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## UNIT 4 MASS MEDIA POLICIES

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### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

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As you are aware, mass media plays a significant role in the life of the people of any country. The main objectives of a nation's mass media organisations are to inform, educate, and entertain all sections of a nation's people. Mass media are also termed as the Fourth Estate of a democratic country, the other three pillars being: the Legislature or the Parliament; the Executive or the government's administrative machinery; and the Judiciary.

While the main functions of the legislature or parliament are to make, enact, legislate and pass laws, including rules and regulations for the administration and governance of the country; the primary responsibility of the executive is to implement these laws. The main job of the judiciary is to adjudicate the disputed issues and resolving diverse contentious conundrums that may arise between the parties within the government and among the common people. The most important job of a nation's mass media is to inform the people about its government's day-to-day functioning, and how it conducts its administrative business. In addition, the mass media are also charged with the work of educating the people to ensure that the government is performing that job effectively, to the satisfaction of the people. Besides, they are also expected to entertain the people seeking leisure through media. The mass media also perform the duty of being a watchdog on government, and public leaders to warn and alert them in case they happen to deviate from their requisite responsibilities and duties ascribed to them under the rules and regulations, and to be in tune with the constitutional provisions.

Keeping in view the important roles that mass media perform in a nation's running, it is pertinent to discuss the policies that govern the media systems and operations.

In this unit, we shall examine various issues related with mass media policies in India.

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## 4.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the meaning, role and objectives of media policy;
- describe the divergent views on media policies;
- outline the media policy scenario in India;
- describe the global perspectives on media policies;
- examine the obstacles and impediments in adopting media policies; and
- discuss the policy contours in the print media.

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## 4.2 MEANING OF MEDIA POLICIES

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Now, let us examine what is the meaning of ‘Policy’ and ‘Media Policy?’ The literal meaning of the word ‘Policy’ as stated by the Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary is ‘a definite course of action adopted for the sake of expediency, facility or a document embodying a contract. Or, a course of action adopted or pursued by a government, ruler, or political party or, action or procedure conforming to or considered with reference to the prudence or expediency.’ Ordinarily speaking, Policy denotes among other ‘elements, guidelines for action, and may take the form of:

- a) Declaration of goals and objectives;
- b) A declaration of courses of action;
- c) Declaration on societal values.

A policy may be general or specific, broad or narrow, simple or complex, public or private, written or unwritten, explicit or implicit, discretionary or detailed, and qualitative or quantitative. For example, editorial guidelines that govern foreign radio or television stations operating within the purview of Indian political and legal systems.

Therefore, ‘Media Policy’ means ‘formal as well as informal strategies, underpinned by specific interests, values and goals that shape the emergence of mechanisms designed to structure the direction and behaviour in a particular media environment.’ The policy tools in such circumstances include legal norms and rules that are deployed on the media (for instance ownership, licensing or the imposition of public remit obligation and tax exemptions). Generally speaking, media policies are broader than media regulations. However, according to the Sean MacBride Commission Report (1980), ‘Communication policies do not necessarily imply rigid, centralised planning, but may simply constitute a favourable framework for the coordination of activities, allowing flexibility and a wide choice of approaches to communication strategies.’

In addition, media policies will entail the government rules and regulations for encouraging media businesses to flourish and also levying strict controls and regulations on the media establishments, and their owners to operate their media units under the rigour of laws and rules of the land. This includes the terms and requirements to be abided by, to set up a newspaper, magazine, television or a radio station, or other media outlets. This may involve issuing licenses, according

sanctions for provision of facilities to the media entrepreneurs to buy equipment - transmitters, printing presses, television studios and camera equipment. Above all, allowing commercial use of these facilities as deemed crucial by media establishment owners to earn profits.

According to Robin Mansell and Mark Raboy, “Global media and communication policy must take into account ‘technological innovation, institutional dynamics, democratisation and processes favouring inclusiveness and plurality... must embrace formal mechanisms of the state — legislation, regulation, and prescriptive practices — and informal settings, offering opportunities for non-state actors to express their opinions about the ideals (e.g., affordable and universal access to networks or diverse content) to which the media should aspire.’”

In the Indian context, the objectives of media policies have been identified differently by different persons and different media organisations. Pran Chopra, former editor of a prominent English daily, *The Statesman*, says, “National media policy should help media fulfill the objective of providing access to information to the largest number of people, preserve their credibility and work as two-way channel”. By media policy, he adds, “I mean those decisions of the national government which might help the media fulfill functions that are appropriate for them in a democratic and pluralistic country like India. I consider four functions of the media to be the most important in the Indian context. First, the media should provide to the largest number of people easy access to information which is reliable, relevant, and abundant. Second, the media must provide reasonably free channels of expression for opinions which are well informed, responsible and adequately reflect all relevant points of view. Third, media should be a two-way channel; not only addressing messages to the audience but also giving the audience a forum for the expression of its concerns. The fourth overrides all these three functions: the media must preserve their credibility’.”

### **Why are media policies important?**

But, why should there be national media and communication policies, and why are media policies important for national government or, for that matter, for any national executive authority/organisation? In India, the central government has laid down and prescribed policies for almost all important matters: we have a fertiliser policy, we have a sugar policy, we have telecommunication policy, and we have a policy for newsprint. Why not a national media and communication policy?

Since mass media continuously, by their very nature, churn out information, day in day out, that deeply and comprehensively touch and impact our lives, and our relationship with the government, it is desirable that media policies make citizens’ life meaningful and productive. Massive developments, particularly in evolution of new media have taken rapid strides during the last few decades. These trends are widely discernible in government functioning and government-public ties and it will be risky to ignore these new trends in media technologies.

Besides, mass media have always been, ubiquitously influencing every area of human life all over the world. Mass media provide information to the government about what’s shaping people’s views, and how government and all its departments are affecting their lives. Such regular communication flow facilitates the government in formulating its own programmes and schemes of action in

multifarious areas of the nation’s developmental tasks for overall good of all levels of society. Media persons being in constant touch with the powers are able to keep their fingers on the pulse of the public thinking and help maintain live channels of feedback about what is happening in government circles and vice-versa.

Moreover, transnational mass media corporations are creating all pervasive impact of their operations and contents on the ideals, opinions, thought processes, values and lifestyles of the developing countries’ masses. The situation in India is peculiar - while the print media, mass-circulation daily newspapers especially, are in private sector, the government-owned and operated electronic media, radio and television, are fast losing audiences. The privately-owned cable and satellite electronic media (more than 800) are thronging and are speedily luring away the audience. Moreover, with the constitutional guarantee of freedom of press, the government cannot have any direct influence on the private media – print or electronic. Consequently, any type of government-structured media policy fails to deliver government-directed information. In such a scenario, media policies prepared or enforced in Indian environment cannot possibly have any controlled, promotional or propagandist flavour about government programmes and schemes. Keeping these factors in view, former Press Council Chairman, A.N. Sen, opined that it might not be ‘wise to seek to lay down firm national media policy, as the effective implementation of such policy may create more problems than it is likely to solve.’

**Check Your Progress: 1**

**Notes:** 1 Use the space below for your answer.

2 Compare your answers with those ones given at the end of this Unit.

1) What does ‘media policy’ mean?

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2) Why should a country have a media policy?

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**4.3 OBJECTIVES OF MEDIA POLICIES**

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We will now discuss the primary objectives of media policies. Referring to the importance of national media and communication policies, the MacBride Commission observed: “Communication be no longer regarded as an incidental service and its development left to chance... formulation of comprehensive communication policies linked to overall social, cultural, economic and interdisciplinary consultations.... Media should be involved in progress of democratising communication.”

Therefore, deliberating on the objectives of national media and communication policies, Government of India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting appointed a sectoral innovation council. It has suggested that the primary objectives of the media policies should be 'promoting, preserving, and protecting India as a free, independent, sovereign democratic, dynamic, progressive nation.' Mass media will have to fully support the nation's aspirations, freely, fully and creatively at community, regional, national and international levels, and help express, exchange, disseminate, information, knowledge, experiences and ideas for building India as a prosperous, just, equitable and secular nation. Also encourage setting up, managing, and supporting such operations, institutions for achieving this objective.

The government expects that media policies in India, should relate, cover and affect nation's all media of mass communication, such as radio, television, news agencies, films, Internet, video, theatre, outdoor media, advertising and public relations. Therefore, it is fully maintained that the country's mass media are public trust; the nation's independence and sovereignty are paramount. The nation's media should serve the deprived and disadvantaged sections.

The uncontested fact is that media policies should encourage media pluralism, universal access, cultural enrichment, developing all languages of the country, education and development, promotion of human rights and inculcate accountability. Thus, it is extremely important that national media and communication policies are conceived in the context of national realities, free expression of thought, and respect for individual and social rights.

### **Media Policies in India: An Overview**

In the Indian context, in March 1996, a sub-committee of the Consultative Committee of the government of India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting spelt out national media policy objectives as under: 'Laying down a broad framework of the relationship of the government with both national and international media, such as television, domestic and foreign and cable, video, internet, radio, newspaper, film, etc. In the Indian context, broad objectives of media and communication policies should be to help a citizen of the country to realise his or her potential best.' To sum up, the following main objectives of national media policy were proposed by the I&B ministry's sub-committee:

- Not to permit growth of monopoly in any media;
- to project the developmental needs and social, cultural and economic aspirations of the people, particularly in the rural areas who constitute bulk of our population;
- to strengthen, preserve and promote our democratic traditions, culture, and values, national integrations and scientific temper;
- to promote and strengthen sense of national integrity built on secularism, socio-cultural pluralism and linguistic diversities (unity in diversity);
- to facilitate greater access to information, education and entertainment in that order to all sections of the people;
- to enable development in the wake of challenges thrown up by the rapid technology;

- to provide wider choice to the people in matters of information and entertainment;
- to act as catalyst for social change; to broadly ensure that discrimination based on gender, religion, caste, language, etc., is not directly or indirectly practiced or promoted and portrayal of any action of the society is not done in a derogatory manner.

### **Indian Scenario**

It is essential to point out here that while the Republic Constitution of India guarantees freedom of speech and expression under the Article 19(1) (a), the national media scenario in the country these days scarcely inspires general confidence. Print media, particularly the daily press, are almost under the control of private sector. Though the Government of India has its own radio and television channels, several well-known private electronic media companies also individually own, control and successfully operate multi-lingual radio and television networks and are extremely popular with the audiences all over the country.

This may not be true in case of the government-owned and operated channels, such as, Akashvani, Doordarshan, Films Division; and telecommunication networks have been laid down in their individual operational charters by competent authorities.

However, the fact remains that all media outfits, irrespective of their ownership, generally abide by journalistic, standards, rules and norms laid down by Central Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and other national journalists and media ethics and standards bodies, such as the Press Council of India, Electronic Media Advisories Councils, Advertising Standards Council, Editors Guild of India, National Union of Journalists, Audit Bureau of Circulation, among others.

Perhaps the most remarkable characteristics of all these private media organisations is that while they operate and function mainly to earn profits, they do rarely abrogate the nation's general aspirations, and generally support people's valid and justified yearnings and aspirations. All responsible media organisations in the country have strongly backed common causes such as anti-rape laws, anti-terrorism measures, poverty alleviation programmes of the union government, and anti-corruption regulations enacted by the central and state governments.

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## **4.4 DIVERGENT VIEWS ON MEDIA POLICY**

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While it is generally accepted that media and communication policies play a crucial role in the life of a nation, there are immensely divergent views on the nature and content of such policies among Government, policy makers, media functionaries and media researchers. They hold diverse opinions on the desirability, and otherwise, of democratic nations' need and importance of framing and adopting such policies, their content, operational modes and limitations. There are strong views on both sides: in favour of and against adopting such policies. However, a vast majority doesn't favour prescribing, or laying down in black and white, rigid or fixed policies by democratic countries for the nation's mass media and communication agencies. We will examine some of the prominent views on both sides.

Although there are several schools of thought on the contents and types of media policies, the following two are known to be the most favoured ones: According to Leo Bogart, a noted American media person, media policies are of two distinct kinds: Regulated, and Unregulated.

#### **4.4.1 Regulated Media Policy**

In a society that cherishes free expression and freedom of press, prescribing or regulating mass media content would amount to ‘risking conjuring up images of thought control; while other democratic nations pursue media policies in a deliberate fashion without falling prey to Big Brother.’ He illustrates his view thus: Sweden provides newsprint subsidies that permit the survival of political minority press. Germany places strict limits on the amount of advertising broadcasters may inflict on viewers. Under any democratic rule, that would mean ‘government interference with business, and also the notion that the intrusion of the state into the exercise of market forces inevitably leads to the control of ideas.’ This type of control would be termed as ‘regulated media policy.’

#### **4.4.2 Unregulated Media Policy**

The Unregulated media policy, or free media play, according to Leo Bogart, on the other hand, would ‘encourage a variety of channels for expression, and discourage concentration of control; insure that the necessity of freely awarding franchises to use scarce public goods (like the frequency spectrum) does not result in financial exploitation of the public; facilitate an extensive and fair exchange of ideas, and that protect society, and specially children, from abuse; and subsidise forms of expression that enrich the national culture and intellectual resources, but that are not necessarily viable in the commercial marketplace.

Another view in this regard is that of a noted media researcher, Professor Ben Bagdikian of University of Southern California, USA, who opines, “Modern democracies need a choice of politics and ideas, and that choice requires access to truly diverse and competing sources of news, literature, entertainment and popular culture.”

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### **4.5 OBSTACLES IN ADOPTING MEDIA POLICIES**

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As you may be aware, the roles that free mass media play in open societies, such as India, USA, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Australia, etc., have generally received popular support from people and governments of those countries. But, quite often one hears that even many democratic governments also deny information and keep public in the dark. Late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had denied permission to the media for reporting UK-Argentina war on the issue of the ownership of Falkland Islands. Besides, there were several cases in India where public was not kept in loop about crucial national affairs, such as many defence equipment purchase deals by the Indian Air Force and Indian Army. In the past, this also happened in case of the Bofors gun deal, 2G scam, and the Coalgate fraudulent transactions, etc. Though mass media have investigated and researched innumerable crimes and frauds, crucial story leads were denied time and again by well known government leaders and functionaries.

In many controlled societies of West Asia, Latin America, Africa, and one-party governments of Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea, China and Russia, maintain a

strict vigil on media ownership, operations and performances. Frequent government interferences in most of these countries have often created interminable obstacles in media organisations' routine operations. In addition, numerous other hurdles created in media's free play include: denying or delaying grant of licensing to set up media equipment such as transmitting stations, studio services, channel broadcasts, printing plants etc. Authorities also very often maintain strict supervision on media persons' daily news reporting and investigating scams and feature stories. Also, reporters function under a constant fear of information denial by government agencies on the issues of public interest and public concern; questioning sources of information and news, and compelling journalists to disclose sources, fear of censoring stories, and jailing reporters.

It would be pertinent to mention here that government-owned and centrally-controlled departments conduct most of the print and electronic media operations; their media policies are also structured to serve the rulers, and governments in power, perhaps more than the public at large. Therefore, there rarely are rifts in media and government. But then, under such media scenario, the common people are kept in dark about the functioning of their government.

Thus, while many a media specialists support and ardently advocate adoption of free media and communication policies, the ground reality is that it's a hard path to tread on. There are practical and genuine difficulties in supporting free national media and communication policies in given national exigencies, or constitutional provisions.

We have seen the diverse pattern of media policies structured in some countries detailed above. It will therefore be noticed that every nation has its own rules and regulations under which the mass media units operate and function. Generally speaking, a nation's political, economic, religious and cultural considerations limit and demand the media to operate within those goals; media's own views are immaterial. These could also be deemed as the government's strict terms and conditions or requirements. But such conditions or restrictions could ultimately become impediments, dictated by a government in adoption of a particular pattern of the media and communication policies.

In addition to governmental settings, there are several known and unknown basic physical and infrastructural obstacles that could impede a smooth and easy ushering in of the desired media and communication policies in many developing countries. Robin Mansell and Marc Raboy have specifically underlined the following: technological innovations; institutional dynamics; democratisation; and, the processes favouring inclusiveness and plurality rather than exclusion and inequality. These impediments will stand in the path of adopting newer and modern media policies. In such situations, the state itself is a veritable impediment.

However, it is a fact that while democratic governments may encourage or allow a good measure of freedom to the media, one-party, one-person, or totalitarian governments may prescribe strict control or even censorship. China, Russia, and most of the West Asian countries are examples where mass media function under the whims and fancies of a few individuals. For, it is well known that free media can spell death-knell of many a powerful regime, ruthless dictatorships and untamed leaderships. Investigative news stories into their misdoing are known to have totally decimated any number of rulers and governments. History is a



witness that mass media writings have been responsible for the fall and undoing of the most powerful and the wealthy. Therefore, these fears impel the powers that be to exercise oppressive and suppressive restrictions on media's free working.

Thus, they can create and innovate insurmountable impediments in the adoption of independent media policies. There is a lot of substance that the MacBride Commission asserts: the success of communication, in both form and content, is inextricably linked with steps to make society itself less oppressive and unequal, more just and democratic. This fact should be highlighted rather than concealed. By now, most countries have realised these truisms.

**Check Your Progress 2**

**Notes:** 1 Use the space below for your answer.

2 Compare your answers with those ones given at the end of this Unit.

- 1) Briefly indicate what in your view should be the basis of forming media policy.

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- 2) What difficulties do you foresee in framing, adoption, and pursuing the media policy in a parliamentary democracy?

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**4.6 MEDIA POLICIES: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES**

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Noted media researchers, Denis McQuail and Jan Van Cuilenburg, have argued that global media policies have slowly evolved during the last sixty years or so. The authors have classified this evolutionary period in three phases:

Phase I- Emergence of media policies-from mid-nineteenth century until the start of the World War II;

Phase II- Public service media policies during 1945 and 1980; and

Phase III- New communication paradigm, 1980 onward.

During the early period, communication programmes were pursued by fits and starts until state's authority stepped in to regularise the tools and means of

communication that existed then. These tools and prominent means of media included: printing press, radio stations, telegraph and telephony.

However, when the state discovered that media could be manipulated against the authority of the state, it came forward to license, control, and regulate these. This was done ‘mainly to enhance’ the state’s interest.

MacBride Commission in 1976 recommended formulation of national and international communication policies in the context of national realities, free expression of thought and respect for individual and social rights. It was not an easy task. UNESCO experts suggested three basic requirements of a nation’s communication and media policies:

- i) Values that determine the structure of communication systems and guide their operations;
- ii) Systems of communication, their structures, and operation; and
- iii) Outputs of these systems and their impact on social functions.

Taking into consideration, a country’s particular and general current needs at global levels, these factors and essential elements are briefly elaborated as under:

- 1) Political and legal parameters constrict the country’s focus on politically and constitutionally sanctioned aspirations, and national goals. In the case of India, for example, the Preamble of India’s Constitution details these aspirations and goals.
- 2) Range and expanse of media available nationally will define its availability in terms of geography and social, language, religious and economic groupings of the population in the country.
- 3) Economics of the media will determine the type, size, and design of the media establishments, as dictated by the nation’s economic and commercial rules and regulations for conducting business in media — print, electronic or digital.

It is from these considerations that we will examine briefly the media policy logistics currently in operation in some countries:

**USA:** In the United States of America, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) created in 1934, regulates the mass media and telecommunications including radio, television, satellite, cable, telephone, and Internet. America’s FCC determines US media policies ‘in the era of rapid and dazzling technological change, FCC hands down the governments’ policies. The 1934 FCC law prohibits foreign companies to buy control of an American radio station, though Canadian companies can do that. But many US magazines, books and recording industries, film and television production studios and cable systems are now also foreign-owned. The FCC law now requires broadcast stations to operate in “public interest, convenience and necessity.”

Every newly established mass media enterprise in the U.S. has to seek a license to start work in its chosen area. The license is issued for eight years; the renewal of this license depends upon the number and kinds of objections and complaints against the media unit. Though there are several restrictions on starting new

media enterprises, including the newspaper— broadcast cross-ownership rule that prohibits common ownership of a full-service broadcast station and a daily newspaper in the same market. Identical rules apply on radio and television cross-ownerships.

**AUSTRALIA:** In Australia, one television station cannot operate in more than the 75% of the country's population or area. Not more than two licenses are allowed to one person in the same area; one proprietor cannot control a commercial television station, a radio station and a newspaper; foreigners are not permitted to control more than 20% of business in one licensed media organisation. There are some other cross-media ownership restrictions along with these few.

**U.K.:** The United Kingdom regulates media through the OFCOM, Office of Communications, created in 2003. The UK's ownership rules prescribe that in every local area, there must be three separate media companies for radio, television and newspapers; there is a 20% control limit on ownership in respect of television, radio and newspaper. Separate conditions apply on the television—radio areas covered; and on circulation in case of newspapers.

**FRANCE:** In France, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA) regulates the communications industry and also manages the issues of media ownership and concentration. There are three conditions on television industry in France: capital share, number of licenses and audience share, and the number of companies in each media industry: one person cannot own more than 49% of a national television channel, or 33% of a local channel, subject to certain conditions of audience share. For newspapers also; cross ownership is not allowed with more than two units of radio or television, subject to the number of audiences in the particular areas. Investment by any non-EU members is restricted to 20% share of the capital of a daily newspaper, television or radio station in the French language. Separate restrictions apply on political parties and other organisations for owning media units.

**MEXICO:** In Mexico, government is directly involved in regulating broadcast media, with some liberal conditions now prevailing in the country due to it being a close neighbour of the United States. Most media units in Mexico are commercial and privately-owned, including television and radio. The government issues licenses but Internet and newspapers are not licensed. The government does partially fund a 26-station commercial radio network. Mexican newspapers are guaranteed freedom from government regulations.

Media in Mexico function under the 1940 General Communication Law, updated by the Federal Radio and Television Law of 1960. Two Mexican agencies administer media: Communication and Transportation Ministry, and the Interior Ministry. These agencies, however, keep strict vigil on the contents of media advertising, objectionable programming on television and the criticism of national government.

**GHANA:** The national media policy of Ghana applies on the following mass communication media: print, broadcasting, and film. It also covers the following mass communication services: wire services, advertising, and public relations. A fundamental goal of the policy is that the media shall serve the well-being of all Ghanaians, especially the disadvantaged. The policy places the print,

broadcasting and film media as well as the news services into the working categories, i.e., public media, commercial media, and community media. It regards all the media and media services as public trust. It therefore holds that the public interest shall be paramount in the operations of all media, public, commercial and community.

The policy broadly sketches the main national and global influences and issues and principles that arise from the influences and developments. These include, in addition to the principles of media as a public trust, the freedom and independence of the media, media pluralism, and universal access. Issues include cultural impoverishment, marginalisation of local languages, education and development, technological competence, human resources, institutional capacity and public accountability. The definition of policy followed in Ghana: policy that's common to all the media and policy that's specific to individual media and services. Policy statements and implementation guidelines have been given in both the cases.

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## **4.7 EXPERTS' RECOMMENDATIONS IN MEDIA POLICIES**

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Though there are varied views on the quality of contents and ingredients essential for formulation of national media and communication policies, most experts are unanimous that sovereign and independent nations should frame and provide directions for the media and communication policies, and also prescribe reasonable guidelines for promoting and assisting the multifarious developmental national schemes and works. While mass media in majority of democratic countries enjoy fair measure of autonomy, in any case they have to operate within the framework of the nation's ideals, and its constitutional provisions.

But, as could be seen from the above discussion on the media policies, there are several schools of thought supporting, and opposing a particular set of national media and communication policies. One school of thought opines that the governmental authorities should lay down the nation's media policies that should be strictly adhered to by all media of mass communication. Whereas, the liberal school of thought argues that the governments should suggest some broad principles and parameters taking into consideration nation's constitution, international relations, national aspirations, national values and customs and traditions and cultural heritage. Within these broad guidelines, media should be free to adopt, self regulate and observe these national goals, and global codes of conduct in performing their day-to-day functions.

In addition, a vital view expressed by the MacBride Commission should also be taken note of while media policies are set up. The commission suggests a completely 'new development approach to communication policies. It asserts that 'communication policies must provide for the development of resources needed to satisfy the requirements of the various population sectors – children, young workers, students, old men and women. This should be the crux of media and communication policies in the twenty-first century. The commission also asserted that 'while the need for communication policies may be more or less universal, it should be noted that their formulation and content differ widely. This do not necessarily imply rigid, centralised planning, may simply constitute a favourable framework for the coordination of activities, allowing flexibility

and a wide choice of approaches. On the other hand, what they do call for is the allocation of public resources, decisions about general structures for communication activities, elimination of internal and external imbalances, and definition of priorities, which naturally vary from one country to another.’

Meanwhile, while framing media and communication policies, the commission felt that countries should make sure that these should:

- a) serve to marshal national resources;
- b) strengthen the coordination of existing or planned infrastructures;
- c) facilitate rational choices with regard to means;
- d) help to satisfy the needs of the most disadvantaged and to eliminate the most flagrant imbalances;
- e) emphasise universal and continuing education;
- f) help in strengthening cultural identity and national independence; and,
- g) enable all countries and all cultures to play a more prominent role on the international scene.

**Check Your Progress 3**

**Notes:** 1 Use the space below for your answer.

2 Compare your answers with those ones given at the end of this Unit.

- 1) What in your view should be the ingredients of an ideal media policy?

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- 2) What mechanism would you suggest to properly implement such policy?

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## 4.8 LET US SUM UP

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This unit deliberated on the role and significance of national media and communication policies in the life and daily affairs of the people of a country. How and why media policies were of great relevance to the Indian situation was also discussed. First, we defined the meaning of ‘policy’, and how do media policies impact people. We also detailed upon the objectives, and presented the divergent views of media experts, and the recommendation of the 1980 UNESCO-appointed Sean MacBride Commission. We discussed various hurdles in the adoption and implementation of such policies and the reasons why so many governments worldwide resist adopting and implementing open media policies in the true spirit.

Since media policies are deemed globally important, we looked at some of the elemental and important determining considerations of media policies as offered by media researchers. We also talked about the position of media policies' adoption in some of the important foreign countries, such as the U.S.A., U.K., Germany, Ghana, France, Mexico, etc., in this regard

Finally, we presented the policy contours for the media policies impacting print and electronic media in India. The question as to what will happen to media policies, what shape, content and affect these will exercise on the national and global politics in the near future though hard to forecast, and the current meteorically developing media and information technologies will surely hold the key.

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## 4.9 FURTHER READINGS

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Mohammadi, A. (2005). *International communication and globalization*. London: Sage Publications.

Raboy, M., & Landry, N. (2006). *Civil society, communication, and global governance*. New York: Peter Lang.

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## 4.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check Your Progress: 1

- 1) 'Media Policy' means formal as well as informal strategies, underpinned by specific interests, values and goals that shape the emergence of mechanisms designed to structure the direction and behaviour in a particular media environment.
- 2) Mass media provide information to the government about what's shaping people's views, and how government and all its departments are affecting their lives. Such regular communication flow facilitates the government in formulating its own programmes and schemes of action in multifarious areas of the nation's developmental tasks for overall good of all levels of society. Media persons being in constant touch with the powers, are able to keep their fingers on the pulse of the public thinking and help maintain live channels of feedback about what is happening in government circles and vice-versa.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Media policies should encourage media pluralism, universal access, cultural enrichment, developing all languages of the country, education and development, promotion of human rights and inculcate accountability. The national media and communication policies are conceived in the context

of national realities, free expression of thought, and respect for individual and social rights.

- 2) Government policies along with technological innovations; institutional dynamics; democratisation; and, the processes favouring inclusiveness and plurality rather than exclusion and inequality hinder the formation of beneficial media policies.

### **Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) Ideal media and communication policies should:
  - serve to marshal national resources;
  - strengthen the coordination of existing or planned infrastructures;
  - facilitate rational choices with regard to means;
  - help to satisfy the needs of the most disadvantaged and to eliminate the most flagrant imbalances;
  - emphasise universal and continuing education;
  - help in strengthening cultural identity and national independence; and,
  - enable all countries and all cultures to play a more prominent role on the international scene.
- 3) One school of thought opines that the governmental authorities should lay down the nation's media policies that should be strictly adhered to by all media of mass communication. Whereas, the liberal school of thought argues that the governments should suggest some broad principles and parameters taking into consideration nation's constitution, international relations, national aspirations, national values and customs and traditions and cultural heritage. Within these broad guidelines, media should be free to adopt, self regulate and observe these national goals, and global codes of conduct in performing their day-to-day functions.

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