PARADIGM SHIFT IN JOURNALISM EDUCATION
RETOOLING OF CURRICULUM IN J-SCHOOLS IN USA

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This paper examines the endeavors made by some of the American Schools of Journalism who have deviated from the dominant path, and advocated diverse and alternate model of curriculum where the concept of ‘convergence’ is central to the process of teaching and learning. This transformation is in perfect correlation with the sea change in the conventional newsrooms of the traditional media like newspaper and broadcasting. The efforts of some of the J-schools to embrace varying shades of convergence illustrating fundamental shift in the functioning of newsroom is another vital issue that is explored in this study.

Obviously, the J-schools have a challenge to handle which forms the focus of this paper but it is apparent that the answers are elusive.

Does retooling of journalism curriculum reflect pro-convergence approach in the journalism education in USA?

The study shows that the responding schools are in various stages of curriculum reconstruction and revaluation but all have recognized the fact that the students need a variety of skills across print, broadcast and online. Some programs have modified the traditional curriculum, others have eliminated the traditional courses, and still others have come out with hybrid kind of modification. Most of them have looked towards industry to evolve a model suitable for the academia. The converged curriculum is beginning to have a significant impact at the undergraduate level. All the journalism programs intent to be connected with the industry.

Obviously, the pro-convergence attitude of the respondents is influenced by the fear of remaining obsolete and becoming irrelevant in the industry. ‘There was a time where it was perfectly acceptable for journalism schools to be five years out of date. It was not a big deal. Things did not change rapidly from 1972-77 that is if you are five years behind industry your students were not really missing much. Now if you are five years out of date you are unemployable’ (Perlmutter 2007)

Backpack Journalist: In 2002, the establishment of Newsplex in the corridors of the university heralded the arrival of convergence paradigm of the Tampa model in the industry that gave a new agenda to the schools of journalism. However, the concept of convergence symbolizing the creation of backpack journalist has been taken beyond realistic realms by the American media. ‘You can’t have everyone doing everything.....you need to master the basics and many of the distribution mechanisms you can pick up later on’ is how Goldstein of Berkeley dismisses the concept of backpack journalist (Goldstein, 2007). Randy clarifies that ‘in Newsplex we sometimes train backpack journalists-multi skilled journalists- journalists who cover stories across media. I think that is a good idea. However, the problem comes when someone says everyone is going to be multiskilled journalist’ (Randy, 2007)

The concept of ‘Backpack journalist’ propounded by the Tampa Tribune model has very few takers. ‘One thing that we abandoned that sounded very attractive but proved unworkable was basically what I call as Tampa Tribune model that is you go out and report a story and write it for print and you shoot it for broadcast and you do the same thing with the story. Backpack journalist, yes. That was too complex for students in their first journalism and so what we are looking to do is to develop a course which students might do something like that but only at advance level.

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level’ says Parks, Dean of Annenberg School of Journalism and the Pulitzer award winning journalist. ‘We just recognize that we have a model but the Tampa-Tribune model actually that is a minority model and we went to where the majority of the practice is’ (Parks, 2007). The industry model trains students to learn skills to work across print, broadcast and online.

The University of Southern California’s Annenberg School of Journalism has the new Convergence Core Curriculum (CCC) that essentially allows students to learn cross platform journalism. ‘...we adopted a new core curriculum that requires all students to take the fundamental courses in news writing, reporting and production across print, broadcast and online. We did that in recognition that is what news organizations had already moving or moved. They were looking for people with skills across sometimes three media certainly two media’ (Parks, 2007).

The USC Annenberg School for Journalism has retooled the curriculum based on Industry model of convergence commonly found in media houses across US. The Industry model has been preferred over the Tampa Tribune model because of heavy technical training required in the latter model. The curriculum allows students to do either broadcast or print production and they need not have to do both. The focus is on teaching multiple skills in such a way that the skills that one learns in print help a broadcaster and vice versa. The model also recognizes the reality that broadcast takes longer to learn because of technical issues. ‘It (Broadcast) is a demanding course in that learning the two separate disciplines is like learning two foreign languages, one of them uses different alphabets. I think the different alphabet is broadcast but the broadcast colleagues think it is print’ (Parks, 2007). The print and broadcast cultures are different that educators have debated on the problems of integration. ‘Newspapers tend to have beats and TV stations have assignment desk and is more team driven than the newspapers’ (Parks, 2007). The school has the advantage of an experimental program, ‘News 21’ funded by Knight Foundation also conducted at Medill and Berkeley, which has given the students an extended opportunity to work across variety of platforms to tell news stories and has promoted the interests of pro-convergence curriculum.

Medill School at Northwestern admits that the school’s program is far away from the concept of making back-pack journalists where ‘everybody does everything’ (Gordon, 2007). The Medill, the home of Knight Foundation, discloses that it is in its first phase of curriculum reconstruction, reevaluation and plans to do more than mere change the content in the existing courses.

‘We are making two changes in them. Primarily one of them is we want students to have an audience orientation... fragmentation of the mass media audience is the single largest trend in this country...Second area is that of adding multimedia storytelling component’ (Gordon, 2007). The pro convergence approach is seen in its curriculum that focuses on preparing ‘multimedia journalists’ aimed at developing journalistic skills in ‘multimedia storytelling’. They say it is not convergence but multimedia. The model is distinct and integrated but deviated from the traditional sequence based majors aiming towards developing multimedia skills across newspaper/online, magazine and broadcast.

A student at Medill program gets to learn the production of content for the web in multiple forms instead of producing single media products therefore bringing it closer to the industry model. The curriculum firstly recognizes the need to develop a level of proficiency in multimedia production and story telling. Secondly, it focuses on building student’s ability to put content in multiple forms of text, audio, video and photos, together on a website- the most logical place at this point of time to put that content (Gordon, 2007). However, Medill’s proposed curriculum assumes significance as it goes beyond the concept of industry model in trying to develop on things like ‘multimedia clickable’ where one can make things ‘clickable’ beyond sound, video, photos and interactive content. ‘I think we need to be literate in visual presentation and that is something we have to figure it out how to incorporate it as well’ (Gordon, 2007).

Academics like Gordon, keep on searching for answers to the convergence issues in journalism education that continue to pour unabated. ‘We can teach students the basics of journalism... reporting, writing, ethics, and the kinds of stories they might be covering. We have always done that We can (and now do) also teach them the multimedia production skills (photography, audio production video production, storytelling with images and sounds together). What we have not gotten good at yet is connecting the two together’ (Gordon, 2007).

Perhaps for the first time in the history of journalism education in USA, the Missouri School of Journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia has created a convergence sequence/major in 2005 in journalism on par with conventional majors such as Radio-Television, Journalism Studies, Magazine Journalism, Newspaper Journalism, Photojournalism and Strategic Communication. A concentrated
curriculum prepares the students for careers in convergence applications of journalism.

(McKean, 2007).

Conceptually, the school has been running a successful program that is turning out the students to have a kind of intelligence, experience and characteristics that people want to hire and therefore did not want to overhaul the system to accommodate the interests of convergence (Kraxberger 2007). As a result, it has not modified the traditional sequences but has added new sequence of convergence to the existing structure accommodating the interests of both the traditionalists and neo journalism educators. This sequence-based model representing traditional approach to curriculum retooling is in contrast with the Kansas’s curriculum.

In spite of creating a separate convergence major, the course structure is closer to Industry model and not the Tampa model as it is far from the concept of ‘everybody does everything’. By creating the first ever convergence faculty in J-education in US, Missouri school has evolved, a model that is conceptually different from Kansas’s ‘converged and then diverged’ (Utsler 2007) concept. Missouri has created an emphasis area to avoid the risk of diluting other specialties (Kraxberger 2007). The line of thinking was not to impart general skills but to have specialists, as it was felt that convergence education is not for every student (Kraxberger 2007).

The convergence major came into existence in 2005 and the first batch graduated in 2007. What is the difference between converged and non-converged students’ competencies in Missouri? ‘The only difference is that in the convergence program, the students are doing all these things, reporting, editing and in depth projects in convergence environment’ (McKean, 2007). Nevertheless, all students are required to take a basic course in news writing before they move into their emphasis area. However, what does one learns in convergence major? ‘….instead of working for a entire semester in one newsroom, (in convergence major) they rotate through all of the newsrooms within a single semester’ (Kraxberger 2007).

McKean, the chair of convergence faculty explains the components of convergence sequence. In convergence journalism, a student begins with a sort of basic skills in introduction and begins to learn how to apply digital audio, video, photography and web-editing techniques into story telling. Then the convergence-reporting course takes them to produce content for all three types of media. Editing and producing courses teach them copy editing and multi-media production. Finally, a capstone course offers them an opportunity to take up a bigger project. A convergence student also acquires depth by choosing a concentration in their area of interest. ‘We have had lot of people taking convergence journalism and specialize in radio and TV and they are finding that they have plenty of job opportunities….’ (Kraxberger, 2007). The model gives a broad exposure of working across variety of media platforms. The focus of convergence curriculum is to teach a student how to work across platforms. Students are required to produce one story three ways and on the web four ways. The challenge of convergence sequence is not whether students can produce one story in multiple forms but can they produce the content significantly different in all of those media… bring in value addition. (Kraxberger, 2007).

The components of converged curriculum of Missouri are no different from other curricula as every J-school under study is emphasizing on story telling using different techniques for varied delivery platforms. Nevertheless, Missouri believes that this structure is trying to recognize the audience perception of media. ‘I see ultimately we are trying to change the relationship between media and the audience….We are looking in a much more holistic interactive philosophy in terms of relationships between media and the audience’ (McKean, 2007).

Retoolling efforts by the responding university departments/schools have followed a pattern. Most of them have retained the dominant structure of sequence based degree programs whereas few of them have evolved an alternate path wherein they have got rid of sequences to have an integrated model of degree courses. The School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Kansas has preferred the latter path. They have a reason to do so. If one traces the history of curriculum development in j-schools in US, one cannot escape from the fact that invention of new media has always influenced the courses. ‘Every time the world invented either a new technology like radio or television or a new practice like public relations or promotions our curricular solutions to this were that we created a new sequence’ (Utsler, 2007). Therefore, instead of adding one more sequence to the existing ones, the Kansas school developed a two-pronged system flexible enough to house strategic careers and news careers.

The William Allen White School of Journalism & Mass Communications, University of Kansas has emerged as a leader in evolving an alternate model of converged curriculum and the school prefers to use the term ‘multimedia’ instead of convergence. Utsler, who chaired the com-
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What is the essence of Kansas’s integrated model? It re-
flects the need to focus on the skills for creation of visual
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The Kansas’s curriculum reflects the predominance of
content creation over skills. There will always be market
and audience for content consumption for all time to come
and therefore students can be trained to be good content
creators which is convergent enough to be applicable to
anything they might be interested in doing (Perlmutter,
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argument is some schools have tried convergence at the tail
end where the students specialize for instance as broad-
cast/print/online majors at the fag end of their course. In
the Kansas model, the curriculum is ‘converged and then
diverged’ (Utsler 2007). It means that everybody starts at
the same level of introductory classes but then as one moves
through the curriculum one has a chance to develop a spe-
cialty either as a newsperson or as a strategic person that
one chooses to be (Max Utsler 2007). Since change is the
name of the game in teaching journalism, how does this
model accommodates new changes? It is claimed that new
courses can be added any time without overhauling the
system. ‘We can change the curriculum without having to
blow the whole thing out’ (Max Utsler 2007).

The nomenclature of the journalism courses has been a
cause of disagreement since its inception. Kansas gives a
Bachelor of Science in Journalism where as other schools
give a B.A./ BJ degree and the degree does not say what they
majored in. ‘... We created it (two streams) artifi-
cially then technically a student can write down anything
that he or she wants to write down as far as what is my
major is... They (employers) do not really care what you
majored in. They care if you know how to do the work
that you sign up to do that’ (Max Utsler 2007).

The Southern Methodist University that considers Kansas
as the leader in converged curriculum (Kraeplin, 2007)
decided to become truly converged two years ago and one
of the changes it did was to get rid of tracks like print,
broadcast and others. The school now simply has a jour-
nalism core curriculum consisting of courses instead of
tracks or sequences. ‘Sticking with tracks that don’t ac-
knowledge the new reality is just not forward thinking. It
is not acknowledging the way the market is headed, the
way the journalism is headed….and most universities will
take some steps, will take some moves towards conver-
gence’ (Kraeplin, 2007). Accordingly, a student can pur-
sue interest in print, broadcast or web along with basic
knowledge of how to work in each of all these media to
develop cross platform skills. The Tampa model is not
their ideal, as the school does not believe in preparing back-
pack journalists. Instead, their goal is to produce students
who are truly skilled journalists meaning concentrating in
one particular area but it does mean understanding how
the other media works (Kraeplin, 2007).

The University of South Carolina, the home of Newsplex-
the convergence newsroom, has tuned its curriculum to
have convergence element and its program is closer to the
industry model though they may not say so. The essence
of the model is to teach students across print, broadcast
and online. The sequence based dominant curriculum model
offers majors in Advertising, Public Relations, Electronic
Journalism, Print Journalism and Visual Communications.
The most visible change is the introduction of Visual Com-
munication sequence four years ago and the course con-
tent is pro-convergence. The school had a Print Journal-
ism program that had a narrow focus, designed to train
students to become newspaper photographers. The introduction of Visual Communication has given the students an opportunity to pursue careers in broadcasting, advertising, small web production companies and entrepreneurs (Kenney, 2007). The school continues to offer dominant track based model curriculum with emphasis on multimedia and has stayed away from evolving any radical changes despite the presence of state of mi converged newsroom at Newsplex very much on its campus.

The Department of Communication and Journalism, University of St. Thomas, Saint Paul, Minnesota is one of the many journalism programs that continue to have the dominant path of sequence or track-based journalism course that branches into print, broadcast, visual communication and media studies. The school hopes to eliminate these four concentrations in future and have only two majors, one in journalism and the other in strategic communication (Bunton, 2007). This model is akin to the full-fledged multimedia (converged) model developed by the Kansas. The advantage of converged model is it erases distinctions between print and broadcast and between PR and advertising (Bunton, 2007).

The Kansas model is more likely to be adopted by many journalism programs as it is in tune with the variety of delivery platforms that continues to emerge. The Kansas model draws a parallel with the industry model adopted by the University of Southern California, Annenberg School for Journalism as both the programs aim at developing similar competencies. In the present industry model, news organizations whether broadcast or print have affiliated news sites, websites, and occasional cooperation with a broadcaster or print partner but not the same integrated model (Parks, 2007). The School of Journalism at Indiana University, Bloomington has an experience of a decade old experiment in converged curriculum. One of the models of media convergence that influenced Indiana experiment was The Sarasota Herald- Tribune at Sarasota, Florida. The important feature of the model is the school selected the existing courses and retooled them to the new challenges. The courses for instance Writing for Mass Media is remodeled so also a course on Photography to accommodate fresh challenges. One cannot disagree with Boeyink when he states the basic goals of journalism courses; ‘in the context of the challenges of technology, there are fundamental skills that we need to teach no matter what the technology is. Our students need to know how to find information… how to interview people… how to write in ways that are clear and concise and expressive and compelling. That I don’t think is going to change no matter what the form of technology that delivers the message’ (Boeyink, 2007)

The new curriculum aims at making all the journalism students getting the hang of reporting and writing a story for one medium and re-working it for other media. In a sense it is not convergence at one level, says Boeyink, ‘but it’s recognizing what the students in their rapidly changing environment of mass media are going to be writing for different audiences’ (David Boeyink, 2007).

The School of Communications, Elon University in North Carolina, has a sequence based dominant model offering both traditional as well as new media courses. Some schools have attempted to strike a balance between professional skills and broad kind of confidences like critical thinking. Elon’s program in North Carolina is cited for this interesting paradigm Elon’s faculty does not want to go Missouri way because their philosophy is that ‘Convergence needs to permeate everything we are doing’ (Paul Parsons, 2007).

Paul Parsons, the Dean poses the critical issue of general versus specific; breadths versus depths in developing convergence competencies. ‘The word convergence is used in a very positive way here but we do not want to use it in the way that diminishes the value of depths in a particular field for our student (Parsons, 2007). A student of corporate communication too learns the skills of multimedia on par with students of broadcast journalism without sacrificing ‘depths’. The question that is posed by the school is do they (students) need breadths for convergence or do they need depths in their specialty? What does the school say? ‘We still value the depths that the curriculum can bring to the student interested in specific area but we also recognize that we may not be serving student well if we train them only to be a writer and they don’t know how to create a web page’(Parsons, 2007). Generally, convergence means that a student need to learn broader set of skills. The bottleneck in most of the models of J-education treading convergence path is the domination of ‘breadths over depths’. ‘Convergence to me is a statement about the value of breadths and I would say traditional journalism and communication curriculum have a tendency to emphasize over the years depths. So, there will probably be some sacrifice of depths in order to accomplish breadths and that is going to be an inherent tension in a world that increasingly emphasizes convergence’ (Parsons, 2007).

‘We thought up the whole lot of breadth not very much depth’ says Edward Adams, Chair, Communication
Department of Brigham Young University citing one of the shortcomings of converged program that they conducted for more than a decade. The faculty found that teaching the technology skills in converged environment is a challenge where the students will not pick up any of them satisfactorily (Adams, 2007). The BYU’s attempt to revert back to traditional paradigm endorses Parsons’s concern for sacrificing ‘depths for breadths’.

‘I don’t call it as convergence. To me convergence is the end point where everything comes together. I just do not see that….Convergence is really not an issue anymore’ points out Adams, referring to his decade old experimentation with converged curriculum. The Tampa Tribune model and other converged media paradigms that created stir in the industry influenced many journalism programs in the US. BYU was one of those earliest schools that got the attention of the academia for retooling the curriculum to bring in convergence into journalism education. ‘We were one of the first if not the first in the nation to retool converged program and the trade magazine, Broadcasting Cable, recognized that in 1999’ (Adams, 2007). As early as 1995 and 1996 the department of communication took steps to build converged newsroom, the first of its kind in journalism schools in USA. It also took initiative to introduce a new converged curriculum way back in 1997-98. However, the program suffered a setback as the industry itself did not come out clean on that model.

Speaking on the problems of the converged newsroom at BYU, Adams reasons that the earlier experience of adopting ‘assignment model’ of broadcast clashed with that print courses and the ‘enterprising model’ of print clashed with broadcast courses, These two models brought to the fore the clash of newsroom cultures in the classrooms. The failure of converged model at BYU has raised major issues like accreditation, newsroom culture and ‘domination of breadths over depths’. The accreditation system requiring accommodating all the research, theory, ethics, history, law, internship with print, broadcast and online production within 40 credits was too much of a challenge (Adams 2007). Therefore, the BYU went back to conventional model with a sequence-based structure consisting of print journalism, broadcast journalism, public relations, advertising and marketing communications and lastly communications studies.

The major bottleneck in all accredited programs is the system of accreditation in J-schools in US. The schools have limited credits in journalism and it is rather difficult to promote pro-convergence approach that means learning broader set of skills, in curriculum in the present system without taking away the depths in a course. ‘The greatest challenge of converged curriculum will be the dilemma of depths verses breadths and convergence to me is a statement about the value of breadths’, is how Parsons expresses concern. More research into these issues will strengthen the retooling efforts of J-schools.

All the responding journalism programs have a pro-convergence approach in their curriculum. Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, MO is the first and the only school to have created convergence faculty in the US. There is Missouri model of curriculum that bears resemblance to the industry model. Many schools that want to change radically are skeptical about Missouri model but are positively inclined to embrace Kansas Model of curriculum. Therefore, Kansas’s integrated model emerges as the leader as far as the convergence is concerned. Nevertheless, Missouri school’s radical creation of convergence faculty can be a trendsetter and it has resulted in the birth of neo journalism educators against traditionalists in the academia.

Is there any emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving skills in convergence curriculum?

Is it true that the converged curriculum is heavy on technological skills? However, the respondent educators do not think so. ‘Anybody can learn technology but what often can’t be taught is curiosity and critical thinking…..There is a little bit of risk in journalism education when we focus too much on form and not enough on content’ (Kraxberger). Converged curriculum would always have components of writing, critical thinking and ethical decision-making (Kristie, Cecile, Boeyink, 2007).

The debate among the faculty is what to teach and whether teachers should go very technologically heavy. Goldstein is of the view that People need to be just more flexible with new media but again, you have to master the old to understand the new….. what we really need to be teaching is the fundamentals because no matter what the distribution system in journalism is going to be the fundamentals will stay constant’ (Goldstein, 2007).

Does emphasis on learning broader set of skills take away students from writing is the central concern of some of the educators (Parsons, 2007) as pro--convergence approach is believed to undermine writing. ‘I still have lot of students who write and edit for a living. We still place students in newspapers’ says Holmes of South Carolina who considers that some of the basic skills are not going to change in new curriculum.

Generally, teaching convergence is thought more in terms
of technology with emphasis on applied than conceptual learning and striking a balance between the two has been a challenge. At Elon, the faculty feels that if there is more emphasis on convergence then one need to hire more teachers that are skilled. ‘That could be a slight shift in the way that we put a faculty together. We always talk about balance between conceptual and the applied and we make sure we keep a good balance between the two’ (Parsons, 2007).

Kraeplin of SMU says that ‘convergence involves a more creative process’ and therefore teaching convergence involves both technology as well as concepts. One has to understand the media conceptually to be able to execute technologically implying that it cannot be one without the other.

The Kansas University with its integrated model of curriculum vouches for critical thinking skills. ‘There is basic critical thinking skills that has not changed over time….The most important thing to teach is what makes the story, why is it the story and why is it important to talk to’ (Musser, 2007). ‘There is no question that in a good curriculum and I hope ours falls into that category, skills take a long long second place to content creativity….Our main job is teaching essentially thinking and writing- the content creation. Convergence is content creation’ says Perlmutter of Kansas answering critics of curriculum as heavy on skills.

In Indiana when they started a decade ago critical thinking was not explicitly stated in their goals but was later added. ‘When we are educating the students into becoming journalists in mass media, a big part of what we are doing is training them to be critical thinkers because they would be working at jobs that we cannot even envision. We can prepare them for what we think is the direction of mass media now’, says Boeyink answering the critics of converged curriculum.

The educators have expressed serious concern about technology being overwhelming in convergence. Indiana did encounter the challenge of technology as in J-201 course where the student gets to learn reporting and ‘writing for on-line. A student in such an experience will be preoccupied with the physical creation of the web page overlooking the content that goes into it. As a solution, the Indiana team endeavored to shift the software and limited the choices available for the students so that they concentrated more on writing and presenting content that is appropriate for the medium. ‘The answer to me was not to master all the complex technology but into limiting the role of technology play…..But in a way you can’t just be driven by the technology. Ideally technology should become transparent’, feels Boeyink about technology becoming one of the downsizes of converged curriculum if it is not handled properly (Boeyink, 2007).

The respondents feel that the students need to develop their higher cognitive skills of thinking, reasoning and rationalization (Perlmutter, 2007). Students are also required to be equipped with all kinds of research skills ranging from interview research to social scientific research. ‘Skills set in all these methods and also the theories and the conceptualizations behind those methods will be useful to them whatever they develop into in terms of a career…..being citizens in a media aided democracy’ (Perlmutter 2007). Missouri with its first ever convergence faculty feels that it is not only important for the students to be adept at moving cross platform but also teaching students to be critical about how they think about media and to adopt to the changes that are coming around (Kraxberger 2007). ‘We are constantly asking students to think critically about the stories that they report. It, takes a lot of critical thinking skills and creative thinking to imagine a story in a way that we have not seen it, heard it or observed it (Kraxberger 2007).

**How do the teachers cope with the convergence-oriented curriculum?**

Teaching in converged environment is a challenge and every teacher has tried to evolve a new technique or a strategy to do justice to the assignment. ‘What we are going to do is rather than having courses that emphasize the differences between media we are going to teach you the similarities that you can apply to any media you work in Good sound bytes make good quotes’, says Utsler illustrating the similarities between broadcast, e-media and print.

Nevertheless, teaching a pro-convergence course has posed new problems in some of the respondents’ schools. Many educators have expressed concern over whether students are capable of mastering both the technical skills and basic journalistic skills at the same time. ‘We need to strengthen journalistic skills to be able to teach both well’
(Holmes 2007).

‘I don’t think people here use the word (convergence) much around but to me they (teachers) are struggling, trying to figure out how best to teach students…..We don’t have a lot of full time faculty who are technologists’ says Goldstein of Berkeley (2007) while agreeing on the inevitability of the course. ‘The biggest challenge that we face is finding faculty that understands the online world, the multimedia world and educating the faculty….’ says Musser, the Head of News and Information Track. There are some people ho are teaching, trying to teach kids things they would not have done professionally themselves’ (Musser, 2007), illustrates that teaching convergence is riddled with problems in most of the respondents’ schools.

‘What we do is we give instructors syllabus, give them a structure, we say here is the outcome. How do you get there is up to you. But here is what the student will be examined on’ states Parks whose ASC school has a huge faculty consisting of 34 full time and over 100 adjunct faculty members.

Indiana had two options either to train the existing faculty to teach new courses or hire someone from outside who had the required expertise. Indiana chose the former and conducted a series of summer workshops to train the faculty. Boeyink feels that ‘faculty ought to be willing to do exactly what we expect our students to do.’ (Boeyink, 2007). Elon University stresses on faculty orientation, to convergence.

‘Our own faculty needs to be continually retooling and expanding their areas of knowledge and expertise…..so that everyone know more about audio production and web publishing or video production and editing’ (Parsons, 2007). At Elon, the attitude of the faculty is very pro-convergence and interestingly the faculty wants to converge themselves in terms of their faculty offices.

Some teachers are convinced about the need to get themselves updated about technology. ‘We had to find a way to encourage faculty to learn new skills, to develop new orientations to engage industry and find out….what they actually need…..’(Perlmutter, 2007).

Many teachers are excited about the new technology in J-education and are willing to learn. ‘I am a dinosaur. I really need to understand…. Even if I shoot five more digital pictures rest of my life, I need to know what is digital color…..I need to understand the multimedia, web design programs because I haven’t done it and I need to be trained in that I needed to know how to put to student’ (Holmes 2007). Statements like, ‘I with 25 years of experience in print and vice-president of newspaper chain went back and took a fellowship and worked one summer in TV newsroom’ (Musser, 2007) denotes the dedication of the faculty in updating their skills. Nevertheless, Kansas did not insist on teachers learning next generation media editing and designing. ‘Our idea was we are going to offload all the training in technology to our lab instructors and TAs…..and that was a major breakthrough for us to have our faculty members get to that point’ (Utsler, 2007).

Boeyink cites an interesting model of teaching at St. Thomas University in St. Paul, Minnesota, to maximize the utilization of existing faculty. ‘What they have tried to do is to teach different skills across the media. They would teach lead writing in different areas and then might talk about story structure’, says Boeyink who followed a different module where the teacher spends approximately 4-5 weeks on writing for ‘one type of audience’ and then shifts.

Finding the right faculty to teach has been a challenge with Missouri, SMU and almost all of them who have gone convergence way. The converged subject by nature requires considerable amount of teaching time and resources because of multiple media components. For instance, a reporting course has a print, broadcast as well as a web component making it difficult for the teachers to do justice to the subject So most of them are experimenting with team teaching and in the absence of a model, every member of the team shares his or her expertise and put their skills together to teach classes collectively. ‘It is not too hard to team-teach. We team teach various skills. Team teaching helps break down the barriers’ (Musser, 2007).

The first convergence major at Missouri too admits to be working with the model of team teaching sharing expertise in courses like photography, video, audio and internet and claims that it works (McKean, 2007). It sounds idealistic but only future research would throw light on the modalities of team teaching vis-a-vis conventional solo teaching and its impact on learning outcome. However, Adams is more realistic and says, ‘you can only build curriculum around your faculty you may want to be converging but if you have an older faculty who know nothing other than print journalism and you don’t have resources to do, team teaching you may not be able to do it’ (Adams, 2007). SMU too has a problem with team teaching. ‘Team-teach is something that we are very new to. We have not done that before. There is no model for how to team-teach. So, that has been a challenge’ (Kraeplin, 2007).

Gordon handling the Medill program feels, ’part of the
challenge is that our journalism instructors are not experts in multimedia production, and our multimedia production instructors (staff members) are not experts in journalism. Our biggest needs now are to develop journalism assignments that make use of the multimedia production skills and to ensure that our journalism instructors are able to evaluate the quality of the multimedia production work.

In US higher education system where textbooks are prescriptive for courses, teachers have a problem finding the appropriate teaching material for teaching multiple media. Teaching these courses calls for enormous resources and the responding schools are adequately equipped to impart the required skills. Nevertheless, getting the right kind of books is posing a challenge in a system of education that is known to thrive on books. ‘In terms of conceptual multimedia text books there are few but quite frankly, there are not a lot in this area and we don’t use a lot of conventional text books. We use our own material (Musser, 2007).

In many schools like the one at Saint Paul, Minnesota, the teachers prepared a text for the class as they were trying to make the class converged but could not find any material that spoke of that philosophy (Bunton 2007). ‘We don’t use books much and I suppose the reason why we don’t use them much is....it is not laid out in books that way’ (Utsler, 2007).

One of the journalism programs, which embraced converged curriculum for more than a decade, the Brigham Young University backed out as they encountered many problems. First of all the newsroom culture that is prevalent in the industry was a barrier. According to Adams, newsroom in broadcasting has an assignment desk whereas newspapers use enterprise model where reporters work on a beat. The individualistic culture of newsgathering conflicted with the team environment in print and broadcast media respectively and students could not cope with the environment. Paucity of time is one of the realistic problems a teacher in this pluralistic field faces. Goldstein is of the view that, ‘there is so much we want to teach them, there is not enough time…..’ (Goldstein, 2007).

It has been a challenge to evaluate students of converged or multimedia courses. Who should evaluate these students? At the outset these courses have been taught by teachers who themselves are learners of new media. ‘...I have never done professionally but I can still evaluate it. Part of what we have done is unlinking evaluation from imparting skills. It means bringing people from outside into teach them’ (Musser, 2007).

We use professional standards to evaluate the work of the students’ says Parks Justifying the evaluation of student’s work by full time and adjunct faculty in converged courses.

**Is Converged Course Industry Driven?**

It is widely believed that converged curriculum is one of the compulsions Dosed by the industry. However, Boeyink armed with his Indiana experience feels that ‘we have had conversations here about leading the industry rather than following the Industry’. Boeyink categorically states that the ‘converged curriculum is an important response to the way in which audiences are getting information and not a response to the way the industry wants us to prepare people’. Elon University and many others too reiterate the same opinion. ‘I do not think we are doing it because the industry is telling us to do.....I do not think we are trying to take orders from the industry. I think we are doing it because we think this is the future of the industry’ (Parsons, 2007).

McKean heading the first convergence major course is of the view, ‘well I think to a certain extent that’s true (the curriculum is industry driven) but I also think they are also driving the industry in looking for solutions to some problems that they have. ‘In that sense we are also leading and not just following the industry’ (McKean, 2007).

Utsler argues that the journalism schools have figured out what the convergence issue is all about consequently showing leadership in journalism community unlike the industry that is trying to figure out what to do with it. Far from industry driven, convergence curriculum, though started as a way to address what was happening in the business, ended up providing the best possible educational opportunities for students (Max Utsler 2007).

Musser teaching one of the successful converged programs at Kansas says ‘Newspaper editors questioned me about why you are teaching multimedia stuff..... The same editors have come back to me and said we really like to have your kids. This is five years later’ (Musser, 2007).

Most of the journalism educators unanimously admit that it is the industry that finds itself in crisis than the journalism schools. Mike McKean, the creator of convergence sequence cautions the critics of J-education, ‘journalism education is as much in jeopardy as journalism profession is if we don’t adapt to new realities...We have to teach differently in order to model the kinds of behaviour that are expected in the profession’ (McKean, 2007). Convergence or divergence, the void between professionals and academicians continue to widen. It is true that in some ways the industry has expectations that really cannot be met (McKean, 2007). Kristie Bunton echoes the same view.
Does teaching convergence change the philosophy of journalism?

Kraeplin of SMU says ‘our faculty has a very solid sense of what we believe journalism is and it is definitely a service oriented theory, a first amendment and a very traditional notion of what journalism should be but that is carried out in terms of employing the technology. That does not change the goal of what journalism should be in terms of serving the public’. Most of the respondents agree that the basic philosophy of journalism, the tree expression and watchdog function, has not changed. ‘I hope we never lose that. I would not want to sacrifice that’ (watchdog function) for bells and bubbles’ (Holmes, 2007). The educators are of the view that the market place is driving journalism the way technology is going but that is not going to change the core philosophy of journalism. ‘In fact it has become the more important when virtually anybody with a digital camera, cell phone and computer can be their own news sources’ (Musser, 2007). Kraxberger says that convergence has not changed the philosophy of journalism. She is of the opinion that the most exciting part of convergence sequence is the more you work through differences among the different media the more you realize that the news value is very much the same.

Adams draws attention to the survey done by the American Society of Newspaper Editors Report that says that the public trust in journalism is only 15% and the credibility is in dumps. Further, blogging has brought in the element of public journalism and public participation in the news operation that was once the prerogative of journalists. Therefore, the school is more concerned with fundamentals of what it takes to go out and gather information and convey it in an accurate clear manner so that public feel like media somehow have contributed to the betterment of their lives as opposed to chasing ambulance stories (Adams, 2007). Kenney says that the basic philosophy of journalism education is teaching people how to tell stories.
Kraxberger, Lynda, Associate Professor, Convergence Faculty, Missouri School of Journalism, University of Missouri-Columbia, April 9, 2007, (Interview)

McKean Mike, Associate Professor and Chair, Convergence Faculty, Missouri School of Journalism, University of Missouri Columbia, March 13, 2007. (Interview)

Musser Rick, Director, Multimedia Newsroom, William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications, Dole Center, 1 000 Sunnyside Ave, Room 2051 Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7575, March 30,2007, (Interview)

Parks Michael, Director, School of Journalism, USC Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, April 17,2007. (Interview)

Parsons Paul, Dean, School of Communications, Elon University, Elon, North Carolina, March 19,2007. (Interview)

Perlmutter D. David, Ph.D, Professor and Associate Dean for Graduate Studies & Research, William Allen White School of Journalism & Mass Communications, University of Kansas Stauffer-Flint Hall,1435 Jayhawk Blvd.,Lawrence,KS 66045, March 27,2007(Interview)

Utsler, Max, Associate Professor, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Kansas, Lawrance, KS, March 30,2007,(Interview)