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**FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION STUDIES IN MALAYSIA**

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## INTRODUCTION

Many factors contribute toward the development of communication studies, many of them are general factors that are applicable to many universities world wide but there are special circumstances that influence the development of these studies in certain institutions and in certain countries. This paper initially takes a historical perspective but later reviews the factors affecting the current development of communication studies in Malaysia. Government policy and incentives on higher education, world events, and institutional developments play vital roles in influencing communication studies in Malaysia. The legal framework in which the universities were allowed to operate, the relaxation in the 1990s to allow for the growth of private universities, the establishment in 2004 of the Ministry of Higher Education (then merging again to form the Ministry of Education in 2013) and the quest to find a global ranking have affected the development of universities and communication studies.

It was 26 years ago when Mohd Hamdan Adnan (1988) wrote that mass communication and journalism programmes in Malaysia had gained acceptance and recognition among institutions of higher learning and professional organisations. He described the growth of communication education and training at the university level then as “astonishing” (pg.67). Other scholars (Asiah Sarji & Idid, 2003; Idid, 2000, 2003a, 2003 b; Merican, 2005; Vincent Lowe, 2005) had also written on communication studies in the past and though these had become dated, the illustrations contained were historical for purposes of reference. In a conference organised by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Idid (2013) touched on the generation of lecturers in the various communication departments with an emphasis given on the public universities.

Over the years there has been a tremendous development in the offerings of communication studies in Malaysia. This is expected because communication studies has been in existence since 1971 with the first offering made in Universiti Sains Malaysia, followed by UiTM, UKM, UPM and in many other institutions since then. And along the way we have seen changes in several areas: in the course contents, in institutional set up, in the perspectives and in accepting communication studies itself among our academic peers.

Communication studies, seen in the context of a larger scenario, has exploded 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).

## PERSPECTIVE

The communication field is shaped by two perspectives. In the United States, both the rhetoric and the mass media have chartered their own course of history. The rhetorics have emphasized on speech, interpersonal communication, and writings, while the mass media have ventured into journalism, advertising, public relations, and broadcasting. The two has remained apart, each with

its own proponents and viewpoints but recent discussions have accorded some common appreciation of the respective view points (Sproule, 2008).

Communication can also be seen within the theoretical offerings made, 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 their own different premises and methodologies, and also among players from two continents .

The history of communication in Malaysia is best reflected in various perspectives. Collingwood (1963) mentioned the need to study the historians to understand better the history that was being studied and likewise one would also posit that to understand the communication studies one need to understand communication scholars whose perspectives had always been part of a bigger scenario. In tracing the development of the communication study in Malaysia, one cannot isolate the happenings within from the happenings without.

There are several reasons to take a historical perspective. 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 neglecting their home based history.

The final reason is to see how the communication field itself has included new technologies. 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 items to be studied. The development of media in Southeast from the colonial past to the present time is well documented by McDaniel (2002) who drew the presence 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 inject where relevant the happenings of communication studies in other parts of the world. Let us take a perspective on the history of communication studies in Malaysia, beginning from the British colonial till the present period.

### **The First Phase: BRITISH COLONIAL PERIOD TO RISE OF NATIONALISM**

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 of social science in society. Tham ( 1988) says that the early phase of social science development in Malaysia were seen in the writings of British administrators who were keen to understand the natives and other peoples within, in order to administer the country well. Understanding the values of the natives and other peoples were important. Thus the push to understand the natives and other peoples were justified on the grounds of need for the purpose of administration.

JMBRAS served the people well at that time and also at the present time. It was a prestigious journal that contained writings about the history, the geography, the herbs and medicine of the ordinary people. It also contained the writings on journalism. Malaysia has much to offer to the British to learn. They had much to gather materials to write for others, including the other natives, to understand society at that period of time.

Scholars during the British colonial period were mainly British administrators, and some Malaysians, who wrote on the ownership and role of newspapers and the technical aspects of the media. But one native stood out well. He was Zaaba, the well known literary who later rose to be a lecturer in the School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London. He wrote among others on the early development of journalism, detailing the growth of early Malay journalism (Zaaba, 1941). There are certain characteristics of Malaysian journalism that should be noted: Malaysia has one of the earliest practices of journalism in the region; beginning under colonialism to the days of independence till today.

While Cheng Mong Hock (1967) reflected on the Chinese press during the early state of journalism in the country, Roff's book on early Malay Nationalism was based on the contribution of the press for independence in the country. Elliott Parker (1973) writing in LEADER mentioned of several literature on Malay and Chinese newspapers in Malaya and Singapore. Examples being Roff's Bibliography of Malay and Arab periodicals Published in the Straits Settlements and Peninsular Malay States, 1876 -1941; S.H. Tan's A Note on Malayan Chinese Newspapers; Cecil K Byrd's Early Printing in the Straits Settlements: 1806-1858. Tham (1988) quoted writings by Nik Hassan (1963); Balakrishnan (1971), Coats (1973) Coats and Dyer (1972), Glattbach and Anderson (1971); Nik Hassan (1963) in dealing with media development in the country. The phase was still on journalism, with the print and the broadcasting media, but such writings were descriptive such as Ghazali Ismail's "Wartawan." "Tempat Jatoh Langit di Kenang." (For further insight on this period see Adnan Hussein, 1999).

Scholars and practitioners, writing on the early development and practices of journalism, have noted the growth of the communication as a field of study and as a field of occupation. Writings on early journalism and media came in two forms. One was from extensive research by researchers and doctoral students who delved in -depth from the documents kept in the archives and also conducted interviews with the survivors to gather information about their experience or about what they knew at that period of time (Asiah Sarji, Halimahton Shaari, 2006; Mohd. Safar Hasim, 1996, 2006, Mohd. Dhari Othman (1989).

The troubled days shaped the writings of media under the first phase. The rise of nationalism and the march against colonialism reflected the uncertainty of the time. The phase was still on journalism, with the print and the broadcasting included but instead of just describing the growth and development of print journalism, there was the linkage of journalism with the political institution, with the Malay press supporting the cause of independence and later in the 1950s and 1960s, in partnership for national development.

The print media as an institution was in collaboration with the political institution, one friendly to the Malaysian based political institutions but antagonistic to the British administration Safar Hasim (1996; Cheah Boon Kheng, 1987). 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 also felt to be a threat to the British administration. It was also a national rise that the British were not able to understand because events affecting London, were deemed 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 appointed as the Director General of Information and Publicity, the way was paved for the growth of government information services. It would follow later with the appointment of personnel in the Broadcast 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 preparedness for the Second World War when Britain established the Ministry of Information in London and the Departments of Information in its colonies. Malaysia was no exception (Idid, 2005)

The historiographical development of communication studies in the United States and in other parts of the world, Malaysia included, 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 the subsequent events thereafter, consolidated the growth of communication study. Scholars began to speak about the blessings of the Second World War that gave rise in a more structured way the study of communication. Scholars learned the usefulness of communication as a field of study and also how important communication was as a practical subject. It was in the research endeavours and tribulations of the communication pioneers that 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, they, being weak in theory but strong in methodology. But differences in opinion persist on who were the fathers of communication studies, ranging from Schramm's perspective to Pooley (2008). Schramm was basically American but Pooley included appropriately scholars from Europe. But then what about scholars from Asia? And Africa?

### ***The Second Phase: 1957 to early 1970s***

The troubled times of the day shaped the writings of communication under the first phase. It was the rise of nationalism in midst of troubled times then because the phase also marked the uncertainty of the time in Europe, and the Japanese incursion into China and Southeast Asia during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The War was also the impetus for the rise of nationalism in Asia.

The second phase was focused on the growth and development of print journalism, linking journalism, the political institution and national development. It also saw the growth of broadcasting and the introduction of television services in Malaysia. The media institution was slowly taking shape in the country.

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 his role from politics." (Cheah, 1987:Pg. 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 politicians 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 express the inability of the press to play its meaningful role in society (Zaharom, 1992; Zaharom, 2002).

The second phase saw the rise of Kuala Lumpur as the capital of Malaysia (then Malaya) and the new media capital, away from Singapore. National newspapers like *Utusan* and *Berita Harian* were to have their circulations from Kuala Lumpur with the independence in 1957. The formation of Malaysia in 1963 added on to the growth of the media capital of Malaysia. Malaysia needed more manpower and trained journalists and allied communication workers in public relations, advertisement, broadcasting and film. More universities were finally set up which greatly influenced the setting up of communication departments under the Third Phase.

### **THE THIRD PHASE**

The setting of communication programmes, departments, faculties in universities marked another milestone in the institutional development of communication studies in Malaysia. The first department of communication was in Universiti Pulau Pinang (later renamed Universiti Sains Malaysia), followed by ITM (later renamed UiTM), then at UKM, UPM, and etc. 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 a programme to send Malaysians abroad to obtain higher degrees either at the masters or doctoral level to be lecturers upon their return to the country. In the early days, the United States was the destination to go as courses in journalism and mass communication were new and regarded as the “in thing”. In tandem with the various departments and programmes, Malaysian students were sent by the thousands to pursue higher degrees in the United States in various fields of study. 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 or rhetoric. When mass communication was discussed it was implied as “mass media” and a term against interpersonal communication which was being referred to as communication between and among individuals.

There were components within the field such as public relations, advertising, journalism, film, and others to be studied under the rubric of communication. The communication studies in the United States lead to the accepted idea on the professional and academic orientation of the programme in Malaysia.

The course structure offered in Universiti Sains Malaysia was structured in terms of streams: Public Relations, Development Communication, Journalism and Broadcasting. In UKM, UiTM and UPM, there were courses pertaining to Journalism, Advertising, Public Relations Broadcasting and Development Communication. What was evident was that the public universities were offering courses directed at the professional dictates of the field and the Government was delighted that courses were tailor made to fit graduates for the industry.

The early scholars had an American outlook due to their training. Malaysians were mainly sent to the United States to obtain their post graduate degrees. The early scholars from USM like Vincent Lowe, Ramli Mohamad, Mansor Ahmad were also U.S trained; in UiTM, scholars sent to U.S included Bebe Chooi, Hamidah Karim, Shariffah Mariam, Mohd. Hamdan Adnan, Kiranjit Kaur; in UKM, Samsuddin A Rahim, were sent to the University of Wisconsin; Rahmah Hashim to Ohio

State University; in UPM, Yusoff Hussein, Mohd Fadillah Kamsah, Saodah Wok were Wisconsin graduates.

On top of that the early experts for USM and UiTM were from the United States: John Lent and Leslie Sargent were some of the early pioneers in communication programme in USM that brought along an American approach to studying communication in the state. The programme at UiTM also sought the expert advice from scholars of Ohio University.

The communication programmes in Malaysia developed over the years, in addition to the new courses that were introduced in other universities, such as in UMS and UNIMAS. Some of the departments developed to be faculties while new communication programmes were started in other universities. Each new structure had to go through the institutional process. A Board of Studies would require views from the industry and academic peers and a final approval would normally be obtained from the Senate, Council and the Ministry before the programme could be offered. The programme developed into the School of Communication at Universiti Sains Malaysia; Faculty of Communication and Media Studies at UiTM, and a department that graduated into a semi faculty status (Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication) at UPM and another at UUM while a department grew into a School within a faculty at UKM (School of Communication and Media Studies). A programme developed into a department (Department of Media Studies) at UM. The programmes at USM, UPM, IIUM and UiTM continued to place emphasis on academic and professional programmes, but with sequences in journalism, public relations, advertising, broadcasting. This is indeed relevant when students decide on their career and are then placed to do their practical training.

The University was a federal government reserve. Since 1971 the Universities and University Colleges Act only allowed the setting up of public universities. So Universiti Malaya and Universiti Penang (later renamed Universiti Sains Malaysia) established before 1971 were duly incorporated under the new Act. Hence it made it easier for other universities like UPM, UUM, UTM, UMS, UNIMAS etc to be set up. The Act also made it compulsory that Malay be the medium of instruction in public universities in line with the national language policy. By 2013 there were 20 Public Universities and 26 Private Universities

UUCA, however, also provided a legal administrative structure, with a lee way given through the Constitution that was made possible as an appendix to the Act. Each public university was to have its own Constitution but it would not be in contradiction with the provisions in the Act. Hence all the universities had faculties and departments, but the Constitution at USM made it different as it allowed for the setting up of Schools. It was specified that the executive head was to be called Vice Chancellor, the head to be Chancellor. The University was to be divided into divisions called Faculties, with departments under the Faculties. There would be a Senate (originally there was a Jemaah, Court but a later amendment, abolished it).

There was also a Registrar, Bursar, Librarian. The Registrar was head of the administration.

Such structure made it possible for government agencies to have a say in the running of the university as there were representatives in the council but this also allowed for the gradation of posts in the Universities to be in line with the government bureaucracy.

The Act set the tone for the academic development of public universities in Malaysia by providing a legal entity and legal legitimacy for the academic institution to be recognised. With Malaysians

mainly US trained, the courses offered took a professional orientation. Placing the universities under Government supervision since the early 1970s, had its advantages; namely

- (1) The budget came from the government. Money was allocated for the salaries of the academic staff and the general staff who, as public servants, enjoyed government pensions, medical facilities, travel allowances but were subjected to government regulations, disciplinary rules, and the General Orders.
- (2) The entire budget for development came from the government. Construction of buildings was financed by the government, and in most cases the construction of buildings was supervised by the government Public Works Development. Buildings were also maintained using government funding. The building of libraries and the buying of books were from the government.

As there were hardly sufficient number of post graduates to be appointed as lecturers, it became part of the Government responsibility to provide the necessary training scheme since 1971 to enable Malaysians to obtain their masters and PhDs, and in the various aspects of medical specialization. In a way it was a scheme that was an example for other countries to follow in building up their manpower. It could be imagined that thousands were sent to do their masters and PhDs since 1971 and the result is evident that there are now over 2000 professors in this country in various disciplines, more than 90 percent would owe it to the government training scheme.

Within that given framework narrated above, what then would be the direction of the communication studies for both the public and the private universities in Malaysia? The change in government policy in allowing the setting up of private universities and , the change in the United States Policy arising from the September 11 Incident, induced many of them to continue their education elsewhere. We are therefore studying the factors affecting communication studies in Malaysia in the fourth phase /current scenario as changes occur within the legal institutional framework and the arrival of more trained scholars graduating from non American universities

## **CURRENT SCENARIO**

### **UUCA 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 coming into being of the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act, 1996 allowing for the setting up of private higher educational institutions.

The changes in government policy with regard to education was part of the overall government's privatization programme. Many government agencies like those in telecommunication, power, and infrastructure were affected by the government's privatization policy. Under the administration of Mahathir, several changes were made in media ownership, signalling an end to the old policy of government monopoly of the electronic media (McDaniel, 2002). The government's policy on education changed when the private sector was allowed to set up their own universities unlike in the previous decades when only public universities could be established. At the early stage there was little supervision by the Ministry until the Ministry of Higher Education was set up in 2004, a Ministry that entirely focused itself on the development of higher education in Malaysia. With that came close supervision of public and private universities in Malaysia.

The Mahathir era also saw great strides being made in information technology with an emphasis on the knowledge economy as part of the country's ambition to achieve developed nation status by year 2020 (Lowe and Ng Alina, 1999). Mahathir saw the strategic importance of information technology. The electronic media once limited to radio and TV were now converging in new technologies that will facilitate the manner people seek information (Mazni and Idid, 1999). The advent of the new technology and its significance has been voiced by many scholars (Lowe and Ng Alina, 1999) acknowledging tremendously the effect of the internet on the mass media and also in politics and education (Kung, Picard & Towse, 2008). The new media technology has affected the way that audience have access to news and information. Traditional news channels like newspapers and television have to compete with online news channels. The Asian Communication Handbook 2008 (Indrajit Banerjee & Stephen Logan, 2008) devoted nearly all its chapters to discussing the role and effects of Information and Communication technology on the learning process and the way that communication schools have to recognise and incorporate the new media technology in their curricular.

### **Growth of Private Higher Educational Institutions**

An early signal in the change of government's educational policy was seen with the setting up of the International Islamic University Malaysia 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. But the early scholars in IIUM manning the Department of Communication were US trained. More private institutions of higher learning were to be set up with the coming into being of the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act, 1996. In 2009 there were 20 Private Universities, 20 College Universities and 5 Branch Campuses and 470 Colleges. Malaysians were very innovative, starting programmes by offering 0+3, 1+2, 2+ 1 and 3+0 in the duration of awarding degrees with foreign universities. 1+2 meant that the education was in Malaysia for 1 year then the students would go abroad for two years and be awarded a degree by that foreign university. Later it developed into a programme with 2 years in Malaysia and one year spending time abroad to get a degree from the foreign university. This tie up was possible with the University Colleges where the awarding degree was from abroad. Of late that had also a case when a local educational institution could finish with a diploma and a student on completion would go abroad for a year or even for some months to be awarded a degree from an overseas university. The courses offerings reflected that of the awarding foreign universities with few courses that are Malaysian oriented.

The tie up was mainly with British or Australian universities as distance and costs worked against the Americans. For example it was listed that Kolej Damansaa Utama had a tie up with an Australian university on a 3+ 0 basis where the degree was Bachelor of Communication (Communication and Media Studies) with Murdoch University, Perth, Australia. Another degree was the Bachelor of Communication (Public Relations) 3+0 in collaboration with Murdoch University, Perth, Australia. Even Tunku Abdul Rahman University College is toying a tie up with a British University in the award of its degree although the present thinking is for it to award its own degree. The Communication programme has grown from a diploma status to a degree awarding programme when the School of Social Science & Humanities (SSSH), established in 1999, had a name change in July 2013 calling itself the Faculty of Social Science, Arts and Humanities (FSSAH). The degrees conferred will be the Bachelor of Communication in Advertising, or Journalism, Media studies, and Broadcasting. And a separate Degree in Public Relations. Public relations is highly popular and has a high student intake.

But there are many forms of private institutions of higher learning. While the University Colleges could offer courses and the degrees would be awarded by foreign universities there were also branch campuses of foreign universities such as Nottingham University, University of Technology Sydney and Monash University that had their course outlines similar to and their degrees awarded by the parent institutions.

Thus in the present set up we have several course offerings:

- (1) The public University. Under this arrangement tightly supervised by the University and University Colleges Act, departments or faculties of Communication must abide by the legal requirements as stated under the Act and as supervised by the Ministry of Education. Funding is provided for by the Government. The degrees are recognized. The course outline are professionally oriented such as Bachelor of Communication in (Public Relations, Advertising).
- (2) Private Higher Educational Institutions
  - (a) Diploma courses with foreign universities
  - (b) Degree courses on time structured manner with foreign universities
  - (c) Foreign universities established as branch campus with degrees awarded by them. (such as Nottingham University, Monash University)

#### **Setting up ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Education in charge 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 status each given extra budget for their research and also directing them to be globally ranked. They were Universiti Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia. (Universiti Teknologi Malaysia was the most recent to be elevated as a research university in 2012).

Research universities were expected to be globally ranked and among the various criteria imposed were the intake of foreign students, foreign lecturers, and the ratio of graduate and undergraduate students. An effect on the research universities that had communication departments was the need to find more foreign students and more post graduate students. Talking to Dr. Zamri, Dean of Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, UPM, this meant that undergraduate classes had to have two modes, the power points were in English and the lectures were in Malay; the assignments and examinations were optional for students to submit their essays and their answers in English or in Malay.

The Ministry of Higher Education's policy to encourage foreign students to further their education in Malaysia resulted in more than 80,000 students coming in from more than 100 different countries. The foreign students took up communication undergraduate and post graduate courses in both the private and public universities. In the private universities there are more foreign lecturers than those in the public universities. The policy on encouraging foreign students to do their quality education in Malaysia has resulted in Malaysia being well known as a global education hub.

Research universities had more research funding. Communication lecturers in RUs had more access to research funding than other lecturers in other universities. One would imagine the growth of research in the five universities given the fund and the encouragement. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology were also providing funding to stimulate research among universities in Malaysia.

### **Effect of September 11 and the cost Factor**

In the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of Malaysians enrolled for undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes in the United States. Since communication was then associated with the United States and the American media were then powerful, hundreds of Malaysian academics received their degrees in communication at the masters and PhDs from universities in the United States. The early or first generation lecturers in USM, UKM, UiTM, and UPM were U.S trained. No one thought of getting communication degrees from other countries other than the United States at that period of time.

It was in the 1980s and 1990s that local PhDs (Asiah Sarji and Mohd Safar Hasim being the early candidates) were produced and there were other first few scholars that were sent to do their Masters and PhDs in United Kingdom and Australia. But the September 11 Incident caused a big change. Malaysians especially the Malays who hesitated to go to the United States preferred instead to go to UK, Australia, New Zealand or even made a choice to do their degree programmes at home. Another factor was the added encouragement by the Malaysian Government for Malaysian Public Universities to develop their postgraduate degree 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 post graduate degree programmes and to produce postgraduates to accumulate points for their KPIs.

The effect of September 11 and the growth of post graduate 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. For example, in UKM new returnees with PhDs were two from Australia and one Austrian, three from UK and seven are products of Malaysian Universities. In IIUM, two returned from UK, three from Australia, one from a foreign university branch campus. Only one is expected to graduate soon from U.S. The same picture is found in USM, UiTM and other universities.

Cost was another factor. It was expensive to graduate from American universities compared to the cost in graduating from universities in Australia or New Zealand. More universities are also thinking of expanding their training scheme to other countries such as to Japan, Korea and China to cut down on costs and to gain more products.

The overall effect was that the tie with the United States universities began to be diluted and better ties were established with universities in UK and Australia. The local trained postgraduates had another advantage in that they were able to do more research in a Malaysian situation, but this could be offset by their overseas exposure. The post graduate programme is in full gear. UPM records 300 students enrolled in its postgraduate programmes.

## CONCLUSION

This paper reviewed the four periods in the development of Communication studies in Malaysia, beginning with the Colonial Period, Independence(1957) 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 of the Ministry of Higher Education. There were various factors affecting communication studies during the four periods that were discussed, among them were the political, the legal and the institutional factors. Each of the factors contributed differently during the four periods.

Some highlights should be given to information technology and how it is affecting communication studies. With the popularity of the new information technology, the profile of media readership, the access, the dissemination of information and news underwent tremendous changes in the media industry. The number of internet users has increased from 90 in 1992, to 100,103 in 1997 (Rahmah Hashim et al., 2001) to over 76 percent of urban households being internet users in 2012 (MCMC, 2014). One could see the effects on the services rendered by government agencies through the use of the internet, such as in the filing of income tax, tender biddings, and information seeking. Changes in the music industry and the electronic books are making ways to replace paper book sales (Kung, Picard and Towse (2008). This has several consequences on the communication curriculum, staff and student training and the way teachers provide and monitor student assignments.

Studies in U.S. have shown the changing skills required by editors in the media industry and new media skills required by top U.S. News companies. Research has indicated that high paid veteran journalists are being replaced with “young, tech savvy, high energy staff.” (Wenger & Owens, 2012; pg 9) as employers gave due attention to the immediacy of information rather than giving due recognition to the fundamental values of journalism. The use of computers in news gathering and the use of internet and web have reached more than 95 percent of newsrooms. Garrison (2001) found that most journalists and editorial staff now use computers in newsrooms, use the web as research resource and the web as a distribution medium

The new technology in Malaysia has revolutionized and transformed the way the newsrooms operate as in gathering, sending and in editing news. The introduction of the internet has made possible immediacy in news gathering and reference. Faridah (2001) quoted the then deputy editor in chief of BRNAMA, Azman Ujang, as saying that the media people were known as knowledge workers who needed to be ICT-literate, hard working and well educated to provide quality services. There are more interactive television and radio programmes in Malaysia than before due to the availability of media technologies.

A discussion is also noticed among some members of the public who would question the need for journalists to be trained or to acquire knowledge in Journalism or Communication Schools when civic journalists due to the new information technology can make their presence felt in society. Claussen (2012) had a full discussion on this defending the journalists that were trained in communication schools saying that trained journalists had values and ethics, probing and checking their stories before transmission while civic journalists rose to meet some occasions, would fire their stories and then wait for reaction. Training and knowledge in media were therefore important.

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.” (pg.174).

Malaysian Communication studies may be journalism oriented during the British Colonial period, with the British being concerned with the Japanese press in Malaysia for wiping anti-British feelings before the advent of the second world war, with the Chinese language newspapers being anti-Japanese because of the Japanese invasion of China and the Malay press being concerned and participatory with the nationalist development of the country. There was a close relationship between the Malay press and the politicians, with some press being with the politicians and others with the Indonesian politicians within the concept of Melayu Raya. The Malay press were later to be anti-British, fuelling the spirit of nationalism in the country to the days of Merdeka. The writings of Cheah Boon Keng (1987), Mohd Safar (2006) and Samad Idris (1982) illustrated the close affinity of journalists and politicians in a common platform to achieve and fulfil the spirit of Independence.

The institutionalising of Information services was to begin immediately before World War II and it became formalised in 1951 with the setting up of the Department of Information Services. The state claimed it legitimate to own radio during the days of the Department of Public Relations in 1946 and later the television services. The Privatisation Policy in the 1980s reversed many policies on government ownership and with the overall policy on privatization, the media industry was affected.

The setting of communication departments and programmes in public Universities under an Act of Parliament enabled the government to send lecturers to obtain their post graduate programmes in U.S. The U.S trained Malaysian scholars and the early expert scholars from the United States who were instrumental in setting up USM and UiTM schools of communication saw a more American oriented approach. Other public universities followed suit. It was evident during the third phase that the Malaysian university communication education was American dominated. Lee (2008) writing about the communication education in Asia said the American dominance was due to their early start and that the scenario would continue in the future but with European critical and interpretative paradigms making further headway into Asian communication programmes.

More private universities in communication diluted the American presence when these universities established more links with their counterparts in Britain, Australia and New Zealand. The methodology and theory courses took different offerings that were less functionalist/positivistic, and more cultural, critical in approach.

The effects of September 11 and the setting up of a separate Ministry of Higher Education added to the change in the nature of Malaysian communication scholarship. Malaysians who were hesitant to further their studies in U.S, decided to continue their education in Australia, New Zealand and U.K. instead. Others took advantage of the post graduate communication degree programmes that were receiving assistance from the Malaysian government that, bent on obtaining global ranking, encouraged the registration of Malaysian and foreign students. Now there are less American trained scholars compared to scholars trained in Malaysia, U.K. and Australia. This orientation of training would influence the future development of communication studies in Malaysia as there would be varied viewpoints from scholars conducting research on the various aspects of the communication process and phenomena in the country.

The blending of American and UK/Australian communication scholarship in Malaysia is an exciting phenomenon to observe. UKM, IIUM and UPM are teaching two method classes, qualitative and quantitative and opening up discussions to theories functionalist/positivists, critical and cultural. The field of communication includes work in the departments of communication, speech communication, journalism, rhetoric, mass communication in a variety of related departments, research institutes, and training centres. The disputes in the communication field are conceived as

being carried on between two camps: the critical/cultural school and the positivists. In the Malaysian communication studies there could also be a debate between the foreign oriented and the local orientation of courses, and the courses being practical and academically inclined (COHECS, 2010).

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. In a discussion with Faridah Ibrahim based on the generation of lecturers that have entered communication education, one can take note of the trend since the days of the 1970s. A summary of the development of communication studies in Malaysia could be summarised as such:

- (1) Colonial Period to 1970: Descriptive Writings on Journalism
- (2) The 1970's (Generation 1) (American Training: Development Communication ---80's-- Functionalism/Positivism (more refined);
- (3) The 1980s (Generation 2 and 3): Creeping in of critical-culturalism, beginning of mixed mode ;
- (4) 2000's (Generation 4 of lecturers) : More critical culturalist, positivistic and mixed mode;
- (5) 2010's (Generation 5): With more local trained academics: Based on niche areas more narrow and segmented). Influence of the new technology.

Hence in summary, if 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 then studying the newspapers and using the media was in the best interests of the Colonial Power. The events preceding Independence made journalists and the politicians to be close in pursuit of a common interest. This close relationship was to continue immediately after independence. It was in the 1970s with the growth of universities that communication departments came into existence. Communication studies was American oriented due to the training received. This American dominance was also evident in the communication studies in Asian universities. Events in the 1990s and 2000s changed the scenario. The promotion of private educational institutions in Malaysia, the September 11 incident 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. More lecturers received their post graduate education in U.K, Australia, New Zealand as well as locally. Communication studies will see a mixture of positivistic/functionalist, cultural, interpretative and critical input as there will be greater input from the local scholars. The future will see a more Malaysian approach into the niche areas of communication studies.

While public universities concentrate more on research, less is said about private universities given the resources available to them. Yet research on media and communication studies would go a long way in having a Malaysian perspective as well rather than being functionalist/positivistic, critical or cultural that is mainly foreign in outlook. The roots of these perspectives are different from the historical roots in Malaysian communication studies. Given this standpoint the communication studies that are being debated need more input from other countries. Malaysians graduating from various universities are expected to ponder on this issue in the coming decades to add greater depth to meaning of communication studies in the future.

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