Disciplining Media: A Case Study of Two School Media in Hong Kong

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Introduction

This case study is about how the cultures of media and schools interact and negotiate with one another at a time when it is said that our society is undergoing a major shift from an industrial to an information era. Mass media and mass schooling, as social institutions, grew along with the rise of capitalism over two hundred years ago (Henry, Knight, Lingard & Taylor, 1988; McNair, 1999). A review of the relevant literature will suggest that the theme of their relationships has been one that is characterized by a sense of confrontation rather than one of cooperation. Both held rather stereotypical views of one another. The formation of particular perspectives about one another is in turn informed by differing values, beliefs, norms and assumptions. Apart from being conceptualized as institutions, media and schools are henceforth conceived also as 'cultures', which hold rather drastically different assumptions about notions like entertainment, education, freedom and discipline.

Regardless of the noticeable differences between media and schools, it was not rare for them to come face to face in various contexts. In Hong Kong, for example, there was an impressive rise in the number of school-based radio and school-based TV over the past few years. Advances in communication technologies have made the production of media cheaper and user-friendlier. Such productions have created sites where the cultures of media and schools have their direct encounters. To differentiate from "mass media", this study called the production of school radio, school TV as well as the more traditional print media like the school press "school media".

This study examines how school media were initiated, designed, managed, supervised and received in two secondary schools in Hong Kong. Although school media are by no means comparable to mass media in their scale and influences, the present study argues that the introduction of a medium inevitably brings along assumptions central to this particular form of medium. How different parties in schools made sense of, as well as negotiated with, assumptions that appeared to be in contradiction with those held by schools will be a major focus. Based on findings from a two-year

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ethnographic study of the production of school media in two particular schools, this paper argues that school media are eventually disciplined in a Foucauldian sense.

The Two Cultures

Media Culture

Central to all media is the activity of communication. As Lind (1998) said, "media can be defined as informative, aesthetic, and ethical interaction through communicative messages". Accordingly, any human activity can be understood as media. The scope offered by this definition is possibly too wide to find a focus. Yet, the inextricable relationship between media and communication is properly acknowledged in this definition.

Given this close relationship with information and communication technologies, media are often amongst the first institutions to reap the benefits brought by such advances (see McNair, 1996). In this sense, media has an image of a pioneer, which is used in the sense of standing at the very forefront in the information society.

To say that the unprecedented scale in the production, distribution and consumption of media depend on technologies is not to say that media are mere technologies. Postman (1985) distinguished between technology and medium in which a technology was merely a machine, whilst a medium was a social and intellectual environment a machine created. This echoed the famous quote of McLuhan (1964) who said "the medium is the message". The mere existence of a medium made a difference to its users, regardless of what messages it actually delivered. In the case of television, for example, regardless of its actual content, its round-the-clock programming schedule and centrality in a family setting are sufficient to make a difference (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999). Just by being there, media had fundamentally changed the cultural and social landscape of our everyday lives (Gerbner, 1999; Silverstone, 1991).

Innis (1951) analyzed how changes in technology had created a "bias of communication" and hence changed the social environment. With a differing focus, different technologies altered our "structure of interests (things thought about), character of symbols (things thought with) and nature of community (the arena in which thought developed)" (Carey, 1989, p.155). In the days when communication relied heavily on speech, communication was a time-biased one. There was a practical necessity for people to memorize speech over a long period of time so as to keep the communication alive. However, with the advent of communication technologies that could transcend space in a short period of time, the culture took on a bias of space. A space-biased communication era flourished with the rapid development in electronic media.

Meyrowitz (1998) created a typology of multiple media literacies to make sense of the different dimensions of any medium. The typology stated that different media had their unique grammars, or languages. Electronic media, for example, differed a

great deal from print media in terms of media grammar. Print media relied heavily on words, whilst radio communicated via speech. Television was predominantly visual in nature and hence has developed its own aesthetics (Agger & Jensen, 2001; Blythin & Samovar, 1985). These emphases brought forth different practices which should not be overlooked in any discussion of media culture.

The predominantly visual media greatly stressed visual appeal. What made a shot appealing? As Postman (1985, p. 86) noted, an average shot on American network television was only 3.5 seconds. With the popularity of MTV, today shots are even shorter. It seems to suggest that to be enticing visually, speed is one of the criteria. Consequently, there is an abundance of images, which never ceases to appeal to the eyes of the audiences.

Another criterion lies with entertaining. Entertainment, as Postman lamented (1985, p. 87), has become the "supra-ideology of all discourses on TV". The need to be entertaining is by no means confined to entertainment media. As Halberstam said, "The great new sin in television news is not to be inaccurate, it is to be boring" (Halberstam, 1999, p. x). In news media, which include both electronic and print media, there are growing trends for sensationalism and "tabloidization". The coverage of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal served as a vivid example (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 1999). The outbreak of the September 11 attacks in New York also tragically demonstrated what it meant to be visually appealing in the media world (Powers, 2001).

Media also tend to seek confrontation and controversies. News and entertainment that have a shocking value can bring in more audiences (Bernarde, 2002; Glassner, 1999), although they also tend to cultivate unjustified fears. Today, state-of-the-art communication technologies like hidden cameras are used as tools to monitor the private lives of public figures.

To summarize, media culture is characterized with a preference for entertainment, conflicts, arguments and dramas. It is fun, hot, confrontational and sensational. Media is so pervasive that it is interwoven into the fabric of our everyday lives. Its influences, or effects, go beyond changing human behaviors and perceptions. Its ubiquitous existence alone has altered the social environment in significant ways.

School Culture

Levinson, Foley and Holland (1996, p. 2) defined schools as "a state organized or regulated institution of intentional instruction". Hence, schools are predominantly concerned about "instruction" or education. Intractor (2000) argued that the emphasis on education had made the educational system push students to learn, even when it was not entertaining.

Whilst media has developed its own set of biases in relation to technologies, schools also tend to bend to certain values in their everyday practices. Hargreaves (1994), for example, believed that the structure of schools was unable to meet the demands of the postmodern world, as assumptions in schools had their origins in the

industrial society. The institution of schools was the product of the industrial economy. Henry et al. (1988, p.70) charted several correspondences between schools and work, which included the hierarchical division of labour, the use of extrinsic threats and rewards instead of intrinsic motivation, and the compartmentalization of knowledge and jobs.

The stress on hierarchy has given rise to a culture of conformity and obedience. Symes and Preston (1997) also argued that over time, education has become "a prisoner of technocratic values" (p. 22).

Well-intentioned reforms have constantly been introduced. However, reforms seem to be forever in vain (Sarason, 1990) and school culture has contributed to a society of conformity, in which the status quo is maintained.

An initial understanding of the two cultures has been charted. Table 1 summarizes some of the most noteworthy differences.

Table 1 Media culture and school culture

Media culture	School culture
At the forefront in the information society	Lagging behind in the information society
Being entertaining is the supra-ideology	Being educational is the supra-ideology
Confrontation and arguments are stressed	Conformity and obedience are stressed
Changing fast	Static
Blurring boundaries between public and private	Maintaining boundaries between schools and other domains

The generalization as shown in Table 1 is by no means exhaustive. It must be recognized that both media and schools are more complex entities than they are here presented. Still, these dichotomies help to sketch the background for this particular study, which aims for an in-depth and grounded analysis of the encounters between these two cultures in the face of social change.

Encounters Between the Two Cultures

Schools are often depicted oppressive, dull and boring in media discourses; whilst media are taken to be naughty and powerful demons or competitors from the perspectives of schools. Such representations and imaginations are nonetheless discursive, mainly reflecting how they saw one another from their own perspectives. Following are specific examples in which the two cultures do have direct encounters within one and the same context.

Making Use of Media: Educational Media

Educational media represent efforts on the part of educators to make use of media to serve various educational purposes. In this particular case, media are conceptualized as tools.

The idea that media should be used to teach has been around for almost a century, at least in the United States. Cassidy (1998) found that in the past century, generations of educators were excited by the opportunities offered by new media. Although the enthusiasm often also met anxiety on the part of those who were not certain how these new media could be applied in school settings, the attempts to integrate new media succeeded one another, like that of education TV.

In the case of education television, the calls to bring television and education together could be dated back as early as the 1960s (MacLean, 1968, p. 26). After several decades, in a global survey amongst broadcasters about educational television in the nineties, there were comments which called for "the need for awareness of the educators, at all levels, about the importance of this activity (using instructional television)". There was also a call for governments to "encourage teachers to appreciate the potential of TV and have the training and experience to use it effectively" (Tiene, 1996, p. 157). These comments somehow suggested that teachers were a group of people who came from a different generation, and were reluctant to embrace changes in education made possible by the arrival of the new mode of instruction. In other words, teachers did not really understand how they could make use of the educational television.

To account for these rather unsuccessful experiences, Cassidy (1998) noted that a common complaint of teachers was that the educational programming or software was of poor quality.

Teaching About Media: Media Education

Another site where media meet schools directly is in the case of media education. The literature shows that in order to teach media in schools, legitimacy has first to be won. While there are ongoing battles in many countries across the world today, it should be noted that media education practices vary across cultural contexts; and this section at best identifies some more common concerns amidst such differences.

Though media education is a relatively new social curriculum in schools (Lee, 1997), many writers agreed that media education had become a worldwide movement in the past 30 years or so (Brown, 1998; Hart, 1998a; Kubey & Baker, 1999).

Such gains in worldwide recognition were hard-won. As Alvarado Gutch and Wollen (1987) said, the emergence of media in the school curriculum has been a long and continuous cultural struggle. This struggle for legitimacy has shed light on two issues related to the central thesis here. Firstly, the hard won battle for media education reflected the fact that knowledge related to media was considered to be of low status (see Alvarado et al., 1987). It was "common knowledge" not worthy of serious attention (Gripsrud, 1999a). Duncan (1992) described the experience of teaching media in schools as one that was "educationally-marginalized". These pointed to a deep-seated belief that this form of knowledge was less useful, if not irrelevant, compared with other high-status knowledge.

In the meantime, the efforts of educators to lobby the parties concerned to legitimize media education also demonstrated how legitimacy was valued in schools.

Without legitimacy, media education could never gain a "firm foothold" (Butts, 1992). Lee (1997) discussed in great depth how media education has successfully negotiated a place in Canadian schools. In short, it must have very good and strong reasons to emerge as a new subject in schools.

Even in the case when media education could eventually find a foothold in schools, proponents need to design the curriculum as well as develop relevant pedagogies. These give rise to other problems. As Hart (1998a) noted, there was "much rhetoric but little research" on media teaching. Little was known about what actually went on in classroom settings. However, the available existing research suggested that media education, when put into practice, differed rather markedly from what was advocated.

In order to uphold legitimacy for media education, the parties concerned have had to enlist the continuous support of the school authorities. One of the strategies most media educator advocates adopted was to promote the cause under the concept of "media literacy". Heinle (1999) used the word "co-opt" to describe the act of naming the movement as "media literacy". By co-opting the term 'literacy', the advocates were able to associate the movement with positive attributes brought about by literacy. Besides, it also "depolitizes the entry of their curriculum agenda into school systems by claiming that media analyses and media production skills are synonymous with becoming literacy" (p. 23).

To survive in schools, media education had to acknowledge the presence of a school discourse. Alvermann and Hagood (2000) reviewed the literature on critical media literacy and discussed its relationships with the school discourse. They argued that the discourse of a school had formed spaces of inclusion and exclusion, from which dichotomies are etched into acceptable or unacceptable practices. School design, pedagogical implementation, and relations between teachers and students highlight within school discourse the distinctions between work and pleasure, classroom and playground, in-school and out-of-school literacies, teacher and student, and mind and body (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000).

Producing Media: Media Production

How should media education be conducted? Some advocates of media education believe that media production, when accompanied by a sustained critical analysis of the media at stake, could be a desirable form of media education (Buckingham, 1998a; Eiermann, 1997). In this instance, media production becomes a form of pedagogy.

Whether media production constitutes a good teaching method has been a preferred subject of debate. Skeptics questioned the educational value of such production. There were fears that students would only imitate the professional practices of mass media. Hence, the dominant ideologies would only be reinforced, not challenged (Alvarado et al., 1987; Masterman, 1985). There were also worries that an intellectual hierarchy would be produced because a course on media production tended to be taken by low achievers (Hobbs, 1998).

These worries on the "mindless imitation" and "intellectual hierarchy" reiterated the question of legitimacy. Other studies raised concerns about power relationships in such production. A three-year study with third-graders making videos prompted Grace and Tobin to wonder how comfortable teachers could be with children whose work "ignores, transgresses or exceeds teacherly, adult notions of appropriateness" (Grace & Tobin, 1998, p. 45). On the other hand, Buckingham (1998b) questioned the autonomy students had in such media production. The emphasis on a critique of ideology required students to engage in media criticisms via the production of media. This mission of "impossible text" (p. 68) highlighted the contradictory nature of media production. Students were under real pressure to succumb to the expectations of teachers, especially when assessment was involved (Buckingham, Fraser, & Sefton-Green, 2000). The tastes and preferences of teachers, even though when they were different from those of students, would become criteria students adopt in their making of media.

At a practical level, the operation and management of the production technologies form real concerns to any teacher who would like to venture into that unfamiliar field. Grahame (1991) warned that the first obstacle to useful practical work was the technology.

Buckingham et al. (2000) stated that another major problem at stake was that the large majority of student production would never reach a real audience. They believed that having a real audience in mind, students would engage in a more spontaneous and self-critical form of reflection. This belief remains to be tested in actual research contexts. School media are probably the best sites for conducting further research along this direction.

Owning Media: School Media

The advances in communication technologies have introduced great changes to this form of media production in schools. Desktop publishing improves editing work for school newspapers. Electronic media, which used to be taken as more expensive ventures, are also becoming more affordable. Technologies have become more user-friendly, with easy-to-follow interfaces. Today, even primary school students could master a video production on their own (Gauntlett, 1996). Schools on different levels can now afford to have their own media.

For schools to set up their own media, apart from solving those practical problems involving technology and equipment, they also have to address other problems which have been identified in other instances when media culture and school culture encounter each other.

Summarizing from the previous sections, the experiences of educational media, media education and media production as a form of pedagogy have witnessed uneasy relationships between media and schools. In the case of educational media, it was hinted at that the failure of teachers to fully understand the language and grammar of the media in current use partly led to the unsuccessful trials in educational media. In the case of media education, where media have to enter the thresholds of

schools, the ongoing battles to win legitimacy asserted the importance of winning support from the school authority. By doing so, an emerging new subject must be seen as worthy of study. It was also noted that even when media education could eventually find a foothold in schools, its implementation revealed again that power relationships in actual classroom settings would curtail the well-meaning intentions of media education to be political and critical.

The said power relationships were most readily found between teachers and students. It was particularly felt in the case of media production, when students were supposedly 'free' to create their own media products. On the one hand, teachers were uneasy about the subversive potential of such work. On the other hand, whose tastes and preferences this media work was about could also become places where the said power relationships became a problem.

Although school media range from newspaper, radio, television to homepages on the Internet, this study focuses only on electronic media which call forth a rather different set of literacies in the process of production. How participants come to express ideas in these electronic media and how participants, particularly teachers and students, negotiate the Dos and Don'ts in the process of production remain to be addressed and discussed in the present study.

Post-1997 Hong Kong

For a contextual understanding of the nature and dynamics of the encounters between the cultures of media and schools, Hong Kong is chosen for this particular study.

According the to Census and Statistics Department in 2002, there were 750 publications registered as at August in 2001. 53 of which were newspapers, of which 28 were Chinese language dailies and 4 were English language dailies. Television remained the most received medium, with an audience of 6.71 million out of a population of 6.74 million. Audiences in Hong Kong had access to 40 channels for both domestic and non-domestic television programs. 24-hour radio broadcasting was available from three main radio stations, adding up to 2,000 hours of programming each week. The film industry generated a gross profit of $950 million in 2000. Meanwhile, the penetration of information technology to local homes continued to see a rapid and huge growth (Census and Statistics Department, 2002). Together with the more "traditional" mass media, new media were entering many homes and making an impact in terms of media use and everyday lives.

Meanwhile, the school environment was also undergoing drastic changes. The Curriculum Development Council launched the consultation document *Learning to Learn* in November 2000. In the consultation paper, it was proposed that existing subject boundaries should be replaced by more flexible key learning areas. There were eight key learning areas. One of them was called Personal, Social and Humanities Education (PSHE). It was in this consultation document that 'media education' was officially mentioned.

> In the existing school curriculum, the major contents of the Personal, Social and Humanities Education (PSHE) key learning area (KLA) are taught in a number of humanities and social subjects, together with related elements incorporated in cross-curricular programmes on moral and civic education, environmental education, sex education, media education etc. (Curriculum Development Council, 2000, p. 2).

Media education, as a relatively new practice and with no official guidelines from the Education Department before, was here described as one of the cross-curricular programs. It showed that there was a growing awareness on the part of policy makers. Media education was finally on the official agenda. There were, however, no further details about what kinds of 'media education' would be incorporated in this new key learning area. It was stated that the overall aim of PSHE was "characterized by students being able to ask questions, interact with others and actively search for their own answers. . .Among the nine generic skills, self-management, critical thinking and problem solving are particularly relevant. . ." (p. 16). These objectives shared a lot of similarities with the rationales cited for introducing media education elsewhere in the world, particularly regarding critical thinking.

Two Cases: School R and School T

Against these general and unique backgrounds, this study asked 'what happens when media meet schools?' This foreshadowed problem has presumed that something was going to happen when media and schools met in one and the same context. This "something" might include exchanges, or confrontations, of ideas, beliefs, assumptions, and practices and so forth. There was no prior fixed knowledge of the patterns of such interactions. In order to arrive at a holistic understanding of such encounters, the present study adopted a qualitative and emergent design.

Two secondary schools were chosen in this study. The school which introduced radio production was named as School R whereas the one which introduced school television was called School T throughout the study.

The choice of cases is one by selection rather than by sampling. The cases chosen are outstanding in their own right. The suitability and feasibility of those cases are accessed beforehand (Walsh, 1998). Both schools shared some important similarities that made later comparison possible. Firstly, both schools began introducing the media production during the same school year of 1998. Besides, both schools were running their new school media on a regular basis. Both schools received extra funding from two government funds for the launch of school media. Allocation of resources had not been a major problem.

In terms of general background, both schools were considered to be "good" schools in Hong Kong, with a history of around 30 years. Both used English as the medium of instruction (EMI). The academic abilities of students in these EMI schools were generally considered higher than average.

There were some marked differences between the two cases, which formed the basis for variation in comparison. In School R, the radio was the brainchild of the principal. He initiated the idea and passed it on to a teacher, Miss Lee, who became

the leader afterwards. In School T, however, the initiative mainly came from the students. The Student Union had experimented with school radio a year before and the then principal wondered if they could also work on video production. The teacher in charge, Mr. Chan, explored this idea with senior students and the school television channel came into operation.

The mode of supervision was also different right from the start. In School R, a committee of eight teachers was set up to advise on the operation of the radio station. In School T, there were only three teachers. In practice, however, students were given a free hand. Only one of the three teachers actually worked closely with the students. His work was mainly to coordinate, rather than to monitor the activities of the television channel.

I have taken on three roles during the period of research, that is, during the school years from 1998 to 2000. In the first stage (1998–1999), I acted mainly as an observer. In the second stage (1999–2000), I became a media teacher for both schools. In the final stage (summer in 2000), I was the researcher who conducted formal interviews with participants who had known me in the previous two stages. Following the emergent tradition, each stage was a result of the previous one, rather than a well-planned product from the start. In each stage, different methods were used when appropriate.

The method of participant observation was used in the first stage. In School R, I asked to take part in teachers' meetings, students' training sessions and evaluation meetings whenever possible. I talked to students and teachers when I had a chance. In School T, there were much fewer activities organized around the television channel. There was no fixed place and time when video production took place. Student participants were literally everywhere when they were working on their programs.

Having worked in local media, mainly TV production, for years, I have acquired some sort of 'expert' status in the eyes of the teachers in charge. The expert role helped me to find a place in School T eventually. In the middle of the school year, Mr. Chan asked if I could give a talk to some Form 3 and 4 students on the functions of mass media. I accepted the invitation immediately and hosted a workshop for a group of ten students. This trial had inspired Mr. Chan, who later invited me to become a media teacher in the coming school year. After careful consideration of the pros and cons of taking the role of a media teacher, I accepted the offer and in turn proposed the same idea to School R. The free training sessions offered to School R were at once welcome. The research moved on to the second stage.

I resumed the more conventional ethnographic research after these trials in media teaching. After two years of operation, enough experience was accumulated in terms of media production. Most students who had been working for the production for one or two years were about to be promoted to senior forms and they would need to leave the school media to prepare for the public exams. I decided to conduct in-depth interviews with key informants, who had been taking part in the actual media production work and who knew the inside stories of the school media.

I conducted 14 in-depth interviews with six teacher advisers and six student producers in School R. In School T, I interviewed the principal, two teacher advisers

and ten students. Some interviews were done earlier but most of them were conducted at the end of the second school year.

These interviews served two major functions. They certainly provided additional information about the actual operation of the school media. More importantly, these interviews were interpretations of the experiences with the school media in which the informants were making sense of the whole thing over a two-year span.

Major Findings

The two-year ethnographic study resulted in a wealth of data. School R and School T turned out to vary a lot in terms of the initiatives, the stated objectives, administrative procedures as well as supervision from teachers. Such differences are summarized in Table 2.

In School R, formality was more stressed than in School T. There was also apparent and serious supervision on the part of the teachers.

In School T, students were left to make their own decisions. Members enjoyed a high level of autonomy.

In Table 3, the evaluative comments made by informants were compared.

It was illuminating to see the similarities in responses, considering the apparent differences in administrative and management practices. Such differences in practices did not result in corresponding differences in the evaluation of the participants. First of all, almost all student informants made it clear that their enthusiasm dropped constantly as time went by. There was a general feeling of frustration. On the part of teachers, the discontent was more because of the heavy workload the school media brought to them. In short, no one was really happy about the experiences with the school media.

Informants also tended to use overtly negative adjectives to describe the programs they produced. The most frequently mentioned word was “boring”.

Despite the drop in enthusiasm, students stayed because they were “responsible students”. It was one of the most cherished virtues found in interviews.

Informants from both schools also liked to compare the school media with the outside media, and often resulted in a sense of failure. While envying the freedom the outside media had in creating entertaining programs, they were aware of the fact that they were “after all running the media in a school.”

Finally, the only difference shown in this table was about media literacy. Students in School R did not think the media experience made a difference in their knowledge about mass media. Students in School T could, however, articulate key concepts in media education.

The differences in the management of the school media in School R and School T led one to perceive School T to be more open and liberal. One might expect, as I did, that in School T, the encounters between the cultures of media and school would be more inspiring and interesting as students were given more autonomy to maneuver in the production. The evaluative comments turned out to suggest a rather different

Table 2 Practices in School R and School T

Practices	School R	School T
1. Initiative	Idea initiated from the principal, who later instructed eight teachers to take up the duties. None of the teachers were interested in the post at the beginning.	Student Union initiated the idea of setting up school radio at the beginning. Its successful operation made the principal ask if TV would also work. Three teachers were responsible for the school media. Two of them were interested in the media and paid more attention.
2. Purposes/Objectives	Clear statements of objectives Promote language education Promote all-round education Enhance sense of belonging	Objectives not stated clearly Promote communication between teachers and students Provide entertainment to schoolmates
3. Starting up and managing the school media	Many administrative procedures Formal recruitment, screening test, training programs, frequent meetings, whole school evaluation. All led by teachers.	Few administrative procedures. Informal recruitment, members join because of invitations from teachers or friends. No formal training, infrequent meetings, no formal evaluation.
4. Supervision from teachers	Clear supervision Presence of teacher advisers during broadcasts Scripts required for all programs Frequent meetings with teacher advisers	Minimal supervision No special requirements in scripts No screening required before broadcasts Infrequent meetings with teacher advisers
5. Institutional Design	Modeled after mass media. For example, division of labour, titles of posts, frequency of broadcasts. Hierarchy stressed	
6. Program emphases	Educational and informative to be preferred Neutrality, objectivity and impartiality	
7. Audience responses	Poor audience reception Generally considered to be boring	

Table 3 Evaluative comments made about School R and School T

Evaluative Comments	School R	School T
1. General Sentiments	Students: Dropping enthusiasm; losing interest	
	Teachers: Heavy workload	
2. Program quality	Boring, too 'educational' and 'informative', not entertaining	
3. Learning about interpersonal relationships	Learn how to handle interpersonal relationships	
4. Censorship	Teachers emphasized that there was no censorship.	
	Teachers believed that students were able to tell right from wrong.	
5. Self-censorship	Students admitted that there was "self-censorship" on their part. Certain topics were avoided, while 'safe' topics were chosen to play safe.	
	Students knew where the bottom line was.	
6. Sense of responsibility	Students stayed for the school media because they had to be responsible.	
7. Comparison with outside media	Students	
	Not comparable in popularity	
	Outside media: more entertaining, trendy, attractive to audiences	
	Ours is not the real media	
	Teachers	
	The school media more like the public broadcaster	
	After all, we are in school.	
8. Learning about media(self-evaluation)	Little gains in media literacy	Enhance media literacy

story. In both School R and School T, their media turned out to be in compliance with "school culture", rather than "media culture".

Disciplining Media

One might argue that it should not be at all surprising to find school media agree more with school culture than media culture. After all, school media operated in the context of schools. This seemingly straightforward observation was complicated, however, when one also considered the often taken-for-granted calls for "freedom of expression" in society. The case was even more complicated in a society like Hong Kong, where political changes had heightened concerns about issues of free speech and censorship. Against this background, how school media turned out to become more like 'school' instead of 'media' warranted careful consideration and discussion.

Foucauldian Discipline

Discipline was mostly about ensuring an orderly environment in schools. The concept "discipline", however, could also be used to analyze the realities of schools and the "power relationships" found in schools (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Hollihan, 2000; Symes & Preston, 1997). Foucault (1977) defined discipline as methods "which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility" (p. 137). What was so new about discipline? Foucault argued that discipline produced both docile and productive bodies. Unlike punishments, discipline is not necessarily negative. As Simola, Heikkinen and Silvonen (1998, p. 68) elaborated, the Foucauldian discipline was not so much about increasing obedience and allegiances on the part of the students. Rather, it aimed at ordering and organizing a mutual power relationship. Discipline was best interpreted as "a technology of power" (Foucault, 1980, p. 148).

Such disciplinary technologies are found in a number of institutions ranging from workshops, schools, prisons and hospitals. The Foucauldian discipline was an example of how power could be exercised continuously at a minimal cost. In his now classic *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault traced the changes throughout punishments in history. Torture as a form of punishment made a public display of the absolute power of the ruler. The cruelty of torture was later reformed into more gentle forms of punishment. However, both the political and economic cost proved to be the minimal when discipline was at work in an institution. In Foucault's words, discipline was "a constant, total, massive, non-analytical, unlimited relation of domination, established in the form of the individual will of the master, his 'caprice'" (p. 137).

According to Foucault, disciplining was an art of distribution, both in space and time. Apart from these specific arrangements, there were other mechanisms that brought discipline into full operation.

Firstly, it was about the means of correct training. Drilling and training was necessary for the subjects to internalize requirements presented to them. In disciplinary technology, punishments were corrective in nature. The purpose was to reduce gaps between the norms and the deviations. As Foucault explained, disciplinary systems favored exercises as punishments. These exercises were "intensified, multiplied forms of training, several times repeated" (p. 179). In other words, to punish was to exercise (p. 180) and hence further internalized the norms.

The emphasis on observing norms was another major technique used in disciplining. Foucault called it "normalizing judgement".

> A system of normalization is opposed to a system of law or a system of personal power. There are no fixed pivot points from which to make judgements, to impose will (Rabinow, 1984, p. 20).

In other words, individuals had to act according to the norms, rather than what was deemed right or wrong. What was important was to do what the majority did. Judgements were hence normalized, rather than made according to criteria of right or wrong. They were internalized as unquestionable values.

The internalization of norms was accompanied, and reinforced, by the hierarchical observation, which was made possible by structural arrangements. The subjects must come to realize that they could be under constant gaze, like the inmates in the Panopticon. This kind of surveillance was, however, done in an economic way. The surveillance was not achieved by coercion. Power was dispersed, rather than held in the hands of certain individuals. As in the example of parish schools, Foucault found that the system of supervision did not depend wholly on teachers. Instead, teachers would "select from amongst the best pupils a whole series of 'officers' – intendants, observers, monitors, tutors, reciters of prayers, writing officers, receivers of ink, almoners and visitors" (p. 175). As a result, everybody was caught up in the web of gaze in this disciplinary system.

These mechanisms, together with examination, turned people into disciplined subjects. Disciplining demonstrated that power was not necessarily negative and destructive. It could also be productive. This power was not to be understood as a thing or a property.

> The power in the hierarchized surveillance of the discipline is not possessed as a thing, or transferred as a property; it functions like a piece of machinery. And, although it is true that its pyramidal organization gives it a 'head', it is the apparatus as a whole that produces 'power' and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field. This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising. (p. 176)

In short, to Foucault, power was not necessarily all encompassing. Rather, it was capillary in nature. There was not one single source where absolute power emanated. Instead, everyone was at the same time the overseer and the observed (Foucault, 1993). Foucault saw schools as one of those institutions that tended to discipline.

The Disciplined Media

This study set out to understand "what happened" when the two cultures of media and school met in the production of school media. It was found that school media, unlike their counterparts in the wider social context, hardly stirred up any controversies, nor were they lamented for any wrongdoings. On the contrary, they were negatively described in terms opposite to features which were generally related to mass media. As teachers and students from different schools in this study said, they found the school media "boring", "silly", "meaningless", "conservative" and/or "too educational". In fact, both teacher and student informants were frustrated, in various degrees, after their work in the school media.

Despite the frustration, there were, except for one public showdown in School T, no open confrontations resulting from the production. It was particularly thought provoking, in the light that media valued freedom whilst schools valued discipline. These two opposing forces, when they met, were expected to produce some sort of conflict or unsettling episodes. The two-year study found nothing of the sort. On the contrary, the relationships between students and teachers, and amongst students themselves, were mostly on good terms.

Analyses of radio and video programs produced by students also confirmed differences, rather than similarities between the school media and mass media. In School R, most radio programs were about imparting knowledge, correct values and attitudes to fellow schoolmates. In School T, where video programs covered a range of school activities, they were still commonly evaluated to be boring stuff by both the producers and the audiences. Regarding presentation, these media works also differed markedly in terms of structure, tones and the uses of relevant languages and conventions.

Table 4 Features related to school media

Media culture	Features related to school media	School culture
At the forefront		Lagging behind
Being entertaining is the supra-ideology	Serving educational purposes Delivering positive messages about life	Being educational is the supra-ideology
Confrontation and arguments are stressed	Except some critical works found in Channel T, most programs did not carry confrontation or arguments.	Conformity and obedience are stressed
Changing fast	Presentation style: static, structured, very few variations in styles; poor visual presentation	Static
Blurring boundaries between public and private	Clear boundaries between school and "outside"	Maintaining boundaries between schools and other domains
Value freedom	Disciplined	Value discipline

When comparing these features with some notable features of media culture, the differences appeared to be more telling. Earlier, the comparison was made between media culture and school culture. Inserting some of the dominant features related to school media in the original Tables 1, 4 above suggested that the latter agreed more with the school culture.

In short, the school media were disciplined in ways that agreed far more with the school culture as a whole.

The Three Disciplinary Forces

Table 5 summarises the three sets of factors that disciplined school media in School R and School T. Factors relating to the hierarchical structure were akin to what Foucault called "hierarchical observation", whilst school norms could be interpreted as "normalizing judgement" in his words. The third set of factors was unique to the cultural context of Hong Kong, which had also exercised disciplinary functions in schools.

As shown in Table 5, School R and School T did not agree on every single item. It was most evident that the two schools differed markedly in terms of the hierarchical structure. School T was much less hierarchical than School R. However, the overall frustrations as well as evaluations about both school media were strikingly similar. How the three sets of disciplinary forces worked in School R and School T will be examined further below. Whilst all three forces were easily identified in School R, the case of School T, which had a more liberal outlook, prompted one to reflect on how school norms could exert influence in disciplining school media. Together, these two cases demonstrated how these forces were mutually informed and enhanced.

Table 5 Disciplining media in School R and School T

	School R	School T
Hierarchical structure (Hierarchical Observation)		
Hierarchical design	Pyramidal	Flattened
Accountability	Highly stressed	Less stressed
Supervision	Close	Minimal
The presence of an external supervisory body	Yes	No
School norms (Normalizing Judgement)		
Appropriateness	Yes	Yes
Educational	Yes	Yes
Cultural-specific factors in Hong Kong (Other Disciplinary Factors)		
Emphasis on harmony	Yes	Yes
Local media performance	Mainly negative	Mainly negative
Public broadcaster's values	Agree	Agree

Hierarchical Structure

According to Foucault, the mechanisms involved in disciplinary power were only simple instruments like hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and examination (Foucault, 1977, p. 170).

The structure of Radio R followed closely to a hierarchical design. It was a top–down model, resembling the shape of a pyramid. At the top of the pyramid was the principal, who had initiated the whole project but had never really taken part in the actual production of any programs. Directly below him was the chairman of the school radio, assisted by seven more teacher advisers. Teacher advisers in turn worked in pairs, supervising four teams of student helpers. Each team was headed by student leaders. In the second year, programs were produced by two big teams, which were further split into smaller ones. The structure remained hierarchical in nature.

All teacher advisers, including the chairman, were instructed by the principal to take up the post. It was said that there was little room for further negotiation. The principal had assigned specific duties and responsibilities for each teacher adviser, who then formed a committee. From then on, the chairman acted as the bridge between teacher advisers and the principal.

The practice of division of labour was also implemented at the bottom level with students. The division was in two levels. Firstly, there was a hierarchy between student leaders and student helpers. Secondly, there was a division between technicians and DJs. Technicians were only to assist DJs on technical matters. Their rank was lower than DJs.

In this hierarchical structure, it was assumed that the higher the position, the more the power. In School R, being in the upper level in the hierarchy was desirable. It was seen to be of a higher ranking and status. In School T, the structure was much less hierarchical. In the "highest" level in this system, there were two teacher advisers. In reality, however, they seldom exercised this supervisory role.

Within the hierarchy, everyone reported to his or her immediate upper level. One by one, the power was relayed. No one was the ultimate holder of power. Quite to the contrary, as Foucault said, everyone "was caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers" (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). Actors, including teachers and students, were aware of the fact that someone could be watching over their shoulders. They thus had to behave themselves. The structure and organization of school media had determined the patterns of how actors would make decisions. Actors even were told that they could make decisions on their own; such decisions must be deemed appropriate in the eyes of these at the upper levels. As a result, the content and presentation of school media had adopted and represented not only the ideas of students, but also the second guesses of the latter. Students would only go for ideas that they believed would be acceptable in the eyes of their teachers.

Accountability

If the hierarchical design had set the stage, the stress on "accountability" held actors in place at this particular stage. In this study, the notion of accountability was

brought up in different contexts. For example, in School R, "accountability" was narrowly conceived as the relationship between one level and its immediate superior. Teacher advisers saw that they were held accountable mainly to the principal. What did it mean to be held accountable to the principal? The first meeting of Radio R I sat in was particularly illuminating. At this meeting, the foremost concern was to make sure that the radio programs would not upset the principal in the future. Teacher advisers discussed at length what measures they should adopt so as to prevent such a scenario. The conclusion was that students should not be allowed to criticize school policies because this might irritate the principal, who might close Radio R as a result.

Accountability was not limited to the four walls of School R. The stress on accountability was, to a large extent, due to the funding School R received from the Quality Education Fund. The money had to be spent well especially as it was "taxpayers' money". The accountability must be a visible one.

Formality was thus stressed at all times, especially in the first year. There were formal meetings, with agenda distributed beforehand and minutes recorded afterwards. There were screening sessions aimed at recruiting student helpers for Radio R. The performance and score of each student applicant was recorded. After being accepted for radio, students had to go through a series of training sessions. Attendance was taken in every lesson. Special school assemblies were organized to officially launch the school radio. Finally, at the end of the first year, there was evaluation.

It should also be noted that in Radio R, full scripts were required for approval before they could be broadcast. Such acts were interpreted as "censorship" in the eyes of some students. Teacher advisers, however, responded by asserting that they were only fulfilling their roles as supervisors in the hierarchy. They had to be held accountable for the students' work and so they must lay certain ground rules.

School Norms: Normalizing Judgments

School T differed markedly from School R in terms of the structure of their school media. The hierarchy was much flatter and the emphases on instruction and supervision were much fewer. Being more open and liberal, with considerably fewer rules and supervision, Channel T should have been different. However, it was simply not the case.

This contradiction lent strong support to the second disciplinary force I would argue here. This disciplinary force was exercised by the school norms. Norms were shared assumptions held within a specific culture. Once formed, culture was resistant to changes and norms became taken-for-granted. It was akin to "normalizing judgement" in Foucauldian terms.

According to Foucault (1977), what was punishable in a disciplinary situation was not necessarily about right or wrong. A mistake in this light did not have to be incorrect, rather, it could be just that it did not "measure up to the rule", or "depart

from it" (pp. 178–179). The word "normalizing" referred to the utmost concern of "normality". Anything that was "non-conforming" was punishable. On the contrary, conforming to the standard and the rule was the norm.

Two dominant "norms" were found in both schools in their handling of content and presentation in school media. They were the significance attached to appropriateness and the adherence to the principle of being educational. Together, they helped actors to decide what was the safe thing to do. As a result, they limited the creative options open to school media and thus contributed to the disciplining of school media.

Act Appropriately

In this study, that one had to act appropriately was one dominant theme, albeit few could tell exactly what it involved. First, the appropriateness rule applied to mannerisms in speech. Students could not use foul words, as the bottom-line said, because foul words were definitely inappropriate. To extend further, colloquial and rude expressions were also not appropriate. However, the generation gap between teachers and students had made the work of definition difficult. What was rude to the teachers might mean nothing to students. As a result, one must exercise extra caution in the choice of words. Creative use of language, for example, could be too "risky". In Radio R, for example, scripting in advance favored the more literal expressions than colloquial ones. In other words, the safe thing to do was to use the teachers' language, instead of popular expressions used amongst peers or in the media.

Appropriateness also applied to behavior. Students had to get the jobs done properly. They should not behave in ways that did not come up to the expectations of other people. To meet such expectations, they had to follow instructions and orders from the upper level. They should do what they were told. For example, although some of the student informants found the division of labour problematic in the school media, they never took any concrete actions to change it. It was not normal for them to challenge decisions. Acting appropriately required them to do what was required of their specific positions but not to change the status quo.

Acting with a sense of responsibility was deemed appropriate. As a result, even though student informants found the production work boring and tedious, they opted to stay in the groups. Being a responsible student, most of the informants said, they could not just run away and leave the school media unattended.

These unspoken rules regarding appropriateness exerted their influence when students were to fill in the content of their programs. Despite having the "freedom" to decide what topics they could talk about, students in the end were guided by their deep concern for appropriateness. To extend the list, they would not talk about school policy because it might produce criticisms that the school did not like. They would not talk about topics like dating, teachers' performance, or radical and sensitive issues that might embarrass the school and other people. In Radio R, the intention to talk about elections in Taiwan was also deemed inappropriate, for it was "too sensitive". Trendy things were also better avoided. A member in Channel T,

for example, thought that it would be "risky" to produce a program about piercing in ears, nose, lips and tongues. Things that were not "traditional" could invite criticisms.

In short, acting appropriately required students to play safe by talking about some "middle-of-the-road topics". What made students so aware about doing things right? In Radio R, a system of close supervision was at place and hence, a constant gaze was felt. In Channel T, there was minimal supervision and the urge to be held accountable to leaders was much less compelling. There was not an "other" to keep a constant check of their "appropriateness". In this light, the power of this normalized judgement was even more thought provoking. It showed how such norms were internalized in the minds of the actors.

Schools Have to be Educational

Another dominant and recurring theme was found in interviews with all the informants. The comment goes like this, "After all, we are a school. We have to be educational".

Related to this comment were two assumptions. Firstly, a school was different from the "outside". Secondly, schools must fulfill educational functions. The conjunction of "after all" recognized the limitations posed by the two "facts". The four walls of the school erected not only a physical but also a mental barrier between the world inside and outside. What was allowed in the outside world did not necessarily get the green light within the four walls. When certain practices were not allowed, the explanation was a "normalized" one: "after all, we are a school".

The pressures to conform to the standard "educational" were strong, even when there was so little instruction and supervision in School T. As a matter of fact, Channel T had set out to produce programs which could give some entertainment to their fellow schoolmates. However, at the end of the day, they found that this aim was not quite realized. Again, it seemed that the pressure to be educational was one from within.

This intention to make school media entertaining is unlikely to be materialized. When Channel T was first set up, core members already believed that it should be able to give some entertainment to fellow schoolmates. Students were aware that being entertaining could boost the popularity of the school media, as the same was found in the case of the mass media. However, the tacit understanding that "schools have to be educational" had eventually guided the making of school media. The need to be educational turned out to be more overwhelming than the intention to be entertaining. The desire to be entertaining was one thing. The necessity to adhere to the school norm was quite another matter.

To be "educational", knowledge and information were taken to be the core ingredients. There was a popular notion of "feeding" and "eating" information with informants in both schools. The metaphors somehow reflected that learning was understood as a linear process. The radio programs in Radio R, given their strong emphasis on educational objectives, revealed the underlying assumptions about "knowledge".

In these programs, knowledge was stable, fixed and deliverable. It must be correct and incontestable. As a result, the presentation of knowledge was largely descriptive. Knowledge was to be taught or transmitted. There is bound to be a teacher and a student. In the presentation, as a result, there were those "knowledgeable elders" found in Radio R. They knew more than their fellow schoolmates and could thus act as teachers. They corrected mistakes and offered authoritative answers on different matters. As the holders of some absolute truth, there was little wonder why a student informant in Radio R said that they sounded like lecturing others.

When it came to values and attitudes, only positive and correct ones could be mentioned and promoted. Those who held wrong and incorrect values and attitudes were to be scolded. Again, the knowledgeable elders were the ones to announce what was right and wrong.

Other Disciplinary Forces

Apart from the above two disciplinary practices, there were other factors which also contributed to the disciplining of school media. These factors were more cultural-specific in the context of Hong Kong and might not be so commonly found in other cultural contexts. These factors included an emphasis on harmony found commonly in Chinese culture, a general dissatisfaction with the local media performance, as well as an agreement with values associated with the local public broadcaster.

Harmony

One recurring finding that could be cultural specific was the apparent emphasis placed on harmony in schools. As repeatedly said before, there had been no major open confrontation in the making of school media. Conflicts were rare, if not non-existent, in schools in this study. It did not mean that there were no complaints, discontent or disagreements. The findings had indicated clearly that frustration was evident, and there was discontent amongst peers. However, most of them were driven underground. Maintaining a harmonious relationship in schools was considered to be highly important. In interviews, more than once student informants spoke of "avoiding making enemies for oneself". It was inadvisable to have conflicts with others because it would create enemies.

As King (1996) showed, although Hong Kong was a westernized society, it was still to a large extent under the influence of Confucianism. Such values as filial piety and respect for the elderly were still widely recognized as virtues. Maintaining a good and harmonious relationship was another. It was said that Chinese culture was a "shame-oriented culture" in which individuals were "strongly socialized to be aware of what others think of them, and are encouraged to act so as to maximize the positive esteem they are granted from others, while trying to avoid incurring their disapproval" (Fung, 1999, p. 183). Winning the hearts of both fellow schoolmates and teachers was important. Getting into direct conflicts was undesirable and should

be avoided. The conscious attempts to stay in harmony and stay out of conflicts were cultural traits associated with the Chinese.

The emphasis on harmony eradicated the tendency of media to stir up controversies. There was no place for controversial topic in the school media. In order to make everyone "happy", "sensitive" issues that might affect the interests of others would not be opted for. In the end, topics that were "neutral" and non-controversial were preferred instead. This preference ran against the tendency of media to start up controversies. Once again, the school media could not look like the media outside.

Poor Media Performance

Another factor that was unique to Hong Kong was related to the media performance. The landscape of mass media in Hong Kong had witnessed drastic changes after 1997. Media performance was lamented. Press credibility dropped. Interviews with both teacher and student informants confirmed the general discontent and distrust towards such performance.

Under these circumstances, there were strong reasons not to use the mainstream mass media as a model. As a result, features that were commonly associated with the mainstream mass media could be discarded in the process. What were found in the mass media, albeit often more enjoyable than those offered by school media, were associated with bad things like sensationalism, sex, violence and/or vulgarity. Copying these things was certainly not desirable in the eyes of the actors, including both teachers and students.

The Immense School Culture

The above factors had contributed to the formation of an immense school culture, which had exerted great influence on the making of school media.

As summarized in Fig. 1, each of these factors was significant in determining a specific aspect of the school media. Hierarchical structure, for example, had determined the design and the ensuing management of the school media. School norms, on the other hand, required actors to decide what content would be deemed acceptable in the school settings. The emphasis on harmony in Chinese culture had discouraged student informants to present conflicts in the school media. As informants were generally dissatisfied about the performance of local media, they tended not to copy them in content or presentation.

These forces were not specially created to discipline the school media. Schools did not bring in media for the purpose of taming them. On the contrary, schools introduced media in the hope of using them to enhance the sense of belonging, or to fulfill a range of educational objectives. In the end, however, school media did not live up to these expectations. From the very beginning, school media were shaped by forces that had been dominant in the schools. These forces were so dominant that even actors, including teachers and students, were not aware of their influences.

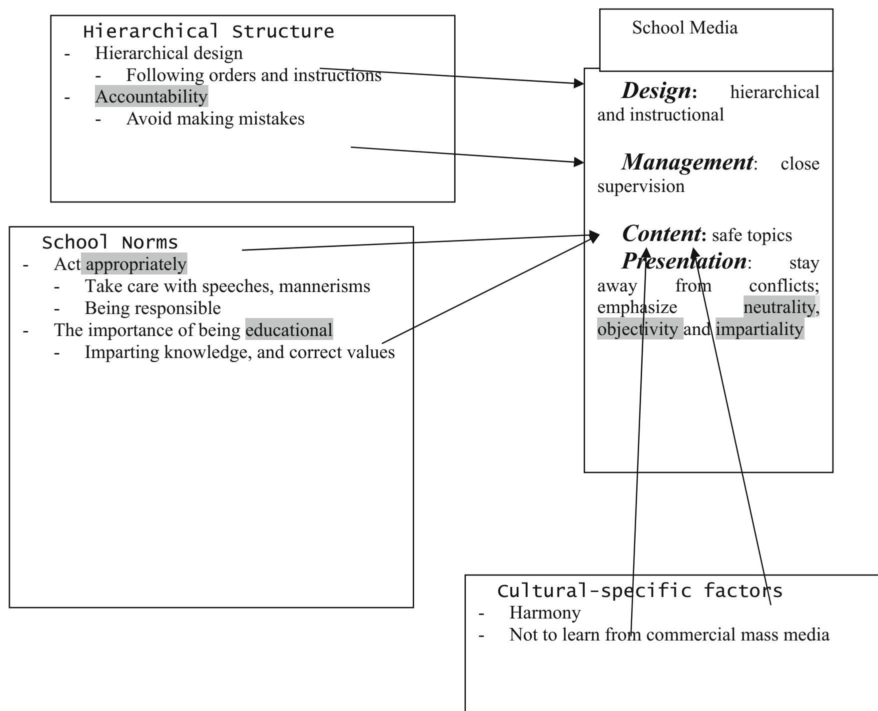

Fig. 1 How disciplinary forces worked on the school media

Actors did not necessarily understand why they did certain things in the process. In the figure, a number of concepts were masked. This was in order to highlight the fact that their meanings were never clearly defined or elaborated by informants in this study. Still, they were repeatedly mentioned to explain or justify various practices.

Why were the actors unaware of the presence of such an immense school culture, which guided them in every step in the making of school media? I would argue that it was due to the nature of the culture. Operating within a certain culture, one would not keep questioning the very assumptions that enabled one to operate. The culture was deep and stable so that it met our needs to have cognitive stability. Newcomers would be taught these shared assumptions, which were enduring values, beliefs, norms, rituals, and so forth, if they were to stay in this specific culture. In this case, actors in schools did not need to have a well-conceived plan to "tame" the newcomers, that is, the school media. As though autonomous, the various disciplinary forces would come into play and the school media would be tamed after the image of the school culture, rather than the alien media culture.

In the above accounts, there was no special mention of "who" were the key people involved with the disciplining work. The reason was that, as mentioned earlier, power did not emanate from a single source. There was no single "oppressor" who could be responsible for the capillary functioning of power. Rather, all the actors in

this study were, to various degrees, complying with this unspoken practice of disciplining. When everybody was involved in this process, no one could really articulate the shared assumptions that were at work.

Conclusion

To conclude, this study has argued that when media entered schools, the characteristics related to the former were all gone. It was shown that these school media were disciplined.

The evidence for this thesis came from the findings of a two-year ethnographic study in two secondary schools in Hong Kong. The two chosen schools had set up their own school radio and school TV in 1998. Three disciplinary forces were identified, namely hierarchical structure, school norms and cultural-specific factors found in Hong Kong. They together formed an immense school culture and shaped the school media in ways that were deemed acceptable by schools.

This study examined the microphysics of power in schools, hence uncovering how power was exercised in schools. Instead of being possessed by a few, power was dispersed and every actor had a role in bringing power into play. This called forth an awareness of every actor to this nature and dynamics of power relationship.

The immensity of school culture was acknowledged and there were clear signs that school reforms could be futile, if there was a lack of critical examination and reflection of all those taken-for-grantedness discussed in this study. School reforms, as well as media education, are certainly desirable and necessary in times of great changes. However, introducing either of them into the existing school culture without first determining their "compatibility" with the existing school culture can jeopardize the well-meaning reforms and result in waste of time, efforts and talent. The dilemma is that when the compatibility is high it is unlikely that the proposed reforms can bring any substantial and lasting changes. When the compatibility is low, the immense school culture, whose power is exercised in productive and capillary ways, is likely to "discipline" the proposed reforms so that the existing school culture finds them acceptable. Both cases show that reforming schools in the age of information is an exceptionally tough task that calls for exceptional observation, reflection as well as tactics. How they can be introduced in a strategic manner is definitely a pressing problem that warrants further research as well as debate.

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