

Journalism education survey: India

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1. What is the framework of higher education and situating journalism education in that?

Higher education (HE) in India is regulated through the nodal ministry in the federal set up, the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD). It is in the concurrent list of our Constitution which means both the Centre and the respective states have jurisdiction over higher education system. The University Grants Commission (UGC) is the regulatory body for multidisciplinary programmes representing the university system that work under state, centre, deemed and institutions of national importance framework.

2. What are the levels at which journalism education is offered?

Traditionally, as in the university system, journalism was offered at the post graduate level with one or two institutions offering journalism as one of the main combination subjects at the undergraduate level. Over a period of time and currently the programmes are offered at certificate, diploma, PG diploma, Bachelors with pass and honors degree and master's degree. Many universities have also launched PhD programmes. Journalism programmes in India are often not necessarily labeled as journalism. They are labeled as journalism, mass communication and journalism and mass communication, communication and sectors such broadcast, radio and television journalism. Nomenclature apart, the focus is on a combination of skills and practices with a skewed focus depending on the approach and in many cases the resources of the Institutions.

3. How many institutions are offering these programmes and at what level?

The numbers are increasing both in the University and non-university streams. According to study done specifically for this project and based on the compilation of report by the association of Indian universities 113 universities are offering journalism and its variant programmes. Historically, many cultural institutions have offered PG diploma in mass communication and advertising and public relations in major towns and cities. Active press clubs as in Kerala for example offer a certificate and diploma programme. Post liberalization and growth of media in both print and electronic sectors, many media houses have branched out into offering vocation based courses in radio, print and electronic journalism. The Asian College of Journalism, Chennai is a model. Similar exercises have been done by leading newspaper publication groups such as Jagran, India Today, Times group etc. According to a study done last year the number of institutions in India both private and public is around 300.

4. What is the national intake of students at different levels?

The intake ranges from about 30 in public universities to about 75 in the private institutions. So about 3,500 students would be seeking admission in universities and about 10,000 students averaging about 50 for private institutions would be enrolling.

5. What are the main components of the curricula at different levels?

The main components of a full-fledged master's programme of four semesters would include subjects ranging from introduction through skills in different media, ethics, introductory aspects of advertising and public relations, law, research and reporting and editing skills. For a vocational programme that is industry specific it focuses on end to end multi-tasking skills in the specific area with claims that the curriculum is industry ready while the critique of University system is that it is more theory and less practical

6. What is the response/attitude towards these programmes by professional journalists and media industry?

Earlier when the media industry was not promoting institutions the view was sceptic including cynicism towards facilitating internship opportunities. Now with their own training institutions and professional journalists being associated with them, their claim is training with skills is acceptable and their critique of the University system is that although the graduates are well informed and also critical they would not be completely industry ready. This posits a dilemma for the universities also that have to recognize this as well as the highly commercialized media set up with many aberrations of practices, ethics etc. Journalism in this context refers to only news and current affairs genre and not the entertainment sector for which there are competing institutions.

7. Give a profile of the human resources involved in teaching/training in terms of permanent faculty and visiting faculty.

University system for tenured faculty (debatable) has a mandated qualification of a master's degree and PhD including clearing a national level eligibility test for either research or teaching or both. In private institutions the profile and the skill sets of the faculty matters more. Here more than formal qualifications their proficiency and acceptance in the industry is privileged with occasional avenues for critical discussion on media practices. Experiential teaching is the basis and criterion for faculty in the so called professional institutions.

8. Provide a short assessment of journalism education in your country.

Journalism education in India on the face of it is mushrooming although there is a gnawing realization that it is overvalued and hyped particularly in the private sector. Salaries and career graphs are not commensurate with the hype or the fees structure. In universities, particularly funded by the public, the fees structure is relatively low and the graduates have the option to pursue careers in many other sectors as journalism in this case is one of the numerous other degrees. The quest for professional skill sets among the academically inclined faculty and critical thinking among the professionals is an institutional challenge. Although there have been murmurs in the context of many unethical practices and erroneous reporting etc. that journalism qualifications should be mandatory, this has not gained acceptance. The recognition that degree or diploma facilitates better entry level requirements is there in the Industry. The expectation that these graduates be multi skilled requires an overall shift in our programmes.