

### **Status of Media Literacy Education in Pakistan**

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#### **Abstract**

This research was aimed to identify the media literacy education practices prevalent in the selected universities of Karachi, Pakistan. This is qualitative research, consisting of 13 in-depth interviews of media faculties from public, private, and semi-private universities of Karachi. Sample was extracted through purposive sampling technique. Key findings reveal that media literacy education has become inevitable for all media audiences particularly after experiencing infodemic during covid 19. Besides that, lack of synchronicity between public and private sector universities in terms of resource allocation and capacity building initiatives was significantly addressed by the respondents thus reflecting the absence of media literacy component in the national higher education policy of Pakistan. Academicians are cognizant of the inevitable need of media literacy; but due to the absence of media literacy curriculum guidelines, their pedagogical inclinations reflect their individual subject orientation and technical expertise only.

**Keywords:** Media literacy, media literacy education, pedagogical practices, pedagogical strategies.

#### **Introduction**

The U.S. National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) defined media literacy as the skills and competencies that allows an individual to use conscientious approach by critically and carefully engaging with the media content. In the words of Malik, Sajjad (2008): “Media education is not about having the right answers; it is about asking the right questions”. This notion of ‘asking the right question’ can be interpreted in the context of the skills and competencies required for imparting media education thus it is imperative to employ the right set of pedagogical practices, approaches, and strategies for the effective conveyance of media literacy education.

Core principles of media literacy education have been revised in 2023 by the national association of media literacy education and are as follows:

- **Expand:** Refers to literacy that is interdisciplinary in nature that covers all forms of media and empower people to become conscious media prosumers.
- **Envisions:** It rests on the notion that people are active audiences and have an ability to responsibly deal with media.
- **Promotes:** Teaching strategies that enable learners to be inquisitive and become rational decision maker.
- **Encourages:** Media audiences to carefully and critically engage with media in view of the challenges of contemporary media scenario
- **Necessitates:** The need of continuous upgrade of skills and competencies by using interdisciplinary curriculum design which is suitable for everyone’s needs.
- **Supports:** Emphasizes on the collaborative media environment which allows individuals to share different ethical responsibilities when they produce and disseminate media content.
- **Recognizes:** Acknowledge the role of media as business enterprise as well as social institution thus serves as a significant social actor, engages in economic activities and a catalyst of change.
- **Affirms:** Collective contribution between all stakeholders which includes media, technology, government and audiences plays a vital role in developing conducive media environment.
- **Emphasize:** Focusses to investigate the role and responsibilities of media, its impact and its consequences on the harmony and wellbeing of society.
- **Empowers:** It allows audiences to become mindful and responsible media audiences as a member of democratic system. (National Association for Media Literacy Education, 2023)

#### **Scope & Significance**

Alexandria Declaration of 2005 (UNESDOC, 2013) and article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right (United Nations, n.d) recognized the significance of media literacy education as a basic human right that empowers citizens to become an active audience irrespective of their geographical boundaries. Given that, UNESCO’ empowerment approach elucidates that media literacy education is crucial for every media consumer as it enables them to develop reflective

mindset, take thoughtful decisions hence actively participate in the country's development process. (*Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines; 2013, n.d.*).

### **Literature Review**

Development Participation theory / Participatory Development

This theory rests on the idea that masses need to be engaged in the process of development by engaging them in the projects of development. Dinbabo (2003) also cited Rehman (1993) & Oakley (1991) by stating: "the concept of participatory development includes the collaborative effort of people, taking initiatives by themselves in terms of their own thinking and deliberations".

This theoretical approach is relevant because it highlights the role of different stakeholders in participatory development, i.e., the concept of active audience or media literate audience, which is mandatory for the effective inclusion and implementation of national policy for media literacy education.

### **Active Audience theory**

This theory revolves around the idea that media audience does not merely reflect passive receiver of media messages; instead, they select, identify, evaluate, analyze, and interpret every stimulus by using their critical thinking and reasoning skills. This theory refers to the potential of individuals in decision-making and effective media consumption. This theory is an extension of Hall's Encoding and Decoding model (as cited by Stuetz & Waddell in 2020)

### **Conceptual foundation**

Status of Media Literacy Education in Pakistan:

Hafeez & Nouman (2020) gave an overview of prevalent media education in Pakistani universities based on the available documents from the departments' websites and the interviews of the head of the departments. They revealed that the curriculum guidelines of media programs did not contain vision and uniformity across Pakistani universities. Zainab (2019) also asserted that there were no national level media literacy reforms; based on the interviews of media professionals and media academicians in Pakistan. Sadia, Iqbal, Ittefaq & Kamboh (2022) reflected that policy and vision are the key components for promoting media literacy education across all levels i.e., schools, colleges, and universities of Pakistan considering the UNESCO's framework of media and information literacy.

Currently, several NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in Pakistan are actively involved in creating awareness among media practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and academicians by organizing workshops/ trainings and providing research reports and publications. In the succeeding paragraph, prominent NGOs' and their contributions are briefly elaborated to present the background of this research, these include Digital Rights Foundation, Society for Alternative Media and Research, Citizen for free and responsible media, National Press Trust & Uks research.

Refer to table 1 that encompasses brief profile of the afore stated organizations highlighting their initiatives for media literacy education in the country.

In view of the above-mentioned overview and table 1 reflections regarding the prevalent media literacy education practices in Pakistan, it can be asserted that there is no synchronicity among the contributions of the key stakeholders regarding the media literacy education. Though, they all are working within their respective realms, but there is an absence of systematic approach that requires clear educational policy about the inclusion of media literacy in higher education curriculum and the concerted efforts with the integration of all stakeholders for the effective penetration of media literacy and formation of knowledge society in Pakistan.

### **Materials & Method**

This is a qualitative research hence in-depth structured interviews of media faculties have been conducted to explore their insights regarding the existing media literacy education practices and its status in selected public / semi-private and private universities of Karachi, Pakistan. Interviews were conducted by using Zoom, Google Meet and WhatsApp calls for about 45 -60 minutes. Respondents were selected from the media programs of public, private, and semi-private sector universities of Karachi only. A total of 13 in-depth structured interviews were conducted. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the faculty of media programs/departments of public and private sector universities of Karachi only.

### **Research instrument**

Interview guide was used to gather the in-depth insights about the teachers' perception regarding media literacy education practices in Pakistan.

Research questions for this research are as follows:

RQ1. What are the existing pedagogical strategies for media literacy education used by the teachers of public, private, and semi-private sector universities?

RQ2. What are the challenges of media literacy education that media teachers faced during the pandemic scenario?

RQ3. What steps should be taken for the inclusion of media literacy in higher education system of Pakistan?

### **Data analysis**

Data analysis was done by using an inductive thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis consists of steps which includes the identification of codes, generating relevant themes and data categorization as per their relevant themes then taking out inferences from each theme to draw the conclusion.

### **Results**

This section presents key themes and their relevant codes, that have been identified after analyzing the interview data by using thematic analysis.

#### **Theme 1 Pedagogical Strategies**

This theme covers pedagogical practices, resources that are being used and the prevalent pedagogical approaches for imparting media literacy education. Findings reflect the responses of 13 media teachers from public, private, and semi-private universities of Karachi Pakistan.

Sub themes are as follows:

##### **1.1 Pedagogical Practices:**

Major responses under this theme reflect that 10 out of 13 respondents do incorporate media literacy components in their courses irrespective of the courses they are teaching, be it journalism, development communication or basic / introductory media courses etc. Moreover, these statements also reflect that the pedagogical practices are concurrent irrespective of teachers' educational institutions be it public, private, and semi-private.

Whilst discussing the media literacy pedagogical practices during pandemic faculty S from the public sector reflected that it was easier for her to incorporate media literacy education during online /remote teaching experience mainly due to the comfortable and user-friendly learning environment for students as for them 'their cell phone is their world' and the ease of access to diverse media genres that could be shared during the online teaching sessions.

This idea was also validated by faculty H from semiprivate university who said: "my pedagogical practices changed in a positive way as it was much easier to include diverse learning resources due to the online teaching platforms".

Consequently, all 13 responses validate the degree of agreement regarding the inclusion of media literacy education for all media courses be it a theory-based course or practical oriented. In addition, all teachers emphasized the importance of media literacy as an essential component of the media curriculum; whereas few also stressed that there should be a separate course so that media literacy can be imparted more effectively to the students.

Interactive discussion is one of the most preferred pedagogical practices that almost every teacher discussed. They say that interactive discussions are enriching for students learning experience as they can question different ideas and learn different perspectives while reading, watching, and discussing diverse media text.

Together with this, the importance of practical approach has been significantly endorsed by the teachers as they believe that it is important to enable students to learn by practically testing the ideas and concepts. Faculty S from private sector university elaborated that "he used praxis or method of praxis which is the process by which a theory or lesson is enacted or realized by practicing the idea. in media literacy education that is the most important which is learning by praxis, so you just don't only learn about the theories but also apply it.". This idea was also confirmed by (faculty S) from public and (faculty M) from semi-private university as they both emphasized on the idea of creating content as an effective learning approach.

##### **1.2 Pedagogical Resources:**

Teachers mostly prefer diverse media text for imparting media literacy education i.e., videos, YouTube videos, animation, memes, and indigenous local media text as well, because they believe that media literacy education can be done effectively by showing real media messages to the students. Keeping in mind that the study was conducted in context of pandemic teaching experience hence, digital archives were significantly identified as the resource platform for media literacy material.

Some additional codes that were not identified in the majority but also highlight the role of media teachers in the selection of teaching resources and the discourse via diverse media text. Faculty S from the public sector university stated that the

resource selection also depends upon the teachers' preferences and the course requirements. In addition to this, private sector faculty S also stressed that one of the most important resources is the media text regardless of the fact whether it is indigenous or not.

### **1.3 Students' Engagement Factor:**

Most repeatedly, codes reflect the idea that students can be inspired to engage more in their learning experience if they are doing their self-initiated projects. This means that if students bring their own ideas in the form of assignments / projects or participating in hands on exercises and learning via praxis i.e., practical application of theoretical knowledge; it will motivate them to put their understanding in practice then and there.

In addition, inclusion of real-life examples is more engaging due to the element of recency hence causes better understanding about the subject. Faculty R from private, faculty S from public and faculty J from semi-private sector universities stressed on the idea of discussing real cases / examples as an important motivation factor for engaging students.

Another idea discussed under this category is incentives /grading criteria and class environment. One faculty Z from public sector university stated that grading criteria is also one of reason for motivating students towards their assignments or projects.

Faculty S from private sector university discussed the lack of students' interest towards reading materials and the significance of visual media text stated that:

“One of the reasons why students are not willing to read on their own during online classes as much as they study during physical classes in the classroom environment, students are sitting in physical classes for 2 to 3 hours where they have nothing else but to study and are there for specific purpose whereas at home there could be 100 things that might change what they are doing. May be visual mediums or mediums that were more tactile could be more effective for these students.”

Individual factors/Students' level of self-motivation is an important factor, and it is recommended by 4 faculties i.e., 3 from semi-private and 1 public sector university. Student presentations is among the least considered option.

### **1.4 Approaches**

Interactive engaging sessions (or creative learning) are one of the most discussed approaches by 8/ 13 teachers i.e., more than half of the respondents. Critical analysis is another most discussed (6/13 faculties) components regarding the media literacy education. This approach can also be referred to as Inquiry based learning because in critical analysis whether it's in the form of content analysis of media messages or other forms; it allows the students to question the content at hand and then evaluate as per different parameters.

4/13 pinpointed the idea of incorporating diverse perspectives using creativity as it allows teachers and students to collaborate in learning experience by sharing their knowledge and insights together. Faculty S from semi-private sector elaborated that students may be shown some examples and then ask them to search for some relevant items on their own. This allows students and teachers to come together and have a collaborative intellectual discourse.

Faculty J from semiprivate university discussed the idea to incorporate diverse perspectives by using creative approaches in designing the course plan. Also, surprise elements can also be an effective approach for imparting media literacy education.

Practice based learning approach is another highlighted approach. 4/13 Teachers (2 from private & 2 from semi-private sector) believed that students should be encouraged to put their knowledge in solving real / imaginary problems hence practically demonstrate their level of understanding.

This idea has been emphasized via code 'collaborations between the academia and industry' that allows students to gain understanding of their respective field from the experts and academia simultaneously. Social agents, i.e. government, researchers, teachers, activists etc. who have been the advocate of media education; should actively contribute through their skills and competencies with other stakeholders who understand the potential of media in contemporary times and the importance of preparing young minds for dealing with the future challenges (Chisholm, Lucia, 2013)

Another code is the community participation as students get the opportunity to explore real-world problems and search for their possible solutions as an active community member. Whilst discussing the collaborative approach, faculty S from public sector university stated that she has been using Microsoft teams and zoom for collaborative work assignments.

## **Theme. 2 Skills & Competencies**

### **2.1 Skill based.**

Repeatedly, one skill has been endorsed by all the teachers i.e., 13 interviewees' (belonging to public, private, and semi-private sector) emphasized critical thinking skill as the most essential tool for media literacy that can empower individuals to become media literate. Faculty H from semiprivate university stated: "media literacy education can help students develop a critical eye to analyses different perspectives of information".

### **2.2 Knowledge based**

Considering the pretext of pandemic, interviewees mostly believed that the knowledge of media is vital as it will allow the media audiences to identify the fake news and take better decisions regarding their information selection and reception. "Critical media literacy provides a theoretical framework and transformative pedagogy to empower students to question media, challenge hegemony, and participate in society as justice-oriented global citizens" (Yildiz, Melda N. & Keengwe, Jared, 2016).

Faculty M from private sector university asserted that "media literacy education is important to enable students with critical thinking skills so that they can evaluate information whether its accurate or not".

Amidst Covid situation and the bombardment of unlimited information, access to digital platforms increased manifolds. People from different facets of life started using digital media because they had no other option but to adapt. Thus, it was also believed that audience should be facilitated to use digital platforms wisely and sensibly for participating as an active citizen. Participation should be encouraged in the digital spaces as per one of the core recommendations discussed in the European Commission declaration on digital rights and media policies. (European Commission, 2022)

One faculty Z from public sector said that "media literacy means that we can think why media is saying whatever they are saying and how they are saying in a particular way." In the words of National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) the core objective of media literacy education is to empower everyone with the skills and competencies that enable them to analyze rationally, convey and receive information effectively and contribute as conscientious and reflective audience in the contemporary times.

## **Theme 3. Gaps**

This theme covers those barriers that hinders the effective dissemination of media literacy education across public and private sector universities in Karachi, Pakistan. Sub themes are discussed below:

### **3.1 Knowledge gap**

Knowledge gap between faculty and institutions reflect that both participants are not aligned in terms of their approaches and practices thus causing uneven distribution of media literacy education in the universities of public and private sectors. Hence, it can be asserted that this knowledge vacuum is mainly due to the reason that teachers are not completely involved in the curriculum design process, neither their input is taken / required to revise or update the curriculum as per the recent trends.

Faculty S from public sector university discussed that inadequate training is provided to the faculty members which in turn furthers the knowledge gap amongst the faculty members.

Primarily it is due to the absence of media literacy component in the educational curriculum hence there is no proper guideline that aligns the pedagogical practices among teachers, and this has been observed after assessing the higher education commission curriculum draft for media and communication studies (HEC, 2018).

### **3.2 Gaps in Pedagogical Practices**

Collaborations between the industry and academia is also vital for the successful dissemination of media literacy education in Pakistani universities, as stated by the faculty from private sector.

SU faculty from public sector university pinpointed an interesting insight regarding the importance of practical knowledge for students via student-faculty research collaborations as an integral part of the academic opportunities given to the students. This practice is quite common in foreign universities where aspiring research students are encouraged to work with senior professors on their projects and gain enriching learning experience on the way.

Considering these inequalities, it raises the question that if students are not prepared for the industry how they jell-in the competitive environment of corporate sector without will being fully equipped with the relevant tools.

### **3.3 Resource Gaps**

Gap between public and private sectors and diverse socio-economic backgrounds of students are inter-related codes as their foundation lies in the striking economic divide between public and private sector universities and their students. This economic divide between public and private sector universities was significantly pinpointed by many teachers.

S faculty from private sector university also stressed about the unequal distribution of resources between genders as the significant problem that occurred during pandemic. Due to limited funds and resources, public sector universities are unable to come at par to the private sector universities. Hence there is a huge barrier between the information distribution practices of both sectors to their students. Besides that, students in the public sector are coming from various socio-economic backgrounds hence it is impossible to say that all of them can avail equal opportunities. Inadequate funds do not allow students of the public sector cannot access different facilities that their counterparts in private sector can easily avail. During pandemic access to indigenous or regional media text was not readily available hence could be considered as an important gap.

### **3.4 Pandemic Challenges**

Unfamiliar online pedagogical system and technical inconsistencies, it was challenging for many teachers to quickly transition from old to new learning & teaching environment. Primarily, difficulty in accessing students' feedback is one major challenge that has been highlighted by almost every teacher. During online teaching sessions, many students take the liberty of not physically present in the class hence they did not use their camera and microphone to actively participate in the classroom activities. Thus, it was difficult for teachers to assess whether students were taking the class or not. Importance of audio & visuals was also considered crucial because it was imperative to engage students via audio/ visual materials in teaching lessons.

Moreover, field trips, guest sessions and visits were not possible due to the constraints of social distancing. Considering the Covid-19 protocols it was difficult to manage practical courses amid pandemic. Another code 'perception gap' (students and faculty) regarding online learning also seems relevant to be discussed here. Due to the unusual communication situation there seemed to be a gap between the students and teachers understanding and their expectations regarding the online learning environments. Non-serious attitude among students towards online learning is another obstacle highlighted by the majority respondents.

Lack of relevant material (particularly local indigenous media text) or resource gap was also a key barrier. In addition, it was difficult for teachers to identify credible information amidst heavily cluttered digital spaces. Most teachers realized that it was crucial for them to learn about digital platforms and use them as per their respective needs. Increased gaps between information haves (private sector) and information have-not (public sector) were mainly the reason behind inadequate available resources.

### **3.5 Educational infrastructure**

It is also revealed that due to the absence of media education policy in the country's legal framework; media studies/ media science/ mass communication is not handled as other professional degrees. Hence the distribution of media education is also not carried out on similar lines across public and private sectors, which results in the growing disparities between information haves and have-not. In addition, industry exposure was also considered imperative for bridging the gap between industry and academia.

SU faculty of public sector university reflected that the criterion of hiring media teachers should also be upgraded as there is a need of bringing new designations like professor in practice and lecturer in practice. Mainly because teachers having industry experience can be of significant benefit for the respective media departments and teaching environments as well.

## **Theme 4. Recommendations**

### **4.1 Curriculum Design**

Inefficient curriculum design is another barrier in imparting media literacy education effectively. It is imperative to upgrade university programs and include the component of media literacy in all disciplines so that students from various educational backgrounds can become media literate. Inclusion of media and information literacy in the higher education curriculum design is fundamental as it will empower students to process media messages with a conscientious approach and smartly navigate through the cyber space whilst actively participating in the global discourse (Unyial & Kaur, 2018). Faculty Z from public sector stressed on the lack of practicality in the existing curriculum and said: "Infrastructure is there but the curriculum design is not practically valid. There is a mind gap between faculty and institution."

All 13 teachers agreed that media literacy education should be included in the educational curriculum. 6/13 also pinpointed the need for media literacy component in theory and practical courses of the entire media curriculum so that the subject can be handled more efficiently and more precisely through different perspectives.

H from semiprivate sector stated: "considering the digital media challenges particularly the spread of fake news through social media; I believe there should be a separate course of media literacy, and it should be made compulsory for all the

students". Faculty Z from public sector university also favors this idea of introducing a separate course of media literacy considering its efficacy for students at all educational levels.

It emerged as a collective insight that media literacy education should be introduced or included in the curriculum of different educational levels i.e. early childhood education, primary, secondary, intermediate, and higher secondary education. "The purpose of media literacy education is to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active citizens in today's world." (Alliance for a media literate America, n.d.)

Faculty U from public sector university asserted that "foundation courses of media should be introduced in the intermediate curriculum so that it will prepare students to further pursue their media education at the university level."

Besides that, 4 teachers (2 from semi-private and 2 from public sector institutions) that media literacy education should be included in the curriculum of early childhood education programs as well, mainly because children have been exposed to media since very young age so it is important for educators to bring it into their notice that they should not handle kids as passive receivers of media hence provide them media literacy in such a way that is suitable for their age.

J from semiprivate sector highlighted the significance of media literacy education for kids "It is dangerous for children because they can't use their judgment and distinguish between real and unreal. They should be taught in schools that you cannot believe everything you see. Someone who studies child psychology would probably suggest better ways to teach children about media literacy. Therefore, I believe media literacy education should begin from school level.

Media literacy is also considered significant for people from different disciplines by 8 out of 13 teachers as they believe that students from other disciplines are also consuming media messages in a similar fashion as media students are & they need to be educated about the possible ways through which they can analyze and utilize media more sensibly. "For teachers and students, media and information literacy are a life skill and one that is necessary to make informed decisions, affect change, and wield some degree of power over the decisions we make in our daily lives" (Wilson, 2012, page 21).

J from semiprivate sector asserted that: "There is a greater need for general masses to be somewhat literate about the media content because they are unable to judge the accuracy of information disseminated through various media messages". Curriculum revision is strongly suggested for the entire media curriculum. Whereas inclusion of separate foundation course is also emphasized for other disciplines too.

Hobb (2011) while discussing the two key school of thoughts on media education stated that the selection of separate stand-alone course or integration model or even a combination of both should be decided by assessing the available support system that comprises of human capital, content etc.

#### **4.2 Change in Pedagogical Strategies**

7/13 Teachers whilst talking about the media literacy education in the wake of pandemic; were of the view that interdisciplinary approach should be used to impart media literacy. This is mainly because they think that the media is not only relevant for media students/ teachers/ researchers, but it has also become an inevitable component of everyone's life. The National Association of Media Literacy Education has also endorsed this notion that "Media Literacy is interdisciplinary by nature" (<https://namle.net/resources/media-literacy-defined/>). Thus, interdisciplinary approach will allow people to understand the various aspects of media which are part and parcel of our everyday lives hence we can consider it practically viable for everyone. Teachers believed that it is important to emphasize the practice-based learning behavior / pedagogical approach as it empowers students and enables them to demonstrate their current understanding and apply it in real situations.

Critical thinking skill is the most stressed component; irrespective of their university status i.e., public/ private, and semi-private. Moreover, lack of technical awareness among faculty is also crucial for effective dissemination of media literacy in Pakistan. They believe that media teachers should know what is happening in the industry and how latest developments and trends can be embedded in their teaching strategies. 10/13 respondents agreed that there should be specialized training of media literacy education for teachers from all disciplines. In pandemic time, the need to upskill teachers with digital media competencies seemed critically significant besides the transformations in educational landscape (Li, Ming and Zhonggen Yu, Zhonggen, 2022).

Faculty U from public sector came up with the idea that "mass communication or media studies should be considered as a professional degree just like medicine and engineering. Hence the criterion of hiring media teachers should be upgraded as there is a need of bringing new designations like professor in practice and lecturer in practice. Mainly because teachers have industry experience can be of significant benefit for the respective media departments and teaching environments as well. Also, he pinpointed the need for a statutory body and the problems that emerge due to its unavailability."

Considering the significance of media literacy amid pandemic, it was considered imperative to upgrade university programs and include the component of media literacy in all disciplines, so that students from various educational backgrounds can become media literate.



## **Discussion**

In many Pakistani Universities, media literacy is neither specifically taught as a separate course, nor it has been incorporated in the curriculum design of media programs. This has been asserted after reviewing the content of Higher education commission's (HEC) curriculum of media and communication studies for BS, MS, MPhil (research and professional track) revised in 2018, available on the HEC's website (Curriculum of Media & Communication Studies, 2018). Ostensibly, this means that even though students and faculty of media discipline are aware of media literacy education; there seems to be no standard educational guideline to facilitate their learning needs; which is not practically favorable considering the growing challenges of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation.

Considering the absence of standard curriculum guideline for higher education and the context of RQ1 (regarding the existing pedagogical strategies for media literacy education among media teachers) it can be asserted that media teachers are self-aware about their responsibility towards media literacy education hence they tend to incorporate it in their pedagogical strategies depending upon their individual subject orientation and technical competencies. Nevertheless, they discussed the inconsistencies in media education due to the gap in curriculum guideline and recommended the inclusion of media literacy in the existing national media curriculum design, which will also be helpful in reducing the discrepancies between public and private sector universities.

The contribution of non-governmental organizations which include SAMAR, Uks, Citizen for free and responsible media, digital rights foundation and media matters for democracy reflects that their efforts are primarily focused to generate awareness and instill the concept of active citizenship among multi-stakeholders i.e. media professional, researchers and citizens. Unlike National press trust which comprises of government representatives, media practitioners, academicians, researchers, and students. Thus, the role of national press trust is responsible for facilitating social participation and democratic discourse between the multiple stakeholders for devising national digital media literacy strategy (National Press Trust, n.d.). After reviewing the initiatives of the above-mentioned NGOs' and the reflection of interviewee's, RQ2 (i.e. existing gaps in media literacy education) it seems obvious that the stakeholders are making their contributions as part of social responsibility towards the greater good but due to lack of coherence between these key players, breakthrough results are unimaginable. Besides, the lack of cooperation between NGO's media and academia, there is a growing concern regarding the differences between public and private sector universities as well.

Considering the status of media education in Pakistan referred by Sadia et al (2022), one can assert that there is a significant gap in the higher education system of Pakistan particularly related to media and information literacy. Zainab, Sana (2019) also pinpointed the gap in the national educational policy of Pakistan and came up with key recommendations including the importance of collaboration between multi stakeholders i.e., civil society, media and government, national policy development regarding media literacy education by formulating localized version of media literacy model that is suitable for the national literacy requirements, curriculum revisions and integration of new media literacy. Besides, capacity building measures was also considered imperative for teachers to combat media monopoly and dissemination of fake news systematically.

The capacity building approach is significant because it engages the community members in the development process by increasing their level of consciousness, updating their skills set and empowering them to take their decisions by using the existing resources and actively contributing in diverse capacities. (Schuftan, Claudio, 1996). Hence this stresses the pivotal role of competent teachers in facilitating the process of civic engagement and developing the mindset of active citizenship among their students. Moreover, the pedagogical styles are also key determinants in the effective dissemination of media literacy education among the students.

A study conducted by Jamil, Iqbal, Ittefaq & Kamboh (2022) highlighted the significance of resource development, teachers' expertise, and students' learning experiences. Besides that, multi-stakeholders' approach was also validated. Moreover, researchers also emphasized that evaluation of educational policy, curriculum redesign and capacity building measures for upscaling teachers' competencies are imperative according to the UNESCO's framework for the effective dissemination of media and information literacy in Pakistan. It is important to understand that these findings reveal the views of the media faculties from various public and private sector universities across Pakistan. Apparently, these findings addressed RQ3 (regarding the steps required for the inclusion of media literacy in higher education system of Pakistan) and seemed coherent with the findings of this study even though the data collected in this research represents the views of media teachers from the selected universities of Karachi, Pakistan only. Sarikaya, Aylin Kirişçi (2022) conclusion is also coherent with the findings of this research; that the inclusion of media and digital literacy course can be made compulsory at the undergraduate level.

Besides that, to raise the standards of media education in Pakistan, concerted efforts and serious research initiatives are required. In case of failure, it may happen due to the gap between academia and media practitioners as both seem reluctant to collaborate for improving the standard of journalism and media education (Hafeez, Erum & Nouman, Sarwat, 2020).



This highlights the need for a media literacy vision-based policy and that should be designed with consultation from the media academicians, practitioners, state representatives, NGOs, and citizens. Considering the social responsibility of becoming media literate, national cohesion between all stakeholders is indispensable.

### **Conclusion**

For conclusion, a comprehensive media literacy education strategy based on the views of media faculties from public and private sector universities is discussed below:

Practice-based learning approach and the use of action-oriented projects with a special focus on media literacy component. Community participation activities to explore the real-world problems and search for possible solutions as an active community member. Critical analysis skill to analyze media narratives and investigate existing & emerging trends from multiple stakeholders' perspectives. An interdisciplinary approach to arrange talks with academicians from other disciplines to understand diverse viewpoints regarding media literacy education. Local / indigenous i.e., audio-visual and digital media archives should be developed to bridge the information gap amongst the learners.

Collaborations between industry and academia should be initiated to understand each other's concerns regarding the growing challenges of media literacy education. Semester wise & annual curriculum review should be planned to evaluate the efficacy of the proposed changes in curriculum and identify the need to update the planning as required.

Recurring opportunities should be given to the academia so that they can improve their existing pedagogical practices and explore industry practices via mutual discussions and collaborative /co-created projects (for instance, awareness programs using the intellectual strength of academia and professional expertise of the industry partners).

Policies should be formulated in the country's legal framework to ensure even distribution of knowledge and remove the discrepancies between public and private sector institutions. New designations like Professor of Practice should be introduced in the university hiring criteria to bridge the gap between academia and industry. Element of media literacy education should be included in the curriculum design of all disciplines. The inclusion of teachers in the curriculum development for media literacy education is strongly recommended.

Foundation courses should be offered at the schools and college levels alike, considering the growing challenges of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news for students of all age and educational backgrounds.

S.No	Name Of Organization	Focus Areas	Contributions	Target Audience	Established (Year) & Founded	Location
1	SAMAR Society for Alternative Media & Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media analysis and monitoring of the mainstream and regional media narratives considering audience interests.</li> <li>Media ethics, media literacy, political economy, media and democracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urdu quarterly publication Media Review, Citizens Media Watch Groups, and online publication Media Mirror</li> <li>Introduced Disaster reporting subject in university curriculum of media programs.</li> <li>Documentaries</li> <li>Policy advocacy for tobacco control</li> </ul>	Existing media practitioners and aspiring professionals	2005, Mazhar Arif was a veteran journalist, media critic, researcher, writer, and activist.	Islamabad
2	National Press Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise a national digital literacy policy document.</li> <li>Capacity building initiatives via Media education and trainings of practitioners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshop in Lahore with Media Leaders, Government Ministers, Information Managers, Professors, Researchers and Students of Media Schools of three top Universities of Lahore</li> <li>Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the faculty and students at the universities.</li> <li>Collaboration with RIPHAH International University for developing base documents of National Digital Media Literacy Policy.</li> </ul>	Government, researchers, students, academicians, activists, and media practitioners	8th April 1964, Citizen's initiative	Islamabad
3	DIGITAL RIGHTS FOUNDATION	research-based advocacy NGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>online safety trainings to media practitioners, bloggers, women, human rights activists, and organizations working for community development projects.</li> <li>DRF helpline annual report 2021, Policy papers and legal analysis on unlawful content on digital platforms etc.</li> </ul>	Media practitioners, human rights activists, women and those working for community developments	2012, Nighat Dad Executive Director	N/A
4	Citizen for Free and Responsible Media	Free and responsible Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of mainstream media</li> <li>Educate citizens about media ethics.</li> <li>Encourage citizens to become active media audience and raise their concerns about ethical violations</li> </ul>	Citizens	Media development experts	N/A

5	Media Matters for Democracy	Policy research and advocacy initiative, media development and digital rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• journalism training courses</li> <li>• produce journalistic content.</li> <li>• facilitate multiple stakeholders and community engagement forums.</li> </ul>	Journalists & citizens	Journalists	Set up in Dec 2014.
6	UKS Gender Watch	works in traditional and digital spaces for gender equality and women's development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• trainings, workshops to students and journalists and consultations</li> <li>• tool kits, desk diaries, brochures, reports and booklets</li> <li>• Gynae feminism corner live podcast to discuss feminine issue via WhatsApp.</li> <li>• Helpline</li> <li>• Digital 50-50 a feminist magazine for women and non-binary journalists and writers</li> <li>• Hopscotch an online platform to monitor gender depictions in entertainment media</li> </ul>	Citizens, journalists, and women	1997, Tasneem Ahmar Executive Director and Founder	Islamabad & Karachi

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