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INTEGRATING GENERATIVE AI INTO THE MEDIA STUDIES CURRICULUM IN PAKISTAN: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract
Generative artificial intelligence (generative AI), such as ChatGPT and tools that create text, images, audio, and video, has spread quickly into classrooms and newsrooms. This paper asks how media studies programmes in Pakistan can use generative AI well. It uses primary policy data from the Higher Education Commission (HEC), mainly the 2025 revised curriculum for Media and Communication Studies and the 2026 decision to make an AI course compulsory, together with recent international research. The paper has three parts. First, it sets out the opportunities: faster drafting and editing, idea generation, translation and transcription in local languages, data analysis support, personalized feedback, and hands-on production practice. Second, it explains the challenges: made-up facts, bias, academic dishonesty, loss of basic skills, privacy risks, weak performance in Urdu and regional languages, unequal access, and the easy creation of deepfakes. Third, and most important, it draws out the pedagogical implications, that is, what this means for teaching and assessment. It argues that bans and detection software will not work, and that the better path is to redesign teaching so that students learn to use generative AI openly, critically, and ethically. The paper offers a simple three-tier assignment framework, a map of the shift from old to new teaching methods, and practical steps for teachers, departments, and HEC. The central message is that generative AI should support, not replace, the thinking and judgement that media education exists to build.

INTRODUCTION

In late 2022, a free chatbot called ChatGPT showed millions of people that a computer could write essays, summarize reports, translate text, and answer questions in plain language. Since then, generative AI has grown fast. Students now

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use it to brainstorm, draft, and edit. Teachers use it to prepare lessons and give feedback. Newsrooms use it to transcribe interviews, suggest headlines, and produce first drafts. The same tools can also create fake images, cloned voices, and false stories that look real. For media studies, a field that trains the people who will inform the public, this is both a gift and a threat (Pavlik, 2023).

Pakistan has decided to meet this moment through policy. In 2026, HEC made a three-credit-hour AI course compulsory in every undergraduate and postgraduate degree, describing AI as "a revolutionary force" of the twenty-first century (Geo News, 2026). A year earlier, HEC revised the curriculum for Media and Communication Studies and built AI and data skills into the core of the degree, including a mandatory course called "AI & Data Analytics in Media" (Higher Education Commission [HEC], 2025). These steps set the stage, but they do not answer the harder question: how should teachers actually use generative AI in the media classroom, day to day?

This paper focuses on that question. It is a companion to broader work on AI in the media curriculum, but it narrows the lens to generative AI and, above all, to teaching. It asks three things. What real opportunities does generative AI offer media education in Pakistan? What challenges and risks come with it? And what do the answers mean for how we teach and assess, that is, for pedagogy? The paper is written in simple language so that department heads and teachers can act on it. Its main argument is that the value of generative AI in media education depends far more on how we teach with it than on whether we allow it.

The approach is document-based and practical. The primary data come from HEC's own policy documents, chiefly the 2025 Media and Communication Studies curriculum and the 2026 compulsory-AI decision. The secondary data come from recent peer-reviewed research on generative AI in education and journalism, and from international guidance published between 2020 and 2026. The paper reads these sources, draws out what they mean for teaching, and turns them into tools that teachers can use at once, including a three-tier assignment framework and a map of the shift in teaching methods. Throughout, "generative AI" refers to tools that create content, while "AI" refers to the wider field of which it is a part.

2. What Generative AI Is, and Why Media Education Must Respond

It helps to be clear about terms. Artificial intelligence is a broad field. Generative AI is one part of it: systems that create new content, such as text, images, audio, computer code, and video, after learning patterns from very large sets of examples. Large language models like ChatGPT are the best-known type. Image and video generators are another. These tools are powerful because they are easy to use through plain conversation and because they are general; one tool can draft a press release, outline a documentary, translate a quote, and write a data query.

This general power is exactly why media education must respond. Media work is largely about producing and checking content, which is what generative AI does. A systematic review of generative AI in higher education found that students are drawn to these tools partly because they expect AI skills to matter for future jobs, while institutions worry most about assessment and integrity (Batista et al., 2024). Both sides of that finding apply strongly to media programmes. Students will use these tools whether or not we teach them; the choice for educators is between ignoring that reality and shaping it.

HEC's new curriculum already opens the door. The mandatory "AI & Data Analytics in Media" course asks students to "apply basic AI-driven tools for audience analysis, content personalization" and media production, and to

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explain the ethical and social effects of AI in media (HEC, 2025). The word "apply" matters: the policy expects hands-on use, not just theory. International bodies have given similar signals. UNESCO's guidance on generative AI in education calls for a human-centred, age-appropriate approach that keeps people in control of the technology (Miao & Holmes, 2023). The task now is to turn these broad signals into real classroom practice.

3. Opportunities

Used with care, generative AI can make media teaching richer and more practical. The opportunities fall into a few clear groups.

3.1 Faster drafting, editing, and idea work

Generative AI can help students move past the fear of the blank page. It can suggest angles for a story, outline a script, propose interview questions, and offer edits for clarity. This frees class time for the harder parts of media work, such as judgement, sourcing, and ethics. Research on journalism writing finds that AI support can speed up routine tasks and let students focus on higher-level thinking, as long as teachers guide its use (Fernández-Barrero et al., 2024).

3.2 Translation, transcription, and local-language work

Pakistani media work happens in Urdu and many regional languages. Generative AI can transcribe recorded interviews, draft translations, and produce subtitles, saving hours of manual effort. Even though these tools are weaker in Urdu than in English, they can still give students a useful first draft to correct, which is itself a strong learning exercise in checking and editing.

3.3 Data and production support

Media is becoming more data-driven. Generative AI can help students write simple code, clean a spreadsheet, explain a dataset, or suggest a chart, lowering the barrier to data journalism, which HEC now places in the core (HEC, 2025). On the production side, image, audio, and video tools let students prototype visuals, storyboards, and rough cuts quickly, so they can try more ideas within a single class.

3.4 Feedback, tutoring, and accessibility

Large classes make individual feedback hard. Generative AI can give students instant, low-stakes feedback on a draft before a teacher sees it, acting as a patient first reader. It can also support students with disabilities and those who find English difficult, by simplifying text, reading it aloud, or explaining a concept in another way. Pavlik (2023) argues that, handled thoughtfully, these tools can expand what a single teacher can offer each student.

3.5 Safe practice and newsroom simulation

Generative AI also lets students rehearse real media situations without real-world risk. A class can ask a tool to produce a biased report, a fake quote, or a misleading image, and then practise spotting and correcting it. Students can role-play a newsroom under deadline pressure, test how a story reads for different audiences, or simulate a crisis communication case. Because the stakes are low, students can make and fix mistakes safely, which is often the fastest way to learn. Used in this way, the tool's weaknesses, such as invented facts and bias, become teaching material rather than hidden dangers (Pavlik, 2023).

Table 1 lists common generative AI tools and how they can be used in media teaching, with a caution for each. Table 2 then sets opportunities beside their matching risks, to make clear that each benefit carries a cost that teaching must manage.

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Table 1. Generative AI tools and their uses in media teaching.

Tool type	Example use	Teaching use	Watch out for
Text (large language models)	Draft, summarize, translate, explain	Idea generation, editing practice, Urdu drafts to correct	Made-up facts; over-reliance
Transcription / speech	Turn interviews into text	Fast transcripts for news and documentary work	Errors in Urdu and accents
Image generation	Create or edit images	Storyboards, mock layouts, concept visuals	Fakes; copyright; bias
Audio / voice	Clean audio, clone or dub voices	Podcast practice, dubbing exercises	Voice cloning and deception
Video generation	Create or edit short clips	Prototyping visuals and promos	Deepfakes; misuse
Data / code help	Write queries, explain datasets	Entry point to data journalism	Wrong code; false confidence

Table 2. Opportunities and their matching risks in media education.

Area	Opportunity	Matching risk
Writing	Faster drafting and editing; less blank-page fear	Students stop learning to write and think for themselves
Language	Urdu and regional transcription and translation	Weak accuracy in local languages creates hidden errors
Production	Quick prototyping of images, audio, and video	Easy creation of deepfakes and fake media
Feedback	Instant, low-stakes feedback at scale	Students trust AI feedback over human judgement
Access	Help for weaker-English and disabled students	Unequal device and internet access widens gaps
Employability	Skills employers increasingly want	Training the tool instead of the professional

4. Challenges and Risks

The same features that make generative AI useful also make it risky in education. Media programmes face sharper versions of these risks because their graduates shape public knowledge.

4.1 Accuracy, bias, and "hallucination"

Generative AI can produce text that is fluent but wrong. It can invent facts, sources, and quotes, a problem often called "hallucination." It can also repeat the biases in its training data. For media students, who are taught that accuracy and fairness come first, this is dangerous. A tool that sounds confident while being wrong can teach bad habits unless students are trained to verify everything (Batista et al., 2024).

4.2 Academic integrity and the limits of detection

Generative AI makes it easy to hand in work a student did not really do. HEC has circulated a draft generative-AI policy that bans AI-generated assignments and demands disclosure, but observers note that this is hard to enforce because teachers cannot verify what students used, and no detection tool has been validated for Pakistani

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students (TechJuice, 2026). The wider research agrees that AI detectors are unreliable and that leaning on them is a weak strategy; the better response is to change how we assess (Kasneci et al., 2023). This challenge is so central that it drives the pedagogy section below.

4.3 Over-reliance and loss of core skills

If students let AI do the thinking, they may never build the skills that make a journalist or communicator valuable: shaping an argument, judging a source, and writing clearly. Studies of student AI use suggest that without training, students tend to copy and paste; with training, they shift toward editing, verifying, and directing the tool (Husnain et al., 2024). The risk is real, but it is also a teaching problem that good design can address.

4.4 Privacy, ethics, and local context

Students may paste private or sensitive material, such as a source's details, into tools whose data handling they do not understand. Media ethics and law require protecting sources and privacy (HEC, 2025), so this is a serious concern. There is also a context gap: most tools are built on English-language and Western data, so they may misread Pakistani names, politics, religion, and culture, and perform poorly in Urdu and regional languages.

4.5 Equity, cost, and the digital divide

The best AI tools often cost money, and many Pakistani students lack reliable devices, internet, and electricity. Studies of Pakistani journalism repeatedly name the digital divide and weak infrastructure as the biggest barriers (Husnain et al., 2024; Noor & Zafar, 2023). If some students can afford strong tools and others cannot, generative AI could deepen inequality between and within universities.

4.6 Deepfakes and disinformation

Perhaps the sharpest risk for media education is that generative AI makes convincing fakes cheap and fast. Pakistan already faces heavy disinformation pressures, and fake images, cloned voices, and AI-written falsehoods make this worse. The ability to detect and debunk synthetic media is now a basic professional skill, not an advanced one (Ioscote et al., 2024; Mayo-Cubero, 2026). A media graduate who cannot spot a deepfake is unprepared for today's newsroom.

5. Pedagogical Implications

The heart of this paper is here. Once we accept that students will use generative AI and that bans cannot be enforced, the real work is to redesign teaching and assessment so that AI supports learning rather than replacing it. Several shifts are needed.

5.1 From product to process

Traditional assessment grades a finished product, such as an essay or a news story. But a finished product is exactly what AI can fake. The fix is to grade the process as well: drafts, notes, interview recordings, source lists, and reflections. Process-based assessment is harder to fake and teaches better habits. HEC's required capstone and internship (HEC, 2025) are natural homes for process-based, portfolio-style assessment.

5.2 From hiding AI to disclosing and reflecting on it

Rather than ask students to hide their AI use, teachers should ask them to disclose it and reflect on it. A short "AI-use statement" attached to each assignment, explaining what tool was used, how, and what the student changed or rejected, turns a hidden risk into a learning moment. This matches UNESCO's human-centred guidance, which asks that people stay responsible for and in control of AI use (Miao & Holmes, 2023).

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5.3 A three-tier assignment framework

A practical way to manage AI use is to label each assignment by how much AI is allowed. Table 3 shows a simple three-tier framework that any media department can adopt. The point is not to ban or allow AI everywhere, but to be clear and deliberate, matching the rule to the skill being taught. Some skills, such as live reporting or basic news writing, are best learned AI-free; others, such as data work or production, are best learned with AI as a tool; and the most advanced learning comes from using AI and then critiquing it.

Table 3. A three-tier assignment framework for generative AI in media courses.

Tier	What students may do	Example media task	How it is graded
Tier 1: AI-free	No AI; work done in class or on the spot	Live reporting, basic news writing, on-camera work	Observed performance; in-class drafts
Tier 2: AI-assisted	AI allowed for set steps, with disclosure	Data journalism, translation, editing, research	Process plus product; AI-use statement
Tier 3: AI-led + critique	AI produces a draft; students critique and fix it	Edit an AI news draft; detect a deepfake; fact-check AI text	Quality of judgement, verification, and correction

5.4 Teaching prompt literacy and verification

Two new skills deserve direct teaching. The first is prompt literacy: how to ask a tool clearly, give it context, and refine its answers. The second, and more important, is verification: how to check an AI's claims against real sources, spot invented facts, and test an image or video for signs of manipulation. These skills sit at the top of widely used AI-literacy frameworks, which stress evaluating and creating, not just using (Long & Magerko, 2020; Ng et al., 2021). In a media programme, verification should be practised in almost every course, not taught once.

5.5 The changing role of the teacher

Generative AI changes what a teacher does. Less time is spent giving information that students can now get instantly, and more time is spent coaching judgement: helping students decide what to trust, what to keep, and what only a human should do. This is a bigger change for teachers than for students, and it cannot happen without support. UNESCO's framework for teachers exists precisely because teachers need to build their own AI competencies first (Miao & Cukurova, 2024). Research in Egypt and Spain likewise finds that faculty readiness, not student interest, is the main bottleneck (Okela, 2025; Mayo-Cubero, 2026). Table 4 summarizes the shift from traditional to generative-AI-integrated teaching.

Table 4. The shift from traditional to generative-AI-integrated media pedagogy.

Element	Traditional approach	Generative-AI-integrated approach
Assessment	Grade the finished product	Grade the process: drafts, notes, reflection, and product
AI use	Hidden and penalized	Disclosed, reflected on, and tiered by assignment
Teacher role	Main source of information	Coach of judgement, verification, and ethics

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Core skills	Writing and production	Writing, production, prompt literacy, and verification
Integrity	Policed with bans and detectors	Built through design, disclosure, and in-class work
Feedback	Only from the teacher, often late	AI for fast first feedback; teacher for judgement

5.6 A worked example

A short example shows how these ideas fit together. Suppose a reporting class must produce a 600-word news story on a local issue. Under the old model, students hand in a finished story, and the teacher cannot tell who wrote what. Under the new model, the task becomes a Tier 2 (AI-assisted) assignment. Students may use a tool to brainstorm angles and tidy their language, but they must do their own reporting, record at least two interviews, and keep their notes. They attach an AI-use statement saying what the tool did and what they changed. Part of the grade comes from a short in-class task where each student explains and defends one editing choice. In one assignment, students practise reporting, editing, disclosure, verification, and judgement, and the teacher can see the learning, not just the product.

5.7 Keeping human values at the centre

Finally, pedagogy must protect what media education is really for: truth, fairness, independence, and service to the public. Generative AI can help produce content, but it cannot take responsibility, weigh harm, or stand behind a story. These remain human duties. Teaching should make this explicit, so that students see AI as a tool they direct and answer for, not as a replacement for their own judgement (Pavlik, 2023; Wenger et al., 2025).

6. Recommendations for Implementation

The following steps turn these ideas into action. First, departments should write a short, clear generative-AI policy for students that uses the three-tier system in Table 3, rather than a blanket ban that cannot be enforced (TechJuice, 2026). Second, HEC and larger universities should run regular, practical workshops to build teachers' own AI skills, guided by UNESCO's teacher framework (Miao & Cukurova, 2024).

Third, departments should redesign assessment toward process and in-class work, and require an AI-use statement on major assignments. Fourth, verification and deepfake detection should be treated as core skills taught across the degree, given Pakistan's disinformation pressures (Ioscote et al., 2024). Fifth, to protect equity, universities should favour free or low-cost tools, provide shared lab access, and build Urdu-language teaching materials and local case studies, so that weaker campuses are not left behind (Noor & Zafar, 2023). Sixth, because the technology changes fast, departments should review their AI teaching every year with input from teachers and the media industry.

7. Conclusion

Generative AI is now part of media work and media education, in Pakistan and everywhere else. HEC's 2025 curriculum and 2026 compulsory-AI decision have opened the door, and the mandatory media AI course even asks students to apply AI tools in practice (HEC, 2025; Geo News, 2026). But policy only sets the stage. Whether generative AI helps or harms media education depends on teaching.

The opportunities are real: faster drafting, local-language support, data and production help, and feedback at scale. So are the risks: false facts, bias, dishonesty, lost skills, privacy harms, inequality, and deepfakes. The way to keep the good and limit the bad is not to ban the tools or chase them with detectors, but to redesign teaching,

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grading the process, asking students to disclose and reflect, tiering assignments by how much AI is allowed, and teaching verification as a core skill. Above all, media education must keep human judgement and values at the centre. Used this way, generative AI can make Pakistani media graduates more capable and more thoughtful. The work now belongs to teachers and departments, one course at a time.

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