Raymond JNC Cruz 1/17/2014

HI166 – H Word Count:

Sex and Family Planning

Foreign speakers are hard to understand due to their unfamiliar accents, but nevertheless, the information their words carry are quite significant once the language barrier has been overcome. The presentations that they showed the audience was more or less enough to get the message across. The speakers presented the sex and family planning measures implemented by Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand.

In Indonesia, a small and happy family norm is promoted with the tagline “Two is enough, girl or boy just the same.” The key success elements to this program are services, commitment, and government, among others. 1970-1990 is called the revolutionary era for family planning, wherein family planning was considered attractive or “sexy” for donor. Indonesia’s leader, Suharto, was awarded by the United Nations Family Planning Association for the development and implementation of this program. However, in what is called the “Era of Decentralization”, the family planning program was weakened since decentralization proved to be a challenge. Eventually, these family planning methods proved to be success. A key element in this is that the approach towards the advocacy was over various stakeholders. This led to various campaigns throughout the country. Even media was involved, for family planning advertisements were seen in televisions, digital advertisement spaces etc. To further spread the information of family planning, the Governor and district mayors were involved in the campaign, telling that for this campaign to be successful they needed commitment from the people involved. Policies were created to support the cause, and budget was also allocated. With the following key factors in place, people were informed wherever they were and properly coordinated with the appropriate family planning services.

Thailand has the late Dr. Nawarat, otherwise known as Dr. Nopporn. He is a self-taught sexologist and sex therapist. He is the author of a column (*Sep Som Bor Mi Som*) that circulates the Thai newspapers, which aims to disseminate sexual education to the general Thai public. The column is of the question-and-answer type, and readers are free to submit their inquiries to be answered and published by Dr. Nopporn. It was described as a medical sex advice column which could be categorized as sexual pleasure education. People who wrote in this column ranged from questions on how to do oral sex, up to which is a better position top or bottom. Some just saw the article as a place to gain information to help them, or their partner. There were even questions from those who don’t know what to do, and sometimes people who would just want to let some steam of like sexual pleasure or sexual frustration. If anyone has any sexual problems, they could consult the magazine itself. There was even a concern about the reader’s significant other’s diminutive genitalia, among others. The article provided sexual knowledge on sexual practice techniques that the readers were unaware of. With the examples from the column it could be seen that the column represents socio cultural normative sexualities. This “sexualization” of the media has proven effective in educating the public in sexual matters. Dr. Nopporn also promoted through his article the medicalization of sexuality, with him tackling his readers’ concerns and inquiries from a medical perspective. It also promotes the sexual Joy in marriage. In addition the language used in the article was straightforward but not offensive. The segment concluded that the column encourages sex more in terms of pleasure than sex for procreation even if it was stated earlier that the column promotes sexual joy in marriage. The clause of this article specifically focuses on heterosexual monogamous marriage since it was dated in the year 1950. Other kinds of marriage, for example, homosexual marriages were not yet introduced and supported. Given the time the column was released it served as sexologists and sex therapists at that time.

In the Philippines, the population is expected to reach 100 million in 2014 (Source: *Philippine Star*). This will put a massive strain on national resources and therefore necessitating family planning measures. There are already family planning programs existing in the Philippines, but almost all of these are only available to those who can afford them i.e. middle to upper class citizens. Since majority of the population is composed of lower class citizens and those who live below the poverty line. Most of these people have also little to no educational attainment, let alone sexual education. These people are simply just too poor to afford the family planning and sexual education programs in the Philippines (now, doesn’t that sound familiar?). It seems like the Philippines is experiencing the same trends the other countries are experiences. If their methods were to be applied in the Philippines, would it produce the same effects? For example, if Indonesia’s Family planning methods were applied in the Philippines, our country must first eradicate the corrupt officials for it to work like a well - oiled machine. With corruption eradicated, the critical success factors, similar to Indonesia could now be applied. But in the case of our country, we will not stop with that, we must push with further with educating the people of what our family planning methods are and what it promotes for it to fully sink in people’s minds. In the case of Thailand’s column, we could see it in the context of the Philippines as the modern, more subtle tabloids sold in the streets. It would still contain stories but the language used would be appropriate and not offensive to the readers, its Dr. Nopporn equivalent in the Philippine context would be like *Dr. Love* or *Tom Alvarez* (people who give love advice for radio stations). The addition, catching up to the times of today may include topics about homosexual marriages and relationships.

Indeed it could be seen that these family planning methods of different countries does work but its application is tailored for its specific country. Family planning starts with the initiative of each and every member of the family. For these family planning methods to work each family must be well informed of what they’re getting themselves into, both its purpose and results for the good of the many.