
Communication as a Field of Study in the Philippines

JOSE REUBEN Q. ALACARAN II, LOURDES M. PORTUS
AND RAMON R. TUAZON

Communication as a field of study has expanded over the years. From an Aristotelian oral tradition, a public speaking model and interpersonal communication point of view, it has metamorphosed into written and symbolic forms and more recently, towards the turn of the 21st century, encompassed computer-mediated and digital communication. Even our concept of communication that originated from the Latin term "communis" which means "to make common" has shifted from transmission perspective to interaction perspective. Communication is now regarded as a process, rather than an act, of "sharing symbols, information and meanings" (Craig, 2007, p. 2).

The earliest form of communication inquiry can be traced back to the 5th century B.C. when philosophers like Plato and Aristotle studied public-speaking strategies of Greek orators. It was not until the 20th century, however, that communication came to be recognized as a science and established as an academic discipline. In the first few decades of the 20th century, studies in communication were undertaken by scholars from other social science disciplines and focused on

understanding how individuals make sense of messages (subjectivity of communication). The two world wars steered communication research into another direction. Concerns over the role played by the mass media in the wars motivated scholars to study the effects of mass media messages on audiences. Research into mass media effects laid the empirical foundation of communication research and served as an impetus for the expansion of communication studies in the West.

Communication research and education "underwent rapid growth and institutional consolidation as an academic discipline in the second half of the twentieth century" (Craig, 2007). To wit:

... Formation of the communication field has resulted from a partial convergence of various disciplines and lines of research that intersect in complex ways, all somehow related to the phenomenon of "communication," but have never been tightly integrated as a coherent body of thought. Hence, the manifest diversity of communication research and education is not a recent development but has characterized the field throughout its history (Craig, 2007, p. 2).
