

Media Education in India and United Kingdom: A Comparative Study

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It is possible to gain a lot of media literacy by mere exposure to the media. In that sense, there is no need for any formal media education. That, however, is not sufficient to gain professional proficiency in this field. A lot of systematic training is required to maintain the standards expected from this fourth pillar of democracy. Presently, the existing structure of media education is at a crossroads. With the changing technology, social structure and international relations the rationale behind the media education in India is getting changed. Under these circumstances we need to form an opinion on what should be the corresponding changes in media education system in India. This paper has compared the media education system of India with some universities of United Kingdom so as to discover the most appropriate path for the future growth of media education in India.

Keywords: Media education, comparative study, university curriculum, standardization of media education.

Looking towards the indispensable need of regulating media education in India, on July 28, 2011 as part of the Government of India's initiative of declaring 2010-2020 as the decade of innovation, the Media Education Council (the Sectoral Innovation Council) which was set up under the Chairpersonship of Asha Swarup submitted its report to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The Sectoral Innovation Council suggested that the government should regulate media education in India so as to ensure orderly growth of the discipline as part of higher education. It suggested that academic courses pertaining to media education should be brought in line with western pattern of education in universities. While any action on the suggestions made in the report is yet to be taken, the undergraduate programmes are undergoing another change that shall leave a permanent impact on the education system in the country. From the current academic year; undergraduate programmes in Delhi University started four years duration instead of three years duration. It is anticipated that other universities shall follow the pattern adopted by Delhi University. Presently no one knows when and in

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what manner the Sectoral Innovation Council's suggestions shall be implemented and what shall be the impact of increasing the duration of undergraduate programmes. Thus, it shall not be much off the mark to say that in India the education system in general and the media education in particular are at the crossroads. We need to make choices at this time, and we need to make very good choices, if we really want to be at par with the global standards. In this paper an attempt is made to examine and compare the media education system in India with that of the United Kingdom with a view to discover the best possible path to maintain the relevance and importance of media education in India.

India is the seventh largest country in terms of geography and second largest populated country in the world with over 1.21 billion population. Apart from this India is a heterogeneous, multicultural and multilingual country with 73 per cent literacy rate. In such a versatile country the role of media as a catalyst becomes significant. Media helps in informing, entertaining and educating the masses. There has been tremendous growth of media in India. Presently there are around 8,200 daily newspapers in circulation with a readership of approximately 181.91 million copies. There are more than 850 television channels including over 300 news channels. There are more than one thousand films released in India annually, and the number of internet users is approximately 132 million. The media reach and exposure has been extended to so much that it offers unprecedented opportunity to content creators, artists, audience and advertisers alike. It has opened new avenues for employment generation in various branches of media and allied activities. The importance of promoting proper media education and training is thus self-evidentiary.

Media Education System in India

It is now universally accepted that the growth of media has led to the emergence of media education. If we talk about media education it is related to teaching and learning about media and this has been nicely stated by Buckingham that in the new era the concept of globalization has led to the demand of media education and the factors affecting it are technological development, social development and economic development (Buckingham, 2001).

Historically speaking, in India initially there was no curriculum on media but there were some media training centers for the budding media professionals. It was only in 1920 that the first journalism course was started by Dr. Annie Besant in Madras. Later Adyar University started undergraduate degree in Journalism (Bagchi and Rath, 2009). Post independence journalism courses were also started by University of Punjab, Banaras Hindu University. In 1965 The Government of India started Indian Institute of Mass Communication. Subsequently several other universities (which were funded by UGC) started journalism courses like University of Delhi, Anna University, Jabalpur University, Jamia Millia Islamia University, and Kurushetra University etc. Makhanlal Chaturvedi University of Journalism and Communication was the first university that started journalism education in Hindi medium. Recently, Haridev Joshi University of Journalism has been established in Rajasthan. It is hoped that many more universities for the education of journalism shall be established in near future. The advent of globalization and changing market forces led to a greater demand for media education. There is a change in attitude of people. People have started believing that

media should not be taken only as a product for consumption it can also be used for welfare of the people and for general public interest. Consequently, media education expanded during the late twentieth century. Apart from government recognized universities, media houses of the like of *Headlines Today*, *Jagran Group*, *The Times of India*, *Manorama* and *Pioneer* group have set up their own media schools for the budding professions. Besides this, now media curriculum is also run in several deemed universities like Amity University, Manav Rachna University etc. In a sense media education has gained importance not just for the aspiring journalists but also for business and media houses.

Presently, media education in India is more popular at undergraduate and postgraduate level (Kumar, 2007). Gradually it is also gaining popularity at doctoral level. However, at school level media education is still not incorporated extensively in the curriculum. NCERT books have one chapter on media in their 'civics' curriculum of seventh standard. That, it is submitted, is not of much use. At undergraduate level there are some specialized journalism courses offered in India such as: BA (Hons) Journalism, Bachelor of Mass Communication and Video Production and B.Sc. in Visual Communication. In addition to this, Department of English includes a functional course on introduction to writing for journalism and Department of Home Science and Social Work teach one course in communication. At the Post Graduate level more than 68 universities offer courses related to journalism like M.A. in Mass Communication and Journalism, MBA in Event Management, MA in Media and Governance, Development Communication, Master of Communication etc. Apart from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes there are several diploma courses run by private and government universities, e.g. postgraduate diploma in development, convergence, advertising and public relations etc. Moreover, some popular institutes like Xavier Institute of Communication, Bombay College of Journalism, Mudra Institute of Communication, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Symbiosis and Asian Institute of Journalism etc. run autonomous diploma courses. All the universities having a department of media facilitate MPhil and doctoral research also. The research is mainly conducted in areas of films, media and culture, advertising, print, radio, television, multimedia, corporate communication, development communication and communication research etc.

Media Education in the United Kingdom

In Britain media education was first advocated in 1930s by literary critic F.R. Leavis and his student Denys Thompson in their book "Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness" (Buckingham, 1998). The decade of 1950s saw the emergence of British cultural studies. During this period the work of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggarts was widely discussed. In 1960s Stuart Hall and Paddy (Buckingham, 1998) offered suggestions for teaching cinema. In 1970s a different approach called "screen theory" developed. It led to the formation of organization called Society for Education in Film and Television. Society for Education in Film and Television published two journals called 'Screen' and 'Screen and Education'. 'Screen' emphasized on new developments in semiotics, structuralism, psychoanalytic theory, post structuralism and Marxist theory of idealism. 'Screen Education' focused on how these theories might be applied to class rooms in schools. Thus an approach of linking the theory with practice was developed in a systematic manner. Thereafter, media

education started taking new forms in UK with the complexities in changing social and cultural climate. There was democratization of media education through school teaching particularly in related areas like teaching of English (Haig, 2005). An attempt was made to include popular culture within curriculum which at that time represented only elite literary culture. Simultaneously, during this period, there was some defensiveness on the part of teachers. They tend to protect students from negative effect of media (Haig, 2005). Later in 1970's and 1980's there was demystification in media education due to socio-political developments. In late 80's British Film Institute defined the aims of media education as a matter of developing students understanding and participation in media. Over the years Britain has evolved as a leader in media education. Key agencies that have been involved in this development include the British Film Institute; the English and Media Centre; Film Education; and the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media at the Institute of Education, London.

It is informative and instructive to observe certain facts about some of the best universities (as per the survey conducted by *The Guardian* newspaper in 2012) in UK. Warwick University runs undergraduate programmes with the blend of film studies and foreign languages like French, German and English. Their post graduate programme includes theatre, digital media and culture, global media and communication etc. At the undergraduate level Newcastle University offers around 20 subjects to the students and they have an option to choose from amongst those subjects according to their personal needs and taste. It also offers post-graduation in International Multimedia Journalism, Media and Public Relations along with the research in Film and Digital Media. Kings College, London in their School of Arts has Culture, Media and Creative Industries that has undergraduate programmes with various languages and film studies. They also offer postgraduate part-time and full-time programmes along with the MPhil and Doctoral Programme. Sheffield University offers journalism programme at undergraduate and post graduate level. The research programme of this university is based upon multidisciplinary approach. Southampton University offers three years as well as 4 years undergraduate programmes along with taught programmes on film studies. These universities are providing best media education in Britain. However, not every student gets an opportunity to study at these universities. Only a few students having good academic score get an opportunity to study at these universities. Apart from these there are other universities like London School of Economics, Bangor University, University of the West of England, University of Westminster, Bournemouth University and many more such universities that also offer wide range of media courses benefiting those students who cannot secure admission in top universities.

Comparing Media Education: India with United Kingdom

A comparison with United Kingdom gives us very useful insight in the field of media education. The first thing that strikes us is the difference in terms of range of courses that are offered by the universities. In India the range of courses that are offered is very limited, whereas UK universities offer very vast and distinct range of courses to the students of media. In UK at undergraduate level alone not less than 115 different institutions offer a total of approximately 1000 bachelor degrees in media studies (Haig, 2005). Not just that UK universities offer diverse media courses but also the range of choices available to the students within one chosen course is very vast. This flexibility in the structure at macro as well as

micro level has an impact of engaging the students in a more attentive and fruitful manner during the entire duration. Since the students are always choosing what they want to study they never lose interest in their course. This blending of multiple options also adds to the versatility of the skills in the students. The approach in India is to offer a rigid structure of course to the students. Thus, students tend to lose interest in those parts of the course which is not of their liking.

It is also very evident that the designing of the course in UK is always based on contemporary needs. In India the course content is outdated and does not meet the contemporary demands. In India there is delinking between thematic, conceptual and theoretical frame work of media education (Das, 2011). The media curriculum has no relevance in terms of theory and concept. The themes designed for the various media subjects are outdated and in some cases do not have any relation with the title of the subject. Due to these problems in curriculum it becomes difficult to generate a conceptual clarity among students. Soon after the beginning of the course students in India develop a feeling that they are not getting exposed to anything that will help them in future. After some time most of the students just want to finish the course and get their degree. In India, an all round belief prevails that the degrees are mere entry passes into some job and the real things are to be learnt on the job. Consequently, so called qualified media professionals are not competent to perform their task after recruitment. On the other hand in UK curriculum are framed with expert suggestions. Time to time curriculum review committee makes alteration in the syllabi. In fact, there are associations for media education in the UK such as: Association for Education in Journalism which regulates up-gradation of media education. A student passing out with a degree from a university in UK finds himself/herself fit to execute his/her job from the first day itself whereas a student passing out from an Indian university does not.

Another difference that strikes us is in teaching methodology. Generally speaking, teaching methodologies adopted in media education in India at undergraduate and postgraduate level is based on formal and non-formal approaches (Kakade and Raut, 2012). Formal approach includes teaching imparted in classrooms. Non-formal approach includes teaching imparted through workshops, seminars and training etc. The idea behind these methods is to inculcate a critical understanding of various media for better responsibility and participation in the production of media. However, pedagogy of Indian universities has remained traditional. Despite having the formal and non formal approach as the accepted norm there is no adaptation for promoting knowledge of technology. Universities in UK are very quick to adapt and disseminate knowledge using latest technology. Moreover, unlike in India where only very limited attention has been paid on teaching methods, UK has transformed by adopting new pedagogies like developing self reflexive style of teaching and learning. The teaching method in UK puts greater emphasis on media production by students themselves. There is a greater use of popular media forms and genres and greater focus on egalitarian relationship between teachers and students. The resultant difference is that a student passing out from an Indian university has much less skills in using latest technology and has much less, if any, global value. In fact, in India most of the faculty members involved in media education are themselves not capable of using advance technology which is used by the media professionals.

When we compare the position of India with that of UK in the field of media education great infrastructural differences can also be seen. Most of the colleges imparting media education are not equipped with smart classrooms and wherever such smart classrooms

exist the teachers are not trained to use them. In some cases there is a lack of even the basic infrastructure that is required for teaching. There is a lack of teaching material available in the universities and colleges. The reading material that is available in universities is usually outdated. In libraries there are hardly any good quality media journals, books, encyclopedia, etc. Thus, students are not exposed to even the basic things required for good education. Another very interesting difference lies in the manner the media departments are run. In India most of the media departments are run without any head of the department. In some universities and colleges the head of media department does not hold any qualification in media. Also, there is an insufficient and non-qualified teaching staff appointed on non permanent basis which creates conflict between qualified and non qualified faculty. This leads to lack of motivation among the faculty members who are qualified. In UK there are well defined parameters for recruiting faculty on the basis of their qualification and/or field experience which avoids all conflicts.

Standardization of media education is also a point of difference between Indian and UK media education. In India, there are a large number of institutes which are not recognized by UGC. Such non-standardized imparting of media education generates unproductive media professionals and unemployment among degree holders. This adversely affects the credibility of the media courses which are run even by the recognized institutes. In UK the media education is completely standardized and most of the institutes follow the rules and regulations prescribed by the media education regulatory bodies. There is yet another aspect of it. Media education in India depends on government policies. Government initiative to promote media education is negligible. This negligence on the part of the government has resulted into less number of reputed universities imparting media education. Some competent institutes are not yet recognized or given the status of university which is affecting study abroad programme for higher media studies. Policies like 'point system' for affiliation/accreditation of the institutes and for promotion of teachers has created a quantity based approach in organizing seminars, conferences and workshops. Mostly these conferences are mere formality for documentation and for accumulation of 'points' by institutes and teachers. This is unproductive, time consuming and leads to wastage of funds. In UK the focus is more on quality of the workshops, seminars and conferences.

Conclusion

In order to improve the media education in India the major thrust areas should be curriculum design, role of academic bodies, infrastructure, faculty development and proper government policies. The media education should be so reformed that the curriculum is made keeping in mind the need of industry and emergence of new technologies. There should be more emphasis on practical assignments in teaching. Field assignments should be based on analytical activities so as to enhance the critical assessment skills of the students. The curriculum up gradation can be done by offering wide range of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary courses. This will also generate more demand for the course. Multidisciplinary courses should be offered at the undergraduate as well as at the diploma level. UGC being the chief regulating and standardizing body has a very significant role to play in improving media education. It should periodically update its guidelines for curriculum development and faculty recruitment. It should release more funds for media education and ensure that the funds are productively utilized by the universities. The norms for faculty recruitment should

allow inducting people having extensive field experience though not having formal degrees. There should be greater interaction between media educators, students, parents and media professionals. We have already lost a lot of time and we have already started a trend of just completing the formalities of education without educating the youth properly. Now if we do not take the right path from the present crossroad we may soon reach a point of no return.

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