

12-1-2005

Editorial: In this issue

Eric Loo

University of Wollongong, eloo@uow.edu.au

Recommended Citation

Loo, Eric, Editorial: In this issue, *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 16, 2005, iii-iii.

Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/apme/vol1/iss16/1>

In This Issue

“Just as they are right in saying that a government has no monopoly on constructiveness and wisdom, the media must recognise that they too have no monopoly on constructiveness and wisdom. Just as the public servant must be prepared to accept criticism, so too must the media be prepared to accept criticism. Just as government is not above the law, the media too are not above the law. It simply will not do if a public is subject to the laws on state secrets but in the name of freedom others are not. Just as the government cannot be allowed to have the freedom to do exactly as it pleases in society, so too the media cannot be allowed to do exactly as they please in society. So long as the press is conscious of itself being a potential threat to democracy and conscientiously limits the exercise of its rights, it should be allowed to function without government interference. But when the press obviously abuses its rights, then democratic governments have a duty to put it right.”

The above quote by former Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamed in his speech on press freedom at the World Press Convention in Kuala Lumpur in 1985 reflects the attempts by governments to differentiate “Asian” media process and culture from the Western notion. The governments’, and to an extent, their editorial appointees’ penchant for contextualizing the ideology of press freedom to the “Asian” setting raises critical questions of how media ethics and values can be understood across cultures.

Deliberations on what is ethical have tended to subsume an absolute distinction between right and wrong, moral and immoral, acceptable and unacceptable. In the absence of clearly defined code of media ethics, the value judgement when applied to the media process across cultures and political systems inevitably raises questions of relativity. Debates persist on whether media standards and practices can be fairly gauged according to a “Western” libertarian pro-capitalist framework, commonly perceived to be universal in its application. Can one reasonably argue the premise that journalism is a cultural practice and the media a cultural resource? Can media practices and its accompanying values be better appreciated within specific socio-cultural and political contexts?

The generally assumed divergence between “Asian’ and “Western” cultural and professional media values raises the question of whether the respective journalistic paradigms will be able to absorb the strengths of both cultures, that of the Asian value for consensus and deference to societal harmony, familial piety, and conservatism in social mores with the Western emphasis on the rule of law, freedom, democratic institutions and equal opportunities to help individuals achieve their full potentials.

This 16th issue of APME eschews any claim on the superiority of each value system over another. The refereed papers and commentaries are generally premised on the notion that journalism’s textual production process is understandably influenced by the practitioners’ cultural and professional value system. Without making any explicitly absolutist claim, the authors attempt to show that answers to value-laden questions are equally multi-coloured. To date, systematic studies scarcely address the nexus between ethno-cultural value systems and media professional practice. I hope readers of APME would consider the papers and commentaries in this issue as a conversation starter in both the newsroom and classroom.

– Eric Loo, Editor