

Foreword to

**Pedagogy in Practice:  
Project-Based Learning in Media Policy and Governance**  
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**Sir John Daniel**

Chancellor

Acsenda School of Management, Vancouver, Canada

Media Education is an important topic, and this book will contribute significantly to its improvement. Not long ago, academics in traditional disciplines, not only in Humanities and Sciences but also in the Social Sciences, regarded Media Studies as a trivial subject - something of a joke. Media and Communications were 'soft' subjects for students who lacked the brains or the motivation to engage with a 'real' discipline.

Yet today, our rapidly evolving media environment has a massive impact on daily life, from the behaviour of individuals to the decisions of governments. Even in this fast-changing world, the speed of developments in media and communications technologies and their applications is breathtaking. In their lifetimes, the authors have seen the arrival of the 24/7 news cycle, the multiplication of television channels, the rise and decline of national and local newspapers, the explosion of social media (and a growing appreciation of their anti-social impact), the emergence of the platform-based economy, mobile telephony, and the advances of digitisation.

These developments have upended cultural, economic, and political assumptions about how media should be organised and regulated, leading to extensive fragmentation in the structure of policymaking in the media and communication industry. Policymaking is being conducted with little objective input from independent sources outside government and industry.

This book aims to enhance such sources by improving media education. It is focussed particularly on India but draws on global scholarship and reaches conclusions that have worldwide relevance. The study was made possible by a Ford Foundation grant to Jamia Millia Islamia University, which is renowned for its Centre for Culture Media and Governance. The development and offering of a master's degree in Media and Communication provided much of the material for this book. Designing this programme gave the authors the chance to bridge the gap between practice-based and theoretically informed courses, neither of which, alone, provides appropriate training for professionals in today's complex media environment. It also allowed them to highlight the centrality of governance in understanding the present media environment and ensure that the relationship between media and governance is understood in both instrumental and transactional terms.

Against this background the introductory chapter of the book gives a rounded account of the design and application of the strategy of project-based learning for media policy analysis in media studies and governance. It is followed by two chapters presenting the foundation for the book and describing the field of media education and pedagogies in practice. Four chapters then use the understanding of these basic concepts to engage with four cases of

media policy analysis. The two final chapters look to the future, making recommendations for the professional development of media educators and exploring pedagogy and technology in the future of media education.

The four cases of media policy analysis are described in admirable detail. Each of them ends with a hands-on project to make the bridge between theory and practice that is the over-riding aim of the book. The first course on 'Media and Politics' enumerates media diversity. The second, 'Introduction to Media Economics' explores market structure, ownership, and industry to deepen understanding of the working and organisation of media markets. A course on 'Policy Research and Evaluation' follows, which gives students tools for document analysis in media policy research and enhances their understanding of the process of policy formulation and analysis. The fourth case, on 'Regulation and Theory in Practice', maps shifts in policy regulation. In all four cases, the course objectives, the curriculum, and the hands-on projects are described in sufficient detail to be very helpful to those developing similar courses elsewhere.

This book is a powerful antidote to the view that media and communication are marginal topics for academic study. I write this foreword at a moment when, in many parts of the world, our shared reality is under assault. The authors insist throughout that democracy relies on evidence-based information. However, bad-faith actors and misguided believers of their lies have broken that societal norm. A major military conflict in Europe was initiated by Russia after months of lies, distortions of history and disinformation had misled a population whose access to independent media is savagely controlled.

In my own country, Canada, blockades of vehicles besieged the capital city, Ottawa, for three weeks, allegedly to protest the requirements in both Canada and the US for truck drivers crossing the border between the two countries to be vaccinated against covid-19. But, as columnist Andrew Coyne has argued in the *Globe & Mail* newspaper, the blockades were merely the symptom. The disease is disinformation. Large numbers of citizens can be made to believe almost anything, which is a huge challenge to our democracy - a challenge all the greater because we are reluctant to acknowledge it. If lots of people are upset about something we assume they must have reasons. We are taught that there are usually two sides to every question, which is mostly a good rule to follow. We should, however, avoid the mistake of thinking that any belief is worth discussing just because many hold it. There are not two sides to whether the earth is flat, even though millions think it is.

The Ottawa blockade movement and similar campaigns around the world bring together various counter-factual ideas. They are opposed to science, authority, expertise of all kinds: in a word knowledge. This is not, for Coyne, simply a set of individual deficiencies but rather a collective failure of socialisation. People have detached themselves not only from the behavioural norms of civil society, but from the whole transmission chain by which knowledge is spread among the population. Knowledge is a social process. We form our beliefs with the help of those around us, often through the communications media, thus absorbing the accumulated wisdom of society. We cannot individually re-litigate every elementary fact of human knowledge every day.

But this process is now breaking down. Instead of being transmitted vertically, knowledge is moving horizontally. Some protest movements are described as class wars, but today they are class wars of a particular kind, where the dividing line is not money or birth, but knowledge. This means that today's class warriors are not out to smash physical and financial capital assets as their predecessors once did. Since capital now resides in knowledge, they seek to undermine knowledge itself and its repositories - the universities, the courts, and the media. All these are not merely fallible but hostile enemies of the people, filled with lies - with facts they refuse to believe.

Such class warriors must then try to make sense of the world unaided: doing their own 'research' on the internet and sharing their findings with each other on social media. This makes them defenceless and vulnerable to bad actors seeking to manipulate them. This, writes Coyne, is the other and more disturbing discovery that we are making. Not merely how easily part of the population can be made to believe the most egregious lies, but how willing certain people are to tell those lies. These people know exactly what they are doing. They know that they are spreading falsehoods and validating lunacy, crossing lines previously considered uncrossable - but they no longer care.

How do we protect democracies against the widespread assault on our shared reality that Coyne describes? We cannot expect the media to wage the fight alone. But by showing the way to train media practitioners, owners, and scholars by blending theory and practice effectively in real-world projects, this book gives us better defences. A generation ago Media Studies was often considered a 'breeze' subject. Today, thanks to books like this, it can take centre stage in the vital project of constructing humane knowledge societies.

Sir John Daniel

### **Reference**

Coyne, Andrew (2022). Our Shared Reality is Under Assault, *Globe & Mail*, Toronto. February 23. p.11

### **About this contributor:**

Sir John Daniel is Chancellor of the Acsenda School of Management, Vancouver, Canada. His earlier career included the Vice-Chancellorship of the UK Open University and senior appointments at UNESCO and the Commonwealth of Learning.