

Stakeholders at Loggerheads: Aspirations of Media Industry Vs Realities in Media Academia: A Critical Analysis of FICCI-KPMG Indian M&E Industry report 2015

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Introduction

This may be the right time when media & entertainment industry of India could cheer up for itself, as recently it has crossed its 1000th milestone. Yes, the size of Indian media & entertainment (M&E) industry has been estimated of 1000 billion INR in the year 2014 (FICCI and KPMG report, 2015). In fact, over the past few years, media and entertainment industry in India has registered robust growth in almost every sector. Thanks to Hindi and regional journalism, the graph of print media is touching new heights, against the global trends. Despite the economic slowdown in recent years, industry can boast to have 730 million TV Viewers, 159 million Radio listeners **and** 176 million internet users (KPMG's Estimate in 2013). Given the impetus, the industry is projected to reach INR 1661 billion by 2017 (FICCI Report, 2012). Within next five years the size of industry could be just doubled up, as FICCI report 2015 estimates that size of Indian M&E industry will touch 1964 billion INR.

M& E is not meant for economic growth only. Press, the watch dog of democracy shares an important part of it. Newspapers are still considered as one of the most credible means of information. Reporters of newspapers or of electronic media serve the country 24*7. Media in true sense is disseminating message of aspirations across the India. In fact, socio-political structure of the country always puts this very sector in focus. With this, new media technology has brought young audience to the main stream of news media. Since market depends on mass demand, so optimism about growth of media is in the air.

Growth requires resources. Being a creative field the M&E industry especially strives for trained and talented human resources. 'The industry is facing a severe challenge in terms of quality of talent across career stages. The challenge is in terms of training and capability, and also in terms of the sector attracting the right talent', CEO Star India and chairman FICCI Media and Entertainment committee Udai Shankar states. But the question remains to be answered what sort of talent is required. When and where will be

the need of these talents? And how the industry is going to deal with such talents? These questions are getting more complicated as spectrum of media is changing rapidly. Advent of new media, digitalization, FDI, changing socio political scenario, market needs are just some of the factors responsible for it. So there is a need that provides the road maps of requirements.

Glimpse of Background of Media Academia

The responsibility to cater the need of talented human resources goes to academia. Early efforts were made in the decade of 1940s, when visionaries like Prof. P.P. Singh introduced media education in Punjab and Delhi University. But academic world paid more attention to the efforts when UGC panel was constituted for journalism education in 1977. UGC observed student should receive not only technical training but also be sensitized to the process of communication and its relevance to social change. The courses should be inter-disciplinary where the expertise of physical and social scientists is blended with skills and crafts of media professionals (University Grants Commission [UGC, henceforth] 1984). However, implementation never remained that easy. Lack of resources, dearth of trained academicians and stereotype pedagogy remained as impediments. Leading academicians raised the issue but significant changes could not be made excluding some rare examples. Situation took another twist when private universities and media house backed academic institutions joined the chorus. At present more than 100 Universities, Colleges, Institutes are offering media related courses only in National Capital Region (NCR). Their contribution, problems and possibilities need to be analyzed as big question looms what might be the specific roles of Govt. Universities, Private universities and media backed institutes in media education.

M&E Matters

However a consensus has emerged: Despite erstwhile critique that journalism particularly cannot be taught, what began as 'fashionable' and adjunct academic programs in the university system have now proliferated beyond, and more media backed institutions are consolidating their programs and their metro-centric presence attracts students whose aspirations are many a

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time based on television content particularly news and current affairs channels. (B.P. Sanjai Committee report)

No institute can survive without students. More than 100 institutes only in NCR mean that every year almost 10,000 students are getting enrolled only in NCR. One Pvt. University boasts more than 1000 students in media. Only D.U received 59000 applications for journalism course for 2013. Recently it is observed that students of third world countries especially Africans are also showing interest in media studies in India. .

FICCI M&E Report and Ground Realities of Media Academia: A Critical Analysis

Despite the growth in number of media education related institutes and upsurge in number of aspirants, M&E industry doesn't show interest in media academia. In 274 pages report about M&E industry, the word 'education' is used just once. That too in the form of an alienated comment from an expert Rahul Puri, Managing Director Mukta Arts that 'The govt. and private players will need to collaborate to provide the right infrastructure and opportunities to the budding talents.' Puri believes (FICCI-KPMG report). Replacing the word media education, Industry prefers for the word 'training' which was used 32 times in the report. The report pitches for ITI training to fulfill the need of human resources (FICCI-KPMG report, 2015: 250). None can object for imparting the education in ITI but if report does not bother to strengthen media education in Universities, colleges or Private institutes, it simply states their approach. This issue becomes vital as the term education closely relates with research and without R&D no industry could groom.

Undoubtedly, media industry asks for professional communicators. The industry has clubbed 'entertainment' with 'media', while academia still focuses on 'Journalism' without paying the attention that 'entertainment' has become buzz work for media industry. The fact should be perceived in different way. Industry is ignoring journalism (FICCI KPMG report doesn't provide substantial data regarding requirements in journalism) and Media academia is apathetic about entertainment. The theme of 2015 FICCI Frames conference was 'Making India a global entertainment superpower.' This Paradox leads us to a dilemma. UGC has yet not proposed any course, dealing with the 'entertainment'.

UNESCO Model Curricula advocates for professionally imparting the knowledge of journalism, saying "As a source of information, analysis and comment on current events,

journalism performs a number of functions in modern societies. The basic goal of most journalists, however, is to serve society by informing the public, scrutinizing the way power is exercised, stimulating democratic debate, and in those ways aiding political, economic, social and cultural development. A journalism education should teach students how to identify news and recognize the story in a complex field of fact and opinion, how to conduct journalistic research, and how to write for, illustrate, edit and produce material for various media formats (newspapers and magazines, radio and television, and online and multimedia operations) and for their particular audiences" (UNESCO Model Curricula: 7). Probably no media institute can claim that it has assimilated this spirit of media education, practically.

UGC backs up the nomenclature like B.A. in journalism and mass communication (BAJMC) and M.A. in journalism and Mass Communication (MAJMC). Interestingly, earlier almost all of the courses were termed as BJMC and MJMC (bachelor in journalism and Mass Communication and Masters in Journalism and Mass Communication). It means a lot. Earlier, media studies were considered as specific field which was equidistant from science and arts stream. Now it is being forced to reside in the ambit of Arts. Psychologically it creates the impediments for the young talents who belong to science stream and are willing to take this very subject as career. With due respect to Arts stream, it must be observed that media education is having the component of science, commerce, management all the field. But orientation is different.

Industry finds its future in digitalization. The report hails the efforts of the government by saying 'One of major highlights in 2014 was the announcement of digital India: A program to transform India into a digital empowered society and knowledge economy by government' (foreword of the report). It highlights the facts 'by the end of 2014 India had 116 interned enabled smart phones and the number is expected to reach 435 million by the year 2019 (FICCI-KPMG report: 105). This is worth mentioning that this digitalization bounds to affect all the sectors of media, be it the print, radio or TV sphere. Convergence has brought all the sectors close. Integrated Newsroom has become the reality. Report shows the trend: 'In 2013, Zee news merged its broadcasting business with DNA (newspaper). India Today shifted its office to a new building with a focus on integrating it TV. Print, radio and online arms and foster enhance collaboration (FICCI-KPMG report: 12)'. But

academia is trapped in stereotype classification: Print, Electronic and New Media. UGC Model curriculum still advocates for it. Need of the hour is to change this age old classification system. New approach is well needed. For example, there is a general perception that writing relates only with print media. But there are ample opportunities for copy writers in radio, TV and new media. So student must get the opportunity to learn the skill of writing in all the semesters. One semester may have the subject like media language, other one might have 'writing for print'. It may go on with the subjects like audio language, writing for visuals etc, writing for web etc. In the same manner technical skills should be imparted in all the semesters. One paper based on general studies should be integral part of syllabi. It may be fragmented into the subjects like 'Social Structure of India', 'political structure', 'economic structure and rural India, Indian cultural etc. Besides, subjects like applications of communication theories and models, media psychology, audience behavior should also be taught.

While acknowledging the significance of technology like digitalization, industry now recognizes well the importance of content. Report admits that content is the king (FICCI KPMG report 2015: 11). Even it advocates for 'content differentiation' (pp. 32) which means more channels like 'Epic.' This may offer a lot of opportunities to academia which could use its knowledge to generate 'quality content.' But media institutes does not seem to avail this opportunities. At present, media institutes are just producing house journals, some short films which lack quality content.

FICCI & KPMG report, 2015 claims that maximum jobs are available in Television sector. On the basis of NSDC skill study, report claims TV. Industry generated .14 million jobs in the year 2013 while print industry could fetch in just .06 million job opportunities. (pp. 241). But this data doesn't reflect complete picture. TV Industry consists of primarily two sectors: News and Entertainment. Academia focuses on news sectors. But the maximum jobs are available in entertainment sector. Data provided in report does not reveal anything about the vacancies in TV news channels. Many of those have been packed up in recent years. On the other hand print industry still means more or less newspapers. This industry continued to derive most (94 per cent) of its revenues from the newspaper category (IRS, 2012). It has got new avenues in grade B cities for regional journalism.

Certainly to the some extent, growth of media could be attributed to private universities, which provided comparatively better infrastructure to this stream (especially electronic media related equipment's). They proved successful to attract thousands of students, by successfully using the glamour of media. But these private universities seem unable to tap the opportunities, offered by the Industry. FICCI-KPMG report states that 'The size of TV content production industry is INR 30 billion, excluding news, animation and sports. Of this, Hindi language content contributes 2/3 of the market (FICCI-KPMG report: 42). Besides, 'of the total print publication in India, over 40 percent are Hindi and nearly 47 percent are vernacular' (FICCI-KPMG report: 42). But Private Universities could not understand the need to teach Hindi and regional languages professionally especially to media students. Instead, they offer foreign languages which cater little opportunities to media and communication students.

Conclusion

In fact, new generation media and communication academia is expected to perform like a professional but prudent medical college. Medical colleges empower their students with practically treating the patients. In the same manner, media academia is expected to equip the students with production of quality content. Research work of medical college is meaningless unless it is used for the treatment of a patient. Same is true with media academia. Its research is meant to uplift the quality of main stream media. As per human resource is considered, the end product is expected to be a real communicator. The mantra to win a cut throat competition in M&E industry will always be commitment, craft and creativity.

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