



Research Article

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# Enhancing Media Education and Industry Relevance in Bangladesh: A Reconstruction of the Curriculum for the Digital Age

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## ABSTRACT

The objectives of the present study are to reconstruct the curriculum of journalism and media studies as it is being imparted in the institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh. In the present study, a comprehensive survey was conducted with the IDI among professionals working in different sectors of media. The purposes of the research are to identify the lacunae of the media curriculum and provide suggestions for the educational and media policies at the academic and industry levels concerning digital media. The research study concludes that a lot of overhauls are required for the optimally effective functioning of the existing media education system in Bangladesh. The problems identified were gaps in the existing educational paradigm and possible changes in the relevant policies discussed in the academic literature. It is for this reason that suggestions have been given not only mainly on the technical aspects but also on how to increase media education participation for all groups within society. Hence, this curriculum is expected to benefit the film trade the media sector, and the Over-the-top (OTT) trade by enhancing their income.

## INTRODUCTION

The role of the media in the contemporary world, which is distinguished by the active dissemination of digital technologies, has increased many times over. Media education as a field of study originated several decades ago in the developed countries of the West and was emulated in the subcontinent in the later years. The media in modern society determines people's attitudes and beliefs, and helps in decision-making regarding national and foreign policies, as it has become an information weapon both inside and beyond the sphere of the country's borders. Still, the advancements of digital technologies have progressively exerted new threats and possibilities and in consequence, now it requires a new over-examination of media education in Bangladesh.

It is clear that media education in Bangladesh has a long history of evolution, but unfortunately, critics never

miss a chance to state that Bangladeshi media education has always lagged technologically. Looking into the effects of the COVID-19 situation on the different sectors has uncovered the predicaments that affect the efficiency of media crisis response. Besides, the media in Bangladesh is often accused of westernization, targeting elite audiences, not providing the concerned marginalized people the coverage they deserve, and for the exclusion of business and entrepreneurship themes from the media education curriculum. These are all questions that have been asked and discussed severally. Also, to say the least, with the emergence of fake news, society has come to realize the urgent need to consider and analyze the existing media education programs across the countries.

In this regard, therefore the aims and objectives of the research are revisiting the curriculum of journalism and media education being offered by the educational

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institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh. The research involved a quantitative part in the form of a detailed questionnaire that was filled in by 50 media professionals, academics, and trainers and a qualitative part in the form of in-depth interviews (IDI) with 10 well-known media workers. The objectives of the study were to determine the gaps in media curriculum and offer policy advice to both academia and the industry in the new age.

### Research Objectives

The research will have the following clear objectives:

- To investigate the challenges and limitations of media education in Bangladesh with a focus on the digital age.
- To explore the perceptions of media professionals on teaching in media education at universities in Bangladesh;
- To give an outline of strategies for improving media education in Bangladesh that could better serve the needs and necessities of the media, film, online, & OTT industries.
- To provide components of an integrated, comprehensive curriculum to deal with problems in the media sector in Bangladesh

### Media Curricula in Bangladesh

The media curricula in Bangladeshi universities are multidisciplinary, and there is a commonly-quoted adage that a media student should be a jack of all trades and master of none. This saying is widespread in universities. The educational program was structured in the same manner.

Ullah (2012) has found journalism syllabi at various public or autonomous and private universities include practical skills training and a comprehensive education within the realms of liberal arts or social sciences. The primary objective is to equip students with the necessary abilities to analyze and gather information and write stories efficiently.

In another research, Ullah (2014) studied that the existing courses of media education curricula from different universities can be summarized into five broad categories: (a) communication studies, (b) journalism/media reporting, writing, and production, (c) techno-centric, multi-disciplinary managerial entrepreneurship (d) social sciences, and (e) media research tools. This approach appears to be a simple extension of Western journalism courses - a combining of craft and study - on both ends, he observed.

For standard journalism or media curricula, if we look at UNESCO Model Curricula for Journalism Education (2013), specialized syllabi have been suggested as an attempt to reflect the diversity of journalistic practice. The syllabi include media sustainability, data journalism, intercultural journalism, community radio journalism, global journalism, science journalism, incorporating

bioethics, gender and journalism, humanitarian journalism, reporting human trafficking, and safety journalism.

## METHODOLOGY

To discover which factors are the most significant impediments to advancement in media education in Bangladesh, the data were analyzed using a mixed-method approach. The Davetail Editorial Team (2023) states that mixed-methods research enables a more in-depth examination of a research subject by combining both quantitative and qualitative data. It can respond to intricate research questions that neither qualitative nor quantitative research can fully address. A thorough assessment of the available literature was conducted to carry out an in-depth analysis of the state that which media education and the media industry are present in Bangladesh. To have a better understanding of the perspectives held by media educators as well as media professionals regarding the media education system that is in place today, a survey was carried out. In addition, to collect qualitative data, in-depth interviews with media educators, journalists, and other professionals working in the media sector were carried out.

### Survey

#### *Population and sampling*

Industry professionals from various sectors related to the media and communication in Bangladesh were the population of the survey. Practitioners from print, radio, television, online, academia, communication, development sector, advertising agencies, production houses, film industry, research organizations, think tanks, and so on were included in the total population.

A survey of industry professionals was conducted to ascertain media professionals' perceptions of the media curriculum. The survey included 50 participants chosen at random from various sectors of the media industry. Researchers included responses from practitioners from print, radio, television, online, academia, communication, development sector, advertising agencies, production houses, film industry, research organizations, think tanks, and so on to ensure that all sectors of media are represented.

#### *Questionnaire design*

The questionnaire for the survey was designed to include both open-ended and close-ended questions. Media professionals were surveyed about a variety of topics, including the technological abilities of newly minted graduates, the types of partnerships that could be fruitful between academia and industry, the challenges posed by emerging AI technologies, the optimal ratio of theoretical knowledge to practical experience in educational programs, and the capacity of the media to address the issues confronted by marginalized populations. The study also asked for recommendations for courses that ought to

be incorporated into the curriculum to make it as detailed and up to date as possible. The questionnaire had eight questions (both closed-ended and open-ended) and took about 15 min per participant to complete.

*Data collection*

Google Forms were used as a data collection tool in this study. A link to the Google Form was shared through email and different social media platforms such as Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp with the respondents to this survey. The survey was conducted from May 2023 to June 2023.

**In-depth Interview**

*Population and sampling*

Industry practitioners who are in leadership roles and are responsible for hiring and guiding freshly recruited graduates were the population of the in-depth interview method. Professionals from the print, radio, television, online, international news agencies, academia, communication, development sector, research organizations, and think tanks were included in the total population of the in-depth interview method.

As the purpose of these interviews was to gather advice for establishing a broad media curriculum, a purposive sampling process was used to conduct in-depth interviews. According to the Davetail Editorial Team (2023) purposive sampling is used in research to select a specific group of individuals or units for analysis. This type of sampling is often used in qualitative research, allowing the researcher to focus on specific areas of interest and gather in-depth data on those topics. Researchers interviewed ten professionals from print, radio, television, online, international news agencies, academia, communication, development sector, research organizations, and think tanks for collecting qualitative data for the study.

*Questionnaire*

This was done to ensure that various facets of the media were adequately represented. They were questioned on the technological expertise and limitations of recent college graduates that they come into contact within the sector. In addition, the researchers asked for comments on how the curricula could be expanded to cover more ground and include more people. They were also requested to provide their opinion and observations regarding the incorporation of topics such as media entrepreneurship, fact-checking, and the utilization of artificial intelligence in the sector into the curriculum.

*Data collection*

Online meeting platform Zoom, and mobile phones were used as data collection tools in this method. In-depth interviews conducted through the online platform and cell phone were recorded with the prior consent of the respondents.

*Ethical implications*

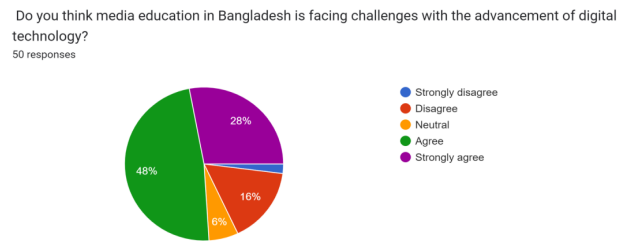
Ethical considerations were given much attention. Before the interview and recording, each respondent for both studies provided their consent. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and they were assured that their identities would remain confidential.

**FINDINGS: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

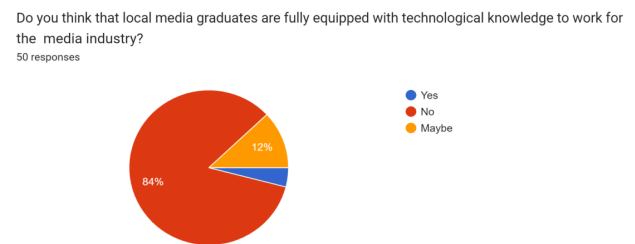
**Survey**

*Challenges with the advancement of digital technology*

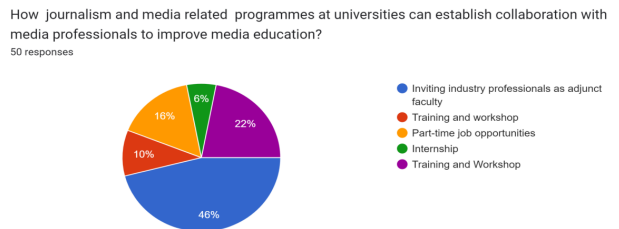
The rise of digital technology is presenting difficulties for media education in Bangladesh, according to nearly half (48%) of the media professionals surveyed, Figure 1 suggests. In the survey, one-third of respondents (28%) strongly agreed that the media education of the country is having to deal with issues brought on by the growth of technology. On the other hand, 16% of media professionals disagreed with this statement. 6% of those who participated in the survey did not express any opinion.



**Figure 1:** Challenges with the advancement of digital technology



**Figure 2:** Technological Knowledge



**Figure 3:** Industry-academia linkage



What should be the ideal balance between theory and practical skills in journalism and media education curricula?

50 responses

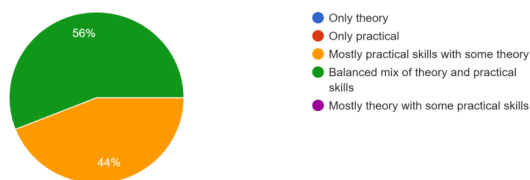


Figure 4: Balanced mix of theory and practical skills

### Technological knowledge

Figure 2 asserts that only 4% of the professionals in the media industry believe that media graduates are fully sound with their technology knowledge, in contrast to the 84% of practitioners who believe that local media graduates do not have the necessary technological expertise to work in the media sector. 12% of the respondents are not sure whether the media graduates are fully equipped with technological knowledge or not.

### Industry-academia linkage

In the case of industry-academia linkage Figure 3 shows that, just 22% of practitioners placed priority on training and seminars, while nearly half of the practitioners (46%) supported the idea of allowing industry professionals to serve as adjunct teachers. On the other side, 16% percent of those who participated in the survey favored opportunities for part-time work, while 6% chose for internships for the notifies that collaboration between industry and academia.

### Balanced mix of theory and practical skills

More than half of media professionals (56%) favored an equal mix of theory and practical abilities, while the other half (44%) preferred a greater emphasis on practical skills with some theory. No respondent voted for either theory or only practical (Figure 4).

### Inclusive curricula

While almost one-third of the respondents (28.6%) disagreed with the opinion that media education in Bangladesh is too westernized and does not adequately address the issues faced by marginalized people, nearly half of the professionals (46.9%) hold the view that media education in Bangladesh is too westernized. While 10.2% of respondents maintained a neutral stance, Figure 5 signifies regarding the Westernization of media education, 12.2% expressed strong agreement with the statement.

### Comprehensive curricula

Table 1 exerts that in order to make the curricula more comprehensive the following subjects were suggested by the respondents.

Do you think media education curricula in Bangladesh is westernized that fails to address the problems of marginalized people?

49 responses

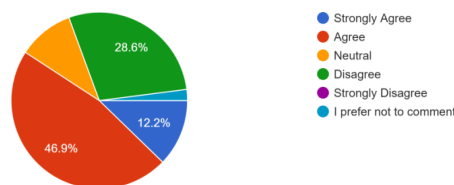


Figure 5: Inclusive curricula

It is recommended by 30% of those working in the media that fact-checking course should be included. 18% of respondents believe that data journalism should be included, and 14% emphasized the importance of courses linked to laws, rights, and ethics.

10% placed a high priority on courses that were relevant to social media marketing or social media management. 6% of respondents said that journalism based on artificial intelligence (AI) should be a priority, whereas the same proportion of respondents (6%) favored increasing the number of courses in the social sciences. 2% of voters chose courses relating to media entrepreneurship. In addition, a handful of the respondents offered some suggestions for courses that may be added to the curriculum to make it more comprehensive. These suggestions included mobile journalism, social media literacy, visual journalism, health journalism, global journalism, etc.

### Threats from Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Nearly half of the experts in the field, 48%, were not in agreement with the notion that AI tools such as ChatGPT would pose serious dangers to the journalism industry in Bangladesh, while 22% of the respondents were adamantly opposed to the notion. 12 percent of respondents believed that artificial intelligence would pose a significant challenge to the journalism industry in Bangladesh (Figure 6).

### In-depth interviews

#### A balanced mix of theory and practical knowledge

The vast majority of those who work in the media believe that recent graduates should have a solid comprehension of journalistic skills, which is something that these professionals find lacking in graduates when they join the sector. The in-depth interviews with the media professionals that were conducted for the study revealed this information. Students at universities ought to be required to participate in more hands-on activities; this will help them develop the intellectual capacity necessary for comprehending current events and editorial guidelines, the professional said.

One significant trend that media professionals have observed is that graduates have a limited understanding of the history of not only Bangladesh but also the rest of the



**Table 1:** In order to make the curricula more comprehensive the following subjects were suggested by the respondents

S No	Proposed Courses	Number of respondents	Percentage of Participants
1.	Media entrepreneurship	1	2%
2.	Laws, Rights & Ethics	7	14%
3.	Fact-checking	15	30%
4.	Cyber security	1	2%
5.	AI Journalism	3	6%
6.	Data Journalism	9	18%
7.	Social Media Marketing/Management	5	10%
8.	More social science course	3	6%
9.	All suggested subjects	2	4%
10.	Visual Journalism (Photojournalism, Video journalism and Multimedia Journalism)	1	2%
11.	Health Journalism	1	2%
12.	Social Media Literacy, Multimedia Journalism, Mobile Journalism	1	2%
13.	Global journalism	1	2%

globe. As a result, very few of them can make connections between any given event and the socio-economic, political, international, or cultural components of that event. They suggest that students should be taught at educational institutions to recognize how to connect each news event with the socio-economic and political context in which it occurred.

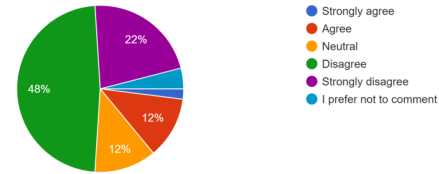
This finding is consistent with the findings of the survey, in which more than half of media professionals (56%) advocated for an equal mix of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. In comparison, the other half of media professionals (44%) supported a larger emphasis on practical skills with some theoretical knowledge.

In addition to this, they have observed that recent university graduates have a lower level of technological understanding. However, specialists believe that technological hurdles can be overcome if individuals receive training after entering the workforce in the relevant field. They emphasize the need for students to be aware of how the state of the art in media technology is always evolving, not just in the United States but globally as well. In addition, they concur that teachers should emphasize the need for students to develop a mind-set that can keep up with the rapid growth of technology.

However, respondents to the survey were more forthright in their assessment, stating that the vast majority of professionals (84%) are of the opinion that graduates of local media programmes do not possess the level of technological skills required to work in the media industry. On the other hand, only 4% of professionals working in the media industry believe that recent graduates in the media industry have a complete and sound understanding of technology.

During the interviews, experts in the media shared their observations that they have found that students

Do you think AI tools like ChatGpT would be major threats of journalism profession in Bangladesh? 50 responses



**Figure 6:** Threats from Artificial Intelligence (AI)

who attend private universities are more skilled in technology and communication than those who attend public universities. Graduates are encouraged by experts in the media industry to learn how to visually tell stories and to prepare themselves as performers for visual media. Media experts believe academia should groom students intellectually as well as technologically. Similarly, students should be more proactive in acquiring knowledge and skills by themselves.

In the field of media, practitioners place a strong emphasis on developing students' capacities to observe and comprehend society to equip graduates with the ability to produce material-related societal concerns. Learning how to ask questions to cultivate an investigative attitude, which is the foundation of journalism and one of the most crucial skills graduates should have, according to professionals in the field.

*Soft skills*

Media practitioners suggested that graduates should focus on acquiring soft skills like professional networking, presentation, interpersonal communication skills, emotional intelligence, and empathy. Students should



not only work hard but also work smart to become global citizens as well as media professionals.

#### *Smart media laboratory*

The professionals in the media believed that smart media labs should be established in educational institutions and should be equipped with cutting-edge technology, such as artificial intelligence tools. The fields of digital communication and visual journalism should receive more attention at educational institutions.

#### *Social media management skills*

Students must be taught how to make use of social media to disseminate knowledge and news to make it trending. Moreover, they suggested, both students and teachers need to have a basic understanding of augmented reality.

#### *Developing problem-solving attitude*

Professionals in the industry believe that the curriculum used in media education needs to be modernized. Courses that adhere to Western paradigms must be contextualized in terms of local factors. They emphasized on instilling a mindset of creative problem-solving among the students. Case studies and activities that require problem-solving should be incorporated into the design of every course, as per their recommendation.

#### *Batch-wise website for uploading assignments*

Media experts advised that each batch of undergrad students should have a website where they will post content produced by them. This will be a platform for practicing content production. Faculty members will assess their work on that platform. This will be an effective space for archiving all kinds of content created by that batch. After four years, that batch will go through the journey of its undergrad class.

#### *Faculty training*

Faculty members have been suggested by specialists in the industry to receive further training to learn how to effectively teach students. In addition to this, members of the teaching staff ought to be familiar with relevant technological developments.

#### *Inclusive curricula*

Experts in the field of media have advocated for the inclusion of both domestic and international examples in the curriculum, arguing that this would make it more inclusive and contextual.

Surprisingly, in the survey, nearly half of the professionals (46.9%) hold the view that media education in Bangladesh is too westernized, and does not adequately address the issues faced by marginalized people, while almost one third of the respondents (28.6%) disagreed with the opinion that media education in Bangladesh is too westernized. 10.2% of respondents maintained a neutral stance regarding the westernization of media

education, 12.2% expressed strong agreement with the statement.

#### *Course on underrepresented voices*

In order for students to have a better understanding of the culture of diversity both at home and abroad, media practitioners advocated for the inclusion of a course in media education curricula that would focus on voices that are underrepresented in the industry. Students will emerge from this class with a better understanding of the significance of the presence of a variety of voices in society. Graduates who receive this education are more likely to create inclusive media content.

#### *Industry-academia linkage*

The professionals in the media industry believe that students should begin networking with various industries beginning in the second year of the curriculum. The linkage with industry will take the form of a variety of activities, such as visits to businesses, internships, and chances for part-time work. In addition, academic institutions ought to recruit individuals from relevant fields to fill adjunct teaching positions. They suggested that members of the faculty should engage with the media sector directly to share their knowledge and skills. They proposed that faculty members may exchange information in the sector as a means of narrowing the gap that exists between academia and the rapidly evolving media industry.

The survey, in contrast, elicited a variety of responses and perspectives. While just 22% of practitioners put a focus on training and seminars, nearly half of the practitioners (46%) supported the idea of enabling industry professionals to serve as adjunct lecturers. On the other hand, sixteen percent of respondents to the study indicated a preference for chances for part-time work, while six percent indicated a preference for internships.

#### *Media business model*

The majority of industry professionals suggested that media education curricula should place a greater emphasis on media business models and media entrepreneurship. They suggested the inclusion of courses on start-ups or on running a social enterprise, in which the fundamentals of accounting and ethical business conduct should be emphasized.

In contrast, only 2% of people who participated in the survey selected courses that were related to media entrepreneurship.

#### *Impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in the job market*

The experts in this field are unanimous in their conviction that artificial intelligence (AI) is already a reality. In this light, the academic world ought to give some consideration to the combination of AI and the human brain. They believe that if students have a solid understanding of the fundamentals of media studies, it will not pose a significant

risk to the creative and critical works that they produce. Instead, AI will be a force for good in the media sector, provided that graduates are trained in ethical standards. They suggested including AI-related topics in the curriculum to instruct students on how to make use of AI.

On the other hand, just 6% of people who participated in the study agreed with the statement that artificial intelligence (AI)-based journalism should be emphasized in educational programs.

#### *Inclusion of fact-checking course*

Professionals in the media believe that students should be aware of the distinction between false information and fact because this is fundamental knowledge for journalism. The most important tactic in the fight against fake news and propaganda is to instill in students the habit of double-checking and confirming their sources. In addition, they proposed the addition of a course that is related to fact-checking to gain greater expertise in recognizing fake news, misinformation, and disinformation.

In the survey, thirty percent of individuals who work in the media supported the inclusion of fact-checking courses as something that should be included.

#### *A virtual platform for understanding media trend*

Media professionals have advised that academic institutions should establish an online platform to serve as a knowledge hub that will cover media trends in both the domestic and international sectors. This forum will focus attention on how new forms of journalism and technological advancements are causing changes in the media. This hub will receive contributions from academics, working media professionals, and media students. In this central gathering place, anyone connected to the media is free to discuss any topic they like.

### **Recommendations**

The following are some of the recommendations that surfaced during the survey as well as the in-depth interviews:

1. **Emphasize Practical Knowledge:** The educational system should involve more practical lessons as this will assist the students to foster the needed head that is useful in understanding news and editorial policies.
2. **A strong understanding of national and global history:** Bangladeshi socio-economic and political history as well as the world should be given more emphasis in the university syllabi. This will enable the students to be in a position to explain how individual part of a situation connects to the other when they are producing content.
3. **Strong command of Bengali and English skills:** This implies that students should be good in the language, whether it is Bengali or English.
4. **Building problem-solving attitudes:** Among the preventive measures, particular attention should be

paid to the problem-solving attitudes among students that seem to be emphasized less by educational institutions including universities.

5. **Acquiring soft skills:** It is recommended that journalism curricula must incorporate the issue of the “soft skills” which are networking, how to present oneself, interpersonal communication, emotional intelligence, and self-compassion.
6. **Batch-wise website:** Undergraduate students should be provided a website where they can upload the content they have developed. This website will be used to practice the creation of content but also store all the content they created during the 4 years as they completed the undergraduate curriculum.
7. **Exchange program between academia and industry:** An exchange program between academia and the industry should be organized in which the faculty members can go to the media sector on their own and impart the knowledge that they possess. Such type of exchange program will go a long way in bridging the existing gap between the academic institutions and the media institutions.
8. **Online knowledge hub:** For media updates, academic institutions should design an online information center that will entail information on local and foreign media trends. This hub has to be in the form of a platform that will be accessible through the web. This hub will involve postings from academics, working media practitioners, and students – new forms of journalism, and how new technologies are shaping media changes.
9. **Social media management skills:** Students should be shown how to use social media platforms to spread news and information to have them trending. Furthermore, from the students and the teachers’ perspective, certain knowledge of augmented reality must be possessed.
10. **Case-based learning:** Because of these reasons, the curriculum needs to be developed in a way that students are exposed to a wider variety of experiences, in this case, both domestic and foreign cases.
11. **Media entrepreneurship and business model courses:** The academic community needs to pay more attention to the business models and subjects connected to entrepreneurship.
12. **Skills of using AI-based tools:** However, it is necessary for students they obtain an understanding of how the media field applies the AI technologies. Modern students should be aware of artificial intelligence tools as well as up-to-date media software to succeed in modern society. The curriculum should also address issues of new media and journalism with emphasis on electronic-media communication and Journalism graphics.
13. **Smart media lab:** As for the higher education personnel, they should create their “smart media labs,” equipped



with the recent technologies and AI tools.

14. Fact-checking courses: Fact-checking courses remain for relating to educational programs to prevent the spread of concentrated false information.
15. Inclusion of marginalized voices in the curricula: To ensure that students appreciate the need to have a diversity of voices in media and that media content is inclusive media education curricula should include a course for marginalized voices.
16. Comprehensive curriculum: To make the curricula more comprehensive the following courses should be included; data journalism, social media marketing, mobile journalism, social media literacy, visual journalism, health journalism, and global journalism.
17. Media literacy campaign by students: To avert such situations this country's educational system should ensure that students in secondary and higher secondary levels are taken through media literacy programs as a way of combating 'fake news' and other related information. Media graduates can be useful in this sense and they must be prepared to know how to educate the public on media literacy skills. More so, students of media ought to follow the media outlets that peddle fake news and misinformation.

## CONCLUSION

The study, therefore, implies a worrying disconnect in the level of alignment of the graduates in Bangladesh media with the needs of the currently dynamic media environment. This dissociation presents certain impediments to the growth and development of the media as a business, and at the same time about its function in informing and influencing the population, as well as with the functioning of democracy.

To counter this problem, there is a need for a complete renewal of media education. The recommendations made in this study can therefore act as a guide to changing media education into a progressive and sensitive programme. Focusing on employability skills, history, languages, problem-solving skills, and interpersonal skills, media education can be reformed and increase the graduation outcomes of technically skilled, but critical thinking, ethical, and civic media graduates.

Thus, the development of an effective media education system that is sensitive to social and technological changes is predicated upon the formation of strong industry-

academia partnerships, media education's strategic implementation of technology through smart media labs as integral platforms, and embryonic but important media literacy initiatives. Following these recommendations will not only improve the quality of media education but will go a long way in addressing the production of an enlightened citizenry.

The implications of this research go beyond what has been traditionally understood as 'media education'. These assertions mean that a relevant and strong system of media education is essential for developing a strong media industry that can enhance the growth of the economy, and the social well-being of the society and foster the entrenchment of democratic principles in the country. Media education is the best investment Bangladesh can make to become a global innovator and responsible actor in the media power environment.

This research urges policymakers, educators, and practitioners in the industry to work together in the integration of the suggested reforms. If people close to one another have a shared purpose of establishing a society with informed and responsible users of the media, then there is the hope of achieving the best media education system for future generations so that they can be in a position to handle the media technologies of the 21st century.

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