



Editorial Introduction

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On 21-22 July 2003, around 250 participants joined the Department of Media Studies and the Southeast Asian Studies Program, University of Ohio for the International Conference on Media Education and Training (ICMET). As we all know so well, the field of mass communication is facing new challenges in the 21st century and nothing is more explosive than the changes brought upon by the technology intensive environment as a result of fast development in information and communication technology. With this in view, we convened the July conference and through this summit we intended to identify innovative ways of thinking that may be crucial to the successful development of media education in universities. The challenges in front of media education providers at the turn of the century seem more formidable than ever before. So many questions need to be answered and we seem to be getting responses that are rather varied, depending on whom we are interfacing with.

As previously mentioned, this conference was organised in the light of changes taking place in the media and communication educational system. On one side the society as well as the media industry are demanding that the universities educate all media students not only with theoretical frameworks and related knowledge but with technological skills so talented as to render them able and empowered to stand up to the challenges of real life and real world situation ahead. All media students have to be able to communicate complex ideas, adapt quickly to the new achievements and demands in the knowledge fields, in information and communication technology, and solve problems they will encounter during their careers and lives as media and communications specialists and technologists.

The range of issues that were addressed aimed to provide a picture of the problems dealing with, amongst others, the review of curriculum of media and communication studies in order to ensure that educational programmes are designed to produce graduates who are able to fulfil the needs of society in terms of abilities, graduates who are multi-skilled, multi-talented, who are potential entrepreneurs, good analysts and communicators, have adequate social and networking skills, able to think as global participants as well as having the right local perspective on things.

The main theme was of course, media education and training and this theme gave us the opportunity to discuss the rapid progress and diffusion of information and communication technologies in the industrialised and developing worlds over the last ten years. The social, economic and political demands over the decades require changes in media education in order to increase the capacity of the educational system. The themes also demonstrated the fact that the question of media education and training is of relevance in the higher education institutions. The ICT dimension for example should be taken into consideration because it is a strategic technology that will determine the future of society and of the economy.

Universities are about the search for excellence and we know that the pace of change has been breathtaking. We need to see if media education in the universities and countries are making the right overtures in promoting the cause of media education, ensuring that changes and alterations are made to suit current demands and changing concepts of media education.

In order to contextualise the discussion during the conference the organising committee constructed two levels of presentations. One level works in terms of country reports, detailing the current media education and training status in ASEAN countries. From the ASEAN output members were able to gather details of media education components from a non-Western framework that has emerged from developing countries. It is clear that media education and training in the ASEAN group has made tremendous progress in the past decade. Several indicators point to the growth in the practice of media education and training across the ASEAN countries, but all members agreed that significant challenges still lie ahead. By identifying media education and training as an essential curricular component in the ASEAN media educational landscape, the ASEAN group has specified the most important step in further developing new curriculum in this subject area.

The contents of this special volume documents the range of issues, perspectives and innovations in media education and training presented and discussed by the ASEAN member countries comprising media and communication academicians, media practitioners and researchers from Brunei, Indonesia, Cambodia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and host country, Malaysia.

In the final section of MJMS, Rick Shriver from Ohio University presented his findings on present trends in media education in the United States. The author suggested that while media education providers try to ensure that basic technological needs are made available to students, they must also bear in mind that the current generation of students may already have basic competencies in ICTs. It would therefore be more useful to move on to other subjects such as writing, criticism, ethics and aesthetics.

As it turned out, the ASEAN group presented a unique intermingling of country and status reports containing one constant factor, that is, most media organisations and practitioners are sceptical about the adequacy of formal media and education curriculum for the media profession. Rosechongporn Komolsevin observed that the media industry in Thailand calls upon the education providers to constantly upgrade the curriculum and provide students with 'real-world' learning opportunities in order to enable and prepare them to compete in a global economy. Victor Menayang, Department of Communication, University of Indonesia reported that communication schools in Indonesia remained a popular choice amongst students and is still the most competitive school in the University. He noticed that students tend to prefer mass communication, journalism or broadcasting over other subjects in the

communication curriculum. Kuo and Lee from Nanyang Technological University echoed the same findings and stressed that NTU should play a bigger role in order to successfully position itself as a regional centre of excellence in media and communication studies. Lorenzana-Diaz presented an overview of the journalism and communication programmes at the University of Philippines, College of Mass Communication. She also mentioned the special role played by the Philippine Association of Communication Educators in devising innovative approaches to teaching and learning of communication in her country. Manap Adam and Phan Sopheap presented views as media practitioners and provided current assessment of training needs, especially in the technical areas of media management. Syed Arabi Idid and Asiah Sarji presented a background on the Malaysian training and communication needs of the communications industry, stressing the role of universities in developing the media and communication curriculum.

The second level of presentation of ICMET consisted of papers from invited speakers, mainly from Ohio University and one speaker from Australia, as well as our own brilliant local minds, professors, media academics and researchers in media studies. The two-day conference began with an opening keynote address by the Minister of Information Malaysia followed by keynoters, Professor Dean Mills from the University of Missouri School of Journalism and Professor Douglas Boyd from University of Kentucky. Therefore the second documentation from ICMET is a collation of all the other presentations prepared by guest speakers and keynoters. This publication will out by the end of 2003.

The Conference was a success and drew prime time coverage in the local national media. It is hoped that this volume will be an important contribution to media education and the Department hopes to maintain close contact with all the presenters. Personally, I hope this meeting will help us to begin a new dialogue with all our media colleagues worldwide and to further plan programmes and projects aimed at enhancing the future of media education.

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