

Journalism Education in the Age of Convergence: Pedagogical and Scholastic Shifts in the Media Departments of Hyderabad

Pranay Rupani

Research Scholar, Department of Communication, Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication,
University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India

(Paper developed from a presentation at the ICA Asia Regional Conference 2017, “Communications Research in the Digital Age”, 14–16 December 2017, Mumbai, India, and the deliberations of Panel-3, “Future Directions for Teaching/Research in the 21st Century Digital Media Ecology”, 14 December 2017)

Abstract

The rapid growth in the field of journalism and mass communication education worldwide is second only to the burgeoning of engineering institutions and B-schools [1]. This also holds true in the Indian scenario, where a study by the Delhi-based Centre for Media Studies reports that there are over 300 media institutes in India offering a wide range of technical and creative programmes with diverse course content [2]. This phenomenal growth must be seen in the context of the manifold expansion of the media market since the economic liberalisation of the 1990s and the ongoing transformations brought about by digital technologies and convergence. Yet the discipline that services this market has no adequately documented Indian history: existing accounts of communication study are largely Western in orientation and, even there, have been criticised as hagiographic and Whiggish. Digital interventions through convergence have meanwhile changed the way journalism is taught as well as understood: skills training is no longer confined to a single technology, reporting is now done simultaneously for multiple platforms, and pedagogy is increasingly focussed on developing multi-skilled students, while media research incorporates techniques such as social media ethnography [3]. Situated within the frameworks of disciplinary historiography and institutional isomorphism, this paper analyses the evolution of journalism education in Hyderabad through a study of two prominent media departments—the Department of Communication and Journalism at Osmania University, founded in 1954 as one of the earliest in the country, and the Department of Communication at the University of Hyderabad, established in 1988–89. Drawing on in-depth interviews with three established academics whose own biographies embody the discipline’s founding lineages, together with a historical perusal of its growth over more than 75 years, the paper examines how journalism curricula have responded to the advent of the digital era, whether educators have had to change their approaches to teaching and research in the age of media convergence, and what the discipline’s many renamings reveal about its constant negotiation with market forces and technology.

Keywords: Convergence, Convergent Journalism, Digital Ecologies, Disciplinary Historiography, Journalism Education, Media Education, Social Media Ethnography.

1. Introduction

The twenty-first century is the era of bits and bytes. Bit by bit, digital media has become integral and instrumental in shaping attitudes, values, policies and public discourse. Digital media penetration is rising globally, but especially in Asia, which by 2017 accounted for nearly half of the world's Internet users despite only moderate penetration levels within the continent. In India alone, the number of Internet users was estimated at 481 million by December 2017, a growth of over 11 per cent in a single year, with mobile Internet users numbering 456 million and the ratio of data to voice expenditure having risen from 45:55 to 84:16 between 2013 and 2017 [4], [5]. What we are witnessing in the last decade—the phenomenal increase in mobile telephony, fixed broadband and data consumption—is the phenomenon referred to as convergence. Jenkins famously defined convergence as the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of experiences they want; convergence, he insisted, is not primarily a technological process but a cultural shift that occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others [6].

The one factor that has not kept pace with this growth is media literacy, and the institutions most directly charged with producing media-literate professionals—the university departments of journalism and mass communication—find themselves at the centre of this churn. The rapid growth of journalism and mass communication education worldwide is second only to the burgeoning of engineering institutions and B-schools [1]. In India, the Centre for Media Studies estimated that over 300 media institutes offer a wide range of technical and creative programmes [2], a striking expansion when compared with the roughly two dozen institutions that existed in the early 1980s [7]. This growth must be read against the manifold expansion of the Indian media market since the economic liberalisation of the 1990s: the Indian media and entertainment industry grew at 9.1 per cent in 2016 despite the headwinds of demonetisation and was projected to grow at a compound annual rate of over 14 per cent between 2017 and 2021, with digital media moving rapidly from the margins to centre stage [8].

Throughout this paper, “communication education” is used as a shorthand term for the range of training programmes in communication and media on offer in India, whose nomenclatural spectrum includes programmatic labels such as communication, mass communication, journalism, advertising and public relations, media studies and communication management. The origins of this education can be traced to journalism training courses begun more than 75 years ago, but not much beyond that chronology is systematically known about the history of the discipline as it took on its varying avatars in different institutions. There has not been much by way of an Indian history of the study of communication; what exists has many missing components and is replete with anecdote. This paper is therefore simultaneously an exercise in disciplinary history and a study of contemporary pedagogical change: it analyses the evolution of journalism education in Hyderabad through a study of two media departments in prominent institutions—Osmania University and the University of Hyderabad—and asks how the curriculum, the classroom and the research agenda in these departments have responded to the advent of the digital era.

2. Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

A. Disciplinary Historiography and the Whig Problem

The chronological history of the established social sciences is little over a century old, beginning with sociology in the nineteenth century and extending to psychology by the 1930s; the emergence of the American research university, with doctoral programmes integrating teaching and research, converted broad fields of learning into bounded disciplines grouped under the divisions of science, social sciences and humanities [12], [13]. The critical reading of sociology, anthropology and psychology from the 1960s onwards produced dedicated subfields for the study of each discipline's own history—explorations of origin myths, critical surveys, and analyses of the functions that disciplinary histories serve—supported, especially in psychology and anthropology, by an infrastructure of associations, journals, archives and specialised doctoral programmes [9], [11]. Communication has lagged conspicuously behind. Park and Pooley argue that the published histories of communication are largely hagiographic in nature and Whiggish—presenting the past as an inexorable march of progress towards the present [10]—written like folksy biography in which a core story remains unchanged, external intellectual influences are ignored, and institutional history, though rich and revealing, is neglected: all social sciences embellish their past, but communication studies has glorified biographies and little else [9].

The historiography of media and communication research is, moreover, overwhelmingly concerned with the United States and Canada, with minor literatures on Scandinavian, Dutch, German and French cases; little attention has been paid to the discipline's development in non-Western countries, and there was no serious comparative work placing national traditions and institutional histories side by side until the publication of *The International History of Communication Study* in 2015 [14]. There are long histories of journalism education in China (from 1918), Japan (from 1932) and India (from 1938), yet no comprehensive account of the evolution of the discipline exists for any of these countries, despite the significant part their media have played in social and political development. The present study of two Hyderabad departments is offered as a contribution towards filling that gap for India, in the institutional register that Park and Pooley identify as the most neglected and the most revealing [9].

B. A Practical Discipline in an Age of Abundance

Over the past half-century the allied fields of communication, journalism and media studies have expanded more than almost any other academic field, with the possible exceptions of computer science and biomedicine. Nordenstreng warns that the approaches to teaching communication and media studies have become so abundantly diverse that the field risks both losing sight of its scholarly roots and embracing only the surface of the realities it investigates [15]. The rapidly expanding field has become progressively differentiated, with convergence and new media—including the Internet—extending grounds for highly specialised and often unconnected points of interest, and becoming more about the technology than about theoretical frameworks; in the process it loses its moorings in basic disciplines that have retained a definitive core, such as sociology, political science, linguistics and literature, and grows ever more dependent on the empirical and practical dimensions of reality, reigniting the long-running debate over the need for theory in a practical discipline [15], [12]. The importance the field had assumed was captured in the celebrated 1983 “Ferment in the Field” issue of the *Journal of Communication*, whose editor remarked that were Marx alive, his principal work would concern communications rather than capital [16].

The Indian variant of this debate has been sharper still, because Indian communication education has been so heavily weighted towards journalism skills. Eapen, one of the discipline's Indian founders, argued in *Communication: A Discipline in Distress* that Indian programmes had borrowed from Western university courses and remained focussed on the requirements of the news sector without addressing what India actually needed [17]. Joseph, writing three decades later, observed that in journalism curricula the necessity for theory itself is questioned, treated as redundant for the discipline and eternally deferred, thereby stalling the enrichment of communication as an academic field [18]—an Indian echo of the practical-discipline argument advanced internationally by Craig, Pooley, Simonson and Calhoun [12], [13], [9]. Any study of how Indian departments have absorbed convergence must therefore attend not only to what new skills entered the syllabus but to what happened to theory while they did.

C. Convergence and Journalism Education

Convergence, in the scholarly literature, operates at several registers simultaneously: technological (the collapsing of print, audio, video and data into a common digital substrate), industrial (cross-ownership and integrated newsrooms), professional (the multi-skilled journalist producing for several platforms at once) and cultural (the participatory behaviour of audiences) [6], [19]. Pavlik, writing at the turn of the millennium, argued that the convergence of telecommunications, computing and traditional media was transforming journalism in ways not seen since the invention of the printing press, and devoted an entire chapter of his landmark work to the implications for journalism education and the preparation of the next generation of journalists [20]. Deuze identified the convergent, multimedia environment as the central challenge to the journalism curriculum, urging educators to produce reflective practitioners rather than narrowly trained technicians, and observing that programmes worldwide were being restructured around cross-platform storytelling [21], [22]. Surveys of journalism programmes in the United States found that by 2005 a large majority had already adapted their curricula to address convergence in some form, even where the overall emphasis remained on legacy print skills [23]. For research, Postill and Pink's formulation of social media ethnography—which reconceives the field site as a “messy web” of digital sociality traversed by the researcher—offered a methodological response to media forms that refuse to stand still long enough to be studied by conventional means [3].

D. Institutional Isomorphism as an Analytical Lens

To interpret the institutional behaviour of the departments, this study draws on DiMaggio and Powell's theory of institutional isomorphism, which explains why organisations in a field come to resemble one another through coercive pressure (regulation and accreditation), mimetic pressure (imitation of prestigious models under uncertainty) and normative pressure (professionalisation) [24]. Indian communication schools have historically emulated established American programmes structurally, at times enacting what may be called a façade of isomorphism through ceremonial conformity—adopting the names, degree structures and course titles of the institutions being copied even where the professional quality measures of those institutions are not followed—thereby raising questions about the substance beneath the form [24], [17]. The lens is doubly useful for the present study: it illuminates the American-assisted founding of the Osmania department in the 1950s, and it supplies a critical test for the convergence-era renamings of the 2010s—are the new digital and convergent labels substantive curricular change, or ceremonial conformity to a new global template?

3. Journalism Education in India: A Historical Trajectory

A. Origins, 1938–1960

Thomas divides the history of communication education in India into three parts: pre-Independence beginnings (1938–1960), state-sponsored media education (1960–1991), and communication education after liberalisation (from 1991) [1]. Because the independently published press was credited by members of the freedom movement and scholars alike with playing a vital role in the Indian independence struggle, communication education in India has from the outset been closely associated with the professional training of journalists [1]. The earliest formal initiative is generally traced to Aligarh Muslim University, which introduced a diploma course in journalism in 1938 under the patronage of Sir Shah Mohammed Sulaiman; the course was successful but short-lived [25]. The first full-fledged department of journalism in undivided India was established at Punjab University, Lahore, in 1941 by Professor Prithvi Pal Singh, a Missouri-trained journalist regarded as the founding father of formal journalism education in India; after Partition the department was revived in Delhi and later shifted to Chandigarh, where it continues within Panjab University [25], [26]. During the same period, Bhavan's Institute in Kochi and the Congress Party ran training programmes for nationalist journalists [1]. In independent India, the University of Madras started its department of journalism in 1947—among the first journalism programmes in Asia—followed by Calcutta University, whose two-year postgraduate diploma was formally inaugurated in 1950, and Mysore, where journalism was offered at Maharaja's College from 1951; the visibility of such programmes grew through the 1960s as many traditional universities opened either journalism or communication courses [25], [26], [27].

B. The American Connection and the Institutions of the State, 1952–1991

A decisive episode in this history—and the one from which the Hyderabad story directly descends—was the American assistance of the early 1950s. Between 1952 and 1955, Roland Wolseley of Syracuse University and De Forest O'Dell of Butler University established departments at Hislop College in Nagpur and at Osmania University in Hyderabad respectively, as part of the Technical Cooperation Mission (the forerunner of USAID) working in conjunction with the Government of India's first Five-Year Plan [1]. The Osmania diploma introduced journalism to K. E. Eapen and S. Bashiruddin, two men who would in turn shape communication education across the country. Eapen, equipped with degrees in arts and law and the Osmania Diploma in Journalism, became the first Indian head of the Hislop school, proceeded on an American fellowship to a master's in journalism at Syracuse under Wolseley in 1954, took his doctorate at the University of Wisconsin—where instruction had shifted towards communication studies proper—and later established the communication programme at Bangalore University [1], [9]. Bashiruddin took his Osmania diploma to the University of Minnesota, known for training journalists for the newspaper market, and returned to head the Osmania department, where he presided over key academic and administrative decisions concerning the DJ, BCJ and MCJ programmes. This initial American support institutionalised an American style of journalism training quite different from the earlier British-era tradition associated with editors such as Robert Knight, which had invested in communication for social change rather than in the training of journalists [28]; it also linked Indian journalism education to the diffusion studies of Everett Rogers and to the institution-building associated with Wilbur Schramm, under whose influence the Indian Institute of Mass Communication was established in 1965 with the support of UNESCO and the Ford Foundation [1].

The Indian state was deeply involved in the subsequent spread of journalism education, media research centres and audio-visual research centres, alongside the expansion of its broadcasting systems. The Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) of 1975–76, conducted with NASA and ISRO to take television to some 2,400 villages, marked the first large-scale use of social-science evaluation in Indian communication—even if conducted largely by physicists—and many young scholars in the university system cut their research teeth during this period [1]. Osmania’s trajectory through these decades tracked the national one: the diploma of 1954 was upgraded in 1962 to a Bachelor of Journalism, the first such degree in India; the master’s followed in 1974; and in 1976–77, responding to the growing importance of the wider field, the department was renamed the Department of Communication and Journalism [29].

C. Liberalisation and Expansion, 1991 Onwards

In the period following the 1991 economic reforms, more than 200 new departments offering communication education were established [1]. Growth in the television sector led to schools for television production and electronic media, including the AJK Mass Communication Research Centre at Jamia Millia Islamia and the Sarojini Naidu School at the University of Hyderabad; the private sector’s appetite for training in media management and media relations produced private schools affiliated to universities and, later, private universities offering specialised media courses, with communication programmes typically housed among the non-funded departments of partially aided institutions [1]. Makhnallal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication was set up in 1991 to cater to Hindi journalism, and the Mudra Institute of Communication (MICA) in the same year to serve the advertising industry, while courses invoking technology, management or the MBA label fell under the scrutiny of the AICTE [1]. Across this expansion, the focus of Indian communication education has remained overwhelmingly on journalism skills; forums on media education have been preoccupied with skills development for news even as industry bodies point to the requirements of other content sectors [27], [30]. It is into this crowded, skills-oriented and largely unhistoricised field that convergence arrived.

D. Five Phases of the Discipline’s Media Environment

On the basis of the institutional record and the recollections of the senior academics interviewed for this study, the development of the discipline’s media environment in India can be periodised into five overlapping phases, which cut across the three-part political economy offered by Thomas [1]. The first, the print journalism phase (roughly 1950–1975), was oriented almost entirely to newspapers: training in reporting, sub-editing and press history, delivered through diplomas and, later, bachelor’s degrees. The second, the television boom (1981–2004), followed the expansion of Doordarshan and then of satellite television after 1991, and brought broadcast journalism, production courses and studio infrastructure into the departments. The third, a comparatively brief multimedia phase (1998–2004), saw the emergence of the term “convergence” itself in Indian curricula and the appearance of new areas of study such as instructional design. The fourth, the new media phase (2002–2014), was defined by blogs and web journalism. The fifth phase, of social media and Web 2.0 (from about 2010 and still unfolding at the time of the conference), is characterised by digital journalism, live journalism and real-time information, and its end point cannot yet be fixed. These phases did not replace one another so much as sediment, each leaving behind courses, equipment, faculty specialisations and assumptions that the next phase had to accommodate.

4. The Hyderabad Context: Two Departments

Hyderabad occupies a distinctive place in this national story, and the two departments studied here bookend two different eras of the discipline. The Department of Journalism at Osmania University was founded in 1954 by the American journalist and educator De Forest O'Dell, with assistance from World Literacy Inc., making it one of the first departments in the country dedicated to the subject [29], [31]. It began with a one-year postgraduate diploma aimed largely at working reporters and sub-editors of the city's English and language newspapers, and from its very first year ran a laboratory newspaper, *The Osmania Courier* [31]. In 1962 the course was upgraded and Osmania became the first university in India to offer a degree (B.J.) in journalism; the master's degree followed in 1974, and in 1976–77 the department was renamed the Department of Communication and Journalism, with its courses restyled as the Bachelor and Master of Communication and Journalism (BCJ and MCJ) [29]. The department's subsequent renamings—the shift to a two-year MCJ from 2011–12, and the UGC-mandated M.A. (Journalism and Mass Communication) from 2017–18 with the corresponding rechristening of the department itself [29]—mirror in miniature the discipline's national history of varying avatars.

No single career embodies that first era better than that of Dasu Krishnamoorthy, a member of the department's founding 1954–55 diploma batch under O'Dell, in which he secured the first rank [32]. His seven-decade career took him from *The Sentinel*, *Daily News* and *Deccan Chronicle* to the founding news desk of the Indian Express edition at Vijayawada in 1959, to *The Times of India* at Ahmedabad, and then to two decades at *The Patriot* in New Delhi; on retirement he returned to the academy, serving as Associate Professor at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication in Delhi and on the faculty of Osmania University, the Andhra Pradesh Open University and the University of Hyderabad, before moving to the United States in 2001 [32], [33]. His trajectory—from the O'Dell classroom to the newsroom and back to classrooms across Hyderabad's institutions, including the newer central university—exemplifies the person-level circulation through which the city's journalism education tradition reproduced itself. Faculty at the University of Hyderabad recall him in the early 1990s as a fiery lecturer on media and capitalism who introduced students to critical works on media ownership and propaganda [32]. Osmania's department honoured him with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2024, and his death in January 2026, months short of his century, was mourned across the profession as the passing of a living link to the discipline's founding generation [32], [33].

The Department of Communication at the University of Hyderabad, by contrast, is a child of the pre-liberalisation moment. Established in 1988–89 within the Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication, it began as a single-programme discipline and evolved into a full department offering postgraduate and doctoral programmes, with its M.A. in Communication organised into streams spanning television and radio, communication and media studies, and print journalism and new media [34]. The department has repeatedly been ranked among the best university departments for media and communication studies in national surveys and has emerged as a major centre for doctoral research that cuts across humanistic and social-science approaches; it also hosts the UNESCO Chair on Community Media, established in 2011 [34]. Between them, the two departments therefore represent the two dominant institutional templates of Indian journalism education—the practice-first journalism school grafted onto a traditional state university, and the theory-and-practice communication department of a central university—and their responses to convergence can be expected to differ accordingly.

5. Research Objectives and Questions

Within the larger project of documenting the disciplinary history of communication education in India, this paper pursues four objectives, scoped to the Hyderabad case. First, to examine developments in journalism education in the two departments within the context of shifts in the country's mediascape, particularly the transformations wrought by digital technologies and convergence. Second, to identify the key actors who spawned and shaped journalism education in Hyderabad, and to understand how decisions regarding institutional spaces, programmes and nomenclature were taken. Third, to understand the different approaches to the pedagogy of communication in the two departments, and the shifts, if any, in their values, ideologies and alignments as the media environment converged. Fourth, to analyse curriculum development in emerging areas—new media, mobile journalism, digital research methods—and the corresponding shifts in communication research since the “Ferment in the Field” moment of 1983 [16]. Three questions follow: How have the curricula of the two departments responded to the advent of the digital era? Have educators had to change their approaches to teaching and to research in the age of convergence? And what do the discipline's successive renamings—journalism, communication and journalism, mass communication, communication, digital media—reveal about the relationship between institutional form and pedagogical substance [24]?

6. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative case-study design combining historical-documentary analysis with in-depth, semi-structured interviews, in keeping with the approach of the author's larger doctoral project on communication education in India, which selects institutional cases purposively from key hubs of the discipline. Documentary sources included departmental prospectuses, syllabi and course structures across successive revisions, university histories and institutional web archives, supplemented by national data on the growth of media education [2] and of the media industry [8], and by the published recollections of alumni of the founding era [31], [32], [33]. The documentary record served two purposes: it established the chronology of curricular change against which interview recollections could be checked, and it supplied the periodisation of the discipline's five phases set out above.

A. Interviewee Profiles and Selection

Interviewees were selected purposively against three criteria: substantial teaching experience spanning at least two of the five phases identified in this paper; direct involvement in curriculum design, whether as head of department, dean, chairperson or member of a Board of Studies; and active research supervision at the doctoral level. Three senior academics were interviewed, and are named here with their consent. Professor P. L. Visweshwar Rao, of the Department of Communication and Journalism, Osmania University, taught through the department's BCJ–MCJ decades and later served as Principal of the University College of Arts and Social Sciences, giving him both a departmental and a university-administrative vantage on curricular change [32]. Professor Vinod Pavarala, Senior Professor of Communication at the University of Hyderabad and founding holder of the UNESCO Chair on Community Media [34], is himself an alumnus of the Osmania department—a biography that personifies the institutional genealogy this paper traces, from the O'Dell-founded journalism school to the communication department of the central university. Professor Kanchan K. Malik, Professor of Communication at the University of Hyderabad, is an alumna of Panjab University, Chandigarh—the

direct institutional descendant of the 1941 Lahore department with which formal journalism education in India began [26]. The interviewee set was thus composed so that the participants' own educational biographies connect the two Hyderabad departments to the discipline's two founding lineages: the Osmania–American line of 1954 and the Punjab line of 1941.

B. Interview Procedure and Ethics

Interviews were conducted in person in Hyderabad during 2017, in English, at the participants' offices on the two campuses, and lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes. A common interview guide was used, organised around three lines of inquiry: how the curriculum had changed in response to digital technologies; how the participants' own research and research supervision had adapted; and how they envisaged the future direction of teaching and research in the digital media ecology. The guide was applied flexibly, with probes tailored to each participant's institutional role and career phase—administrative decision-making in the case of Professor Rao, the community media and media studies research agenda in the case of Professor Pavarala, and curriculum development and journalism pedagogy in the case of Professor Malik. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent; participants agreed to be identified as interviewees, while specific remarks are reported thematically and attributed to individuals only where expressly permitted. Interviews were recorded with permission, transcribed, and returned to participants for factual correction where requested.

C. Analysis and Limitations

Interview transcripts were analysed thematically. Initial open coding generated categories relating to curriculum, skills, research methods, classroom practice, infrastructure, nomenclature and institutional constraints; these were consolidated into the five themes reported in the findings. Themes were triangulated against the documentary record, so that, for example, an interviewee's recollection of when a new media paper entered the syllabus could be verified against the corresponding prospectus. The intention throughout is interpretive rather than evaluative: the paper does not rank the departments but seeks to understand the logic of their scholastic and pedagogical shifts. Two limitations should be noted. The interviews are confined to senior permanent faculty, so the perspectives of early-career teachers, guest practitioners and students are not directly represented; and the two departments, both housed in public universities, cannot speak for the private institutes that constitute the majority of India's media education providers [2]. Both limitations are addressed in the author's larger multi-city study, of which this paper reports the Hyderabad case.

7. Findings and Discussion

A. Curricular Change: From Specialised Streams to Convergent Skills

The clearest finding is that both departments have moved, at different speeds, from medium-specific specialisation towards convergent skilling. The older architecture of the curriculum was built on specialised streams—print journalism, broadcast journalism, media studies—with print and new media eventually paired in a single stream as an interim accommodation [34]. Interviewees described a persistent tension between core skills and convergence: the anxiety that time spent teaching the latest platform is time taken from reporting, writing and ethics, set against the certainty that graduates who cannot shoot, edit and publish across platforms are unemployable in converged newsrooms. The resolution emerging in

both departments is a three-fold reorganisation of the curriculum around media practice, media studies (including, crucially, how to study new media) and media production and distribution, rather than around individual legacy media. New courses in new media and mobile journalism have been added, echoing the national pattern [2], and the syllabus revision cycles have shortened, since a curriculum fixed for five years is now obsolete before its first cohort graduates. This mirrors international experience, where convergence entered the curriculum well ahead of any settled agreement on what, precisely, should be taught [21], [23].

B. Adapting Research: Studying What Is Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

Research within the departments has adapted in parallel. Faculty and research scholars increasingly study Twitter feeds, Facebook trends and platform-native news practices, and doctoral projects have embraced techniques such as social media ethnography, in which the researcher follows digital sociality across a messy, unbounded web rather than a fixed field site [3]. Interviewees repeatedly emphasised the methodological difficulty of studying phenomena that are “here today, gone tomorrow”: trending topics vanish, platforms redesign themselves mid-study, and application programming interfaces close without notice. The convergence being negotiated here is not only of technologies but of thoughts—of disciplinary traditions, as textual analysis, ethnography and computational approaches are combined to keep pace with the object of study. In this respect the research agenda of the departments has followed the same trajectory that Pavlik predicted for the profession: the tools change first, and the conceptual frameworks scramble to catch up [20]. The shift also revives, in a new key, the oldest anxiety of the field: Nordenstreng’s warning that abundance and technological fascination can cut a discipline loose from its theoretical roots [15] was voiced by interviewees as a concern that digital-methods enthusiasm should not become a substitute for questions worth asking.

C. The Classroom as a Convergence Laboratory

A third theme concerns digital technology in the classroom itself. Interviewees observed a reversal of the traditional direction of instruction: students now routinely introduce new developments—applications, platforms, formats—to their teachers, and the effective pedagogical stance is to treat technology as an aid and the classroom as a convergence laboratory in which faculty and students experiment together. The laboratory-newspaper tradition that Osmania pioneered with The Osmania Courier in the 1950s [31] thus finds its contemporary form in multi-platform student productions, campus web publications and community broadcasting—the last institutionalised at the University of Hyderabad through its campus radio station and the UNESCO Chair on Community Media [34]. This inversion has consequences for faculty development: the authority of the teacher shifts from command of the tool to command of the judgement—news sense, verification, ethics and context—that the tool cannot supply, a division of labour consistent with Deuze’s argument that journalism education must cultivate reflective practitioners rather than mere operators of equipment [21], [22]. The career of Dasu Krishnamoorthy, teaching across Osmania, the Open University and the University of Hyderabad after decades on the news desk, and remembered for bringing the political economy of media ownership into the skills classroom [32], stands as a reminder that the strongest pedagogy in this tradition has always combined the two.

D. Nomenclature, Isomorphism and the Question of Theory

A fourth theme—brought into focus by the disciplinary-historiography framework—concerns the succession of names under which the field has traded. Osmania's department has been, in turn, a Department of Journalism (1954), a Department of Communication and Journalism (1976–77) and a Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (2017–18, following UGC guidelines) [29]; the University of Hyderabad opted from the outset for the unadorned “Communication” [34]; and across the country the labels journalism, mass communication, media studies and now digital media have circulated with the market. Read through DiMaggio and Powell, this nomenclatural churn displays all three isomorphic pressures: coercive, in the UGC-mandated renaming; mimetic, in the emulation of prestigious American templates from the O'Dell era onwards; and normative, in the professional networks—Syracuse, Minnesota, Wisconsin—through which the founding generation of Eapen and Bashiruddin was formed [24], [1]. The critical question is whether each renaming marked substantive curricular change or ceremonial conformity. The evidence of this study is mixed in an instructive way: the 1962 and 1976–77 changes at Osmania tracked genuine additions (the degree course, the communication turn), while interviewees were candid that some convergence-era relabelling across the wider field amounts to new signboards on old syllabi—precisely the façade of isomorphism that Eapen had diagnosed a generation earlier [17]. Where theory is eternally deferred in favour of the latest skill [18], renaming is cheap; the two Hyderabad departments have, on the whole, resisted the cheaper path, but both acknowledge the pressure.

E. Future Directions: Keep Up or Lose Relevance

Finally, on future directions, the interviews converged on a stark formulation: keep up or lose relevance. Responding to technological development, respondents suggested, happens at two levels—interpretation at the personal level, where individual teachers decide what a new platform means for their courses, and interpretation at the institutional level, where funding, partnerships and adaptation determine whether that meaning can be acted upon. The contrast between editing in the print era and editing today was offered as an emblem of the change: where the sub-editor once polished text for a single edition, today's desk assembles story, image and video for multi-platform delivery, coupled with live reporting and real-time information gathering. The departments' challenge is to institutionalise responsiveness—through industry partnerships, flexible course baskets, in-service training for faculty and investment in production infrastructure—without surrendering the critical, scholarly core that distinguishes a university department from a training shop. Given that digital media was, by 2017, moving from being an additional medium to the centre stage of a media and entertainment industry projected to grow at over 14 per cent annually [8], and that India's Internet population was approaching half a billion [4], the cost of failing to adapt is not marginal but existential.

8. Conclusion

This paper has traced the evolution of journalism education in Hyderabad against the longer history of the discipline in India, from the Aligarh diploma of 1938 and the Lahore department of 1941, through the American-assisted founding of the Osmania department in 1954 and the state-sponsored expansion of the middle decades, to the post-liberalisation proliferation and the converged present. The two departments studied—Osmania University's pioneering journalism school and the University of Hyderabad's communication department of 1988–89—have responded to convergence by restructuring specialised

streams into convergent curricula, by admitting the study of ephemeral digital phenomena into their research agendas through methods such as social media ethnography, and by re-imagining the classroom as a space of mutual experimentation between teachers and students. Read as disciplinary history, the Hyderabad case also corrects two deficits identified in the literature. Against the hagiographic and Whiggish tendency of communication's self-narration [9], it shows a discipline formed not by inexorable progress but by contingent episodes—a Cold War technical mission, a bequest to a new central university, a UGC circular—and by the person-level circulation of individuals such as K. E. Eapen, S. Bashiruddin and Dasu Krishnamoorthy, whose biographies stitched the institutions together. Against the neglect of institutional history, it demonstrates how much of the discipline's logic is legible precisely in prospectuses, renamings and laboratory newspapers. The discipline's many avatars—journalism, mass communication, media studies, communication, digital media—are best understood not as identity crises but as evidence of a field constantly responding to market forces and technological change in order to stay relevant, even as institutional isomorphism warns that some of that responsiveness may be ceremonial [24]. Whether responsiveness can be institutionalised without eroding the core of journalistic judgement and critical scholarship—without theory being eternally deferred [18]—remains the central question for the next phase. Future research, pursued in the author's larger study, will extend this analysis to institutions in Bangalore, Pune and Punjab, to the private institutes that constitute the bulk of India's 300-plus media education providers [2], and to the comparative question of how public and private institutions differ in their negotiation of the digital media ecology.

9. Acknowledgment

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the ICA Asia Regional Conference 2017, "Communications Research in the Digital Age", held from 14 to 16 December 2017 in Mumbai, India, as part of Panel-3, "Future Directions for Teaching/Research in the 21st Century Digital Media Ecology", chaired by Dr Arpan Yagnik (Penn State University) on 14 December 2017. The author thanks the chair, co-panellists and participants for their comments; Professor P. L. Visweshwar Rao, Professor Vinod Pavarala and Professor Kanchan K. Malik for generously giving their time, institutional memory and consent to be identified; and the two departments for access to their documentary records. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Dasu Krishnamoorthy (1926–2026), first-rank holder of the first batch (1954–55) of the Diploma in Journalism at Osmania University, whose seven decades in newsrooms and classrooms embodied the very history this paper attempts to write.

References

1. P. N. Thomas, "Observations on Journalism and Communication Education in India," in *The International History of Communication Study*, P. Simonson and D. W. Park, Eds. New York: Routledge, 2015, pp. 435–453.
2. Centre for Media Studies, "Media Education in India: Key Trends and Quality Issues," *Mass Media*, vol. 4, no. 42, pp. 9–22, Sep. 2015. [Online]. Available: <https://mediastudiesgroupindia.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/mass-media-september-2015.pdf>
3. J. Postill and S. Pink, "Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web," *Media International Australia*, vol. 145, no. 1, pp. 123–134, Nov. 2012, doi: 10.1177/1329878X1214500114.

4. Internet and Mobile Association of India and Kantar IMRB, Internet in India 2017. New Delhi: IMAI, 2018.
5. Internet and Mobile Association of India and Kantar IMRB, Mobile Internet in India 2017. New Delhi: IMAI, 2018.
6. H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
7. M. Chatterjee, "How Media Education Can Keep Pace and Pilot the Emerging Trends in Media," *Media Mantra*, May 2015. [Online]. Available: <https://mediamantrabymrinalchatterjee.blogspot.com/2015/05/article-media-education.html>
8. FICCI and KPMG India, *Media for the Masses: The Promise Unfolds — Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2017*. Mumbai: KPMG in India, 2017. [Online]. Available: <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmgsites/in/pdf/2017/04/FICCI-Frames-2017.pdf>
9. D. W. Park and J. Pooley, "Introduction," in *The History of Media and Communication Research: Contested Memories*, D. W. Park and J. Pooley, Eds. New York: Peter Lang, 2008, pp. 1–15.
10. E. Mayr, "When is Historiography Whiggish?," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 301–309, 1990, doi: 10.2307/2709517.
11. L. Graham, W. Lepeyres and P. Weingart, Eds., *Functions and Uses of Disciplinary Histories (Sociology of the Sciences Yearbook)*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983.
12. R. T. Craig, "Communication in the Conversation of Disciplines," *Russian Journal of Communication*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 7–23, 2008, doi: 10.1080/19409419.2008.10756694.
13. C. Calhoun, "Communication as Social Science (and More)," *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 5, pp. 1479–1496, 2011.
14. P. Simonson and D. W. Park, Eds., *The International History of Communication Study*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
15. K. Nordenstreng, "Lost in Abundance: Reflections on Disciplinarity," in *Making the University Matter*, B. Zelizer, Ed. London: Routledge, 2011, pp. 194–205.
16. G. Gerbner, "The Importance of Being Critical—In One's Own Fashion," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 355–362, 1983.
17. K. E. Eapen, *Communication: A Discipline in Distress*. Madras: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, 1995.
18. J. Joseph, "Whither Communication Teaching?," *The Hoot*, Aug. 2013. [Online]. Available: <http://www.thehoot.org/research/media-monitoring/whither-communication-teaching-7010>
19. H. Jenkins and M. Deuze, "Editorial: Convergence Culture," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 5–12, 2008, doi: 10.1177/1354856507084415.
20. J. V. Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
21. M. Deuze, "Educating 'New' Journalists: Challenges to the Curriculum," *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, vol. 56, no. 1, pp. 4–17, 2001, doi: 10.1177/107769580105600102.

22. M. Deuze, "What is Multimedia Journalism?," *Journalism Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 139–152, 2004, doi: 10.1080/1461670042000211131.
23. C. Kraepelin and C. A. Criado, "Building a Case for Convergence Journalism Curriculum," *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, vol. 60, no. 1, pp. 47–61, 2005.
24. P. J. DiMaggio and W. W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 147–160, Apr. 1983.
25. M. Chatterjee, "100 Years of Media Education in India," *OdishaPlus*, Jun. 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://odisha.plus/2020/06/100-years-of-media-education-in-india/>
26. "100 Years of Media and Journalism Education in India," *Northeast Now*, Jun. 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://nenow.in/north-east-news/100-years-of-media-and-journalism-education-in-india.html>
27. M. K. Desai, "Indian Media/Communication Education Today: Consequences and Concerns," *Journal of Global Communication*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 118–131, 2008.
28. E. Hirschmann, "An Editor Speaks for the Natives: Robert Knight in 19th Century India," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 2, pp. 260–267, Jun. 1986, doi: 10.1177/107769908606300202.
29. Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Osmania University, "About the Department." [Online]. Available: <https://arts.osmania.ac.in/DeptJournalism&Masscommunication.php>
30. B. P. Sanjay, "Journalism Education: Challenges to Universities and Training Institutions—A Perspective from India," in *Proc. World Journalism Education Congress (WJEC)*, Mechelen, 2013.
31. "Story of Osmania University Journalism School," *The Siasat Daily*, Jun. 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://archive.siasat.com/news/story-osmania-university-journalism-school-1911965/>
32. M. Somasekhar, "As a Journalist, Dasu Krishnamoorthy Leaves Behind an Unmatched Legacy," *The Siasat Daily*, 23 Jan. 2026. [Online]. Available: <https://www.siasat.com/as-a-journalist-dasu-krishnamoorthy-leaves-behind-a-unmatched-legacy-3330482/>
33. "Veteran Journalist Dasu Krishnamoorthy Passes Away at 99," *The Hindu*, Jan. 2026. [Online]. Available: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/veteran-journalist-dasu-krishnamoorthy-passes-away-at-99/article70532881.ece>
34. Department of Communication, Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication, University of Hyderabad, "About the Department." [Online]. Available: <https://snschool.uohyd.ac.in/comm/>