

ICT's and Challenges for True Collaborative Partnerships among Thai and Non –Thai Communication Educators : a conceptual paper

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Abstract

The paper draws a panorama of evolution and development in communication education in Thailand from both historical and contemporary perspectives and the status of communication associations in Thailand to show the necessary to establish its own communication educators network. However, to strengthen and succeed in the collaborative partnerships among Thai and non-Thai communication educators in all levels: individuals, departments and the network itself, the paper has proposed the concept of true collaborative partnerships and challenged the problem of ICT's used in professional communication associations nowadays with the concepts of interactive ICT's that can bridge the differences and gap among members, establish a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas and resources among them and also facilitate their services delivery. Moreover, the paper has also presented the opportunities and guidelines to expand the collaboration network with non-Thai communication educators that need to be discussed broadly in order to enhance communication education in Thailand in the future.

Introduction

Academics and practitioners agree that in the global network era knowledge has become a key resource for continuous innovation and competitiveness. (Blomqvist, Hurmelinna and Seppänen , 2005) Then, it's a good idea to surround yourself with reliable friends, especially in area such as communication arts. Academic associations are the places to find and meet with like-minded friends, and to get moral and informational support. They can serve as bargaining or lobbying units to negotiate contracts, set standards, or get legislation in place; they can do targeted market research that is beyond the resources of almost any individual company; they can help you keep a finger on the pulse of the latest and update news and developments; and they can offer excellent opportunities for networking. (Nichols, Paul, 1996) Therefore, the paper aims to propose a concept of using ICT's as a social networking tool to strengthen relationship among educators in communication arts disciplines that can drive to a true collaboration in many areas (viz. research, *education*, and service provision). However, at the current time, there are a limited collaboration among educators and educators, and also among educators and professionals both Thais and non Thais. This seemed to be the problems occurred in all disciplines not restricted to Communication Arts as the research finding of Suwannaphati (2001) in her dissertation topic "Collaboration between thai professional associations and university continuing education centers for professional development needs of business and industry" that indicated the perspectives of directors of both organizations for the limited collaboration among them nowadays, the extent of collaborative activities and future directions of collaboration between them, and the need to establish and engage in collaborative activities such as long term planning for development new programs, enhance relationships and communication and sharing facilities.

This article describes the evolution and development of communication arts studies in Thailand and the concept of true collaboration that confirm the necessary to build Thai academia network as sudden before proposing the conceptual framework of true collaborative partnerships among Thais educators at each level: individual level, program/department/or faculty level and finally universities level, by investigating and answering the six key questions. Moreover, to assure the success of collaborative intellectual partnership more, it also outlines some expected problems and provides guidelines to build this virtual network together with the process model of creating a true collaboration at each steps too.

The evolution and development of communication arts studies in Thailand

Neunghathai Khopolklang (2004) reviewed the history and development of communication arts in “A Study of Present Status of Communication Arts Curricula in Thailand” saying that the education of communication arts in Thailand was already accepted as one of the education fields in any graduate institutes since 1939, which was the first year this field was opened under The Department of Literature and Science of Chulalongkorn University. From then, this field had continuously grown, though in the first period, it had temporarily been stopped for a short time because of The World War II. However, when it came recovery, the communication arts was popularly as seen that was selected by lots of student who wanted to prolong their education to graduate level of the universities.

At the first period, the education of communication arts in Thailand is divided into many sub-departments, based on categories of media types. It was evident from the first 4 institutes that opened Department of Communication Arts; Chulalongkorn University, Chiangmai University, Thammasat University, and Bangkok College (or Bangkok University in present). These institutes did not, at first, set up as the Faculty, as said, but as the department. For the first time at Chulalongkorn University in 1939, during the age of Field Marshal Por. Pibulsongkram, it was opened in the name ‘Department of Journalism’ 1-year vocational certificate program, under The Faculty of Literature and Science. For Chiangmai University it was opened at first as Department of Mass Communications, under The Faculty of Humanities, initiated by Mom Luang Tui Chumsai, Dean of The Faculty of Humanities in 1964. Thammasat University initiated as The Department of Journalism and Mass Communications in terms of nighttime programs in 1966, a 3-years program, under The Department of Social Sciences. For Bangkok College, the first private institute that initiated communication arts, it was opened as The Department of Public Relations, under The Faculty of Business Administration.

Considering the purpose of the establishment of communication arts curricula since initiated by Chulalongkorn University, at first, it was clearly aimed this department was for personnel preparation for government services, and for personnel training for performing the journalists for public relations of the country. It was seen from the case of Chiangmai University which opened The Department of Broadcasts, aiming to produce personnel for government services, following *The National Commercial and Society Development Plan*, that emphasizing on searching personnel for radio broadcasts, especially education broadcasts. Department of Public Relations, at first, was specified to train the government officials, that supporting the government’s public relations works whose main mission was mass communications. Therefore, we can concluded that the purpose in rear of expanding into education fields of communication arts at the first period, was responsive to the *The National Commercial and Society Development Plan* and served as the material for broadcasting and publicizing the government’s affairs.

However, considering any departments opened in years later, they were for supporting labor market, especially for supporting the growing business sections, such as advertisement and public relations, journal, and radio broadcast and television. Entering the new decade that called The Age of Information Technology, it was the period of the great changing of the world, especially in term of communication technology that had rapidly been advanced. Systems and methods of mass communications had changed, so such employers needed to improve themselves as far as advance technology, to use them as the mass communication materials for public sake. Therefore, the study of communication arts in any graduate institutes had emphasized on the importance of information technology in terms of mass communication works, such as design and production of electronic mass media, news reports, and communication development plan on networks. (Neunghathai Khopolklang, 2004)

The current status of communication arts studies in Thailand : problems and trend

Shifting and changing of society, economics, and politics, especially high advance of mass communication technology, is like a driving force to the development of the education in communication arts inevitably. As we can see the evidence of the increasing number of student admission and graduation in this fields for both public and private institutes , the opening of new curricular and international programs for both undergraduate and graduate degree, and the opening of new departments or faculties in the field of communication arts education every year for both public and private institutes too. The competition in the field of communication arts are clear in the *“University Fair 2005”*, on September 29th – October the 2nd, this year at Sirikit Hall Center such as Mahidol University opened the international program in edutainment media at the bachelor degree and already admitted the first year students last year, Hua chiew University that opened the Faculty of Communication Arts and offered the program of communication arts at the bachelor degree level expecting to admit a limited number of students in 2006, Dhurakij Pundit University opened the master degree and PH.D degree in communication and also the international program in Master of Marketing Communication (MMC) expecting to admit the students in the next semester too, Christian University opened the master degree program in mass communication administration expecting to admit the graduate students in 2006, Assumption University of Thailand opened the Faculty of Communication Arts and offered two programs of study: the bachelor of communication arts program (comprised of four majors: advertising, public relations, new media communication, and performance communication) and the visual communication arts program expecting to admit the student in 2006 too.

The expanding of the education in communication arts seems to be more diversified and adjusted to need of users especially for the professional organizations. However, most of the new majors are still based on media types more than content. There are nowadays eighty-three institutes that provide programs related to the field of communication arts. These can be categorized in groups as follows:

1. Government university: there are 17 universities in this category that can be divided into 2 groups; 1) fifteen universities for limited admission university (Close University) and 2) two universities for unlimited admission university (Open University)
2. Government-Supervisory University: there were two universities in this Category.
3. Rajabhat University and Rajamangala University of Technology : there were thirty-nine universities in this category.
4. Private University and college. There were twenty-five universities in this category.

The programs offered by these institutes can be categorized into twenty-seven groups as follows: 1) advertising 2) public relations 3) print and journalism 4) advertising and public relations 5) photo, film and video 6) mass communication and technology in mass communication 7) mass communication administration 8) media/new media study 9) speech & performance arts 10) communication/ communication arts 11) business communication and integrated marketing communication 12) information technology and information science 13) communication design and visual communication arts 14) communication arts for agricultural 15) integrated communication arts 16) interpersonal communication 17) political communication 18) campaign communication 19) management communication and organizational communication 20) communication management/administration 21) development communication 22) mass communication for sport 23) television production 24) cinema production 25) animation production 26) language & communication and 27 others

Though the development of communication arts education in term of new curricula in all levels and new departments or faculties, seem to be more prosperous as said above, it found that production of graduate students was for fulfilling social and labor market needs than leading the society. Moreover, whereas the characteristic of business, society, politics, and context were changing, the production of graduate students kept moving only in term of quantity. Therefore, the criticism about the quality of education in communication arts is still increasing as much as the number of students that graduated each year. In addition, the quality of the traditional curricula are still questioning and moderately satisfied by stakeholders, especially for employer or graduate users as a research result of Neunghathai Khopolklang (2004:12) saying that *“the current curricula did not provide students with sufficient knowledge and skill for real performance. Students were acknowledged but not able to adapt for use. Such knowledge gained was too wide and various so that lack of specific one....., Students also lacked of knowledge of business, marketing, current situation, and interest of news and information”*.

Moreover, other problems that limited the healthy and value of communication arts studies are the status as department or sub-program in many institutes, the lack of uniqueness of curricular and its role in social leading, the shortage of instructors both quantity and quality or real skill to teach communication arts, the lack of regulation that contain the right process for student admission and selection, and the lack of providing general knowledge in specific field etc. Therefore, the research suggested that institutes should lift up the status of communication arts to be the faculty level, define their unique philosophy for curricula administration and emphasize its role in social leading more, teach, screen the qualified instructors appropriate to the field, have a regulation that contain the right process to screen students full with knowledge, ability, skill, and readiness appropriately with this field, add the courses involving the general knowledge and social context, reviewed and improved the courses of curricular in line with the changing society, adjust the system of apprenticeship that let students utilize all of their ability in working as equally to such company's employee. (Neunghathai Khopolklang, 2004:13) Moreover, it suggested the desirable trend of communication arts field was cooperation between technical and professional institutes to be more tangible organization, such as Commission of Mass Communications Technical and Professional Cooperation that was union of qualified experts and professionals of mass communications in order that the curricular development would have the better direction in the future. (Neunghathai Khopolklang, 2004:13)

As the important point we should take account is qualitative development because communication arts was related with many other fields, and also involved with social and contexts that kept changing continuously. The collaborative network among communication arts educators both Thais and Non-Thais in order to assure the quality of graduates and the healthy of this discipline seem to be the best alternative as an evidence of

international conference's theme of the National Communication Association (NCA) title "*Creating Sites for Connection and action*". The convention theme aim to encourage their members around the world to emphasize the role of place in communication and the sites where colleagues can exchange research, make things happen, to network and to socialize etc. (www.natcom.org, 2006) Beyond these aims, the association want to provide the service deliveries needed by members for example to showcase the strongest research, to lobby for the discipline, to take principled social action, to establish project partnerships with outside agencies and foundations, and to promote diversity in scholarship and leadership within the discipline, the association, society or world.

However, in Thailand, the concept of true collaboration and networking via ICT's seem to be new and challenge the style and culture of communication arts educators in many ways. Therefore, we should compares the status of communication associations in western and eastern regions and also that of Thailand to confirm that it's time to have a true collaborative partnerships among Thai and non-Thai communication arts educators starting with ICT's in the sense of networking before establishing a formal network organization or academic association as found in western and eastern regions, and many countries in Asia in the future. Thus, the initial network should play a leadership role in the process of development communication arts study.

The status of communication associations in Thailand

In, Thailand, there was an effort to establishing an academic association among communication arts educators: the Council of the Mass Communication Faculty Members of Thailand (C.M.C.T. or so called in Thai; Sor Sor Mor Thor). The association was formed in 1992 by a group of scholars who were specialized or interested in the filed of mass communication from nineteen public and private institutes that opened communication arts curricula (excluding Rajabhat institutes) for three basic objectives: to promote the cooperation, exchange and the development in mass communication study, professional and codes of conduct in the field of mass communication; to promote the right, freedom and the laws involved with mass communication professions together with the support for the right of information seeking and the right to know of people; and to promote the education and research in mass communication and also give a suggestion for policy formation that serve the benefits of public and society as a whole.

At first, the chairman of the council was Associated Professor Dr. Darunee Hirunrak; dean of the faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University at that time, whereas the administrative committees were comprised of the nineteen representatives elected from each of the founding institutes, a term of all position was only one year. In 1998, Associated Professor Aruneeprapa Homsrettee, head of the department of mass communication, Ramkhamhaeng University, was elected as chairman followed by Ajarn Anusorn Srikaew, the dean of the Faculty of Communication Arts, Rungsit University and Associated Professor Dr. Surat Metheekul, a lecture of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication ,Thammasart University in 2004 till now. The Council is operated under the participation from the educators in the field of communication arts of public and private institutes including Rajabhat Universities who are volunteer to be the committees with their own spirits and the advice of its twelve consultants who are in the positions of the deans and head of department involved in the field of communication arts, together with specialists in media organization. to make progress to the network more.

The status of the Council seems to be more standardized and clear in its roles as an academic leader in mass communication for there will be an effort to develop and expanded the scope of activities, members, and committees along the thirteen years of establishing the academic network in a group of educators who are specialized and interested in mass

communication. However, the concentration of efforts to mobilize the social movements and activities that protect the right to inform and the right to know of public, to suggest for the laws and policy making that serve for public interests and benefits, to take a leadership role in the process of struggle for media right and freedom against the government and to participate in the activities such as seminar, organized by academic institutes and professional organizations and alliances to express its own standpoints in any kinds of problem issues faced by mass media organizations etc, are more recognized and perceived by most educators in communication arts and public than to promote the cooperation among academias and the development in mass communication study and research and also the development in professionalism.

In addition, the Council now lack of resources and information that are important to the achievement of its objectives for example budgets, the database of individual and faculties member profiles and record, website and other kind of public relations media to report its news and current movement to members and public, and human resources to operate the routine and pheripheral jobs etc. These cause the lack of feeling involvement and the sense of belonging among the educators in the filed of mass communication and especially for other programs in the field of communication arts. The reason underlined these problems, may come from the name of the Council that is only limited to the field of mass communication, the lack of information and knowledge about its' updated news and movement, the lack of opportunity to join, and the lack of awareness information about the benefits of joining in network for them and their faculties, etc., thus need to be solved.

Though, the progress and development of the Council is a good sign as the initiative academic networking in Thailand, the conceptual idea to build our own standardized and true collaborative network organization or academic association among Thai and non-Thai communication arts educators as those of the western and eastern regions through ICT's, may be the starting point that helps increasing the number of members in an individual, faculty and university level and the sense of involvement and belonging that may lead to strengthen to role of academic networking for the benefits of all and wider society as a whole in the near future. However, before proposing the conceptual framework of true collaborative partnerships among thai and non-thai communication arts educators via ICT's, the concept of true collaboration needed to be reviewed for the consistency in understanding.

The concept of true collaboration and linking idea in establishing an academic network in the field of communication arts

Gray and Donna (1991a) defined collaboration as “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible.” The levels of collaboration identified in the Amherst Wilder Foundation's Collaboration Handbook are cooperation, coordination, and true collaboration (**Hofmann** (2003)

Cooperation are cooperative in nature largely support individual learning goals, and participants tend to be concerned with the results of their personal assessments. If participants are asked to provide feedback or help someone else, they will--as long as it doesn't affect their personal performance.

Coordination occurs when participants start to work together as a group to achieve a common goal. They plan and assign tasks, create deadlines, and deliver a common product (presentation, report, set of answers, and so forth). Although individuals are still concerned with their own performance and assessment, they're willing to work with a group when it supports their personal goals. If one group member starts to fall behind or fails to support the overall group effort, individuals within that group may decide to strike out on their own to ensure personal success.

True collaboration. When the success of the group is paramount and all individuals must contribute to that success, you have true collaboration. No group member can be left behind and everyone within the group will do whatever it takes to reach the common goal. This is a very altruistic form of interaction and strongly supports collaboration as a learning outcome.

The definition is consistent with Vichita Vathanophas (2000: 6) that define cooperation as a communication with a purpose toward a common goal, while coordination is actions in some form to bring pieces of work into a goal and collaboration is defined as actions performed in order to structure a work group. The difference between cooperation, coordination and collaboration are emphasized by Swan and Morgan (1992). From their perspective, cooperation is the least complex while collaboration is the most sophisticated. Interagency cooperation is defined as “a process of working together to achieve the day to day goals of the organization” (ibid:21). Interagency coordination is “a process of engaging in various efforts that alter or smooth the relationships of independent organization, staffs or resources.” Interagency collaboration, by contrast, is more joint-planned and intensive. (ibid).

Collaboration may help secure many of the benefits of, and overcome many of the obstacles (Rich, David, Robinson, Geoffrey, Bednarz, and Robert, 2000:1) Intersubjectivity is a central concept in collaboration and it arises between participants from the shared understanding based on a common focus of attention and some shared presuppositions that form the ground for communication. (Rogoff 1990: 71) It therefore requires an appreciation of the mental states of others (Crook, 1994). The elements that are part of creating intersubjectivity are: shared problem space; shared objects; and shared or distributed cognition. (McCormick, 2004: 5)

Further, Swan and Morgan (1992:24-25) provide several key concepts in collaboration as follows:

1. Collaboration cannot be mandated.
2. Collaboration is both a process and an attitude
3. Collaboration takes time.
4. Collaboration does not develop evenly.
5. Collaboration must be nurtured.
6. Collaboration must have clear goals.

Reasons to collaborate are identified in the literature, often as contextual factors that may impede or encourage collaboration. (Hill, 2002: 14) Mur-Veeman et al (1999: 131) show four such factors: (1) external financial stimuli (2) innovation tradition (related factors are extent or mutual trust, willingness and inclination to change, available time and expertise, capability and power of the change agents (3) network structure and (4) local situation. Hill (2002: 14) identified twelve reasons to collaboration as follows: need to deal with complex problems, ‘messes’, known as ‘metaproblems’, external financial stimuli, mutual trust, willingness and desire to change, pooled resources, pooled expertise, desire to enhance ability to adjust too rapid changes in technology and the market, enables an organization to remain autonomous while acquiring needed resources (resources dependency), desire/need to gain legitimacy among network agencies and within the broader community, desire/need to increase political power with communities/policy domain and need to overcome specific barriers to service delivery.

Therefore, we can say that the concept of collaborative network is contrasted with the competition and can be achieved under the four keys conditions: listening with an open mind to other’s proposals, acknowledging and using conflict productively, leading by supporting and facilitating, and designing new and to end value systems (Hill, 2002:8) The collaborative network among academics in the field of communication arts, should play a leadership role in the process of development in communication arts studies, sharing and dissemination of knowledge and worthwhile experiences, research exchange, instructional materials and

resources (eg, e-books, e-research papers, on-line teaching materials and others) creating the extra projects such as on-line course and training program , research projects to make a contribution to professional organization and wider society , brainstorming the important issue involved, mentorship and professional training in teaching of communication arts to career path, social action and etc.

Conceptual framework of true collaborative partnerships among thai and non-thai comm. arts educators via ICT's

As the problems of communication arts study in Thailand are still increasing while the concept of true collaboration among partnerships seem to be the best alternative because the success of the group is paramount and all individuals must contribute to that success. An the goal of on-line collaboration is identified by Hoffman (2003 ;1) : *“When collaborating online, using asynchronous and synchronous online tools, participant groups should be able to get results (solve problems, create project plans, design projects, and so forth) that are better than the results they would have gotten working individually”* The idea is consistent with the concept of true collaboration as said above and brings about six important questions to examine and contribute the conceptual framework of true collaborative partnerships as follows:

1. What is academic collaboration in the field of communication arts?
2. Who are the collaborators? And what are their collaborative activities?.
3. What characteristics of ICT's collaborative tools appropriate for them?
4. How true collaboration among academics in the field of communication arts can be achieved through them?
5. What are the benefits and costs of collaborating among communication arts educators via ICT's?
6. What is the procedure for Setting up a true collaboration partnership via ICT's

1. What is academic collaboration in the field of communication arts ?

As the prime consideration for any collaboration is to ensure and develop the academic quality in management and/or delivery of programmes and guiding principles to establish collaboration include :

1. The collaboration is in line with the mission and academic activities of the programs and University.
2. There is clear commitment of both partners to quality assurance of the academic standard of programmes.
3. There is academic input in the development and conduct of the programme.
4. The collaboration brings about academic enhancement to all partners
5. The collaboration agreement is formulated in comprehensive and documented detail. (hkuspace.hku.hk/publications/qa/chapter3.pdf :3)

Therefore, we can conceptualized the academic collaboration as the way scholars and practitioners in the same discipline that is communication arts and others kinds involved come to join with their mind-set to bring about academic enhancement and healthy to their discipline. Therefore, the establishing of true collaborative network among communication arts educators should aim to solve all existing and prospected problems by providing new opportunities to develop communication arts studies especially for courses and curricula that are appropriate in thai context and lead society in all levels; certificate, diploma, bachelor degree, master degree and doctoral degree, to mentor and professional training in teaching communication arts to develop the capacity of them, to set standards and guidelines or

manuals to help developing their career path more quickly and easier, to exchange instructors who are specialized in specific field to solve the problem of lacking expertise, to set the standard of knowledge, skill and competency required for students in the field, to share access to instructional resources and database such as textbooks, academic journals, course content, manuals and teaching materials etc., to develop the system of apprenticeship and also to form a network or link with professional organizations and industries involved etc., in order that we can invited Thai scholars to become our network by volunteer together with an involvement and desire to solve overall problems that can recently permit an exchange and a better outcome of our discipline indeed.

2. Who are the collaborators? And what are their collaborative activities.

Who are the collaborators?

At the most basic level, it is an academic who collaborate, not institutions so direct collaboration between two or more academic who teach communication arts is the fundamental unit of academic collaboration. However, we often talk about academic collaboration at other levels--between academic groups within a department, between departments within the same institution and between institutions. Therefore, the true collaborative partnerships in this paper include partnerships at individuals, programs or departments or faculties level including graduate schools as well as networking with universities that open communication arts curricula both intra and inter forms. See Table 1

Table 1: Different levels of collaboration and distinction between *inter* and *intra* forms

level of collaboration	intra	inter
Individual	-	Between individuals
program/department/ or faculty	Between individuals or groups in the same program/department/ or faculty	Between program/department/ or faculty (in the same institution)
Institution	Between individuals or departments in the same institution	Between institutions

Adapted from Katz and Martin (1997) : 10

For the first question, who are the collaborators?. The criteria for distinguishing 'collaborators' from other educators in the field of communication arts are those who are willing to be partners and willing to participate in network activities. Therefore, to succeed in establishing the network via ICT's, the collaborators are scholars from eighty-three institutes; seventeen universities in the group of government university, two universities in the group of government-supervisory university, thirty-nine universities in the group of Rajabhat University and Rajamangala University of Technology and twenty-five universities in the group of private university and college, that provide twenty-seven programs related to the field of communication arts.(see also appendix 1) that have equal opportunity to register as member of network and desire to participate in network building to make frequent or substantial contribution to the discipline, not all of them are counted. To make them feel involvement at first, each should be provided the necessary information about the network building such as problems issues for our discipline nowadays, clear goals and end-results to networking, means or activities to reach these goals, and clear benefits for their career path, their programs/departments and faculties, their universities and finally the wider society.

What are their collaborative activities?

As the central concept of collaboration is intersubjectivity that contained the three elements :shared problem space; shared objects; and shared or distributed cognition. (McCormick, 2004: 5) The collaborations of all kinds is then characterized by an exchange of knowledge among participants. (Butcher and Jeffrey, 2005: 2) As the collaborative partnerships include partnerships with individuals, programs/ departments/or faculties level including graduate schools as well as networking with universities that open communication arts curricula nowadays, therefore, the collaborative activities should be planned to establish shared problem, and shared thinking, shared cognition that lead to the overall success of networks.

Dealtry (2000:175) reviewed the strategic directions in the management of the corporate university and identified that collaborative intellectual partnerships should involve: exchanges of information; experience sharing and consultancy; collaboration on development through research projects; adaptation and evaluation of learning media and materials; establishing APL and APEL methodologies; establishment of credit transfer arrangements; and the creation of new management structures both within, between/ and among the partners/institutions. The idea can be applied to identify the collaboration activities as follows:

The collaborative activities at an individual level

As academic network (or association) is expected to protect its members' interests as well. Members are expected to contribute their membership responsibilities and enjoy corresponding privileges. (Yongchang and Benzhen, 2000:1) Therefore, academics in the field of communication arts should be given opportunities to carry forward the discipline by sharing their new information and finding, exchanging their ideas in the forum or on-line journals, while receiving the latest information to promote individual academic ability and moral values as well.

Therefore, the true collaborative partnership via ICT's among each of them should contribute their own benefits to continue a professional development both practical knowledge and expertise in many aspects, because communication between and among them via these potential tools enables collaborative activities in two principles: data level to exchange shared information, and relationship level to coordinate the group activities. (Schlichter et al, 1997, cited in Vathanopas, 2000: 22) The activities that lead to innovative experiences and the increased awareness of their own scaffolding practices, can be identified as follows:

1. Interactions between educator. *ICTs* *ICTs* provide a low-cost medium by which this interaction can occur. Moreover, ICT's can both demand and facilitate greater collaboration by encouraging a formal and informal networking and relationship building between and among scholars in the fields of communication arts. The frequency and quality in interaction can lead to trust and commitment to the network and also share of experiences and attempt to learn from others.
2. Sharing and development of instructional resources and materials for communication study. This might involve small-scale reciprocal arrangements between members of two departments, such as course syllabus and content, articles, and instructional media etc.
3. sharing knowledge and teaching experience. For academic, sharing teaching experiences with peers and interacting with professionals in other fields can provide a reservoir of new ideas, challenge preconceptions, build expertise and enhance motivation: staff morale is higher in more collaborative environments (Ramsden, 1998:78, cited in Rich et al, 2000: 2)

4. news and information exchange
5. research collaboration
6. shared problem solving and social supports
7. shared idea and comment on what's going on and current issue involved in the field.

The collaborative activities at a program/department/ or faculty level

1. pool resources collaboration such as online databases, research reports and papers, e-books, e-learning, instructional media etc., and evaluate of on-line instructional media and materials in communication arts study.
2. collaborative development of instructional resources for communication study.
3. Collaborative design, produce and develop a dynamic curriculum both structured and unstructured process. The curriculum design should integrate the acquired knowledge and new learning in the program to create a need to learn-orientation to current and prospected students and to satisfy graduate users' need.
4. Joint delivery of courses and programmes.
5. Research projects collaboration. Research is one of the fundamental activities that academics engage in. 'Research collaboration between and among program/department/or faculty could be defined as the working together of academics in a different organization to achieve the common goal of producing new scientific knowledge. (Katz and Martin, 1997: 7) Research collaboration may be the sharing of data or ideas through correspondence or discussions via ICT's, or by performing parts of a project separately and then integrating the results.
6. shared career-related information to students in the fields of communication studies to serve the career development needs of students and to ensure that all students are aware of the range of services provided by communication industries.
7. shared idea to advocate and mobilize the social action activities such as suggestion for policy making,

The collaborative activities at the institutes level

Academic collaborations at the institute level refer to partnership or joint efforts in the development, management and/or delivery of programmes in communication arts between and among colleges and universities. Collaboration partners at the institutes level include local and non-local universities and academic institutions that open communication arts curricula, though the concept should be expand to other kinds of stakeholder such as local and non-local professional bodies and other local and non-local organizations who are defined as graduate users.

The concept can be applied to set collaborative activities among the partners at each level via ICT's

1. Joint delivery of courses and programmes.
2. On-line databases and resource for communication study. As the availability of learning resources increases, there are growing efforts to make them more accessible via the development of databases.
3. Collaborative design the assessment criteria for selection the potential and qualified students
4. Collaborative creation of acceptable 'standards' involving curriculum, resource materials, course management, assessment and credit transfer.

5. encouraging and rewarding individual achievement in teaching and research in the field to ensure that there will be an effort to develop teaching innovations :educational plans and structural arrangements, exercises and assignments, instructional media, etc.

3. What characteristics of ICT's collaborative tools appropriate for them?

As nowadays, as the problems of ICT's use to create academic network in foreign communication association was the passivity of academics that can be accounted for by many reasons, including the absence or lack of social practices of a larger scope that would create a belief that everyone's investment and participation might make a difference, as well as a lack of tradition in creating and managing electronic methods of interacting so called cultural behavioral patterns. Therefore, the web and other kinds of collaborative tools should be well designed to create knowledge and bring about an interactive experience to members.

The use of interactivity as a variable in empirical investigations has dramatically increased with the emergence of new communication channels such as the world wide web. The definition interactivity can be reviewed form the fields of sociology, communication, psychology, and computer/science design.

From a sociological perspective, DeFleur and Ball Rokeach similarly contend that 'interactivity' generally refers to the processes of communication that take on some of the characteristics of interpersonal communication. (1989: 341 cited in Kiouisis, 2002: 363) Importantly, in this sense, the interactive experiences are associated with technologically-mediated environments, thus, to some extent interactivity deal with the ability of system to simulate interpersonal communication (Kiouisis, 2002: 367) and the ability of individuals to experience different media as if they were engaging with other human-beings. According, the simulation of interpersonal communication in an interactive environments is not just confined to human-to-human communication, but includes human-to-machine communication as well. (Kiouisis, 2002: 364) Therefore, Schneiderman (1987) balances technological criteria (system functionality and reliability) with user criteria (time to learn, speed, rate of user error, etc.

In communication context, Heeter (1989, cide in Kiouisis, 2002: 361) conceptualized the definition of interactivity in six dimensions based on a series of communication studies primarily examining the world wide web, which includes the following: complexity of choice available; effort that users must exert; responsiveness to the users; monitoring of information use (when a system can track users); ease of adding information; and facilitation of interpersonal communication. In addition, Down and McMillan (2000: *ibid*:362) provide a five-dimensional definition of interactivity comprised of: direction of communication,; timing flexibility; sense of place; level of control; responsiveness and the perceived purpose of communication. Traditionally, the real-time speed ideal has been included or implied in many interactivity conception, making it difficult to reconcile with communication experience such as email, newsgroup, etc. –which most people deem “interactive” despite their delayed response times. (Kiouisis, 2002: 361)

Kiouisis (2002: 372) reviewed its definition and classified it definition in to three principal dimensions: the structure of a medium, the context of communication setting, and the perception of users. Then, he tied these three aspects together into an inclusive definition saying that

“interactivity can be difined as the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediated environment in which participants can communicate (one-to-one, on-to-many, and many-to-many), both synchronously and asynchronously, and participate in reciprocal message exchange (third-order-dependency). With the regard to human users, it additionally refers to their ability to perceive the experience as a simulation of interpersonal communication and increase the awareness of telepresence”.

Therefore, interactivity is both media and psychological factor that varies across communication technologies, communication context and people's perception. (Kiouisis (2002: 355) In a very general sense, interactivity is used as a descriptive characteristic of new media. (e.g. DeFleur and Ball Rokeach, 1989, cited in Kiouisis (2002: 366) Many authors center on feedback as the key signal of the concept (Rafael, 1988, cited in Kiouisis,2002: 366) Thus if participants can engage in message transactions that are comparable to interpersonal communication, those experiences are labeled interactive (e.g. Kayany et al., 1996 cited in Kiouisis,2002: 366) However, two way communication is not the only type of experience related to interactivity, for many scholars highlight one-to-many and many-to-many communication experiences as well- provided that some degree of feedback is involved. (e.g. Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Rust and Oliver, 1994,cited in Kiouisis,2002: 366) Therefore, one can assume that the ability to 'induce feedback' is a major prerequisite to calling a medium or communication experience interactive and feedback should not be limited to two-way communication, but multiway communication as well.

The review of the definition and dimensions of interactivity provided by scholars and researcher in the fields of sociology, communication, psychology, and computer/science design as said above, bring about the characteristics of innovative idea and collaboration tools such as websites that are appropriate for making true collaborative partnerships among academics in communication arts as follows:

1. interpersonal communication
2. induce feedback; two-way and multiway communication
3. the platform and acquisition of promoting a really professional lifelong learning skill to individual member
4. connectedness with hyperlinks on webpages
5. complexity of choice in terms of options or alternatives for speed, language, color
6. playfulness by the number of curiosity arousal devices
7. consistency in updating news and movements about individual and faculty members
8. information collection with registration prompts at websites
9. space for academic exchange and comment
10. reciprocal communication and interchangeability in the role of message sender and receiver among participants through mechanisms such as email, webboard etc.
11. provide the ability user experiences in manipulate the content, form, and pace of a mediated environment in some way such as updated their own information
12. easy access and use
13. responsiveness of website to their input
14. like off-line
15. update
16. real time and synchronous
17. security

4. How true collaboration among academics in the field of communication arts can be achieved through them?

As, ICT's are seen to support academic networking in many ways, thus giving the new network a considerable advantage in markets. Therefore, the interesting question is under which conditions that this technology can contribute to a success of the network indeed? Gillian (2000) identified nine conditions that network organization will only be achieved through ICTs as follows:

1. where we can identify an ideal combination of technological and non-technological support;
2. where there are rules about appropriate and inappropriate uses of the technology;
3. when technologies exist which can convey social cues and support 'realistic' group work;
4. where there is a group culture which supports technology use and eschews conflict;
5. where there is a pre-existing participative culture in the organization;
6. where managerial policy supports and enforces network ideals;
7. where employees are largely professional and already autonomous
8. where work to be conducted is not susceptible to standardization;
9. where employees have internalized organizational goals.

Moreover, the collaborative system needs to provide awareness of when information is being used and the propagation of activity between users (reactive data storage); allow each user to be aware of each other to a different degree according to the nature of the task; display awareness information; provide synchronous and asynchronous working and provide supporting informal communication. (Mariani & Rodden:1991; Hugh et al, 1993, cited in Vattanopas, 2000: 26) Greenberg and Johnson (1997, cited in Vattanopas, *ibid*: 26) identified three steps that must be taken to support awareness in collaborative work. First, determine what people need to know about others in the work setting. Second, consider how that knowledge can be gathered and interpreted into the information available in the groupware setting. Third, determine how to display that information so that people can obtain and use the knowledge naturally and effortlessly. The concept can be applied to contribute key success factors of true collaboration among communication arts scholars via ICT's as follows:

1. The collaborative system through ICT's tools should be emphasized by providing two types of awareness information that are social awareness and task awareness information. The first type contains information about what should each member expect from others in the network?; How will he or she interact with other member in the network?; what role and activities will he or she take as member of the network?; and what roles will the other members of network assume? The second one contains information about what should members know about the structure of network tasks or activities, what steps must be take to complete the network tasks? How to evaluate the outcome? What tools/materials are needed to complete the network tasks? How much time is required? and How much time is available? etc. (adapted from Gutwin, Stark, and Greenberg, 1995, cited in Vattanopas, 2000: 29). Since, awareness is knowledge about a dynamic environment, it should be continuously updated. Moreover, it should be clear for the method to search and retrieve existing knowledge and the guidance for member to post their message easily too. Creating awareness across distance can't only lead positively toward communications and interactions, but it also can contribute to a shared sense of community. (Dourish & Bly, 1992, cited in Vattanopas, 2000: 25) Therefore, increasing awareness information and information about the status of individuals may contribute to the collaboration more.

2. The selection of ICT's collaborative tools should integrate and balance the traditional and new & high-tech media such as internet and website in order to serve academia in all generations since the important factors that underline ICT's adoption and usage are the familiarity and skill competency. A new generation educators may be familiar with internet and high- tech tools and have more competency than the older and middle age educators. Therefore, the first step of networking through ICT's should not only limited to the new kinds of technology but combine the traditional media. Moreover, the rules about appropriate and inappropriate uses of the technology should be set to satisfy the need of scholars in each generations together with the training support along the line of technology change in order to take a step forwards to expand the network with ICT's collaborative tools.

3. The strategy to enhance the level of involvement and participation should be designed since the problem faced by RCA is a lack of tradition in creating and managing electronic methods of interacting, so called as cultural behavioral patterns of interaction. (Beebe, 2004: 7) Beebe (2004: 7) identified that RCA has some effort to establish an interactive RCA email-group list, or listserv to activate the exchange of professional ideas through this tool, it remains a one-way process; the information is being posted, but virtually no feedback is being received, and very few subscribers have expressed their point of view on suggested questions. (Beebe, 2004: 7) Moreover, a cultural nature such as professional norms that inhibit requesting help from colleagues may be one of the factors that constrain collegial exchanges and participation among scholars. (Schwartz, Hollingsworth and Izsac, 1987; Zahorik, 1987; Little, 1990; Johnson, 1990; and Raywid, 1993: cited in, Grünberg and Armellini, 2004: 2) Such experience should be learned and aware while building an academic network among Thais via ICT's too. The approach of social constructivist or situated view that focus on the *joint* creation of knowledge more than an individual creation should be taken for more involvement and participation. In addition, the pattern of interaction and participation in professional resource exchanges via electronic and internet should be promoted till it become our group culture.

5. What are the benefits and costs of collaborating among communication arts educators via ICT's?

Being in an organization that basically build network, we are constantly trying to prove that there are benefits to building networks, that there is some value in the money that is invested. The major benefit of networking is in relationship and trust-building. The networking potential is like a continuum for at one level, the networking is to make a connection with someone while at the other end, it can lead to deep and lasting relationships of trust where advocacy agendas can be built, and common goals achieved. Thus the matters of true collaborative networking among communication arts educators should bring about an individual benefits in term of connection trust and relationship building and professional development and academic community benefits in terms of educational quality development in communication arts which is the main problem nowadays.

Benefits accrue from true collaborative partnership between scholars, faculty and university that open communication arts curricula in Thailand can be identified by level of collaboration: Individual level, Program/faculty level, and University level that finally contribute to wider society as a whole.

In an individual level, the distinguish benefits are professional development in career path, expanding the capacity for problem-solving, producing and developing course content, instructional resources, and teaching innovation. Moreover, in social dimension, the relationship building through collaborative ICT's tool help develop trust, friendship, collegiality and connection among specialists and educators in each programs that is the priceless value.

In the program/department or faculty level, the benefits of true collaboration partnership among them through ICTs are as follows: more flexible delivery of and greater access to learning-resources databases; greater resource sharing and potentially reduced costs; more opportunity to adjust and create new and dynamic curricula that lead society as a whole.

In the institute level, the benefits of true collaboration partnership are the creation of a variety of managerial, commercial and strategic opportunities that enable a better standards and quality in communication arts education.

6. What is the procedure for Setting up a true Collaboration Partnership via ICT's

One of the major difficulties of networking is that it is incredibly difficult to come together as a group. To build a network or alliances we need to understand how we can compromise to serve the strategic interests of different groups. (Baruah, 2002: 1) Thus to create the sense of belonging to the academic network and increase the involvement and participation in network collaboration among communication arts educators in Thailand seem to be a good choice, thus the procedures should starting with the collaboration of each partners in thinking, negotiating and tailoring the concept and activities of academic network and the use of collaborative ICT's tools to ensure the final success of collaboration as follows:

1. Review the experience of establishing network both virtual and formal academic associations in the field of communication arts in western, eastern and asian regions to overview the formation, administration, process, and maintaining these networks and learn from their experiences before setting our own network.

2. Find the key men or potential leaders who are standing in both academic and professional in communication arts to form a network together with the representative and support from the head of programs/departments/faculties and institutes that open communication arts in Thailand.

3. Promote the concept and welcome members at an individual level, program/department/faculty and institute level in the subject areas of communication arts to share their concept ideas about the vision, aim, administrative committee, services delivery and collaborative activities of networking among partners at each levels: individual level, program or department/ faculty level and institute level, the scope of duty and responsibility for partnerships at each levels, and the system of monitoring and evaluation to ensure the end-results and better outcome for the discipline.

4. Use ICT's collaborative tools especially for website to inform the initiative idea of networking and provide the interactive channel such as web board, on-line questionnaire, space for comment or feedback, vote to the idea provided, on-line application form, etc.to received communication arts educators' feedback, idea and aspiration about establishing network, together with the desired benefits for their career path, their programs/departments or faculties, their universities and finally the wider society.

5. Adjust the initial concept of academic networking and collaboration activities be more responsive to those desires and distribute an agreement in academic collaboration to all partners.

6. Collaborative planning among comm.arts educators, faculty members, and web developer, to design the ICT's collaborative tools such as innovative website, email, webboard, electronic conferencing e-board, wimba (voice and text), etc., that contain characteristics and features to do functions as needed so as to avoid a problem of "one size fits all" and also encourage on-line interactivity and collaboration among them.

7. Collaboration monitoring and review should include evaluation and feedback mechanisms. The criteria to measure collaboration or real actions at each levels should comprise both quantity and quality of contact & interaction, teaching experience & resources sharing, course and curricula development, problem-solving, social supporting, etc.

The opportunities and benefits to expand the collaboration network with non-Thai communication educators

The increased need for information and education exchange among Thais and non-Thais communication arts educators should become more awareness by ICT's challenge. The same forms of collaboration are possible across international boundaries and many of the collaborative activities and benefits can probably apply for *ICTs* have the potential to underpin rich communications among academies/ department/or faculty/ and institute from all parts of the world and to support the exchange of ideas and information and provide alternative viewpoints and perspectives that may bring about the challenge idea in the development communication arts education in Thailand. A possible form of opportunities for joint development of teaching and learning communication arts may include:

1. shared information, resources and database in communication arts study, such as on-line textbooks, on-line research articles, on-line journal and publication and instructional media etc,. The collaboration may extend to the production of instructional & teaching innovations and also resource materials of all kinds such as e-books, e-journal and publication, e-learning and on-line course management etc.
2. Shared existing curricula and trend to develop and produce new curricula.
3. Shared teaching experience between individual, program/department and faculty. ICT's could enable the communication to reflect their own experiences and participate in developing course arrangement & planning, instructional media, exercise.etc. Moreover, the shared of context, culture and environment of teaching communication arts may help increasing the understanding of what should be adapted and applied.
4. on-line joint programs in communication arts for educators (and also students) that are already extensively used in other discipline such as MBA and DBA, The program may allow on-line study for a term, semester or year--and to receive credit in their home university. This collaboration can bring huge educational and personal benefits.
5. On-line research project collaboration. For the research in communication arts of non-Thai educators are strength, the shared idea perspective and trend in research projects that contribute the benefits to professional organizations, discipline, and a better way of life locally and globally should be the matters of networking with them too.
6. On-line donation and funding.

Normally, international collaboration among academia face four groups of issues: challenges to established institutional structures and practices; re-allocations of funding; adherence to agreed technical standards; and legal impediments. (Rich et al, 2000: 1) Thus, the benefits of true collaborative partnership among Thai and non-Thai communication arts educators at an individual level, program and faculty level through ICT's are not merely the sharing of information, idea, theory, practice and movement of teaching communication arts, but the assistance in the instructional resources, materials and database and also the professional link among colleagues in communication study. In addition, creating a collaboration with non-Thai educators in communication arts does its function to promote and improve international recognition of communication arts study in Thailand globally and to bridge the gap in knowledge and culture in communication pattern gradually that is eventually worthwhile for Thai society and social world.

Implications for communication arts study and research and limitation.

The papers provoke the starting point to establish a national academic networking for communication arts educators in Thailand at an individual level, program/department/ or faculty level and institute level using ICT's collaborative tools to make and enhance a connection and true collaboration in all activities set up for a better change and development of the discipline. The paper emphasizes a basic concept to create true collaborative partnership or networking among communication arts educator by trying to answer six key questions include:

1. What is academic collaboration in the field of communication arts?
2. Who are the collaborators? And what are their collaborative activities?.
3. What characteristics of ICT's collaborative tools appropriate for them?
4. How true collaboration among academics in the field of communication arts can be achieved through them?
5. What are the benefits and costs of collaborating among communication arts educators via ICT's? and the implications for research?
6. What is the procedure for Setting up a true collaboration partnership via ICT's

Moreover, the procedure to establish a true collaborative partnership is proposed together with the challenge in creating a connection with academias in this field globally via ICT's. The paper also emphasizes the success of the discipline by suggest that all individuals, programs/departments/or faculties and universities must be provided an awareness information of what need to be done, an equal opportunity to design their own networking concept at the start point. In addition, all partners must be commitment to play roles as contributors to that success for the benefits of networking isn't only for them all but also the Thai society and Thailand as a whole.

The concept proposed may inspire academia in each of the twenty-seven sub-fields especially for the traditional media-based ones such as advertising, public relations, print and journalism, photo, film and video, mass communication and technology in mass communication, speech & performance arts, development communication etc, to create their own sites both on-line and off-line in any scale: local, regional, national and international, to enhance their relationships and a connection that can contribute to the development and strength of their fields too.

Though the paper is concluded by discussing the benefits and implications of collaboration among overall communication arts educators and provoke the idea to create the sites for each of the twenty-seven programs opened nowadays, it may be too specific to be practical at this current time for a trend of interdisciplinary collaboration to contribute to a common goal becomes more important because the paper scope the networking among scholars in this field and neglect the role of educators in other disciplines and key stakeholders involved in the production process of qualified graduates. Therefore, the next paper should extend the scope of collaborators from educators in communication arts to interdisciplinary groups and stakeholders involved such as current students, graduates, media and professional organization, professional associations, graduate users and industries etc. and the way ICT's can help facilitate in making a connection and true collaboration among them too.

Moreover, the concept and model proposed to create a true collaborative partnerships among communication arts educators are still broadly and lack of empirical evidence to support. Therefore, the six key questions and the steps to form the network together with the ICT's collaborative tools and strategy that are appropriate to promote, manage, develop, and maintain the network, the criteria to measure successful networking in term of output through ICT's? And the limitation of ICT's in networking etc., should be investigated in detailed

from communication arts educators in eighty-three institutes by using triangulation methods such as content analysis of existing academic communication associations' websites in western, eastern and asian regions, in-depth interview of key men or heads of programs/departments/or faculties, ethnography-delphi technique to find out the consistency of specialists' perspective, seminar and questionnaire survey to communication arts educators to collect the overall opinion etc. in order to establish a national communication arts association in Thailand that is finally responsive to their desire and aspiration indeed.

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