



Role of Pakistani Media in Educating the Masses: Analyzing Need for National Media Policy

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Abstract *Mass media is considered as one of the most important means of communication. There are certain agencies of education like home, family, and society which play important role in educating masses. Along with these agencies, media has an important role to educate the masses as it has ability to influence the masses. This research analyzes the media landscape in Pakistan and its role in educating the masses. An in-depth analysis of media in Pakistan elaborates that media in Pakistan is not playing a vibrant and effective role to educate due to vested interests of media conglomerates. Both private and state-owned media require a complete revamp and revisit. The need is felt is to design contents keeping in social and psychological needs of the people. It was suggested that while formulating national media policy all stakeholders- government, private media, consumers and intellectuals, and academia should be consulted.*

Key Words: Mass Media, National Media Policy, Education

Introduction

The impression that mass media can influence the people is acknowledged largely by the masses but the extent to which it can influence, and impact people's life is yet to be explored. The overall effects of mass media are visible and pervasive in every discipline ranging from Sociology, Psychology, Politics, and Education as well. Mass media has evolved gradually in human history-it is argued that the invention of printing press by Gutenberg provided bases for print media to provide bases for mass media otherwise books were limited to the only elites of the society. The influence of mass media on society is subtle and; especially electronic media has taken over all other forms of media. The arrival of internet and then invention of smartphones has boosted electronic media at a greater pace. This is of pivotal importance to analyze the role of mass media; especially electronic media in educating Pakistani people. There is also greater room to assess the overall role of mass media in national integration as well. Apparently, effects of media are not so much visible, but it does affect the lives of people in a subtle, latent and invisible way. It is a conduit to bring changes in the lives of a nation which slowly but consistently results in cumulative changes over a period. It results in bringing changes in nations that are aimed at improving socio-economic-political conditions of people. These socio-economic-political conditions of a country depending on the society in which mass media is functioning. Whatsoever are the conditions of a specific society in which mass media operates there are few factors that can result in national development by bringing positive and purposive changes in the lives of its masses. Among these harbingers of change mass media has an important role to influence people. In a democratic state expects media is expected to play an effective-positive role to bring change. The main target of any media is bringing change and this change results in improved form of circumstances for the masses. The media influences perception, attitude, and behavior of the masses and it then results overall change in the society and masses. The media can influence the society in different ways: it can be an instrument of socialization, it can be a conduit for cultural exchange, a source of information, education, entertainment, and infotainment. Its role in democracies is of greater worth and importance as it provides with a bulk of political

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information and provides the citizen with the information for their basic rights. It's a communicator of ideological values, norms, and beliefs as well. Mass media influences whatever you think, plan, wear and buy. It also has a greater impact on decisions that people make in their lives (Schwartz, 1983).

The world in which we are living is termed as information society and in this age, information is of one the most lethal weapons. Media has a great to play; ranging from our daily routine life communication to strategic communication in all future societies' media is expected to be the currency of all those times coming ahead. For an ordinary person of the world, media serves as a platform to see and experience the world which is outside of his frame of reference. We see the outside world with goggles of media. With the passage of time media has secured status of a weapon which is going to decide the rise and fall of different nations of the world.

We can say that media in a country be a barometer to judge the character, vitality, and values of a nation. It's a powerful tool that can make or break; can constructor can cause havoc. It is the miracle of the media that the world we are living doesn't seem to be a bunch of countries where nations are separated by thousand miles rather it has squeezed the world into a global village where we are located at second time from one another. We can conclude that media is tool of supremacy to rule the world for those who own it and a malady for those who do not have it (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967).

The situation in Pakistan is like where electronic media has flourished unprecedentedly during the last decade and a period of seven years. In these two previous decades a mushroom growth in the spread of different private TV channels has been observed. Our electronic media was proved marvelous in provision of information- especially related to the politics, however it was found focusing less on educating masses. Therefore, it needs a thorough look to see and analyze where does electronic media stand in educating the masses of the country. Pakistan is the country where youth is comprised of the greater chunk of the population, so it is important to see the extent to which our media is educating 200 million masses of society. Hence, it is of paramount importance to evaluate overall performance of media in the context of its role towards educating masses of the country.

Objectives

To analyze the role of mass media in educating Pakistani people.

To suggest a viable national media policy for media to play an effective role in educating the masses of Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

Mass Media and society are in a symbiotic relationship with each other. Keeping in mind the role of mass media for a democratic society this study owes greater significance due to the following points

It will analyze and emphasize the role of mass media in a democratic society of Pakistan.

This study will provide an insight into the media landscape of Pakistan.

It will assess the role of mass media as an educator of society.

It will be a systematic effort to provide guidelines for the formation of uniform media policy in the country.

Background

Human history reveals that the subject of Communication has been of greater worth since the time of ancient Greece. With the passage of time, the subject subsumed different names under different disciplines. In the year of 1928, the English literary critic I.A. Richards described communication as following "Communication takes place when one mind so acts upon its environment that another mind is influenced, and in that another mind an experience occurs that is like the experience in the first mind and is caused in part by that experience". It can be inferred from above discussion it is evident that communication is the process of influence of human action by the manipulation of representations.

Former US president Ronald once said, "Information is the oxygen of modern age. It seeps through the walls topped by barbed wire; it wafts across the electrical boars." Human history is loaded with many such examples that elaborate the importance of communication in human history.

Former US President Ronald Reagan once said, "Information is the oxygen of the modern age. It seeps through the walls topped by barbed wire; it wafts across the electrical border." Human history is filled with many such examples in which different leaders of the globe used the power of media to support their arguments.

Inventions of the telephone and the telegraph provided an impetus for mass communication which was later supported by the invention of service of radio. With the passage of time development of press resulted in mass production of books, newspapers and periodicals. Later, development of motion pictures and introduction of television resulted in institutional and cultural inventions and these inventions thus proved as catalysts to disseminate information over a wider and larger diameter. Thus, dissemination of communication became possible from individual to whole of society.

Media is seemed focused on the following issues in the 21st Century.

Mass Media as culture industry, the people who run this industry and audience members who are the consumers of the media industry.

Persuasive communication and effective use of information communication technology.

Interpersonal communication is one of the important mediators of communication.

Construction of such an environment that creates the consent of people to submit them according to messages (media contents) being communicated by the mass media.

Usage and application of information communication technology and its symbiotic relationship with the mass media. In contemporary society technology seems as an engine of communication.

Creation of such an environment which is conducive for criticism and safeguarding of intellectual property rights.

Finally, mass media has been used as a propaganda tool and still is being used as an effective tool to mold the opinions of the masses either through propaganda/persuasion.

Though there are different types of media which include: Print, electronic and social media, and all types have their own importance and uniqueness.

Analysis

In the modern world of today media has different roles to play in human life and few them are mentioned below: Here the functions of the Communication that once quoted by Laswell (Lasswell,1948).

Surveillance

Surveillance is called the news information role of mass media in which mass media informs masses about different happenings of the world. This function can be further subcategorized into:

Warning

Through this function media plays the basic role of information conveyor by intimating masses about different calamities like severe weather conditions, economic conditions, political upheavals, probable military attack and different threats being faced by the society and to a nation. This information is about threats –either immediate or long-term.

Instrumental Surveillance

This function of mass media deals with the transmission of information which is useful for the people in their everyday lives e.g. updates and news about new films, blockbusters, music charts, updates about sports, information about different brands of shoes and clothes, news about food outlets, new ideas about food recipes and so on. All information that is of practical use for audience members is included in it. When news is transmitted it is out to reach masses e.g. media coverage of Pulwama attack gain audience's attention because of the intensive coverage provided it by mass media.

Correlation

This is sometimes also termed as linkage function of the mass media. This is basically selection and interpretation of information about the environment. This function often includes criticism and how one should react to events. This function can be an editorial and propaganda function of the media. This function is important in the sense that it keeps an eye on the activities of government and often offers suggestions and different solutions. Most TV news channels through talk shows perform this function of correlation through which information is selected, interpreted and explained before the audience. Though this function helps masses to interpret different issues yet this issue has some dysfunction as well e.g. when some event/ issue is highlighted partially being biased then it does affect opinion of masses directly. Through this function, media sometimes deviated the basic principle of fairness and impartiality.

Transmission of Social Heritage

This function is important in the sense that it communicates information, norms and values from one generation to the other generation. This serves to increase social cohesion and integrity among the members of society. In performing this function media serves as an agent of socialization. Thus, it serves to glue society by decreasing estrangement and rootlessness. Television dramas can be seen and viewed as example of these functions.

Entertainment

This fourth function of mass media was added by Wright (Wright, 1960). Basically, this function of mass media provides respite, recreation and diversion from the daily routine of dull and boring life. Perhaps in the contemporary age this function has taken over the above three mentioned functions. Drama, music, films and cartoons are one of the important forms of entertainment. Even nowadays entertainment is found as an ingredient in news as well. This phenomenon has taken the shape of infotainment and edutainment as well.

Electronic Media in Pakistan

Independence of Pakistan was strongly supported by media of the contemporary age when newspapers were considered as one of the important tools of influencing public opinion.

When Pakistan came into being there were only three radio stations in the states. But with the passage of time electronic media has made unprecedented progress in the country. Almost two decades ago state-owned radio and TV channels were considered an important source of information. But today Pakistan has a very rich media landscape having many satellite channels, more than 130 FM radio stations

Almost 18 years ago, radio and state-run TV channel i.e PTV were thought to be as important sources of information for Pakistani masses.

In Pakistan, PTV was expected to play its role in image building of the state through display of such contents that will highlight integrity and solidarity of the state. It was supposed to safeguard the national interests of the country through display of its contents by affecting public opinion at large. In Pakistan history Network Television Marketing (NTM) was the first TV channel that was privately owned, and this channel started its broadcast with the joint venture with Shalimar Television Network (STN) in 1990.

Conventionally, PTV was owned, directed and dictated by the government or those in the power. It was 2001 when electronic media in Pakistan was freed from shackles of red-tapes through issuing license to private TV channels.

Pakistani electronic media was dictated by the party-in-power until the year 2001 when the respective government of that time i.e. Gen. Pervez Musharraf provided ground for the establishment of many private TV New channel. During 2001, Indus TV Network was launched as the first private TV channel in the history of Pakistan. Following the footprints of Indus TV ARY initiated its TV channel which started its transmission in September 2001, and it was followed by the establishment of Geo News during 2002.

After 2002 a mushroom growth of private TV news channels was observed which was triggered by air attack on World Trade Centre and then attack on Afghanistan further stimulated the growth of private TV channels. According to existing statistics more than 150 TV channels are operating in Pakistan excluding social media.

The arrival of internet resulted in increased interactivity in social media and as a result a multitude YouTube channels are also operating. Furthermore, instant and increased accessibility of smartphones.

Motives of People's Media Usage

Most of the earlier research in mass communication deals with the powerful effects of media which see media as one of the most influential media of influencing public opinion by having direct effects on them. This approach presumed that audience don't have their opinion of their own and they heavily rely upon on media for seeking information. Then there was a shift from effects to uses. According to this mass use media differently for gratifying their needs. These needs vary from cognitive and affective needs. In fact, uses and gratification is a shift from purpose of communication from communicator's point of view to consumer point of view (Ruggiero, 2000). Communication scholars argue, "The notion of active communicator is rapidly preeminent status in the Communication discipline" (Bryant & Street 1988).

Audience use media to gratify their different needs which are cited below (Blumler, 2019):

Diversion: This includes escape and respite from daily dull and drab routine of life. It is meant for the social and psychological wellbeing of consumer as well.

Personal relationships: It means that usage of media to strengthen relationships with society fellows. This function also serves as a substitute companionship need of audience members too.

Personal Identity: This involves self-understanding, reassurance, and exploration of reality among the audience members of society.

Surveillance: Through this function people use mass media to gratify their information-related needs-e.g. people watch television to acquire information about everyday happenings like politics, economy and religion. Through this function people feel satisfied by being well-aware (McQuail & Blumler, 1972).

Impact of Media on Society

The mass media impacts society by performing the following functions: Conveying inform, educating masses, influencing and entertaining them. Transmission of information is among one of the basic functions of the media that it serves for the society. True democracy is heavily dependent on well-informed citizens. In the contemporary age, information is a resource and so no nation can claim to be developed if it is not aware of different issues of the world. In the developed democracies of the world information highways and satellites are being effectively used. Now online videos through YouTube channels are being used by the students and scholars as well; equally they are fora of information for common people.

While talking about different media types it is observed that Print media still has some role to play to inform people. Those who cannot afford to buy a television set do settle for newspapers; especially in Pakistan because it is little cheaper. However, print media is no more effective as it was in the past days; almost two decades ago in Pakistan. After all-time availability of radio-television it seems electronic media is quickly replacing print media. There is sharp decline in readership of newspapers; especially in hard form. Due to arrival of internet newspapers, radio and even television have instant access for masses. This has given birth to the convergence of media where all media are available at one platform. Now media contents are being accessed online due to interactivity of it. Further, instant access to information has become possible for information communication technology (Larrondo & Peña Fernández 2018).

Television, in the capacity of audio-visual medium has got great potential to influence its viewers. The arrival of fast speed internet, satellite, and the fastest information highways have resulted in wider reach of television among masses.

Media in Promoting Culture and Ideology

Mass media has an important role in influencing culture and ideology. There exists a symbiotic relationship between the three. Media is thought to be an important tool of propaganda as well. It is a tool used to manufacture the consent of masses according to the plan of propagandists. They are used to mold and hold opinions of masses. The audience of mass media thus thinks, sees, hear and wears in the same way. It has thus promoted notion of

mass culture where masses are greatly dependent on mass media. Media plays role in constructing realities by creating perception about certain issues. Media is expected to promote indigenous culture through display of contents but sometimes it also distorts indigenous culture and results in alienation of culture (Chomsky & Herman 2003).

Media and Education of Masses in Pakistan

Government, Media, and Education of Masses

Currently, there is no declared written document in Pakistan which may be helpful in providing a road map about the media policy of the country. Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) is still in the quest of formulating media policy for the country. There seems a lack of direction in media outlets regarding education of masses. Constitution of Pakistan also grants freedom of expression to masses which is not yet practiced with all its spirit as it includes if and then in it. Article 19 concerns with the freedom expression specifically:

Though there is a plethora of ordinances and acts in Pakistan's media history, yet no policy has been formulated. These are the few shortcomings that are obstacles in the formulation of a national media policy which are as under:

There is a lack of long-term objectives and guidelines; especially with reference to mass education in the whole history of media laws in Pakistan.

Media has not been institutionalized in the country which shows apathy on the part of planners in the country.

Though PEMRA established yet it doesn't seem working with the spirit of the regulatory body.

There is a lack of uniformity in policy of different media houses who are mere in cut-throat competition of breaking news.

Less importance has been accorded to Public opinion.

Only political contents to some extent are monitored and less importance has been given to the education of common people.

Psycho-social Dimensions of Education of People

Through its representations and manipulations of contents media results in deliberate effects on different social groups, government institutions, and different commercial organizations but the dilemma of media is that they impact masses negatively in the following ways:

Media sometimes distort realities by creating pseudo-images and pseudo-events which result in deterioration of media contents, and these contents influence masses negatively.

Media contents are biased and slanted which sets the dimensions of people's thinking in their desired way. As a result, mass media frames different events accordingly. There seems political bias in different TV channels and other media outlets.

There seems a lack of interest in reporting news stories that deal with the social issues of the country.

Media is working on a market-driven style where less importance is given to human values and financial aspects are given preferences.

For absorbing media contents inefficient way, it is important for masses to be literate; semi-literate masses cannot comprehend these contents which are more fatal than proving helpful for them.

The Ideology of Pakistan and Education of Masses

The genesis of Pakistan has its basis in the Two-Nation theory that claims that Muslims have different ideologies than Hindus. There are many groups of people in the country having different ethnic backgrounds and races. It is quite evident that the people of Pakistan have different races, different languages and reside in different geographical territories. Hence, to expect them national integrity and solidarity is not an easy job. This is annoying that few ethnic groups with their small number are still posing threats to the ideology of the state due to negative role of media. Media, where it ought to play a role of cohesion it serves to disintegrate the masses.

Hence, it affects masses negatively rather educating them. There seems a lack of coordination between Government-Media policy which result nothing to educate the masses. With the passage of time the people are being away from roots of Islam due to free flow of information and they forget Islamic ideology; resultantly we find unity scarce in the state.

Religious Emotionalism, Media and Education of Masses

Perhaps, religion is one of the tools which is used by media houses, political elites and some other forces to play with the emotions of masses. They often used the card of religion to exploit the innocent masses. Our electronic media is complete failure in this context. This is important to note that ethnicity and sectarianism are not a problem in Pakistan. Rather, it is being faced in different countries and is being faced in the global context. It has been observed that problems related to ethnicity and sectarianism are highlighted and exaggerated by the media. Further, these problems are usually brought into the limelight in the name of freedom of expression. The dilemma is no serious and tangible effort is seen to address the issues. There is a dire need to formulate a concrete plan of action both by government and media as well.

Intercultural Harmony and Education of Masses

Pakistan has a diverse landscape and diverse culture where people living in different regions are blessed with different unique cultures. Media can play a role of glue to promote indigenous cultures by bringing people together and educating them as well. Being a part of the global village Pakistan faces threats from western culture which is making masses alienated from their roots. Hence, media is again required to serve as a bonding force to unite people belonging to different cultures.

Socio-economic Aspects and Education of Masses

Human resource development is one of the most important aspects of socio-economic conditions of a state. This includes development of the manpower, training and uplifting from poverty to dynamic state of human beings.

Human Resource Development has been among one of the most neglected areas. Pakistan has been blessed with a human resource that needs to be developed and trained. According to National Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pakistan, the country now has a greater percentage of youth in as compared with the other countries. It is estimated that 64% of the total population in Pakistan is below the age of 30.

Keeping this condition in mind it is of pivotal importance to educate the younger lot of the society and here media is expected to play its dynamic role to convert this youth into a vibrant and participatory component of the society. Unfortunately, our media is badly lacking this aspect. If a systematic content analysis of our media is performed it will be found that there is very small proportion of time and space has been allocated to programs for youth. Both-state owned, and private TV channels are ignoring youth by not properly highlighting their issues. It is observed that there are very few contents in media that highlight youths and their problems. There is lack of career counseling for youth in our media be it is print or electronic media.

Importance of Electronic Media for Educating Masses

Currently, our electronic media private or government-owned both do not seem to play their role in imparting education to masses. Our TV screens are loaded with talk shows having pseudo-event and lacking education. Through zapping different channels most of the content is found about politics and entertainment. There seems a lack of programs that promote education in the state. Even our universities are only contributing to formal education. Allama Iqbal Open University is contributing to the education of masses by offering different courses like technical courses for college students and common people of the society, certificate courses for professionals, Adult Literacy, distance, and non-formal education, etc. The University has state-of-the-art media technology. The University has also been granted a license for Satellite TV as well.

This is need of the hour that some state-run TV channels may be established that may meet the academic needs of the students by providing them on hand training through their programs. Further, there must be a channel that may promote adult literacy in the state

Suggestions

Dire Need for Uniform Media Policy

These are a few suggestions that can help government in formulation of uniform media policy in collaboration with the different stakeholders

Diversification of media may be encouraged by welcoming regional and national media.

Independent media should be supported, and a conducive environment may be provided to different media to work with independence, fairness, and impartiality.

While formulating media policy all stakeholders should be considered. The consumers of media including citizens ought to be consulted seeking their suggestions.

Media Industry-academia linkage may be established and patronized by the government to ensure the transmission of best media content to the masses.

Public Broadcasting Service Broadcasters should play their role to ensure socio-economic change and its trickle-down effects on the masses. Furthermore, they should launch public awareness campaigns to promote education across the country.

Journalists should be provided professional training in the beat of education and there must be refresher courses for them too.

Media Departments of public and private universities must serve as conduits for the formulation of national media policy while conducting research at MS/MPhil and Ph.D. levels.

Ethics and Morality may be a focal point while working on policy.

When a national media policy is devised it must be in line with Article 19 of the Constitution of Pakistan.

Ensuring Principal Guidelines for Media

Like other institutions of the state, media should be accountable for what it publishes or broadcasts.

Serving and prioritizing the national interests should be among one of the core responsibilities of Mass Media.

The credibility of information source must be authenticated and in case of breach of it penalties may be inflicted.

Censorship Committee should adhere to the ideology of the state.

Preparing Masses to Understand, Digest and Respond Media Messages

This is important to note that media contents are designed for the masses, so they must be prepared to understand and respond to the messages. Here are few of the suggestions in this regard.

Media contents are to be designed while keeping the social and psychological aspects of consumers.

Enemy propaganda may be countered in a balanced way and then be communicated to the audiences.

Academia and intellectuals may be motivated to effectively reply to enemy propaganda on internet and other forms of media.

Masses may be entertained through infotainment which might include an element of information in the light way of entertainment.

Information dissemination is to be based on scientific grounds on a solid basis. Ministry of Information is advised to establish Quality Enhancement Cell to ensure the validity of information.

Optimal Utilization of Mass Media and Technology

There is a dire need that internet may be used effectively for communication of information to the masses. We ought to work on creation of such websites that may work for image building of Pakistan. There should be sites that are interactive in providing education to masses effectively. The government should patronize website that may provide education to masses as well as may promote image of the country. Efforts should be made to attract maximum domestic audiences by creating attractive and localized content. Pakistan is also required to work on

satellite channels which may include local news, documentaries. The contents of these channels may be designed in such a way that they may influence public opinion at large.

Conclusion

It is said that media is the fourth pillar of the state and it can play effective role nation-building. Media in Pakistan is in nascent stage and needs further maturity to develop itself. Keeping the demography and geography of the country a great need is felt to formulate a national media policy across the country. All segments of society; especially stakeholders should be taken on board to formulate a unanimous policy. This policy should ensure promotion of education across the country.

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