Special Report to IJODeL

ODeL at UPOU: Some Historical Antecedents
(How Did We Get Here, Anyway?)

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Beginnings of Distance Education in the Philippines

Most historical accounts, by definition, are descriptions of events that are arranged according to how they relate with one another that would tell a meaningful, logically progressing story. They frequently are not pre-arranged or pre-planned. They become part of the history of an event simply by the manner in which they are later organized in support of the event in question. This is how the development of distance education and open distance e-learning at the University of the Philippines may be viewed. The events that led to the establishment of the U.P. Open University in 1995 were independent events rather than carefully pre-planned chronological happenings over a pre-determined time line.

There were two major events particularly at UPLB that eventually were considered the precursors of distance education in the university and then the UP Open University. These were the introduction of radio broadcasting and the formulation of a specific radio broadcasting format called the school on the air. Here are brief accounts of those events.

Rural Educational Broadcasting Opens New Horizons for Distance Education and e-Learning

The use of radio broadcasting as a tool to promote education took some time to gel among educationists and broadcasters in the Philippines. Radio broadcasting in the Philippines started by the Americans in 1922 as a commercial enterprise rather than as educational innovation and serious educational broadcasting in the country did not begin until the 1950s. In fact, it was in 1959 when the School Broadcast Program was launched jointly by the Department of Education and the Philippine Broadcasting Service. This broadcast service provided valuable and up-to-date materials to teachers, pupils, and adult learners (Librero, 1997). They were essentially broadcast materials designed to help teach English to Filipinos and were more useful to teachers than to pupils in elementary schools. These broadcasts were designed to be supplementary materials to classroom lessons in English, and teachers tuned in to the radio program, which was scheduled at a certain time during the class period for English, so the pupils could participate in the language drills that were the content of the radio broadcasts. Toward the end of the 1960s, however, that Department of Education found these broadcasts difficult to sustain and eventually had to be phased out.

In the early 1950s, a parallel development in the use of radio in the area of non-formal education was evolving. This was, in the Philippines, the beginnings of what later became to be known as rural educational broadcasting. Rural educational broadcasting was defined later as the use of radio for non-formal education purposes primarily to support planned social change in the rural setting (Librero, 1985). It was in 1952 when the enterprising, free-lance, Iloilo City-based broadcaster named Pacifico Sudario, conceptualized, produced and broadcast an educational radio program designed to teach farmers in Iloilo Province and the rest of Central Philippines modern farming techniques. It was called "farmers' school" and was broadcast on Radio Station DYPR in Iloilo City (Tan, 1971). This endeavor proved to be successful so that in 1963 the National Cottage Industries Development Authority (NACIDA) adopted Sudario's "school" format in a radio program discussing information on swine raising (Flor, 1995). This radio program was broadcast from Manila.

Rural educational broadcasting grew and developed much more systematically at the U.P. College of Agriculture (UPCA, elevated to the UPLB in 1973) in Los Banos where rural educational broadcasting was pursued as a field of study in the then Department of Agricultural Information and Communications (DAIC, which later became the DDC). This began in 1962 with the conceptualization of a project to design and implement a research-oriented radio broadcasting operations in the UP College of Agriculture as part of its action research and extension programs. Full operation of the radio broadcasting station, Radyo DZLB, began broadcasting on August 2, 1964. It broadcast at a power of only 250 watts, but it right away produced and broadcast customized radio programs for farmers, rural homemakers, and the rural youth.

In 1967, the first school on the air was aired. It was called Paaralang Panghimpapawid sa Pagatasan (School on the air on Dairying), a 30-minute program that broadcast radio lectures and discussions and interviews on dairying directed specifically to dairy farmers of Jala-jala, Rizal province who were participants in a research-extension program of the Dairy Training and Research Institute (DTRI) of the UP College of Agriculture.

From then on, schools on the air were broadcast and evaluated by DZLB every year. In 1976, with a more powerful 5,000-watt transmitter, DZLB increased its efforts to reach rural listeners in the provinces of Laguna, Rizal, Batangas, and Cavite. It was in the 1970s when DZLB was at its height of popularity as an alternative to the commercial broadcasting stations originating from Metro-Manila and other urban centers of the country. It also became the de facto training center for farm broadcasters from the Department of Agriculture.

It should be pointed out that DZLB was not only the radio station broadcasting educational content from the 1960s to the 1980s, but it was the only radio station that time that was also doing serious research alongside its broadcasts so that it became practically the center of the systematic study of radio broadcasting in non-formal education in the country. Out of this experience evolved the school on the air format, which was adopted at the national level by the Department of Agriculture in 1973, in support of the then national Masagana 99 rice production program of the Philippine Government. As each of 110 farm programs hosted by farm broadcasters of the Department of Agriculture all over the country were engaged in conducting schools on the air during that time, there were practically 110 schools on the air that were being broadcast simultaneously all over the country. These schools on the air had a total of about 165,000 farmer-enrollees at any given time. The Department of Agriculture maintained schools on the air annually for at least a decade beginning in 1973, which means that a minimum of 1.65 million farmers benefitted from the schools on the air.

The Schools On The Air of DZLB

The school on the air (SOA) so far has been the most comprehensively researched and possibly the most effective radio program format for farmers in the Philippines. Various theses of students of development communication at UPLB have shown that participation in schools on the air contributed in large degree to the increased productivity of rice throughout the country.

In a seminal publication in 1976, we have defined the school on the air as a "specially-designed radio program where the subject matter is presented systematically and in progressive manner with the ultimate goal of achieving desired results under a teaching-learning situation" (Librero, 1976). The techniques employed by the SOA were actually instructional even if the broadcasts were not undertaken in classroom setting. The enrollees listened to the radio program, frequently alone in their homes or in groups. The SOA developed as a non-formal education strategy. The specific techniques, however, were adoptable to formal instructional broadcasts.

In our original conceptualization of the SOA, we identified five characteristics that must be present, as follows:

1. The SOA has a well-defined set of instructional objectives.
2. The SOA must be well-planned.
3. The SOA should deal with only one major subject matter at any given time. That is, one major topic for each "school broadcast period" which may last anywhere from one month to three months.
4. The SOA should present the subject matter in a progressive manner, according to learning principles.
5. The SOA should be a cooperative undertaking among appropriate agencies since the radio station cannot do it alone.

Between 1967 and 1990, Radio DZLB broadcast 28 SOAs on subject matters ranging from agriculture to health. These were conducted in collaboration with various national government agencies and educational institutions. All these SOAs were actually small scale schools because their enrollments have always been limited due to lack of resources.

How is the school on the air undertaken? In earlier papers, we have identified specific steps in the conduct of SOAs. In general, these steps may be classified under three major categories: pre-broadcast activities, broadcast proper activities, and post-broadcast activities.

1. Pre-broadcast activities include preparation of course syllabus, recording to radio lectures, conduct of enrollment campaign, preparation of broadcast scripts, and conduct of pre-broadcast examinations. All these must be conducted before the SOA goes on the air.

2. Activities during the broadcast proper include first the orientation broadcast. This is the actual start of the school on the air. Usually, in this broadcast the policies and guidelines of the SOA are discussed and explained. Everything that the enrollees need to know about the SOA are explained in this broadcast.

As the SOA proceeded, it become acutely necessary to introduce various means of motivating enrollees to continue listening and participating in the broadcasts. There are many ways of doing

this. For example, experiences in various schools on the air in the past indicated that broadcasting interviews with learners themselves provided great satisfaction to the learners. The listeners, it has been observed, love to listen to their own voices or hear their names mentioned on radio.

Another important activity that was part of the broadcasts were the in-broadcast tests. Normally, an would SOA last for more than one month, hence it was wise to test whether or not your listeners were learning from the school. As the SOA proceeded, there were times when certain modifications had to be introduced on the format of the program. This was necessary in order to make the program more exciting to listen to. In many cases, adjustments were made on the delivery of the radio lectures and the over-all pace of the radio program itself.

There were dropouts, by the way, because many were not able to listen regularly to all broadcasts and actually opted to drop out from the school. There were two types of drop outs: those who have lost interest in the broadcasts altogether, and those who have failed the in-broadcast tests. In both cases, the situation was usually remedied. For example, to maintain interest, it frequentlybecame necessary for radio hosts to be sensitive to program modifications when the need arose. Radio listeners always found time to listen to radio programs that they were interested in.

3. Post-broadcast activities include a general course review, a post-broadcast examination, and follow-up activities. The general review was needed in order to make sure that the enrollees recalled important aspects of the subject matter that they studied and raised their level of knowledge confidence. The post-broadcast examination determined whether or not the enrollees learned what had been the subject of the SOA. Then the follow-up activities were necessary in order to make sure that those who had graduated from the "school" continued to listen to the radio broadcasts and continued to search for information that they needed in their daily activities.

Science Teaching Using Distance Instruction: An Experiment

The STUDI Concept

Science and technology have always been considered important components of national development, and science education therefore had been acknowledged a vital concern of the academe particularly at UPLB which was the seat of the Center of Excellence in Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology. Sensing the need to improve the state of affairs in science education in the country, then UPLB Chancellor Emil Q. Javier, who was concurrently Science Minister that time, issued an Administrative Order on 18 April 1964 creating a Task Force to develop a plan for a pilot distance education project for science teachers. The intentions of the Administrative Order were clear. It said:

> The idea is to avail of the expertise in the basic science of UPLB faculty in the development of instructional materials, and to offer courses leading to a degree of science teaching with a view to upgrade science teaching competence. It is also intended that advances in new technology be fully exploited in order that the materials developed would gain wider and most efficient distribution
> and utilization.

The conceived operational name of the administrative order was STUDI, standing for Upgrading of

Science Teaching Using Distance Instruction, an action research project. It was a fairly large project implemented by a team comprised of known faculty members of UPLB who served as study leaders, writers, and editors for mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology, and consultants for education, educational technology, curriculum, and admissions. The project was headed by Dr. Ma. Cristina D. Padolina, then Director of Instruction of UPLB, as Project Leader.

STUDI collated experiences in distance education in other countries and also conducted a survey to determine if distance education was acceptable among Filipino science teachers. Results of the survey indicated several revealing information, the most glaring of which was that Filipino science teachers were not trained in the field of science which they were teaching. Specific results showed that among college and university teachers, only 51% of those teaching chemistry were graduates of chemistry programs, 31% of biology teachers had training in biology, 18% of mathematics teachers had training in mathematics, and 14% of those teaching physics had training in physics. A similar situation was also observed in the case of teachers at the secondary level.

A more extensive national survey that was undertaken by the Science Promotion Institute of the than National Science and Technology Authority (now the Department of Science and Technology) showed a better picture that was alarming just the same. The percentage of qualified teachers in mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology were 61, 25, 32, and 52, respectively. Only 58.8% of teachers of general science were qualified to teach general science.

There were two significant observations gleaned from these data. First, there was a clear need for an urgent and immediate corrective action to solve the problem of lack of training of science teachers. Second, there was a clear need to provide opportunities for longer-term training for teachers without requiring them to go on an extended study leaves of absence. How should these two problems be resolved immediately? Briefly, what came into the minds of the leaders of the UPLB Task Force was to undertake a program designed to upgrade the skills of the science teachers (which was sufficiently long term) but which could provide content mastery), or to provide opportunity for teachers to master content over a much shorter time (like a refresher course).

STUDI had also just completed its own evaluation of experiences in distance education in various countries and decided that there were distinct benefits of a distance education program for Filipino science teachers, as follows:

1. Teacher would continue to earn while studying;
2. Schools should not have the problem of finding substitute teachers and would not run the risk of hiring less capable substitutes;
3. Teachers would not have to go on leave of absence or be separated from their families;
4. Scholarship costs would be less since they would not have to cover living expenses and would not also have to provide for the salaries of substitute teachers;
5. Teachers could study where, when, and how they chose;
6. The teachers' current teaching situation would become a situation that could actually form a basic study resource as they would learn while teaching at the same time;
7. The teachers would be able to apply immediately in their teaching tasks that they have learned from their lessons;
8. The development of teachers would take place within their normal work environment so their development activities would immediately relate to their on-going work. This would eliminate dislocation and re-entry problems associated with having to go on leave of absence;

9. The teachers would invariably interact with other teachers not involved in the program thereby actually disseminating and sharing what they have learned.

The Pilot Course of STUDI

During a consultative meeting between the Project Management of STUDI and selected science educators and science teachers, STUDI was referred to by one of the most outstanding Filipino professors of science education, UP Professor Josefina Fonacier, then Director of the Institute for Science and Mathematics Education Development (ISMED) at UP Diliman, as "most needed and a most daring program." It was observed that the Philippines, compared to other countries in the region at that time, had been the slowest in adopting distance education which had been referred to as the form of education of the 21st century.

STUDI was a pilot project undertaken with the objective of "determining not so much if a distance education program would succeed but more to determine the conditions under which such a program would succeed" (STUDI Terminal Report, undated).

Four test courses were developed, one each for mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. These test courses were called either Special Problem or Special Topics courses under the UPLB course numbering system. It was customary at UPLB to classify test courses (to be tried out before they would finally be instituted as formal three-unit courses) as either Special Problem (numbered 190) or Special Topics (numbered 191), respectively. The STUDI terminal report described the test courses as follows:

The topics covered in the courses were determined on the basis of the learning needs expressed by the teachers in the survey conducted by the Task Force. The topics which they listed were quite diverse and it was not possible to cover all in one course. Also considered in the creation of the courses were the science curricula which were in use at that time in the secondary schools and those being planned for implementation. The Mathematics course included logic and set theory, functions and relations, abstract algebra and linear algebra. The Physics course focused on the concepts of theories of motion. The Chemistry course was mainly concerned with biochemistry but featured some basic topics such as chemical bonding, acids and bases and organic chemistry which were intended to provide some background for understanding the topics of biochemistry. On the other hand, the Biology course covered a wide range of topics covering basic biological concepts such as reproduction, plant and animal development, systematics and ecology.

STUDI Course Development and Delivery

The STUDI courses were prepared by writers who were assisted by media consultants and language editors all of whom had no formal training in distance education. Whatever they knew about distance education and how to prepare modules for independent study they gained from studying appropriate references.

Members of the course writing teams had good background in writing although writing for radio was new to them. While it was initially the intention to have experienced radio writers do the writing of the radio lessons, it was decided later that such radio lessons should be written by the group as a team. In the end they found the activity enjoyable and enhanced their writing creativity and imagination.

The lead time for the preparation and production of the course materials was set at one and one-half years. However, writing invariably fell behind schedule so that the course materials were completed very close to the time they were needed for production and distribution. There was practically no time for revision of the materials.

The production process may be best described in the terminal report of the project.

The production of the course materials can be best described as having been conducted in the traditional Filipino "Bayanihan" spirit. Course team members, administrative staff of the institutes, even family members of the coordinators helped in proof reading the modules editing the word processors, collating the materials, etc.

An important observation made in the Project's Terminal Report was that it "became more important in some cases to be able to produce the materials on time than to use the most economical method of obtaining multiple copies."

The course materials were in printed modules and recorded radio lectures. The radio lectures were broadcast over Radio DZLB, the rural educational broadcasting station of UPLB. The radio lectures were stored in magnetic audiocassette tapes for distribution to teachers in areas not penetrated by the signals of DZLB.

The printed modules followed the same formats as well as in terms of content treatment and the use of simple language. The length of the modules varied from course to course. While each module started with the statement of objectives and ended with a summary, certain elements differed. For example, for the biology modules questions that learners needed to answer were embedded within the text and were to be answered by the learners as they encountered them. In the Mathematics modules, the questions which were also embedded within the text were graded. In the case of the modules for the Physics and Chemistry courses, a separate set of questions were given at the end of each module and were also graded. The learners were instructed to mail their responses to these questions.

The radio lessons ranged from 8-20 minutes and were contained in a 30-minute program titled Science Encounters. The program was aired over DZLB Monday to Friday at 8:00 p.m. The radio lessons for each of the modules were broadcast only once a week: Mathematics (Monday), Physics (Tuesday), Chemistry (Wednesday), and Biology (Thursday). The Friday broadcasts were reserved for the discussion of the answers to the questions in the modules. During the second semester, the Friday broadcasts were excluded and the feedback to the teachers were included in the regular broadcasts for Mathematics, the feedback for Physics modules were included in the Tuesday broadcasts, and so forth.

The radio lessons varied in terms of format and content treatment. Some were presented in straight lectures, others dramatized, and still others in a combination of drama and lecture. Some lessons dealt with day-to-day applications of concepts discussed in the modules, others provided some historical background to the concepts, and still others provided further discussion of the concepts.

Some Pertinent Observations

The STUDI experience highlighted some interesting observations that could provide strong arguments in support of a decision for the University of the Philippines to engage in distance education, even if originally the STUDI project was undertaken only to determine the conditions that would support the implementation of distance education programs to provide opportunities for science teachers to upgrade their skills and knowledge of content. In any case, the following conditions were highlighted:

1. A significant proportion of the science teachers who participated in the STUDI project indicated that they had no opportunities to upgrade their qualifications as science teachers in the traditional system of instruction due mainly to economic reasons.

2. The level of motivation of teachers to learn independently would enhance their success as distance learners. It was observed that the motivation levels of more than half the participants in the STUDI Project were enhanced by the amount of time they had for study, the novelty of the distance learning method, and the difficulty of the materials to be learned. These conditions may be adjusted to create a situation more favorable to self-study.

3. The STUDI Project was conceived to be able to make courses more easily available to as many science teachers as were in need of skills upgrading. While a more liberal admission system would provide opportunities for more to enter the program the degree of upgrading would vary among the teachers requiring upgrading. This condition could have posed some problems in the design of the courses.

   Such a situation could have been remedied, however, by providing some kind of a bridging mechanism to level the playing field so to speak. Such bridge program could have also served to orient the incoming students on the nature of distance learning and trained them on the appropriate study skills which distance learners ought to possess.

4. The observations made by course coordinators and writers in the STUDI Project pointed to the fact that a "friendly" learner environment for teachers who enjoyed the support of their superiors and the company of their colleagues or co-teachers as they studied the same courses, contributed to the build-up of motivation to continue participating in the STUDI Project. This situation also pointed to the potential positive effects of administrators allowing their teachers to participate in distance learning activities in groups thereby forming some kind of local learning communities.

Message From the STUDI Experience

The over-arching message from the STUDI experience is that the Filipino science teachers, aware of their own shortcomings, were motivated to seek opportunities to upgrade their skills both in content and methods preferably in ways that would not pull them out of their daily grind and the company of their families.

The STUDI Project's output, the Diploma in Science Teaching, since its initial offering in 1988, has been consistently a "best seller" of an academic degree program. When the curriculum was refined further in 2001 it bifurcated into the following programs: Diploma in Science Teaching and the Diploma in Mathematics Teaching. Both degree programs have been "best seller" programs until today.

The UP Distance Education Program

Establishing the UP Distance Education Program

The University of the Philippines has always maintained very high academic standards and is extremely serious about preserving its stature as a conventional university. Therefore, introducing distance education in the university did not sit well with senior professors particularly those who considered distance education as a poor alternative to classroom instruction. This was the backdrop against which UP President Jose Abueva created in July 1991 a Distance Education Committee to "study the desirability and feasibility of distance education in the University" (Nemenzo, 1993) The Committee drafted a concept paper and an expert in distance education from abroad was invited to assess the university's capabilities to pursue education efforts.

It was the consensus of the members of the Distance Education Committee that a more rational way to pursue the issue of distance education was to set up an executive arm of the Committee. Hence, the Distance Education Planning and Implementation Unit (DEPIU) was created to "provide information on the potential demand and support for distance education in UP" (Nemenzo, 1993) The information that was supposed to be provided by the DEPIU would enable the university to decide rationally on (a) "whether or not to continue with the distance education initiative,: and if it does to (b) finally decide on its priority areas." The DEPIU was also to design an information campaign on the viability of a quality distance education, explore potential funding sources, and start implementing some pilot courses.

The establishment of the UP Distance Education Program was formalized when it was officially approved by the Board of Regents in its 1053rd meeting on 27 August 1992. The Program was to focus on three subject matter areas, namely: teacher training, applied computing, and public administration. The final choice of subject matter areas depended on a set of criteria which was part of the proposal approved by the BOR, as follows:

1. Which would best attract students and have the longer-term potential for taking advantage of the economies of scale?

2. Which would have the backing of a well-motivated and committed staff?

3. Which would lend itself best to imaginative distance education presentation using the range of media?

4. Which would be more likely to attract most support from the university, government, and other institutions and potentialities?

5. Which subject is likely to have the greatest public impact and publicity/promotion value?

The Program was provided funding of P500,000 for its first year of operation, with the following personnel: a director, two research assistants, administrative assistant, and messenger. In other words, it was a small office just about enough to simply coordinate activities of various units within the university that would be working on the development of course materials. There was really no way that this little office would be able to develop programs on its own, and it was not meant to be. To complete its task of choosing what courses to develop and undertake their evaluation, the Program was given the following timetable:

Phase I (Planning)	6 months
Phase II (Preparation of Materials)	12 months
Phase III (Implementation: the first Courses in operation)	12 months
Phase IV (Completion and Evaluation)	12 months

It was not clear in this scheduling whether or not the UP Distance Education Program was going to be a continuing major activity of the University, although it could be argued that the continuity of this Program was implied in Phase III. What Was clear from this initiative, however, was the fact that at the time the BOR approved the creation of the UP Distance Education Program there was actually no intention of pushing this further to establish a separate entity parallel with the conventional UP campuses that would be mandated to develop and offer academic degree programs.

Philosophical and Policy Environment

The time between the UP Board of Regents' approval of the creation of the UP Distance Education Program and the end of the Abueva presidency was less than one year, and there really was not enough time for the Program to pursue the activities it lined up to do. Perhaps the most significant document produced in this interim period was the essay written by Dr. Francisco Nemenzo, then Executive Director of the UP Distance Education Program, which served as the philosophical and policy framework for the Program. This document dealt with four basic issues: definition of distance education, rationale for pursuing distance education at UP, what the UP Distance Education Program was doing, and a clarification of both the strengths and weaknesses of the conventional and distance education modes.

Nemenzo's definition of distance education was based on the standard definition of it but in much simpler form. He said that the essence of distance education was that it was a "program of self-study" (Nemenzo, 1993). He focused on the novelty of distance education which was the emphasis on the "method of designing texts especially for self-study, the use of modern communication media and the network of student support services."

Why distance education? As regards this point, Nemenzo made some interesting observations. He was a believer of the conventional university model but at the same time he appreciated the weaknesses of the conventional university. He said that the conventional university, if it was to stay relevant in a changing world, "must dare to explore uncharted territory." After all, even the traditional "citadels of intellectual snobbery like British universities" have found that distance education was a viable response to the changing times.

In the Philippines, who would possibly benefit from distance education? First on Nemenzo's were the "late bloomers" whom the University of the Philippines may have unwittingly discriminated against through the UPCAT. And the UPCAT, Nemenzo says, was not exactly infallible because it was more a "test of family upbringing and secondary schooling than of native intelligence." Another group of individuals who stood to benefit from a distance education program at UP were the non-academic personnel of UP who needed to further their studies in order to get ahead in their professions.

Nemenzo observed, "other potential beneficiaries of distance education are those who develop interest in new areas of intellectual inq1uiry, the disabled, the prisoners, the full-time housewives, and others who could not pursue degree programs the conventional way and yet have the drive and ability for college work." Distance education, Nemenzo said, would give those individuals a second chance.

What was the UP Distance Education Program all about? By design, the Program was not a degree-granting unit. It was simply an academic support unit. In other words, its efforts were geared toward just providing support to any unit of the university that would choose to offer its courses in the distance mode. Its tasks, according to Nemenzo (1993) were:

1. To encourage the various colleges and departments to organize their own distance education courses;
2. To provide them with technical assistance;
3. To put them in touch with faculty members of other units who might be recruited to their course teams;
4. To help them look for funds; and
5. To ensure quality control.

The Program had identified priority initiatives in 1992 which included a Master of Science in Development Architecture, a collaborative project of the UP Diliman College of Architecture and the United Architects of the Philippines; a Diploma in Local Government Administration, a project of the College of Public Administration (now National College of Public Administration sand Governance); and a Diploma in Applied Computing, a project of the Institute of Mathematical Sciences and Physics at UP Los Banos.

The Program was also encouraging the preparation of instructional materials for General Education courses, focusing initially on the courses Social Science I, Social Science II, and Mathematics I. It was also the intention of the Program to seek approval by the UP Diliman Council to allow qualified students to choose between the conventional and distance modes for their GE requirements.

Non-formal courses were also targeted by the Program particularly for those not interested to pursue academic credits for their course or degree programs. The idea of undertaking broadcasting courses on television was also being considered by the Program because the Program Executive Director believed that the university should build its capability to employ television and video cassette recording (VCR) technologies.

The Nemenzo document also dealt briefly with the age-old issue of whether or not the distance mode was inferior to the conventional mode of instructional delivery. Dr. Nemenzo cited two instances where he pointed out that respected professors in conventional systems had grave reservations about distance education.

In the case of the United Kingdom Open University (UKOU), British professors were skeptical in the beginning but were convinced that the UKOU was actually a good idea when the UKOU was already producing the best instructional materials in Britain. The fact that the Prime Minister of Great Britain at that time, John Major, was a product of distance education helped greatly in dignifying distance education.

In the case of Thailand, Nemenzo reported, professors at Chulalungkorn University (considered the equivalent of the University of the Philippines in the Philippiners) thought of introducing distance education at the tertiary level in Thailand in the 1960s but there was a very strong negative reaction from the academic policy making body of the university. The professors eventually resigned from Chulalungkorn and helped establish the Sokhuthai Thammathirat Open University (STOU). Initially, STOU reeled from the vicious sniping from Chulalunkorn, but during the period 1980s to the 1990s, STOU established itself as a respected open university at the international arena. As a result, Chulalungkorn began conceptualizing its own distance education program in the 1990s but still has not caught up with STOU in terms of stature in the field of distance education.

The distrust of distance education stems from the belief that there could be no substitute to the teacher. This is an age-old argument from conventional teachers even in the United States when teaching machines were introduced into the instructional process. Of course, machines could not replace the human teachers. There was, however, a caveat here. The Nemenzo document pointed out, for example, that "the question is whether the classroom is the only suitable milieu for teaching." He asked, "isn't it possible to teach as effectively through print, audio, and video?"

Admittedly, there were things that distance education programs may not be able to provide adequately such as a dialogic atmosphere in classroom and exposure to extra-curricular activities. To these points, the Nemenzo document countered, "how much of these do the present crop of conventional students still enjoy when frivolities and outright inanities seem to pervade the campus?" In any case, Nermenzo pointed out that the "cranky 'terror teachers' have no moral ground to assail distance education on this score because their style of teaching inhibits an authentic dialogue."

Still on another point, the UP Distance Education Program under the direction of Nemenzo during the Presidency of Jose Abueva put forth a significant argument in favor of distance education. The University of the Philippines had been turning away many qualifiers of UPCAT and had never given another chance to those who almost made it to the cut-off point. The situation at UP when Nemenzo was making a point for distance education was that about 20% have made it to the UPCAT cut-off point but due to lack of resources UP admitted about 18%. Even that made UP burst at its seams.

According to Nemenzo, "universities abroad (including the ancient citadels of intellectual snobbery like the British universities) have found distance education a viable response to this extremely limited absorptive capacity of the conventional university."

Establishment of the U.P. Open University

Three major events at the University of the Philippines converged and led to the establishment of the U.P. Open University (UPOU). These were the introduction of rural educational broadcasting in 1964 at the then U.P. College of Agriculture (which is now the UPLB), the completion of a major action research project at UPLB called Science Teaching Using Distance Instruction (STUDI) in 1988, and the implementation of the Distance Education Program of the University of the Philippines in 1991.

The first portion of a chapter of the book by this author, Distance Education in the Philippines, provides a brief and concise discussion of how the UP Open University was established. That chapter portion is reprinted here to provide a clear description of the beginnings of the UPOU.

The resolution of the Board of Regents of the University of the Philippines System establishing the U.P. Open University on 23 February 1995, states:

Faced with the perennial challenge of providing quality higher education to a growing population distributed in over 7,000 islands, the U.P. through the UPOU's open and distance learning, will allow wider access to quality education. As an institution with the largest full-time faculty, with the highest number of advanced degrees and the widest fields of study among institutions of higher learning in the country, U.P. is in the best position to offer quality distance education programs.

The UPOU was designed to provide the mechanism for a wider access to UP education for more Filipinos without watering down the quality of education that it delivers. It was felt that UP was in the best position to offer instruction through distance education in the country, given its top caliber human resources, expertise, and experience.

The UPOU is a full-fledged university, one of the seven (now eight) campuses of the University of the Philippines system. Its foundation and development were influenced by a series of events starting with the first school on-the-air broadcast originating from UP Los Banos in 1967. This was followed by the implementation of STUDI in 1984, with support from Science Minister Emil Javier who was concurrently Chancellor of UP Los Banos. As a result of a successful STUDI, a formal degree program was formulated and instituted by UP Los Banos upon approval by the UP Board of Regents in 1988. Then in1991, UP President Jose Abueva organized at (emphasis provided) the system level the UP Distance Education Program with Dr. Francisco Nemenzo as Executive Director.

When Emil Javier became the 17th President of the University of the Philippines in 1993, he obviously took the report of STUDI very seriously and immediately institutionalized the UP Distance Education Program and appointed Dr. Ma. Cristina D. Padolina as Executive Director (vice Dr. Francisco Nemenzo). Thereafter, in each autonomous campus of the UP System, an office of Distance Education, headed by a Director, was created.

Then on 23 February 1995, the UP Board of Regents approved the establishment of the U.P. Open University as the 5th autonomous campus of the UP System, and with the UP Distance Education Program as its nucleus. The Office of Distance Education in each of the autonomous campuses of UP (Diliman in Quezon City, Los Banos, Laguna; Manila; Iloilo City) were transformed into the Schools for Distance Education (SDE), each one headed by a Dean. When the UPOU was reorganized in 1999, these geographically-based SDEs were transformed into discipline-based Faculties, namely:

Faculty of Education, Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Management Science, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, and Faculty of Science and Technology. This organizational structure was perceived as top-heavy by the System Administration of President Nemenzo, hence UPOU was further reorganized in 2003 to reduce the number of Vice Chancellors from three to two, and the number of Faculties from five to three, as follows: Faculty of Education, Faculty of Information and Communication, and the Faculty of Management and Development Studies.

Factors that Influenced the Establishment of UPOU

Why did the UP go into distance education to the extent of establishing the UPOU? The establishment of the UPOU, from a broader context, is well explained by the fact that the Board of Regents recognized the "perennial challenge of providing quality higher education to a growing population" in the country. However, because of limited resources, the conventional colleges could not admit all students who applied and qualified for admission. Through distance education, the UPOU could allow the UP System to "respond to growing demand for quality graduate and undergraduate education" even in areas that are traditionally underserved by the tertiary education sector.

Viewed from more specific concerns, the establishment of UPOU was influenced by the following specific issues:

1. *Availability of human resources and expertise.* The University of the Philippines has the largest concentrationofhighlytrainedacademicsinthevariousdisciplineswhohaveextensiveexperience in teaching. To a degree, this expertise has not really been fully harnessed by the university in its conventionalinstructionprograms. It was thefeelingatthetime when distance education at UP was conceptualized that it was absolutely necessary to harness the said expertise in providing alternative ways of delivering education to Filipinos. In other words, offering degree programs in the distance education mode was seen as an alternative means of providing quality higher education to Filipinos who areunabletohaveaccesstoconventionalinstructionin UPcampuses.

2. *Access to quality higher education.* For a long time now, quite a large proportion of the Filipino studentry end up being out of school probably because they do not have the financial capacity to pursue higher education. Quality education in the Philippines is expensive. Even at the University of the Philippines, one has to pay at least P250 per unit. Translated into semestral cost, this totals about P4,500 tuition fee (assuming a standard load per semester of 18 units), and perhaps about P2,500 more for additional charges. On top of this, consider the cost of food and lodging in the city. Then, of course, you have the regular maintenance cost. For the entire semester, you are talking of a minimum of P25,000. This alone makes UP education rather inaccessible. InotherschoolsinMetro-Manilaonewouldneedatleastthreeorfourtimesasmuch.

3. *Democratization of admissions at UP.*
   Democratization does not mean mere lowering of tuition fees. Many feel that the UP College Admissions Test (UPCAT), for example, is a form of screening, which simply means that admission to the university is not really democratized. It has been pointed out that those who pass the cut-off point of the UPCAT are those coming from more endowed high schools, which are essentially high schools where only those with financial capability can afford to attend. In other words, those can afford have better chances of having access to UP education because they are more academically prepared given their access to better educational opportunities due to their economic status.

Still, it should be pointed out that even if all deserving students pass the UPCAT, not all UPCAT passers are accommodated primarily because of lack of facilities on campus. There are not enough teachers, not enough classrooms, not enough student housing facilities. This is the second tier in the flaw in democratizing admissions to UP.

4. *Trends in the delivery of educational content.* In the last ten years there has been a worldwide exodus toward distance education among higher education institutions largely because of the trend in higher education as enunciated by Lockwood (1998), as well as due to the rapid developments in the ICT sector. For tertiary institutions in the Philippines, there is a limit to the capacity of these institutions to expand physically and be physically present in all parts of the country. Funding, particularly government funding, is not so unlimited as to make continuous and unlimited physical expansion possible al the time. Therefore, distance education, as an alternative delivery mode, is the direction toward which universities worldwide are moving.

Vision, Mission, Goals, and Values of the UPOU

In its strategic plan titled Harnessing Technology to Improve Access to Quality Education, the UPOU details its vision, mission, goals, and the values it goes by (Librero, 2008).

Vision. The U.P. Open University shall be at the forefront of the knowledge society as a leading institution of open learning and distance education.

Mission. Adhering to the philosophy of open learning and distance education, the U.P. Open University shall:

1. create dynamic, innovative, alternative learning environments, technologies, and opportunities that shall draw out the full potential of learners;
2. reach out to a wide spectrum of learners; and
3. contribute to the upgrading of the quality of education in the country.

Goals. The goals of the UPOU are, as follows:

1. To offer degree and non-degree programs, through open and distance learning. That are responsive to the needs of the learners and the society of which they are a part;
2. To develop a system of continuing education to sustain professional growth and promote lifelong learning;
3. To develop and adapt delivery systems appropriate to the distance learner;
4. To provide leadership in the development of open learning and distance education expertise in the country and in the appropriate use of information and communication technologies for education; and
5. To make instructional packages accessible to various publics through collaborative arrangements, institutional agreements and other appropriate mechanisms.

Values. The UPOU upholds the following values of excellence, equity, efficiency, and humanism:

1. *Excellence.* UPOU shall promote academic excellence as it adheres to UP's standards. The value of excellence, likewise, shall permeate all aspects of UPOU's entire operations and shall be manifested in the performance of its staff.

2. *Equity.* UPOU affirms its open access policy in terms of student admissions, but shall maintain the rigors of learning in producing quality graduates. The value of equity shall likewise be observed in the fair practice of recognition and reward for performance.
3. *Efficiency.* UPOU is committed to the efficient delivery of its services to its various clientele. The value of internal efficiency shall be translated to optimum use of resources in the operations of the university.
4. *Humanism.* UPOU shall uphold the primacy of human concerns over the use of technology as a means of achieving its goals. The value of humanism shall also be expressed in terms of the university's concern for the well-being of its personnel.

Defining the Stakeholders of UPOU

As explained elsewhere by Librero (2008), the stakeholders of the UPOU are the individuals and institutions who share the vision, mission and goals of the university. These are the students, the faculty, the employees, the policy makers, and its institutional partners.

The students, having invested their time, effort, discipline, resources, and commitment, shall in return expect to obtain a UP education through effective and efficient delivery systems.

The members of the faculty, having infused their expertise, dedication, and commitment to the UPOU, shall expect the leadership of the university to vigorously maintain the UP tradition of academic excellence, and to uphold the values of equity, excellence, efficiency, and humanism.

The employees, having committed their skills, resourcefulness, and service, shall expect the university to provide a pleasant work environment conducive to high productivity, and to offer opportunities for growth and development of the individual.

Policy makers, in the UP System and the government, having supported and provided funds and the policy framework for the UPOU's operations, shall expect the UPOU to endeavor to implement to the fullest its institutional mandate and in doing so, to adhere to the rules of governance.

Institutional partners, having appropriated the3ir institutional reputation and prestige, shall expect the partnership to enhance mutual growth and development.

ODeL: UPOU Institutional Worldview

From 1993 to about 1996 all course modules were printed and distributed to students during enrolment periods. Also, there were monthly face-to-face tutorials in UPOU Learning Centers all over the country. These Learning Centers were based in other institutions of higher learning that were collaborating with the UPOU. Interactions between professors and students happened through emails. In 2002, tutorials were fully online. About three years later, enrolment was online. Then all of the activities associated with the delivery of courses were fully online.

From the beginning, there was the intention of going fully on line but this was greatly affected by the availability of hardware resources and access to the Internet on the UPOU end. Besides, we were aware of the fact that not all the UPOU students had complete access to the Internet. There were a lot of problems initially but these were largely resolved over the period from 2005 to 2007.

It was during this time, too, that the UPOU was feeling that it had arrived and began participating actively in the new learning environment, electronic learning.

By 2008, the UPOU began conceptualizing a new orientation, the complete implementation of mediated instruction primarily through the Internet, thereby starting efforts towards open distance e-learning as a major focus of the operations of the university.

The basic concept of open distance e-learning (ODeL) has been identified and defined by experts at the UPOU and in other open universities in the region as indicated in a compilation of concepts as well as critical discourse (Alfonso and Garcia, 2014). In fact, from a historical perspective, it was at the UPOU where ODeL was first conceptualized and defined as a distinct process in the distance education realm. The specification focused on the fact that it was not merely of the distance education genre, but more specifically of the focus on electronic learning, which could be in the realm of either distance or conventional classroom instruction.

To be sure, open distance education and learning were not a discovery or creation of the UPOU. In fact, other previous writers and experts have identified these concepts as important considerations in the development of distance education as alternative instructional delivery of knowledge. It should be pointed out, however, that what has been emphasized in the scientific literature is the focus on open and distance education (UNESCO, 2002), rather than open and distance e-learning, which is what the UPOU has been pursuing since just about the same year when it decided to put all services like tutorials online (Librero, 2008). It was the UPOU as an institution that first focused on the emphasis on electronic learning processes that combined with the concepts of open ad distance learning, hence the importance placed on open distance e-learning or ODeL. What made the difference in the UPOU's conception was the focus on open and distance e-learning as a worldview. This is what Alfonso (2014) had to say in defining what UPOU's concept of ODeL was:

> ODeL draws from the features and affordances provided by open learning, DE, and e-learning – access and equity, resource sharing, learner-centeredness, flexibility, active learning, interactivity, ubiquity, and connectivity. Some of these features – like access and equity – are more in tune with open learning. Others – like learner-centeredness, flexibility and active learning – and shared by the three domains. Ubiquity, interactivity, and connectivity are more of e-learning's contributions.

It was this worldview that got highlighted in the crafting of the law (R.A. No. 10650), otherwise known as the Open Distance Learning Act. In fact, all of the provisions under Section 12 of R.A. 10650 which reflect the issues and concerns associated with ODeL, have specifically been referred to as functions of the UPOU. It should be pointed out that the early efforts to pass a law governing open distance learning in the Philippines started as early as 2004. However, the goals of the expected law and the specific provisions changed over time and for reasons of specific developments in the field.

The specific provisions of R.A. 10650, particularly Section 12, specifies the role of the UPOU, as follows:

1. Provide leadership in the development of ODL in the country and in the appropriate use of information and communications technologies is support of quality in support tertiary education;
2. Provide best practices in ODL in the Philippines;

3. Share knowledge through informed research and other development activities related to ODL through its e3xemplar policies, programs, materials, learning management systems, guidelines and offerings;
4. Provide technical assistance to the CHED and the TESDA in matters relating to ODL particularly in the development of basis design and formulation of national policies, standards and guidelines for ODL programs and institutions in the country;
5. Design model curricular programs which shall serve as prototype programs upon which similar programs to be offered by other HEIs and post-secondary schools in the country shall be patterned after;
6. Develop and promote appropriate information and communications technology to facilitate quality ODL programs in the country;
7. Design quality learning materials and objects, both in print and multimedia formats, for higher education and post-secondary instruction in the country;
8. Make instructional materials for ODL programs accessible to the public through collaborative arrangements and other appropriate mechanisms;
9. Assist other interested educational institutions in developing their ODL programs, courses, and materials to specific learner groups or the public at large;
10. Design and implement a continuing program to develop high level expertise in the fields of ODL in the Philippines through quality higher education degree programs and technical-vocational programs through either or both ODL and face-to-face modes of instruction and training; and
11. HelpcapacitateODLteachersandpractitionersthroughcapacitybuildingandprofessionalization programs.

Epilogue

This is where we are today, 2015, and our current work is double that a couple of decades ago. Most likely it will double or perhaps triple a couple of decades into the future, but we cannot be certain what exactly we shall do then. Suffice it to say that we shall probably be grappling with much more sophisticated forms of e-learning and delivery systems.

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