

# **MEDIA STUDIES - CHANGING DYNAMICS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY : SCRIPTING A NEW STORY**

## **Abstract**

As man is a social animal, communicating with one another and with other members of society is an inherent trait of human society. After all, effective interaction with others is needed to connect and share ideas with others as this clarifies information, helps build relationships, teamwork and trust. Additionally, it helps develop an individual's knowledge base while helping is making informed choices. As media is a platform for human communication, it holds a special place in society. The present study seeks to look at how technological advancements in the field of mass media are helping humans harness this option to their optimum advantage.

**Keywords:** Media Studies, Human Communication, Interdisciplinary Field.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

*“In America, the president reigns for four years, and journalism governs forever and ever.”*  
-Oscar Wilde.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes communication as a transitive verb in grammatical terms and says communication means to pass on knowledge of or information. The dictionary says that communication's function is to make known facts or a story to the target audience concerned. From this it can be deduced that communication is information exchange. Humans are communicating with one another always. The contexts can be myriad including interpersonal and intercultural communication. However, when it is on a large scale, it is called mass communication. But what should also need to be understood is what is the place of communication in culture.

Now culture, originally stemming from ancient Greek and Roman (Latin: cultura) is a term which is used extensively in daily speech, academics and public discourse. With so many roles that it has due to its myriad uses, the various dimensions built around the term in today's era arise from different needs and uses of each field like anthropology, sociology or communication studies.

As far as communication studies are concerned, culture is learned behaviours. This is shared by individuals through interaction. In other words culture is not having a fixed entity. They are fluid and influenced by pressures and influences. These are invisible experiences in the line of schemas and artifacts. Even subcultures may exist within the main cultural framework of a society. But they can be dissimilar too. Society is understood within the perspective as groups of interacting individuals. It is very difficult to separate out culture and society.

Now, even as society and culture are understood as two different entities, it is now to see what role does communication play in culture. Both entities are interwoven.

## II. MEDIA STUDIES - AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELD

Now even as we study media studies and its changing dynamics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is imperative that we know media studies evolution over the decades. There is no doubt in saying that media studies draw on conventions from both social sciences and Humanities. But they are mostly from the core disciplines of mass communication, communication sciences, communication studies and communication.

Now even as media concern themselves with the field of communication, we need to understand that what does interdisciplinary field of studies involve? Clinton Golding in 'Integrating the disciplines: Successful interdisciplinary subjects' article says, "While disciplinary depth is essential for investigating these complex issues, they also require what Howard Gardner calls a 'synthesising mind' (2006, p.3). They require investigators who can engage in interdisciplinary translation and synthesis, as part of multidisciplinary teams or individually, in order to develop more complete pictures than would be possible from any one disciplinary perspective. As Lyon (1992) and Brew (2008) show, this is not a deviant exception, but a common path for the modern academic. The implication is that we must

educate for both disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise. Interdisciplinary education must supplement disciplinary teaching and learning so students can learn how to respond to challenges that transcend disciplines, work in the confluence of multiple disciplines, and develop research trajectories that do not conform to standard disciplinary paths.” So as we talk about interdisciplinary field of studies, it encompasses three issues. These three concerns are its first, evolution from more than one origin, second, its diversity including its reaches and scopes and third, general skepticism about its usefulness that is question of professionalism and employability.

Now when we talk about foundation of media studies, its roots can be traced to the inquiries about relationship between media and culture. Early attempts in this direction started in the 1920s. In the 1920s mass media forms like radio networks, newspapers and magazines of mass circulation rose intensely, and after mid 1930s with advent of television, media studies started taking form. Early studies into media were influenced by the Eurocentric obsessions on high culture claimed by many to be “the best that has been said and thought.” The media of those decades were assigned the role of representing a culture included in Europe while ignoring the world outside it. News agencies like Reuters and BBC led the way. The media studies emerged from subjects like Sociology and English. Later, media studies took on a vocational nature. Thornham and O’Sullivan (2004) state that from Sociology ‘came a focus on patterns of social production and consumption and their relation with power and ideology, and corresponding empirical research skills’. While from English ‘came an emphasis on the skills and methods of textual analysis...’ (ibid.). Experts says that initial sociological researches ignored media considering it to lack serious subject matters to justify special attention (McQuail, 2002, p. 6), in preference to common social problems like crime, poverty, race relations and family dislocations. But media studies gathered importance when in the era of TV, unfriendly responses in Europe and America in the guise of rise of soap operas and horror shows started affecting society. Experts in the field of educational psychology alerted that TV was a deterrent to child rearing and family kinship. Then sociologists started paying detailed attention to the relationship between society and media.

But when the television media was exposed to horror shows and soap operas in Europe and America, during 1950s and 1960s, educational psychology scholars warned about TV being a deterrent to child rearing. As family values were getting affected, sociologists began to pay attention to examining the relationship between media and society. This gave way to the development of functionalist empirical study model which supported the view of society as ‘voluntaristic and self-directed, rather than ... manipulated and controlled by media’. In other words, researches here defended mass media. It formed a kind of resistance against the view of renouncing media from domestic use. Media studies, however, departs from sociology in its “insistence on acknowledging the centrality of texts and modes of cultural representation” (Thornham & O’Sullivan, 2004, p. 719). It was only in the 1960s that media studies started to get an increased scholarly attention.

Further down the line with advent of cultural studies in 1970s, media was brought under the purview of the academia withing the gambit of English Studies program. At the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in University of Birmingham in 1964 where significant contribution took place, Cultural studies incorporated media with literary studies. The latter was then expanded into an interdisciplinary field. Herein areas like sociology, anthropology, postcoloniality, gender, race, ethnicity etc were covered. It searched

alternative possibilities in the scholarly inquiries of socio-cultural issues. As cultural phenomena were being studied, pop culture was the main strand of media studies in the 1960s.

### **III. MEDIA STUDIES & 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHALLENGE**

As already discussed media studies have evolved gradually over the decades into a part of academics from sociology and English streams. In fact there is no denying that postmodernism stresses on the fact that today's era is when identities are determined by whose information is disseminated fastest (Kafle, 2009). This approach also recognizes the mass media role in 'integrating people by reducing boundaries of space and time. It acknowledges the presence of multiple technologies as vehicles creating more spaces and more possibilities of switching across them'.

Now with the commencement of 21<sup>st</sup> century as new media started taking shape, Carl Eric Rosengren said, "As new media for communication have been created, the old ones have become specialized, but none have been completely eliminated." From this it can be interpreted that media studies which in themselves are a wide field, it is in this field only that changes in society and developments in media technologies merge continually. So to justify how media studies are changing the dynamics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has to be seen how it has evolved as a subject first. Although it is not easy to define the time limit when a subject can evolve into an academic discipline, but certain parameters exist. One deciding factor is that the subject should have enough theoretical legacy based on reasoning, experience and conceptualization over decades to become part of academic discipline. In other words as theory forms real base for more investigations, theoretical legacy helps store knowledge from the past so that a picture is gradually formed of what will be the future of that subject. At the same time the subject can call for development of its related science and scholarship meaning development of the actual subject matter along with study of human related facets. These can include ideas, actions etc. This line of thought applies very much to the media as a discipline and media study encompasses studying tech tools along with societal implications. Additionally, academic institutions should have the readiness to show that they are willing to teach the subject formally on the campuses. Now as there should be a ready supply of teachers to teach subjects formally in institutions, only then a subject can be a part of mainstream education. So the discipline of media had emerged via the joint attempts of political scientists, psychologists and sociologists. These experts brought media studies into main public domain by joining hands with schools of journalism teaching the discipline as a vocation.

Now as media studies are both an eclectic mix of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary facets, many areas are integrated into it. English studies and cultural constructs are its main parents but what it now also includes are hands on training in the existing and emerging technologies like the new media. Hemraj Kafle says media studies incorporate a lot of diverse fields.

Now as digital media is on the media landscape then ever before, social media, digital advertising, and rising access to the Net are shaping media trends. These media trends include new tools such as mobile video, VR, AR and use of data analytics all influence digital media and its future in the academic world.

It is not that traditional media studies have lost their grounding. They still focus on studying the cultural aspects, that is form and effects giving way to study critical enquiries. The other format of the media is now convergent media where both theory and practical are merged. The range is wide here. This places a thrust on producing trained media graduates who have employable skills and can work across all major media formats. This convergent media format is the contemporary media studies format and has the potential for continuous modification. Additionally, media studies prepare media teachers for various levels of education at various levels of teaching. These trained media educators can help in further training of budding media entrepreneurs who can generate employment in lower income economies and developing countries.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

It can be concluded that as media is a form of human communication, it will remain that but with increasing technology there will be more of it. There will be more researches on processes of media with a huge focus on the computerization communication methods. Developments in technology will make computerized data more feasible which will be shared through digital libraries. The future is also that students trained in convergent media studies will be far more employable after studying media.

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