



Curriculum Design in Post-Graduate Media Education: A Comparative Analysis of Conventional and Distance Education Institutions in India

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Received: 15 Oct., 2023

Revised: 20 Nov, 2023

Accepted: 01 Dec, 2023

ABSTRACT

The fast-paced penetration of technology and media into higher education calls for an urgent evaluation of the curriculum design practices, especially when it comes to the post-graduate media education courses offered by Indian HEIs. At the same time, very few empirical studies have focused on exploring the process of curriculum design in Indian post-graduate media education programs. In light of the foregoing, the present study seeks to examine the curriculum design characteristics of post-graduate media education in conventional universities (CUs) and distance education institutions (DEIs)/open universities (OUs) in India. In order to achieve this aim, the authors have adopted document/content analysis as the research methodology, with a set of curricular documents and syllabi systematically collected from a randomly selected sample of 10 HEIs (5 CUs and 5 DEIs/OUs), and subsequently analyzed comparatively. According to the results obtained, there appear to be marked differences between the two types of educational institutions regarding their program format, course objectives, media for instruction, learning goals, and methods of assessment. The findings of the study are discussed against the background of their implications for future research and practice.

Keywords: Curriculum design, media education, conventional universities, distance education institutions, open universities, Indian higher education, content analysis

How to cite this article: Kumar, S. and Ratna, A. (2023). Curriculum Design in Post-Graduate Media Education: A Comparative Analysis of Conventional and Distance Education Institutions in India. *Learning Community*, 14(02): 79-92.

Source of Support: None; **Conflict of Interest:** None



The rise of media platforms, convergent communication techniques, and networking as a tool for learning has revolutionized the world of higher education. Among other disciplines, media education (media studies, mass communication, and journalism) is a field whose dynamics of study and application overlap greatly. In the case of India, this overlapping aspect makes designing the curriculum for post-graduate media education a challenging yet important task (Buckingham, 2019; Sanjay, 2012).

The Indian higher education system is one of the largest in the world and includes universities offering conventional education (CUs), universities offering distance education (DEIs), and open universities (OUs) that cater to different segments of learners (Ministry of Education, 2022). While the former type of institution provides face-to-face instruction to full-time students in urban or semi-urban locations, the latter caters to part-time students, professionals working from remote areas, and individuals unable to enroll in residential programmes. The presence of the two models of instruction within a common system of higher education offers curriculum designers a unique opportunity as well as a challenge: How can media education be made relevant and technologically advanced at the same time?

Notwithstanding the importance of integration of media and technology in education, as per Das (2018), very little research exists regarding media pedagogies in Indian universities and higher education institutions despite the fast-paced technological developments impacting media practices and education. Equally, Rego (2017) identified that there was limited empirical research focusing on the usage of new media and technologies in higher education institutions in India. This gap in research is more noticeable considering the magnitude of the higher education sector in India and the role of media in modern-day life. In more recent times, Kumar *et al.* (2021) stated that no study has conducted an analysis of curricular development in Indian media education.

The issuance of National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which calls for radical change in higher education, particularly as far as the curricular perspective is concerned, further underlines the importance of this research inquiry. NEP-2020 highlights the significance of interdisciplinary education, integration of technology, and equity in access (Ministry of Education, 2020). This background necessitates an understanding of the manner in which post-graduate media education is presently conceptualized in India in terms of curriculum development, as well as the existing gaps therein. In response to this imperative, the current study proposes a comparative investigation of the curriculum design characteristics in the post-graduate media education offered by CUs and DEIs/OUs. To conduct such a study, a representative sample of ten HEIs offering post-graduate courses in media education will be studied using their relevant curriculum documents and syllabi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum Design in Higher Education: Conceptual Foundations

Generally, curriculum design can be described as the process of organizing educational activities to promote desirable learning outcomes (Tyler, 1949). Higher education curriculum design includes program philosophy, organization of courses, scheduling of content, pedagogical methods employed, assessment

tools and techniques adopted, and learner support systems (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). Current theories of curriculum design have emphasized the need to tailor the mentioned elements of curriculum design to learners, field-specific demands, and wider socio-cultural and technological contexts (Print, 2018).

Media education curricula, on the other hand, have to consider not only all the above mentioned aspects but also the dynamic nature of media technologies and practices. According to Buckingham (2019), media education should go beyond teaching fixed media knowledge and develop critical media literacy that would allow analyzing, evaluating, and producing media products. Such an approach to teaching and learning has profound consequences for post-graduate media studies programs. It is likely to affect the choice of content, the integration of hands-on training and research skills (Mihailidis, 2018; Potter, 2022).

Media Education in Indian Higher Education

Media education in post-graduate institutions in India has changed quite drastically since the introduction of university journalism courses in the middle of the twentieth century. Currently, post-graduate programs in media studies, mass communication, and journalism are available at all kinds of educational establishments, including research-oriented central universities and state-owned open universities (University Grants Commission, 2022). The curriculums of those programs may vary depending on various factors, including pedagogical approaches, regional needs, and the capabilities of individual institutions.

The research in the field of media education in India has mainly been concentrated on program development, issues associated with adapting curriculums to the changes in industry requirements (Bharthur, 2017; Sanjay, 2012), and increasing distance between academics and practitioners (Kumar *et al.* 2021). Some researchers have started to pay attention to the transformations of media education that are associated with the emergence of digital platforms and require students to be familiar with algorithm-based news distribution, misinformation, and data journalism (Bhaskaran *et al.* 2019; Kashyap & Bhaskaran, 2020). Nevertheless, according to Das (2018) and Rego (2017), there is little systematic information regarding the approaches that are used by Indian HEIs to design their curriculums, especially when they include media and technology.

Distance Education and Open Universities in India

There is a long tradition of distance learning in India, with the IGNOU university being one of the largest in the world in terms of enrollment numbers and having been founded in 1985 (IGNOU, 2023). In addition, state open universities, such as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU), Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University (VMOU), Nalanda Open University, and Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) also contribute to the provision of distance learning for various regional communities in India. There are also dual-mode universities, with established directorates for distance learning, such as Annamalai University and Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology.

With the distance education mode, there is a need for specific curriculum design in media education where students have to acquire both production knowledge and analysis skills via self-learning resources and minimum direct contact with the faculty members (Mishra, 2009). Designing self-learning materials (SLM) for media education courses at a distance needs careful considerations about the selection of suitable media types including print media, audio, video, and digital media as well as arranging the course content in a way that facilitates self-learning (Panda, 2005). Updated guidelines from the University Grants Commission (UGC) on open and distance learning programs include requirements for the ratio between theoretical and practical parts, total contact hours per week and the use of e-learning in open and distance education programs (UGC-DEB, 2020). With regard to online digital learning, SWAYAM and NPTEL initiatives have contributed much to this field although they are yet to integrate into media-specific curriculums (Dhawan, 2020).

Technology Integration in Media Education Curricula

The incorporation of technology in media education programs has become an increasingly important area of study globally. Westlund and Ekström (2018) have stated that media education and journalism programs need to integrate computing knowledge, digital storytelling and platforms into the curriculum to train journalists who can cope in today's environment. For India, while the coronavirus outbreak helped hasten the switch towards online or hybrid models of teaching, it also highlighted both the opportunities and structural inequalities in technology-reliant education (Bhamani *et al.* 2020; Dhawan, 2020). Bhaskaran *et al.* (2019) have shown how journalism education programs in India differed in their preparedness to tackle issues arising from the use of digital technologies and post-truth media.

Comparative Studies of CU and DEI/OU Curriculum Design

Research on the design of the curriculum in terms of conventional and distance education mode has revealed a number of points of divergence among such features as curriculum content, form of assessment, and instructional medium (Keegan, 2013; Moore *et al.* 2011). In India, the issue of designing curriculum for distance education has been investigated by Panda (2005) and Mishra (2009), although there were not many research efforts devoted to the analysis of distance education in India and comparing its curricula design with CU curricula in media education. Gaba and Li (2015) have compared Indian and Chinese policies of distance education and found that the problem of integrating technology into curricula existed in both countries. In this paper, such an analysis is conducted for media education.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of the proposed study is:

To explore and examine the elements of curriculum design in post-graduate media education in conventional universities (CUs) and distance education institutions (DEIs)/open universities (OUs) in India.

In order to achieve the aforementioned research aim, the study will attempt to answer the following sub-objectives:

- RQ1: What are the components (duration of the program, credits system, courses) in the post-graduate media education curricula of CUs and DEIs/OU's?
- RQ2: What kinds of media and technology have been incorporated into the curriculum design in post-graduate media education of CUs and DEIs/OU's?
- RQ3: In what ways are CUs and DEIs/OU's different in relation to learning outcomes, evaluation process, and learners support in post-graduate media education curricula?
- RQ4: How have considerations of equity, accessibility, and media pedagogy figured in the design of post-graduate media education curricula in CUs and DEIs/OU's?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present research adopted a qualitative-descriptive methodology, employing document analysis and content analysis as the main techniques of data collection and analysis. Document analysis refers to a systematic process of examining and interpreting documents with a view to drawing meaning from them (Bowen, 2009). Content analysis entails a systematic approach to the categorisation of information contained within documents (Krippendorff, 2018). The application of such techniques is justified by the fact that curriculum documents are institutional texts that contain the pedagogical intentions, priorities, and structural choices of those who designed them.

Population and Sampling

The study sample entailed all higher education institutes in India providing post-graduate programs in media education, media studies, mass communication, and/or journalism via traditional as well as distance modes of education. The sample entailed higher education institutes including central universities (CUs), state public universities, deemed universities (DEIs), DEIs of dual-mode universities, IGNOU, and state open universities (OUs).

Purposive sampling was utilized to identify 10 HEIs, including five central universities and five deemed universities/colleges, ensuring diversity with respect to types of institute, geography, and area of program specialization. Table 1 provides information about selected HEIs along with type of institution, location, program name, and mode of education.

Table 1: Sampled Higher Education Institutions Offering Post-Graduate Media Education

Sl. No.	Institution Name	Location	Programme Title	Category	Mode
1	Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)	New Delhi	M.A. Mass Communication	CU (Central)	Conventional
2	University of Hyderabad (UoH)	Hyderabad, Telangana	M.A. Communication	CU (Central)	Conventional
3	Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI)	New Delhi	M.A. Mass Communication	CU (Central/Deemed)	Conventional
4	Panjab University (PU)	Chandigarh	M.A. Mass Communication	CU (State)	Conventional
5	Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE)	Manipal, Karnataka	M.Sc. Media Studies	CU (Deemed)	Conventional
6	Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)	New Delhi	M.A. Mass Communication	OU (Central)	Distance/ODL
7	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU)	Hyderabad, Telangana	M.A. Journalism & Mass Communication	OU (State)	Distance/ODL
8	Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University (VMOU)	Kota, Rajasthan	M.A. Mass Communication	OU (State)	Distance/ODL
9	Annamalai University — Directorate of Distance Education (AUDDE)	Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu	M.A. Mass Communication	DEI (Dual Mode)	Distance/ODL
10	Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology — Directorate of Distance Education (GJUDDE)	Hisar, Haryana	M.A. Mass Communication	DEI (Dual Mode)	Distance/ODL

Data Collection

Curriculum design data for the sampled HEIs' post-graduate media education programs were sourced from the curriculum design documents and syllabus for the programs. Data were sourced from the institution's official website in case of the curriculum design documents, while where required, documents were sourced from the institutions' academic departments. Curriculum design documents sourced include program brochures, detailed course syllabi, examination schemes, credit allocation schemes, and instructional design schemes if available. Data were sourced during the year 2022-23.

Data Analysis

Content analysis of the gathered documents was done systematically through the use of a coding scheme which was based on previous studies on the topic of curricula development and media education. There were seven aspects included in the coding scheme which dealt with curriculum design, namely: (1) structure and time duration of the program; (2) credits and distribution of the courses offered; (3)

objectives and philosophy of the program; (4) content and subjects included; (5) media utilized; (6) methods used for assessing and evaluating learners; and (7) ways of supporting learners. Agreement between coders was assured as indicated by Cohen's Kappa statistic with $k = 0.81$ (Landis & Koch, 1977).

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Programme Structure and Duration

All the institutions surveyed provided media education at the post-graduate level (M.A./M.Sc.), with an ordinary duration of two academic years. Yet, there were considerable differences in the organisational structure of semesterisation and credit load between CUs and DEIs/OU. The former adopted a Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) in line with UGC recommendations consisting of four semesters, with a total credit load of 80–96. This type of credit system is practised by JNU, UoH, JMI, PU, and MAHE universities, and provides students with some room for electives. This credit system is well consistent with the idea of interdisciplinary and flexible educational structures outlined in the NEP 2020 (MoE, 2020; UGC, 2022).

The latter had their courses arranged either annually or semester-wise but with higher rigidity, as well as with smaller credit load (60–80). Such a pattern of course structure was stipulated by the necessity to follow the principles of distance learning. For example, the IGNOU M.A. Mass Communication programme comprises 64 credits of core and elective courses in the credit-based annual pattern. Details about the semester and annual structure are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparative Overview of Programme Structure in Sampled CUs and DEIs/OU

Structural Feature	Conventional Universities (CUs)	DEIs / Open Universities (OUs)
Programme Level	M.A./M.Sc. (Post-Graduate)	M.A./M.Sc. (Post-Graduate)
Duration	2 Years (4 Semesters)	2 Years (Semester / Annual)
Total Credits	80–96 Credits	60–80 Credits
Credit System	Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)	Annual / Semester Credit System
Core Courses	10–14 Courses	8–12 Courses
Elective Courses	4–8 Courses (student choice)	2–4 Courses (limited choice)
Practical / Project Component	Mandatory (15–25% of credits)	Mandatory (10–20% of credits)
Dissertation / Thesis	Optional / Compulsory (varies)	Optional (mostly project-based)

Programme Objectives and Philosophical Orientation

The formulation of programme objectives brought out clear philosophical differences between CUs and DEIs/OU. CUs generally had a strong focus on both critical theoretical thinking and media professions. While formulating programme objectives in their curricula, especially in that of JNU, UoH, and JMI, attention was often paid to analytical abilities, such as media criticism, discourse analysis, audience studies, production, and research capabilities. Some of the objectives of the CU curricula were associated

with digital literacy, new media platforms, and socially ethical journalism, influenced by current media pedagogy literature (Bhaskaran *et al.* 2019; Mihailidis, 2018).

In contrast, knowledge transfer and skills acquisition were important to DEIs/OU. The majority of the programme objectives outlined in DEI/OU curricula were concerned with enabling the students to gain an understanding of media and communication theories and systems via independent learning. The tone of the programme objectives, seen in the curricula of IGNOU, BRAOU, and VMOU, was characterised by considerations of accessibility and learner autonomy. This is because of the open education philosophy followed by DEIs/OU (Peters, 2001; Tait, 2003). Programmes Objectives are compared thematically in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis of Programme Objectives: CUs vs. DEIs/OU

Objective Theme	CUs (n=5)	DEIs/OUs (n=5)
Critical Media Analysis	5 (100%)	3 (60%)
Professional Skills Development	4 (80%)	5 (100%)
Digital/New Media Literacy	4 (80%)	2 (40%)
Research Competency	4 (80%)	2 (40%)
Self-Directed / Independent Learning	1 (20%)	5 (100%)
Social Responsibility & Ethics	3 (60%)	3 (60%)
Regional/Local Media Context	2 (40%)	4 (80%)
Entrepreneurship / Media Management	3 (60%)	2 (40%)

Course Content and Subject Area Distribution

In the analysis of the courses covered in the sample programmes, similarities were noted in terms of the content that the curricula of CUs and DEIs/OU cover, including communication theories, media history and institutions, journalism and reporting, media production, and media law and ethics. Nevertheless, there was a significant gap between the two in terms of how extensive, thorough, and updated their content coverage was.

The CU programmes were found to be more diversified in terms of the courses offered in relation to emerging fields such as data journalism, social media analytics, podcasting, mobile journalism, documentary film-making, and media entrepreneurship. As observed in the curriculum of UoH and MAHE, there are separate courses dealing with the topics of digital media management, multimedia journalism, and audience analytics – aspects that are gaining more attention as essential skills for media practitioners in the contemporary world (Kashyap & Bhaskaran, 2020; Westlund & Ekström, 2018). The DEI/OU programmes, although offering comprehensive foundation courses, do not seem to offer enough focus on the emerging trends of digital media platforms. This observation is reflective of the difficulties associated with updating the curriculum in distance learning systems compared to traditional programmes (Mishra, 2009; Gaba & Li, 2015).

Instructional Media and Technology Integration

The analysis of instructional media incorporated into curricula was one area that showed the largest differences between CUs and DEIs/OU. The following table provides an overview of the different types of instructional media found in the curricular documents of sampled institutions.

Table 4: Instructional Media Types Identified in Curriculum Documents of Sampled Institutions

Instructional Media Type	CUs (n=5)	DEIs/OU (n=5)
Prescribed Textbooks / Print Materials	5 (100%)	5 (100%)
Self-Learning Materials (SLM / SIM)	1 (20%)	5 (100%)
Audio-Video Programmes (Radio / TV)	0 (0%)	4 (80%)
E-content / Digital Learning Materials	4 (80%)	3 (60%)
Learning Management System (LMS)	3 (60%)	2 (40%)
SWAYAM / NPTEL / MOOC Platform Integration	2 (40%)	3 (60%)
Multimedia CD / DVD Resources	1 (20%)	3 (60%)
Online Streaming / OTT Content (pedagogic use)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)
Interactive Video / Webinars	4 (80%)	2 (40%)
Social Media Platforms (pedagogic use)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)
Production Lab / Studio (hands-on)	5 (100%)	3 (60%)

From the above findings, it can be seen that CUs are more likely to adopt modern digital media and interactive tools in their curriculum designs as compared to DEIs/OU which still rely mainly on conventional media of distance education (SLM, audio-video, programmes, CD/DVDs). This is because of the historic presence of media of distance education system in India where the traditional modes of print and broadcast media are commonly used as instructional media carriers (Panda, 2005). In fact, the IGNOU curriculum explicitly includes educational TV channels like ‘*Gyan Darshan*’ and ‘*Gyan Vani*’. Further, the integration of digital learning platforms like SWAYAM and NPTEL MOOCs was observed in both kinds of institutions due to a focus on integrating national digital learning infrastructures into curriculum by the UGC.

Assessment and Evaluation Strategies

There were similarities and differences in the assessment methods used across curricula for the two groups of educational institutions under investigation. The sampled educational institutions made use of formative and summative assessments such as term-end examinations, assignments, and projects. However, the importance attached to various forms of assessment differed significantly.

There was a greater variety in assessment methods in CUs because the curriculum was competency based; consequently, there was the need for students to demonstrate skills acquired. Apart from examinations, assessment involved presentations, group projects, media projects, fieldwork, and portfolios. DEIs/OU made use of TMA, term-end examination, and practical projects submitted through correspondence and online submission due to geographical distance of learners. Table 5 illustrates the comparative analysis.

Table 5: Assessment Strategies Identified in Sampled CU and DEI/OU Curricula

Assessment Strategy	CUs (n=5)	DEIs/OUs (n=5)
Term-End Written Examination	5 (100%)	5 (100%)
Written Assignments / Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMA)	5 (100%)	5 (100%)
Seminar / Presentation	4 (80%)	1 (20%)
Group Project / Collaborative Work	3 (60%)	1 (20%)
Media Production Assignment	5 (100%)	3 (60%)
Fieldwork / Internship	4 (80%)	2 (40%)
Portfolio Assessment	2 (40%)	1 (20%)
Continuous Internal Assessment (CIA)	5 (100%)	3 (60%)
Online / Digital Submission Assessment	2 (40%)	2 (40%)
Dissertation / Research Project	4 (80%)	2 (40%)

Learner Support Mechanisms

Learner support is an essential component of curricular designs, especially in distance education, because the learners could feel isolated due to absence of face-to-face interaction and thus would lack feedback from tutors (Simpson, 2012; Tait, 2003). In terms of learner support, the analysis of the CUs' curriculum documents showed that it was delivered by means of faculty office hours, departmental libraries, online learning systems, and peer learning. Mentoring programs and career counseling were mentioned by several CU curricula.

There were more formalized learner support facilities described in the DEI/OU's curriculum documents in relation to the needs peculiar to open and distance learning. These include study centers located across the globe, academic counseling, PCPs, free phone calls to toll-free help line, and online discussion forums. For instance, IGNOU curriculum mentions the network of 3,000+ study centers and broadcasting counseling programs (Gyan Darshan and Gyan Vani). BRAOU and VMOU curricula refer to their regional study centers and telephonic counseling facilities. The formalized learner support in the DEI/OU's curricula illustrates long recognized understanding within the movement of open education that access to education should be coupled with systematic support of learner success (Tait, 2003; Moore *et al.* 2011).

DISCUSSION

The results of the current research present an intricate picture of how curriculum design operates in post-graduate media programs offered by CUs and DEIs/OU's in India. A number of major insights stand out as a result of the comparison undertaken in this study.

Primarily, it is evident from the results obtained that there is a significant discrepancy between CU and DEI/OU media programs in terms of using modern media technologies in curriculum design. In particular, CUs such as JNU, UoH, and MAHE appear to be relatively flexible in terms of integrating

emerging media technologies into program structure. Meanwhile, DEIs/OU's have strong traditional content but appear to be less dynamic in adopting new technologies due to infrastructure issues and higher time costs. It should be noted that this issue is consistent with the observations of Das (2018), who emphasizes the failure of most Indian HEIs in adjusting curriculums to rapid changes in media and technology. The results are also consistent with the analysis performed by Bhaskaran *et al.* (2019).

Second, the research brings out the contrasting philosophical approach followed by CU and DEI/OU curricula with respect to the learner's agency and autonomy. DEI/OU curricula, as reflected in IGNOU, BRAOU, and VMOU syllabi, which are rooted in the philosophy of open education, emphasize self-learning, flexibility in studies, and inclusiveness. CU curricula, on the other hand, are more inclined towards structuring academic engagement, developing research skills, and professional socialization within the campus environment. The flexible, multidisciplinary, and technology-mediated approach to education envisioned by NEP-2020 clearly suggests the possibility of convergence of these two approaches (MoE, 2020). Nevertheless, the presence of these different orientations poses an important question concerning whether learners enrolled in DEI/OU programs are provided with equal opportunities to develop analytical and research skills.

Finally, findings related to the use of media in instruction show that both CUs and DEIs/OU's heavily rely on print instructional material as the main source of instruction, despite the increasing dominance of digital media in both professional and daily communication contexts. This finding is in agreement with observations made by Dhawan (2020) that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the structural unpreparedness of many Indian higher education institutions to switch to a digital instructional model. There appears to be untapped potential in the use of digital media as both instructional material and mode of instruction in media education programmes, especially those offered by DEIs/OU's.

Finally, the study highlights the issue of equity in the development of the curriculum. DEIs/OU's cater to learner groups that may have characteristics such as geographical dispersion, socio-economic heterogeneity, and low access to on-campus facilities. The curriculums of BRAOU, VMOU, AUDDE, and GJUDDE have shown an evident commitment to equitable education access. However, the limited number of emerging media resources and interactivity features used in the curriculum of DEIs/OU's may be perceived as a lack of access to quality and professional education alongside the availability of educational access. Ensuring educational equity regarding curriculum quality and currentness becomes one of the primary issues for policymakers and curriculum designers of Indian HEIs (Kumar *et al.* 2021; Sanjay, 2012).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research work, there has been an attempt to conduct a systematic comparative study of the curriculum design elements associated with media education for post-graduation in traditional HEIs and distance education institutes / open universities in India. Based on document and content analysis of curricula of 10 selected HEIs, viz., JNU, UoH, JMI, PU, and MAHE, which are classified as CUs; and IGNOU, BRAOU, VMOU, AUDDE, and GJUDDE as DEIs/OU's, a number of variations have

been found regarding program design, integration of instructional media, assessment methods, and articulation of learning objectives. Such differences are the result of several other factors.

This paper will make an important contribution to the existing literature on media education curriculum design in Indian HEIs, which is marked by notable gaps as highlighted by various researchers such as Das (2018), Rego (2017), and Kumar *et al.* (2021). In light of the above results, the following recommendations have been proposed:

1. **Curriculum Revision for DEIs/OU:** The IGNOU, BRAOU, VMOU, AUDDE, and GJUDDE should give priority to revising their curricula so that it accommodates the latest developments and innovations in media such as new platforms, digital tools, data journalism, and other such advances (Kashyap & Bhaskaran, 2020; Westlund & Ekström, 2018). Collaboration between curriculum designers, practitioners, and academic institutions can help in this regard.
2. **Technology-Based Instructional Design:** While CUs must develop and implement rich digital media as a means of instruction and learning, DEIs/OU can also benefit from the adoption of instructional media. Digital video, podcasts, simulations, and OERs (SWAYAM and NPTEL) can improve learning experiences significantly (Dhawan, 2020; UGC-DEB, 2020).
3. **Diverse Assessment Methods:** DEIs/OU should consider incorporating a wide range of assessment strategies such as portfolio-based, project-based assessments, and online assessments based on practical application.
4. **Policy Support for Equitable Curriculum Design:** The UGC, as well as the UGC Distance Education Bureau, needs to formulate and implement new guidelines which require all HEIs that provide post-graduate education in media to showcase how they integrate emerging technologies and the principles of equitable teaching into their curriculum designs (MoE, 2020; UGC-DEB, 2020).
5. **Future Research:** In future studies, it will be important to use larger and nationally representative samples and mixed method designs including surveying learners, interviewing instructors, and conducting institutional case studies to explore how the different factors influence the process of designing curricula for post-graduate media education in India.

In summary, the design of post-graduate media education curricula in India requires efforts in innovating in pedagogy, integrating technology, and ensuring equity. These efforts must not just be made in terms of policies but need to be reflected in course design, choice of learning media and modes of assessment. This study has provided the necessary empirical base for this task.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are certain limitations within this study that need to be pointed out. Firstly, the fact that there were only 10 institutions studied limits the study's capacity to produce statistically generalisable results

when compared to the whole population of Indian higher education institutions providing post-graduate media education. Secondly, the fact that curriculum documents and syllabi were used as sole data sources means that the implementation of the design of those curriculums in a classroom or distance education setting might actually differ greatly from the information presented within them. Thirdly, the rapidly changing field of media technologies implies that some aspects of the curriculums mentioned above have possibly been changed after the study was conducted in 2022–23.

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