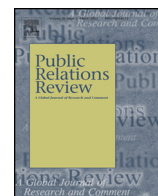




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We are what we teach: The impact of persuasive communication on Philippine PR history and contemporary PR education

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ABSTRACT

The history of the Philippines is one of colonial struggle. It is no wonder that the indelible marks of three and a half centuries of Spanish colonization followed by five decades of American occupation are still intensely palpable in every aspect of Philippine society. The aftermath of centuries of domination is no more pronounced than in the education of its citizens. This paper aims to trace the evolution of Philippine public relations education, examine its influences and critically evaluate the content and status of the public relations curriculum using a post-colonial lens. Public relations is one of the Philippine imports from the United States after the Second World War. This study interrogates how this Western transplant is addressing the dueling interests of multiple stakeholders and the competing priorities of a developing country steeped in the traditions of a colonial past. Through a primary analysis of 20 Philippine undergraduate and graduate programs, personal interviews and secondary research, the historical analysis revealed private, mostly Catholic, universities as key providers of PR education. The study also found that Philippine PR education is still nascent, elitist, and requires a research culture to help professionalize practice.

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1. Introduction

The history of the Philippines is one of colonial struggle. It is no wonder that the indelible marks of three and a half centuries of Spanish colonization followed by five decades of American occupation are still intensely palpable in every aspect of Philippine society. The aftermath of centuries of domination is no more pronounced than in the education of its citizens. This paper argues that the colonial influences that shaped Philippine public relations continue to constrain the further development of public relations education in the country.

There are only a few published studies on Philippine public relations. Of the sparse scholarly literature, Philippine PR education is given but a brief, cursory attention (e.g. [Jamias & Tuazon, 1996](#); [Sarabia-Panol, 2000](#); [Sison et al., 2011](#); [Sison & Sarabia-Panol, 2014](#)). By focusing entirely on the topic, this study is an attempt to ameliorate the dearth of research on

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PR education in the country. As a modest initial endeavor, this paper will trace the evolution of Philippine PR education, examine its influences and critically evaluate the content and status of the PR curriculum using a postcolonial lens.

It has been claimed that postcolonial perspectives reveal the colonialist and imperialist legacies that have shaped contemporary culture and discourse. Postcolonial theory, according to Dutta and Pal (2011, p. 196) “examines the symbolic representations and material relationships that underlie processes of colonization. . . that challenge the systematic erasures of the narratives of oppression and exploitation.” Moreover, a postcolonial approach “involves a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies, as well as at the level of more general global developments” (Quayson, 2000; p. 2). Thus, a postcolonial lens provides a useful framework to investigate the impact of Philippine and PR history on contemporary PR education.

Public relations is one of the Philippine imports from the United States after the Second World War. This study will interrogate how this Western transplant is addressing the dueling interests of multiple stakeholders and the competing priorities of a developing country steeped in the traditions of a colonial past.

Based on published materials and personal inquiries, this research will unravel how the legacies of the country’s Spanish and American tutelage manifest in the nation’s PR curricula. In particular, we will ponder and attempt to answer the following questions: Are there differences in the way public/secular and private/religious universities approach PR curricular offerings? How is the public-private dichotomy carried over in the industry? What are the current trajectories of Philippine PR education?

This preliminary exploration of the PR education ecosystem in a small but growing industry in a developing country hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of the challenges that face Philippine PR education through a more nuanced look at the past. Through this study, we hope to highlight the need for PR education programs, which are basic requirements for professional PR practice in any country.

2. Research approach

This historical study used both primary and secondary research. The primary research involved a website analysis of degree programs in Metro Manila universities and colleges from the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and various university websites. We analyzed the content descriptions of 22 undergraduate and graduate programs that either offered a degree, major or courses in public relations, corporate communication and integrated marketing communication (IMC) as well as development communication and public affairs. Where available, the curriculum and course descriptions as well as a small convenience sample of course syllabi were reviewed. The focus given to Metro Manila is based on the urban-centricity of media-related industries and professions (Maslog, 2007). Mautner (2005, p. 821) argues that despite the challenges of websites, being ephemeral for one, “discourse on the web is now a key factor in constructing representations of reality and social relationships.” She suggests that with their dynamism and flexibility, websites are more accessible than print media and its affordances reflect issues of “colonization/appropriate, globalization/localization/, reflexivity/ideology, identity/difference” (Mautner, 2005; p. 821). In addition, a few interviews with academics and practitioners from the Philippines were conducted. Secondary research consisted of published materials on Philippine history, education and the public relations industry.

3. Colonial influences on Philippine education

3.1. Spanish times

Historians have chronicled how Spain used the sword and the cross to gain imperial power and ensure the world dominance of the Spanish crown. The colonial policy of the United States, on the other hand, centered on “benevolent assimilation” (Miller, 1982). For both colonial masters, however, education was a potent weapon in their vast arsenal, which they used to complete the subjugation of the conquered archipelago.

The Spanish colonizers established schools and offered locals, particularly the Chinese, free education in order to convert them to Christianity. However, locals were discouraged to learn Spanish for fear that it would “become too united and join in opposition to the government” (Forbes, 1933; p. 156).

Since the establishment of the first Jesuit *colegio* in 1595 and the Dominican counterpart in 1619, the enormity of the influence of the Spanish religious orders in shaping education in the Philippines continues to this day. According to Simpson (1980) the Jesuits and Dominicans led the “Hispanization” of the islands. Even if they were outnumbered by the Franciscans and Augustinians they “totally monopolized the institutions of higher education until the end of Spanish times” (Simpson, 1980; p. 3).

The Jesuit-run Ateneo de Manila University and the Dominican-owned University of Santo Tomas (UST) continue to be venerable institutions of higher learning today. It is noteworthy that Ateneo’s Department of Communication offers advertising and PR as one of four concentrations in their curriculum. UST currently offers PR within an interdisciplinary bachelor’s degree in communication arts as well.

A welcome transformation in the Spanish colonial educational system came about with the Educational Reform Law of 1863. The law provided “a system of compulsory primary education with free instruction in Spanish language and grammar, Christian doctrine, arithmetic, geography, agriculture, music, the history of Spain, and courtesy” (Kramer, 2006). This reform

resulted in the emergence of the *illustrados*, the new urban and educated elite class that counts among its ranks the country's national hero, Jose Rizal.

3.2. Under the Americans

The current American-style education system in the country, however, traces its beginnings to the Thomasites, who arrived in Philippine shores in 1901. Charles Burke Elliott wrote: "...The transport Thomas ... sailed from San Francisco with 600 teachers – a second army of occupation – surely the most remarkable cargo ever carried to an Oriental colony" (Constantino, 2000; p. 3). The arrival of the Americans signaled the change from a friar-dominated education where religion was a bedrock to a more secular, universal one (Salamanca, 1968).

Although the U.S. recognized that it could not simply ignore the Roman Catholic traditions of the Spanish school system and the fact that the vast majority of the Filipinos were Roman Catholics, it nevertheless instituted the separation of church and state. The so-called Faribault Plan, which was in effect throughout Governor Howard Taft's administration, stated: "No teacher or other person shall teach or criticize the doctrines of any church, religious sect or denomination, or shall attempt to influence the pupils for or against any church or religious sect in any public school established under this act. ..." (Act No. 74 of the Philippine Commission, 1901 in Salamanca, 1968).

The American era also ushered the ascendancy of the public university with the establishment of the University of the Philippines (UP) in 1908 (Boudreau, 2003). To date, the premier university does not offer a PR degree.

As expected, English replaced Spanish as the medium of instruction. But the feudal system established under Spain was not dismantled and further perpetuated elitism and colonial mentality despite the introduction of democratic values. In addition to developing educational and mass media systems, the Americans also modernized the country's infrastructure, expanded international trade, improved healthcare and used communication to convince the population of the benefits of American 'benevolence.'

During the American occupation, several of the old Spanish colleges as well as the American-modeled universities such as the University of the Philippines morphed into "vehicles for providing higher professional education," which was a departure from their original mission as "training academies for administrators" (Boudreau, 2003). Professional schools of pharmacy, medicine, engineering and law were soon established. This change opened the doors for education to become one of the engines for social mobility for those outside the landed aristocracy.

Another significant aspect of American educational policy was the *pensionado* program, which started in 1903. By 1912, this government scholarship sent 209 Filipinos to obtain degrees or advanced training in the U.S. Many Filipinos, but mostly from the upper class, applauded the *pensionado* program. Despite its egalitarian ideals, American educational policy hardly made a dent in the prevailing socioeconomic and political power structure in the country. Educational access remained for the most part in the hands of the privileged few (Salamanca, 1968).

4. Philippine public relations: an industry synopsis

Filipino PR practitioners consider 1949 as the year when modern public relations began in the country. Historical accounts tell us that the profession actually began as early as colonial times with the country's national hero, Jose Rizal (Sarabia-Panol & Lorenzo-Molo, 2004). In 1882, Rizal campaigned for the Filipino cause by taking advantage of the anti-clerical feeling in Spain in what was later called the Propaganda Movement. PR during the Spanish colonial period can be characterized by propaganda to extend and maintain domination by the conquerors, on the one hand, and emancipation efforts of the colonized, on the other. Friar propaganda consolidated economic, religious and political power that only fueled the Filipino demand initially for representation in the Spanish Cortes and later the fires of the revolution against Spain (Sison & Sarabia-Panol, 2014).

In 1898, the Philippines gained independence from Spain. However, a new foreign power, the United States, soon took control of the islands. During this period, the Americans used PR to persuade the locals of the benefits of having the new colonizer as the U.S. pursued its benevolent assimilation policies in the country. As in the Spanish era, PR activities during this period were in the form of propaganda and persuasion in the interest of the colonial powers. Similarly, on the Filipino side, PR once again took on a major activist role. General Emilio Aguinaldo, the leader of the transition government, used PR tactics to persuade the U.S. to recognize Philippine independence.

In 1949, the Philippines set out to rebuild its economy after World War II. Although the war was over, the country was still facing serious internal threats from the Communist *Hukbalahap* rebellion (Nieva, 1999). The government was also losing popular support due to graft and corruption. Investment and business activity had come to a halt. To restore a more favorable business climate, government and business leaders formed the Philippine Association.

Led by then Ambassador to the U.S. Carlos P. Romulo and industrialist Andres Soriano of San Miguel Corporation, a public information campaign began in the U.S., then the largest investor in the Philippines. The campaign was orchestrated by Joe Carpio, hailed as the father of modern PR in the Philippines. The successful campaign helped spur economic development throughout the 1950s and sustained the practice of using PR to influence the American public, primarily legislators and the business community. To this day, the Philippine government is known to hire U.S. PR agencies to lobby on its behalf, a practice rife with criticism primarily because of the perception that government is siphoning limited resources away from high-priority needs of a developing country such as poverty alleviation, infrastructure and capacity building, healthcare, and other priorities.

In the mid-1950s, a number of PR professionals met and following the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) model formed the country's industry association, the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP). The ensuing political climate where former President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law from 1972 to 1986 saw PR practice dominated by government propaganda.

While the eventual return to democracy improved business conditions and increased a demand for public relations work, professional practice underpinned by strong educational frameworks was still wanting.

5. Public relations education: origins and influences

Scholars have recognized the link between PR education and professionalization (e.g. Ehling, 1992; Pieczka & L'Etang, 2006). In the Philippines, the need to professionalize PR practice provided the impetus for the industry to demand that public relations programs be offered at the university level. Thus the path that academic PR programs took in the Philippines is much like other countries where the industry clamored for university training. But unlike journalism's and for that matter advertising's early start, it was only in 1977 that the PRSP secured a permit from the Ministry of Education allowing schools to offer PR as a specialization (Nieva, 1999).

5.1. History of PR education

The first formal PR degrees were offered in three private universities: Arellano University, Santa Isabel College and St. Paul's College (Lorenzo-Molo, 2007; Sarabia-Panol & Lorenzo-Molo, 2004). To date however, only Santa Isabel and St. Paul have retained their PR programs.

Santa Isabel's Bachelor of Science in Public Relations was given government recognition in 1981 (<http://www.ched.gov.ph/>). It was then the only school in the Philippines offering a bachelor's degree in PR. St. Paul, on the other hand, has a bachelor's degree in mass communication with a major in corporate communication.

While journalism, film, media and communication arts programs abound, very few programs with a PR focus may be found. According to CHED, there are 2180 higher education institutions in the country. Of this number, more than 50 Manila-based private and public academic institutions offer mass communication, journalism or communication arts degrees. Some of these B.A. or B.S. in mass communication degree programs were offered soon after the Philippines gained independence in 1945. The College of the Holy Spirit (Mendiola) had its communication arts and advertising program in 1947, Adamson University and St. Scholastica in 1949, De La Salle's advertising management and Philippine Women's communication arts in 1948.

Four more mass communication programs were added in the 1950s: Manuel L. Quezon University offered journalism in 1951, St Joseph's College's mass communication and Miriam College's (formerly Maryknoll) communication arts started in 1953 and UST's journalism and advertising arts in 1958. The then Institute of Mass Communication at UP-Diliman was founded in 1965 with a B.A. in journalism. A few more mass communication degree programs were started in the 1990s such as those at the Colegio de San Lorenzo and Universidad de Manila. The majority of the Manila-based 50 or so mass communication degree programs were established in the new millennium. These include Centro Escolar, Colegio de San Juan de Letran, Dominican College-San Juan, Feati University, St. Paul's University-Quezon City and the University of the East.

Presently, single courses or majors in public relations exist typically in mass communication departments but full degree programs are very few. The top universities such as UP-Diliman and Ateneo de Manila University still do not have formal degrees in PR despite having well renowned journalism, broadcasting and mass communication programs. Instead the UP College of Mass Communication only had two PR courses in the late seventies: Public Information and Public Relations Principles (Sarabia-Panol & Lorenzo-Molo, 2004; Rolando Tolentino, *personal communication*, March 12, 2010). While PR is popular among young people, it was suggested that journalism academics have strongly opposed its introduction as a separate degree.

In the 1990s, there were approximately 15 schools offering mass communication programs with PR as a subject of study (Nieva, 1999). At that time, two programs offered PR as a degree or major—the *Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila* (PLM) and Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP). PUP's program is a Bachelor of Science in Advertising and Public Relations. PLM, on the other hand, offers a bachelor's degree in mass communication with PR as a major.

The needle has moved very slightly as the CHED inventory of degree programs shows 20, academic institutions now offering PR courses. As Table 1 shows, only five are full degree PR programs and with the exception of Santa Isabel College, which had a B.S. in PR in 1981, all began offering the bachelor's in PR degree in the 1990s and 2000s. These are Colegio de San Juan de Letran with a Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations, Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) with its Bachelor in Advertising and PR, San Beda with a B.S. in Marketing and Corporate Communication and University of Asia and the Pacific's bachelor's degree in Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). Except for PUP, which is a state university and known as the "Poor Man's University", all the other institutions are private universities.

At the undergraduate level, seven private Catholic universities offer PR either as a concentration or major. Assumption College's Bachelor of Communication has an advertising and PR major, St. Paul University's B.A. in Mass Communication has corporate communication, St. Scholastica's B.S. in Commerce has Corporate Communication Management, La Consolacion's and the *Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Manila's* Bachelor of Mass Communication programs have a major in public relations, and

Table 1

Summary of current Philippine universities offering PR as full degree, major/concentration or course units.

Educational Institution	Type (Private or Public)	Year	Home Department	Degree Title	PR Focus
Santa Isabel College	Private (Catholic)	1981	Business Admin	B.S. in PR	Corporate PR
Colegio de San Juan de Letran	Private (Catholic)	2007	Arts & Sciences	B.A. in PR	Corporate Comm, Marketing
Polytechnic University of the Philippines ^a	Public (State)	1997	Communication	Bachelor in Advertising & PR	Marketing, Public Information
San Beda	Private (Catholic)	2003	Marketing	B.S. in Marketing & Corporate Communication	Marketing, Corporate PR
University of Asia & Pacific ^a	Private (Catholic)	2011	Communication	B.S. in Marketing Communication	Corporate PR, Marketing
Assumption College	Private (Catholic)	2007	Communication	Bachelor of Communication	Corporate Communication, Gen. PR, Events Mgmt
St. Paul University	Private (Catholic)		Communication	B.A. in Mass Communication	Corporate Communication
St. Scholastica College	Private (Catholic)	2006	Commerce	B.S. in Commerce	Corporate Communication
Ateneo de Manila University ^a	Private (Catholic)		Communication	B.A. in Communication	General PR
De La Salle University ^a	Private (Catholic)	2008	Communication	B.A. in Organizational Communication	Issues Management, Campaign Management
La Consolacion College	Private (Catholic)	NA	Educ., Humanities & Social Sciences	Master of Marketing Communication	Corporate Communication, General PR
Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Manila ^a	Public (Municipal)	1990s	Mass Comm	Bachelor of Mass Communication	Corporate Comm, Marketing, Government Relations
Silliman University	Private (Protestant)	1990s	Mass Comm	Bachelor of Mass Communication	Gen. PR, Church PR
University of the Philippines-Diliman ^a	Public (State)	1982	Mass Comm	B.A. in Communication	Public Information, Gen. PR
University of the Philippines-Los Banos ^a	Public (State)	1998	Development Com	M.A. in Communication	Crisis Comm, CSR, Strategic Comm
		1998	Public Affairs & Development	B.S., M.S. & PhD in Developmental Communication	Development Communication
				M.A., PhD in Public Affairs	Strategic Planning & Public Policy, Government relations, NGO
Far Eastern University ^a	Private	NA	Arts & Sciences	B.A., M.A. in Communication	IMC, Corporate Communication
Centro Escolar University-Makati	Private	2005	Mass Comm	M.A. in Mass Communication	Integrated Marketing, Dev Comm
Miriam College	Private (Catholic)	1985	Arts & Sciences	M.A. in Integrated Marketing Communication	Corporate, Marketing PR
University of Santo Tomas	Private (Catholic)	2004	Graduate School	M.A. in Communication	Gen. PR Management
Asian Institute of Journalism & Comm	Private	1994	Graduate School	Master in Communication Management	Corporate Comm, Dev. Comm, IMC

^a Also has graduate-level courses in public relations-related areas.

Ateneo de Manila's B.A. in Communication has advertising and PR as one of four concentrations. De La Salle University, on the other hand, has a B.A. in Organizational Communication with courses in PR, Issues Management and Campaign Management.

Silliman University, a prominent Protestant university, which holds the distinction as a pioneer journalism and mass communication school outside Metro Manila, offers courses in PR, Communication Campaigns and Church PR. The UP-Los Baños runs development communication and public affairs classes that mirror PR functions. Even the esteemed College of Mass Communication at UP-Diliman now has a master's in communication program that includes at least eight PR or PR-related courses such as Strategic Communication, Issues in Crisis Communication, Communicating Corporate Social Responsibility, Communication Evaluation and Communication Campaigns. So while the college has avoided the use of PR in the titles of these graduate courses, a review of the course descriptions clearly show that the courses are squarely in the PR realm. A recent conversation with the current dean of UP CMC revealed a renewed interest to pursue public relations education programs within the institution. She indicated plans to resurrect the Memorandum of Agreement with the PRSP (*personal communication*, 1 February 2016).

There are about a dozen graduate programs that are arguably PR-focused including those offered as communication management at the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication, De La Salle's Master of Marketing Communication, Miriam College's IMC, *Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Manila's* M.A. in Communication Management and the University of Asia and the Pacific's M.A. Communication with IMC as a major. Far Eastern University, on the other hand, has an M.A. in Communication with classes in communication and management, IMC and communication project management.

What does this mean? Public relations degrees exist in Philippine universities albeit mostly in private, often Catholic, universities located in urban centers. Public universities also offer PR units, however, they tend to avoid using the term 'public relations' instead favoring the term 'communication'. Moreover, except for the state subsidized University of the Philippines, which offer more community-oriented courses in public information and development communication, most public relations programs and courses are predominantly oriented in marketing and corporate communication.

5.2. Journalism and PR

Journalism's influence on PR is apparent not only in that some of the academic PR programs are housed in schools of journalism/mass communication, but also because the early PR practitioners were former journalists. A study of degree sources of PRSP members, for instance, show that at the bachelor's level, 27 percent earned degrees in journalism/mass communication, followed by business at 21 percent then by arts/literature/philosophy at 17 percent (Panol, 2000). At the master's level, however, only 22 percent pursued graduate journalism/mass communication degrees. The majority or 59 percent majored in business management, public administration and development management.

Like in the West where PR practice is most developed, Philippine PR indeed has its roots in journalism. For the uninitiated, "public relations is simply being a 'journalist-in-residence' for a non-media organization" (Wilcox et al., 2011, p. 12). However the "journalist-in-residence" takes a discomfiting interpretation in the Philippines where Filipino journalists (those working in news media) are actually on the payroll of corporations and politicians (Coronel, 2002), a practice not too dissimilar among some American and Australian media practitioners. Although common knowledge in the industry, the practice expectedly creates a slew of ethical problems that severely erode the credibility of both professions. It is worth asking whether such media practices are rooted in cultural values such as '*pakikisama*' (comradship), or whether the presence of colonizers ingrained in Filipinos a deference to 'foreign' authority.

The dominance of media relations and publicity functions in Philippine PR practice today can thus be traced to journalism's lingering sway on the profession. Researchers have also noted that the content of early PR education in many countries is influenced by the fact that the early PR practitioners were originally journalists (Tench & DeFlagbe, 2008). While tactical approaches play important roles in PR programs and communication skills are still valued assets, for PR to assume significant management decision-making and be part of the "dominant coalition," the shift from tactics to strategic communication has to occur.

Because PR has a plethora of definitions and it comes under multiple names, PR education in the Philippines also is being delivered in some of the key universities under different nomenclatures. For example, if the definition of PR includes 'development communication,' the earliest program in PR can be traced to UP-Los Baños, which offered the first bachelor's degree in development communication in 1974. Educated in the U.S., Prof. Nora C. Quebral defined development communication as the "the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential" (Quebral, 1986).

UP-Los Baños was an agricultural college and development communication at that time was geared toward informing farmers of the new technologies available to them. So extension workers as they were called were tasked with an educative and informative approach that conforms with Grunig and Hunt's public information model. UP-Los Baños seems to have a more progressive approach to PR education with the transition of its programs from its agricultural information beginnings to the establishment of the College of Development Communication and College of Public Affairs in 1998 (Sison et al., 2011).

Following the development focus, the Asian Institute for Journalism and Communication incorporates a Master of Communication Management with graduate certificate and graduate diploma exit points. The program includes foundation courses in the craft of communication, communication issues and knowledge management and electives such as development communication, ICT for development as well as corporate communication, risk and crisis communication and cross

cultural communication. It also offers an online certificate course in corporate communication with courses on strategic communication, corporate communication planning, building and managing corporate image and reputation, employee communication, publicity and media relations, stakeholder and public affairs, and crisis management and communication (Sison et al., 2011).

As mentioned earlier, another progressive university offering PR under the organizational communication umbrella is Manila-based De La Salle University. A review of its undergraduate and postgraduate curricula revealed courses most similar to many Western PR curricula with a management-oriented PR course, issues management, power and politics, negotiation, organizational change, communication management etc. This may be attributed to the influence of its course director, who received her PhD from Purdue University in the U.S. (Sison et al., 2011).

5.3. Marketing and PR

With very few PR degrees and a growing number of practitioners with a business background, it is not surprising that the industry is increasingly seen within the marketing discipline (Sison et al., 2011). Moreover, academia soon began offering PR courses within a business/IMC rubric. At Assumption College, students major in advertising and PR as part of a Bachelor of Commerce degree. St. Scholastica also has a B.S. in Commerce in Corporate Communication.

The business and marketing orientation is also apparent in at least two other curricula: San Beda's B.S. in Marketing and Corporate Communication and St. Paul's B.A. in Mass Communication with a major in corporate communication.

Danilo Gozo, vice president for public affairs of Ayala Land company and an alumnus of UP-Diliman's then Institute of Mass Communication noted that the "influence of business schools has resulted in public relations people assuming greater management roles" (Jamias & Tuazon, 1996).

PR and marketing seem to have a paradoxical relationship. PR has been interpreted in various ways depending on a specific industry's needs and concerns. For instance, "a process of strategically managing audience-focused, channel-centered, and results-driven brand communication programs" (Kliatchko, 2002; p. 26), has adopted numerous PR principles. Unfortunately, it has sometimes combined many PR functions, even rewriting some of its approaches. Second, while marketing communication may have helped PR, it often conflicts with the predominantly Western notion of PR as a management function (Lorenzo-Molo, 2007). As a result, while marketing communication may have ensured the survival of the PR industry, "their intrusions may have also heightened the already equivocal and uncertain nature of public relations" (Lorenzo-Molo, 2007; p. 59).

The real dilemma though resides in the fact that while entrepreneurship is encouraged in the Philippines (Co, 2004), the country's business environment combines neo-liberalism, a dominant land-owning oligarchy and strong U.S. investment (Ranald, 1999). From the post-war era to the present, the same system prevails. Even with then president Joseph Estrada, who was known for his extreme nationalism and as a champion of the masses, the oligarchy and business elites dominated the political process (Ranald, 1999). Undoubtedly, Spanish and American colonialism each contributed to the feudal system and democratic processes in the country that continue to reinforce the current business and academic environment in which PR as a profession and as a discipline operates.

5.4. Religion and PR

Aside from the preponderance of private academic institutions, which are owned by the different religious orders of the Roman Catholic Church or Protestant denominations that are clearly remnants of Spanish and U.S. colonial rule, there are courses specializing in church PR such as the one in Silliman University. A description of the Church Public Relations course states that it is a "study of the church as a PR natural and how to make use of the available media (print and broadcast) to serve the church promotion and publicity needs" (<http://su.edu.ph/resources/college-of-mass-communication/236-245-college-of-mass-communication-1327389955.pdf>).

Many of the PR curricula in these church-owned or affiliated institutions include ethics courses that do not only draw from philosophy but also from religious dogma and more specifically from the guiding principles of the respective religious orders. For example, UST's interdisciplinary program in communications, broadcasting, advertising, PR and multimedia studies emulates members of the Dominican Order as models such as St. Dominic de Guzman, 'the Preacher of Truth and founder of the Order of Preachers, whose life of prayers served as an inspiration to countless individuals', St. Thomas of Aquinas, 'the Angelic Doctor of the Universal Church' and *Beato Angelico de Fiesole*, the 'Angelic Artist and Theologian of Art' (<http://www.ust.edu.ph/>).

With ambitions to be ranked among the top 100 Asian universities by 2018, the University of Asia and the Pacific, which was founded by Opus Dei members, carry the UNITAS motto that convey, among others, the desire to achieve "... unity between faith and reason, and unity between religion and life" (<http://www.uap.asia/about/the-university/unitas/>).

Catholic universities' focus on social justice reflects their approach to public relations education. De La Salle University's vision, for instance, states that it is a "leading learner-centered research university, bridging faith and scholarship in the service of society, especially the poor" (<http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/inside/vision-mission.asp>). Staying true to its "mission of forming men and women with and for others through its many programs created to alleviate poverty by helping capacitate and empower marginalized communities and sectors of Philippine society" the Ateneo de Manila has partnered with *Gawad*

Kalinga. GK “envisions a new Philippines and world with no more slums, by building homes and vibrant communities in depressed areas” (<http://www.admu.edu.ph/social-development>).

6. Public-private dichotomy in academia and in industry

There are substantially more privately-owned or run higher education institutions in the country: 1708 private vs. 680 public (<http://www.ched.gov.ph/index.php/home/media/data/statistic/highereducationdatainforgraphics/>). Those founded during the Spanish colonial regime such as UST, Ateneo de Manila, De la Salle, San Beda, Santa Isabel and St. Scholastica are still highly regarded institutions of learning to this day. That journalism, mass communication and PR got their early start in these academic campuses speak well of the organizational nimbleness of the private sector compared to the often stultifying bureaucracy of government.

These private colleges and universities remain faithful to the tenets of their founding religious orders and are considered elite institutions partly because of their reputation for academic excellence and high standards of learning but also because they, for the most part, are the enclaves of the rich, who either belong to the landed gentry or are scions of business and political dynasties. It's no small wonder that the PR programs in these institutions have a more corporate or marketing orientation such as the one at St. Paul University and St. Scholastica. Even the relatively new University of Asia and the Pacific that carries the Opus Dei insignia has bachelor's and graduate degrees in IMC.

UP-Diliman and UP-Los Baños, on the other hand, are reputable and competitive public academic destinations. These state universities are known for their brand of intellectual ferment that spawned activism during the Martial Law years and nurtured a revolutionary zeal for social change but were decades slower in introducing mass communication/journalism programs compared with their private-sector counterparts. While still resistant to conferring academic PR degrees, both institutions have PR or public affairs courses in their present curricula. Perhaps true to their “public” nature, the first PR-related course offered at UP-Diliman in the late seventies was public information, which as we know, is more government-oriented.

These noticeable differences between private and public universities in general and in the orientation of their PR curriculum, in particular, are evident in the industry organizations as well. Created in 1957, the PRSP counted among its original members PR and advertising executives. It has since continued to grow its corporate and individual membership and practically mirrors the PRSA in its objectives, programs and structure.

Like its American counterpart, the PRSP also runs member accreditation, awards and annual conferences. With many practitioners educated in the U.S. and Canada, this approach reflects the adoption of Western trends and tools in Philippine practice.

In 2015, PRSP marked the 50th year of the Anvil Awards, which annually recognizes the best PR program in the country. The Grand Anvil Award went to ABS-CBN's “*Tulong Na, Tabang Na, Tayo Na*,” a campaign that included fundraising and star-studded concerts with the country's leading artists performing *pro bono* to bring relief and rehabilitation for the victims of typhoon Pablo, Bohol quake and typhoon Haiyan in 2013. Past recipients of the Grand Anvil include a campaign to save the Philippine eagle, a pharmaceutical foundation's program that helped 12 communities in reducing malnutrition and eliminating diseases and a bank's search for outstanding teachers. Based on these award winners, PR at its best strives to address local needs.

On the technology front, PRSP is making a push to the digital world. Aside from conference topics, the society has partnered with e-Learning Edge and the Internet and Mobile Marketing Association of the Philippines to offer a three-month certification program to sharpen PR skills that leverage digital channels like social media (<http://prsociety-philippines.blogspot.com>).

For the government side, professionalizing public information is the job of the Public Relations Organization of the Philippines (PROP). This organization of information officers in government offered courses using an e-learning approach, conferences and other professional training opportunities (Alagaran, 2007). Established in 1972 and incorporated in 1976 to “improve coordination among government information officers,” the PROP is a non-stock, non-profit association with about 800 government public information officials and employees as members (Manila Standard, 1997). Francisco Tatad, the then Information Minister was its first president.

PROP had four objectives: (1) foster cooperation and better coordination among those in government public information services, (2) professionalize public information, (3) elevate the status of government public information to a “position of high responsibility and importance,” (4) assist in achieving national reforms and development goals (Manila Standard, 1997).

From its publicity beginnings, the scope of public information activities now includes social marketing and mobilization, education, advocacy, behavior change communication and government media. While the functions have obviously expanded in number and complexity, public information still wrestles with the perennial problem of co-mingling political propaganda and development communication. According to Alagaran (2007),

Government media and information offices are often used to serve the personal interests of political leaders, especially presidential appointees, who cannot distinguish accountability from political propaganda. Development communication materials are also sometimes used as channels for institutionalizing a personality cult. Another challenge is how to rationalize public information to make it more responsive to the needs of the general public and the stakeholders of development (p. 354).

The public sector equivalent of the Anvil Awards is the Gawad Oscar M. Florendo. Launched in 1992, the annual award recognizes excellence in government information. It is named after a former military brigadier general, who was a peace negotiator and a staunch believer that communication is better than arms in resolving conflict.

Another interesting facet of Philippine PR practice is becoming evident in public affairs, which generally involves government relations. Educational background comes into play because lawyers are quite often performing public affairs activities while PR assignments went to former journalists and publicists (Jamias & Tuazon, 1996).

While having separate professional organizations representing different specializations is not uncommon, it is nevertheless intriguing to find the kind of delineation between the rather small universe of government and private sector PR practitioners. That academic institutions likewise reflect such dichotomy with public universities such as the UP-Diliman offering a public information course early on and UP-Los Baños having the internationally eminent development communication program vis-à-vis the corporate and marketing curricular orientation of the private Catholic universities is quite fascinating.

7. Issues and challenges

Just like the industry, Philippine PR education faces manifold challenges. On the industry side is the credibility deficit with PR being called as the “dark art” populated by “partying men and women at expensive watering holes or golf courses” (Osorio, 2007). PR is also chastised for ‘under the table’ and ‘ATM-based dealings’ entered into by PR people with huge relationship-building funds. Still others describe PR as “organized lying, ‘envelopmental’ communication or spin doctoring” (Osorio, 2007). It is therefore not surprising that some universities such as UP-Diliman resisted offering PR degree programs and of the few who do, PR is called something else, i.e. corporate communication, integrated marketing, communication management, strategic communication, etc. This is of course not a uniquely Philippine approach to overcome the negativity associated with the practice.

Certainly, PR’s bad reputation is a direct offshoot of unethical behavior. But what is baffling is that for a country whose citizens are 85 percent Roman Catholic and with an academe dominated by religious-owned or run entities that seem to perpetuate the Catholic sense of guilt that sends the faithful to crowded church confessionals, corruption is sadly rampant. The PR curriculum in some Philippine universities today fortunately includes ethics and corporate social responsibility courses. But are these enough? Does economics trump ethics? The challenge remains on how the study of ethics translates into ethical public relations practice within a context dominated by corruption and neoliberal economics.

While Philippine PR education might still be considered in a nascent stage, it does have the opportunity to address two industry issues—the absence of a culture of research among PR practitioners and PR organizations as well as the “lack of qualified professionals, who can deliver the demanding requirements of PR with aplomb” (Osorio, 2007). Ronquillo (*personal communication*, April 27, 2015) echoed the same sentiment saying that, “the challenge of teaching PR, as a practitioner, is to prepare students for the rigors of the practice.” While public relations education undoubtedly benefits from practitioner insights, teaching students about ‘current’ practice tend to perpetuate rather than challenge the status quo. This cyclical practice-teach-practice approach leaves little room for new, perhaps radical, research-based approaches to public relations education and practice.

The authors were hard pressed to find research courses in the undergraduate PR curriculum in Manila universities when there were whole departments of communication research such as the one in UP-Diliman’s College of Mass Communication and PUP. Communication research and evaluation, however, is part of graduate PR programs. Skills courses such as multimedia writing, design, desktop publishing and photography are also offered at the bachelor’s level together with basic theoretical and foundation PR courses just like in the West. The absence of research-oriented courses in PR curricula leads programs to focus on skills and technical training, instead of critical, ethics-based inquiries to public relations practice.

Many of the current curricula and syllabi examined reflected ‘generic’ elements of the ‘ideal’ PR curriculum described in the U.S. based Commission on Public Relations Education’s *Port of Entry* and *The Professional Bond*. While the CPRE recommendations apply to universities providing full degree programs or majors in public relations, these remain challenges for Philippine institutions with limited PR courses. A brief survey of PR course guides from four institutions reveals more generic and limited localized content.

For example, one private university’s course syllabus covered the usual content: PR as a profession, PR and its stakeholders, PR processes, PR practice and PR in the 21st century. It is only in the latter section where Philippine practices are identified. On the other hand, a Catholic university’s “PR Principles & Practice” course started off with international and local historical perspectives of PR. The rest of the course included the following topics: PR as a Management Function, PR publics, PR tools, Broader spectrum of PR, PR measurement and evaluation and Jobs in PR.

A course elective from a public university, uniquely coded as a Journalism course, is entitled “Public Information and Public Relations.” In addition to learning about the “elements, process, tools and techniques,” the course syllabus indicated that it aims to examine “the role that PR plays in creating consensus, public opinion and effecting attitudinal and behavioral change.” The topics included: differentiating public relations, advertising and journalism, the PR process and kinds of PR, PR applications, PR agency and PR consultants, PR tasks and tools, the press kit, media and media relations. The latter half of the course involved getting a PR account, account servicing, the PR campaign, PR executions, the PR proposal and presentation skills and the PR challenge. The course syllabus did not have a reference list and indicated a practice-oriented approach to public relations.

An Integrated Marketing Communication course from a private university covered principles, planning model and strategy as well as media, audiences and branding. In fact, this study found minimal localization of content. The three course examples used American texts as references. This comes as no surprise as the syllabi review indicated that only 14–25 percent of the textbooks and references used in the courses were non-West or U.S. publications. While the historical dominance of U.S. education has been noted by scholars (Toth & Aldooray, 2010), the colonial mentality that seemed to privilege Western and particularly U.S. perspectives may have exacerbated the meagerness of local content in the sample of PR courses examined.

The fact that the highly exclusive private universities in the Philippines were the first to offer PR courses gives authors pause as it reflects an elitist view of PR practice. Moreover, it could be argued that since the first programs were offered in all-girls private colleges, the educational institutions further perpetuated a view of PR as a career option for 'privileged females'. The pervasive public image that gives private PR practitioners more prestige and acceptability than those in the public sector is perhaps a carry-over of these attitudes.

8. Discussion and conclusion

PR is a relatively young profession so it is understandable that PR as an academic discipline would still be in its infancy in the Philippines. However, early indicators already present reasons for both optimism and concern about the state of Philippine PR education. If we are what we teach, it appears that centuries of colonial rule and the historical development of PR in the country have significantly molded Philippine education in general and PR education, in particular. Governance systems that define public and private as well as church and state-run educational institutions appear to have powerful impact on the content and status of Philippine PR curricular offerings.

From a postcolonial perspective, the current state of Philippine PR education reflects the social inequities that continue to exist in current Philippine society. While approximately 80 percent of all college and university students enroll in private institutions, access to the top universities is still determined by their parents' wealth, education and profession (James, 1991). And while private Catholic universities integrate issues of social justice in their general curricula, many of their graduates will chase a career in the corporate, rather than the public or not-for-profit, sector, and often for multinational companies (<http://www.jobstreet.com.ph/career-resources/jobstreet-reveals-top-companies-filipinos-aspire-to-work#.Vp4SdMB96dQ>). Most employers on the other hand favor graduates from four universities—UP, UST, De La Salle University and Ateneo (Bueza, 2014).

Since modern PR is attributed to be a creation of the West, it is not difficult to see why Philippine PR is Western-like in its practices, including how practitioners are trained and educated. Merely adopting 'ideal' standards of PR education, which are constructed from Western standards, without local contextualization and consideration of political, economic and cultural nuances will be tantamount to a new form of colonialization, often in the guise of 'globalization'. The challenge is to shake off some of the vestiges of its colonial past and make PR education more locally relevant and meaningfully responsive to the needs of a developing nation. The minimal customization of PR courses and curriculum is worrisome. Certainly, there is need for consistent efforts to balance local relevance while preparing PR students for the global workplace.

Observably, there are strong streams of activism, social development and community movements within the academe, which could provide the groundswell for critical theory building in PR. The existence of the programs in De La Salle University and UP-Los Baños provides some hope in the future for PR to not just benefit marketing and profit-driven businesses but in the social responsibility and social change areas as well (Sison et al., 2011).

The social justice approaches present in some educational programs and reflected in many CSR-based PR campaigns offer opportunities for educators and practitioners to develop a Philippine-brand of community-centric public relations. And if the industry is mature enough to develop its own brand of 'professional' PR practice that integrates local values and observes global standards, it is imperative that research-based educational programs exist. While companies that require PR are often private and multinational organizations, public sector and non-government organizations are also employing PR practitioners.

Despite the current state of contemporary PR education in the Philippines that continues to reflect a colonially inspired, elitist and media- and corporate-centric PR practice, there are few seeds of hope for progressive, community-centric public relations able to negotiate the tensions of localization and globalization.

The negative public perceptions of PR that persist to hound the industry in the Philippines can only mean that education and professionalization are keys to turning the corners of decades of credibility shortages. More important, the opportunities for growing public relations practice in the Philippines lie in a concerted effort among practitioners and educators alike to recognize PR as a 'serious' academic discipline that is research-driven, and is aimed at enabling social change.

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