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Media Education and Training in Malaysia
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Abstract

The paper will trace the chronology of the Malaysian media education system and takes a macro look at the training and educational needs of the communication industry. Three phases are discerned in providing these needs: the first phase was during the colonial period, the second phase was from 1957 to 1970, and during the third phase, the role of universities as media and communication education providers become more important than just media training.

Asignificant move made by the Malaysian government in 1970s to improve the education system in Malaysia was to accept communication as a discipline to be taught at the university level. The status of communication education was elevated from a non existence level in the colonial days to a technical level in 1960s to the same level as other traditional disciplines offered at the universities in1970s. It was seen as a bold move.

The introduction of media and communication education at the university level was a blessing not only to the nation but also to the development of the media industry itself, whereas during the same period, many countries in the world, including Britain, believed that media and communication should not be considered as something to be learned formally. This attitude, unfortunately, contributed to the rising negative perception of media practitioners towards media educators and its products throughout the 70s and 80s.

The original aims of communication training in Malaysia then were to produce graduates who can contribute to nation building, and to meet the needs of the media and communication industry (Syarifah Mariam Ghazali,1987). That was the scenario 15 years ago. In a few years, the age of media education in Malaysia will reach 35 years. What has happened to the media and communication education in Malaysia during these years?

Has it managed to help Malaysia in its nation building effort? Have we managed to improve the quality of media and communication practices in the country? Have we managed to

change the attitudes of the media practitioners towards media educators and media education? And more importantly, why are we still here? Are we moving in the right direction?

Malaysia: Education and Media Industries

Malaysia is considered as one of the fastest developing countries in the world (Table 1). Malaysia is exposed to various forms of changes, from economic to socio-cultural changes. These changes have influenced the attitudes of Malaysians towards several government development policies. As a result a major change has taken place in the education system as well as in the media system. Most of these changes began in the early 1980s when the government implemented the privatization policy.

In education for example the government encouraged the setting up of private colleges and universities. On top of that more public colleges and universities have been set up in addition to the available ones. (Table 2 and 3). More high schools graduates are given the opportunity to continue their studies in various fields offered by these colleges and universities. The courses can be vocational or professional in nature or purely academic.

Table 1: Malaysia: Selected Socio-Economic Data

No	Socio-economic data	Position
01	Area	329,735 sq.kilometers
02	Population	23,275,000
03	Life expectancy at birth (age in years)	
	Male	70.3
	Female	75.2
04	GDP (at constant 1987 prices)	RM224,346
05	DNP per capita	USD3,529
06	GNP per capita in purchasing power	USD8,831
07	Unemployment Rate	3.9
08	Literacy Rate	93.8
09	Number of Mobile telephone subscribers	5,192,000 (inc.pre-paid)
10	Number of Internet subscribers	1,512,405
11	Personal computers actively installed	2.2 million
12	Number of computer per 1000	96

Until 2003, there are more than 64 private and public colleges operating in Malaysia. Nearly half of them provide media and communication education including in the areas of new communication technology and multimedia. Almost all of these colleges use English as the medium of instruction. Most of these colleges open their intake to foreign students.

Table 2: Major Colleges in Malaysia (Private And Public)

Institute for Medical Research
Sabah Institute of Art
Akademi Laut Malaysia (ALAM)
Kinabalu College
Kolej Bandar Utama
Kolej Damansara Utama
Kolej Islam Sultan Alam Shah
Institut Bahasa Kuala Lumpur
Institut Latihan FTMS-ICL Science
Limkokwing Institute of Creative Institute
  Technology (LICT)
Maktab Sultan Abu Bakar
Maktab Perguruan Sandakan
Maktab Perguruan Sarawak
Maktab Perguruan Temenggong
  Ibrahim Johor Bahru
Maktab Tentera Diraja (Royal Military
  College)
The Malay College
Malaysian Institute of Management
Malaysian Insurance Institute
Mara Community College (MCC)
  Kuantan
Systematic Education Page
Telekom Malaysia - ITTM
Tuanku Bainun Teacher's College
Tunku Abdul Rahman College
Universiti Telekom
RAYMA Management Consultants (M)
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute MSA
  Technology
Akademi Kewartawanan & Informasi
  Taima (AKrT)
Akademi Seni Kebangsaan
MTDC-UPM Multimedia Academy

Jayadiri Institute of Technology
Institute of Management & Development (IPPJ)
Asean Sheffield Medical College
Asia-Pacific Institute For Broadcasting
  Development
Country Heights Education
Informatics Klana Homepage
Kuala Lumpur School of Computer
Institut Perguruan Darulaman
Computers Merlimau
Institut Teknologi MARA Terengganu
Institut Teknologi MARA Shah Alam
Institute of Software Technology
Institute of Telecommunication and
Information Technology
Intec College Penang Malaysia
INTI College
Sedaya College
Sepang Institute of Technology
Shen Jai School of Commerce Ipoh
Sultan Zainal Abidin Islamic College
Stamford College
Sunway College
Mara Institute of Technology (ITM)
Metropolitan College
Politeknik Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah
Saito Academy
Workers Institute of Technology
  Informatics
Asia Pacific Institute of Information
Monash University
International College Penana (ICP)
INTI College
Akademi Filem Malaysia
Malaysian Institute of Interactive Media

Table 3: Malaysian Universities 2003

Num	Name of Universities	Government	Private
01	International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)	X	
02	Multimedia Universiti (MMU)		X
03	Open University Malaysia (OUM)		X
04	Universiti Industri Selangor (UIS)	X	
05	Universiti Malaya (UM)	X	

06	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	X	
07	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)	X	
08	Universiti Malaysia Sabah (OMS)	X	
09	Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)	X	
10	Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	X	
11	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	X	
12	Universiti Tekno1ogi Malaysia (UTM)	X	
13	Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN)		X
14	Universiti Tun Razak (UNITAR)		X
15	Universiti Utara Malaysia	X	

Table 4: Television Channels in Malaysia March 2002

Name	Mode Transmission	Year	Coverage	Active
TV1 (Government) Radio and TV Malaysia (RTM)	Terrestrial	1963	National	Active
TV2 (Government) Radio and TV Malaysia	Terrestrial	1969	National	Active
TV3 (Private) Sistem Television Malaysia Bhd.	Terrestrial	1984	National	Active
NTV7 (Private) Natseven TV Sdn. Bhd.	Terrestrial	1997	National	Active
ASTRO (Private) Measat Broadcast Network System Sdn.Bhd.	Satellite 40 channels	1996	National/ International	Active
TV4 Metrovision (Private) Metropolitan TV Sdn.Bhd.	Terrestrial	1995	KL & Selangor	Temporarily no service
Mega TV (Private) Cableview Services Sdn.Bhd.	Cable 10 channels	1995	National	Temporarily no service
Medanmas Sdn.Bhd.			Northan Region	Has not begun
Grafimatrix Sdn.Bhd.	MITV Multimedia Interactive TV			Has not begun
Network Guidance Sdn.Bhd.	Fine Network-interactive TV			

Source: Ministry of Information and Ministry of Energy, Communication and Muitimedia;www.astro.com

At the same time, the privatization policy also encourages the development of private media industries. For example, the number of TV channel has increased from just three channels in 1984 (including two government channels) to 45 channels now (Table 4). As the economy

improves, Malaysia will continue to have more TV stations. The same scenario can be seen in radio broadcasting and the broadcast media industry (Table 5, 6, 7,8).

Table 5: Radio in Peninsular Malaysia 2001

No	Channels	Language	Airtime (Hours)
01	Radio 1	Malay	24
02	Radio Muzik	English and Malay	24
03	Radio 3	Malay (states in Pen.)	24
04	Radio 4	English	24
05	Radio 5	Chinese	24
06	Radio 6	Tamil/Hindi	24
07	Radio IKIM	Malay/Arabic	18

(Source: Media Guide 2001)

Table 6: Radio Malaysia in Sabah, East Malaysia 2001

No	Channels	Language	Airtime (Hours)
01	Nasional	Malay	24
02	Blue Network	English	19
		Mandarin	10
		Dusun	01
		Kadazan	20
		Murut	10
		Bajau	20
03	Tawau	Malay	06
04	Sandakan	Malay	06
05	Labuan	Malay	24

(Source: Media Guide 2002)

Table 7: Radio Malaysia in Sarawak, East Malaysia 2001

No	Channels	Language	Airtime (Hours)
01	National Channels	Malay	24
02	Merah	Mandarin	13
03	Hijau	Iban	13
04	Biru	Bidayuh	10

(Source: Media Guide 2002)

Table 8: Private Radio Stations in Malaysia 2003

No	Channels	Language	Airtime (Hours)
01	ASTRO (Satellite) 16 channels (era, myfm, Opus, hitz.fm, MIX, Light & easy, Classic Rock, Golden Oldies, Nostalgia, India beat, Jazz, Melodi, Irama Melayu, Osai, VARIA, Musiq'a.	Malay, English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tamil, Hindi, Arabic	24
02	Time Highway Radio (Nationwide)	Malay-English 42% Tamil-Chinese 40%	24
03	Suara Johor Best 104 FM, (Southern Johor Area)	Malay (60%) English (40%)	24
04	Cats Radio (Sarawak Area)	Malay (42%) English (37%) Mandarin (21%)	24
05	Radio Rediffusion (Redi FM- Nationwide)	Chinese	24
06	Radio Rediffusion (Rfm - Nationwide)	Malay (46%) English (54%)	24

Source: http://www. Astro.com.my, Media Guide 2002

In 2002 alone, about 18,000 publishing permits were issued by the Home Ministry. There were nine newspapers in Malay language, 16 in English, 19 in Chinese and four in Tamil language (Media Guide 2001-02). Based on data collected by Press Guide 2001-2002, most of the advertising expenditure went to newspaper industry, followed by television, magazine, radio and others. On top of that the new media has been positioning very well among the media industry in Malaysia. The growth of internet subscribers is very encouraging from only 63,945 in 1966 jumping to 1,512, 405 in the year 2000. The same goes with the computer usage. Although still lagging behind some of the more advanced countries, the growth in computer use per 1000 can be seen clearly. From only 21 computers per 1000 in 1993, this has increased to 96 to 1000 in 2000 (Economic Report 2001-2002).

For a small country like Malaysia with only 23 million population, one can easily admit that there has been a tremendous change in the Malaysian media environment. However the development in media industry seems to correspond with the development in media studies. About six colleges in Table 9 offer diplomas in media and communication studies.

Table 9: Media and Communication Education in Universities

		CENTER/FACULTY SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	DEGREE
01	Universiti Sains Malaysia	School of Communication With three programmes	BA (Hons) MA, Ph.D
02	Universiti Technology MARA	1. Faculty of Mass Communication 2. Faculty of Screen and Performing Arts	Diploma, BA, MA, Ph.D
03	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Center for Media and Communication Studies With three programmes	BA (Hons) MA, Ph.D
04	Universiti Putra Malaysia	Department of Communication	BA (Hons) MA, Ph.D
05	Universiti Malaya	Department of Media Studies	BA (Hons) MA, Ph.D
06	International Islamic University	Department of Communication	BA (Hons) MA, Ph.D
07	Multimedia University	Faculty of Creative Multimedia	B.Sc. M.Sc. Ph.D
08	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak	Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts with three programmes	BA (Hons)
09	Universiti Malaysia Sabah	Communication Programme	BA (Hons)
10	Universiti Utara Malaysia	Bachelor of Communication Programme	BA (Hons)
11	Universiti College Islam Malaysia	Communication courses under Dakwah Programme	BA (Hons)

All nine universities in Table 9 offer media and communication studies at bachelor and post graduate levels, except a few which have yet to begin their post graduate programmes.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA
Media and communication education in Malaysia has been following two different types of education, formal and informal.

Informal Education
Through formal education, students will be awarded with either diplomas or degree. Whereas through the informal system, courses are conducted based on the need and plan of the organizations concern (Table 10). The function of informal media education is to help the

relevant media organizations in improving the performance of their staff. There are other media and developmental organizations that run similar methods of training. It is on the job type of media training.

However some organizations like FINAS (National Film Board of Malaysia) and IPRM (Malaysian Public Relations Institute) design their courses to meet the need of the industries. They even open participation to those who are new to the fields. Participants will be charged with some amount of fees. At the end of the course they will be conferred with certificates or diplomas.

Table 10: Informal Education on Media and Communication

No	Name of Institution	Ownership	Types of Courses	Cert
01	Tun Razak Broadcasting Institute.	Ministry of Information Malaysia.	Broadcasting for RTM Staff and other interested parties. Training broadcasting	X
	Asia Pasific Institute of Broadcasting	Ministry of Information with ABU and other Development sponsors.	to broadcasters at Asia-Pacific Region	X
02	National Film Board Malaysia (FINAS)	Ministry of Information Malaysia	Film related courses	X
03	Institute of Public Relations (IPRM)	Public relations related courses	Open to all	X
04	Malaysia Press Institute.	Journalism related courses	Open to members	X

The frequency of the training held is almost consistent every year. In the study conducted on the pattern of film related training organized by FINAS, it was discovered that FINAS spent a lot of efforts in this area (Asiah, Fuziah Kartini and Arfah, 2001). The number of courses that has been organized increases steadily especially in the field of film script writing. The study conducted by FINAS and UKM in 1998 showed the poor state of screen writing.

Formal Education

Due to the wide spread development in media and communication industries, the demand for skilled and trained media personnel increases. As a result, more formal education institutions have developed. Most of these institutions offer diplomas and degrees in media and communication studies. (Table 9) From just three higher institutions in 1970s, namely Universiti Sains Malaysia, Institute Technology of MARA, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, a total of nine institutions existed in 2003. These nine institutions have distinctive structure of media and communication education.

Since the policy on higher education stresses on complimentary system, therefore each higher institution that plan to offer media education must have its niche, although in practice

it is hard to do so. The industries seem to demand certain kinds of media skills, consequently the training institutions are more inclined to respond to the needs of the real media world. For this reason, most of the private colleges focus their attention on the skills aspect of media training. Among the skills covered are television, radio and film production, television, film and theater management, writing for various media including speech writing, multimedia related subjects including graphic, desktop publishing, 3D animation and production, journalism, advertising design and production and photography.

However, the public universities have tried to balance between skills and theoretical input. Other then skills courses, each university offers courses related to communication theory and research, except for Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Universiti Multimedia, Monash University Malaysia, and Faculty of Screen and Performing Arts in UITM, which have more skill elements in their media and communication related subjects. Other universities allocate at least 50 percent of their teaching time on the theoretical foundation of the subject mater.

The period of time to obtain bachelors degree is three years in many of the public universities. The number of units to be completed varies between universities and colleges. However all of the universities and colleges in Malaysia require their students to submit projects to fulfill one of the requirements to get the diploma or degree. However most of the government run universities require students to complete one research project and one major project relating to skill before they are eligible to receive their diplomas or degrees.

According to the records published by Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi (Higher Education Department) and Fakulti Pengajian Am (Faculty of General Studies) 2001 (Saodah Wok, 2002), a rough estimate of the number of graduates in communication based on the levels of programmes offered are about 1000 certificate holders, almost 7,000 bachelor holders, and nearly 200 masters degree holders and close to 20 Ph.D holders. Most of the universities offer postgraduate degree programmes. Generally, three types of programmes are offered to postgraduate candidates; full thesis programme, course work and thesis, and course work only. Most of the working candidates prefer to do their masters degree on a part time basis. Most of these students are more inclined to choose course work only programme. At least 10 percent of the post graduate candidates are students from abroad. Most of these foreign students come from countries such as Middle East, Africa, South Asia, North Africa and Central Asia.

The number of foreign students doing their masters and PhD degrees in local universities, government or private universities, has increased significantly lately. Most of these universities allow the students to write their dissertations either in Malay or English. This is the advantage of studying media in Malaysia. In fact the research finding shows that communication educators in Malaysia were significantly proficient in English and Bahasa Melayu in all aspects of proficiency (Saodah Wok and Miszaidah Kamaruddin, 2001).

The Educators
Malaysia, to a certain extent has succeeded in producing graduates in media and communication for the industries, and according to Saodah Wok, quite a number of them has occupied strategic positions in the public and the private sectors. Does this show that the Malaysian media educators are fully qualified? Only the qualified educators can produce qualified man power. In other words the demand for qualified manpower in media and communication has to be shouldered by the communication educators in the country. As it

is, according to Saodah Wok (2002) the number of professors is less than ten, about only 20 associate professors, and roughly 30 assistant professors/senior lecturers with Ph.D. We share the concern of Saodah by questioning their capability in training the media and communication workers since the number of students and teaching responsibilities has increased tremendously.

ISSUES IN MEDIA EDUCATION

As was mentioned earlier, the original aim of communication training in Malaysia then was to produce graduates who can contribute to nation building, and to meet the needs of the media and communication industry (Syarifah Mariam Ghazali, 1987). Based on the available facts, Malaysia has successfully fulfilled the need of providing skilled manpower in the media and communication industry. If not for the bold move by the government then, Malaysia will still be relying on foreign experts in managing its media and communication industries.

This success story is a blessing to the media educators and the graduates they produced. It has helped in gaining respect from the media practitioners and the policy makers. The media and communication education is gaining respect from other faculty members from different areas of social sciences.

On top of that, Malaysia has successfully provided professional trainers and academicians to the ever-expanding media education institutions. This development was not foreseen during the earlier years. As a result of these successes, the responsibilities in developing and shaping the media industries in Malaysia fall into the hands of Malaysian experts. What we expect out of this is that, the Malaysian media educators and practitioners should be able to shape the identity of media and communication industries according to the Malaysian socio-cultural backdrop. Have we managed to produce media practitioners who emphatise with the needs of nation building? Or are our graduates among the many followers of global media practitioners whose job is just to strengthen foreign hegemony?

On the academic aspect of media and communication education, several issues arise especially regarding the quality of our academic atmosphere. Skill wise, Saodah Wok's survey did show that Malaysian media educators are capable and qualified, however the number of professors, associate professors and Ph.D holders is still small. This is not the scenario we would like to see after 35 years of existence. On top of that we have not managed to embark into the search for new major theories and knowledge building. Western ideas and philosophy are still very much embedded in our trend of thinking. In the film industry for example, the Malaysian' scholars have not yet been able to explore an alternative film theory, which can help film practitioners understand the Malaysian identity and develop our own alternative film industry in Malaysia. The same goes with other aspects of media and communication science. After nearly 35 years of existence we have not managed to pull ourselves together into forming a united group of Malaysian scholars to help us examine media education in this country. We have no voice in determining the direction of our media education.

CONCLUSION

After looking back, we can say that media education in Malaysia has developed significantly especially in the physical forms. The number of schools, the teaching staff, and the graduates had increased 100 percent as compared to 10 years ago. The awareness on the importance of media and communication education has been widespread. The demand from the high

school leavers to join media related education studies had increased ever since. Similarly, we have noted a steady development in the post graduate enrollment especially in the last five years.

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