

Media Education Compatibility with Market Needs: Evidence from Pakistan

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This research explored the compatibility between media education and market needs. It also identifies gaps between media education and market needs along with future challenges and directions. The survey method was employed to collect data from media professionals of different specialized media fields i.e TV, Radio, and Advertising, Public Relations, online Journalism and Print Media. A positive correlation was found between capability of Advertisement, TV, Public Relations, Print media, Theory and Research Education with media market needs. On the contrary, Online Journalism, Radio and Film education are not compatible with market needs. This study presents the list of reasons and challenges that make media education incompatible with market needs including lack of linkage between media industry and education institutions, non-availability of paid internships for students, untrained teachers, budget constraints, poor technical facilities in universities, lack of diversity in offered media education programs/degrees. This study reveals that the measures including education institutions liaison with media industry, teachers training, government support and allocation of funds are required to make media education more compatible with media industry requirements.

Keywords: *media education, compatibility, media market needs, satisfaction*

Introduction

Pakistani society and all its institutions are experiencing a dynamic change. This change is not only attributed to history, but also to a very powerful agent, the media. Media is centre to this change that it is affecting politics, society, culture, and economics. Media is not an automated machine rather it's an industry driven by human beings skilled to develop contents according to their ability and awareness level that is generated by the media educational institutes. Therefore, role of media institutions in disseminating knowledge, imparting skills, creating awareness and sensitizing the public about the media role in society is immensely important. Media industry growth, quality of media contents, contribution of media to the society, politics and economy all depend upon the quality of the graduates produced by media educational institutions. The basic purpose of this study is to explore the compatibility between media education and market needs. According to the Merriam Webster online dictionary (2013) compatibility is defined as "capable of existing together in harmony....designed to work with another device or system without modification." (merriam-

webster.com/dictionary/compatible). In this study compatibility means the fit between the skills, knowledge, abilities of the mass communication/media studies/journalism graduates and the job opportunities available in the media industry i.e. Public Relations, Online Journalism, TV, Radio, Print media, Film, Advertisement and Theory and research.

El-Nawawy (2007) maintained that journalism educators at Arab universities and journalism practitioners at daily Arab newspapers in Egypt and Jordan are of opinion that there was a gap between journalism education, practices and market needs. The data was collected through survey by employing a convenience sampling technique. He compared the perceptions of educators and practitioners regarding types of media-related courses, journalism competencies, practices adopted by academic journalism programs and qualifications of journalism faculty revealed that educators agreed with professionals on most journalistic competencies and practices that ought to be taught by academic journalism programs in Egypt and Jordan, educators' rankings of courses on media theory, journalism skills and ICT were significantly higher than those

of professionals. On the contrary, Xu, Chu, & Zhongshi (2002) surveyed 30 journalism and communication schools of China 60 trace changes and continuity in the country's journalism education in the past three decades during which dramatic economic and sociopolitical reforms were implemented maintained that there were increasingly intimate too the ties between pedagogical strategies and market demands. In Australia, researchers maintained that proper education of journalists' in journalism subjects can play a significant role in improving media credibility because it improves their understanding about society, culture, law and ethics, social system and the quality of information disseminated (Daniel 1990; Smyth & Davies, 1990; Henningham, 1994).

Most employers in the media now accept that their intake will be university graduates with consideration of specialization. The issue becomes even more complex when media employers rely solely on academia for the preparation of media professionals and no input to the curriculum development. Without such input how can they know which journalism courses impart the skills relevant to industry needs? Moreover, the respective focus on areas of specialization in media education can also become problematic for the respective formats of media, i.e. (print, radio, TV, PR, advertising and online). From another point of view, the question of relevant courses may help students to understand society from a media perspective. Knowledge and skills other than media publishing and broadcasting are also significant. It's very important and should not be ignored because education is not solely meant to fulfill the market needs. The focus should be to strike a balance between journalism and media industry, society in general as well as research activities for academia (Wicklein, 1994: 45-48; Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Phillips, 1994: 124-7; Hamlett, 1994).

It has been more than a decade that we have witnessed an enormous growth of media in Pakistan. But there is not a single systematically conducted study available to access media education compatibility with market needs. Moreover, the planning and developing of media curriculum is solely based upon input from the academia or only from a few of media professionals, with no opportunity available to have the input from a larger section of media about the media industry needs and

requirements. This trend is poisonous for the relationship of media education and industry. It has not only undermined the trust level between media education and industry but also raised concerns about the media educational institutes in the country. Moreover, this trend has negatively affected the prospects of media graduates to find respectable jobs.

This study is designed to explore the compatibility of media education and market needs in detail. Moreover, study also investigated the reasons for any incompatibility between media education and market needs. This study also addressed the challenges to the compatibility and future directions to meet those challenges. In addition, normative theory and Parsons Talent matching concept helped to understand the fit between market needs and employee education. It asserts that people make occupational decisions based on their judgment between personal traits and the labor market. These decisions are made after understanding of their individual traits and knowledge of job and labor market (Gikopoulou, 2008, p.9).

The following hypotheses were developed to measure the compatibility of media education and media industry needs.

Hypotheses of the study

H₁: Online journalism education is related to the media market needs.

H₂: Advertising education is related to the media market needs.

H₃: There is a relationship between Print media education and media market needs.

H₄: Radio education is associated with media market needs.

H₅: TV education by universities is related to media market needs.

H₆: Public Relations education is associated with media market needs.

H₇: Film education is associated with media market needs.

H₈: Theory and research education is related with the media market needs.

H9: Media education is associated with the media market needs.

Research Questions

R1: What are the reasons of incompatibility of media education with the market needs?

R2: What are the challenges faced by Pakistani education institutions to make media education compatible with the market needs?

R3: What kind of directions proposed by media professionals for making the media education compatible to media market needs.

Significance of Research

The purpose of this study is to give insight into the importance of media education according to market needs in Pakistan. It also aims to explore the perceptions of different segments of media industry about the media education. The findings of this study are beneficial in exploring how media education can be made compatible to the market needs by providing future course of actions for media education, media industry and government.

Methodology

The survey method was employed in this study to measure the compatibility of media education to the market needs in different media fields. The convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from the professionals working in various media industries of Lahore. Around 17 professionals from each area of specialization (i.e. TV, Radio, Advertising, Film, PR, Online Journalism and Print media) were selected on the basis of availability of respondents and having more than three years working experience in their relevant field. A total of 120 questionnaires were collected.

Instrumentation

Media education and market compatibility related to different fields of specializations in media including Print Media, Film, Advertising, Public Relations, TV, Radio, Online Journalism and theory and research was assessed using self-report survey questionnaire. A total of 55 items on a seven point Likert scale were used to get the response on satisfaction level of media professionals on all the fields of specialization. The items were related to variety of aspects of each field including language, writing, technical skill, industry knowledge, jargon,

software etc. The instrument was developed to get a fairly good idea about the areas in which academia is performing according to market needs as well as the areas where academia is lacking so that proper attention may be given to those lacking areas. An overall compatibility of media education to market needs was also gauged by asking the direct questions. Other than measuring the skill, knowledge and ability level of students, the understanding of students to the role of media in society, democracy, development as well as students' knowledge about media ethics and laws was also measured. The reasons, future challenges and future directions regarding the media education and market needs were also explored using open ended questions.

Item development and Content Validity

Items for this survey were developed by the researcher and for the purpose of establishing the content validity of all items; opinions from experts of media specialization including TV, Radio, Print media and PR and Advertising were taken. Initially researcher developed 105 items for the instrument in which 12 items were to measure the Advertising education compatibility, nine items were to measure Online Journalism education compatibility, 11 items were to measure Public Relations education compatibility, 14 questions were to measure Print media education compatibility, 10 items were to measure Radio education compatibility and 7 items were for film education, 7 items were assessing theory and research education compatibility respectively. After reviewing the instrument experts recommended to improve the instrument like shorten the items' length and arrangement of items in a good order etc. It was also recommended by experts that limit of items in a specific variable should not be more than seven. After the review of experts, the instrument was rearranged and less important items were excluded from the instrument according to the recommendation of experts. The finally approved instrument by experts comprised of 55 statements further divided into 8 parts. A pilot testing of an instrument was done which showed a good response and it's a good indicator for the researcher to continue study with this instrument. Internal consistency of the instrument was measured by using Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis. According to DeVellis, (2003) the ideal value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient should be more than

0.70. The value of the coefficient for internal consistency of the instrument was found highly reliable. All the values of reliability are given in table 1(see in Appendix).

Results

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was carried to find out the relationship between media education and market needs. Findings in table 2 (see in Appendix) indicated that education related to advertisement, TV, print media, Public Relations and theory and research areas of specialization are significantly correlated with the market needs, hence study hypothesis 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 are accepted. Whereas, media education regarding Online Journalism, Film and Radio education are not well-matched with the market needs indicating that media education in these study areas are not fulfilling the requirements of the media industry of Pakistan. So, the hypotheses of study 1, 4 and 7 are rejected. In addition, the study explores the reasons for incompatibility of media education to market needs, future challenges and directions to address the issue of media education and market needs compatibility and the findings of research questions 1, 2 and 3 are given in table 3 (see in Appendix).

Discussion

It is evident that media industry is not satisfied with the media education provided by media institutions across the country. There is a prevailing sense of dissatisfaction among the various sectors of media; the factors could be either the standard of education or the quality of media graduates produced by these institutes. Overall, this dissatisfaction is more evident in the fields of online journalism, radio and film education.

There are several reasons of dissatisfaction regarding Film education in Pakistan, such as; lacking the infrastructure and equipment (cameras, lights, studios, editing suites etc.) essential for the training of students, budget constraints, lukewarm government support and absence of industry–education liaison. Moreover, presence of under trained teachers for the Film courses has also been noticed especially in the affiliated colleges and private sector universities.

For the radio, the above mentioned reasons also stand true. Majority of media studies departments are not having FM radio stations that's

why students are not trained in a professional manner. It has also been noticed that radio has no longer been identified as a career of choice among the students because of the monotony existing in the field, low salary structure and low level of recognition.

The respondents maintain that education related to public relations is compatible to market needs. This satisfaction level of PR education is because of following reasons: Firstly, PR education does not depend upon technical infrastructure; secondly, internship opportunities are available in PR field; thirdly, students join the field solely because of their aptitude. Fourthly, PR is being taught in mass communication departments for the last couple of decades and there is an expertise available to teach these courses. Moreover, advertising education is also compatible with market needs because many institutes in Pakistan offering specialized courses and degree programs in this field.

The respondents maintain that print media education has compatibility with industry needs due to following factors: students join the print media solely derived by their passion to write and share their views; print media education is not much dependent upon technical infrastructure; print media is being taught at education institutes for the last several decades and there is enough teaching expertise available to teach the courses. On the other hand, respondents are concerned about some aspects of print media education in Pakistan including command over English language, sub-editing skills; print media format writing, reporting skills, knowledge of media industry and print media management.

In addition, education related to online journalism is incompatible to media industry needs because of the following reasons: Firstly, online journalism sector is still under-development in Pakistan. Although online journalism has an immense potential for growth and it is a future media technology. Secondly, Professionals' working in online journalism field does not have media/journalism background. Majority of them are having IT background. Thirdly, mass communication departments in Pakistan do not offer degrees and specialized courses related to online journalism.

Responding to question “what are the reasons of incompatibility of media education with the market needs,” media professionals maintained that Education & media industry gap, lack of technical facilities and equipment, budget constraints and lack of diversity in offered media education degrees and Programs, whereas for the question of under trained teachers there was a mix response (RQ 1, For details see Table 3). These findings are important because it makes the picture clearer. The study also reveals that students are also lacking in terms of their ambition to excel in media industry after graduation. On the other hand, enrollment in the media institutes is increasing year after year. The plausible explanation could be that media has penetrated deep into society and students are definitely interested to get educated in media but their ambition to become media practitioner in future declines because of prevailing environment in the media education institutes that is characterized with lack of facilities, difficulties to get internship, concentration of media in a few cities i.e. Karachi mostly and then Lahore and Islamabad, absence of proper compensation structure in media industry, lack of career counseling and job insecurity.

Media professionals maintained that media job market would not be limited in the future rather they expressed a very strong hope that there will be an expansion of media industry and consequently there would be job openings for the fresh graduates in the field (RQ 2, For details see Table 3). This finding demands more attention toward improvement in the quality of education being provided at the media departments. In addition, govt. support and funding and undertrained teachers would be the major challenges faced by media educational institution to make media education compatible with industry needs.

Responding to the question about the future directions that must be adopted in order to make media education compatible to media industry needs the media professionals proposed that that teachers training at foreign Universities, specialized training in media, education & media industry liaison, govt. support and funds allocation for media education are required (RQ 3,Table 3). These results clearly indicate that it's in the favor of both media educational institutes and media industry to develop a close liaison with each other so that a synergy may be developed for mutual benefits. In addition, proper

infrastructure should be developed at educational institutes and for that purpose government support and allocation of funds must be ensured. Therefore, these are the areas where there is need to give proper attention in order to improve upon the standards of media education at media institutes.

Conclusion

It is evident from this study that media education in Pakistan is compatible with market needs especially in TV, print media, PR advertising and Theory and Research fields. Media education in Radio, Online Journalism and Film are incompatible with media industry needs. Media institutes are making the best possible efforts to produce human resources not only capable of fulfilling the market requirements, but also having a strong sense of responsibility to define and shape the perception of the Pakistani people about important political, social and development issues. It must also be noted that with a little effort by all stake-holders including media educational institutes, media industry and government the areas of concern can be addressed and media educational institutes of the country can become hubs of excellence.

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Appendix

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

No.	Variables	No. of Items (k)	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Advertising Education Compatibility	7	0.74
2	Film Education Compatibility	6	0.79
3	Online Journalism Education Compatibility	7	0.81
4	PR Education Compatibility	7	0.69
5	Print Media Education Compatibility	7	0.85
6	Radio Education Compatibility	7	0.71
7	TV Education Compatibility	7	0.77
8	Theory and Research	7	0.80

Table 2:

Summary of Correlations for Compatibility of Media Education to Market Needs (N=120).

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Online Journalism	.12	.09*	.06	.20**	.12	.15*	.15*	.09
Advertising	-	.23*	.42**	.54**	.20*	.22*	.30**	.19*
Print Media education	-	-	.60**	.34**	.12	.12	.15*	.20*
Radio	-	-	-	.49**	.20*	.26*	.32**	.06
Television	-	-	-	-	.34*	.22*	.22	.24**
Public Relation					-	.33*	.24*	.19*
Film Education						-	.15*	.09
Theory & Research							.16*	.32**

Overall Media Education Compatibility	-	.18*				
Market Needs						
<i>Note. **p<.001, *p<.05</i>						
Challenges	extremely unimportant	quite unimportant	slightly unimportant	slightly important	quite important	extremely important
Funding	13 (11%)	12 (10%)	23 (19%)	21 (18%)	20 (17%)	31 (26%)
Govt. Support	9 (8%)	15 (13%)	17 (14%)	19 (16%)	26 (22%)	25 (21%)
Media Growth	18 (15%)	20 (17%)	30 (25%)	17 (14%)	22 (18%)	13 (11%)
Limited Job Market	16 (13%)	22 (18%)	38 (32%)	15 (13%)	19 (16%)	9 (8%)
IT Incorporation	-	-	3 (3%)	31 (26%)	37 (31%)	49 (41%)
Undertrained Professionals	16 (13%)	17 (15%)	21 (18%)	18 (15%)	23 (19%)	25 (21%)
Lack of student interest	14 (12%)	17 (14%)	20 (16%)	23 (19%)	21 (18%)	25 (21%)
Reasons						
Education & media Industry Gap	2 (2%)	5 (4%)	9 (8%)	27 (23%)	29 (24%)	48 (40%)
Lack of Technical Facilities	4 (3%)	10 (8%)	11 (9%)	27 (23%)	26 (22%)	42 (35%)
Untrained Teachers	12 (10%)	17 (14%)	21 (18%)	22 (18%)	26 (22%)	22 (18%)
Lack of Budget	9 (8%)	9 (8%)	16 (13%)	30 (25%)	26 (22%)	30 (25%)
Lack of diversity in offered Programs	16 (13%)	10 (8%)	10 (8%)	26 (22%)	22 (18%)	36 (30%)
Directions						
Teachers Training at Foreign Universities	9 (8%)	13 (11%)	15 (13%)	22 (18%)	27 (23)	34 (28%)
Specialized Training in media	10 (8%)	13 (11%)	18 (15%)	20 (17%)	24 (20%)	35 (29%)
Education & Media Industry liaison	11 (9%)	7 (6%)	11 (3%)	26 (22%)	28 (23%)	37 (31%)
Media Expansion	11 (9%)	12 (10%)	15 (13%)	26 (22%)	18 (15%)	38 (32%)
Govt. Support	11 (9%)	14 (12%)	15 (13%)	27 (23%)	18 (15%)	35 (29%)
Funds Allocation	18 (15%)	14 (12%)	20 (17%)	22 (18%)	25 (21%)	21 (18%)