travelling overseas, etc. So the reality depicted by Facebook users can be a secondary reality which might be different from primary (interpersonal face-to-face reality) or even misleading.

**Concluding Remarks and Recommendation**

Denis McQuail (2005, p.164) contends that the media should operate based on the same basic principles governing the rest of society, especially in relation to justice, fairness, democracy and reigning notions of desirable social and cultural values. This appeal is still relevant in today’s world, especially in countries like Indonesia which needs to develop its strong and healthy culture.

What do we do to maximize the favorable effects of television and internet? I think at the interpersonal level, we should do the following:

- We have to use communication media (television and internet) to complement our interpersonal/intercultural skills
- We have to use media wisely in terms of time context, duration, frequency
- We have to build harmonious families. We have to guide our children to use media. Children in happy families are more likely to obey their parents.
- We have to design personal blogs to develop verbal competence and share ideas
- Through the internet, we have to seek opportunities to pursue further studies and conduct research, and attend conferences, especially as speakers
- We have to develop interpersonal communication competence to enhance social relations and career

As academics and researchers, we should do the following:

- Explore media culture through interpretive (phenomenological/constructivist) and critical approaches
- Share research results through popular articles, journals, and books
- Put research results into curriculum to be a course (*Media Literacy*) or part of a course

The government has to set up certain policies that can enhance the positive impact of the media through the following action:
• The authoritative media commission must be granted full authority to impose sanction on TV stations that are merely profit oriented.
• The society must be empowered so that they are media literate through training programs and workshops.
• The government must encourage the society to take class action to punish media that mislead society.

References
Peace Journalism and Peace Communicators: New Challenges in Journalism Education and Professionalism

Faridah Ibrahim
Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur (IUKL), Malaysia

Introduction
Media play a central role in modern wars. With technology that allows transborder flow of information and visuals within seconds, war news has become routine news of the day. In reporting on war and conflict, journalists play an important role in framing war news. An interesting question to ask is, how do journalists react to the word ‘peace’ and ‘war’?

From a general semantics perspective, the two words are equally complex and abstract. Hence, how do journalists inject elements of journalistic wisdom and professionalism in their news, in such a situation involving these complex issues? How do journalists write and package their news to promote peace? Do journalists practice peace journalism and play a role as peace communicators? Well-trained peace journalists or peace communicators, would ideally not settle for a violent solution and never assume that violence is unavoidable. In the words of Johann Galtung, peace equals nonviolence plus creativity. However, some local studies on war journalism demonstrate that local journalists are still far from propagating peace. These studies show that war journalism tends to outdo peace journalism. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to conceptually dwell into the meaning of peace journalism and what it takes to be peace communicators. The paper looks at the challenges that journalists have to face in terms of upholding their
professionalism when reporting conflict and war. This paper ends with suggestions that there is a great need for the sensitization of journalists toward the idea of peace journalism and language awareness through journalism education.

**War news and the Media**

The war between Israel and Palestine, for example, has been going on for years without any sign of peace. In this war, the concept of “mine” and “yours”, dispute over territorial rights, pride, dignity, indignation and ego have preoccupied the psyche of both Palestinians and Israelis. The word “struggle” is deeply-rooted in the hearts and minds of “patriots”, “jingoists” and “nationalists” of both sides. The fighters, either freedom fighters or protectionists of the state of Israel gravely internalized that the country could have lost its identity, wither away, or lost its root of history, if there is no struggle. In Israel, everyone has every right to lift arms to exterminate the enemy.

This is just one current war we see in the media but there are many other wars today (Huntington 1997) in different parts of the world, small and large. It is impossible to accurately narrate the feelings and sentiments of those living through war. We may be able to hear their desperate whispers and cries of wretchedness through the mass media but it is impossible for us to truly feel their agony. Our understanding about war and war victims comes second hand through watching prime time news, reading the morning papers or surfing the Internet.

It is indisputable that the media plays a crucial role in times of war, and this could be seen during the U.S-Afghanistan war and the U.S-Iraq war (the first Gulf war, Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and U.S-Iraq war in 2003). Having learnt from the gruesome truth of the Vietnam War, the U.S government sees the media as the *sine qua non* in war coverage. In numerous wars in which the US was involved in, following the Vietnam War, it can be seen that the government has used the media as the conduit in their psychological war strategy to gain public and political support. Undeniably, war correspondents in these wars faced enormous difficulty in obtaining accurate information. As a result, they became an unwilling but necessary part of the misinformation campaign.

Knightley (1991, p.4) contends that information manipulation has progressed since the Crimean War and reached deadly sophistication in modern wars. News management in the war has three main purposes: to deny information to the enemy; to create and maintain support for the war; and to change public opinion and perception of the war itself. Of these, the third is by far the most important and the most menacing.
Often times, inaccurate, or even fabricated, information becomes news, and this distorted news flows around the globe providing information to world audiences.

In the age of image and image-makers, every nation and its people seem to be conscious of their public image, particularly their image abroad. Boorstin (in Faridah 1984 p.40) who conducted a thorough study of pseudo-events said that the United States especially has become preoccupied with creating “favourable images” of itself overseas to the extent that American images today tend to overshadow American ideals. In a study of five world superpowers, reflected in two Malaysian newspapers (Faridah 1984), it was found that the image of the west particularly America and Great Britain, is largely an image provided by the international news agencies, for instance, Agence France Presse (AFP), Associate Press (AP) and Reuters.

Media Language

Today, western influence is no longer confined to just literature and folk culture. It has spread its roots in all forms with the proliferation of new communication technology through the widespread use of television and computers, hardware and software. The dissemination of information and knowledge is inadvertently in the sophisticated language of the west, especially the English language. Most television programs in many countries of the world, Malaysia is no exception, are direct imports from western culture. The subtle penetration of western hegemony and propagandistic models come into play.

The most striking statement that gives indubitable support to the art of propaganda that dates back in the Second World War was orchestrated by Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda. After the Second World War, the word propaganda had subjected every one with fear, both the public and government. Ironically, the state of the art pertaining to the word “propaganda” has been widely used under a different brand such as advertising, strategic communication, public relations, public speaking and persuasion, to name a few. The word “propaganda” according to a renowned international relations scholar, Philip M. Taylor, “is a good word that turned bad”.

Indeed, the danger that confronts us now in the age of modernization and globalization is no less severe than in the Second World War. Manipulation of words, distortion of words, word inferences and fabrication of words and meaning altogether bring about immediate danger to the world today.
It is also through language that people are mesmerized. Of course, it comes together with the content, persuading through effective public speaking, advertising, organizing human perception, propagandizing and through all sort of means; documents, utterances, persuasive speaking, writings and broadcasting certain issues and events that are powerful enough to change all together the perception of the receivers.

Indeed, the saying the pen is mightier than the sword, is not far from the truth, especially in today’s war. And it is through words, written or spoken, that the ideas, feelings, thoughts and perceptions of people become clearer. General semanticist S.I. Hayakawa (1979, p. 80) writing about language and meaning had said “words are more than descriptions of experience. They are evaluations.” Words have become the “weapons” of today’s turmoil. In modern warfare, or appropriately termed as semantics warfare, a new language was brought into being to soften the reality of war. Bombing military targets in residential areas was called “denying the enemy an infrastructure”, people were labeled “soft targets”, saturation bombing was labeled “laying the carpet”, when civilians are killed they are called “collateral damage”, when smaller attacks are carried out they are called “surgical strikes” and when accidental firing of one’s own troops or allies occurs, it is called “friendly fire”; when civilians are killed they become “paramilitary” or soldiers “disguised as civilians”. In the 2003 Gulf War, “precision bombing” landed in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and killed Syrians at the Iraq-Syria border. And any Iraqi phone booth destroyed, becomes posthumously, a “command and control structure” (P. Sainath 2003 http://man.sarai.net/piperman).

Past Studies on War News

Numerous studies have been done on war and peace news coverage, locally and internationally using various theories from agenda setting, news framing to peace journalism (Lacasse & Forster 2012; Ottosen 2010; Abu Daud et al. 2008; Aday et al. 2005; Faridah & Mohd Rajib 2005 & 2002; Pfau et al. 2004).

However, not many studies have peace journalism as the focus of study. One such study is a research on the perception of Malaysians regarding war against terrorism by Abu Daud et al. (2004). Respondents’ perceived an increase of terrorism acts over the past years due to the deepening misunderstanding and tension between the West and Islamic states; and aggressive US foreign policy. The respondents also predicted that with the proliferation of new media technology, acts of terrorism will be on the increase.
A study on war and peace journalism pertaining to the war against drugs in the US was conducted by Lacasse and Forster (2012). These researchers looked at peace journalism in US local and distant newspapers’ coverage of Mexico’s rampant drug problem. The researchers contended that the local newspapers which represent newspapers in close proximity to the US-Mexico border where the conflict occurs tend to use peace journalism rather than war journalism modes of reporting. Since US border states are likely to be most affected by any spillover violence, immigration surges, or drug and arms trafficking, framing of media coverage about Mexico’s drug war will likely differ among various locations within the US.

Based on a content analysis study conducted on the selected newspapers, the researchers found that the distant US newspapers (The New York Times, USA Today, Washington Post, The Plain Dealer, and Chicago Sun Times) use more demonizing and emotive language frames compared to the local newspapers (Houston Chronicle, The Arizona Republic, The San-Diego Union Tribune and Los Angeles Times). However, newspapers in closer proximity to the drug war in Mexico use more peace-oriented news. The study suggested that the positive effects of proximity have resulted in the local newspapers avoiding overtly negative framing in the news articles.

A study by Faridah et al. (2013) on perceptions of war and peace journalism among Malaysian showed that Malaysian are saddened (88.8%) by acts of war, even though the war is not happening in Malaysia, but foreign wars taking place in foreign countries. The study also highlighted the concerns of Malaysian audiences towards war victims and their sufferings. Malaysians felt anger towards the initiator of war (82.5%). They hated war (78.2%) and sympathized with the victims of war (88.1%). The findings in Table 1 show the trend of perceptions among Malaysian audience with regard to war.

The same study (Faridah et al. 2013) also reported that the Malaysian audience also felt that the local media pay less attention to peace news (mean=3.11) as compared to war news (mean=3.42). Most of the war news was from international news agencies and global media such as Reuters, AFP, AP, CNN and Aljazeera. In terms of news slant and orientation, most of these news is slanted towards the superpowers.

Along similar lines, a study by Maslog et al. (2008) regarding Asian media coverage of the US war in Iraq showed the presence of two important factors namely religion and news sources, that had championed the use of peace journalism frames in the newspapers. The researchers content analysed news on the Iraq war in 2003 as covered by newspapers in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines
and Pakistan. Their study found that newspapers from the non-Muslim countries except the Philippines have a stronger war journalism frames and more supportive of the war as well as the proponents of the war. On the other hand, newspapers from the Muslim countries gave more support for Iraq. They found stories by the foreign wire services have a stronger war journalism frames and show more support for the war and the Americans/British partnership compared to stories written by the newspapers’ own staff.

Foreign news coverage by international news agencies on war and non-war issues (see Faridah and Mohd Safar 2005; Mohd Rajib & Faridah 1996) also demonstrated that these news are reported with a Western bias. These agencies tend to give a negative slant to news about other countries other than their own.

A study in Malaysia conducted by Faridah and Mohd Safar (2005) on the use of news sources and news agencies in 12 Malaysian newspapers found the news is reported with a negative slant, especially those that concern developing and less developed countries. These news reports are from international agencies such as Reuters, Agence France Press (AFP) and Associate Press (AP). This study is in tandem with an earlier study by Faridah and Mohd Rajib (1996). The two researchers found that local editors prefer news by AFP and Reuters because of their extensive and up-to-date coverage, superior footage and visual.

An Indonesian researcher, Naswil (2002) identified reasons for the negative slant by the western media towards developing countries. Apart from language barriers, other reasons cited are lack of interest and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotions</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sad</td>
<td>309(88.8%)</td>
<td>25(7.2%)</td>
<td>14(4.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Scared</td>
<td>243(69.8%)</td>
<td>60(17.2%)</td>
<td>45(12.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Uninterested</td>
<td>119(34.2%)</td>
<td>78(22.4%)</td>
<td>151(43.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Angry</td>
<td>287(82.5%)</td>
<td>46(13.2%)</td>
<td>15(4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Repentant</td>
<td>248(71.2%)</td>
<td>75(21.6%)</td>
<td>25(7.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Hate</td>
<td>272(78.2%)</td>
<td>55(15.8%)</td>
<td>21(6.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Regret</td>
<td>244(70.1%)</td>
<td>80(23.0%)</td>
<td>24(6.95%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Sympathize</td>
<td>310(88.1%)</td>
<td>27(7.8%)</td>
<td>11(3.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Like</td>
<td>22(6.3%)</td>
<td>28(8.0%)</td>
<td>298(85.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Indifference</td>
<td>23(6.6%)</td>
<td>41(11.8%)</td>
<td>284(81.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peace Journalism and Peace Communicators

basic knowledge about Indonesia; Indonesia’s weak public relations and promotion programs; old perceptions and stereotypes in past foreign media coverage; the Western media tend to impose their own opinions, values, norms and practices when reporting Indonesia; and Western media do not consider Indonesia important as far as geopolitics is concerned.

Similarly, in an another study, findings showed that Western media tend to select negative news stories in developing countries even though there are positive ones that could have been chosen (Rodcumdee 2002).

The Peace Journalism Option

According to Knightley (2000), war journalism is highlighted due to the notion of conflict as one of the criteria of news value, as noted by Johan Galtung in his seminal study. In fact it is Galtung, a Norwegian scholar who first proposed peace journalism in the 1970s.

Galtung (2002) used the health metaphor to explain peace journalism. He said a good health reporter would describe a patient’s battle against a disease, for instance cancer and at the same time inform the readers about the causes of cancer as well as the full range of cures and preventive measures. Whereas, war journalist, says Galtung are akin to sports reporters who focus only on winning.

How is peace journalism defined? Proponents of peace journalism argue that it is a kind of journalistic practice when editors and reporters make choices about what to report, and how to report certain happenings or events in times of war, conflicts or peace. This gives flexibility to readers to digest and form their own opinions without being primed by the reporters via their writing (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005, p. 5). Hence this would enable the audience to form their own opinions regarding universal values of humanity, particularly peace, democracy, human rights, pluralism and respect for differences.

McGoldrick and Lynch (2000) described peace journalism as a broader, fairer and more accurate way of framing stories, drawing on the insights of conflict analysis and transformation. The definition is based on a premises that place great importance to the understanding of conflicts and violence by journalists since their reports may contribute to the momentum towards war or peace.

According to Galtung (2000), war journalism tends to focus on violence as its own cause and is disinclined to delve into the deep structural origins of the conflict. War journalism reduces the number of warring parties to two. So anyone who is not ‘my friend’ automatically is ‘my enemy’. This is similar to the term ‘either you are with us or against
us’ which the former US President George Bush was fond of using before the US attacked Afghanistan and Iraq following September 11.

Such a term is a two-value orientation which general semanti
cists like Alfred Korzybski and S.I. Hayakawa said could create more animosities than friendship. This term is also known as “either-or” thinking. We sometimes become unconscious of our evaluation of things. For instance, in news writing, journalists can sometimes confuse facts that can be verified and interpretations, with judgments and opinions that are exclusively their own. From the general semanticist point of view, journalists should try to differentiate between what is going on and what they feel or understand is going on. This is termed as a multi-value system of judgment. Reports by the international news agencies, for instance, are often times found to present news based on two-value orientation. News about their home countries is given positive coverage while other countries are negatively portrayed. For the general semanticists, the two-value orientation is obsolete and multi-value orientation is considered more humanly acceptable (Mohd Rajib and Faridah, 1996).

Although peace journalism has been introduced in the western world since the 70’s, and Malaysia in early 2000, the adoption of the principle of peace journalism is very slow.

A local newspaper editor contends that peace journalism acts as a timely and welcomed antidote to much of what passes for war journalism. It is an alternative not a polemic. The elements of peace journalism are not new; it is part political analysis, part investigative journalism, part socially responsible reporting, part advocacy journalism in the interests of peace (Bunn Negara, 2003, p. 6).

Peace journalism proposes that journalists take up the roles as educators who inform and educate the public on the background, contexts and origins of global media content, providing a multidimensional setting in their reports. This, of course, needs training, to promote media literacy and sensitization programs, conducted among journalists and the public.

According to Galtung (2002), those propagating peace journalism consciously adopt an agenda for peace believing it to be the only genuine alternative to an agenda for war. In the process of information gathering and dissemination, these groups map the pre-violence conflict, identifying many parties and more causes, thereby opening up unexpected paths towards dialogue and peace making. The existence of the various international bodies and world organizations such as United Nations (UN), UNESCO, World Health Organisation (WHO), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and the like stand on this premise.
Peace journalism humanizes all sides of the conflict and is prepared to report both deceit and suffering as well as peace initiatives from all parties (Lynch 1998). In other words, peace journalists should be aware of his responsibilities and yet do not lapse into simplifications like going into a two-value orientation: President A is a Devil and President B is a Saint. What is required is the kind of journalism that is prepared to discuss the framework within which judgments are made that will enable the audience to inspect, evaluate and make his own decision.

According to Galtung (1998), peace journalism follows a specific trend in reporting. Firstly, peace journalists need to map the conflict. Secondly, identify all parties involved and thirdly, analyse their goals. In trying to provide objective reports, they need to discuss the process by which some facts are selected and others suppressed. Like investigative journalists, they need to seek out the truth and expose the untruth.

He also wrote about the power that journalists possess, and coined the term ‘peace journalism’ to describe reporters’ responsibilities to include new perspectives which are different from the conventional conflict coverage which he calls ‘war journalism’. He said journalists can either take the ‘low road’ (war journalism) or the ‘high road’ (peace journalism) when writing about conflicts. The ‘high road’ focuses on various dimensions of conflicts highlighting peace rather than violence; truth on all sides instead of one-sided propaganda; voices of common people rather than elites; a solution oriented story rather than victory oriented reporting (Galtung cited in Laccase and Forster 2012, p. 224).

**Professionalism and Peace Journalism**

As information gatherers and disseminators, journalists must act in ways that allow them to report news objectively. Only then can they claim that they are professionals and that their reporting is accurate and ethically sound. However, reporting about war and peace, requires journalists to adhere to different demands. This include the demands of army generals in war zones, the leaders of the warring states as well as the leaders who send their troops to foreign wars. News about war and peace negotiations is subsidized by these groups who are categorized as the protagonists of war. Information from these sources are considered official statements or accredited sources war correspondents can’t do without.

The news media have long been players in the drama of war. War correspondents or embedded journalists are always looking for sources to provide them with information for their news stories. But embedded journalists are not free to roam the war torn zone to gather information. Hence, they have to depend heavily on subsidized information.
Usually war coverage follows a standard format. Its main focus is on acts of violence and national sufferings. Violence is represented as a natural consequence of incompatible cultural differences between “us” and “them”. As Lynch (2002) contended one side is the problem, the initiator, the perpetrator of violence, and the other side is the innocent victim who must respond. To the general semanticist such as Korzybski and his followers, war journalism constructs binaries between good and evil. Victimising and demonizing language is likely to be used by war protagonists and these terminologies are passed to the public via the journalists and the mass media. Hence, the challenges faced by war correspondents are to select the right words from credible sources.

The use of qualified and accredited sources has been underlined in many codes of ethics and has been the basic tenet of objective journalism. In fact, objectivity lies in the domain of professional standards that journalists need to attain and maintain. Roscho (1975) contends that objectivity does not reside in news stories themselves rather it resides in the behaviour of the journalists.

What invokes objective news? For journalists, objectivity does not mean that they are impartial observers of events but they seek out facts and report them in a fair and balanced way. By giving a balanced presentation of facts, journalists are able to satisfy more members of the audience than if they were to report the news in an overtly political manner. For Malaysian gatekeepers, it is the question of balance and professionalism that color local media landscape.

One way to get balanced news is by using balanced facts provided by multilevel sources and not just from a single source. The use of multilevel sources will enable journalists to assemble various opinions from multi-perspectives in a single story, especially a lead story.

Although an interdependent relationship exists between news sources and journalists in war zones, it is the journalists who will retain nominal veto power over incoming information. They can choose to print or not to print. However, they usually relinquish much of their decision-making responsibility to the accredited news sources assigned at the war zones who will select and control the material disseminated. While journalists may reject information from news briefings or press releases, they do depend on the constant flow of information from their news sources. To a large extent, journalists can be seen as the great processors of information passed on by the protagonists of war.

Journalists in general have an overwhelming desire to find facts. They maintain that not only are they responsible for providing information to the public, the duty of providing feedback from society-at-large to the powers that-be, also lie in their hands. Hence, journalists
who gather and organize information for the media tend to take their social responsibility very seriously. They view themselves as having a sacred public mission; to serve as the public’s eyes and ears, to be watchdogs on public institutions and serving public interest. They see their job as seeking the truth, putting it into perspective, and publishing it so that people can conduct their affairs in an informed manner.

These are the professional demands of journalists. According to Larson (1977, p.168), professionalism “makes the use of discretion predictable. It relieves bureaucratic organizations of responsibility for devising their own mechanism of control in the discretionary areas of work.” Proponents of professionalism such as Nayman et al. (1977) and McLeod and Hawley (1964) found that professional norms and values are important criteria to uphold journalistic profession. One reason being, professionalism is an efficient and economical way by which news organizations monitor and control the behavior of journalists.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) identify five dominant characteristics that should be present among professionals and these are a set of professional standards; membership in a professional organization, professional norms, a tradition of knowledge and technical competency. In this regard, journalists would call themselves as emerging professionals as many can truthfully claim that all five characteristics are present in their profession.

Because of their commitment and devotion towards carrying out their responsibility professionally, it is only natural if their interpretation of facts differ from that of their sources’. Journalists consider news a highly perishable commodity, while the source of the news is more concerned about the lasting impression a story will make. To the journalist, a story is a transient element in the ongoing flow of information; to the source, it is a discrete event. The journalist is usually uninterested in the positive or negative flavor of the story, as long as it presents the facts fairly; whereas the source always wants to be cast in a favourable light (Baskin et al. 1997, p. 228).

The media’s goal of providing truth and making profit are sometimes conflicting. We have seen too often newspapers and televisions carrying more negative than positive news mainly because negative and sensational news attract readers as well as viewers and help made the news business a lucrative industry (Faridah 2001). This is so when covering war stories. One can see war stories are heavy on negative reports as compared to positive ones. Such is the case in most countries all over the world and Malaysia is no exception.

In order to survive, the media industry has to attract and hold a particular audience which it could then sell to advertisers. Hence, day
by day, the media content tend to be a mere interpretation of what the audience want so as to maximize readership and circulation or ratings which often means increasing advertising and commercials as well as subscription rates.

To maximize profit, news organizations, both electronic and print, are encouraged by their corporate owners to find news that capture the attention of the audience. Since negative and sensational news sell, we see the proliferation of negative news such as conflicts and wars, and lighter stories about lifestyle, entertainment, celebrities, gossips and so on. All these forces lead to considerable pressures on journalists, and these pressures often bear ethical implications.

The use of appropriate news sources is one of the tenets of professional journalism and it has been spelled out in media codes of ethics in most countries. However, sometimes news sources can provide misleading information in order to champion a certain cause without the journalists realizing that they have been manipulated. Hence, journalists need to closely monitor their sources’ interests and affiliations, their track record, and the extent to which they can be considered credible and reliable. Four key factors that help journalists in analyzing the news sources are the extent of quotability, accessibility, accountability and credibility.

What constitutes credible and objective reporting? The question of objective reporting is value laden and there is no clear cut guideline as to what is objective and what is not. Or what is news value and what is bad taste. A simple definition of objective reporting is reporting that relies on relevant and reliable sources without bias or slant. However, a practical answer to this is to put extra effort in gathering information honestly and accurately as well as treating people involved with compassion. Journalists should try to seek and report the closest truth about events of great concern and interest to the people (Mohd Rajib and Faridah Ibrahim, 1996).

**Doing Peace Journalism and Becoming Peace Communicators**

As has been established earlier, understanding and covering war and peace news is a complex process. It takes a deeper understanding of what war and peace are, and what the ultimate goal of war coverage is. These are the ongoing issues that need to be addressed by journalists when they begin their news gathering either through first-hand experience in war zones or by assembling war news from the various news agencies and other databases via the internet.
Journalists need to understand that they are reporting about complex issues, which cannot be managed with a simple approach. A peace journalist, confronted with a violent, potentially violent or difficult situation, must attempt to look at the whole conflict, not just from one side. This requires lots of digging and uncovering new angles and also interviewing multi-level news sources. This is to ensure that all sides will be heard. Many journalism codes of ethics espouse this idea and this has become a prerequisite for professional and responsible reporting.

According to a peace journalism syllabus created by an academic and practitioner, Robert Koehler (commonwonders.com), a peace journalist never settles for a violence solution and never assumes that violence is inevitable. He emphasized that peace journalism requires awareness of language. Like all good journalism, it is written in plain language that is jargon free. It is aware of the thoughtless use of the military metaphor such as collateral damage, precision bombing which have been discussed earlier.

In short, Koehler stressed that peace journalism is a goal to bring an outside source of wisdom to a complex situation. This wisdom is about the nature of healing, the possibility of transformation, the awareness of social and global wholeness, and the assumption of equality among human being.

The presence of this curriculum shows evidence that peace journalism could be offered as a syllabus in a country. And peace journalism is not only confined to coverage of war and peace news, but also areas that involve conflicts such as local crime (for instance, war against crime, war against drugs; war against prostitution); retributive vs. restorative-transformative justice; punishment vs. healing; ecology and environmental stories that highlight humanity’s relationship with nature; all stories about human conditions which could be in the domain or economy, politics, social and religion.

Questions that need to be addressed pertaining to journalism which uses the common 5W’s and 1H should now be dwelled into at a deeper level, and followed up with more critical questions such as What are the assumptions, especially the unstated ones? How was the story framed? What was left out? What was the consciousness behind the story i.e. was it a peace consciousness or something else? What is no one talking about? How could this be resolved in a positive way for everyone? What is the complex story here? How is it part of the larger peace creation effort?
Conclusion
The media is said to be the Fourth Estate. This is so because they act as watchdogs that check and balance the powers of the other three branches of government — the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. In their effort to be effective as watchdogs, and to perform their noble duties and responsibilities, they are often caught in a web of uncertainties — between news values and bad taste; and between public’s rights to know and national secrets or invasion of privacy. But the public, above anything else, have the right to be protected against misleading and distorted information. As had been established earlier, war stories are filled with bias. This requires journalists to be professional and responsible in news dissemination. The universal standard demands that news dissemination be based on accuracy and impartiality. The media are expected to carry out their watchdog role without fear or favor. And to this end, they are expected to be accountable.

Why do we need journalists and the media to be ethical ones? The answer is simple and straightforward — democracy depends on the free flow of accurate, responsible and trustworthy information. What we have learned from many theories of democracy is that, an informed citizenry is essential in order to build a strong and independent society. Information, as we know, is power. In other words, those who wield information, also wield power. Hence, journalists, who are in the business of gathering and disseminating information, are inadvertently an important distributor of power in society, a role that makes them powerful. Hence, some ethical and professional practices are necessary so that there is a commitment to proper use of power in carrying out their duties as journalists and media practitioners. Thus, it is highly important that journalists learn to be sensitive to choice of media and peace journalism so they may effectively communicate peace when reporting the news, especially news on conflict issues.

The media and journalists have multifarious roles in society. The most pervasive is their role as purveyors of information. According to Merrill (2002) they have the potential to eradicate wrong impressions and stereotypes and reduce tensions; at the same time, they also can create fears and anxieties within a society or nation. Their roles become increasingly important given today’s world in which conflict and war come hand in hand with complex psychological warfare and mounting global tensions.
References


Audiences Everywhere: From Mall to Media: The Practices Perspective on Consumption

“Practice theory should develop more philosophical perseverance and at the same time not give up its embeddedness in empirical social and cultural analysis.”

(Reckwitz, 2002, p. 259)

“If one pauses to reflect on Asian traditions of thought dealing with language and communication, one would perceive a great affinity between these traditions and the approach of Heidegger.”

(Dissanayake, 2003, p. 26)

London School of Economics academics wrote recently that the “critical repertoire of ideas and insights developed to rethink the mass television audience in the 1980s and 1990s” is “only now coming into its own” to “reveal its full analytic power and potential” (Livingstone and Das, 2013, p. 105) in the digital era. Consistent with this claim, their returning colleague Nick Couldry referred to media hermeneutics twenty times in his LSE Professorial inaugural lecture (2013)!

Inspired by hermeneutics and later learning from student projects about the distinctive genre of Malaysian media marketing (from Digi to
Maxis, Public Bank to Universities), my work seeks further to advance a hermeneutic account of audience-authoring practices.

Drawing on Silverstone's (1999) LSE initiative in proposing his own “repertoire of ideas and insights” from hermeneutic phenomenology (Huizinga to Ricoeur) for analyzing media consuming, this chapter suggests how such a conceptual tool kit can be developed as a practices perspective in reflecting upon Malaysian media audience activity. Here, practice theory’s teleological, temporal and topological model of consumer understanding is applied to audiences producing meaning for marketing, shopping malls and social media - the ludic *substratum* of everyday life.

I should first acknowledge that in developing this research through many articles and five monographs I am indebted to the hundreds of Malaysians in Malaysian universities both private and public, as well as in telecommunications, who have been co-authors, contributors in focus groups and collaborators over the two decades during which I have written Malaysian media research. Malaysia’s cultural capital sets high standards: its “voicing out” tested my theorising. I hope that these pages developing earlier work (Wilson, 2007) enable Malaysian horizons to be shared internationally.

Recently, I have been especially grateful to multi-lingual Bidayuh, Chinese, Iban, Indian, Kelabit and Malay large undergraduate classes I taught for three years on the beautiful University Malaysia Sarawak east campus - enjoying efficiency and an earlier enabling Australia-Malaysia Institute fellowship. They were generous in their formal evaluation of my course on consumers. I thank their first year peers for volunteering involvement as participants in social media research. Likewise, Sunway University students were invaluable contributors of mall practices in visiting Malaysia’s Sunway Pyramid Mall (listed by *Yahoo!* among the world’s top ten!)

**Thinking Through a Research Method: How Actions Author Our Narratives in Media and Malls**

*The “social is a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings”*  
(Schatzki, 2005, p. 12)

Since I set out on audience and consumer research and publishing from the philosophical perspective - horizons - of existential or hermeneutic phenomenology (i.e. Gadamer, Heidegger, Ricoeur) in Malaysia twenty years ago, I and Malaysian colleagues have conducted focus groups...
and interviews on a wide range of media topics: from advertising to cellphone use and cinema, talk shows, television drama and tourist web sites.

These focus groups are almost always small (not more than four people), and they are never tightly structured, enabling we believe, participant narratives to emerge. When I started focus group research on media reception - in those distant days producing our recordings on micro-cassettes - I was “overwhelmed by data”. This was for two reasons. First, Malaysian citizens generate interpretive “voicing out” generously: thus our transcription took many hours (but finding research grant funded assistants to undertake this work took longer!) Second, from what perspective was it then possible to conduct the analyses, grounded as articulating our participant cultural “horizon of understanding”? Nowadays, I listen repeatedly to our digital recordings, enhancing awareness of laughter, silences and so on, as significant: we transcribe that which is thematically relevant, always checking again for accuracy. How do we decide on what is “thematically relevant”? I work analytically from the perspective of Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology or the philosophy of understanding-in-practice(s). He emphasizes understanding as an equipped embodied process, elaborated in his Being and Time (1962). That is to say, the primary or “primordial” (ibid.) form of understanding is the way in which we understand how - our habitual, little reflected upon (tacit) unproblematic ability to make use of shopping malls, social media, tables, television programmes, and so build narrative.

Hermeneutics seeks accounts of these processes through analysis using terms such as “horizon of understanding” (a consumer’s broad assumptions), “projection” (expectation), and the “hermeneutic circle of understanding” (how expectations are integrated with emerging events). In focus groups, a researcher can consider previously little reflected upon “horizons of understanding” and so on.

I believe it is important to write in as critically informed a way as is possible within such a conceptual schema. Thus the latter’s representing our “understanding” at its core as “always already” concerned with a purposeful or teleological “take” on experience is significant, allowing discussion of everyday audience practices as consumers or producers of meaning, immersed in mall or media. Practices are “where understanding is structured and intelligibility articulated” (Schatzki, 1996, p. 12).

Our behaviour embodies narrative “projection” people share a culturally (in)formed, practical “fore-understanding” of their surroundings, initiating and instituting this perspective in activity.
Projection of possibility is occluded by power: in Malaysia, fore-understanding is shaped by ethnicity. “Long-standing beliefs about race and racial hierarchies impact upon marketing” (Tadajewski, 2012a, p. 486).

Focus groups are almost always convened by a local facilitator. My initial question in analyzing the results from these discussions is hermeneutic, focusing on a contributor’s embodied, equipped constructing meaning: “how is this participant understanding and hence using equipment (in mall or media), enabling in her/his practice “potentiality-for-being” (Heidegger) with others?”

[Polt (1999) in his lucid book on Heidegger writes about the latter idea as the “communal dimension of my own being-in-the- world” (60)]. Sometimes, of course, our narratives incorporated-in-practice disable, producing “depleted” relationships with others. It is important to remember here also that Heidegger fundamentally (or “primordially”) challenges the prevailing (or Descartes’) account of our experience as being human subjects viewing objects: he argues (as noted) for a phenomenology, in which he regards experiencing “entities” as primarily instrumental (shaped by practical concern). As narrative of such ubiquitous understanding-in-use, offering a “practice-based phenomenological take” (Ardley, 2011, p. 638) on activity, hermeneutics has achieved a renaissance in practices theory.

**Accustomed Practices in Authoring Meaning: Ready-to-Hand Behavioral Narrative Production**

“I think basically everyone visits the mall with a purpose, lah.”
(female, Chinese Malaysian student)

Within Heidegger’s phenomenology (as a critique of subject-object dualism), it is possible to establish a framework or horizon of intelligibility from which one can begin to think through and to reflect on participants constructing narrative [in a “fusion of (contributor/researcher) horizons”]. So understanding embodied in the practice of visiting a shopping mall, for instance, can be considered by convener as well as contributor to focus groups as (in)formed by regarding it as ‘second home’. Such interpretive perspectives are often incorporated in little reflected upon consumer behaviour, activity so habitual or “ready-to-hand” (Heidegger) it receives minimal monitoring. Instead, they require to be “presented-at-hand” (ibid.), consciously foregrounded for inspection in focus groups.
How can respondent stories (as sense-making equipment) be seen as instantiating a wider - or universal - pattern (e.g. social media meaning making), and grouped thematically, considered in generic sub-divisions of that pattern? Each tale told to us tacitly (or implicitly) represents a sought after “hermeneutic circle of (coherent) understanding” (Heidegger). Consumers pursue understanding employing marketing’s media tools but an uncertain brand identity or blogging can be challenging.

Screen consuming is ubiquitous: unlike watching domestic television, social media use is far from secluded but strung out through the city, prompting theory at every turn. Here our narratives in behavioral immersion online are considered as being plausibly parallel to the embodied articulation of narratives offline. Thus research has been based on working with a small group of colleagues in providing a thematic account of consumer experience while at a local shopping mall. (The Sunway Pyramid Mall - the world’s ninth largest - is arguably a cathedral of consumption). Visitor narrative “tools” differ depending on the gender of the source: accounts range from identifying with a group or alignment (both metaphorical and physical) to alienation from being-with-others.

In a familiar mall, of course, our behaviour is not frequently reflected on: first person self-monitoring narratives will be elliptical (minimal “narrative sketches”) as visitors primarily actualise activities of ... conversation, choice, consumption. Nonetheless, if “presented-at-hand” (Heidegger) across the threshold of reflection, their embodied stories, more fully formed, emerge to constitute meaningful thematic practices in focus group discussion with a local colleague.

In short then, for this researcher, Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology wherein people’s understanding is practiced or tool-bearing but not much simultaneously reflected on signals a route through constructively analyzing recorded data. Engaging with familiar entities is always already ready-to-hand experience, not greatly analyzed until their failing to function or our focus group. But as Ess and Dutton note in their recent (2013) New Media and Society Internet Studies editorial, “Perspectives on a Rapidly Developing Field”, “phenomenology and narrative theories of identity” point to an “emerging consensus on how we are to understand online (and offline) identity” (640).

Reflecting on the Ready-to-Hand: Presenting Practices Analytically At-Hand

Heidegger is thus a philosopher who emphasized the practical ... and its proper extent. For him, our fundamental engaging with (always in
some aspect, recognizable) “entities” is as familiar “equipment”, which we “understand” (Verstehen) as “ready-to-hand” for us or other Dasein (humans). Accustomed use of already well known equipment - from armchairs to watching television - needs little reflection. But tools break down. Their functioning is then “presented-at-hand” for analysis.

For instance, we are so accustomed to understanding screen narratives - in the cinema or on computer or on television - we don’t often reflect upon the aesthetic processes or audience activity involved in manufacturing meaning from media. Yet enabled by the content of mainstream cinema or television, audiences produce meaningful stories in their complex practice of connecting shots, sharing point-of-view or shot-reverse-shot sequences. Usually, we just immerse in looking through an apparent “transparent window” on events. Engaging with these narrative tools is ready-to-hand.

But if narrative equipment does not meet its audience or user expectations, then we engage in present-at-hand reflection on these tools. “For me, the reality of investing in HSBC is as complex as how to understand the image”, to “capture” meaning (a female Malay taming the bank’s marketing at the University of Science Malaysia, Penang). How is story telling used as mediating equipment by the marketing people engaging it as a tool to sell products? And how do consumers comprehend?

I suggest that a need to analyse under such circumstances is shared whether one is dealing with the narrative experience of audiences, clients or consumers. People presume their world to be everyday intelligible. Both the tools enabling sense-making - and their failure - are of core import. From this perspective, one has to be open to the experience of the “other”, but always already with the presumption that the universal horizon of understanding entities is teleological, as equipment. Such was Heidegger’s radical challenging of the English empiricists, philosophers for whom human subjects experience objects having qualities lacking connection to any practice. Instead, the “hermeneutic circle of understanding” is Heidegger’s (and Gadamer’s) spatial image of the mundane temporal process where we without reflection make integrated functional sense of entities everyday.

A Heideggerian account of audience/ client/ consumer narrative, then, is of equipment as being customarily familiar or ready-to-hand but also encountering conflict or contradiction which requires present-at-hand analytical reflection (repair). Such a thesis seems appropriate, I suggest, from audiences encountering difficulty with media stories to the psychotherapeutic discussion.
Phenomenology - carefully articulated as in *Being and Time* - can guide practice: but also listening to participants in research finds philosophical perspectives embedded in their voicing out. Hence our theme, discovering ready-to-hand or tacit use of tools - narrative equipment - buried in behaviour, to make sense of experience. These are here presented-at-hand for fuller scrutiny.

Our Malaysian research interest is in *time* - the behavioral process of producing narrative.

For instance, how does our students’ thematic understanding of the local mall - the ninth largest in the world - as a “home from home” tacitly (in)form familiar experience in this place? Entering from this “horizon of expectation” (Jauss, 1982) entails anticipating and actualizing destination.

To use Heidegger’s concepts, in a focus group conducted at length by a Chinese Malaysian colleague, they are enabled to articulate ready-to-hand awareness of the mall as ‘second home”, or as a “third place” (Oldenburg, 1999) - to present-at-hand for our shared reflection the narrative tools whose embodiment and use enabled them, mostly coherently, to visit. Here, they discuss their ludic immersive experience of the mall, contrasting with the media marketing of this space as offering “adventure”. The “horizon of intelligibility” implicit in understanding the practice of going to the shopping mall as revisiting a ‘second home” rather than as an adventure “implies a certain way of understanding oneself, others, and the events that occur as part of the practice” (Nicolini, 2012, p. 5).

**The Phenomenology of Practices: Behaviour as Text - How Actions “Fore-Understand” and Fulfill Narrative**

In narrative understanding, we have noted, we reconcile our anticipating with actuality: it is never instantaneous. Implicitly or explicitly, we measure our fore-conceptions against content. Our parading through the mall - as well as our perceptions - put projection of possibility to the test.

Heideggerian phenomenology’s account of our narrative understanding as an incorporated process of (in)formed inferring and implicit inspection (checking out fore-conceptions) is central not only to literary reception theory but to marketing research focussed on interpreting consumers’ “key patterns of meaning” in the “narrative structuring of cognition and understanding” (Thompson, 1997, p. 438) in responses to marketing. Elsewhere, Interpretative Phenomenological
Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al, 2009), influential in health psychology and increasingly beyond that discipline, is also shaped by its origins in phenomenology as a philosophical account of understanding life-worlds.

Nonetheless, I suggest this shaping is selective [as, indeed, is similar use of phenomenology within Interpretive Marketing (Wilson, 2012)].1 This would be a theoretical issue of concern only to philosophers, except that it may have limited the focus of subsequent practice. In research, IPA has drawn on phenomenology’s arguments that people always, already are culturally interpreting their experience - rather than seeing the world (somehow) as culturally-free ‘sense-data” (a thesis which for several centuries has shaped English philosophy from Locke to Austin).

However, as indicated on the preceding pages, phenomenology (from Heidegger to Merleau-Ponty) has also argued in detail that as embodied beings we (from the first moment of our everyday perception) understand entities as equipment or tools: we see cups and computers, not mere objects. Narrative is such a tool, used to tell stories, not only in talking, but also in how we talk or walk. A mall can enable anticipation of a clean and comfortable stroll to be realized. But a patient’s slow speech may disclose her or his depressed seeing a deficient life-world of objects (indeed) without meaning: belabored behaviour can articulate as eloquently as speech a story of chronic arthritis.2

Where people have issues voicing out, reference to their activity (or its absence) may be “data rich”. Behaviour ‘speaks”. How (indeed, that) we walk in a mall articulates a narrative enabled by equipment. Strolling securely embodies our silently - albeit sometimes outspoken - anticipating or projecting from a pre-formed/forming horizon of understanding that it will be coherently realized: “conventions of “doing walking” are produced and reproduced by the members of the community involved and are consequently sensitive to culture and situation” (Shove and Pantzar, 2005, p. 47).

According to practitioners, IPA as research method can result in a dysfunctional dualism or an opposition between focussing on broad “themes” disclosed in participant experience and “ideography” or particular participant narratives. Yet autobiography/ideography can be considered philosophically from phenomenology’s perspective as a narrative process of informed projecting and so establishing meaning (rather than as a completed account). Then a story becomes a theme which can be pursued by all - researchers and participants - across contributions or topics in a community of interpreters. This separation of ideas governing experience and particular accounts (or narratives of that experience) can be resolved by researcher and participant
discussing the latter’s process of building accounts. How does he or she come to make sense of issues? What are the indeterminacies or the uncertainties in doing so? Do we demonstrate our understanding through behavior as well as talk? Horizons of understanding the problem with which a patient presents may be explored together. Analyzing the process of ideographic construction can be a heuristic theme in all IPA research. It could be regarded as the always present “abstract” in the “particular” monitoring of self.

Returning to his emphasis on recovering in “our” analyses, ready-to-hand understanding as a little reflected upon process of using equipment (e.g. in constructing stories), Heidegger goes on to warn those researching in phenomenology of delusory data, that “our first, last, and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions” (1962, p. 195). Instead, the participant’s narrative is the focus of reflection.

In short, from phenomenology’s horizon of understanding encompassing elicited interviewee narratives, they are viewed as emerging in time as the product of participants’ embodied behaviour. Heidegger’s concepts of “fore-understanding” (projecting narrative from a horizon of meaning), and the productive integrating of its content through a “hermeneutic circle of understanding” constitute a theoretical prism through which interviewee accounts can be everywhere presented for reflection.

**Advancing Narrative Analysis - Theory as Enabling Tool: Perspectives in Practices Initiating and Incorporating Projects**

The practice of Verstehen (understanding), I suggest, involves accomplishing a story (from shopping mall to social media), enabled by Dasein’s (our being’s) equipment or tools (“projection” from a socially shaped “horizon of understanding” in a “hermeneutic circle of understanding”). Thus, we can be said to understand a mall when our behaviour demonstrates that our expectations have been successfully integrated with events: narrative emerges. Anticipatory projections (expectations), as Heidegger uses that term, can be tacitly embodied in behaviour (such as how people are walking) or explicitly presented-at-hand as a result of issues arising in understanding or for interpretation.

At the core of Heidegger’s wide-ranging authorship is his denial of the prevailing ‘subject-object dualism’. That is, human beings are subjects who see a world of separate objects bearing no relationship to our goals in everyday living (Mumby, 1997, p. 4). Instead, as we
have seen, Heidegger argues that people *a priori* (fundamentally or primordially) understand the entities around them to be “tools”, “equipment” enabling their “being-with-others”. So, interacting with familiar entities (he employs the mundane example of a hammer), we use them without reflection - or they are ready-to-hand. Only when issues arise (or the hammer breaks!) do people then regard these entities as object, reflected on as present-to-hand. This analysis of routine as *equipped practices*, I suggest, is open to being widely applied, from accounting for audience-media response to therapy.

The idea of “practices” is “foundational” in this analysis: “they are meaning-making, identity- forming, and order-producing activities” (Nicolini, 2011, p. 602). In the terms used by Heidegger, the practice(s) of understanding (from walking through a mall to watching television) recounted in the tool-like tales emerging in our focus groups have a temporal “fore-structure” (1962, p. 192) where they engage with enabling equipment: authors implicitly assume from varied horizons of understanding experience that it will evolve in a certain way and that its narrative can be coherently established in their hermeneutic circle of understanding. Subsequently Ricoeur (1981a) argued that these practices were appropriated in forming personal identity or became the focus of alienated disidentification.

In the Malaysian context of cultural diversity, along with local colleagues, I have employed phenomenology’s practices theory - with its model of narrative equipment enabling understanding - in considering multi-cultural audience and consumer responses to a wide range of traditional as well as ubiquitous media, marketing and mall stories (2004, 2009, 2011). Marketing engages consumers with modes of understanding practices, skills with ‘stuff”, or Heidegger’s term, “equipment” (1962). In these studies, researcher and researched can share horizons of understanding actions as practices.

Silverstone wrote of liminal moving “across a threshold” in relation to the ludic practice of media understanding in *Why Study the Media* (1999, p. 60). Qualitative research (as in my research focus groups) likewise crosses a threshold, disclosing in participant narrative, pre-reflective play-like practices - a “place ballet” (Seamon and Nordin, 1980) or tacit theatre of an only momentarily monitored meaning making. Choosing apples while chatting to a companion are both meaningful activities. Embodied understanding is everywhere, constituted by regular habitual “backgrounded” behaviour where we integrate anticipation with actuality, or “fore understanding” (Heidegger, 1962) with fact in a “hermeneutic circle of understanding” (Gadamer, 1975) displayed in bodily knowing.
We are now interested in the tacit theatre of routine consumer response to social media (e.g. YouTube’s drama on screen) or shopping mall. For instance, in our research on visitors to the latter, a Malay woman understands a large shopping mall at length as being “good for (a) bonding session” - her prioritized, momentarily reflected upon, presented practice. She talks of the latter as projected or anticipated activity, produced with an established friend participating. Of her cellphone photo record of the “meeting” she asserts, “It was a happy … happiness but is something more because I remember at this moment when we took the picture it was something that you want it to last.”

Phenomenology, asserts Scannell in his *Media and Communication* (2007) is “an effort at an understanding of the world uncluttered by the usual academic baggage” (6). My research on media use in Malaysia (Wilson, 2015) is less ambitious: it seeks to present-at-hand embodied horizons of understanding, supporting audience “voicing out”, semi-realized perspectives on the world, enabling making sense of screen content. Engaging with such exploration, phenomenology’s “practice theory should develop more philosophical perseverance and at the same time not give up its embeddedness in empirical social and cultural analysis” (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 259). Hermeneutic philosophy claims a ubiquity for our understanding, a playlike projecting of meaning in/on practices everywhere.4

Notes

1 I argue in Wilson (2012) that marketing theory’s appropriation of hermeneutic phenomenology (as exemplified by Craig Thompson’s contribution) is silent on this philosophy’s account of human understanding as always already considering entities to be equipment or gear (*Zeug*). In marketing’s “Heidegger-lite” reading of hermeneutic theory, consumers interpret their circumstances simpliciter. Where marketing theory has appropriated a (Heidegger-heavy) view of human understanding being more instrumental is in recently adopting practices theory. As Andreas Reckwitz remarked, “one could point out the philosophical background of practice theory, above all Ludwig Wittgenstein’s late works (…) and Martin Heidegger’s early philosophy (…) and their radical attempts to reverse common philosophical and everyday vocabularies – and in fact, we find everything that is original in practice theory already in the work of these authors.” (2002, p. 250).

2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis focusses on interview narrative themes. Smith claims (2004) to have been “highlighting the inductive emphasis in IPA” (43). However, IPA’s method is more akin to abstracting general (governing?) ideas from particular participant accounts. Inductive reasoning takes the shape, ‘some a are b, therefore all a are b’ (“some heated gases expand, therefore all heated gases expand”). What Smith describes in his (2004) article is moving from “an individualistic frame of reference” to his having then “theorized the material (…) in terms of a “relational self””. Reshaping his horizon of understanding “material” is hardly inductive.
Heidegger’s warning anticipates Bourdieu’s comment in the latter’s later Outline of a Theory of Practice that anthropology needed to question the “presuppositions inherent in the position of an outside observer, who, in his (sic) preoccupation with interpreting practices, is inclined to introduce into the object the principles of his relation to the object” (1977, p. 2) (emphasis in the original). In that text, Bourdieu’s reference to “generative schemes” of the “habitus” enabling “representations produced ad hoc from the same schemes” (ibid, p. 98) could be taken as rescheduling Heideggerian reflection (1962) on projections of meaning from embodied horizons of generic understanding.

Hermeneutic philosophy claims the ubiquity of understanding, defining our being human, as a ready-to-hand (or minimally monitored) playlike practice, projecting and producing participatory meaning. Or in other words, Lancaster University colleague Ruth Topol suggested, understanding is a generic practice, instantiated in particular practices (from using a hammer to visiting malls). As Moran writes of the project of universal analysis in Being and Time: it “aims to be both an apriori transcendental phenomenological description of the essential structure of human existence, Dasein and (... the temporal, cultural, and the dispersed nature of human historicality” (2000, p. 222).

References


Malaysian Media Studies


Closing Reflections on Media Training and Education at a Crossroad

Drew McDaniel
Ohio University, United States

Chalisa Magpanthong
Bangkok University, Thailand

Reflections on Media Training and Education at a Crossroad

For those of us in the field of media education or training, this volume provides us a valuable opportunity to take stock of where we are, where we have been, and—most importantly—where we are going. The first collective effort to do so in Malaysia came in the form of a the International Conference on Media Education and Training, ICMET, convened in 2003. This was just a little over a decade ago, a comparatively short time in most terms. And yet, for those of us working in the media that conference in 2003 seems long ago, so much has happened since then. Consider the field’s trajectory across those years.

Where we have been

It might be instructive to consider the unfolding history of the media here in Malaysia. Its birth occurred early in the 19th Century with the establishment of the first regularly published newspaper in Penang, Prince of Wales Island Gazette. Other newspapers in both English and Malay languages gradually appeared over the following century but mostly from the main trading centers in Malacca and Penang. Then, of course, Singapore became part of the mix of territories that made up Malaya and it developed a vigorous press during that time as well.
Radio came later and then television, much later. The Kuala Lumpur Amateur Wireless Society started broadcasting regularly in April 1930 with a program quaintly entitled “Tea Dance Music from the Selangor Club.” These ambitious amateurs gave way to commercial broadcasters within a few years and a succession of other efforts followed. Radio Malaya—which became Radio Malaysia and eventually Radio Television Malaysia—only emerged in the years following World War II. Television was finally launched at the end of 1963 from studios located on Jalan Ampang, carrying such notable programs as “Huckleberry Hound.”

By the end of the 20th century, although the electronic and print media had proliferated, still not much of a fundamental nature had changed for decades. There were new private radio and television outlets, as well as the satellite service ASTRO that delivered a range of local and international television channels directly to Malaysian homes. In the print media, there was an array of newspapers in Malay, Chinese, Tamil, and English languages available as dailies, as well as a host of magazines.

Of course, there was film too. Malaysia had a lively, if small, movie production industry in the 1950s and 1960s. It created stars too, just like Hollywood and Bollywood. Especially notable was the fabulous P. Ramlee who was featured in dozens of films as an actor, writer, director, and composer. By 2003, the film industry was still present, though much of the production work had been redirected to locally produced television series.

A half century ago, education for the media was seldom taken seriously in the academic world, and back then many educators considered it unworthy of genuine intellectual inquiry. To be frank, institutions of higher learning often considered it a stepchild discipline at that time. Only a small portion of universities around the world actually offered programs of education in media prior to the 1960s, and most of those that existed operated under the rubric of journalism, focusing on writing and reporting skills. Moreover, in the earliest days media education was mainly confined to training for newspapers and magazines. Whereas the first journalism course was offered in 1923 at my own university, Ohio University, the first course on radio only became available many years later.

Where we are today
In the twenty-first century’s second decade the media have undergone a fundamental transformation. Trends occurring since our 2003 conference have turned the media field upside-down and irretrievably
altered our notion of what constitutes the media, disrupting 200 years of steady evolutinal change. The main culprit, but definitely not the only factor, has been the explosion of online media. True, prior to 2003 there were tools for communicating through the Internet—mail lists and bulletin boards were popular—but they did not have a mass appeal and their adoption was limited mostly to the technically proficient. There was also the problem of access. In most parts of Southeast Asia before 2000 dial-up connections to the Internet were the best that one could do, and they were discouragingly slow. Furthermore, in many countries obtaining Internet access of any kind was expensive.

In 2004, Facebook was launched. Initially, its adoption was slow. The number of users did not really begin to grow rapidly until 2006. The pace of growth picked up rapidly by 2008 and continued to rise at an exponential rate until 2011 when a slight levelling off in growth took place. This pattern was emblematic of the overall shift from conventional media to online media, which came to include many other popular services such as YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, Hulu, etc. Almost all of these were established and grew to prominence in under 15 years.

Accessibility was eased and the cost of Internet usage was reduced during those years as well. High speed broadband Internet access became much more widely available, though not yet a universal trend. Although about 83% of homes in the US have access to the Internet, less than 30% of homes have broadband access. In Malaysia, access to the Internet has been spurred by the Multimedia Super Corridor project and other related initiatives. Nevertheless, Internet speeds remain disappointing in many parts of the world.

The impact on mainstream media was immediate and profound. The longstanding decline in newspaper readership accelerated in most parts of the world. In the US, daily newspapers were available in 53% of homes in the year 2000, but by 2014 that proportion had dropped to just 33%. There has been a corresponding decline in readership in almost all countries. For instance, those circulation figures in Canada were 48% of homes in 2000 but only 25% in 2014. Naturally, these trends have produced a loss of financial viability for more than a few publishers. See, for example in Figure 1 the sharp drop in US advertising revenues for print media in the years following 2006. Although print advertising dwarfs that of online advertising, the gap is gradually narrowing.
One thing we can celebrate is the rising acceptance of media studies in the academic world. Whereas a half century ago academic programs on media in institutions of higher learning were uncommon, today no major university would be complete without one. A 2013 survey by researchers at the University of Georgia (2014) found that in the US, 480 institutions reported that they hosted a program in journalism and mass communication. Undoubtedly, many others offered media studies under some other nomenclature such as communication, information, film, media, publishing, and so on.

**Where we are going**

It is undeniable that technological change will be continuous throughout the lives of today’s graduates. We know, for instance, that television is in the midst of a very important changeover from analogue to digital formats. In some countries, this has been achieved already—the Netherlands made the conversion in 2006 and in the US it occurred in 2009. At this writing, Malaysia is scheduled for the digital conversion in 2017, and other countries in the Asian region have set similar dates.
Developing Animation Curricula for Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia

for their own digital rollout. Radio is facing a comparable technological change but the impetus for its digital conversion seems less urgent.

The long term implications of the digital changeover are not so obvious, and the potential for unintended consequences is very great. One of the most interesting consequences we can already observe is that digital formats used in the media have been adapted by all sorts of hardware, so that it is now easy and inexpensive for anyone to produce broadcast quality video materials. On any of the high-end smartphones currently in the marketplace one can easily create videos that would be suitable for mass distribution. Indeed, to supplement their staff’s video work broadcast news editors now frequently rely on amateur video coverage submitted by viewers and shot on consumer camcorders or even mobile telephones. Concurrent with this has been the emergence of platforms for sharing user-produced media content such as Flickr and Vimeo. Productions created on home equipment or telephones uploaded to these websites can potentially reach millions of viewers, more perhaps than distribution through conventional mainstream media channels. Such media productions have proliferated to the point they far outstrip the number of products created by professionals.

Just a little over a decade ago, notably at the aforementioned 2003 ICMET conference there was a great deal of discussion about convergence—the idea that all media would evolve into some sort of unified reality. This notion was based on the indication that technologies for all sorts of information and entertainment were becoming more and more similar, even in some cases even interchangeable. Even at that time, media content could easily be displayed on personal computers, though the idea of media distribution on mobile telephones seemed a bit futuristic back then. As one can easily see, technology has indeed marched onward, enabling more and more crossover from one distribution system to another, each one imposing its own characteristics and peculiarities. This convergence was driven by the conversion of media content from analog to digital formats, making the content transferrable across platforms, networks, and especially the World Wide Web.

At the same time, it seems that a countertrend is taking place—media have evolved into multiple complex and contrasting realities. Let me illustrate: In my own academic program, we offer a major specialization in “Screenwriting and Producing.” But today, screens are everywhere—not just on theatre screens and on my TV, but also on my computer, my tablet, and my telephone. When we say screenwriting, which screen do we mean? Producing for all these contrasting types of screens cannot be the same. Besides, in the US, we are finding that for
many viewers one screen is not enough. A surprisingly large proportion of television viewers are simultaneously using their computers or tablets. It has now become important to provide information to enable viewers to locate online content to supplement their televised content. Although the educational implications for this multiple-screen multitasking phenomenon remain puzzling to me, it is quite clear that broadcasters of this world like Radio Television Malaysia will not disappear, but transform themselves to deliver their content in various ways on diverse platforms.

Somewhat like broadcasters’ need to develop a complementary Web presence, print media have been forced to develop parallel online presence too. While this is not exactly a new trend—in 2003, most newspapers’ maintained Websites. But they tended to be merely online repositories of their print content—today, readership has so much shifted to an online world that publishers must first think of shaping their content to suit their Webpages rather than the printed page. I personally subscribe to the New York Times but there are frequently days when I never open the printed version. But I always catch the main stories online, almost always on my smartphone. Newspapers now recruit a different kind of staff—one adept at writing and design for small screens as well as the printed page.

The field of music recording has encountered a related set of conditions. Worldwide sales of music albums has been on the decline for many years, and as recently as 2007 the sales of albums in the US stood at about 500-million annually. As of this writing, final figures are not yet in, but the projected sales in 2014 will only rise to about 250-million, about half of which were online digital sales rather than conventional CDs. Does this mean people are listening to less music? Probably not. More likely, music is being acquired electronically via the Internet through downloads on iTunes or one of the other music aggregation Web delivery systems. Many music performers have set up their own online delivery systems, often providing their musical recordings at minimal or no change to listeners. Today, in the US, most music performers make their living by means of live performance rather than their recordings, and they use their online offering to build demand for their live appearances.

Curiously, the one area of music sales that is booming is in the sales of old fashioned long play vinyl albums. In 2007, LP album sales totaled just 1-million in the US, but by 2013 that figure had jumped to 6-million units. What is going on here? The main reasons for the increasing demand for vinyl albums seems to be a combination of nostalgia, their sonic qualities, and a taste for the aesthetics of these
plastic disks and their colorful album covers. The visual and tactile appeal of the CD was never one of its strong suits.

Does the erosion in sales of albums mean that students are losing their interest in the production of music recordings? Not at all. In my own school, the Music Production and Recording Industry major is one of the most popular, and because of facilities constraints we are forced to strictly limit admissions to that specialization. At any time, our school enrolls roughly 120 students in this major. So how will these students use the training that they are gaining? Some of them will find media jobs that employ their skills in audio production, ones such as audio for video, sound reinforcement, commercial radio production, and so on. Many of them will find employment in some other field and continue their work on music recording as a part-time career. Admittedly, some may never pursue their audio work for financial gain but will continue to enjoy their work in the music field as a pastime.

Finally, consider what is taking place in the book publishing industry, which has been profoundly affected by events since 2003. Amazon, the US online book dealer, introduced the electronic e-book reader Kindle in 2007. In a format not much larger than a paperback, the reader could contain dozens if not hundreds of books to be browsed and read at the owner’s leisure. While it was electronic, it was very efficient and it could be used for two or three full days of reading without requiring a charge. The Kindle could directly access the Internet and through it books could be purchased and downloaded (usually at a lower cost than their paper versions). Within a few years, the extent of Kindle’s coverage embraced most countries, so that travelers could obtain their reading material wherever they went. Soon there were competitors for Kindle. The most prominent, the Nook, was introduced by book retailer Barnes and Noble in partnership with Microsoft. Although never quite as successful as the Kindle, it also delivered hundreds of thousands of titles to readers.

The number of books proliferated quickly as the e-reader became popularized, and now just seven years after Kindle’s introduction, Amazon claims that there are about 3 million books available for the e-reader in its online store. The conversion to electronic books has had a huge impact on publishers. Although growth in e-book sales has leveled off, Nielsen estimates that about 50% of fiction book sales currently are in electronic formats. The impact of this new technology has varied from country to country, but has been great in the US where local book shops have struggled to maintain their market share.

It has become cliché to identify technological change as shaping the media, but it should not be considered determinative. Other factors...
play a role as well. How regulators exert their control over media content and structures, how the marketplace responds to new options, and how investors plow their funds into media alternatives all shape the world into which our graduates step into.

As one would expect, the enormous shifts in media technology and structures have led to concomitant effects in the fields of education and training. The University of Georgia study mentioned earlier found that since 2010, enrolments in US programs of journalism and mass communication has been declining year by year. The enrolment drop in 2013 from the previous year amounted to 1.0% at the bachelor’s level and 1.2% at the master’s level. Doctoral level enrolment fell by 7.1% from the previous year. Initially, it was thought that much of the decline was due to dire economic conditions that were evident beginning in 2008, but the improvement in the US economy after 2010 seems not to have affected total student enrolment. Where have those students gone? Perhaps the experience of my university provides a clue: In my own program, which does not carry a journalism designation but is named the “School of Media Arts & Studies,” enrolment has risen. In 2014, the number of students entering our program grew by about 28% over the previous year and projections for enrolment in 2015 is for a growth of another 10%.

But here is the most challenging reality: Many—perhaps most—graduates of media programmes in institutions of higher education are finding employment in positions that did not exist two decades ago, ones such as Web designers, Blog editors, and Facebook page managers, for instance. Today’s graduates will have at least thirty years of productive work in their careers, and how we prepare them for their future roles will determine how effectively our trainees and students will be able to adapt to the inevitable changes that will accompany such changes in the technologies and organizational arrangements surrounding the media.

What are the appropriate curricular strategies to prepare for an uncertain future such as ours? Whatever the choice, academic programs cannot merely prepare our students to enter the media field as it exists today; it must envision an ever-evolving reality. Unfortunately, we in the academic world tend to be slow to conduct needed revisions in our curricula and somewhat backward-looking. None of us has a crystal ball to gaze into what lies ahead, and successful predictions about the future are a rarity.

In my own program—which I am definitely not offering as a general model, merely one example in a range of possibilities—we attempt to address this challenge by building our program of study on a story-telling emphasis. Our logic is that no matter the technology
or format, the delivery platform, or technical quality, the most basic purpose of media is to communicate a story. We also acknowledge that not every one of our graduates enter the media field directly; most do, but a significant portion of our graduates pursue careers outside the media. However, today everyone in nearly every endeavor can be a media content producer, and regardless of the job or the personal interest, the ability to present compelling ideas in forms that reach an audience will undoubtedly continue to have value.

Reference