Mass Communication Education in Punjab: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract
This paper aims at exploring the nature and scope of Mass Communication as an academic discipline in Pakistan in general and analyzes the level of progress in the province of Punjab – being the most populated province of the country with a history of Socio-Political developments and a surging revolution of academia in particular. Importance of Media education to the youth has been finally recognized due to its far-reaching multidimensional effects on society and individuals. The Media is now considered to be the fourth pillar of the state. The post-second World War growth in propagating of messages due to the development of the electronic Media has turned it into a phenomenon that calls for constant research because it affects society in multiple ways. Development of digital Media has introduced new dimensions to its effectiveness. That is why institutions around the world have adopted it as a vital part of their academic programmes. In Pakistan, Mass Communication is taught at university and college levels. Using two surveys, the second in 2010, the paper attempts to find how far Mass Communication education has expanded in Pakistan’s Punjab province, and how will it improve the capacity of students to understand the mechanics of Communication enabling them to meet and understand fully the demands of Globalization brought about by the contemporary Media revolution we are witnessing around us.

Keywords: Journalism; Mass Communication; Society; Globalization Effects; Media Studies; Punjab
I. Introduction

Journalism / Mass Communication in any shape is basically a technique of communication. Grasp on this technique requires both knowledge and expertise. When journalists cover different events and issues and present them in the Media in the form of news report, editorial and analysis, they mostly do so without any qualm, and hardly in its true perspective. It has been established that Journalism not only changes the thoughts and opinion of the readers but also the status they enjoy in society. Opinion formation is of course one of the rudimentary tasks of Media and Journalism. The newspapers adopting modern techniques of attractive printing have brought about a revolution in the field of Journalism and are affecting all segments of society, thereby adding to its quantum in terms of viewership and readership. Journalism protects and promotes by creating a public sphere for healthy opposition - positive and constructive criticism on public policies. As the present era is described as an era of ‘Mass Communication’, different ideologies and nations have taken Mass Media as tools to confront their conflicting interests. This makes it essential to have a strong and broad network of Mass Communication and persons affiliated with this profession. Nevertheless, they must be experts in their discipline and should be capable of demonstrating a strong professional attitude.

Recognizing the significance of this field and its vital role in national development, most of the states have institutions imparting theoretical and practical education and training on all aspects of Journalism and Mass Communication, and the number of these institutions is increasing manifold contemporarily. In the developed countries, specialized books and curricula have been published and developed on different aspects of Journalism, Mass Communication, Electronic and Print Media. The waves of change have also touched Pakistan where theoretical and practical education and training in Print and Electronic Media is rapidly expanding.

Historically, in the sub-continent, comprising today’s Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, Journalism emerged as a formal discipline during the British rule. Initially, news transmission and gathering was meant for public affairs. News was collected by the correspondents or incident analysts, and was then sent through various means to various Media centres. News transmission to the general public was not possible without printing, though prior to that, manuscript newspapers existed in the pages of history. Publication of newspapers for the general public became possible with the setting up of printing press during the British regime. In the beginning, newspapers were published in English, Bengali and Persian and in many other languages. English newspapers publication was initially restricted to the British origin people residing in the sub-continent and government authorities mainly with the aim to spread Christianity that had been facilitated in Bengal and its adjoining areas. The Persian language at that time was enjoying the status of official and scholarly language being spoken and written even in the sub-continent’s remote areas. Many newspapers in the Persian language were therefore being published.

II. Mass Communication in Pakistan

Formal education in Journalism started in the sub-continent in 1940 with the introduction of diploma courses at the University of Punjab, Lahore, and Jamia Madaris (religious institutions). At that time, radio was the only electronic Media outlet; however, its influence was limited due to scarcity of radio stations in the sub-continent. Journalism
was therefore influenced and monopolized by the print Journalism. Nonetheless, there were quite a little formal training arrangements available for different tasks for radio broadcasts, consequently the Journalism curricula focused much on the subjects relating to the newspaper production at the Department of Journalism at the Punjab University and in the Madaris.

The Journalism curricula in that period were based on discussions related to various elements of Journalism and different writing styles. The pioneers of Journalism and their institutions were described as the learning institutions for Journalism. It is a fact that Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Ali Johar, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Hameed Nizami and their followers who had made valuable contributions in laying the foundation of institutions that promoted Journalism throughout the sub-continent. These institutions became the training centers for Journalism and Mass Communication. Similarly, the largely circulated newspapers and magazines had strict selection criteria for the recruitment of journalists who were mostly trained by the British and European print Media. English, Urdu and Persian Journalism also flourished in parallel. In the 19th century, a flood of English and Urdu newspapers, and even regional language newspapers and magazines, were found in the large metropolitan cities. In the 20th century, transformation in Journalism took place and it played a significant role in the Freedom Movement of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

There were different levels and theories in the commencement and training of Journalism education in the sub-continent having contents of distinction between the literary and journalistic writings, kinds of news, different styles of Journalism, laws and ethics, etc. News writing, news translation and editing were part of training and practical work was also carried out generally in the Urdu and English languages.

After independence, Pakistan chalked out its new priorities and prepared plans in different sectors. Promotion of Journalism was also a sector for which steps were taken and same resulted in the expansion of Punjab University Diploma Course to the level of MA Journalism in 1959. Earlier, a Journalism Department was set up at Karachi University and later on at Gomal University in 1974, Sindh University in 1977, Federal Urdu Arts College Karachi in 1984, Peshawar University and Islamia University Bahawalpur in 1985 while Mass Communication classes was started simultaneously in Baluchistan University Quetta and Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan in 1987. The graduate level courses of Journalism/Mass Communication were recommended at the college level in 1987. Prominent educational institutions include FC College and Government College Lahore, while classes of Journalism/Mass Communication are being taught at many other colleges of the Punjab.

Only in Punjab, over a dozen institutions are continuing education and training in different fields of Mass Communication and there is a sense of responsibility prevalent at the provincial level about making the Mass Communication discipline strong and effective. In this regard, many institutions have started television and radio production programmes to keep pace with the market. Pakistan’s government policy of issuing television and FM radio licenses to academic institutions has contributed to the development of Mass Media and communication departments in Punjab. This has brought
a great improvement in the education being imparted on Mass Communication, but what simultaneously is needed is the publication of maximum number of text and reference books on all aspects and subjects of Mass Communication. Till 2006, the facilities related to Mass Communication in Punjab’s public universities were: University of Punjab: development of communication studies, FM radio station started in 2001 and television transmission started in 2004; Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan: development of Mass Communication, independent building, FM radio station started; Islamia University Bahawalpur: development of Media studies, FM radio station 92.6 in September 2006, television transmission to be started, printing press to be set up for newspaper and magazine publication.

III. Situation in Punjab

Though Punjab province of Pakistan is relatively small in area as compared to Baluchistan yet it has a large population, consisting almost 60 percent of the country’s population. Similarly, the literacy rate in Punjab is highest than that of other provinces of the country. The number of schools, colleges and universities are also comparatively more than other provinces. As for as Mass Communication education is concerned, it is not as wide as other subjects being taught in the colleges of Punjab province, according to a survey. The survey taken some years ago found that Journalism and Mass Communication had not yet been introduced at graduate level in colleges of Bahawalpur, Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan divisions. The Government Degree College Sahiwal where the subject was introduced at the BA level; however, with only one teacher. Similar situation was at Degree College for Women in Sara-e-Sidhu and Degree College Jahanian where this subject was introduced but one teacher was available each at these colleges.

According to the survey, in the Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, the total number of teachers engaged in Mass Communication teaching was eight and, out of them, three were on a full-time basis while five were visiting faculty members. Three had done their Master’s in Mass Communication and two were PhD scholars. In Government Fatima Jinnah College Chuna Mandi, Lahore, the number of full-time teachers of Mass Communication were four out of which three had done their Master’s in Mass Communication while the third one held a M.Phil degree. There were only two teachers in Journalism Department of Government Post Graduate College, Lahore Cantonment, who had done their Master’s in Mass Communication. The services of only one teacher having M. Phil degree had been acquired by the Journalism Department of Government College of Science, Wahdat Road, Lahore. Similarly, the Township College Lahore had two full-time teachers and a female teacher was working in the Himayat-e-Islam Girls College Lahore with Master’s degree in Mass Communication. The same situation was with Government College Sahiwal where the students were benefiting from only teachers having a Master’s degree. The students of Post-graduate College Bahawalpur were also acquiring BA level education from one part-time teacher with the similar number of teachers i.e. one each at Government Degree College for Women Sara-e-Sidhu and Degree College Jahanian, district Khanewal.

According to the survey, BA and MA level courses were being taught at Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, while the courses in BA Mass Communication were being taught at Margala College Islamabad and similarly in Fatima Jinnah College for Women in Chuna Mandi, Lahore. The BA courses were being taught in Garrison Post-Graduate College Lahore, Government College of Science Wahdat Road, Lahore, Township
College, Lahore, Himayat-e-Islam Girls College, Lahore, Garden Town College, Rawalpindi, Government College, Sahiwal, Government Post-Graduate College, Bahawalpur, Women Degree College Sara-e-Sidhu, and Degree College, Jahanian. It means only one college had a postgraduate programme in Mass Communication.

The survey further found that internship was mandatory at Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore and Fatima Jinnah College for Women, Lahore while the students of Mass Communication in Margala College Islamabad, Garrison Post Graduate College Lahore, Government Science College Wahdat Road Lahore, Township College Lahore, Himayat-e-Islam Girls College Lahore, Government Garden Town College Rawalpindi, Government College for Women Sara-e-Sidhu, Government College Sahiwal, Government Degree College Jahanian and Post-Graduate College Bahawalpur can undergo internship as an option. The internship programme at Mass Communication Department, Kinnaird College Lahore, is spread over three months while Fatima Jinnah College for Women Choona Mandi, Lahore, conducted an eight-week internship programme. Rest of the colleges in Punjab had no mandatory internship programme.

The survey further revealed that there was only one teacher of Mass Communication for the BA level courses each at Kinnaird College, Lahore, Fatima Jinnah College for Women, Lahore, Garrison Post Graduate College Lahore Cantonment, Government Garden Town College, Rawalpindi, and Government Degree College for Women, Sara-e-Sidhu, Government College, Sahiwal, Post-Graduate College, Bahawalpur, and Government Degree College, Jahanian.

All above mentioned colleges were not offering research subject for study at the graduation level. Only three colleges; namely, FG Margala College Islamabad, Kinnaird College, Lahore, and Fatima Jinnah College, Lahore, were offering research methodology as a subject. Rest of the colleges had no such subject in their Mass Communication programmes. Marks allocated to the research subject were 100 at Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, and FG Margala College Islamabad while 50 marks were allocated for the research methodology at Fatima Jinnah College for Women, Chuna Mandi, Lahore. It was noted during the survey that all the students with 100 percent ratio attempted thesis in Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, 95 percent at Fatima Jinnah College for Women, Lahore, and 30 percent at Margala College, Islamabad. There was no compulsory condition for writing a thesis in the rest of the colleges of Punjab at the bachelor level. Kinnaird College, Lahore, Margala College, Islamabad and Fatima Jinnah College, Lahore, had allocated 100 marks while there were no marks for Thesis writing in other colleges. Newspaper or magazines were published under the supervision of Mass Communication Departments at Kinnaird College Lahore and Fatima Jinnah College for Women, Lahore, while the departments at the rest of the colleges had no newspaper or magazine/periodicals/journals. Kinnaird College published a magazine entitled ‘KC Times’ while Fatima Jinnah College for Women, Lahore, had a magazine being published under the title of “Kavish’. No newspaper or magazine was found at the departments of Mass Communication in other colleges of Punjab.

It was noted that there were limited electronic Media training facilities available at Kinnaird College, Lahore, Fatima Jinnah College, Lahore, and Garrison Post-Graduate College, Lahore. The rest of the colleges in Punjab had no such facility for the students. It
is interesting to mention here that latest communication facilities like television; VCR, film developing laboratory, computers and Internet facilities were available for students in Kinnaird College, Lahore. There was also a television in Department of Mass Communication at Fatima Jinnah College but only to watch. Garrison Post-Graduate Lahore College had a computer lab and internet facility and the remaining colleges had no facility for electronic Media training.

There were 1,000 books in the seminar libraries of Departments of Journalism and Mass Communication in Kinnaird College and Fatima Jinnah College Lahore, while Department of Mass Communication, Margala College, Islamabad had a stock of 600 books. The situation in other colleges of Punjab was dismal as there was no book on Mass Communication in any of the library of any college. There was no seminar library in the departments of Mass Communication of many colleges.

IV. Survey of Lahore, 2010

Having conducted the first survey of Mass Communication institutions and departments in terms of their courses, faculty and equipment so that their potential to cope with globalization could be ascertained, the researchers conducted a fresh survey in 2010, using Lahore as the universe of the study. The objective was to measure the trend and the expansion of Mass Communication studies. The survey included both public and private institutions and started from the Institute of Communication Studies at University of Punjab before moving on to other institutions and departments.

Institute of Communication Studies (ICS), University of Punjab, was established in 1941 as Department of Journalism. Its name changed in 1985 from Journalism Department to Mass Communication Department. Now the Institute of Communication Studies offers BS (Honors.), MS / M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes in Communication Studies. It has a modern library, photo lab, computer lab and video editing lab. It has an FM radio station and TV production facility. The Institute has six PhDs and one M. Phil in its permanent faculty of nine.

The researchers conducted a survey of campus through a Research Associate who interviewed students of different programs, i.e. Bachelor’s, Master’s and M. Phil. The questions asked received responses at variance. A student of M.Phil said that they had the best faculty and equipment: all the faculty members were experts in their fields, and he was satisfied with the courses and both permanent and visiting faculty. On the question related to practical work, he said the students preferred to work with both the pen and camera in all the fields, i.e. advertising, print and electronic Media. Interviewing other students of BS level revealed that they were satisfied with the courses but unsatisfied with the teaching methodology of some of the teachers. They opined that the ICS degree had worth in the market, and the students had acquired enough knowledge on their chosen field which is relevant to the market needs. However, some of the students of BS argued that knowledge counts more than the degree. They were somehow unsatisfied with the faculty and courses. They furthered that the department could perform better if technical facilities could be provided by the administration. The ICS degree had international value; however, it needs to focus more on practical work. Another area of discussion included the possibility of improvement by focusing knowledge and the students’ presentations beyond mere good grades. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the ICS is the best platform for developing electronic Media skills.
In the Government College, Lahore, Journalism was introduced as an elective subject at the undergraduate level by the Department of Political Science in 1987. When Government College Lahore became a university in 2002, the nomenclature of the subject was changed to Mass Communication. In September 2007, the Department of Mass Communication was established under the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. As a new department, it is teaching Mass Communication as an allied subject in BA (Honors) programme. It lacks practicum options, and has an M.Phil as its Head. Another entrant in the field of Mass Communication is the National College of Arts that established Department of Film & Television in 2005-2009, which is running a 4-year bachelor degree program in film & television production and plans to launch a one year postgraduate diploma program in script & screenplay writing. NCA is known for its practical work, hence its Film and Television Department offers practice-based education. It does not have a PhD or M.Phil faculty and is headed by a reputed documentary maker. NCA has initiated a postgraduate Centre in Multimedia Arts, which offers Masters in Multimedia Arts and postgraduate Diploma in Multimedia Arts. When asked about the NCA film and TV program, the students said that the NCA degree had value in both the national and international market. Most of the students were found to be satisfied with the faculty, which included some big names in the industry, and the equipment. The NCA survey, and prior to that the ICS survey, strengthens the researchers’ view that the new trends in Mass Communication studies depict a tilt towards the practical side of Mass Communication studies and students prefer to study market based courses.

Government Kinnaird College has a Department of Mass Communication, which offers Bachelor’s and Master’s in Mass Communication. It does not have a Ph.D. or M.Phil faculty. Some old and fresh students of Kinnaird College were asked questions regarding their faculty, courses and technical facilities. One of the old students of Bachelors said that there were limited technical facilities at Kinnaird because of limited resources. She said their degree was not recognized internationally. She said the department needs to provide more practical courses and should have mandatory internship in the Media industry. Some were satisfied with the facilities including technical assistance in the field of broadcasting. They, however, stressed that the equipment should be upgraded. The students should be indulged in more practical work along with the theories they are made to read about. Writing for newspapers and magazines should be made a compulsory for Mass Media studies and to overcome shyness, students should be made to face the camera. The department has no proper equipment has just one computer lab, a mal-equipped production studio, some complained. Quite a few students opined that that the print Media and advertising should be focused rather than heavily concentrating on the electronic Media. A handful of students were satisfied with the visiting faculty but not with the permanent faculty.

Forman Christian College University has a Department of Mass Communication, which is running Bachelor’s programme. When asked about their study programme, some preferred to join the field of advertising or electronic Media. They were satisfied with the faculty and courses; however, suggested that the department needed more work for its betterment, and it should focus on practical work. Regarding recognition of the degree, most of the students said that their degree had no international value due to lack
of technical facilities in the department. Nonetheless, most of the students were found to be satisfied with the courses, and more practicum slots.

Coming to the private sector universities offering Mass Communication programs, in Lahore, Beacon House National University (BNU) has a School of Media and Mass Communication (SMC). Set up in 2003, it is running BA (Hons) in Journalism, MA Mass Communication, MS/MPhil. At present out of 6 permanent faculty members, 3 hold PhD. When asked students pursuing their Master’s expressed satisfaction over the faculty and courses but stressed that more practical work should be carried out. In addition, they called for improved online facilities. University of South Asia, University of Lahore, Iqra and University of Management Sciences are also offering Mass Communication programmes.

Superior University has a Master’s in Mass Communication program, and like Government College University, which has a journalist society; it also has a journalists club. When asked about their courses, the students of Superior University had different arguments. They did not see their degree had any international value, but were satisfied with the faculty, and were interested to join the electronic Media. Students desired to have their courses to be conducted in a more professional manner; they also wished that the institution should establish its own TV channel.

V. Conclusion

The world has been transformed into a small village due to the great strides of progress taken by Communication via the Computer Revolution. Our era is regarded as the ‘age of Media’; it has drastically reduced communication gaps and distances among the people of different geographical regions. Psychological warfare tactics and Mass Media effects have increased and diversified manifold. The Media are being used as policy instruments by the world powers to influence the masses to shift their opinion and mould their thinking process. The world powers are using Mass Media to achieve their political strategies and economic objective. The agenda setting role of the Media in the Gulf war, US attack on Iraq and other similar crises are worth-mentioning. The Media has been widely used to overpower the mind of others. The world television networks like BBC, CNN and Zee, etc, are deeply impacting the minds of the people of other countries. They are also bringing about a cultural revolution that is negatively affecting family system and religious values in the less developed countries. Pakistan is one among those victims of Mediated change. The Western and Indian channels are creating acceptance for vulgarity, obscenity and immorality which are dangerous for the young generation. It happens so due to the absence of any mechanism to see how Media are doing in entertainment and what codes they should evolve and follow. The lack of updated Mass Communication education that tells the good or bad effects of Media and educates masses about how to counter the onslaught of negative Media campaigns is another cause.

Both surveys revealed that most institutions in the Punjab are imparting Journalism/Mass Communication education on a limited scale that is a matter of grave concern, given that Punjab is the largest province of the country in terms of population. The situation of Journalism/Mass Communication is alarming. Most of the institutions lack proper training facilities and students complain of dearth of professionalism and orientation to the market.
The following suggestions should be considered by the administration and the academia related to Journalism/Mass Communication studies:

i. Print and electronic laboratories should immediately be established in the Mass Communication departments;

ii. Management and teaching staff should be qualified and trained;

iii. Attention should be towards research work;

iv. Syllabus should be reviewed and streamlined along the modern lines;

v. Practical and internship should be made mandatory for the students;

vi. There is need for introducing Journalism/Mass Communication education at the intermediate level as well as updating the degree level syllabus;

vii. Introduction of BA Honors level classes in Mass Communication is the need of the hour;

viii. The approach of students and teachers to all the channels of electronic Media must be ensured;

ix. Besides publication of newspaper or magazine, arrangements for practical training for radio and television should be made available in all institutions of the Punjab;

x. Internet facilities should be provided to the students of Mass Communication to keep them abreast with current affairs and other advancements in different disciplines;

xi. Special attention should be paid towards practical training rather than theoretical studies in Journalism/Mass Communication disciplines, while there is need to focus on use of proper language and its improvement;

xii. Degree courses on the subject of internet and practical Journalism/Mass Communication should be initiated in all institutions of the Punjab;

xiii. Like other disciplines, 50 marks for practical examination must be made compulsory for Journalism/Mass Communication students;

xiv. Provision of radio, television channels, newspapers and magazines should be ensured in the Journalism/Mass Communication departments;

xv. Special lectures of Western journalist, experts and professionals should be arranged in the Journalism/Mass Communication departments;

xvi. Students should be encouraged to take interest in international affairs;

xvii. Students graduated in Journalism and Mass Communication should fill in the jobs linked with the Mass Media;

xviii. Refresher courses for Mass Communication educators should be arranged at the national and international levels;

xix. The Education Department, Government of Punjab, should carry out the promotion of Mass Communication education with proper planning and allocate required funds;

xx. B.Sc and M.Sc Mass Communication degrees should be recognized and notified by HEC as professional degrees in all Pakistani universities;

xxi. In all departments, be they private, government or semi government, and organizations, both federal and provincial, advertisements for the posts of PRO, Producer, News Producer, Programme Producer, etc, which are related to the Media, should clearly mention that only Mass Communication graduates can apply, and no other degree will be considered;
As the surveys proved, Mass Communication at the intermediate level must be introduced. In particular, colleges in Punjab’s southern areas should start Mass Communication at the intermediate and graduation levels, given the subject’s relevance to the development process.

M.Phil technical track can be considered by other institutions - ICS at Punjab University has already started it;

Professional experience should also be considered for the appointment of faculty in Mass Communication institutions/departments;

Research work should be promoted along with technical side, and in this regard Mass Communication journals should be funded and assisted by HEC.

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