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Exploring the Dynamics of Media Education in Delhi

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Abstract

The proliferation of Journalism and Mass communication programs in both the University system and outside of it is significant. Media education is offered through different programs by a variety of institutions with different educational traditions and resources, in multiplicity settings, circumstances, and in contrasting political conditions. Through this research paper, we have tracked the experience and politics of media education in Delhi by looking at the participation of various stakeholders through the creation of diverse education spaces and the multiplicity in education practices.

Keywords: Media Education, Media teaching, academics and media, private colleges, govt. colleges, media pedagogy

Introduction

Media industry is one of the most flourishing and vast sectors of India. But just like any other industry, it also needs well-educated and trained media professionals to run and meet the requirements of this growing sector. At present, more than 100 institutes and colleges exist in Delhi-NCR which provide media education at various levels like graduation, post-graduation, Ph.D, Diploma programs and some even conduct certificate courses. There are around 90 private institutes in Delhi-NCR. Some of these colleges are run by media houses; some institutes are affiliated to universities and a few provide autonomous degrees. The courses that fall under the University system are under the purview of the UGC (University Grants Commission) and/or state Governments who both fund Universities and also lay guidelines on curriculum and systems (including faculty recruitment). Private Universities that have emerged in the last few years in India are also mandated to follow certain set systems and procedures set by the MHRD. Other non-university institutes or courses do not fall under any legal authority or need to follow any set standards.

The on-going discourse on media education in India have often referred to a steady arrangement between media schools and the media organizations, somewhat on the lines of medical or law education. However, such an initiative is yet to be taken seriously primarily because of maturity of the industry and also interest of the industry in the formal/informal media education. In fact, it has been felt that 'media organizations are indifferent to the academic programmes, particularly at the university level'. Institutes such as the Asian College of Journalism, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Indian Institute of Journalism and New Media, Xavier Institute of Communication have industry focused diploma programmes and have been successful in getting industry placement for its students. And it is felt at the university level, that despite their two year masters course being comprehensive, they need to reorient themselves to the changing media trend.

With the objective of determining the present scenario of media education at the graduate level, this research explored the dynamics of media education in Delhi-NCR from the perspective of both the students and the academicians. The research focused on studying the various aspects like curriculum of media courses, infrastructure, availability of technology, placement

and internship assistance, faculty profiles, etc. Interviews of media academicians and survey of the media students were conducted to analyze the current status of media education provided by both government and private institutes, offering undergraduate degree courses.

Research objectives

This research attempts to examine the undergraduate media education scenario in private and government colleges of Delhi. The objectives of this study are-

1. To understand the current state of media education in Delhi from the perspective of both students and media educators
2. To know if the colleges in Delhi-NCR are well-equipped with technology to impart the practical aspects of media courses
3. To study aspects related to media education like: syllabus, course structure, hiring procedure of faculty, industry-institute interface
4. To explore the details of the practical exposure being provided by the institutes to the students

Review of literature and conceptual framework

Mass Communication has emerged as one of the major area of interest, as the world has noticed an unprecedented detonation in the communication technology and media industry nowadays. The speeding up of this industry also led to a sudden boom in the opening up of media institutions and many colleges started introducing media related courses at various levels like Under-Graduation, Post-Graduation, Diploma, etc. Students seek to pursue these courses as it broadens up the horizon of career options for students. The research study conducted by Dr. Gopa Bagchi and Dr. Pradosh Kumar Rath in 2009, 'Media education in the era of globalization: A study of India' reflected that there was absence of quality teachers and majority of them are not trained for practical-oriented subjects. They also observed dearth of quality books on journalism and mass communication in India and that the number of departments for media education were limited. Dr. Biswajit Das in his research titled 'Media Education as Development Project: Connecting Emancipatory Interests and Governance in India' elaborated that the recent explosion of communication tools and services within last two decades has posed new questions that are beyond the comprehension of existing pedagogy in Indian communication studies. Indian society has witnessed a widespread proliferation of media technologies to such an extent that they have become ubiquitous in society. K.E. Eapen (1995) in the book *Communications: A Discipline in Distress* has given a clear picture of the stark reality of the status of academic communication programmes in India. The study has documented the sorry state of affairs of journalism education in India such as lack of infrastructure, books and equipment and other hindrances in imparting quality journalism education like eligibility criteria for journalism teachers in the state-aided universities and colleges.

Vasuki Belavadi (2002) in her article titled, 'What ails media education in India – A Teacher's perspective', has analysed the factors, which are considered to be pulling down journalism education in India. She has lamented on the fact that media institutes lack focus in the designing of curriculum and in their anxiety to illuminate their students as much as possible, many institutes continue to offer a little bit of print journalism, a sprinkling of radio and television. All this in addition to other subjects like communication research, corporate communications, advertising, etc., all taught in just one/two/three years. She too has stated that media education in the country is largely dependent on textbooks from the west whose costs are often prohibitive and largely irrelevant in the Indian context. The question whether Journalism education is a professional or vocational in nature is often debated in the contemporary India even though the issue has been conceptually dealt by Wilbur Schramm in his classic paper published way back in 1947- 'Education for Journalism: Vocational, General, or Professional?' Schramm argues that professional journalists are made through education, experience and social demand and hence, journalism schools trained future news men /

women. Schramm put a strong emphasis on professional education, arguing that journalism was just as much a profession as law, or medicine

Methodology

This research study is both quantitative as well as qualitative in nature. Data is collected from both students and educators of media colleges. To collect the data from the media educators, Interview method was opted as it helps in getting in depth information. The format of the interview questionnaire was semi-structured so as to maintain a balance between uniformity and flexibility. To understand the subject from media students' viewpoint, a survey was conducted. The survey had questions on internships, institute and industry, technology and equipment. A sample size of 100 students was selected from different private media institutions which were divided into east, west, north and south according to their location in Delhi-NCR. Using the simple random sampling technique, one college from each zone was selected i.e. total of five colleges. However, using the convenient sampling method, first 20 students who were available and agreed to participate in the survey were made to fill up the questionnaire. To make a comparison between the private and non-private media education set-ups, a survey of 100 students, studying media in government colleges of Delhi was also conducted simultaneously. Questionnaire for the same was prepared including 25 questions with a mix of both close ended as well as open ended questions. The questionnaire asked the students about their previous exposure to the media subjects, their interests and preferences for theoretical as well as practical subjects, equipment they use, projects they are getting involved with, internships/ training exposure they have had, assistance their colleges provide in industry-interface, visit of guest faculty in college, teaching methods they like, role of library in the media education as well as the best and worst things students feel about their respective colleges.

Data interpretation and analysis

1. Syllabus

There are concerns related to the syllabus raised by many professors in most of the interviews and the survey also reflected that students want the prominence to be given to 'practical' subjects rather than theory. One of the major shortcomings of the syllabus of media related courses in government colleges was found to be the repetition of subjects. 45.3% of the students feel that they have to go through same subjects again and again. The repetition of the subjects not only results in decline of their interest but also restrict them to explore something new and experiment. Students mainly prefer practical subjects over theoretical which is again questioning if the theory they are studying is failing to inspire them and pushing them towards reading.

The survey also shed light on the changing reading habits of the media students with their decreasing dependence on books. In private colleges, only 6% students issue books every week from the college library. 13% students issue books twice or more than twice in a month; 28% of the students do the same only once in a month. Whereas 20% said that they rarely issue books and 23% of them issue books only before exams. 20% students never issue books. This clearly shows that how majority of students have poor reading habits. An important observation of the study is that colleges do not even have specific 'Library visit' periods in the timetables. 10% of the students said that there is 'library visit' period in their college timetable, 68% denied and 22% said that there is no such period but their faculty suggests them to visit library.

Graph 1- Library Visit

Ms. Manmeet Kaur HOD - BJMC of Trinity Institute of Professional Studies even suggests that *there should be a subject introduced, at least in one semester that should entirely focus on book reading and writing book reviews so as to inculcate reading habits among the students. It is really unfortunate to see this plight of the students. Since media and journalism are the courses in which students are supposed to be really well-read and well aware of the surroundings.* However in government colleges, it is found that 67.3% students regularly visit the library and only 11.3% students said they have not seen the library of

their college. The data collected reflects that the students in government colleges visit library more often than the students pursuing media studies in private institutions. However, they are not consulting library on a regular basis.

The research data also reveals that books available in the library are failing to infuse readership among students. The failing of students to recall the names of some famous and important books and authors of Journalism and Mass Communication highlights the prevailing disconnect between the students and the library. While 68% students said they visit library regularly but a large percentage among them could not find one favorite book and author of the discipline, which, apart from the lackluster attitude of the students, also casts serious aspirations on the quality and quantity of books available in the libraries of these institutions. One may also conclude that the books available in the libraries are failing to connect with the readers, because more than 75% of students said that 400 plus books are available in the library, but they still failed to name one favorite or important book of their stream. It has also been observed that due to insufficient financial support from the institution, the media departments are usually unable to meet the requirements of the students to access to valuable books which are essential for up-to-date knowledge on modern communication methods. Old and western concept books are inappropriate for the present curriculum. This also results in the loss of enthusiasm among the students. According to Prof Babli Moitra Saraf, IP College for Women, *“Some books are classics and are fundamental to media studies in broadcast and production. Students of mass media should have facts and should know why everything began and how. Also they should have knowledge about the local and global scenario as per the requirement. Books from different departments as well as from different authors are available to help students in better understanding of the subject.”*

The research study points out that, contrary to the popular inclinations, much of the focus in media education in India, continues to be on the traditional mass media. Media students are majorly interested in ‘Film and TV production (42%) followed by Event Management (24%), Advertising (23%), Public Relations (22%). 7% and 9% students chose Radio and Print Journalism respectively. 16% students chose ‘other’ and mentioned the field which interests them that included Photography, digital media, travel journalism, video editing, camera operations, reporting, news reader, HR & marketing and lecturer.

Graph 2- Preferred Subject

The ‘new’ interactive media such as satellite radio and television, computing, computer games, the internet, mobile telephony and other digital devices are rarely touched upon. Further, the stress has been largely on the ‘deconstruction’ of texts in the press, the cinema and television, with very little attention paid to music, telecommunications, computing and the internet

One of the objectives of this study was to gauge the perception about the importance of theory or practice in media education. Drawing comparison between media and medical studies, Prof. Vikram Dutt of Delhi Metropolitan Education said, *“If I want to become a surgeon, and you are teaching me its theory, how will I ever become a surgeon?”* Similarly, in the case of media, it is obvious that practical aspect cannot be ignored while training the students for the profession. Most of the media educators feel that there should be a balance between both theory and practical in a media course; and the theory should include the ‘Heritage’ of the media so that the students understand the impact and power of the media as a tool. Majority of the students of private colleges also agree to it that equal emphasis is given to theory and practical in their colleges. 42.4% of students said that there is equal emphasis on both practical and theory in their college. Whereas 25.3% students said that their college emphasizes more on ‘practical’ whereas 32.3% said that ‘theory’ is more emphasized.

Graph 3- Theory/Practical or both?

60% students of the government colleges are more inclined towards practical learning and whereas only 6.7% of the students like theoretical subjects and find reading more interesting than practically working. Dr. Bharat Kumar, HOD, BJMC of Lingaya’s Lalita Devi Institute of Management and Sciences says, *“Now big media houses have opened their own media institutes because they feel that in other colleges, only degrees are being granted and practical knowledge is being imparted the way industry*

wants". Prof Babli Moitra Saraf, Principal, Indraprastha College for Women, DU conceded, "*Media cannot be studied in isolation from other social processes. Media education has to be interdisciplinary and it must intersect with history, language, political science and development studies. But this demands faculty who can teach theory along with the practical, something that many colleges in Delhi-NCR lack.*"

2. Practical Lab and Equipments

On the issue of infrastructure and equipment for practical training, the students' survey revealed that most of the private colleges allow their students to issue equipment like camera and recorders however in government colleges, 52.7% students said their college does not provide them with the equipment to have hands on training. While 40% of the students said their colleges help them with equipment whenever they need it, 7.3% never asked for equipment from college and hence they don't know if college authorities provide equipment beyond class hours or not. However when we asked if they have ever issued camera from college or not, only 36% students said that they issued camera from college while 61.3% students didn't issue any equipment while studying for practical learning. 2.7% students though failed to remember if they have issued any or not and said they don't know about it.

In Media, the technology is required to collect, construct and disseminate messages to reach wider audience. This makes it essential for the students to experiment with equipment before entering the industry. While determining the situation in government colleges, students said we have either one or two cameras or even no camera available to train ourselves. It's very difficult for them to access equipment after class hours for majority of students. Though it is very important to give students leverage to go and experiment and nurture their production skills beyond class hours as classes are scheduled for a fixed time, it is very difficult to give equipment to each student during the same. Keeping in view the number of students get enrolled in the course and no. of equipment available for them, it explains that students are not getting that proper hands on training to experiment themselves.

3 Industry Institute Interface

Most of the private media colleges organize guest lectures, industry visits, and internships for their students. When students were asked if their college organizes guest lectures, 79% agreed to this whereas 21% denied. However, when they were asked if they attended all such lectures, 46% students said they do attend all the master classes and guest lectures organized by their college; 26.4% students do not attend all but most of those lectures. 18.4% students attend 'very few' such lectures whereas 9.2% 'never' attended any. However, nearly half of the students gave just 3 marks to these lectures which show that either they are not too productive or the students feel them to be a 'time-waste'. A lot of colleges also take the students to media houses or organizations to make them see and learn about how things actually work there. When asked, 49% students said that their institute organizes industry visits; 38% students denied. 13% students say that they do not know whether their college organizes industry visits or not. It means either those students are mostly absent or the frequency of such visits is too less.

Graph 4- Internships

Analyzing the experiences gained from internships, the data reflects that there exists a gap between what is taught in the institute and what industry actually demands. 52.6% of the students felt that while doing internship there was a gap between what industry demands and what is taught in college. 19.2% did not feel any such gap and 28.2% said 'maybe' there was a gap. Dr. Aditya Awasthi, HOD – BJMC, Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Management Studies, says, "*Yes, there exists this gap and this is because, the syllabus is old and the industry changes very fast. More interface with the industry is needed.*" Whereas Dr. Bharat Kumar of Lingaya's Lalita Devi Institute of Management and Sciences, believes that this gap is the reason that media houses have opened their own institutes.

Graph 5- Academia Industry Interface

This again raises questions on the syllabus, faculty and the teaching methods. Here, a lot depends on the faculty. In media education, teachers are not working media professionals. If the faculty is well-experienced in the industry, then this gap can be narrowed.

3. Hiring Procedure

Class room discourses in media courses may be enriched further if the faculty have some industry exposure. However, colleges affiliated to universities follow UGC norms which requires NET as the qualifying criteria for Assistant Professors. Therefore, in most of the private colleges that offer media courses it is not compulsory for the aspirant teachers to have industry experience. A combination of both educational qualification and industry experience is just 'preferred'. In government colleges however, there are teachers on both permanent as well as Ad hoc basis. They also have provision for Guest lecturers for special classes who have updated knowledge of the subject as the area of studies is continuously evolving. However, hiring process is strictly as per UGC norms which is further reiterated by Prof. Anil Thakur of Maharaja Agrasen College who said that "*Teachers here got selected under UGC norms and procedure for both the permanent teachers and Ad-hoc teachers is same*".

Teaching Pedagogy

Technological development has brought major changes in the education system. On being asked if the advent of technology has affected the methods of teaching or not, 68.7% media students of government colleges expressed that their teachers are using latest technology. However, some students were still unsure over the impact of technology on teaching methods. In private institutions, practical and discussions came out to be the most preferred teaching methods among students (with 46% votes for each of them) followed by the 'Presentation' method (42%). Case studies and film screening methods were also mentioned by some students. Blackboard teaching was liked by the least number of students (7%); but it is still one of the most prevalent methods among the colleges today. Clearly the practical and discussions are such methods in which students actually get involved; whereas in blackboard teaching and presentations there are chances that students are not entirely involved. A few teachers in the interview expressed that not all topics can be taught properly with a single method. A combination of two or more teaching pedagogies is necessary and is practiced by a few teachers however, this is just a starting trend and more teachers should follow the same.

Graph 6- Teaching Pedagogy

4. Entrance Exam Pattern

It is found that government colleges providing media education are majorly following the uniform admission mechanism. The admission is done on the basis of marks scored in senior secondary school examination. As per the data available regarding the cut off list of marks required to get admission in the Journalism course in Delhi University, we found 98.5% marks were required in the first phase and admission got closed by the fifth phase with minimum requirement of 90% marks in general category in 2015-16. This explains that students scored less than 90% marks in their senior secondary examination failed to get admission in Delhi University for media education. This also raises questions on the students studying media because till senior secondary, no media related subject is there which can actually help to determine critical and analytical skills of a student. This raises some concerns related to the Quality Assurance in higher education.

Mr. Calleb O Gudo (Deputy Director Research and Extensions) and Dr. Maureen A Olel, (Lecturer, Maseno University) in their research titled "Students' Admission Policies for Quality Assurance" in Kenya in 2011, wrote that Quality Assurance is a mechanism to achieve standards it has negotiated and agreed on, has quality of student as one of its main ingredient. It is defined as 'fitness for purpose' and 'conformance to standards'. Fitness for Purpose refers to the purpose and utility of the product while conformance to standards based approach aligned to the specified standards given by regulatory agency. Admission mechanism could be questioned for the failure in capturing the hidden competencies. The written examination can help determining the

critical and analytical skills of student while Interview whether personal or Group Discussion can also help in determining the one who has the quality to maintain or upgrade the quality of education. Keeping marks as the only determinant the pattern will certainly help those in getting admission who score good at the senior secondary level. But because of the high competition in each area of study, students also get enrolled in the course of study, which is not what they are interested in, but because they anyway want to take admission in some or other course before it gets late.

In an Interview with Prof. Anil Kumar, Department head, BA (H) Journalism, Maharaja Agrasen College he said, *“For the entrance procedure we go by the University norms”* while Prof. Babli Moitra Saraf, Principal, IP College for Women talking about the entrance procedure she stated that the entrance procedure here in I.P college differs from rest of the colleges of Delhi University as we are running a self-financed journalism course here. We position ourselves as a communication course, therefore we look for the qualities that we value in a media student. She asserted *“We conduct a two-tier entrance system. There’s basic eligibility criterion in overall on average and in English. We have divided the exams in first General awareness; those who qualify the same will go through another round on specialized and analytical skills in English because our medium of teaching is English. And then the final list comes out.”*

5. Language

The syllabus of media courses in most of the private institutes is entirely in English. Hindi is not included even as a language. Educators also believe that there is a dominance of English in the syllabus but feel that the dominance is justified because it is the universal language. Prof. Vikram Datt (Principal Academics and Head – BJMC Department, Delhi Metropolitan Education) *the syllabus just reflects what is there in our country; we do not even have many books in Hindi (related to the course) in the country.”* To cater to the students from Hindi speaking belt, most of the teachers feel free to teach in both languages, if students demand. In some universities like GGSIP University, students can appear for their exam in Hindi. Mrs. Manmeet Kaur of Trinity Institute of Professional Studies, tells how she knows many students who were poor in English, but with their constant effort and will to learn, they are working well in the industry. However, some media academicians think otherwise. They point out that except a very few, the universities and institutes offering courses in vernacular languages are limited to diploma level. If one opts for higher education, there is no alternative to considering English as the only medium of education, which prevents many regional language media professionals from acquiring higher media education. It is a belief that the other regional language education is hardly considered fruitful for this profession despite the fact that language press (e.g., Malayala Manorama, Gujarat Samachar) has outnumbered the English press in terms of circulation and readership and has entered a new phase of development.

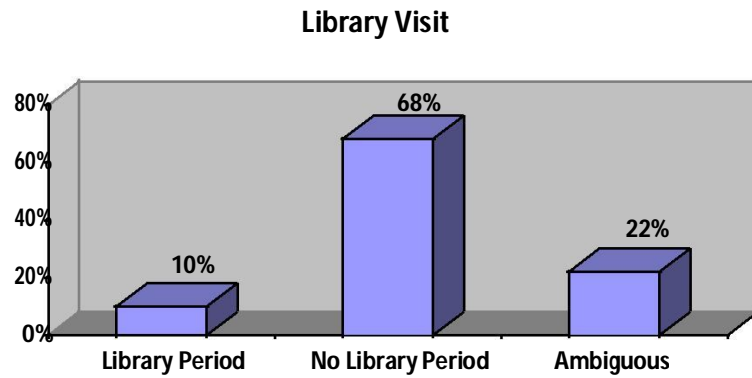
Conclusion and Recommendations

Journalism education in India is still developing and though it has grown in size and importance, it is still not treated at par with other traditional disciplines of knowledge. This discipline is striving for an identity of its own and unfortunately, there have not been adequate efforts of either the academia, industry or the policy makers to make gainful efforts towards the same. While a majority of the current media students have an inclination towards TV & Production, many colleges are still struggling to provide adequate equipments. Attendance is a major area of concern for almost all the colleges and students feel that there is a gap between what is taught at the colleges and what the industry demands. Another challenge widely faced by colleges is the dearth of working media professionals teaching the students. Since, experience in the media-industry is not compulsory while hiring a teacher; students feel lack of practical inputs in the classes. Language is another concern for many. Hindi is not even a part of the media related courses in most of the private institutes in Delhi-NCR, even though there is a huge Hindi-based media industry in this region. Students who are not much fluent in English and are from Hindi-speaking belt face problems in understanding the concepts but are allowed to write exams in Hindi.

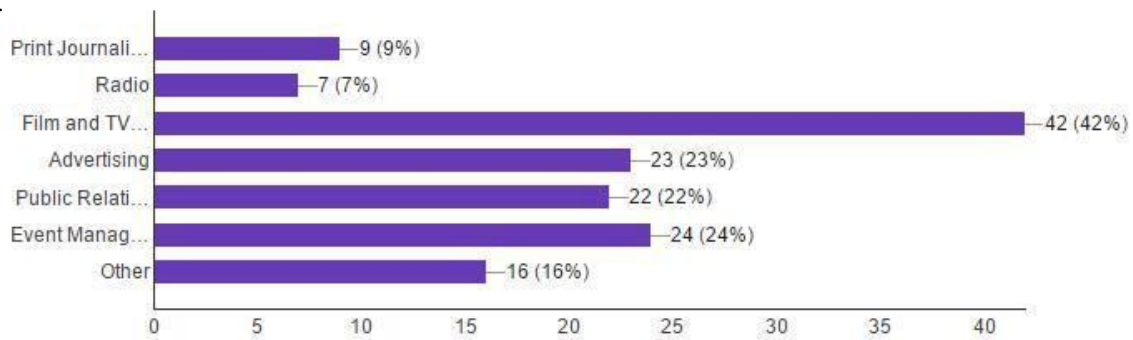
The students are more inclined towards practical subjects and find a number of subjects repetitive. The practical exposure is restricted and only few students issue equipment to use. However it was seen that the students have worked in various no. of projects including production work, News reporting and writing, designing, social work and lot more while working beyond college. The colleges are also not helpful in providing assistance to the students in terms of internship or industry interface. Most of the students though underwent the same but on their own. There is also dearth of quality books in the colleges as despite the fact that major number of students do visit library and found more than 300-400 books, they failed to name best they have read. There can be various reasons for lack of interest of students in it as this is one serious concern. The teaching process however has seen changes with the advent of technology, which also help students in learning better. There is an urgent need to study 'Media Education' in detail and aspects related to it, so as to improve the status of this crucial area.

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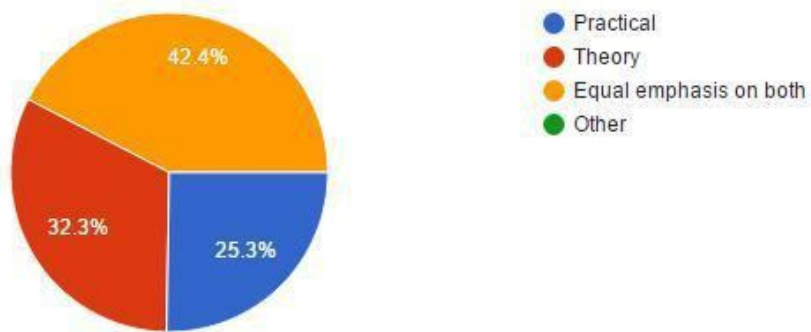
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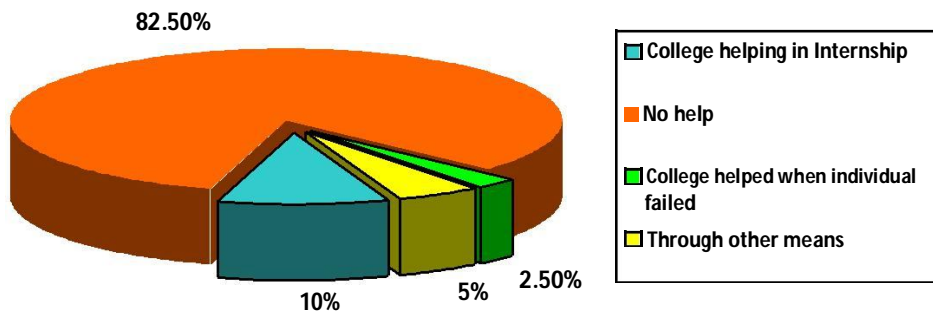
Graph 1- Library Visit



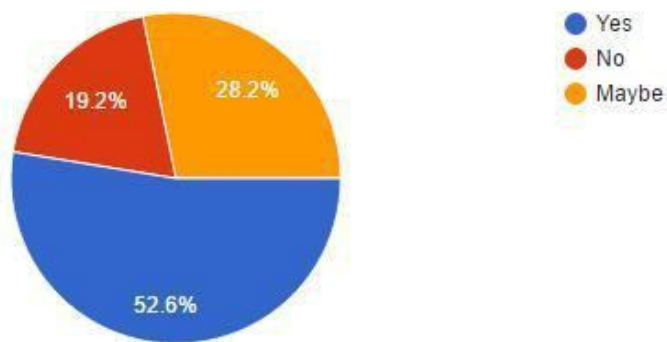
Graph 2- Preferred Subject



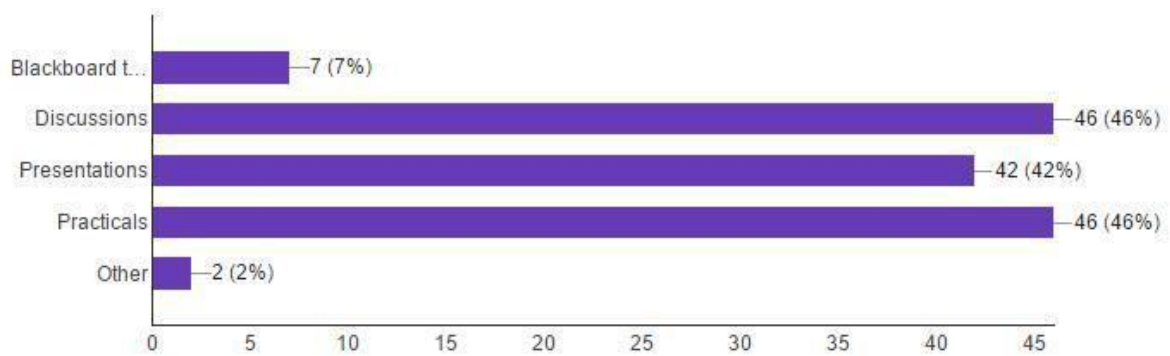
Graph 3- Theory/Practical or both?



Graph 4- Internships



Graph 5- Academia Industry Interface



Graph 6- Teaching Pedagogy