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Why should I study Open RAN: An Interview with Richard Matias November 2022

A new technology, a new addition to elective choices, a new question of “why should I study X?”

In this day and age, it seems we are continually bombarded with the next big thing, the next thing to know, the next thing to download to our smartphone. So, what makes open RAN any different? Richard Matias, a veteran in the ICT/telecommunications industry shared his views with the AORA team on why he is promoting open RAN, why he is encouraging his students to educate themselves in this technology, and how he sees AORA playing a key role in the adoption of open RAN regionally.

“I began my career in 2005 as a wireless cadet engineer for Globe Telecom. I developed skills in radio network design, optimization spectrum management and frequency operator management. My career took me abroad as a consultant, working in Doha, Mexico City, Myanmar and more.” But the thing with technology is it is not stagnant. It continually evolves – requiring upskilling and continuing education. “In 2016/17 I was sent by Ericsson to Thailand to learn 5G and work in testing and optimization. From there I moved to PNG to work in LTE deployment. My career has been about learning the ‘next thing’ and supporting testing and deployment.”

“Now I run my own company sharing my knowledge to upcoming Filipino engineers so they themselves can be on the forefront of technological advancements. When I started [TerraHertz](#) I had around 100 subscribers, now I have over 13,000. I view open RAN as a marriage between telecommunications and information technology. What you learn from wireless telecommunications in terms of wireless engineering will be combined with current or upcoming technologies offered by the IT world, i.e., virtualization, containerization, cloudification etc – as open RAN becomes a more mature technology. As a student looking ahead to future possibilities it is not only basic to learn about wireless telecommunications, but it is imperative to learn different IT skills. Open RAN is a different animal altogether – it isn’t just enough to learn wireless telecommunications anymore. The Philippines isn’t a country left behind in terms of technology. By knowing open RAN and 5G new students will have an edge.”

“To support the next level of open RAN education we need to move from the theory to the practicality of the technology. Studying open RAN in theory is hard for students to visualize when we discuss different aspects. Having access to a lab to showcase the actuality of the technology will be very helpful. For me, this is an important space for the Academy to support. Whenever we talk about ‘the lab’, we get excited. With AORA, I feel excited about what will come next, and I hope industry partners continue to support us including our academic partners. When we are backed by industry partners, government, and academia it increases

credibility. With AORA leading the charge I am confident we will be able to ensure access to open RAN courses at the academic and continuing professional development levels.”

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