

ANALYSING UNDERGRADUATE JOURNALISM PROGRAM AT BANGALORE AND MYSORE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Indian education sector is indeed a fast-growing sector. Being the 3rd largest in the world with 700 universities - national, state, deemed universities, autonomous colleges & around 35,000 affiliated colleges. It serves 20 million students of the country. With raising competitions in the media industry, expectations of the employer are increasing and the recruiter is looking for employees who are not only subject experts but also who are skilled and analytical thinkers. But the question is, is media/journalism courses concentrating on the job-readiness of the graduates? Is the curriculum of the course designed in a way to expose them to the industry standards? Media industry requires skills beyond academics and there is always scope for media courses to prepare youngsters to become industry ready professionals. The main reasons for this industry-academia gap could be an outdated academic syllabus, language skills, insufficient practical sessions and absence of career counselling facilities that stop students from embracing professional skills. A student to be employable must possess academic knowledge along with various skills. This study will analyze industry-academia gaps which can help media students to become industry ready. This study will also suggest measures to bridge gaps in the media industry and media education. It will also try to analyse and answer above-mentioned concerns through content analysis of BA Journalism syllabus.

Keywords: *Indian higher education, industry-academia gap, curriculum development, skills gap, journalism syllabus, media courses*

1. INTRODUCTION

Industry-academia gap is the most discussed topic in the education sector. As Marshall McLuhan says, the world is a global village, it is important for the students to meet the requirements and demands to retain global competition. The universities or colleges are teaching subjects which will help the students to get a job but the students are unable to apply the conceptual knowledge taught in the classroom to real life scenarios.

Here, it is important to examine the nature of the curriculum. One of the reasons students fail to fit in the industry standards could be the static curriculum. It fails to include the recent developments and trends which the industry demands. More importance is given to theoretical subjects than practical exposure.

The current mindset of the students is to acquire grades and scores and not to prepare themselves to be a professional. To bring this it requires proper orientation and guidance as to make them understand why they study what they are studying. This is also a nationwide issue.

1.1. Media Education in India

The media industry is a fast-growing industry which demands knowledge beyond academics. Communication skills, team spirit, creativity, attitude, commitment are some of the skills expected from the media students when they are seeking a job.

The main objective of media education should be critical thinking, understanding abilities and analyzing the media texts to come to right conclusions. It is important to find out is the journalism courses which students are studying are a blend of both theoretical knowledge and also has the required skill set.

1.2. Objectives

- Study existing gaps in the BA journalism program
- To understand gaps in the media industry and academia
- To suggest initiatives to bridge these gaps effectively

1.3. Research problem

It is essential for building critical thinking abilities in media education. The current Journalism syllabus are outdated and there is an immediate need to revise the syllabus based on the current trends of the media industry. The journalism syllabus mostly concentrates on theory subjects and less importance is given to practical and skill based subjects which industry demands.

1.4. Operational definitions of key concepts

- 1.4.1 According to Aristotle, “Education is the process of training man to fulfil his aim by exercising all the faculties to the fullest extent as a member of society”.
- 1.4.2 Curriculum as the sum total of resources - intellectual and scientific, cognitive and linguistic, textbook and adjunct resources and materials, official and unofficial that are brought together for teaching and learning by teachers, students and in the best case community, in classrooms and other learning environments (Kelly, 2004).
- 1.4.3 Westbury (2008) defines the syllabus as a “guide” to the curriculum while Schwartz (2006) describes the syllabus as a “written curriculum” that acts as an action-oriented “guide” or “tool” for teachers. The Oxford English Dictionary tells us that the term “syllabus” has evolved to refer to a “summary” of what is to be taught and learned.
- 1.4.4 Undergraduate- A College or university student who has not yet received a bachelor’s or similar degree.
- 1.4.5 An academic program is defined as any combination of courses and/or requirements leading to a degree or certificate, or to a major, co-major, minor or academic track and/or concentration (from Temple policy 02.60.01)
- 1.4.6 Employable means having the qualities expected that would keep up business and advance in the working environment (Lee, 2002).
- 1.4.7 Global Village: the world seen as a community in which people are connected by computers, television, etc., and all depend on one another.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy was created by Benjamin Bloom and was revised by Lorin Anderson. This taxonomy helps educators build critical thinking skills and cognitive abilities in students. Bloom categorized six skills which will help teachers to build classroom objectives and students to understand the learning objectives.

The six categories are as follows:

- Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Application
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

1.5.1. Fig. Bloom's Taxonomy

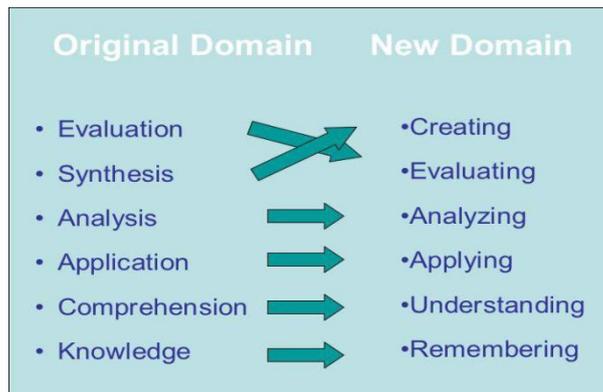
Table 1
Structure of the Original Taxonomy

<i>1.0 Knowledge</i>
<i>1.10 Knowledge of specifics</i>
<i>1.11 Knowledge of terminology</i>
<i>1.12 Knowledge of specific facts</i>
<i>1.20 Knowledge of ways and means of dealing with specifics</i>
<i>1.21 Knowledge of conventions</i>
<i>1.22 Knowledge of trends and sequences</i>
<i>1.23 Knowledge of classifications and categories</i>
<i>1.24 Knowledge of criteria</i>
<i>1.25 Knowledge of methodology</i>
<i>1.30 Knowledge of universals and abstractions in a field</i>
<i>1.31 Knowledge of principles and generalizations</i>
<i>1.32 Knowledge of theories and structures</i>
<i>2.0 Comprehension</i>
<i>2.1 Translation</i>
<i>2.2 Interpretation</i>
<i>2.3 Extrapolation</i>
<i>3.0 Application</i>
<i>4.0 Analysis</i>
<i>4.1 Analysis of elements</i>
<i>4.2 Analysis of relationships</i>
<i>4.3 Analysis of organizational principles</i>
<i>5.0 Synthesis</i>
<i>5.1 Production of a unique communication</i>
<i>5.2 Production of a plan, or proposed set of operations</i>
<i>5.3 Derivation of a set of abstract relations</i>
<i>6.0 Evaluation</i>
<i>6.1 Evaluation in terms of internal evidence</i>
<i>6.2 Judgments in terms of external criteria</i>

Lowest level being knowledge acquisition and highest being evaluation of the acquired knowledge. This level was later revised by Lorin Anderson where he removed synthesis and added creation as the higher level of Taxonomy.

The revised taxonomy is as follows:

- Remember
- Understand
- Apply
- Analyse
- Evaluate
- Create



The first level is to remember the topics thought in the class which will help in understanding the topics well which is the second level in the revised taxonomy. Next level is applying what is taught to execution or implementation. The fourth level is analysing where the topic is divided into different parts and analysing each part for deeper understanding. The fifth level is the Evaluating which in simple terms is the judgement process, where with the help of the previous stages, a decision is made by critical thinking. The last and final stage is creating where a new idea has emerged and the student comes up with a product by wholly understanding the concept.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Higher Education and Employability: Review by Sarang Bola and Sunil. S Dhanawade

The research gives deeper thought and insights to employability, employability skills, academic perspective, employability skill gap and it gives suggestions on employability skills. Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful (Pool and Sewell, 2007).

(Coopers and Lybrand 1998), (Moreley 2001) define 'employability skills' in terms of four key areas:

1. Traditional intellectual skills e.g. critical evaluation, logical argument;
2. Key skills communication, IT, etc.
3. Personal attributes motivation, self-reliance and
4. Knowledge of organizations and how they work.

Employability skills are coachable skills and may be trained in both schools and employment settings. Therefore, the authority should set aims and objectives for teaching employability skills and instructions should

be designed to ensure goals and objectives are attainable. (Robinson 2000). The faculty-student ratio should be close to 1:10, frequent revision of syllabus in consultation with the industry and institutions should create the professionals with a global mindset so that they can adjust in different cultural & social settings (Hannan 2003). Ensure a common platform for industry and education institutions to work out value-based curriculum taking into consideration the needs of industry (Patel and Popker 1998). The primary role of higher education is to train students by enhancing their knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities and to empower them as lifelong critical and reflective learners. This is similar to the perspective of the Skills plus Project who see concern for employability as supportive of good learning rather than in opposition to it. Empowering learners is about giving students control over the educational process and their post-educational lives, and (Harvey 2000). It is essential that any changes to the curriculum are owned by the staff delivering the modules if they are to be successfully implemented. It is important to work with the traditions and values of the institution and of higher education itself. A culture that strives to improve the learning environment for the benefit of students and staff is essential for the successful implementation of change (Atlay, 2000).

This paper mostly discusses to bring research, higher education and industry together and work together to blend all of these and make it one.

2.2. Role of Technology in Indian Education by Mr Chinmoy Goswami

This paper study the role of Education Technology in India. Employers report that they are in need of freshers who are professionals, having good moral and work ethics, can work in a team, have critical thinking and problem-solving ability, can lead a group of talents and are should be skilled in verbal and written communication. Today, students are expected to use media and materials to enhance their learning experience. No more education is seen as one-way communication, indeed it is seen as a process of interaction and interpersonal communication. Educational technology is the study and ethical practice of facilitating e-learning, which is the learning and improving performance by creating, using and managing appropriate technological processes and resources. Be it any field of study using technology to learn and enhance learning has become important and efficient use of technology will enhance teaching-learning experience. Also, students tend to relate quickly and find easy to understand topics through this method of teaching. A balanced generic curriculum, where computers are relegated to their due place as tools, and where they extend the horizons of other subjects is a must.

2.3. Best Practices in Syllabus Writing - Article by J Chiropr, 2006

This article presents an overview of the syllabus structure for faculty members and administrators who would like to develop and evaluate their syllabi. A brief overview of syllabus contents and a checklist is provided.

The syllabus is a description and plans for a course and, if well written, may be a tool that improves student learning, facilitates faculty teaching, improves communications between faculty members about their courses, and assists with monitoring program quality.

Syllabus Checklist:

General course information:

1. Name of the course
2. Term/quarter/semester
3. Location
4. Units/time per week
5. Prerequisites

Instructor information:

6. Instructors' name
7. Office hours and contact information
8. Additional instructors' information

Purpose of the course:

9. Course purpose
10. Course goals
11. Course objectives
12. Additional course information

The learning environment:

13. Facilities and teaching methods
14. Required Texts
15. Provided materials
16. Recommended Texts

Time Schedule/ course plan:

17. Schedule/ course plan
18. Lecture and/or lab topics
19. Landmark events, assessments and due dates

How learning will be assessed:

20. Grading procedure
21. Grading scale and method
22. Missed assessment
23. Grade posting
24. Results of a failing grade
25. Additional student support information

Policy information:

26. Syllabus amendments
27. Special needs
28. Last course revision date
29. Student conduct and class/college policies

Any other additional information:

2.4. The National Association of College and Employers (NACE) has compiled a list of the top 20 skills requested by employers (2007). These skills in rank order are as follows:

Rank	Skills	Rank	Skills
1	Analytical Skills	11	Leadership and Management Skills
2	Communication Skills	12	Motivation/ Initiative
3	Computer Skills	13	Organizational and Time Management

4	Creativity	14	Real Life Experiences
5	Detail-Oriented	15	Self-Confidence
6	Risk-Taker	16	Strong Work Ethics
7	Flexibility/ Adaptability	17	Tactfulness
8	Friendly	18	Teamwork Skills
9	Honesty/ Integrity	19	Technical Skills
10	Interpersonal Skills	20	Well-Mannered/ Polite

(Source NACE 2007)

2.5. Top three employers’ preferences according to the India skills, 2018 report are:

Employer’s Preference
Domain Expertise
Positive attitude
Adaptability

(India Skills Report, 2018)

3. METHODOLOGY

This study will use Qualitative method of research. Content analysis is the primary research tool for the study. Undergraduate Journalism Syllabi of two select universities are analyzed for a better understanding of the nature of syllabus. The syllabus is taken from the official website of the universities. Two selected universities are:

University	Place	Ownership
Bangalore University	Bangalore, Karnataka	State Government
Mysore University	Mysore, Karnataka	State Government

4. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Analysis of Undergraduate Journalism Syllabus from select universities

Structure of the syllabus gives insight into the content and the quality of the subject. Undergraduate programs in India are studied for three years with two semesters each year. Universities either state or central must follow the norms given by the University Grants Commission (UGC). According to the latest UGC guidelines, all the state and private universities should follow Choice based credit systems (CBCS) pattern. CBCS was introduced to ensure the quality in education and also to give more importance to the practical subjects.

The journalism syllabus which is analysed in the research is one of the core subjects studied with two subjects which are elective. It is important to note that there are very few colleges/universities offering exclusive

media courses. In most of the courses, journalism is studied with either History, Economics, Psychology, Optional English or Political Science.

4.1. BA Journalism - Semester 1

In semester 1, Bangalore University offers the subject Introduction to communication which in detail explains kinds of communication, basic models of communication and introduction to print media, electronic media and folk media. Whereas in the Mysore University students study communication skills along with communication models, different types of communication and process of communication. Mysore University gives importance to students visiting seminars, festivals, conferences but the evaluation process is not clearly mentioned in the syllabus.

Summary:

In both the universities basics of communication, communication models are taught in the first semester. It is important to note that Mysore University gives importance to communication skills which are necessary in the media industry. But the topics mentioned under the communication skills are broad and fails to mention the levels of communication skills. Bangalore University concentrates only on the theoretical subjects in the first semester.

4.2. BA Journalism- Semester 2

In semester 2, both the universities concentrate on fundamentals of journalism. Bangalore University introduces print media to the students under which Introduction, definitions, the origin of print media and pioneers in print journalism are studied. Whereas Mysore University has included Applied Journalism in the second semester where students study definitions of journalism, history of journalism, Kannada journalism, theories of press. The last unit gives students peeks into the industry as it talks about journalism as a profession in which citizen journalism, business journalism, Magazine journalism is covered.

Summary:

It is observed that both universities have followed different topics in the second semester. Bangalore University introduces students to print media probably because it is the old form of journalism and is the foundation to the emergence of other fields. Mysore University gives importance to regional journalism by talking about Kannada press. It is important to note that in the second semester both the universities exclude practical subjects. In Bangalore University, only theoretical topics on print are taught and no importance is given to practicals like software used in the print media for page design or photography which is essential in print journalism.

4.3. BA Journalism- Semester 3

In this semester Bangalore University introduces students to Audio Visual media which covers the history of radio and television, types of radio and television programs and the last unit covers an introduction to Indian cinema. Mysore University introduces reporting in the third semester under which Qualifications and responsibilities of a reporter, techniques of news gathering, interview, media conference, press release, fieldwork and observation, writing styles and types of reporting are incorporated. The practical section offers rural reporting, human interest story, one personality interview and crime reporting.

Summary:

It is observed that both the universities in the third semester teach students about the specialized topics moving from basics and foundation subjects. Bangalore University is more of theoretical topics whereas Mysore University attempts to include practicals on reporting along with the theory subjects.

4.4. BA Journalism- Semester 4

In the fourth semester, Bangalore university introduce students to Media laws where they study freedom of the press, freedom of speech and expression, defamation, slander, libel, and various acts related to the media. Mysore University includes editing where editing techniques, editorial page, newspaper design and translation. Practical section include editorial write-up, letter to the editor, translation, headlines and caption writing.

Summary:

In the fourth semester, both the universities subjects are theoretical subjects. Journalism students must be aware of the media laws and newspaper editing which is covered well to an extent.

4.5. BA Journalism- Semester 5

In the fifth semester, it is mandatory to introduce elective subjects to broaden the horizons of students and to give them options to choose fields/subjects they are interested in. Bangalore University offers Reporting and Editing whereas Mysore University offers 4 electives such as Media laws and ethics, Media Management, Freelancing & feature writing and Media and Society.

Summary:

Reporting and Editing topics of Bangalore University are more or less as same as Mysore University topics covered in the third and fourth semester. Mysore University by offering 4 electives is giving students a chance to explore subjects of their interest. But since this is the final year and students would be stepping out for jobs in the next six months, the syllabus could have been more of practical subjects like typography, Anchoring, editing software, Photography, videography and other practical subjects which could prepare them for the industry.

4.6. BA Journalism- Semester 6

Bangalore University introduces students to 2 electives, Media Management and Advertising & Public Relation. Mysore University expose students to Advertising and Public Relation, Introduction to electronic media, Online Media and Intercultural Communication. Mysore University offers practicals on Online Media where students are expected to create a blog, voicing opinion on social media, citizen reporting and analyzing newspaper.

Summary:

In the final semester, both the universities concentrate on Media management. Advertising & Public Relation is commonly introduced in both the universities. Bangalore University restrict on the detailing of the topics in both the electives. Only introduction is taught in the final semester. Mysore University even though gives opportunities for students to excel in the domain, topics taught are very broad and misses the small important details in the topics. Both the Universities have mandatory 2 months internship in any media organization which will be assessed on the report and viva conducted after completing the internship.

5. OBSERVATION AND CONCLUSION

1. Journalism is one of the core subjects studied in both the universities along with either History, Economics, Psychology, Optional English or Political Science.
2. Skill based subjects are given less importance and thus lacks industry orientation
3. In both the universities, Print media is given more importance and other areas are either subtopics or offered as electives.
4. Topics studied under Journalism subject is largely introductory in nature which makes it difficult for students to excel in the subject.
5. Practical components in both the universities are restricted.
6. Both the universities include topics which are outdated. For example, new media is the most popular used means in the journalism industry. Both the universities fail to include new media in their syllabus
7. Subjects offered are distributed unevenly. That is one university offers certain topics in the second semester which are studied in the fourth semester in the other university.

Looking at the dynamics of Higher Education in India, it is evident that the government is trying to make students employable by introducing choice based credit system in the education. But the concern here is the outdated syllabus. The practical subjects and theoretical subjects students learning are not keeping up with the recent trends in the media industry thus students are failing to match to the industry standards. For example Print media is studied in larger context but electronic media and the much important new media is not given enough importance in the syllabus.

From the content analysis conducted, the following recommendations can be derived to find solutions for the existing problems.

1. Syllabus should be updated regularly considering the change or modifications in the media industry.
2. Media industry professionals should be called for guest lectures to give students insight into the industry.
3. Skill based subjects like Personality development, Leadership qualities, Team management, Crisis management, Communication skills should be given equal importance as the core subjects and evaluation process should be as same as core subject evaluation.
4. Media faculty should be trained well in practical oriented subjects.
5. Syllabus must include description of projects/ assignments which will be given to the students in every semester and it should be evaluated.
6. Facilities and infrastructure are key elements in Media education. Required infrastructure like smart classes with ICT facilities, studio, design software, equipment and other necessary things should be provided for the students.
7. Students need to be exposed to interdisciplinary approach to the journalism subject as it will enhance their critical thinking abilities.

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