

## Voorsittersrede ● Address by chairman

# Die rol van kommunikasie en die Kommunikasiekunde in Suid-Afrika

H.P. Fourie  
Unisa

### Huidige beeld van die Kommunikasiekunde

Dit gebeur baie dikwels met my en ek is seker daarvan dat dit ook gereeld met alle ander Kommunikasiekundiges in Suid-Afrika gebeur dat iemand met so 'n opregte, intelligente en belangstellende uitdrukking op die gesig (oor 'n skemer kelkie) vra: "Nou, wat doen julle in Kommunikasiekunde?" Dié mense verwag 'n vinnige antwoord voordat hulle aanbeweeg na die volgende persoon en ek is nie altyd seker daarvan dat hulle weet wat hulle werklik vra nie.

Afhangende van hoe laat in die aand die oorspronklike vraag gevra word, het ek al 'n aantal standaard-antwoorde gereed. Die vraag pla my nie meer so baie nie.

Wat my werklik nog elke keer met stomheid slaan, is wanneer iemand met so 'n opregte, intelligente en belangrike uitdrukking op die gesig (oor 'n skemer kelkie) vir my vra: "Wat doen julle nou *eintlik* in Kommunikasiekunde?" Dit is die woordjie "*eintlik*" wat my stonk, want dit laat my altyd voel dat die persoon daarvan oortuig is dat ons kastig sekere goed doseer, maar dat ons *eintlik* besig is met iets anders en dat hy/sy ons uiteindelik betrap het. Die beste wat ek nog met die vraag kon uitrig, is iets soos: "Nee, wat, ons kyk maar so bietjie na mense en hulle kommunikasie en wat doen jy nou eintlik vir 'n bestaan?" Gewoonlik hou dit die persoon vir so 'n tydjie besig, maar dan kom hy ook gewoonlik terug met die vraag: "Maar wat doen julle studente nou *eintlik* nadat hulle afgestudeer het?" Dit beskou ek as 'n baie onbillike vraag, want hoe moet ek of enige dosent weet wat ons studente "nou eintlik" doen. Studente is mos onverantwoordelike wesens!

Dit is sulke vrae wat my oortuig daarvan dat ons sal moet kyk na die algemene beeld van Kommunikasiekunde, maar ook na die rol wat Kommunikasiekundiges in die algemene gang van sake kan en behoort te vervul.

Dit kom voor asof die meeste mense vandag Kommunikasiekunde sien as 'n vak wat jou voorberei vir 'n loopbaan in die joernalistiek, die uitsaaiwese en die skakelwese. Wanneer mense dan van die joernalis-

tiëk praat, verwys hulle gewoonlik net na die koerante en is meesal nie bewus van tydskrifte en skakelblaaie nie.

Wanneer daar na die uitsaaiwese verwys word, praat mense gewoonlik van “die SAUK” en in die besonder van “televisie”, maar hulle weet gewoonlik nie wat daar gebeur en watter soort beroepe daar beoefen word nie. Hulle is meesal onbewus van die honderde programme wat jaarliks in private TV-ateljees gemaak word en waar hulle goedskiks aan ’n groter verskeidenheid van beroepsrigtings blootgestel sal word as by SATV, waar mense noodwendig moet spesialiseer.

Mense weet soms ’n bietjie meer van skakelwese, maar gewoonlik is ’n skakelbeampte iemand wat partytjies reël en vrae beantwoord. Van al die ander belangrike werk ten opsigte van personeelverhoudings, gemeenskapdiens, ens. weet hulle niks.

Hierdie effens skewe beeld van Kommunikasiekunde en sy beroeps-moontlikhede is gedeeltelik ook ons eie skuld. Ons doseer die geskiedenis van die massamedia en skakelwese. Ons doseer die tegnieke wat nodig is vir die beoefening van sommige beroepe. Sommige universiteite en kolleges sê hulle doen beroepsafrigting, terwyl ander sê dat hulle met voorbereiding vir ’n beroep volstaan.

Hoe dit ookal sy, in die meeste gevalle word daar op dié bogenoemde drie beroepsrigtings gekonsentreer en word die wye toepassingsveld van Kommunikasiekunde uit die oog verloor. Dit het tyd geword dat Kommunikasiekundiges begin om op meer terreine hulle bydraes te lewer.

## **The scope of communication**

Last year, in the Chairman’s address, I mentioned the New World Information and Communication Order and I said that we all await the McBride Commission’s report on the state of world communication and the direction into which it will develop. This report has now been published and it will be to our benefit to look at a couple of the remarks made in the report.

When he appointed the Commission Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow, the Director-General of Unesco said:

Communication is at the heart of all social intercourse. Whenever men have come to establish regular relations with one another, the nature of the systems of communication created between them, the forms these have taken and the measure of effectiveness they have attained have largely determined the chances of bringing communities closer together or of making them one, and the prospects for reducing tensions or setting conflicts wherever they have arisen.

You will agree that this is an extremely wide and all inclusive statement and it is necessary to be more explicit. For this purpose the Commission said:

If communication is considered in its broadest sense, not only as the exchange of news and messages but as an individual and collective activity embracing all transmission and sharing of ideas, facts and data, its main functions in any social system may be identified as the following:

- **Information:** the collection, storage, processing and dissemination of news, data, pictures, facts and messages, opinions and comments required in order to understand and react knowledgeably to personal, environmental, national and international conditions, as well as to be in a position to take appropriate decisions.
- **Socialization:** the provision of a common fund of knowledge which enables people to operate as effective members of the society in which they live and which fosters social cohesion and awareness thereby permitting active involvement in public life.
- **Motivation:** the promotion of the immediate and ultimate aims of each society, and the stimulation of personal choices, and aspirations; the fostering of individual or community activities, geared to the pursuit of agreed aims.
- **Debate and discussion:** the provision and exchange of facts needed to facilitate agreement or to clarify differing viewpoints on public issues; the supply of relevant evidence needed to foster greater popular interest and involvement in all local, national and international matters of common concern.
- **Education:** the transmission of knowledge so as to foster intellectual development, the formation of character and the acquisition of skills and capacities at all stages of life.
- **Cultural promotion:** the dissemination of cultural and artistic products for the purpose of preserving the heritage of the past; the development of culture by widening the individual's horizons, awakening his imagination and stimulating his aesthetic needs and creativity.
- **Entertainment:** the diffusion, through signs, symbols, sound and images, of drama, dance, art, literature, music, comedy, sports, games, etc. for personal and collective recreation and enjoyment.
- **Integration:** the provision to all persons, groups and nations of access to the variety of messages which they need in order to know and understand each other and to appreciate others' living conditions, viewpoints and aspirations.

Besides these functions which are seen essentially from the individual's standpoint, emphasis should also be laid on a new phenomenon, or at least one whose importance is rapidly increasing: communication has become a vital need for collective entities and communities.

They expand somewhat on this theme and then say:

Apart from main government services, and the biggest enterprises and banks, which are usually well-informed, many local bodies, factories, firms and agencies lack already access to organized information. So, in many instances, the emphasis is still on information systems whose purpose it is to satisfy individual communication needs. It is vitally important to correct this situation which is liable to affect adversely the development prospects of millions of people, especially in developing countries.

This is particularly so as communication functions are linked to all people's needs, both material and non-material. Man does not live by bread alone; the need for communication is evidence of an inner urge toward a life enriched by cooperation with others. People want to add aspirations toward human growth to the satisfaction of material needs. Self-reliance, cultural identity, freedom, independence, respect for human dignity, mutual aid, participation in the reshaping of the environment — these are some of the non-material aspirations which all seek through communication. But higher productivity, better crops, enhanced efficiency and competition, improved health, appropriate marketing conditions, proper use of irrigation facilities are also objectives — among many others — which cannot be achieved without adequate communication and the provision of needed data.

I have always maintained that development in a Southern Africa context implies by definition an intercultural activity and also cultural change. Under the heading *An Impulse and Threat to Culture* the McBride Commission has the following to say:

The inter-dependence of culture and communication is even more pronounced. Particularly if the term "culture" is used to mean the entire achievement of human creativity — "all that man has added to nature" — if it is seen to embody everything that raises human life above the animal level, and to embrace all aspects of life and all ways of understanding. In that light, communication — both between people and nations — is a major component of all ways of life, and thus of every culture. The rôle of communication may be regarded as that of a major carrier of culture. The media of communication are cultural instruments which serve to promote or influence attitudes, to motivate, to foster the spread of behaviour patterns, and to bring about social integration. They play, or should play, a major rôle in implementing cultural policies and in helping to democratise culture. For millions of people, they are the principal means of access to culture and to all forms of creative expression. Communication is involved, too, in the management of knowledge, the organisation of the collective memory of society, and in particular the collection, processing and use of scientific information. Potentially at least, it can recast the cultural mould of society. But in this sphere, as much as in others, the rapid development of new technology and the growth of industrialized structures, which extend their grasp over culture as well as over information, introduce problems and dangers.

And further:

We can conceive of a richer cultural future only in a pluralistic form, in which cultures representing the world's diversity connect with one another while sedulously preserving their originality. No doubt, specific contribu-

tions to culture will take on a somewhat hybrid form as traditions mingle and fuse; indeed, that has happened throughout cultural history. However, because of the rapid pace of change and the dangers of standardization, it will be necessary to ensure that the emerging forms preserve what is most distinctive and most developed in each culture, rather than what is most elementary and commonplace. Cultural evolution is inevitable; the question of incalculable importance is one of what elements it should draw upon in order to be as fruitful as possible.

## **Posisie in Suid-Afrika**

Soos ek aan die begin genoem het, is die beeld van Kommunikasiekunde een van tegniese vaardighede. Hoe skryf mens 'n koerantberig? Hoe skryf mens 'n draaiboek? Hoe beplan mens 'n skakelveldtog?

In die beroepswêreld word die werklike waarde van Kommunikasiekunde nog nie besef nie. As ons kyk na die uitsprake van die McBride-Kommissie dan kan ons met reg vra waarom is daar nie meer Kommunikasiekundiges in die honderde ontwikkelingsprojekte van die land betrokke nie? Ons kan met reg vra waarom is daar nie eintlik Kommunikasiekundiges betrokke in die talle programme wat gerig is op die verbetering van tussengroepverhoudings nie? Ons kan met reg vra waarom die onderwysdepartemente van die land konsekwent weier om Kommunikasiekunde as bevorderingsvak te erken?

Benewens die beroepsvelde is dit ook opmerklik dat talle beleidsformulerende liggame en organisasies soos die Presidentsraad en die Raad van die SAUK nie Kommunikasiekundiges insluit nie. Ek moet egter ten opsigte van die twee organisasies sê dat hulle wel kommunikasiepraktisyns insluit. Mense vir wie ek persoonlik baie hoë agting en waardering het. Dit is minstens 'n troos!

Ek sal nie nou verder uitbrei op hierdie vrae nie, maar ek wil net die hoop uitspreek, nee, sterker gestel, ek moet by Kommunikasiekundiges daarop aandring dat hulle hul taak wyer moet sien as slegs vaardige mediapraktisyns. Dit moet natuurlik ook daar wees, maar ons het meer take, ons het meer en groter verantwoordelikhede en bowenal het ons veel meer om aan te bied. Hierdie kongres, die tema waaroor dit handel en die onderwerpe wat bespreek word, is 'n bewys van hierdie stelling.

Ek hoop dat u almal aan die einde van die kongres ook oortuig sal wees van die wye toepassingsveld van Kommunikasiekunde en dat u in u onderskeie beroepsrigtings die waarde daarvan sal bekend maak.