

# Present state of journalism education in India

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- **Abstract**

*The reach of the press medium in India has increased to 200 million readers in the last three years (NRS, 2005). There are over 60,000 registered newspapers in India in various languages (see Appendix 1), and this is just the reach of the print media—dailies and magazines combined. If one were to include the phenomenal growth of the other forms of media in India, especially television in over 100 million homes, then it becomes evident why it is important to look at the status and relevance of journalism education in the country today and whether it meets the needs of the new scenario. In this chapter, I will explore the present status and relevance of journalism education in India based on primary and secondary data collected through personal observations and interviews of journalists, journalism educators and other related experts.*

**Keywords:** Journalism, Incubation, experts, Freedom, Communication, English

- **Introduction**

Historical overview of journalism The history of journalism in India can be classified into two main phases: pre-independence and postindependence. India attained independence from the British Empire on 15 August 1947 and this is the time period used in this report to divide journalism history into pre-independence—before 15 August 1947—and post-independence—after 15 August 1947—phases. Pre-independence The pre-independence phase started with the acknowledged history of the first newspaper in India in 1776 by William Bolts, even though it wasn't until 1780 that James Augustus Hicky started the Bengal Gazette, also known as Hicky's Gazette (Kumar, 1981). In subsequent years, this phase was marked by different newspapers with two distinct ideologies. The first was mostly by Englishmen who supported the British Empire, while the second was mostly by educated Indians who promoted nation-building and, later, the freedom struggle. While the initial set of newspapers, for example, Times of India, The Statesman and The Hindu, were mostly in English, there was also a strong presence of newspapers in Indian vernacular languages, including Maharatta, Kesari, Sambad Kaumudi,

Harijan and Navjivan. Some of the prominent Indian journalists during this time included Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi.

Post-independence After independence, the Indian press were initially focused on nation-building but had, over the years, witnessed many changes. Some of the significant landmarks in this phase include the “national emergency” declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975, during which civil rights were suspended and restrictions were imposed on free speech. It was a phase when a lot of journalists put up a spirited struggle against restrictions imposed by the state on the freedom of the press; the pre-liberalisation phase that stretched from post-emergency (1977) to the early 1990s when the country started on the path to economic liberalisation. It was during this phase that the Indian press really matured professionally and diversified as a commercial industry. In this phase, while a small group of journalists pursued investigative journalism and tried to justify the press tag of the “watchdog of society”, most of the industry instead veered towards the commercialization path and focused on making profits. There was a phenomenal boom in newspapers and magazines and the adoption of the latest publishing techniques in this phase. From the early 1990s to the present, the press are in a postliberalisation phase, marked by increasing competition from television. They are also facing increasing threats from the Internet and have to brace themselves for the entry of foreign players in the Indian media industry. Newspapers are also starting Internet editions to reach out to a larger global diaspora. The reach of the press is especially growing in the rural areas relative to the urban areas (NRS, 2005). This phase is also witness to the newspapers’ increasing focus on supplements and local editions. Some of the major newspaper groups in this phase include Bennett Coleman (Times of India, etc.); Kasturi Group (The Hindu); The Indian Express; Eenadu group (Ushodaya Publications); Malayala Manorama, Dainik Jagran, Amrita Bazar Patrika and many others.

Historical overview of journalism education There is no accurate documentation of the historical trajectory of journalism education in India. While it is a good guess that most of the initial education for journalists occurred on the job, it was only in the late 1950s that courses in journalism started appearing in the college curricula. A good way to trace this trajectory is through what P. Krishnatray terms as generations. One can speak of history of journalism education in terms of generations. The first generation schools were formed in the 1950s, in the flush of independence. They offered certificate courses in “how-to” journalism. The faculty was drawn from amongst the practitioners and some, like Hislop College in Nagpur, had

British teachers and earned a reputation for themselves. Such efforts were, however, too few and far between to make any difference (personal communication, March 2006). B. P. Sanjay, a former director of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication and a Professor of Communication at the University of Hyderabad, believes that “journalism education is well past its diamond jubilee year if one takes into account the formal attempts to start journalism education in India at the Punjab University in 1941. Prof. P. P. Singh took this initiative.” It is also the phase that Professor Eapen refers to as the time that the first formal efforts in journalism education were made. He wrote: In India, the first attempt was made by Mrs. Annie Besant at the National University at Adyar, Madras. This did not last long. Efforts made by the Indian Journalists Association, Calcutta, to sponsor a training course for journalists also failed. It was at Aligarh that the first university level instruction course in journalism was introduced in 1938. This was abolished in 1940. The Department of Journalism started by Professor P. P. Singh at Lahore under the auspices of Punjab University in 1941 is the oldest institution (1991). Krishnatray classified the second generation from the late 1960s, saying: By the late 1960’s, the college-based certificate courses were replaced by university-based, second generation journalism departments. These departments offered either one or two-year degrees in journalism and mainly attracted urban, middle class, English-speaking students. They grew in numbers, mainly in southern part of India, especially in cities like Mysore, Bangalore and Hyderabad (the predominantly Hindi-speaking North India was soon to get caught in the deeply contentious English-Hindi row and jettison English as (the) medium of instruction). The journalism departments served a growing economy and offered a “one-size-fits-all” programme that included subjects such as graphic arts, reporting, editing, history of journalism, etc. In the 1970’s and 80’s, several of such departments changed their nomenclature from “journalism” to “journalism and mass communication” and incorporated subjects such as communication, public relations and advertising. Professor Eapen (1991) added, “There were only six university departments up to 1961 in India and the number went up to 25 by 1981. Since then, there has been a phenomenal expansion with another 25 departments coming up.” Krishnatray’s analysis classifies the third generation as coming into being in the early 1990s when the Indian government started opening up its economy to the outside world. He observed: The drive to liberalise the Indian economy in the 1990’s ushered in the third generation of com Historical overview of journalism education There is no accurate documentation of the historical trajectory

of journalism education in India. While it is a good guess that most of the initial education for journalists occurred on the job, it was only in the late 1950s that courses in journalism started appearing in the college curricula. A good way to trace this trajectory is through what P. Krishnatray terms as generations. One can speak of history of journalism education in terms of generations. The first generation schools were formed in the 1950s, in the flush of independence. They offered certificate courses in “how-to” journalism. The faculty was drawn from amongst 68 MEDIA ASIA, VOL 35 NO 2, 2008 the practitioners and some, like Hislop College in Nagpur, had British teachers and earned a reputation for themselves. Such efforts were, however, too few and far between to make any difference (personal communication, March 2006). B. P. Sanjay, a former director of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication and a Professor of Communication at the University of Hyderabad, believes that “journalism education is well past its diamond jubilee year if one takes into account the formal attempts to start journalism education in India at the Punjab University in 1941. Prof. P. P. Singh took this initiative.” It is also the phase that Professor Eapen refers to as the time that the first formal efforts in journalism education were made. He wrote: In India, the first attempt was made by Mrs. Annie Besant at the National University at Adyar, Madras. This did not last long. Efforts made by the Indian Journalists Association, Calcutta, to sponsor a training course for journalists also failed. It was at Aligarh that the first university level instruction course in journalism was introduced in 1938. This was abolished in 1940. The Department of Journalism started by Professor P. P. Singh at Lahore under the auspices of Punjab University in 1941 is the oldest institution (1991). Krishnatray classified the second generation from the late 1960s, saying: By the late 1960’s, the college-based certificate courses were replaced by university-based, second generation journalism departments. These departments offered either one or two-year degrees in journalism and mainly attracted urban, middle class, English-speaking students. They grew in numbers, mainly in southern part of India, especially in cities like Mysore, Bangalore and Hyderabad (the predominantly Hindi-speaking North India was soon to get caught in the deeply contentious English-Hindi row and jettison English as (the) medium of instruction). The journalism departments served a growing economy and offered a “one-size-fits-all” programme that included subjects such as graphic arts, reporting, editing, history of journalism, etc. In the 1970’s and 80’s, several of such departments changed their nomenclature from “journalism” to “journalism and mass communication” and incorporated subjects such as communication, public

relations and advertising. Professor Eapen (1991) added, “There were only six university departments up to 1961 in India and the number went up to 25 by 1981. Since then, there has been a phenomenal expansion with another 25 departments coming up.” Krishnatray’s analysis classifies the third generation as coming into being in the early 1990s when the Indian government started opening up its economy to the outside world. He observed: The drive to liberalise the Indian economy in the 1990’s ushered in the third generation of communication education. It created opportunities for new and bold initiatives in communication. Industry captains, non-resident Indians, and established colleges were quick to seize the opportunity. Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad (MICA) was the first private, not-for profit institute launched by Mudra Communications. Alive to the growing needs created due to emerging technologies and the globally integrated marketing communication business environment, third generation private institutes developed strong industry linkages, diversified the syllabi, sought faculty from allied fields and emphasized on research. More important, they realized the value of building brands, creating niche markets, admitting students from all over the country, and recruiting faculty with industry experience. None sought affiliation with the University Grants Commission, a federal agency, and all worked feverishly towards seeking legitimacy from the marketplace. They have succeeded (personal communication, March 2006). Krishnatray also predicted a newer generation of journalism (communication) education institutions would emerge, saying: The fourth generation of communication education is in the making. It can be seen in collaborative efforts and memoranda of understanding being signed between Indian communication institutes and foreign universities. It’s a matter of time before foreign universities themselves set up shop in the country. This trend is already noticeable in the increased stress on “internationalisation” and “study abroad” programmes and their focus on Asia (specifically India and China) within universities in the US.

Present state of journalism education Journalism education in India is offered at different levels and in over a few hundred public and private institutions in India. There are different nomenclatures for the degrees and a number of terms used synonymously. It is not uncommon to use “journalism”, “communication”, “mass communication” and “media” individually or in a combination when referring to the degree emphasis. Traditionally, journalism courses have been a postgraduate offering available for students after their regular (10+2+3)2 Bachelor of Arts, Science or Commerce degrees; but, even though it is a post-graduate degree, it is still termed as

either a Bachelor's in Communication and Journalism (BCJ), Bachelor's in Science (Journalism and/or Communication) or Bachelor's in Journalism and Mass Communication (BJMC), and a Master's in Communication and Journalism (MCJ) or a Master of Arts (Journalism/Communication) degrees. In addition, there are a number of postgraduate diplomas and certificate courses offered by private institutions like Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Asian College of Journalism 69 Journalism Education in India and Xavier's Institute of Communication. Of late, the trend has been to offer it as an undergraduate elective (Akhileshwari Ramagoud, State Correspondent, Deccan Herald, personal communication 2006). A number of media houses also train some of their own journalists by selecting potential students with the necessary skills and putting them through journalism training workshops and on-the-job training "intern" programmes. Such media houses believe that it builds employee loyalty and increases long-term employee retention rates while also proving to be cost-efficient. The Times Research Institute and the Eenadu School of Journalism are two of the institutions that run on-the-job training programmes, while media organisations like NDTV and others also come to mind. All state institutions in India offer degree courses in journalism and communication and some offer journalism courses through distance education. Each state also has a number of private institutions that offer degree and diploma courses; some states have federal institutions that also offer these courses. The following section will present a comprehensive zone-by-zone summary of selected journalism institutions. As India is a vast country, this division will present a much better perspective of the present status of journalism education in the country compared to a holistic analysis. Examples of institutions offering various types of degrees in journalism education in each zone will be presented. The only criteria for selection here is the aim to present a diverse and varied picture of the various institutions and the degrees they offer. It is by no means indicative of the merit, visibility or any other criteria of each represented (or unrepresented) institute. Indian Institute of Mass Communication The Indian Institute of Mass Communication is a good example of a public-funded institution that offers degrees in journalism education. According to the publicity brochure of the institute, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) is an autonomous society under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and was set up with the objective to provide training to the information and publicity personnel of the central and state governments, organise training and research in the use and development of mass communication and make available facilities for training and

research to meet the information and publicity needs of the public and private sector industries. The institute is administered by an autonomous society and its executive council is constituted by the Government of India. The institute conducts training programmes for Group “A” and Group “B” officers of the Indian Information Service and broadcast journalism course for personnel of AIR and Doordarshan. Apart from those, the institute conducts nine-month postgraduate diploma courses in journalism (English); journalism (Hindi); advertising and public relations; and radio and TV journalism in New Delhi. The institute’s branch at Dhenkanal in Orissa conducts courses in English journalism and Oriya journalism. The institute also offers a diploma course in development journalism. Two such courses are held every year and are of four-month duration each. In addition to the above, the institute runs short-term academic programmes for middle level and senior officers of the Indian Information Service, personnel of different media units and other government officers. The following is a sample of modules for the Postgraduate Diploma in Journalism (English) course at IIMC.

- Communication – Concepts and process
- Communication and development
- History of press, laws and ethics
- Reporting – Concepts and process
- Reporting – Practicals
- Editing – Concepts and process
- Editing – Practicals
- Audio-visual production and cyber media
- Electronic journalism
- Public relations

Advertising and newspaper management Similar institutes to the IIMC include the film and television institutes, the central universities, such as the University of Hyderabad and the Tezpur University, and the state universities across the country. All are fully funded by either the federal or state governments. 70 MEDIA ASIA, VOL 35 NO 2, 2008 Central In this chapter, the defined central zone includes the states in the middle of the country, namely Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand and Bihar. Some institutions offering journalism courses in these states include Behrampur University, Jabalpur University, Dr. Hari Singh Gour University,

Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism, Guru Ghasidas University, Mahatma Gandhi Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya, Nalanda Open University, Awadesh Pratap Singh University and Patna University. South In this chapter, the south zone encompasses the states and union territories in the south of the country including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala and Lakshadweep Islands. Some of the institutions offering journalism courses in these states include University of Madras, Karnataka University, Madurai Kamaraj University, Mangalore University, Sri Padmavathi Vishwavidyalaya, Osmania University, University of Hyderabad, University of Kerala, Calicut University, Sree Krishnadevaraya University, Andhra University, Bangalore University, Mysore Vishwavidyalaya, Bharathiyar University, the Manorama School of Communication, Manipal Institute of Communication and the Asian College of Journalism. Manipal Institute of Communication The Manipal Institute of Communication is a part of the Manipal-based T. A. Pai group of educational institutions. It is a good example of a privately funded corporate institution that does not own a media organisation, like a newspaper or a television channel. This institute offers a three-year, or six semesters, Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and communication studies. The students are trained in print journalism, radio, television production and web communication. This course, ideal for future media professionals, also allows a diversity of studies by facilitating access to courses in related disciplines like management, as stated in the publicity materials issued by the institution. Students with 12 years (10+2) of school education from any stream are eligible to enrol into this programme. The course invites students to understand the dynamics and structures involved in interpersonal communication, group communication, mass media production and mass audiences. Theoretical inputs along with practical skills training during the course prepare the students to take up entry-level positions in the media industry. The programme is suitable both for those who anticipate building a career in media and those who propose to opt for higher education in media research, journalism, broadcasting or public relations or those who intend to branch out into allied areas of management studies. This institute also offers a postgraduate Masters in Communication degree that is spread over two years, or four semesters, of study. The postgraduate course is open to graduates from all disciplines. The publicity brochures state that the course is designed to provide a holistic understanding of communication processes in the global context. Students acquire competency in media skills and are trained in print, television, radio and multimedia.



They can specialise in broadcast studies, communication management or print and new media. Some of the sample modules offered as part of this programme include the following.

- English – Prose and poetry
- A cultural history of India
- Human communication
- Presentation skills
- Reporting and writing
- Introduction to computers
- English – Drama and remedial grammar
- Constitution of India
- Editing and design for print
- History of media
- Fundamentals of Internet and new media
- Med 124 – Computer applications
- Foreign Language I – German or French
- Organisational behaviour
- Magazine journalism
- Visual communication
- Media organization
- Media project
- Foreign language II – German or French
- Introduction to economics
- New media communication
- Media and society
- Introduction to radio
- Introduction to political science
- Fundamentals of media laws and ethics
- Introduction to advertising and public relations
- Information and society

- Introduction to television
- Media project II – Graphics and animation
- International relations • Media criticism
- Media and development
- Media research techniques
- Media seminar series
- Media project

III Similar institutions include the Indian Institute of Journalism and New Media in Bangalore and the Bhavan's Institute of Communication and Management. Asian College of Journalism The Asian College of Journalism (ACJ) is a good example of a privately funded educational institution that also enjoys active support from a media organisation. This institute is based in Chennai and is actively supported by the Kasturi group of newspapers that publishes newspapers like The Hindu. S. Vishwanathan (2003), writing about the 125 years of The Hindu newspaper, points out in a published interview with the editor-in-chief, N. Ram,

Relevance of journalism education After being neglected for a long time, journalism and mass communication courses in India are witnessing a big demand from students intent on pursuing careers in journalism and communication. While the boom in private television channels in the country fuels this demand, it is not uniform across all institutions and the reasons are many. What used to be a postgraduate degree specialisation is now also being offered in many institutions as an undergraduate specialisation. In addition, there are also other questions about the level of courses and how they tie in to each other, the type and consistency of training offered, the course curriculum and duration and the overall quality of the education. While there are a number of other concerns about journalism education in India, four major concerns will be discussed first in this section. These are prioritised based on personal observations and experiences, and are supplemented by primary data collected through interviews of experts in this field (see Appendix 1 for list of interviewees).

## ▪ Conclusion

In the preceding sections, some of the major concerns about journalism education in India today were highlighted. While there are a number of other issues that need to be addressed, these above-mentioned are major concerns that need to be addressed urgently if what is being taught in the name of journalism education in India is to be relevant at all. As Buroshiva says, It is difficult to say “what is right” with journalism education in India today. In fact, nothing is right. There is today a huge amount of interest in media courses among the new generation. In fact, many skip business management and engineering courses and opt for media and journalism, but are quickly disillusioned because of the way it is taught at the conventional colleges or universities. So, the growing interest is certainly a positive development, but we academics have not been able to live up to the expectations of the new generation partly because it is hard to change the existing system, and partly because of our own limitations in not recognising the need for “convergence of thoughts”—the different technologies and the disciplines that are coming together to teach the media and communication subjects. There [is] a growing number of research work and projects being done on media subjects—this is another positive development—but researchers who strictly do not have media and communication backgrounds are still undertaking the more relevant ones like social sciences, humanities, information technology, and the rest. Journalism education in India ... [has yet] to attain the “rigour” that can fetch the subject the status of a front ranking independent discipline (in many universities not many years ago, it was a part of other departments like English). This is unfortunate[ly] because of our own failure—the journalism professionals and academics who never agree—and yet the discipline has all the potential and the market need[ed] to be one of the most sought-after subjects. The controversy between the professionals and academics will continue, as it does in other countries, but they should come together on the vital issue to raise the quality and the status of journalism education in India.

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3. H. S. Shubha, Lecturer, Manipal Institute of Communication. G. NagaMallika, Assistant Professor, Manipal Institute of Communication. Maya Ranganathan, Professor, Manipal Institute of Communication.
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12. Sridhar Chari, CEO, March Consulting, Hyderabad. Chandra Siddartha, Film Director. Supriya Sakamuri, Producer, EMMRC.
13. P. L. V. Rao, Professor of Journalism and Director, Educational Multi Media Research Center (EMMRC). B. S. D. Raja, Producer, EMMRC. Kennedy Pilli, Producer, EMMRC.
14. Padma Iruvanti, Programme Manager, Gemini Television. K. Jagadeeswara Rao, freelance television director.
15. Ramaraju Kamalasaana Rao, freelance television director. Vasuki Belavadi, Reader, Sarojini Naidu School of Performing Arts, Fine Arts & Communication, University of Hyderabad.