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Media Education in Assam

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Introduction

The development of journalism both as education and profession has never gone hand in hand. It can be understood from various literatures quoting the historical development of journalism as a whole novel idea; that this concept of journalism has its own base. And this is the basis of growing scope about debates that mostly follows onto the nature of its form. But, as per the most reliable and the nearest study that we have, one cannot deny the fact that the stem of popularising journalism as a form of media education developed across the globe in 1960s. The picture of the development of journalism as education was consolidated through the contribution of intergovernmental organisations like UNESCO. Their contribution also penetrated into the development of ethical practice of journalism and stand by it as a profession.

The importance of media education in the inculcation of professionalism for industries was highlighted by this development body which later on also traced how such kind of journalism suited better to foster democracy, dialogue and development (Dutta, 2020). There began an unstable development of journalism; somewhere focusing onto its knowledge, while somewhere investing onto its practice. The parallel development was mostly out of sight. Similar picture can also be drawn in the light of development of Journalism as education in Assam and other northeastern part of India. Mostly considered or regarded to remain aloof from the mainland India, Assam

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has a rich and the oldest contribution towards media education. The region has a history of 55 years of contribution towards media education; and through this long journey, the state witnesses a myriad shades of struggles. This in result today has successfully laid down a strong base for communication education in this part of the region.

First media education initiative of Assam

Farsightedness was responsible for introducing media education at Gauhati University fifty years ago in 1967. The charismatic leadership of Professor V Venkatrao and Professor Deba Prashad Baruah was instrumental in starting media education at the department of political science. Later in the year 1983, the centre metamorphosed into a full-fledged department of the university, offering post graduate diploma courses in communication and journalism. With advancing times, the media education gained momentum further as diploma courses started to transform into higher valued programmes with the launch of Bachelor of communication and journalism in 1994 and post graduate programme in 2005 as per the UGC guideline (Dutta, 2018). While nurturing media education in the state, Parishmita Phukan (2016) in her academic research said that it would be no exaggeration to claim that Prof. V Venkatarao was the founding architect of media education in the region.

Padmashri Anjan Kumar Banerjee was the first full time faculty of the department, who later shifted to Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Dr. Arobindo Mazumdar rendered his service for a long period in the department. He headed the department from 1984 to 1999 and during his tenure, in 1994 the Bachelor of Communication and Journalism course was introduced, alongside the diploma in journalism. Till 2016, Professor Anuradha Dutta, Professor Kandarpa Barman, Dr Abhijit Bora, Professor Umesh Deka and Dr. Chandan Kr Goswami served the department as head in charge (Phukan, 2016).

It was after 16 years that the department got its first full-fledge head, Dr. Ankuran Dutta, who joined in January 2016. His leadership gave a new ray of hope to media education in the region through establishment of the department as a centre place of learning, attracting young minds, intellectuals, prominent academicians from all over South Asia. His tenure defied a series of hurdles in popularising

the Department as one of the vibrant media departments in India. During the last five years, the department organised about many events of international, national and regional importance and collaborated with about 30 international and national organisations. The physical and academic infrastructures were also developed with a new RCC building, renovating the old building, a computer lab, non-linear editing lab, multimedia studio, conference room, researchers' lab etc. and initiated opportunities for campus recruitment with successful placements in different leading media organisations. The department at present runs with an associate professor and three assistant professors along with a number of guest faculties.

Prior to that, many veteran journalists and media personalities of the region served the department. Jnanpith awardee Dr Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya taught in this department for four years. Among others, many renowned editors and journalists like Satish Chandra Kakoti, Munin Chandra Borkataki, Radhika Mohan Bhagawati, Dr. Khiren Roy, Naren Chandra Rajkhowa, Haidor Hussain, Prashanta Jyoti Baruah, Pratap Bordoloi built and nourished the department during the difficult phases of its evolution (Dutta, 2018).

In the last five decades, the department also produced lots of journalists, media personalities, public relation practitioners, film makers, science communicators, media educators and public opinion leaders. This is not an exaggeration but a fact that has put decades of media education into practical implementation as a number of individuals brought respect to the media of the region.

Among the public opinion leaders, MP (Rajya Sabha) Bhubaneswar Kalita (1967), former Chief Minister and MLA Prafulla Kumar Mahanta (1983-84), former MLA Rekha Rani Das Boro (1983-84), former Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly Hitendranath Goswami, former Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal (1995-96), former Speaker of ALA and sitting minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, senior student leader Dr. Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharya (1995-96), former AASU President Amiya Kr Bhuyan are prominent alumni of the department (Idem).

Presently, the department offers a masters' programme in mass communication under the choice-based credit system, master of philosophy and doctoral programme. In the last one decade, since

master's programme was introduced, the students of the department have been well received by the media industry, government services and media education. A good number of students have also cleared different competitive examinations, including Information Officer of the Central and State governments, NET and JRF. Many other national awards were won by the students and research scholars of the department. The students are sent to many organisations in and out of the country for their internship programmes.

The department has collaborated with about 30 organisations, including renowned media houses. The department has been striving for excellence in media education in collaboration with many international and inter-governmental organisations, such as UNICEF, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), International Committee of the Red Cross, University of California Los Angeles, Poynter News University of Florida, US Consulate etc. At the national and regional levels, the department has been collaborating with Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, National Council for Science and Technology Communication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Ministry of Consumer Affairs of Government of India, Assam Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Airport Authority of India etc. (Gauhati University, 2021).

Another feather added to the cap of the department for its tireless effort in renovating the department and focusing on the all-round development of students was the idea of periodical publication from the department called 'GU Times', which is not considered only as a lab journal but a very popular community newspaper inside and fringe villages of the university. It is noteworthy that the first issue of the GU Times was edited by the present Rajya Sabha MP Bhubaneswar Kalita. Assam Assembly Speaker Hitendranath Goswami too edited an issue of the journal. Since 2006, the department has also been organising the biggest student media festivals of the north eastern region, *Communika*. Another notable activity of the students was engagement with the communities through production of programmes for the community radio service of the university Radio Luit since its inception in March 2011 (Dutta, 2018). The research was carried out through different projects and PhD programme in the department. Nearly hundreds of research scholars were admitted in the department under the guideship of the professors of different disciplines of the

University and its affiliated colleges. Only in 2017, the university recognised a research supervisor from the discipline of mass communication.

The department of communication and journalism at Gauhati University paved the way for development of media studies in northeast India. Almost 30 years after the establishment of this department, it was only in 1996 that Assam University, Silchar, set up a mass communication department, followed by Tezpur University, with state of the art facilities in 2001. St. Anthony's College, Shillong founded a mass media department in 1995. Media and Communication Study Centre, which is renamed later, was established in 2004 at Cotton College. Presently, almost all the universities of the region and the state have their programmes on media and communication. In addition, many standalone institutes have also grown up to produce skilled human resources for the industry. The tree, planted by Prof. V Venkatarao, has grown up despite various challenges in its long journey of 50 years and its branches have started to scatter across the whole of north east today.

Media education in public institutions of Assam

As discussed above, Gauhati University started the first journalism course in the state through conventional education system. The Department of Communication and Journalism of the university came into existence in 1967.

The department of Mass Communication of Assam University, Silchar started the first Masters' programme in the state. This department started functioning in 1996 and since then it has been providing quality training and media education at postgraduate and doctoral levels. Prof. Partha Chatterjee, a renowned media personality, educator and motivational author of Kolkata took the initiative as the Professor and Head to upgrade the department with excellence. The infrastructure of the department consists of a complete facilities of audio and video production. The department's TV studio is fully equipped with broadcast quality equipment coupled with online multi camera production facility. Adding yet another feather to its illustrious cap, the department has been designated with Major Research Projects UGC, ICSSR in the thrust area of modern mass media (Assam University, 2020).

The department has been offering four academic programmes, namely Master of Mass Communication (four semesters), M.Phil (three semesters), Ph.D. and D.Litt. Of the total eleven faculties serving in the department, two are Professors, one Associate Professor and the rest are Assistant Professors. Prof. G P Pandey is working as the Head of the Department. A renowned media educator Prof K V Nagaraj also served this department for a period of five years as its head and later as the Pro Vice Chancellor of the University.

Having seen the increasing demands for technically well-equipped film technicians in the regional film industry in the last few years of the 20th century, the Governing Body of Jyoti Chitran (Film Studio) Society (JCFS) decided to establish a film institute in the Jyoti Chitran film studio. In this regard, the society has acquired the formal permission from the Govt. of Assam on 14 December 1998 to establish the institute and thus the institute came into existence on 17 January, 1999, called the Jyoti Chitran Film and Television Institute (JCFTI). Jyoti Chitran (Film Studio) Society remained as the mother concern providing all sorts of audio-visual equipment to the studio and other logistics required to run the institute. In 2011, the institute was bifurcated from the studio and became a complete government entity, known as the Regional Government Film and Television Institute (RGFTI). Again in 2016, the institute was renamed as Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Regional Government Film and Television Institute (DBHRGFTI) by the Govt. of Assam. For many years DBHRGFTI was the only institute of its kind in the entire north-eastern region of India. It is a regional centre of excellence in the field of film and television education and programme production. The institute, considered as one of the leading film and television institutes of the country, emphasizes on holistic development of its students as film makers through interactive practical training on various aspects of film education. A closely networked industry-institute interface is ensured by inviting guest lecturers from the industry, regular visits to the studios and laboratories, organizing workshops and seminars, attending film festivals etc (DBHRGFTI, 2020).

Established in 2001, the department of mass communication and journalism at the Tezpur (Central) University is one of its kind in the entire northeast to have state-of-the-art facilities with provisions

for production of industry grade quality media content. The department offers two Masters programme in Mass Communication and Journalism (MAMCJ) and MA in Communication for Development with an intake of 37 and 12 students respectively. The curriculum combines theoretical studies of media with practical and skill orientation, which includes courses in television journalism and production, visual communication, new media technology, film studies, advertising and public relations, development communication, communication research methods and applications etc. The department has been offering a part-time Post Graduate Diploma in Community Communication since 2009, which became a full time Masters programme later on Communication for Development (Tezpur University, 2021). Presently, Prof. Joya Chakravorty is heading the department.

Media and Communication Study Centre was established by the Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC) on December 3, 2004 at Cotton College, Guwahati with the initiative of the Chief Coordinator and other members of the Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC) of the college and Dr Ankuran Dutta as its founder course coordinator. Dr Satyendra Kr Choudhury and Dr Suresh Kr Nath along with the other members of EDC such as Dr Abhijit Bordoloi and Dr Santanu Sarma were among the persons who floated the idea of starting a media centre at the college, which was proposed by Dr Dutta in the beginning of 2004. Dr Anamika Ray took academic charge of the centre in 2006 as course coordinator and later as senior faculty, when she was also instrumental in starting a special course on science communication. EDC was a five year project funded by the Department of Science and Technology which was started in 2003. The media centre under the EDC initially started a nine month course consisting of three levels on mass communication in January 2005. Later the course became a self-financing PG Diploma programme. In 2008, the centre was renamed as Centre for Mass Communication and Journalism (CMCJ) and as a tribute to Bharat Ratna late Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, CMCJ became BCMJ, i.e. Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Centre for Mass Communication and Journalism. The Centre was eventually upgraded to a full-fledged Department in July, 2018. At present, the department offers a Master's programme along with pass course at the under graduate level, which is headed by Dr

Abhijit Barthakur, a professor of physics (Dutta, 2011; Cotton University, 2020).

Although Dibrugarh University first initiated a mass communication programme through distance education in 2006, the Centre for Studies in Journalism and Mass Communication was also established at Dibrugarh University in 2008, which offers two Masters programmes: M.A in Mass Communication (MAMC) with a provision for specialisation in print, electronic, new media and public affairs along with a mandatory internship programme and M.A. in Communication for Sanitation, Hygiene and Health (CSH&H), which was started in collaboration with UNICEF. The centre has well-equipped studios and computer laboratories, it has been successful in carving a niche for itself in the field of Media and Communication education since its inception in 2008. Its infrastructure provides the students balanced inputs in both theory and practice of mass communication. Eminent scholars, journalists, filmmakers, video professionals, corporate communication specialists, and leading academicians constitute a panel of eminent visiting faculty who offer quality education to the students from across India and those from abroad enrolled under Indian Council for Cultural Relations - African Scholarship Scheme (Dibrugarh University, 2020). Presently it is headed by Dr. Satyakam Barthakur, a professor of the Department of Assamese.

The Department of Animation and Multimedia Technology started in the year 2009. Initially, the department offered a three-year diploma programme in Animation and Multimedia Technology to prepare students for making a career in the field of animation and other related areas. The department was upgraded and renamed as the Department of Multimedia Communication and Design (MCD) in 2016 to widen its scope and started its under graduate Bachelor of Design programme in July 2016. In the year 2019, the department started its Post Graduate programme as part of the De Novo category specialisation. The department currently offers diploma course of three-year / six semesters in Animation and Multimedia Technology, under the graduate course of four-year / eight semesters Bachelor of Design (B. Des.) in Multimedia Communication and Design and post graduate course of two-year / four semesters Master of Design (M. Des.) in Multimedia Communication and Design. Earlier the Bachelor

of Design programme was affiliated to Assam Science and Technology University (ASTU), Guwahati and the Diploma programme is affiliated to State Council of Technical Education, Govt. of Assam. The M. Des., B. Des. and Diploma programme have been started under CITK's own academic affiliation from 2019 onwards after the institute was declared as a Deemed University. The PhD. degree programme has also been started from 2019.

The Department of Mass Communication was established in August, 2016 with the provision of Bachelor of Mass Communication (BMC) degree at Bajali College, Pathshala. As Bajali College got upgraded to Bhattadev University, the BMC Department was transformed into the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism in June, 2019 and started functioning regularly from 14 August 2019. The Department offers Mass Communication and Journalism as an honours subject and awards the B.A. degree in Mass Communication and Journalism. The main objective of the department is to groom the students as skilled communicators and to help them in getting associated and engaged with the media sector of the country. The Department is dedicated to imparting knowledge to the students about journalism, different kinds of media, photography, film studies, advertising and public relations and many more. The department has no permanent faculty and runs on guest teachers (Bhattadev University, 2020).

The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Assam Women's University, Jorhat started functioning from the inception in the year 2014. The department provides media education and training at the post graduate level. The focus is on hands-on training along with theory to make the experience holistic. There is no permanent faculty in the department and the department runs with contractual assistant professors (AWU, 2020).

Media education is not popular in the under graduate level in Assam. Only a few provincialised colleges run a bachelor programme under Gauhati University with entirely contractual faculties. Centre for Media Studies was established at Dakshin Kamrup College, Mirza in the year 2014. Dakshin Kamrup College, Dakshin Kamrup Girls' College and Bongaigaon College run the Bachelor of Mass Communication (BMC) programme, which is now renamed as BA in Mass Communication (Bongaigaon College, 2020; DK College, 2020 and D K Girls' College, 2020).

With the policy paper developed by Dr Ankuran Dutta on the request of the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, the Government of Assam established an Institute of Mass Communication and Printing Technology in the name of Lakshminath Bezbaroa, pioneer of modern Assamese literature, in the Budget session for the year 2011-12 and 2013-14. The vision of this institution is expansion and mobilisation of facilities for offering good quality mass media and printing technology education and research in the north-east Region. This institution is an initiative to seed new ideas and create knowledge, with the vision of imparting high level training with values and social commitment. An area of 30 Bighas of land has been allocated for this project in the village of Kali Pahar of Sila Ghopa Mouza under North Guwahati revenue circle. Work on building this Institute has remained suspended presently (DIPR, 2021).

Media education in distance mode

In order to extend the benefits of the study of mass communication to any student interested in the field, the Institute of Distance and Open Learning (IDOL), Gauhati University started a PG Diploma programme in Journalism and Mass Communication and a two-year Master of Communication and Journalism (MCJ) programme from 2005 and 2008 respectively in open and distance learning systems. Prof. Srinath Baruah was the Director of the institute, when the first mass communication programme started in distance mode, later Dr. Kandarpa Das introduced the Masters' programme, which is a modular yearly course. Under this scheme, a student successfully completing the first year will be awarded the PG Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication and will be eligible for admission to the Final Year of the course. After successfully completing the final year module, the student will be awarded the MCJ degree (Dutta & Ray, 2011; 2010). Dr Ankuran Dutta is the present coordinator of the media programmes at IDOL.

The Directorate of Distance Education, Dibrugarh University also started a PGDJMC programme from 2007 for the distance learners of the state. This programme was initiated by Prof Mukut Hazarika, the then director of distance programmes and the programme was designed by Dr Abhijit Bora and Dr Ankuran Dutta. In the following year, the university established the Centre for Studies

in Journalism and Mass Communication and launched a regular P G Diploma course in conventional mode. Professor Kamala Borgohain is the Director in-charge of this centre. Earlier, the university established a Media Studies Centre in collaboration with the Vikalpa Trust of New Delhi and started two programmes, namely Animation and Digital Film Making and Digital Film Making and Recording Arts (Idem).

Meanwhile, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University was established and its academic works started from mid-2007. This first and only state open university of the north-east launched a Bachelor of Mass Communication programme for the first time in the region. After receiving a good response in the BMC programme, the University also started two UG level diploma programmes namely Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication and Diploma in Assamese Journalism; and two PG diploma programmes - PG Diploma in Mass Communication and PG Diploma in Broadcast Journalism. The university has also launched Master of Mass Communication from the academic year 2010 and two PG diploma programmes on TV production and Radio Production in regular mode from the academic year 2011. Later these two programmes were clubbed and re-launched as PG Diploma in Broadcast Journalism. Dr Ankuran Dutta and Dr Anjuman Borah started the BMC programmes. It is to be noted here that Dr Dutta was instrumental in launching all other diplomas, post graduate diplomas and masters programmes along with establishment of the first community radio service Jnan Taranga in January 2009 and the first web radio e-Jnan Taranga in 2011. With the encouragement of the founder Vice Chancellor Prof Srinath Baruah and the Registrar Rajat Baran Mahanta, he initiated the radio services and the multimedia production centre, wherefrom more than thousand audio and video educational programmes were produced. It became a school and named as Bhupen Hazarika School of Mass Communication. At present, Dr Trisha D Baruah and Dr Juri Hazarika run the programmes in 84 study centres across the state, but the Masters programme was discontinued by the university. Dr Jayanta Kr Sarma has recently joined the school as a professor, who has come from the industry and served the North East Frontier Railways as Public Relations Officer for over two decades (KKHSOU, 2021; Dutta & Ray, 2011).

Centre for Open and Distance Learning (CODL), Tezpur University was established in 2011 with the objective of disseminating knowledge and imparting quality education in the open and distance learning mode. CODL launched MA in Mass Communication and Journalism to improve quality training and understanding of communication and media to put communication practices within the realm of Indian and north-eastern social and cultural context (Tezpur University, 2021).

As a private initiative, perhaps the Academy of Journalism was the first institution in the state to offer a diploma in journalism through correspondence mode. This institute was registered in 1984 through registration no. 127 of 84-85 and started a correspondence diploma programme from its office at West Sripuria, Tinsukia.

Media Education in private institutions

The Department of Mass Communication at Assam Don Bosco University was established with a broad objective to provide students with practical hands-on training in the field of media and communication studies. The department started on August 1, 2014 with PG programme and later expanded to the UG programme on August 18, 2017. The department offers a modular structure for the PG programme with a certificate after the first semester, PG diploma certificate after the second semester and a Master's degree after the fourth semester with a blend of conceptual inputs and hands-on training for research practices and methodology (ADBU, 2020).

Assam Royal Global University, Guwahati offers post-graduate programme that provides professional education to aspirants wishing to become journalists and managers/managerial executives in mass media. Besides providing an understanding of communication theories and mass media research, the programme offers three areas of specialization- Electronic Communication covering radio, television and film production; Advance Journalism (Royal Global University, 2020).

Assam Down Town University was established in 2010 with the initiation of both undergraduate and post graduate programmes in mass communication in 2012 but later on in 2015, all media related programmes were discontinued.

Image Creative Education is India's first professionally-managed multimedia training institute, established in 1996. From the day it

was established as an Institute for Multimedia Arts and Graphic Effects (IMAGE), it has been offering highly professional courses in the Design and Media fields. In the 20 plus years, it has grown from strength to strength and has a pan-India presence today with over 32 fully operational digital media training institutes that have trained over 72,000 students and assisted them in charting a successful career (IMAGE, 2020).

Regional Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication was one of the pioneering private institutes established in the mid-nineties under the guidance of Dr Arupjyoti Choudhury and started classes in the evening hours at Handique Girls' College. Many other private institutes came up during that time with different short term diploma and certificate courses such as Assam Professional Academy, Graphica Design Studio etc.

It's noteworthy to mention here that a registered society called Media Trust established in the year 2002 by veteran journalists of different media houses of Assam and established an Institute of Mass Communication and Media. The Trust started a media archives to preserve valuable newspapers, journals and magazines and published a number of books on history of journalism in undivided Assam.

The Asian Institute of Management and Technology (AIMT) is an initiative of Gyanjyoti Foundation which offers bachelor and masters programmes in mass communication since 2010. The course along with the prescribed syllabus also brings into its fore, drama classes for students' personality development. The department also organizes, from time to time, street plays and film making sessions for better interaction with the immediate society, along with renewed understanding of the social fabric (AIMT, 2020).

To provide a platform for such promising young minds, noted film-maker and social activist, Late Sailadhar Baruah, with the help and co-operation of an able team of educationists, intellectuals, journalists and social activists, established the Assam Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research in 2007.

The educational agenda of Assam School of Journalism, a standalone institute, has specifically incorporated local language, literature, society, culture along with special and prime importance to practical area of all the different facets in journalism and mass

communication and has come up with a well-rounded curriculum. Meanwhile, observing the recent fall in the ethical and moral standards in the journalistic profession, the Assam School of Journalism has given a particular weightage to a healthy, value based and holistic approach for imparting of journalistic knowledge. This educational institution is being managed by Pratyasha Foundation, a registered trust since 2011 under the leadership of a senior journalist Manorom Gogoi (ASJ, 2020).

The Assam Academy of Media Studies was set-up in 2011 under the aegis of Unique Educational and Media Centre. AAMS (formerly Academy of Broadcasting Media School) provides high quality training in broadcast journalism, TV production and direction, camera and lighting, TV news reporting and news production, post production and video editing, radio jockeying, audio production, voice over training and disc jockeying (DJ-ing) and is known for producing the best media professionals in the region. Here, creativity and commitment are the main priorities. The main aim of AAMS is to turn exceptional, creative and talented people into hardcore professionals, by training them in the latest techniques and technologies, mentoring them with an environment that is conducive to creative learning (AAMS, 2020).

The Turning Point Institute of Media and Creative Skills is situated in Guwahati and established in 2016. The institute primarily specialises in broadcast journalism with short term and year-long programmes in journalism (Turning Point, 2020).

The Zee Institute of Creative Art is the animation wing of the Mighty ZEE LEARN Group and Guwahati Centre as one of its oldest pan-India centres. This institute provides a unique and personalized method of learning, creating an environment to nurture, educate and encourage creative individuals to achieve the highest level of success (ZICA, 2020).

The T-Series Stage Works Academy is an initiative designed to identify, nurture and create a pool of immensely skilful and passionate professionals who can match national and global demands. Carrying the flag of Gulshan Kumar the founder of T-Series, the academy has been formed with a commitment to foster creativity and talent by offering structured courses in the field of film, music, dance and

performing media arts. T-Series Stage Works head honcho is Bhusan Kumar, leading Bollywood singer Ms. Tulsi Kumar and her husband Mr. Hitesh Ralhan who operate this noble academy.

The academy was opened in Noida where Gulshan Kumar's T-series started its incredible journey. Apart from a modern infrastructure and world class equipment, the academy boasts of a team of distinguished advisors and has an immensely talented faculty for all courses. As part of the process of extending its wings to other cities of India and internationally with T-Series Stage Works, several of its branches were opened; Guwahati remained the first one in its list.

Very recently, in 2020 another private institute came up in Guwahati, named the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Studies, which has collaboration with Assam News Agency.

Specialised communication education in north-east

In 2005, the National Children Science Congress was organized in Guwahati. The Congress comprised of the students of Media and Communication Study Centre of Cotton College. During the NSCC, the then course coordinator met Dr. Dinesh Ch. Goswami, eminent science communicator and scientist of Regional Research Laboratory, Jorhat to chalk out a plan for establishing a centre of mass communication. Dr. Goswami advised that the funding provisions of the National Council for Science and Technology Communication, New Delhi be followed by the centre. The course coordinator then immediately took the initiative and contacted the NCSTC for funding. At that time, science communication was a new concept among the faculties of Cotton College. It was with a host of new ideas that the new course coordinator Dr. Anamika Ray started a special paper on science communication and this initiative of hers immediately created a ripple among the academicians. Then she participated in a workshop on curriculum development of science communication at Jaipur organised by Prof. Sanjeev Bhanawat, head of the department of Mass Communication of Rajasthan University in collaboration with NCSTC, Govt. of India. After receiving the technical knowledge on the running of a science communication paper in PG Diploma course, the course coordinator of MCSC prepared a project with the help of the authorities of EDC, Cotton College, especially Dr. S K Choudhury and Dr. S K Nath. The project was sanctioned by the NCSTC, Govt.

of India to run a special paper on science communication in May, 2007. After receiving the financial grant from the NCSTC, the Media Centre of Cotton College incorporated a special paper on science communication in the second semester of the existing PG Diploma programme. Dr. Manoj Kr. Patariya, the then Director of NCSTC took special care to start the project for the first time in the region. It must be mentioned here that though some science organizations of the state organized so many workshops and seminars on science communication or science journalism, it was for the first time that it was incorporated in an academic discipline in the region (Dutta and Ray, 2010; 2011).

On the other hand, with the support and help of Dr. Abhijit Bora, then lecturer and head in-charge of the Department of Communication and Journalism, Gauhati University, Dr. Ankuran Dutta went on to prepare a separate project to start science communication special paper in the Master of Arts in Mass Communication course of the university. This project was also sanctioned by the NCSTC, Govt. of India in 2008, though later on, the coordinator of the project Dr. Dutta resigned from the department and joined the newly established K K Handiqui State Open University, Guwahati and at the same time, principal coordinator Dr. Bora also shifted to Tezpur University in 2009. Dr Anamika Ray joined as senior lecturer to run the programme till her joining the Sikkim Central University in 2010. Science communication is running as an optional specialization in the third semester of MA Mass Communication course of Gauhati University. Assam University, Silchar has also started an optional specialisation in science and technology communication in the final semester of their Masters programme from 2009 (Idem).

Conclusion

The present scenario of media education in Assam needs a dire assessment; and hence must be upgraded accordingly. It is about fostering the development or rather in appropriate words must be about enhancing the existing state of media art and knowledge in the region through cooperative actions. It can be said that forming an association of media educators in the state can help to bring into different areas of importance for journalism education. There needs

to propagate a cooperative dialogue or laying down a platform of communication to enforce certain requirements for enhancing the journalism knowledge as per the need of the time. This as a whole must be based on the utmost objective of raising the standard of media education with the advancement of science and technology. This doesn't mean that it has already been enriched with value knowledge of media education; rather the development must be experienced on the level of maturity. When it comes to that, the sad part of the story is about the lack of quality research in media education despite media educators are mostly alienated towards various national and international media projects. This needs immediate evaluation and for that a common platform to share dialogues may come worthy. Apart from this, in order to bolster the image of media education in Assam, it is also important that all the stakeholders of media related activities in the region must come forward. There is a dire need of collaborative research activities on the front of media education by both media industries and academia. Both the sector needs each other to establish an independent and powerful image of the concept and the novel idea about 'Media'. To make the media educators more professional and media professionals more educative of the ideals of media knowledge, there must be a unifying force of both the sector. And that can be the honest call for shaking hands with each other. (*Acknowledgement: Raja Das of Dr Anamika Ray Memorial Trust and Dr Anupa Lahkar Goswami, GU for their assistance*).

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