

Yearbook 2016

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

EDITORS: MAGDA ABU-FADIL,
JORDI TORRENT AND ALTON GRIZZLE

The International Clearinghouse on
CHILDREN, YOUTH & MEDIA
at NORDICOM, University of Gothenburg



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فرص جديدة للتربية الإعلامية
والمعلوماتية في منطقة الشرق
الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا

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Preface

It is with great pleasure that this volume *Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa* is presented as Yearbook 2016 from the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, at Nordicom. The Yearbook is published in cooperation with UNESCO and UNAOC.

The aim of the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media is to increase awareness and knowledge about children, youth and media. Providing information and knowledge about new research findings and positive examples will hopefully offer a solid basis for relevant policy-making, contributions to a constructive public debate, and an enhancement of children's and young people's media literacy and media competence.

The rapid advances in information and communication technology, the opportunities that, for example, social media provide for citizens to engage, have transformed how and at what pace information is spread and circulated. In a time when almost everyone can be a publisher, the abundance of media content gives us increased opportunities to find information, but also disinformation. Hence, this development has also brought forward new challenges. The need for information and education about media and information literacy (MIL) has become more and more urgent. With MIL competencies, citizens may be empowered and able to fully exercise fundamental human rights such as freedom of information and freedom of expression, and be able to scrutinize media content with a critical eye.

Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa is the seventeenth Yearbook published by the Clearinghouse and fills a gap in the existing body of literature about the progress of media and information literacy work in different parts of the world. We believe it is of particular interest to shed light on a region, the MENA region, where young citizens' engagement with media has been in focus in news reporting all over the world in recent years and awareness of MIL competencies is gaining ground.

All books published by the Clearinghouse aim to stimulate further research on children, youth and media. Various groups of users are targeted, such as researchers, policy-makers, media professionals, voluntary organizations, teachers, students and interested individuals. It is our hope that this Yearbook will provide new insights to these targeted groups all over the globe.

Ingela Wadbring

Director at Nordicom, University of Gothenburg
and The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media

Foreword

This publication is one of the outcomes of a series of media and information literacy teacher training workshops that the UNAOC co-organized in 2013 and 2014 in Fez (Morocco) and in Cairo (Egypt).¹

From early on, the UNAOC recognized the paramount importance that MIL has in building peaceful societies, where individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds live side by side in harmony. As the UNAOC High Level-Group Report acknowledged:

The constant exposure of populations to media presents an educational challenge, which has increased in the electronic and digital age. Evaluating information sources requires skills and critical thinking and is an educational responsibility the importance of which is often underestimated. Separating fact from opinion, evaluating text and image for bias, as well as constructing and deconstructing a text based on principles of logic are teachable skills. Media literacy instruction is not widely recognized for its importance as an aspect of civic and peace education and therefore few instructional programs have been developed as part of basic modern education.

The Report recommends that

Media literacy programs should be implemented in schools, particularly at the secondary level, to help develop a discerning and critical approach to news coverage by media consumers and to promote media awareness and development of Internet literacy to combat misperceptions, prejudices and hate speech.²

Today, the need to implement media and information literacy in schools has only increased in extraordinary proportions, the pervasive power of social media has caught the attention not only of the publicists of consumer goods, but – tragically so – of the digital propaganda engines of groups spreading hate, polarization and extreme

violence across the world. Media and information literacy should be understood as a fundamental piece in the efforts towards building resilience to the narratives of violent extremists. Media and information literacy, not as censorship, but as a platform for the development of critical thinking skills, creating counter narratives to the speech that glorifies death and violence.

We hope this book will inspire and become a resource for educators in the Middle East and North Africa region looking for opportunities to bring to their classrooms elements of MIL education, with the hope that it will facilitate the development of better understanding among individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

We would like to thank the government of Spain for providing the funding for the above-mentioned workshops and facilitating this publication. We would also like to thank all the contributors of this book, particularly Magda Abu-Fadil for her double task by being the main editor in English and Arabic. Our gratitude as well goes to Alton Grizzle and UNESCO for joining forces with the UNAOC and making this book possible. A very special thank you to The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media at NORDICOM for their support in publishing this book and ensuring its global distribution.

Jordi Torrent

Project Manager
Media and Information Literacy Initiatives
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

Notes

1. These workshops tested and discussed with secondary level educators the opportunities and challenges for the implementation of UNESCO's "MIL Curriculum for Teachers." Please see <http://unesco.mil-for-teachers.unaoc.org>
2. Please see <http://www.unaoc.org/who-we-are/high-level-group>

I.

General Perspectives on
Media and Information Literacy in the MENA Region

1. Introduction

Magda Abu-Fadil

There has never been a more propitious time than the present to promote, teach, and engage with media and information literacy (MIL) in all its permutations across the Middle East/North Africa region, notably the Arab states that are undergoing tectonic changes. The very notion of MIL is nascent in most of the countries surveyed herein and the application of programs falling under the MIL umbrella varies from almost non-existent to relatively dynamic, albeit on a limited scale. That is due, in great measure, to the variety of educational systems across the Arab world, although there is also common ground in that the top-down imparting of information (not always knowledge) has been the rule rather than the exception and can still be seen in schools and universities. Critical thinking has yet to take root across the board. There are examples of educational institutions where it has been encouraged but various factors come into play in its application.

Religious and social traditions in the region have dictated norms where certain figures such as parents and teachers are treated with respect and high regard and whose views and knowledge should not be questioned. Religious figures sometimes also double as educators and are supposed to be held in high esteem, so their approach to media and information literacy is likely colored by their moralistic and more conservative slant on the topic.

Then there is the matter of the different educational systems that exist in the region. There are public, private, and religious schools (that could be either publicly funded or privately subsidized) and learning is acquired mostly in Arabic (the common language in the Arab countries), French (where the French colonized), and English (where the British Empire spread its influence). This has also been complemented by the influence of the American entry into the educational and religious panorama through missionaries establishing their foothold in several countries, as well as teaching in local and/or ethnic languages like Amazigh in North African states, Kurdish in some parts of the Middle

East, and Armenian in Lebanon and Syria where an Armenian minority has lived for over a century. All of these elements have become part of the intertwined, integrated and multimedia content, interaction, and audiences/producers in the region.

Since media and information literacy as a field of study is relatively new, it continues to be explored and built upon worldwide, and is still taking baby steps in the Middle East and North Africa region. Quite often media literacy and information literacy are used interchangeably. For those with more academic backgrounds, information literacy takes precedence, with media literacy acting as an appendage. Those more in tune with the media landscape tend to focus on that aspect of the literacy spectrum. Ideally, those who have worked in media and have been involved in academia and are familiar with the latter's structures, tend to better straddle those two cultures through their comprehension of what exists and what needs to be done, provided, they, too, keep up with the fast changing technologies and priorities.

The book's authors shed light on this promising landscape with the hope that their enterprising work will provide the building blocks on which to erect a solid, yet flexible, structure. The following lineup sheds light on different national, local and individual efforts to create more awareness, show the existing shortcomings, and expand the circle of stakeholders involved in MIL.

In his *Preliminary Comparative Analysis of Media and Information Literacy in the MENA Region*, UNESCO's Alton Grizzle explored what is transpiring in the Middle East and North Africa. Grizzle provided a roadmap to the region, with an overview of its demographics and information and media environments in light of the large number of young citizens in the Arab countries. He also stressed that the conceptualization of media and information literacy had direct bearing on how MIL programs were designed, implemented, and monitored and their impact on the lives of youth, and citizens in general. The author's underlying rationale is that MIL in the Arab states is treated as a means to achieve a broad spectrum of social, political, and economic development goals. "On the other hand, it is also an end in itself, insofar as MIL enables people to acquire personal competencies, self-awareness, creativity and self-actualization" he said.

Meanwhile in Lebanon, Jad Melki, an associate professor of media studies at the American University of Beirut, and Lubna Maaliki, the director of the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut (MDLAB), shed light on the academy, its activities, and its evolution. MDLAB was launched in 2013 by a group of Arab and international academics "with the explicit aim of advancing digital and media literacy education in the region through training Arab media educators and developing digital and media literacy curricula, not only in Arabic, but also grounded in Arabic cultures and concerns." The academy has since been convened in summers to host academics, graduate students and media practitioners from different Arab countries wishing to hone their digital skills and gain better understanding of how those skills tie in with an understanding of media and information literacy. According to Melki: "Media and digital literacy is media education for the masses. It is the silent revolution that can counter the ideologies of greed, hate and death and fight for generalizing and globalizing social justice and egalitarian

systems”. The authors conclude their chapter by stressing that digital and media literacy cannot be only available for the shrinking pool of students who can afford a university education: “We need to create more accessible online and offline courses and workshops in Arabic to reach a broader audience. What’s more, media and digital literacy needs to move into schools, all the way down to elementary teaching and beyond. We need to develop a critical mass of well-networked teachers, academics and researchers capable of taking digital and media literacy teaching and research to the next level.”

Jordi Torrent, Project Manager of Media and Information Literacy at the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), turned his attention to youth and digital media, with particular focus on workshops involving middle and high school educators in Egypt and Morocco. “The workshops were an opportunity for most of the educators to discuss for the first time the main concepts and building blocks of MIL pedagogy, understanding that traditional concepts of literacy (writing and reading print texts) are no longer enough skills for individuals to properly function as active participant citizens in contemporary societies,” he said. While digital technology skills are an important prerequisite to succeed in today’s world, Torrent stressed that media and information literacy was more ‘humanities’ than ‘technology.’ The educators in Cairo and Fez conducted a simple survey to gauge their students’ media habits and discovered that television was the young respondents’ favorite medium. Torrent wrote: “I put watching TV in quotes because youth today do not only watch TV (this is no longer the captive audience of the pre-Internet era), they consume other forms of media while watching TV.” That includes uploading photos and videos to social media, sending text messages, and using multi platforms for multi purposes.

A very difficult scenario is the one presented by Lucy Nuseibeh and Mohammed Abu Arqoub on the concept of MIL in the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, why it is composite, and why it has to be on empowerment. The authors said the concept of ‘information literacy’ was more prevalent than ‘media literacy.’ What is particularly striking is that Palestinians have had to live in those territories under the control of Jordan and Egypt at one point, then under Israeli military occupation, and under their own form of government that has been divided between pro-Palestine Liberation Organization’s (PLO, or Fateh in Arabic) supporters mostly on the West Bank of the Jordan River and annexed East Jerusalem, and the pro-Hamas advocates mostly in the Gaza Strip. The divisions have created their own set of challenges, not least of which are restrictions on Palestinians’ movements, individual and collective punishment of those opposing the occupation, shortages of basic needs such as water, a chaotic media scene where conflicting jurisdictions of ministries play out in the control, licensing, airwaves rentals and fees of the media, and, a diet of crack-downs on the media. Against this backdrop, Nuseibeh and Abu Arqoub explained that MIL is still a relatively new concept in Palestine, both in the education system and in civil society. “There is also growing realization of the need to raise the general level of awareness on how to interact and deal with the media,” they said. “These activities are being organized across all sectors of society: civil society, academia, government and

the private sector.” “But,” they added, “more than developments in technology, is the prolonged Arab-Israeli conflict that has had, and continues to have, the most impact on everything to do with media, including media literacy, for Palestinians.”

In tackling prospects, Dr. Abdul Ameer Al-Faisal noted that one might not be able to frame the information scene in Iraq, as it is evolving in a country that is swiftly turning to expanded use of information at all levels via unrestrained Internet access. “Iraq has kept pace with the current boom in terms of the evolution and proliferation of information into which individuals and organizations tap, to promote advanced technological developments to monitor, collect, process, store, retrieve, transfer and use information via computers, microfilm techniques, and telecommunications, to name a few, and their coupling and association to form what we call ‘information technology,’” he said. There is more focus on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) than on an actual MIL mechanism, despite the emergence of a national information policy in Iraq. Dr. Al-Faisal concentrated on the role of libraries in Iraq as they have evolved over the years and technology is the predominant interest in this particular MIL equation. “In a nutshell, Iraq’s information technology footprint began in 2003, and has witnessed quantum leaps,” he wrote. “It has managed to make clear changes in the IT’s general performance.”

On the other side of the Arab world, Dr. Redouane Boujemaa, a research professor at the University of Algiers, addressed the issue of media literacy in Algeria and its correlation with various historical developments the educational system has been undergoing since the country’s independence. Boujemaa acknowledged that Algeria had suffered from high illiteracy rates due to colonialism and its negative consequences and that at independence in 1962 the rate stood at 86 per cent. Since then and the country had not yet achieved the goal of integrating media and communication into the education system by using ICTs. Algeria has also gone through a transition of self-definition, where the educated few had functioned in French, the language of the former colonists, and where the need to recognize Arab and African roots required a re-examination of the educational system, and, by extension, the media landscape. In this chapter, the author zeroed in on the introduction and promotion of ICTs, as opposed to MIL since the concept has yet to take hold in Algeria and where teachers and students require extensive training and immersion into its multiple strata. “However, the introduction of technologies alone will not have a significant impact unless it is associated with new educational practices along with other educational activities and a new dynamic; a dynamic which will pave the way for a collective knowledge-building process,” he concluded.

Abdelhamid Nfissi, from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Fez, Morocco and Drissia Chouit from Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Morocco, examine the state of the art of media and information literacy in their country. They study how MIL was introduced in Morocco, the actions undertaken to promote it to better prepare citizens for the information age, and the main action plans and initiatives which will be undertaken in the future. According to Nfissi and Chouit, “media and information literacy is still in its infancy in Morocco. It is not included in the educational system.

It is not on the agenda of activists, policy makers and educators. People are not even informed about it to consider it. For many Moroccans, ‘literacy’ means the ability to read, write, and interpret printed messages.” Media literacy was incorporated into Moroccan media studies courses, they wrote, but information literacy per se had not been integrated into university curricula. So there was a missing component. “After teaching ML and IL separately in semester 2, the course on Studies in Media and Cyber Culture taught in semester 4 involved the combination of ML and IL since it included both ‘studies in media’ and ‘cyber-culture,’” they said. Since MIL was not on anyone’s radar screen in Morocco, and believing strongly that it is important for youth, parents and every citizen, they decided to organize an international conference on the topic to make it known to Moroccan academics and to raise individuals’ awareness of its importance in their lives. They have since engaged in other activities, detailed in their chapter, and are well on their way to developing a more rooted understanding and implementation of MIL.

Egypt, at the heart of the Arab countries, also boasts the largest population in the region, with 95 percent of some 85 million Egyptians occupying a mere three percent of the landmass. Urban congestion in most cities alongside an overloaded free public school system with woefully underpaid teachers, an over-priced private school network beyond the reach of average Egyptians, and a mix of private and state-controlled print, broadcast and online media marching to different drummers need qualified media interpreters to ensure citizens comprehend what they’re consuming. Samy Tayie, a department head at Cairo University’s Faculty of Mass Communication, admits his country is a bit of a latecomer to the world of media and information literacy despite the proliferation of news and entertainment outlets following transformative years after recent revolutions triggered by the ‘Arab Spring’ in 2010 and several changes of governments in Egypt. Tayie said his faculty had introduced a course on media and information literacy for undergraduate students in 2005 and that other public and private universities had followed suit. Moreover, his efforts included workshops, conferences and the creation of a kit aimed at making available resources for university professors to use in their teaching of MIL courses at different public and private institutions. But stumbling blocks abounded, as he explained: “The main challenge to media and information literacy in Egypt lies with policy makers. There is no policy on the matter. Some scholars and experts tried to include representatives from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education in most of these activities but the problems and obstacles usually came from policy makers and those working at the Ministry of Education.”

Yasar Durra of the Jordan Media Institute (JMI) admitted he first learned of MIL at a UNESCO conference in 2012 and that prior to that it was a series of fragmented values and goals taught within different media training curricula that did not include young school children. “In the past three years, however, the term has become part of the jargon used by staff and students at JMI and has assumed ever-greater momentum as students are regularly invited to take part in MIL workshops,” he said. Durra said “that the most extensive and long-term MIL-focused training in Jordan took place in

2006 as part of the Newspapers in Education NIE Development Project, an initiative by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA).” While schools in urban areas were more fortunate to receive the attention of, and funds from, policymakers, those in remote regions of Jordan, where they have had to host a steady flow of Syrian refugees escaping that war-torn country, lack the resources needed to help make the country more media and information literate. “In the present unsettled climate in the region where blame is laid on the failure of education systems to address the issues of pluralism, freedom of expression, and the right to information, it is imperative for the Ministry of Education to integrate MIL in the national curriculum as a matter of priority,” said Durra who recommended an action plan to put Jordan on the international MIL map.

In the Sultanate of Oman, Dr. Naifa Eid Saleem, an assistant professor in the Department of Information Studies, found that the development of ICTs and the huge flow of information has made it easier for civil society actors to share information with each other, which the country’s leader, Sultan Qaboos, had addressed in November 2008. Referring to the role of the Omani Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, in addition to an IT body whose aim is to turn the Sultanate into a sustainable knowledge society through ICTs, Saleem said these entities’ goals were to provide citizens and residents with accurate information in addition to helping people process information and develop critical and analytical thinking. She also called for the introduction of a curriculum on media and information literacy in schools, urging the Ministry of Education to implement it, given the ministry’s experience with learning resource centers that are the equivalent of school libraries. “If the content of the proposed ‘media and information literacy’ course does not correspond with the Ministry of Education’s specific guidelines and benchmarks, the Learning Resources Center is expected to provide the course as it is directly linked to the media and information programs following approval by the Ministry,” she wrote. Saleem further offered alternatives to those centers, saying that if they did not provide the MIL course, private and public universities should incorporate it within their education plans and make it a requirement for all students.

Magda Abu-Fadil, a veteran international journalist, academic and blogger, was an early adopter and proponent of the concepts of media literacy. In 1999, as the coordinator of a journalism program at a university in Lebanon, she participated with her students in a virtual media exchange project with a professor and students from the University of Missouri’s School of Journalism. Through it, they were all part of an experiment in cross-cultural communication, values, newsworthiness, the use of nascent technology (notably the Internet in Lebanon), and finding out what really mattered in a media environment to people on two different continents. As a multilingual foreign correspondent who covered news from different capitals around the world, Abu-Fadil was also too well aware of the impact media had on audiences and was particularly sensitized to their often harmful effects on children and young people. With the proliferation of online, digital and social media across various platforms, Abu-Fadil became a strong advocate

of media ethics and the need to create awareness about deconstructing messages, processes, outcomes and repercussions of all the interactivity, integration, convergence, and the overwhelming flow of communications that keeps morphing into new shapes at incredible speeds. “Subliminal messages tucked into programs may influence purchasing patterns. Conflict-filled episodes or video games could incite violence and lead to aggressive behavior. Even innocuous-seeming serials could traumatize young people into confusing fantasy with reality. All with the end result that an unsophisticated approach to the consumption of news, entertainment, and even the more popular ‘edutainment’ may contribute to dysfunctional societies and individuals, or, at the very least, confusion about how to react to the cacophony of messages overloading our sensory circuits,” she wrote. Abu-Fadil has since been writing extensively on the subject, speaking at conferences on the need to adopt national MIL programs and training educators, students and media practitioners on the pros and cons of the media.

Carmilla Floyd and Gabriella Thinz present a refreshing hands-on approach in their chapter on empowering children and youth in Tunisia by fusing media and education. They took on the task of training students and teachers on how media and information literacy can help them find meaning in their lives, particularly in post-revolution Tunisia, following the self-immolation of street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi in December 2010 that marked what the media termed the ‘Arab Spring.’ Floyd and Thinz wrote:

Picture this: A regime that unscrupulously controlled the media was forced to give up power. Before the revolution, censorship was commonplace. Journalists were often subjected to harassment. ¹ For the first time, during the revolution Tunisian journalists went out on the streets and reported live – letting the public voice their opinion without any censorship.

With the fall of the regime, the Ministry of Information, a once-feared instrument of media control, was abolished. Suddenly there was free speech. An explosion of new radio stations, TV channels and online news sites followed, while state broadcasters re-organized, and an endless stream of information and news was shared through online news services and social networks.

Enter the authors, who between them have extensive experience working with young people in Sweden and elsewhere, to provide capacity building through a series of workshops for youngsters, educators and media producers in different parts of the country aimed at helping children and young people become active and have a voice in matters of human rights and a democratic Tunisia. “To achieve this, we believe that adults also need to become media and information literate – teachers, youth leaders and parents. In addition we were determined to reach out to those who produce the media: journalists, editors, newsroom managers, TV producers and bloggers,” they wrote.

Some Arab countries are making fast inroads and aiming to ascend to the next levels. These countries have the economic resources and/or a certain modicum of freedom, where creativity and vision are encouraged. In the United Arab Emirates, the Dubai

Foundation for Women and Children has been active in calling for the inclusion of media literacy in school curricula in a bid to mitigate the negative impact of television and online content on young people and lessen the effects of violence that various media can promote. The Mohammad Bin Rashid Program for Smart Learning – named after the UAE's vice president and ruler of Dubai – launched in 2012 has also been pro-active in promoting the latest high tech tools and equipping classrooms with digital tablets to replace traditional textbooks, cut down on paper use, and foster awareness on the need to protect the environment. A young Emirati illustrator has created an iPad book app for children. The Smart Learning Program has helped school students enjoy, and become more involved in, the learning process; better interact with their teachers and classmates in class and wherever they are thanks to high speed mobile connectivity; and, develop their curiosity to search for information via the Internet and other online channels. It is part of the Emirates' *Vision 2021* initiative. The program was awarded a prize for capacity building projects at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva, Switzerland in 2014. The *twofour54* media and entertainment hub in Abu Dhabi, a tax-free media zone that provides television and film services, is also home to a creative lab and training center available to students and professionals. In 2014 it began collaborating with major Arab media and entertainment organizations to support young media producers, gaming developers and platforms that conform to the country's norms and traditions.

In Saudi Arabia, progress on media and information literacy has been slower. Despite tremendous wealth, the country's education system has been more traditional and its teachers less attuned to the digital knowledge society. Smart learning has taken a back seat to the more classical methodologies but the desert kingdom is pressing ahead trying to catch up with other countries in the region. Distance learning is catching on and teachers are encouraged to adopt it as one of several teaching/learning methods. While command of foreign languages has proven a key to better understanding and interaction with media and information, the Saudi public educational system has failed to produce up-to-date English language curricula as well as qualified instructors who use creative teaching methods, as opposed to subjecting their charges to learning by rote. But all is not lost. There have been efforts underway to turn the tide, if only incrementally, in accordance with religious and cultural traditions. Ultimately, there's much ground to cover and MIL in the MENA region remains a work in progress.

2. Preliminary Comparative Analysis of Media and Information Literacy in the MENA Region

Alton Grizzle

Media and information literacy (MIL) is coming of age. It should no longer be overlooked by governments and policy makers of the world given the emerging huge body of academic literature supporting the relevance of MIL. MIL is a necessary subject of learning, a way of learning and self-awareness, self-guided socialization or self-regulation. It is a tool that can be applied to all forms of development issues and contexts. Finally, MIL is a set of 21st Century competencies that can ultimately lead to citizens' empowerment, self-expression and intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

In marked similarity, the UNESCO *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006*, drawing on years of work of many academic scholars, proposes four ways to understand literacy and has evolved based on disciplinary traditions. First, literacy is considered a separate set of tangible skills such as reading, writing and numeracy, that is independent of context and that extends to skills to access information and knowledge. Second, literacy is viewed as reliant on context, going beyond acquisition of skills to bringing to the fore the use and application of these skills to real-life situations. Third, literacy is seen as a learning process. As persons learn, they gradually and actively become literate. In this sense literacy is both a means and an end. Finally, literacy is considered as 'text' or 'subject matter' – located in communication, politics and power that can take on multiple forms. Written language is one form of text through which learning is communicated. But there are other texts, such as oral communication, media (radio, television, and newspaper), technological, art and artifacts. Media and technology are associated with all four traditions of literacy. In the 21st Century, more than in any other period of history, learning, socialization, cultural exchange, political, and social activism are being mediated by media, technology, the Internet and the flood of information they bring. Media and information literacy can empower all citizens to understand what new dimensions media and technology bring to their experiences. In the 21st Century more than ever before, citizens are learning more about themselves

and the world around them outside the classroom (Watt, 2012; See also Macedo, 2007¹). Media and information literacy is that bridge between learning in the classroom and learning that takes place outside of the classroom enabling both to enrich each other. This calls for new pedagogy of learning and a greater focus on non-traditional literacy competencies. MIL is as relevant to the Middle East and North Africa as it is to every other region of the world.

Abu-Fadil (2007) wrote, “Media literacy and awareness have long been neglected in the Arab world... Media literacy as a subject is rarely taught in schools in any organized way and is often couched in vague terminologies within university courses that fail to address the *raison d'être* of mass communication tools...” (p.1). Six years later, etching Lebanon and Qatar as case studies, she acknowledged that there is slow progress with respect to the existence and development of media literacy programs in the Middle East and North Africa and that “critical thinking is not embedded in the education systems of many of the countries [though many experts would agree that this phenomenon is common in all regions of the world]...” but many inventive educators and other actors are implementing projects that enable students to think critically and to explore multi-modal learning through multiple media platforms (Abu-Fadil, 2013). Watt (2012) cited Mihailidis (2009, p. 65) as arguing, “it is not enough to focus on media content alone, but also on citizens as the nexus of the information world.”

The articulation of MIL as an area that deserves the attention of the development community and national governments, the depth of awareness and implementation of MIL initiatives vary from region to region. The depth and breadth of what has changed in media and information literacy awareness and implementation in the Middle East/North Africa since the first international meeting on media literacy in the region – the Riyadh International Conference on Media Education in March 2007 – is the subject of this chapter, and indeed this entire book. I first give a sketch of the media and information environment in the region. I then navigate a basic framework for a preliminary critical comparative analysis of MIL in the region using four questions:

- How do experts in the MENA region conceptualize MIL?
- What is the underlying rationale for MIL in the Arab States?
- Are these countries harmonizing the field?
- Do they have national policies and strategies on MIL?

Overview – demographics, information and media environments

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA), often erroneously used interchangeably with the Arab States, covers the region that includes countries from northern and north-eastern Africa and southwest Asia². The Middle East includes Iran and Turkey, two non-Arab countries. The 22 countries in the MENA, according to the League of Arab States, in alphabetical order are Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt,

Table 1. Media Characteristics in the MENA Countries

Country	Population ⁸	Proportion of population on the Internet (%) ⁹	Number of Libraries ⁹	Radio stations	Radio stations, television stations ¹⁰ and newspapers		Number of Newspaper-titles ¹²
					Proportion of households with radios (%) ¹¹	Proportion of households with television sets (%)	
Algeria	39 667 000	17	760	34	60 (2009)	46	17
Bahrain	1 377 000	97	209	5	32 (2013)	4	6
Comoros	788 000	7	3	6	1
Djibouti	888 000	9	4	3	50 (2004)	1	...
Egypt	91 508 000	48	11 048	65	20 (2013)	64	...
Iraq	36 423 000	8	11 395	55	...	28	...
Jordan	7 595 000	45	5 687	29	...	4	4
Kuwait	3 892 000	87	132	18	...	13	8
Lebanon	5 851 000	67	642	54	...	12	15
Libya	6 278 000	22	41	22	...	12	4
Mauritania	4 068 000	11	38	16	...	1	3
Morocco	34 378 000	60	735	15	67 (2009)	8	24
Oman	4 491 000	66	1 121	14	36 (2010)	13	6
Qatar	2 235 000	97	208	12	25 (2013)	1	5
Saudi Arabia	31 540 000	59	5 317	76	...	117	12
Somalia	10 787 000	2	4	12	...	4	...
State of Palestine	4 668 000	1	3	...	3
Sudan	40 235 000	24	4 851	14	...	4	22
Syria	18 502 000	27	1 760	55	...	44	...
Tunisia	11 254 000	45	947	47	67 (2012)	26	10
United Arab Emirates	9 157 000	93	1 364	23	53 (2012)	15	55
Yemen	26 832 000	19	12	9	...	3	6

Note: Readers should use this table carefully when making comparison given the unavailability of complete data from a single source and in some cases data are not available for the same set of dates.

Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the State of Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. This configuration varies from source to source. For instance, the World Bank references a configuration that consists of 14 countries including Israel³. The United Nations Human Rights/Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights lists 19 countries as part of the MENA region⁴. This configuration also includes Israel but excludes the Comoros, Somalia and Sudan and Djibouti.

The region has an estimated population of 416,000,000⁵. Approximately 20 per cent of the population of the MENA region, one in five people, are youth between the ages of 15 and 24 (Assaad and Roudi-Fahimi, 2007). The number of youth in the region stood at 95 million in 2005. (ibid) The youth population is almost evenly distributed across Arab countries ranging from 15 per cent to 23 per cent with only four countries having less than 18 per cent of youth as a percentage of their population. “The extent to which this large group of young people will become healthy and productive members of their societies depends on how well governments and civil societies invest in social, economic, and political institutions that meet the current needs of young people.” (ibid)

Thirty-seven percent of the MENA population have access to the Internet⁶. At the time of this writing, the author could not find sources providing the number of archives in the region as a whole or by country. Public, academic and special libraries stood at over 47,364. Radio stations, television stations and newspapers stood at 584, 420 and 201, respectively in MENA (See details and sources in Table 1).

Conceptualization of MIL by experts in the MENA region

Those who follow my writings on information literacy, media literacy, digital literacy or media and information literacy would know that I go through pains to stress the necessity of a coherent approach, focusing on key commonalities and interrelated competencies, rather than a disjointed definitional approach. This is not to belabor a point but, the conceptualization of media and information literacy has direct bearing on how MIL programs are designed, implemented, monitored and ultimately their impact on the lives of youth, and citizens in general. In a September 2015 meeting with Dr. Fahad Sultan Alsultan, Deputy Secretary-General, King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue, he reminded me of the transformative potential of creating knowledge in a local language (in this case – Arabic) as opposed to simply translating knowledge or concepts from one language to another. Dr Alsultan is a senior representative from Saudi Arabia, which is one of the lead partners and supporters of UNESCO’s media and information literacy thrust in MENA. He was right. He also acknowledged that when translation of knowledge from one language to another takes place adaptation should be in the mix. By saying this he recognized that to create new knowledge, it is often necessary to borrow and adapt from other sources and languages. As Jenkins (Jenkins et al., 2009: 32) posits, “most of the classics we teach in the schools are themselves the product of appropriation and transformation, or what we would call sampling and remixing.” As

Professor Redouane Boudjema said in his chapter when reporting on ICTs and media literacy in Algeria, “Traditionally, knowledge and culture were at the core of several philosophical debates as well as various social, political and ideological conflicts. The current education systems and institutions were no exception. Since the second decade of the last century, mass communication has played at least a pivotal role in either overestimating or underestimating the importance of education.” All the authors of this book employed that approach here or in other articles written by them; they directly or indirectly sampled and remixed concepts of information literacy, media literacy, digital literacy or media and information literacy in their discourses.

Jad Melki and Lubna Maaliki, Lebanon: Here and in other academic writings a strong leaning to critical digital competencies, ‘digital media literacy.’ (See Melki, 2013)

Jordi Torrent, Morocco and Egypt: Presents MIL as a composite concept based on the UNESCO model.

Lucy Nusseibeh and Mohammed Abu Arqoub, Palestine: In this chapter, the authors focus primarily on media literacy. They propose that media literacy is teaching about how media work as well as how citizens can effectively engage with media. It is both protective and proactive. Protective in connection with enabling people to “analyze media content and read between the lines, understand the messages behind the images, and therefore become less vulnerable” and proactive to the extent that people are empowered to “to work creatively – not as technicians, but again in regard to content, so they can produce their own media messages.” In their conceptualization, Internet literacy, citizen journalism as well as Master of Arts and Bachelor of Arts degrees in media are connected to media literacy.

Abdul Ameer Al-Faisal, Iraq: Abdul Ameer Al-Faisal in his chapter focused on information and an understanding of how information is created and disseminated as being central to development in Iraq. The author used the word information 41 times and information technology 9 times. He mentioned computer literacy only once in referring to the objectives of the National Information Technology Strategy in Iraq. While he highlighted the revolutionary impact that new technologies have had on media and freedom of expression in Iraq and the centrality of libraries and documentation centres – media literacy, information or MIL as concepts was not mentioned though evidently implicit in his arguments.

Redouane Boudjema, Algeria: The very title of this chapter suggests a particular focus. The author juxtaposes ICTs in education, media literacy and education and communication. He defines media literacy as “the process of optimally using means of communication in order to meet the goals stated in the state’s education and communication policy. Another definition is that the process consists of teaching and training students as well as teachers on how to deal with media content selectively and consciously in order to avoid their negative impact, leading to an awareness in dealing with media messages and images.”

Abdelhamid Nfissi and Drissia Chouit, Morocco: These authors note, “the potentials of media and information cannot be realized if people lack the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media content.” They also posit that media and information literacy is “providing individuals with the skills and tools to critically evaluate, process and interpret the content of messages, sounds and powerful images of our multimedia culture.” As they see it, information literacy and media literacy are natural transitions from basic literacy given the proliferation of media and technology. In their analysis, information literacy is being able to assess authority, credibility, and reliability of information, identify information needs in cyberspace, how to visit the relevant websites and to use ICTs effectively. Based on their experiences in teaching media studies and cyber culture in the Department of English, they see the necessity for the combination of information literacy and media literacy as media and information literacy (see also Nfissi, 2014 and Nfissi, 2013).

Samy Tayie, Egypt: While no particular reference is made to conceptualization of MIL in this chapter, in describing MIL activities in Egypt, the author alludes to the need for young people to understand media and to effectively use social media.

Yasar Durra, Jordan: The author made no reference to what MIL entails. Having first encountered the concept through the UNESCO MIL Curriculum, the concept quickly became central to the work of the Jordan Media Institute. He thus aptly used this umbrella concept to describe a series of activities related to youth engagement in political accountability, storytelling, simulation exercises for youth as a platform for opinion and expression, news in education, and, “mentoring and training journalists, journalism students and representatives of civil society organizations on the power of data to help make this dialogue more effective and informed.”

Naifa Eid Saleem, Oman: Dr. Saleem, based on her background in information sciences, places emphasis on the data and information aspect of MIL. She writes that there is a need to “provide citizens with the right skills and information or the so-called ‘Media and Information Culture’ covering knowledge as well as attitudes. Access to knowledge is about the data needed, their timing, how and where to get them, how to analyze them, criticize them, arrange them, and most importantly, how to use them ethically.” She outlines MIL as described by UNESCO and embraces MIL as a composite concept.

Magda Abu-Fadil, Lebanon: Magda Abu-Fadil used the term MIL throughout her discourse though she has used the terms media literacy and media education in other articles (Abu-Fadil, 2013). She ties MIL closely to journalism education and media ethics. She underlines the mixed media environment that exists in Lebanon, games, applications, animated cartoons, comic books, posters and street signs, newspaper, television, digital and mobile media, radio, and multimedia online and offline. Magda Abu-Fadil writes, “In Lebanon, MIL is tied to education, pedagogy, religion, and media in the general sense. Information is often brought in as an adjunct, with technology playing a supportive role.”

Carmilla Floyd and Gabriella Thinz, Tunisia: These authors, while using the term media and information literacy, did not offer a specific or explicit definition. However they pointed to MIL as a tool for youth empowerment and civic engagement. They noted that MIL initiatives in Tunisia received inspiration from similar projects in Palestine, Belarus and Sweden where MIL is used to combat gender stereotypes, promote respect for human rights and “sustainable development that improves conditions for peace, stability...”

Other experts from the region have also presented important perspectives on MIL. Only two are noted here for the sake of brevity. Saleh (2011: 35) argues that media education (media literacy or MIL) should necessarily begin in primary school when fundamental knowledge skills and habits are formed. “Children must learn how to question the reliability and validity of decisions and to offer criticism and alternatives, as well as to understand that there exist other viewpoints, solutions or perspectives in addition to their own.” For Gomaa (2014: 33), media literacy or MIL includes being able to think critically, be creative, as well as “exercising one’s duties and rights as an active citizen rather than be [a subject] subjects of the state.” Moghtar, Majiid et al. (2008: 196) purports, “... Teaching information literacy does not merely involve library and bibliographic instructions or the ability to use different information sources effectively. It also includes teaching critical and analytical thinking skills regarding information, as well as the ability to generate new ideas from current information and prior knowledge. Most importantly, it includes what students will be able to know, think or do as a result...”

What is clear from the above analysis is that there are a variety of viewpoints about how MIL should be conceptualized in the MENA region. However one cannot help but notice the convergence and complementarity of perspectives offered. MENA is no different from the rest of the world in grappling with ensuring clarity to delineating the field and process of media and information literacy.

Underlying rationale for MIL in the Arab States

The purpose or rationale for media and information literacy is to some extent implicit in, or at the very least, grows out of the myriad of conceptualizations of the field. Based on the contribution of authors in this book, other sources, preliminary analysis of the findings of research that I am undertaking, MIL is treated as a means to achieve a broad spectrum of social, political, and economic development goals. On the other hand, it is also an end in itself, insofar as MIL enables people to acquire personal competencies, self-awareness, creativity and self-actualization (Grizzle, 2013)¹³. Some experts question the overemphasis of the ‘instrumentalization’ of MIL over citizens’ acquisition of these competencies for personal use, enjoyment and creativity (see Madrenas, 2014). Frau-Meigs (2011: 334) posits, “For now, media education [MIL] is seen as a kind of panacea by all partners (private, public and civic) but in many ways it is being instrumentalized as the sweet wrapper around the bitter pill of neo-liberal polices...”

These rationales include:

- Combatting stereotypes and promoting intercultural understanding (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, many Arab States) (See Abu-Fadil, 2007).
- Promoting press freedom and understanding of the news.
- Increasing access to information and easing the free flow of ideas (Qatar, Lebanon) (ibid).
- Combatting the influence of media in the lives of youth (Egypt) (See Tayie, 2011¹⁴, 2013 and 2014; See also Saleh, 2009)
- Journalists needing digital skills to compete with the influx of news from outside and within the country (Lebanon)
- Enabling young people to use social networks for productive and development purposes other than entertainment (Lebanon, Egypt).
- Advocating for media ethics (Lebanon).
- For young people, challenging world views in media and being critical of the tendency towards monolithic secular and religious media in the Middle East (Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Palestine).
- Protecting and preserving local cultures and intercultural dialogue (Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt) (Nfissi, 2013 and 2014).
- Establishing a basis for citizen journalism (Tunisia, Egypt Jordan, Lebanon, and Qatar).
- Enhancing quality education (Algiers, Oman).
- Improving quality research and decision-making (Morocco, Algeria, Oman).
- Promoting peace and non-violence (Palestine, Egypt, and Tunisia).

Trends towards national policies on MIL in the MENA region

There is no country in the Arab States Region with a national policy on MIL. Countries like Morocco and Qatar are perhaps heading in that direction, given related decisions taken by these governments and national initiatives supported by them. However, most Arab States have related policies and laws based on constitutions and information and broadcast regulations. These include ICT policies and strategies, access to information laws, education policies, cultural policies (all countries in MENA), and media and communication policies and national youth policies. See Table 2 below.

Table 2. Strategies on Information-, ICT-, and media policies/media laws in the MENA Region

Country	National Information Policies/Strategy	National ICT Policies/Strategy	National Communication/Media Policies/Laws
Algeria	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bahrain	Yes	Yes ¹⁵	Yes ¹⁶
The Comoros	N/A	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	N/A	Yes ¹⁷ (Evidence of this online but not full version)	N/A
Egypt	Yes	Yes ¹⁸	Yes
Iraq	N/A	In Draft or being prepared	Yes
Jordan	Yes ¹⁹	Yes	Yes
Kuwait	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lebanon	N/A	Yes ²⁰	Yes
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mauritania	N/A	Yes ²¹	N/A
Morocco	Yes	Yes ²²	Yes
Oman	Yes	Yes ²³	N/A
Qatar	Yes	Yes ²⁴	Yes
Saudi Arabia	Yes ²⁵	Yes ²⁶	N/A
Somalia	N/A	No ²⁷	N/A
State of Palestine	N/A	Yes	N/A
Sudan	N/A	Yes ²⁸	N/A
Syria	In Draft	Yes	N/A
Tunisia	Yes	Yes ²⁹	N/A
United Arab Emirates	No	Yes	N/A
Yemen	Yes	Yes	N/A

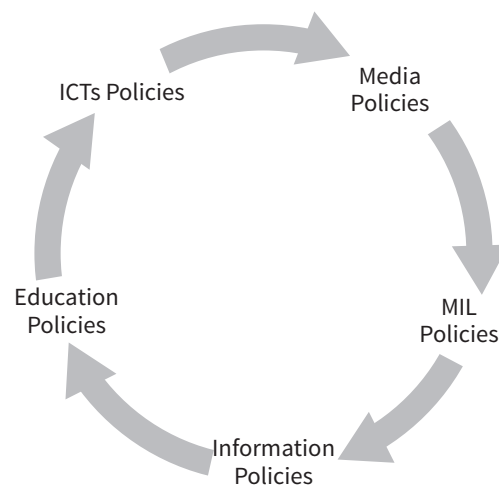
Source (if not indicated): National Profiles of the Information Society <http://www.escwa.un.org/wsis/profiles.html>

A summary and analysis of as well as recommendations concerning media related laws in Bahrain, Kuwait Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirate, Qatar, and Oman was carried out by the Doha Centre for Media Freedom and written by Dr. Matt J. Duffy³⁰. A broad analysis of these existing policies, strategies or laws is needed to ascertain the extent to which they cover elements to ensure media and information literacy for all. For instance, are there provisions in these policies that promote, direct and guide the design and implementation of programs to enable citizens' acquisition of critical thinking competencies about information, media and ICTs? This is the subject of another paper and comprehensive research. However, contemplating these policies has implications for the future articulation of national MIL policies in the MENA region and elsewhere. One implication is whether these policies, strategies or laws are geared towards citizens' empowerment in contrast to a focus on institutions, business or government processes, opens the possibility for the articulation of media and information literacy policies. Menou (2002), for example gives an insightful analysis of how information literacy (IL) could be integrated in national ICTs policies referring to cases from Latin America.

While it is clear that citizens can be, and are often, reached through institutions, policies that serve institutions may not necessarily serve citizens. Media and information literacy policies should not be developed in isolation. Rather, they should be placed in the broader ecology and seen as an enabler to the efficacy of other related policies that may include youth, cultural and educational policies (Grizzle, Moore et al., 2013).

Figure 1 below shows the interrelationship of various national policies. Purposeful collaboration across government ministries or entities is necessary to lead to multilateral policy development, a sort of crossing of policies that embeds MIL in relevant aspects of public policies (cf. idem). It is crucial to note here that national MIL policies and strategies are not only the remit of national governments. All information providers such as libraries, archives, media organizations, telecommunication organizations, publishers, Internet service providers, museums, etc., should engage in internal MIL policy formulation and outreach strategies to benefit their audiences and users.

Figure 1. UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Policy and Strategy Guidelines



Source: Grizzle, Moore et al., 2013.

The articulation and application of national/regional MIL policies and strategies should consider five interwoven approaches:

- 1) Convergence – a joined-up approach as described in Figure 1 above;
- 2) Rights-based approach – recognizing that MIL is a direct offshoot of the right to quality education, the right to access to information, the right to freedom of expression, and the right to peace and security;
- 3) A shift from a focus only on protecting citizens from potentially negative aspects of information, media and technology to empowering them to self-regulate as well as appropriate the benefits of the information, technology and media-driven age (Mihailidis, 2008);

- 4) Building an inclusive knowledge society/communication and information for development, including a culture and linguistic diversity approach.
- 5) A gender-based approach – underscoring equal access, participation and leadership of women and men in the information life cycle, media and technology development, and providing men and women equal access to MIL education (see detail analysis in *ibid*).

National strategies on MIL and their implementation

There are no systemized national MIL strategies. In the main, there are many important, but often fragmented, workshops and conferences. Pockets of success, mostly led by universities and in some cases libraries and NGOs, are highlighted here:

- MENTOR Project, Cairo University, Egypt – MENTOR International Media Education Association.
- Alexandria Library, High-level colloquium on information literacy and lifelong learning, Alexandria, Egypt.
- American University in Cairo, information literacy instruction labs³¹.
- Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah Univeristy, Morocco – International Institute on MIL.
- Birzeit University’s Media Development Center, Palestine – Media Education (MIL) Program – Cooperation with Ministry of Education and development of materials for teachers and students³².
- Doha Centre for Media Freedom – MIL Program involving 10 per cent of public and private elementary schools in Qatar, with projections to implement it in all 150 elementary schools.
- Qatar University Library, Information literacy program and the Qatar chapter of the Information Literacy Network of the Gulf³³.
- MENTOR/Cairo University taking steps to set-up a Master of Arts in MIL.
- MIL Toolkit for the Arab States supported by UNESCO.
- Ministry of Education in Morocco leading the national integration of MIL in teacher education supported by UNESCO.
- Magda Abu-Fadil conducted workshops at the Two Sacred Hearts School and International College for high school seniors (Lebanon), as well as for teachers and coordinators at International College (Lebanon), for teachers and coordinators of dozens of schools in Qatar, for journalists in Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania, and in a remote media literacy (ML) program with the University of Missouri School of Journalism, to name a few.

- Information Literacy Program in a Private School in Lebanon³⁴.
- The Interactive Cultures research group is working in partnership with the US-based technology company Meedan on *Developing Citizen Journalists in the Arab region*, (Tunisia, Egypt Jordan, Lebanon).
- Maghreb network of media and information literacy (IL) experts launched by UNESCO³⁵.

Where governments are involved, there is evidence of possibly more sustained or long and broad-based MIL programs. This is evident in Qatar, through the government's MIL program at the Doha Centre for Media Freedom.³⁶

Are MIL Programs in These Countries Harmonizing the Field?

- Activities are generally either ML- or IL-related.
- In some cases, ML or IL includes digital/ICT skills.
- In a few cases, MIL is being considered (the use of the UNESCO MIL Curriculum for Teachers) in countries recently taking systematic actions to promote media and information literacy. These countries include Morocco, Egypt, Qatar, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Jordan.

Do many MIL experts/practitioners live and work in the region?

At the time of this writing, I was in the middle of initial analysis of research, one component of which was to ascertain the existence and levels of media and information literacy experts globally. The research explores criteria such a level and area of qualification, level and period of involvement in MIL, academic writings in MIL, etc. In the MENA region, over 150 experts from various disciplines such information, media, communication, education and other practitioners, were invited to complete the questionnaire. Preliminary analysis indicated that library and information specialists, media and communication specialists, and journalists were the main drivers of media and information literacy education. With respect to experts who spend more than half their professional time on MIL-related activities, Table 3 depicts how the MENA region compares to the rest of the world.

Table 3. Arab States Compared to Other Regions on MIL Experts

MENA	Other Regions of the World
Less than or equal to	Sub-Sahara Africa
Less than	Latin America
Less than	Asia Pacific
Less than	Caribbean
Less than	Europe
Less than	North America

Using the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Policy and Strategy Guidelines and the Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework as a basis, literature review of MIL in the MENA region, including chapters in this book, as well as preliminary analysis of the primary research that I am undertaking, Table 4 offers an initial classification of the take-up of MIL in MENA countries across four possible scenarios.

Table 4. Initial Classification of the Take-Up of MIL in MENA Countries

Scenario	Countries
MIL is largely unknown and undeveloped	Bahrain, Libya, Iraq, Kuwait, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, the Comoros, Yemen, Mauritania, Palestine, and Oman.
MIL is nascent and quite novel as a concept	Djibouti, Algeria and the United Arab Emirates.
MIL is somewhat established within specialist programs and institutions and some citizens benefit from access to these initiatives	Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Egypt.
MIL is widely understood and MIL programs are available to most citizens	

Systemizing MIL in the MENA region and standing together through regional and international alliances

The future for MIL in the MENA region is dependent on all stakeholders, individuals, private and public organizations or institutions, international development organizations, and civil society in general. This preliminary analysis attempted to illuminate some first steps that should be considered such as a harmonized approach in conceptualizing and articulating MIL competencies, recognizing that there already exist related public policies in the MENA region on which MIL policies can be built, and the need to create consensus around MIL diffusion. There is undoubtedly meaningful experience in the region on which to build. A main challenge for the region – lack of policy – has been noted by Samy Tayie, a leading expert, in various regional and international conferences. A key starting point then is to raise the awareness about MIL among policy makers and educators and to strengthen concrete partnerships among actors in the region to accelerate MIL for all. This was the subject of the *Regional Forum on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Arab States* in Cairo, Egypt, held April 22-23, 2015 and organized by UNESCO in collaboration with the League of Arab States, the Swedish International Development Corporation Agency (SIDA), Al Ahram Canadian University, and the Egyptian National Commission for UNESCO.

It grouped some 140 participants from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen, and the UAE. Participants included policy makers, curriculum experts, educators, and media and information experts. Ms. Zainab Al-Wakeel, Assistant Secretary-General of the Egyptian

National Commission for UNESCO, representing Prof. El Sayed Abdel-Khalek, Minister of Higher Education of Egypt, Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, the Assistant Secretary-General, League of Arab States, Dr. Farouk Ismail, President of Ahrum Canadian University, underlined the importance of media and information literacy in the Arab states in the present social and political context. They also stressed the need to introduce literacies at an early stage of the students', and citizens in general, lives in schools and clubs, work, on the Internet or social media, and other places (cf.³⁷).

In connection with enhancing partnerships among MIL actors in the region, in 2013 UNESCO launched the Global Alliance for Partnerships on MIL (GAPMIL) with three objectives: 1) articulating concrete partnerships to drive media and information literacy (MIL) development and impact; 2) enabling the MIL community to speak as one voice on certain critical matters, particularly as it relates to policies; and 3) further deepening the strategy for MIL by providing a common platform for MIL-related networks and associations. A formal call for membership in the alliance was carried through an ongoing survey in English, French and Spanish. While this is anecdotal, since then only 13 organizations from the MENA region have joined the alliance which now has over 600 members (See Table 5).

Table 5. GAPMIL Members from the MENA region

Name of Organization	City	Country
Doha Centre for Media Freedom	Doha	Qatar
Delta University for Science and Technology	Mansoura	Egypt
Search For Common Ground Morocco	Rabat	Morocco
Zayed University	Abu Dhabi	United Arab Emirates
Supreme Council for Information and Communication Technology (ict QATAR)	DOHA	Qatar
Editore libri e comunicazione (Book Publisher)	Cairo	Egypt
International Centre of Film for Children and Youth (CIFEJ) Headquarters	Tehran	Iran
Petra University	Amman	Jordan
Al-Hussein Bin Talal University	Ma'an	Jordan
Hashemite University	Zarqa	Jordan
Regional Centre for Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue	Fez	Morocco
Jordan Media Institute	Amman	Jordan

The Arab States' Chapter of the Global Alliance on Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy was launched at the Forum. A detailed action plan for the Arab States GAPMIL Chapter was finalized along with committee members from 14 countries.

UNESCO has developed four vital international resources that, through adaptation, can help to systemize national MIL policies and programs in the MENA region. In the area of *curriculum*, there is the Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers. This is adaptable to all levels of society and is available in Arabic.³⁸ In the area

of *policy and strategy*, countries can access the model Media and Information Literacy Policy and Strategy resource³⁹ which will be available in Arabic by the first quarter of 2016 through the UNESCO and Saudi Arabia Culture of Peace Project. In the area of *monitoring and assessment*, UNESCO has produced the Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: Country Readiness and Competencies.⁴⁰ In the area of *teaching resources*, to make these more accessible to teachers and trainers, UNESCO has partnered with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), also in connection with the UNESCO and Saudi Arabia Culture of Peace Project, to set up an international online multimedia, intercultural MIL teaching resources tool. This online platform, while available to the public, is still under development with components in Arabic, French, and other languages.

Finally, systemizing national MIL policies and strategies requires capitalizing on new forms and modes of educating citizens. To increase access to media and information literacy among youth in the Arab States, UNESCO has partnered with the American University of Beirut and is preparing the first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in media and information literacy in Arabic. It is an adaptation of an international MIL and intercultural MOOC developed by UNESCO. The Arabic version will include cooperation among many other universities in the MENA region. The reader of this article should recognize that the traditional information literacy part is not as rich as the traditional media literacy characteristic. This is due to a general absence of relevant literature. Attempts will be made to address this in a future article. This article and indeed the entire book, attempts to put stakeholders in the know about MIL in the MENA region. When one does not know and thus does nothing, a certain course of action is required. When one knows and still does nothing, other questions are raised. In June 2015, I was browsing through the latest book published by the renowned expert Paul Zurkowski, who coined the concept 'Information Literacy.' The book is titled, *Action Literacy – Empowering “We the People” in the information age*. During my reading of this book I learned of a new form of literacy called 'Action Literacy.' According to Zurkowski, Action Literacy means “the ability to transform good information into ethical action. Being action literate means that one’s ethical actions are firmly rooted in good information.” He goes on to say “the actions are helpful. The actions are good. Right actions are carried out even when difficult.” There are many inferences we could draw from this definition of action literacy.

Here, UNESCO and I propose two points for reflection:

One, Action Literacy is part of media and information literacy (MIL). When we are fully media and information literate we should take positive and purposeful actions concerning how we use, engage with, act upon the positive and negative impact of information, media and technology in our personal, economic and social life.

Two, armed with information about MIL in the MENA region, UNESCO encourages all stakeholders to consider the challenges facing the region. We first need the commitment of all players. We can do this together but we must first commit and take action.

Like the 13-year-old girl, who was determined to tackle cyberbullying by creating the innovation software, ReThink,⁴¹ we must rethink the relevance of media and information literacy in the MENA region and globally. We must take rapid and innovative actions to fuel change.

Notes

1. Editors note: Not in list of references.
2. An independent view of the Arab World website, <http://www.arableagueonline.org>. Accessed on September 7, 2015. (NB: This is not the official website of the League of Arab States. See <http://www.arableagueonline.org/remark>. The official website is <http://www.lasportal.org/ar/Pages/default.aspx> and there is no English equivalent).
3. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena>. Accessed on 26 October 2015.
4. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/MenaRegion/Pages/MenaRegionIndex.aspx>. Accessed on 26 October 2015.
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3. Helping Arab Digital and Media Literacy Blossom

Three Years of the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut (MDLAB)

Jad Melki & Lubna Maaliki

Realizing the importance of educating youth about ubiquitous media systems and messages that surround every aspect of their lives, many countries across the globe have embraced media and information literacies as core components of university curricula, and in some cases middle- and high-school programs. Unfortunately, the Arab region has been a latecomer to this realization (Melki, 2009, 2011).

Even as social media fuel Arab uprisings, most Arab higher education systems remain oblivious to the merits of incorporating digital and media literacies within their core teaching requirements, and in most cases critical media literacy competencies remain absent even from journalism and communication programs. In fact, up until recently, most digital and media literacy initiatives in the Arab region have been individually driven or promoted transiently by a few civil society groups through training workshops and awareness campaigns (Melki, 2013b, 2015b). But even the individual academic initiatives – mostly at private elite Arab universities – have faced opposition and discouragement from entrenched interests of traditional Arab media academics who have resisted innovations that threaten their turfs and have clung to outdated media theories that view the digital media revolution as an insignificant matter. In addition, many Arab academics who would otherwise have championed digital and media literacy at their universities faced a dearth in Arabic curricular material and an absence of the necessary facilities and equipment. Many of them were also uncertain about their own skills and knowledge to develop and teach digital and media literacy. In the past few years, multiple efforts to advance digital and media literacy in the Arab world have been launched by academic coalitions and international institutions, such as the UNESCO-initiated International Network on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (MILID), the Doha Center for Media Freedom (DCMF), and the Association of Kuwaiti Teachers and the Kuwait Centre for Media Literacy (KCML). These admirable efforts have had mixed outcomes so far. Both DCMF and KCML seem to be mainly nation-

ally focused and have yet to produce significant, tangible and long-lasting outcomes (DCMF has had an outreach program involving workshops in Jordan, Morocco and other countries). MILID remains the most promising international initiative that will hopefully bear fruit soon for the Arab region.

Launch of the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut

Another institutional initiative that has tried to address this situation and fill the gap is the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut (MDLAB). Sponsored by the Open Society Foundations (OSF), al-Monitor news, and the Arab-European Association for Media and Communication Researchers (AREACORE) through the German Academic Exchange Service, MDLAB launched in 2013 by a group of Arab and international academics with the explicit aim of advancing digital and media literacy education in the region through training Arab media educators and developing digital and media literacy curricula, not only in Arabic, but also grounded in Arabic cultures and concerns.

Building on the model of the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change – an international partnership of over a dozen universities from around the world – MDLAB runs an annual summer academy that brings together 50 Arab media faculty and graduate students, in addition to Arab and international media literacy trainers and experts, particularly from the Salzburg Academy network. The academy also works year-round to develop curricula, support media literacy initiatives in the region, and acts as a hub for a network of Arab media literacy educators. MDLAB's missions encompass five objectives:

- (1) To diffuse the knowledge and teaching of digital and media literacy education and promote its importance among Arab universities.
- (2) To train each year young Arab university instructors and graduate students on digital and media literacy concepts and competencies.
- (3) To develop annually university-level curricula that include lesson plans, curricular modules, training manuals, case studies, and multimedia content.
- (4) To establish a hub for a network of regional universities and media educators centering on the development and promotion of digital and media literacy education.
- (5) To create and maintain an open online space for the dissemination of curricular material and the connection of the academy's alumni and potential contributors and collaborators.

The Academy

The idea of MDLAB first emerged as a recommendation of the 2011 conference of the Arab-US Association of Communication Educators (AUSACE) themed “Digital and Media Literacy: New Directions” and the OSF-sponsored global study on Mapping Digital Media (Melki et al., 2012). Both projects recommended the expansion and generalization of digital and media literacy education in the Arab region. By providing the needed training, curricular material and resources, and motivating faculty to transfer what they learned to their institutions, the academy aims to spread such knowledge throughout Arab universities, creating a multiplier effect. MDLAB focuses mainly on junior educators and graduate students who have the highest potential and flexibility to learn advanced digital skills and accept innovative ideas, in addition to being closely in touch with the largest Arab demographic that today is leading change in the region. Three years after the launch of MDLAB, some two-dozen Arab universities teach digital and media literacy in a variety of formats based on curricula developed at the academy. Some have introduced full courses. Others have used the modules to infuse their traditional media courses with digital and media literacy concepts and competencies, while they continue to battle with tedious government and institutional bureaucracies and obstacles that have delayed the approval of standalone digital and media literacy courses. Nevertheless, today nine Arab universities have been able to offer full digital and media literacy courses: Damascus University, American University in Sharjah, American University of Beirut, Ahrum Canadian University, Lebanese American University, Rafik Hariri University, Notre Dame University, Birzeit University, and Azm University. The number is expected to double next year, especially after the Iraqi Ministry of Education approves a proposed national curriculum that includes a required digital and media literacy course.

Although the first two years of the academy focused on Eastern Arab countries – namely Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq, the 2015 MDLAB academy had participants from Egypt, Oman, Yemen, Qatar, Sudan, the UAE, and Iran. The same year, MDLAB included three schoolteachers from the International College (IC) in Lebanon, the first Arab school to officially name media literacy as a strategic priority. Future plans include expanding to the rest of the Arab region, adding more schoolteachers, and other international participants. MDLAB’s resolution is to get each Arab country by the end of this decade to have at least one school and one university offer digital and media literacy as a core curriculum.

Curriculum and methods used

When it comes to curriculum, teaching and learning methods, MDLAB has striven to go beyond the classic definition of media literacy, “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms” (Center for Media Literacy, 1992). Digital and media literacy, in this conception, transcends the mission of training students to become

critical media consumers. In an era of infinite digital media potential and globalized communication, digital and media literacy becomes most essential for survival in the information age and more critical for our globalized cultures and economic systems. Hence, digital and media literacy not only offers competencies to critically read, listen and watch diverse media content and decipher its underlying ideologies, assess its embedded commercialism, propagandistic intentions, and harmful hidden consequences. Digital and media literacy also empowers individuals and communities. It helps people intelligently manage their media uses, effectively utilize digital and social media tools for personal and communal advancement, and proactively engage in collaborative global discussions and civic action. Digital and media literacy offers the requisite knowledge and competencies for marginalized individuals and disenfranchised communities to gain back the initiative and balance the powers of big business, concentrated wealth, and unbridled authoritarian systems. “Media and digital literacy is media education for the masses. It is the silent revolution that can counter the ideologies of greed, hate and death and fight for generalizing and globalizing social justice and egalitarian systems” (Melki, 2015b). MDLAB’s curriculum covers diverse social, political and economic topics, integrated with essential digital competencies and research skills, all of which are guided by studies that inquire into the media uses and digital activism of Arab youth and prevalent media-related disorders and trends in the region (Hitti et al., 2014; Melki, 2013a, 2015a; Melki and Mallat, 2014a, 2014b; Melki et al., 2014). Core conceptual modules include the influences of corporate ownership and business practices on media production, the politics of news construction and control, the persuasive power of images, advertising and its devastating effects on body image and self-worth, media representation of gender, race, and sexuality, and, deconstructing propaganda messages and institutions.

The curriculum strives to integrate critical media analysis with digital production competencies and scientific research skills in a seamless and coherent fashion (Melki, 2013a). Weaved into the conceptual lectures are a set of research methods and digital composition workshops that both concretize the media literacy theories and offer students an array of exciting technologies to learn and use creatively. Core digital and research competencies cover blogging, photo manipulation, audio and video editing, digital curation, comparative media analysis, social network analysis, and the effective use of digital research tools. The curriculum tries hard to tie each of these digital and research competencies to corresponding theoretical and critical media literacy concepts. For example, teaching photo manipulation using free applications such as *Pixlr* are closely tied to lectures about the power of images in news and the representation of the body in advertising, while learning digital curation and comparative news analysis with applications such as *Storify* and *Meograph* are linked to lessons about news construction and the role of media in war. While the teaching of theoretical and critical media literacy concepts is delivered through a series of lectures and discussions moderated by renowned digital and media literacy academics, a team of digital media production experts dubbed the ‘digital squad’ runs the digital media workshops. The digital work-

shops follow a carefully designed learning approach based on four guidelines: Visual demonstrations, one-on-one guidance, non-linear exercises, and scaffolding (Melki, 2013a). The non-linear approach allows participants with a higher level of technical skills to skip to a different task while they await the teacher's help, which saves time and lowers frustration levels. In addition, these advanced participants can offer great help during the workshop. Whenever a participant finishes the exercise quickly, we recruit him/her to help other participants during the lab exercise, which also offers the participant a chance to test his/her teaching skills. A digital workshop session usually starts with a 15-minute lecture about, for instance, digital audio formats and the concept of push technology used by podcasting applications. Then, the digital squad delivers a short demo on how to use a digital audio recording application, such as *Audacity*, to record, edit, and export an audio file. Immediately after that, participants follow a written exercise that guides them step-by-step through a specific task, such as creating a 60-second audio interview with one sound bite. The detailed written instructions are posted online along with all curricula, lectures and exercises created at the academy for participants to use in the future when they plan to teach digital and media literacy at their universities. Such integrative teaching and learning approaches were developed and tested over several years in collaboration with international academics within the Salzburg Academy circle (Mihailidis, 2011, 2014; Shumow, 2014). The methods have consistently shown great promise:

Effectively integrating digital and research skills into media and news literacy teaching builds on the critical reading skills traditional media literacy classes produce, and helps students transition from media consumer to adept and critical producers of information and knowledge and empowered global citizens engaged in important discussions and able to organize in networks better positioned to shape societies and regions and enhance the statuses of marginalized individuals and disenfranchised groups. (Melki, 2013a)

Building on experiences

The hard work of MDLAB participants has helped us refocus the academy's curriculum and better deal with the priorities of Arab societies. Thanks to extensive feedback from participants through discussion sessions and focus groups, the core curriculum now includes such topics as media and terrorism, sectarianism, extremism and war and emphasizes human rights, tolerance, civic activism and global citizenship. Other recommendations include strengthening the training components on social network analysis, digital media research, and data literacy competencies, as well as more networking opportunities and ongoing activities throughout the year, such as conferences and shorter workshops conducted on the campuses of each participating university. Moreover, the academy offers intentional social integration activities, as well as cultural excursions and networking events to help participants from various countries and cultures better

assimilate and build long-lasting relationships. Such activities were enhanced after the inaugural academy when we observed participants clustering in national and even sectarian groups with little interaction between groups.

During that first year, in at least one recorded case, some participants felt being derided by individuals from another national group. The matter was effectively addressed in the following academy by ensuring that each working group and team – as well as hotel roommates – included participants from various countries and by incorporating several ‘speed meets’ where participants spend time meeting with other individuals and ask about their lives and professional backgrounds. In addition, the screening of applicants became more rigorous in the second and third years, including phone interviews that asked questions about openness to other cultures and tolerance of difference. What also helped tremendously in raising the quality of participants was the increase in the pool of applications from fewer than 70 in the first year (70 per cent acceptance rate) to over 200 in the third year (25 per cent acceptance rate).

We anticipate even further improvement in this area and expect the number of applicants to exceed 250 in the fourth year, as the academy continues to build a strong reputation regionally and internationally and as digital and media literacy courses become more common on Arab campuses. But MDLAB’s long-term goals for the region are far from being reached. Promoting the teaching of digital and media literacy courses on Arab campuses is a positive step in the right direction but not enough. Arab media and communication curricula – regardless of specialty – should become grounded in the theories, concepts and skills of digital and media literacy.

Whether it is journalism, advertising, public relations, political communication, health communication or any subspecialty within this field, all its courses and curricula should incorporate critical media literacy concepts and applied digital literacy competencies. For example, teaching advertising should never be devoid of critical teaching about the negative effects of advertising and consumerism on society. Journalism training must incorporate the formidable competencies of citizen journalism, data journalism, and digital activism, as well as the latest knowledge on propaganda strategies and tactics, especially those used in war and conflict by extremists and terrorists. Questions examining gender, sexuality, race and religion should become embedded within any communication training and research, while civic engagement, global citizenship, social justice and tolerance should guide their purpose. In addition, digital and media literacy cannot be only available for the shrinking pool of students who can afford a university education. We need to create more accessible online and offline courses and workshops in Arabic to reach a broader audience. What’s more, media and digital literacy needs to move into schools, all the way down to elementary teaching and beyond. We need to develop a critical mass of well-networked teachers, academics and researchers capable of taking digital and media literacy teaching and research to the next level.

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4. Youth and Digital Media

Drafting a Landscape from Fez and Cairo

Jordi Torrent

In November 2013 and February 2014, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) organized two workshops on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) for educators in Cairo, Egypt, and Fez, Morocco. In Egypt, the local organizer was Cairo University¹, and in Morocco it was the Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University². Both universities are partners of the UNESCO-UNITWIN UNAOC Global University Network on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue.³ Both universities were able to gain the support and engage with their respective country's Ministry of Education, facilitating in this way the participation of middle and high school educators in the MIL training during these workshops (presented as an opportunity for professional development). Other partners of these workshops included UNESCO, the Doha Center for Media Freedom, and, for the ones organized in Fez, Search for Common Ground.⁴ A total of 36 educators in Cairo and 27 in Fez participated; the workshops were conducted in Arabic.

The main purpose of the workshops was to introduce MIL concepts and a framework to the educators, mostly using UNESCO's Arabic version of the *Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers*⁵ as well as the Doha Center for Media Freedom's teacher resources on MIL.⁶ The workshops were an opportunity for most of the educators to discuss for the first time the main concepts and building blocks of MIL pedagogy, understanding that traditional concepts of literacy (writing and reading print texts) are no longer enough skills for individuals to properly function as active participant citizens in contemporary societies. During the workshops it was also stressed that teaching merely 'digital technology skills' (how to use a computer, build a blog, basic coding, etc.) is not MIL education per se. Developing critical thinking skills applied to media messages, introducing the analysis of media representations of historical events in social studies, encouraging students to produce relevant and ethical media messages, etc., is part of MIL education.

Making it clear that MIL is in many ways more ‘humanities’ than ‘technology,’ that MIL education is a good platform to re-introduce humanistic themes in an educational framework that currently – across the world – tends to prioritize science and technology over philosophy, history and social studies. Questions of state power, media control, freedom of speech, citizens’ ethical responsibilities as media producers, censorship, hate speech in social media platforms, etc., were also discussed during the workshops. Given the challenging political and social movements that certain countries from the MENA region are experiencing, some of the educators expressed concerns that teaching MIL in their schools could be interpreted as a form of social activism with political implications that could jeopardize the safety and future of their students. Others responded that while it is true MIL education has aspects of social criticism, it is also true that learning to read and write is already a political act. In that sense, MIL education is no more a ‘political activist’ pedagogy than teaching to read and write – it is only a better, more relevant, way to teach ‘literacy’ in the mediatized world that we inhabit.

Survey of media use

At the end of the workshops, the educators were asked to distribute in their classrooms a questionnaire aimed at assessing the media habits of their students.⁷

Looking at the results of the research we acknowledge that television continues to be the favorite medium for these young people, over 60 per cent of youth (in Cairo and in Fez) spend between 1 and 3 hours a day watching TV. Some 18 per cent in Cairo spend 4-6 hours a day in front of the TV screen. Not dissimilar to youth of the same age from other countries. A 2015 Nielsen study reported that North-American youth of the same age watch television an average of 2.8 hours a day.⁸ This being an average calculation, we can infer that at least 18 per cent, if not more, of American teenagers are also spending 4-6 hours a day “watching TV.” I put watching TV in quotes because youth today do not only watch TV (this is no longer the captive audience of the pre-Internet era), they consume other forms of media while watching TV. We found that 16 per cent of the young people from Fez and Cairo who participated in the questionnaire spend 4 to 6 hours a day surfing the Net. Youth watch TV while surfing the Internet as well as sending SMS with their phones to their friends, and some listening to music as well. This being the so-called multi-tasking phenomenon: multi-media (multi platforms, multi screens) simultaneously used. This occurrence is also global; other countries experience similar youth interactions with media.⁹ The study also showed that youth from Fez and Cairo upload photos and/or videos to their Internet social media of choice at least once a week, in Cairo 31 per cent of them do this daily. In Fez, 30 per cent send more than 10 SMS to their friends each day. In contrast 16 per cent have conversations with their family only once a week. In both cities 40 per cent spend 30 minutes or less a day doing school homework. And only a quarter read from a book each day. It is clear then that media have a great stake in their socialization development as well as in their identity-

Table 1. Media Use Among Youth in Egypt and Morocco (per cent)

Youth 10 to 20 years of age	Cairo, Egypt	Fez, Morocco
Television watching 1-3 hours a day	67	62
Television watching 4-6 hours a day	18	11
Internet surfing from school	13	4
Internet surfing from home	65	32
Internet surfing using a cellphone	39	16
Internet surfing 1-3 hours a day	45	38
Internet surfing 4-6 hours a day	16	15
Internet use for social media & fun	90	36
Internet use for news	15	5
Uploading photos & videos on social media	78	49
Uploading photos & videos on social media, each day	31	7
Uploading photos & videos on social media, once a week	42	40
Have a cellphone	92	70
Using a cellphone for photos	80	90
Using a cellphone for videos	39	80
Using a cellphone for SMS, more than 10 messages a day	13	30
Reading books, each day	21	25
Reading books, once a month	10	34
School homework, less than 15 minutes a day	16	9
School homework, about 30 minutes a day	25	34
Meeting with friends after school, each day	57	30
Meeting with friends after school, once a week	8	44
Having conversations with family, once a week	22	16
Having conversations with family, once in a while	20	12

Note: The number of respondents in Morocco was 201 students and 233 students from Egypt. The gender balance was about 50/50. The respondents were between 10 to 20 years old.

personality formation. That it is through media consumption and production that their social persona is created, that the understanding of themselves, their community, the world at large, and ‘the other’ is shaped and constructed.

It is precisely because of this that MIL education needs to be included in the mandatory curriculum of middle and high school education. We were pleased that the representatives of the Ministries of Education of Morocco and Egypt present during the workshops understood the scope and importance of MIL education. We trust they conveyed to their supervisors information and knowledge that will soon be developed into new educational policies where MIL education is not only acknowledged but, more importantly, included in the school curricula of their countries. Recognizing that many educators need to be trained on MIL concepts, we also hope that these workshops were but a pilot for a much larger MIL teacher-training program in the region. We welcome the efforts of many organizations that are actively involved in promoting MIL education in the MENA region, many mentioned in the introduction and chapters of this publication.

The UNAOC understands that a media literate individual is less prone to be violently polarized when finding on his/her media options messages that might be insulting to his or her creed. A media literate citizen develops opportunities to engage in conversation, not in violent confrontation. It is for these reasons that from its origins the UNAOC identified media literacy as one educational initiative to be supported, encouraged and developed – as it is clearly stated in the initial UNAOC’s High Level Group Report.¹⁰

Notes

1. Special thanks to Professor Dr. Samy Tayie from Cairo University
2. Special thanks to Professor Dr. Abdelhamid Nfissi, from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University
3. Please see <http://milunesco.unaoc.org/unitwin>
4. Other instructors included Ayman Bardawil, Youssef Omar, Foad Helmy, Adly Reda, Hassan Emad, Amal El Shafie, Drissia Chouit, Khalid Aoutail, Rawia Alhumaidan, Ahmad Al Mohanadi, Mohamed Fawbar, Soufiana El Hamdi, Mohamed Azami, and Youssef Benabderazzak.
5. Please see <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/media-and-information-literacy-curriculum-for-teachers>
6. Please see <http://www.dc4mf.org/en/content/media-literacy-another-vision-teaching>
7. Special thanks to Mohamed Samy Abdel Raouf and Nora S. Abdel Raouf Mohamed (Cairo) and Mohamed Faoubar (Fez) for their support on this research
8. Please see <http://www.adweek.com/news/television/infographic-look-kids-media-consumption-163087>.
9. Please see “2015 Ofcom Report on Media use and Attitudes” http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/media-lit-10years/2015_Adults_media_use_and_attitudes_report.pdf
10. Please see <http://www.unaoc.org/repository/report.htm>

II.

Media and Information Literacy in the MENA Region From State Policies to Action Research

5. An Overview from the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Lucy Nuseibeh & Mohammed Abu Arqoub

This article gives a brief overview of the state of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt), starting with a brief look at the concept, including why it is has to be composite, and why the focus has to be on empowerment. It focuses on MIL among the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (the Occupied Palestinian Territory), including East Jerusalem, among schoolchildren, university students, and among the general public. It also examines briefly the overall media context and situation, various MIL activities, and the most urgent needs of the Palestinian population with regard to MIL.

MIL as concept

MIL is a two-way concept. It includes both educating about how media work, how emotions and images can be manipulated, and how to work actively with media including new media and technology. MIL is a subject that is still settling, with the definition and scope still the subject of hot debates, but as a composite concept, comprising the technological (information literacy) along with the analytical skills (media literacy), it combines and underpins what is needed for full participation in today's world. In the words of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Media and Information Literacy Policy and Strategy Guidelines¹, "Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is a basis for enhancing access to information and knowledge, freedom of expression, and quality education. It describes skills and attitudes that are needed to value the functions of media and other information providers, including those on the Internet, in societies, and to find, evaluate and produce information and media content; in other words, it covers the competencies that are vital for people to be effectively engaged in all aspects of development." As different forms of media have proliferated during the past 20 years, so have the different names and different forms of

literacy, such as digital literacy, Internet literacy, even social networking literacy, with new terms accompanying the new developments in technology. These can be taken as included in the overall umbrella of MIL.² While media literacy is sometimes opposed to information or digital literacy, which are more concerned with skills and with Internet navigation, it is the combination of the two that has the most force. The UNESCO MIL policy and strategy paper gives clear details of how the two separate concepts combine: “Information Literacy focuses on the purposes of engaging with information and the process of becoming informed.”³ “While the concept of information literacy focuses on the information user as an autonomous decision-maker, citizen and learner, media literacy examines the ways in which the media environment facilitates, shapes, enables and, in some cases, constrains engagement with information and the communication process, be it for intentional or indirect learning, social participation or simply for entertainment.”⁴

In the context of the occupied Palestinian territories, “information literacy” is more present and more known than “media literacy” or the composite, MIL. In the case of libraries, training is taking place on information literacy: “Changes in technology are having a considerable impact on libraries and their instruction programmes. These changes require information literacy programmes for users to become more effective, efficient and independent in their information searching.”⁵ There is general appreciation of the importance of information literacy: all the 13 Palestinian universities offer ICT courses, as do many smaller community colleges, and in the revised Palestinian school curriculum, grades 5 to 10 are supposed to include technology education as part of the science and maths overall “STEM” (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) approach. However, it is the composite concept, MIL, with emphasis on media literacy as well as the information component, that is most relevant for the oPt, a nation that, regardless of the frustrating situation of prolonged occupation (in fact also because of this), that needs to move towards becoming a learning society, with a knowledge base, to build a viable democracy. “When addressed jointly, media and information literacy do not only interact, but add value in promoting participation in future knowledge societies.”⁶

In addition to the debate about the actual term, (which kind of literacy?) there has also been considerable debate as to whether MIL is protective or empowering (proactive). It can be seen as protective in so far as people are taught to analyze media content and read between the lines, understand the messages behind the images, and therefore become less vulnerable, less easy prey. This is especially in relation to children and media, where research has tended to focus on the possible negative impacts, even dangers from unfiltered media. But it is the proactive empowering element of MIL that really makes it essential for all sectors of society. Renee Hobbs, for instance, describes how: “we look to digital and media literacy to help us more deeply engage with ideas and information to make decisions and participate in cultural life”⁷ MIL is proactive and empowering in so far as people are taught to read, listen, watch, perhaps interact, with an active critical approach, not simply a passive receptivity. It

is also proactive in so far as people are taught to work creatively – not as technicians, but again in regard to content, so they can choose, develop and produce their own media messages.

UNESCO again, sums this up well:

The ‘everywhereness’ of information, media, Internet and other information providers requires a greater emphasis on citizens’ empowerment by ensuring that they have the skills, attitudes and knowledge that will enable them to critically and effectively interact with content in all forms of media and with all information providers. The digital age thus calls for a shift from a “protectionism only” approach to a focus on citizen empowerment. This does not necessarily imply that protection, for instance Internet safety, should be abandoned, but the emphasis should be on empowerment. Emphasis on only protectionism may lead to excessive restrictions being placed on media and other information providers. Further, children who do not acquire the competencies to be critical of media and information will be more susceptible to the potential negative influence of information and media content and less equipped to capitalize on opportunities when they become adults.⁸

By encouraging greater awareness of the various forces in society, such as media owners, business, special interests, MIL programs encourage civic engagement. “MIL has the citizen as its starting point. In addressing the status of the citizen, MIL is underpinned by human rights....” However, people are not regarded as inactive from an MIL perspective. Rather, they are actively involved in constructing their own realities. “Thus, the purpose of MIL becomes one of empowering people to actively take part in determining the conditions under which they live.”⁹ What is more, MIL becomes its own engine of empowerment: “...There is strong evidence to support the hypothesis that if young people gain greater media literacy and access to the internet, they will use it to obtain information about and express their views on political and other public debates.”¹⁰

The examples of media literacy projects in the oPt, such as those teaching children to become “Media Smart” or enhancing the rule of law, or participatory video, are all in fact examples of MIL as empowerment. MIL as protection can contribute to awareness around the manipulation of words, images and general propaganda, thereby giving some protection against manipulation, scaremongering and divisiveness, although even this is in a way also a form of empowerment. Too much of a protective approach would risk being yet another restriction on already restricted lives, where human rights are lacking. Both the protection and the empowerment elements are relevant in the context of conflict. MIL “enables diversity, dialogue and tolerance.”¹¹ What is more, MIL can also be considered an important component of peace building as it shapes self-awareness, awareness of others and awareness of bias and stereotyping, thereby building resistance to them, and generally to propaganda.¹²

Brief background on the political situation and media landscape

The oPt (East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) are roughly 6,220 square kilometres (2,402 square miles), with a population of just over 4.5 million in 2014 (2,790,000 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and 1,760,000 in the Gaza Strip) of whom nearly 70 per cent are under 30 years old.¹³ Since June 1967, for nearly 50 years, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been living under Israeli military occupation, and in East Jerusalem, which was annexed by Israel, where the Palestinians are also directly subject to Israeli laws. Israel retains control over every aspect of Palestinian lives.

The current state of affairs for Palestinians in the oPt is summed up by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA):¹⁴

Palestinian civilians living in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) continue to bear the brunt of ongoing conflict and Israeli occupation. A lack of respect for international humanitarian and human rights law has resulted in a protection crisis with serious and negative humanitarian consequences. In the Gaza Strip, Israel continues to impose a land, sea and air blockade that has significantly undermined livelihoods, seriously diminished the quality of, and access to, basic services, and which amounts to collective punishment of the population of the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, East Jerusalem is isolated from the rest of the West Bank. Communities in Area C face a range of pressures, including demolitions, settler violence, and movement and access restrictions, that make meeting basic needs increasingly difficult and threaten Palestinian presence in the area. Bedouin and herder communities are particularly vulnerable. Unlawful Israeli settlement activity lies at the heart of many of the humanitarian difficulties facing Palestinians in the West Bank. Overall, the lack of accountability for violations of human rights and humanitarian law, along with a failure to effectively enforce the rule of law when it comes to attacks on Palestinians and their property by Israeli military forces or Israeli settlers, has created a climate of impunity that contributes to further violence.

History

The first Palestinian newspaper was published on September 18, 1908,¹⁵ with a license from the Ottoman rulers, rapidly followed by licences for 15 more newspapers and magazines. Apart from a brief hiatus during World War I, the media continued to develop and thrive first under the Ottomans and then under the British Mandate (1922-48). The first radio station, Honaalquds (“This is Jerusalem Calling”) was launched in March 1936. From 1948 to 1967, the Gaza Strip was under the control of Egypt, and the West Bank of the River Jordan was under the control of Jordan, with the media continuing under their respective auspices, while the rest of British Mandate Palestine became the Israeli state. In June 1967, the “Six-Day War” left Israel in control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula and Syria’s Golan Heights. Israel

imposed a military occupation on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and annexed East Jerusalem, and, immediately clamped down on Palestinian media. In 1968, some newspapers, such as Al-Quds, As-Shaab, An-Nahar and Al-Fajr, representing different Palestinian factions, and all printed in Jerusalem, were allowed, but only with heavy censorship, and often with large glaring blanks on the pages.¹⁶ No Palestinian television or radio stations were allowed. Therefore, in those days before widespread satellite access, Palestinians under occupation would mostly watch either Jordanian or Israeli television. They did however have access to a broad range of international radio stations, and several monthly magazines, including those published within Israel.¹⁷

Less traditional media were prominent, too. In the “Intifada,” the Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation in 1987, the main form of media that gave the instructions for the forms of nonviolent resistance (such as what days to strike, what hours shops should be closed) and therewith drove the uprising, was leaflets, distributed in the name of the Unified Leadership of the Intifada. Graffiti were also used a lot at that stage and are still very much part of the Palestinian media landscape, generally expressing political affiliation. It was only after the Oslo Peace accords of 1993 and 1995 that Palestinian radio and TV stations were allowed to operate. This time, apart from the original newspapers, they were allowed only in the West Bank and Gaza and not in Jerusalem, as the Palestinian Authority was not allowed to operate in Jerusalem. Despite rapid proliferation of media outlets, the situation remains complex in relation to freedom of expression, frequencies, and other core matters, and is still essentially under Israeli control.

The media landscape

The media environment in the West Bank and Gaza is, at best, a confusing one. Three ministries control licensing, airwave rentals, and fees, and they were in conflict until late 2005. The media law is at odds with the basic law. The press and publications law is currently being reworked. Many say there are too many media outlets.¹⁸

The main media outlet is the Palestine Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) set up in 1995 with “Palestine TV” as the national satellite (and originally also terrestrial) television, the “Voice of Palestine,” the national radio station, and the national news and information agency “Wafa” (in Arabic, English, French and Hebrew). Originally broadcasting from Gaza, the PBC moved to Ramallah in 2007, when there was a split between the two main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, leading to separate governments in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In a survey published by Internews in 2014,¹⁹ “in the West Bank alone, there are 17 terrestrial TV stations and 72 radio stations...the majority of stations are in [the main cities] Hebron Nablus, Ramallah.” According to the UNESCO Assessment of Media Development in Palestine, published in 2014, there are: “85 radio stations – 70 in the West Bank and 15 in the Gaza Strip – and 17 local TV stations, which broadcast from the West Bank. There are also four satellite channels: Maan and Falastiniat in the West Bank and Al-Aqsa and Al-Kittab from Gaza.”²⁰

In addition to the local media, Palestinians watch Aljazeera (established in 1996) and Al Arabiya (established in 2003) and any of the wide variety of available satellite channels.²¹

There are three main newspapers in the West Bank, Al Quds (published in Jerusalem), Al Ayyam (published in Ramallah) and Al Hayat Al Jadida (also published in Ramallah). There is one newspaper published in Gaza called Al Resala. “There are approximately 18 local news agencies with locations in Gaza and the West Bank.”²² The newspapers also have online versions. According to the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, about one-fifth of Palestinian households take a daily newspaper and more than half prefer to listen to the news: “The percentage of households in Palestine who obtain a daily newspaper was 20 per cent distributed as 24 per cent in the West Bank and 14 per cent in the Gaza Strip compared with 32 per cent in 2009. Also, 23 per cent of persons aged 10 years and above in Palestinian society read newspapers: 27 per cent of males and 18 per cent of females.” The percentage of households who listen to radio stations was 61 per cent, including 57 per cent in the West Bank and 68 per cent in the Gaza strip. With regard to the households’ first choice of programs, news ranked the highest followed by religious programs and music and songs.²³

New media are developing fast. In the decade preceding 2014, the number of young people with access to mobile phones has doubled – 75 per cent of young people own a mobile phone (79 per cent in the West Bank against 69 per cent in the Gaza Strip) compared to 35 per cent in 2004. For 28 per cent of youth ages 18-35, the Internet is now their primary source of information while 25 per cent of people use the Internet daily. Some 50 per cent of youth aged 15-29 in the Palestinian Territory do not read newspapers or magazines at all – 40 per cent in the West Bank and 65 per cent in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2013). In 2013, 68 per cent of young people in the age group 15-29 used a computer (70 per cent in the West Bank and 63 per cent in the Gaza Strip) and 43 per cent used e-mail (PCBS, 2013). The landscape is changing and moving to younger users as shown by figures from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) indicating that in 2014, 60 per cent of the population aged 10 or over used a computer and 54 per cent used the Internet. (PCBS 2014).²⁴ This should facilitate MIL programs with schools. Even in 2012, UNESCO reported that the percentage of Internet users in the oPt, 58 per cent, was almost 20 per cent higher than the average (40 per cent) for the MENA region.

UNESCO draws attention to the development of community media, noting that “despite having limited access to the Internet, community media use the available ICTs to convey their message to the community and encourage public interaction through the existing means of communication, such as mobile phones and land lines.”²⁵ Two radio stations (Ajyal and Raya) have developed apps to broadcast their programs to smart phones in areas out of range of frequencies. UNESCO also mentions another example of community media, Honaalquds, a community radio and news agency in the Old City of Jerusalem that targets the Jerusalemite community and broadcasts via the Internet.²⁶ However, social media are the most popular method of communication among

Palestinians, and Facebook is far and away the most prevalent form (used primarily for chatting and by nearly half the entire population,²⁷ according to Socialbakers (a social media analysis and publicity company for Facebook.)²⁸ “The number of Facebook users is the third highest in the region with over 1,987,000 making it #81 in the ranking of all Facebook statistics by country in an area with a population of approximately 4 million.” Again, according to Socialbakers, “Although Twitter has been slow to catch among Palestinians, the interest and usage has increased in the three years since the Arab uprising. In 2013, the total number of active Twitter users reached 36,800.”

Use of broadcast media

UNESCO sums it up: “The conditions of Palestine’s use of broadcasting frequencies were decided by the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995. Frequencies have been granted to Palestinian governmental radio and TV media outlets only and not formally to the private or community broadcast media. The PA has not, to date, devised a plan for spectrum allocation and management. The PA is now looking to develop a plan for digital transition to be implemented mid-2015 as per the road map set out by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The lack of a proper legal basis renders the Palestinian spectrum management unclear and unstable.”²⁹ “Unclear and unstable” means that Israel can close down Palestinian stations whenever it wants, on the pretext that they are interfering with its communications. This will soon change however, as in relation to traditional media, especially radio and television, the media landscape is set to change between 2015 and 2020, as throughout the Arab world TV and radio frequencies are moving from analogue to digital.³⁰ Mamoun Mattar, a Palestinian expert who has been working on this, states that: “One of the biggest advantages of going digital will be that the current spectrum will be freed of frequencies that can have other usages. It will allow for the use of 4G technologies for local cell phone companies and therefore allow us to skip the problems over 3G, which Israel is refusing to give to the Palestinian cell phone companies, using the excuse that the frequency spectrum for 3G is already full.”³¹ This fogginess over frequencies is part of the Palestinian media landscape, which includes attacks both on the infrastructure and on journalists themselves.³²

Lack of safety for Palestinian journalists, and problems over freedom of expression

While problems of safety and freedom of expression for journalists are not directly connected to MIL, they still have an impact on the overall media scene in Palestine. The Israeli occupation permeates the media landscape as it does the political scene, and “Where there is an environment of fear the media cannot effectively carry out their role of disseminating information to the public and fostering democracy. Safety standards for journalists in Palestine are poor. Numerous assaults have been recorded by international and local institutions that monitor violations against Palestinian journalists.”³³ Journalists are often affected by Israeli restrictions on movement (including the denial of access to Jerusalem) just as much as the rest of the population. The Israeli

army also sometimes deliberately targets journalists, so they are generally discouraged from moving around. The violations against Palestinian journalists by the Israelis are escalating according to a 2014 report by the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA):³⁴

The violations monitored by MADA escalated in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in 2014, compared to the violations against journalists and media freedoms in Palestine monitored during the previous years. The total number of crimes and violations in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem reached 465 in 2014. The IOF [*Israel Occupying Forces*] committed the most serious and dangerous violations: 351 cases, i.e. 75 per cent of the total of violations. The Palestinian side committed 114 violations, i.e. 25 per cent of the total. The number of the Israeli violations was double of the violations committed in 2013, with the Israeli violations rising from 151 violations in 2013 to 351 assaults in 2014, which means an escalation of 132 per cent.

MADA also pointed out that half the Israeli attacks directly threatened the lives of journalists. Moreover, 17 Palestinian journalists and media workers were killed in the summer of 2014 alone in the Israeli operation “Protective Edge.”³⁵

The impact of the conflict on media for Palestinians is, therefore, like other aspects of the occupation, oppressive and restrictive. The impact on MIL is to hold it back along with all other developments that could take place in a more enabling environment. In an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, it is even more essential than in an atmosphere of peace and safety, to be able both to distinguish truth from falsehood and the real from the unreal, and to be able to engage in action, including media actions, that could perhaps improve the situation. It is not only the Israeli occupation that has a negative impact on the Palestinian media landscape. Specifically, the rift between the two main factions Fatah and Hamas that began in May 2007, has severely negatively affected the Palestinian media scene.

Although since 2014 there is an official reconciliation and “unity government” made up of members from Fatah and Hamas, it is not clear how long this will last and the situation remains tense. As the extreme factionalism and aggressive divisions encourage media being both used and perceived as propaganda and attack tools rather than reliable sources of information, the Palestinian media environment, by extension, tends to have a negative impact on media and media literacy. Rather than encourage pluralism and respect for human rights, the media climate encourages divisions, bias and even violence, and pushes people away from mutual understanding. As for MIL, Palestinians primarily watch Palestine TV (Fatah) or Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas) with varying levels of credulity. There is little criticism or analysis, with little tolerance for contrarian views. The preceding overview of the media landscape in Palestine is of specific relevance to local media literacy in so far as the bias in the coverage of news has become more and more extreme. “No doubt that the internal Palestinian division negatively impacted Palestinian media,” says Adel Zanoun, a reporter with Agence France-Presse in Gaza. “The most important impact was the gradual retreat among journalists from ethical,

professional and objective values and standards to political agendas, and the consequent exploitation of the news outlets in the respective areas. As such, many of the news outlets contributed, by agreeing to be a tool of the division, in strengthening the division itself.³⁶ The increase in partisan attitudes as expressed in the Palestinian media were not limited to them, but were also manifested in attacks on the press, and on journalists and bloggers. The figures from MADA's report (above) give evidence of this.³⁷ The problem of the Fatah-Hamas rift and the decline in media ethics is also linked to freedom of expression and the question of pluralism and diversity in the media³⁸ – the rift affects the laws as there cannot be elections and, therefore, the entire system is paralyzed.

Freedom of expression is part of the Palestinian constitution (article 19): “Freedom of opinion may not be prejudiced. Every person shall have the right to express his opinion and to circulate it orally, in writing or in any form of expression or art, with due consideration to the provisions of the law.”³⁹ But it is not so simple. There are in fact many contradictory laws. There are various press laws that guarantee freedom of opinion and expression for each Palestinian and freedom of the press, such as Article 4 of the Palestinian Press and Publications Law, while Article 7 stipulates that it is “illegal to publish anything that goes against the general system,” without defining what this means. Indeed, the law institutes a number of sweeping restrictions on the content of what may be published, many of which are unacceptably broad or vague.⁴⁰ In fact the legal situation is extremely unclear, with laws still in force from Ottoman times, from the British Mandate and from Jordan.⁴¹ For instance, Jordanian Criminal Law No 16 of 1960 applied in the West Bank defines slander as: “The attribution of a specific statement about someone – even as a suspicion or a question – that may damage his honour or dignity or expose him to derision, whether the crime requires punishment or not.”⁴² This allows any number of restrictions and arrests on the grounds of slander or libel, and as criminal offenses they are punishable by imprisonment. UNESCO states that “Both the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the de facto authorities in Gaza exercise tight control over the information disseminated by the media. There have been cases of media content being censored and journalists being detained and persecuted for voicing political opinions and for reporting on human rights violations.”⁴³ It goes on to say that, “Official bodies prosecute most often in response to published material that allegedly defames political figures, damages national security, incites hatred or includes inaccurate information.”⁴⁴ In addition to the external constraints on freedom of expression, there is also a serious problem with self-censorship.

In a study released in December 2014, showing that 80 per cent of interviewed journalists practice self-censorship, MADA's General Director Musa Rimawi pointed out that the spread of self-censorship seriously impacts the quality of Palestinian journalism, in addition to hampering freedom of expression and citizens' right to information. He explained that self-censorship obstructs the role that journalism must play in a democratic society.⁴⁵ The question of pluralism and diversity in the media is clear from the problems with the Fatah-Hamas rift and the extreme bias in some of the media outlets. But, as the sheer number of outlets shows, there is open access to these opposing views.

In general the media reflect the tradition of openness and tolerance prevalent in Palestinian society towards different groups. The problem is more with the perception of bias in media outlets, not in their being dominated by any one group. UNESCO states that “there does not necessarily appear to be much trust in media outlets overall,”⁴⁶ and that “a number of Palestinian media outlets tend to be biased towards one political orientation and are reported to design their programmes on the basis of their political leaning rather than the needs of their audiences.”⁴⁷

Background for Media and Information Literacy

MIL, as such, is still a relatively new concept in Palestine, both in the education system and in civil society. The writers of this chapter were introduced to media literacy outside the context of Palestine – via work with nonviolence and gender, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), and media activities in Jordan. Since 2009, there has been growing appreciation of MIL’s importance. There has also been an increasing number of activities related to information and media literacy, as there have been a number of projects, i.e. developing skills, and how to navigate today’s digital world.

There is also growing realization of the need to raise the general level of awareness on how to interact and deal with the media. These activities are being organized across all sectors of society: civil society, academia, government and the private sector. For instance, “In relation to schools, and information literacy, the Ministry of Education has had several initiatives regarding e-learning since 1995, and several projects were conducted such as ‘Intel teach’ that was related to training teachers on the use of ICT in education and training them on basic computer skills, involving more than 10,000 teachers. Other major projects related to the use of ICT in education were ‘world links’ funded by the European Union (EU), ‘SEED’ funded by the Japanese International Cooperation Fund (JICA), as well as smaller projects.”⁴⁸ More than developments in technology, however, it is the prolonged conflict that has had, and continues to have, the most impact on everything to do with media, including media literacy, for Palestinians. One aspect of the occupation, for instance, is the severe restriction on movement imposed on the Palestinian population. Media is one of the ways that can help to overcome these. From teaching children through televised classes (in Hebron), to Facebook, to meetings via digital videoconference between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, although they are often not possible due to the lack of sufficient electricity.⁴⁹

The current situation is one of frustration and fragmentation among the Palestinian population, as the Israeli occupation continues, and becomes increasingly entrenched, and as the level of human security decreases and hopes for a just solution fade. The occupation remains the dominating feature of all Palestinians’ lives. It also keeps the bulk of the population constantly focused on media to keep up with what is happening around them. MIL is especially important for Palestinians. With more media awareness, their sources and messages, along with an ability to analyze them, Palestinians could perhaps take more control of their lives and the process of conflict, “actively determining the

conditions under which they live,”⁵⁰ and start to improve their human security. Given the intensity of the international focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Palestinians are used to seeing themselves represented in the media. Foreign journalists covering the conflict regularly number in the hundreds. But this representation of Palestinians all too often is negative, whether as victims or as violent actors and terrorists, thus feeding into existing stereotypes. What is more, these negative images affect self-image and lead to disempowerment and demoralization among Palestinians. MIL could help Palestinians escape from some of these chains as they communicate more and better with the outside world; as they build up internal freedom and democracy within Palestinian society, and become sure of their own battered and bruised identity.

Media literacy and universities

It is via universities that various projects on media literacy, as opposed to just information literacy, have begun to be implemented and to have an impact. Some 300 students graduate every year from the 10 Palestinian universities in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza that currently offer BAs in various forms of media studies, though only Birzeit and Al-Quds Universities do additional work on media literacy. The Islamic University in Gaza is so far the only Palestinian institution to offer an MA in Journalism and Media.

Media literacy is not a separate major or emphasis area under the umbrella of media studies, although it is included in a general way in courses across the board from the theoretical “Introduction to Media” and “International Media,” to a variety of practical courses on different media techniques. Al Quds Open University (a completely different entity from Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, owned and funded by the Palestinian Authority and with a very large virtual student body, in the tens of thousands, as it has offices in all major population centers), through collaboration with the Palestinian Ministry of Information, has provided training and education in the media as a general course for its students. This has included field visits to Palestinian and other media institutions to draw students’ attention to the media as a means of influencing and bringing about change in the community. It provides an introduction to MIL as a means of empowerment.

Finally, and only tangentially connected with media literacy, starting in 2013, Al-Quds University developed a series of training manuals on investigative journalism, for professional journalists, for civil society (including training 30 NGO representatives), and undergraduates. Since February 2014, the course was approved and has been included as a requirement for all undergraduates. This is part of a project funded by the United Nations Democracy Education Fund (UNDEF), which has included the production of 36 investigative reports, partly with the aim of raising the standard of expectations on the part of the public regarding Palestinian media. While this is not specifically media and information literacy, by raising expectations regarding reporting, it indirectly encourages media literacy, as audiences will start to look for more depth and accuracy and in general view news reports with a more critical eye.

Media literacy projects

Both Al-Quds University and Bir Zeit University have worked specifically on MIL projects. Birzeit, in conjunction with FOJO of Sweden, spearheaded a project on media literacy education in secondary schools. Al-Quds has introduced MIL via community and school projects, such as training the “popular resistance” nonviolent activists, (groups of Palestinians who since 2005 have been organising weekly nonviolent demonstrations in their villages, to try to change the route of the Israeli separation wall) both in how to use and how to analyse the media. The Media Development Center of Birzeit University implemented the first specific MIL project, “Helping Palestinian Children Become Media Smart,” in 2007. Its goal was to deepen the understanding of children and adolescents, to inform them and to provide them with tools for analysis and critique of the various types of media messages, as well as encourage them to undertake their own media productions.⁵¹ “It included a new media literacy toolkit for Palestinian schools to help children become “media smart.” The toolkit was the result of a joint project between the Birzeit University Media Development Center (MDC), in Ramallah, and Sweden’s FOJO, the Institute for Further Education of Journalists. Some of the activities were tested in a pilot workshop for Palestinian schoolchildren in the Ramallah area – 21 children aged 9-14 and three teachers spent a day at the BZU Media Center, discussing what makes media tick and how they influence our lives. The children analyzed all kinds of media, from newspapers to the Internet to graffiti. After a lively discussion, the workshop ended with the children producing their own “fanzine.” Participating children’s comments were enthusiastic:

I learned in the workshop how to differentiate between important news and unimportant news that does not touch our lives or our concerns, but unfortunately it fills the newspapers. I dream of an integrated Palestinian newspaper or magazine that meets the tastes and needs of children and adolescents and the family in general. (Aya Jayousi – sixth grade, 12 years old)

The first stage of this project, in 2008/2009, involved producing a toolkit: a manual for seventh grade school children along with a manual for their teachers. The preparation of these manuals was based on a large number of interviews, meetings and workshops that included specialized institutions working with children, as well as media, teachers, writers and intellectuals, in addition to children themselves and their parents. Altogether, 2,000 hard copies were published. They are not available online. In 2009 the manuals were tested in eight schools; a combination of government, private, and the United Nations Refugee and Works Agency (UNWRA)⁵² schools. An evaluation of this stage, and further consultations resulted in the inclusion of an additional chapter on the art of journalistic writing, and the inclusion of practical exercises in media work. The manuals were based on nationwide input and expertise, and more importantly, on local Palestinian input and models. There were additional worksheets produced for training in media literacy, based on a comprehensive range of interviews and thorough

testing and preparation. The project continued for two years with the development and distribution of manuals, and 17 schools involved. The project was very participatory in nature, working continuously with the manuals as drafts, and regularly soliciting and incorporating feedback. Despite plans to continue with the project, the most recent meeting was in February 2011. The significance of this project notwithstanding at the formal education level in schools, there are always constraints due to constant pressure to focus on the official curriculum for each year, and to complete it during the allotted time. In the Occupied Palestinian territory, this can be quite challenging as there are often disruptions to the school year, due to “normal” interference by the Israeli occupation, such as road closures, incursions, and exacerbation of the overall conflict. There is officially one class per week allocated for “activities” such as MIL, citizen education, or drama, but to work effectively with the formal education system, it would be essential to integrate media literacy into the formal curriculum via the Ministry of Education, and especially to include it as a subject in the final school exams. This means much of the current work with schoolchildren on MIL has to be done via non-formal education, through projects with media institutions or NGOs.

In fact, it is through civil society that the bulk of MIL takes place. There are tens of projects (there are more than 2,400 NGOs in the oPt, according to an estimate from 2010⁵³) that include some element of media training and empowerment, such as a radio discussion or a film, as well as blogs or elements of social media. Fewer, however, include a specific element of media literacy such as media awareness, though these also exist. Youth organizations often implement projects, funded primarily by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU), that include media training and production. As an example of a youth empowerment project, Al-Quds University in 2013-14 implemented a project funded via the United States Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) that consisted of training 30 marginalized youth from East Jerusalem, many of whom had not completed their schooling, to become “citizen journalists.” This resulted in a group of confident and empowered young people, several of whom were able to find work, and all of whom are now able to express themselves on camera and via all forms of modern media. Their training focused on media literacy as well as on specific skills and competencies.

An example of a current very wide-reaching youth-centred project,⁵⁴ also funded via USAID, is one that began in 2009 with the training of three groups of youth in media skills and the establishment of youth media centers in three key city centers. Again, this is more closely related to media skills and information literacy than specifically to media literacy. However, the project was restarted in 2015 by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) as the “Partnership with Youth.” As part of the project, youth in the West Bank were to develop pre-employment and marketable employability skills through engagement in media activities, information communications technology (ICT) programs, and other areas such as the English language, sports, drama, and the environment. This involves extensive practical training in new media techniques and the project has included the production of a media training manual for the youth,

with some media literacy components. One of the more interesting projects on MIL that actually focused as much on literacy as on skills, combined learning about the law with learning about media. In January 2012 Al-Quds University's Institute of Modern Media engaged in MIL education via a series of projects to promote justice and the rule of law through the use of media. The projects were funded by USAID's Palestinian Justice Enhancement program (PEJP) with the aim of raising the levels of knowledge and awareness among school children and teachers in the Palestinian governorates on the principles of the rule of law, and as a way to combat internal community violence (20 schoolchildren and 10 teachers).⁵⁵ The children and teachers attended workshops on how to create media messages and analyze them. They were also trained in the use and questioning of media with regard to many issues of concern to both the community and individuals in Palestinian society. They produced three documentaries, four talk shows, five radio reports, and 20 written reports. The training included many different pedagogical methods to ensure the children's attention and interaction with the trainer and the taught material. The trainer's feedback on the teachers training was very positive; he mentioned that the teachers' session included a very interesting and lively discussion on the current lack of law enforcement, its obstacles and possibilities to overcome them.

Jana Hamarsheh, a 15-year-old student from Jenin was one of the workshop participants. In her interview she said she was very happy during her participation in the training, as it was a very special experience for her and enhanced her understanding of the law, the justice sector and the role of media as an informant of society, which can be used to strengthen the rule of law. Jana stated that she personally enjoyed the part in which participants were trained on how to produce TV and radio reports. She added that the trainers asked the school children to give examples from their daily lives, such as the issue of school dropouts or the right to vote, and used this example to explain how the rule of law can help solve this problem as well as how media can be used to spread information and awareness on the subject. Jana said she plans to share her experiences with classmates. As an example of empowerment through MIL, another project implemented by Al-Quds University in 2008, "All Children Together" (ACT), funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), taught children with special needs how to use media to create and report via programs catering to their needs. It empowered them to speak up on their need for inclusion in the general education system from which they are frequently excluded.

Media literacy and civil society

At the level of civil society, as opposed to universities, The Foundation for the Future has focused on training Palestinians to promote community accountability through the use of media. The foundation organized a program in partnership with the Maan News Network in Bethlehem, which started in 2011, during which participants were trained on how to use media to monitor the performance of various institutions operating in

the community, and to hold accountable those responsible for mistakes and corruption. The project was named “Empowering Citizens, Civil Society and Media to Demand Accountability and Good Governance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories” (OPt). Its main focus was on training 10 Palestinian journalists and civil society actors on how to act as strong and independent interlocutors between the Palestinian population and those in positions of power in the Palestinian National Authority. Specifically, training was designed to focus on utilizing innovative media activities and strengthening awareness of best practices.

Another civil society approach is that of “participatory video,” a form of empowerment through the teaching of video/film techniques to small groups of ordinary people – often marginalized groups, such as women and youth – whereby they learn both to film and be filmed and to become aware of their own image. This method has been used particularly by Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy (MEND) in projects supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and more recently with the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University.⁵⁶ The MEND project with Sussex University was undertaken in the context of research on change, and the importance of participation as an element in creating change, with the aim of proving how a participatory approach is crucial to formulating the next set of sustainable development goals. The films were shown at the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in September 2013, as part of a campaign to influence policy makers towards a more participatory approach regarding sustainable development goals. The short films were designed and produced by two groups of rural women from villages on the outskirts of Jerusalem that have been totally cut off from the city by the Israeli separation wall. With no media background, after 52 hours of training⁵⁷ the women were directly responsible for every stage of each film; they chose their own subjects, wrote their own storyboards, did their own filming. Everything short of editing. But they also worked with the editor for the day given to each film.

The above examples come from the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where despite the many problems and restrictions on human rights due to the occupation, there is still some level of media freedom. However, efforts towards education on MIL in the Gaza Strip have been considerably fewer, due to appalling security conditions and the Israeli-imposed siege since 2007. Nevertheless, there have been some attempts at MIL in a few schools. These were carried out by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the Gaza Strip in 2010, as part of a project on media education for children. The project was implemented at the ministry’s headquarters, with the participation of 20 children, some of them very young, one even described as a “baby.” The ministry organized an additional workshop with experts to discuss a vision for the activation of school sports and how to work with it via media. This workshop involved 12 hours of training, included a simplified definition of the concepts of the press and news reports and interviews, as well as how to develop websites, how to analyze, how to implement and how to develop good interactions with the media. Sadly, with the deterioration of

conditions in Gaza, especially since the war in the summer of 2014, the focus switched to urgent basic needs.⁵⁸

Media literacy in the context of peace building

Living under occupation is often humiliating, whether directly or indirectly. This damage to dignity and self-respect is also harmful to the sense of self. MIL, through its empowerment, can help rebuild self-respect and a strong sense of identity. These are also an essential base for being able to engage in cross-cultural dialogue and peace building. This process of self-identity formation is critical to intercultural dialogue, enabling people to understand their own cultural points of departure, and thus engage in dialogue on the basis of an “authentic communication” in which they “have an awareness of the ways in which they might be manipulated or coerced and an awareness of the ways in which differential power is operative in the society.”⁵⁹ What is more, MIL can also be considered an important component of peace building as it shapes self-awareness, awareness of others and awareness of bias and stereotyping, thereby building resistance to them, and generally to propaganda.⁶⁰

Projects using MIL as a peace building tool could have a lot of potential, and could be a way to shift some of the negative stereotyping that contributes (directly or indirectly) to the perpetuation of the occupation, and to work towards overcoming some of the psychological obstacles to peace. There has been one attempt at working with media literacy as an approach to peace-making, funded by the European Union and implemented on the Palestinian side by the Israel–Palestine Journal, which has a joint Israeli-Palestinian editorial board and staff. As a joint project, with an emphasis on reaching the Israeli side, it is on the very edge of the scope of this chapter, but it did work with some young Palestinians and did focus specifically on media “to encourage students to apply critical thinking to the functioning of older and newer media, and to offer alternative approaches to, and messages about conflict coverage. “The project, funded by the EU as part of their ‘Peace Education Through Media,’” featured three expert roundtable discussions (15-20 participants) in Jerusalem in 2010 and 2011, and included a detailed policy paper on “Media Guidelines for Covering the Middle East Conflict”⁶¹ modelled on the theoretical bases of critical media literacy for the purpose of developing students’ critical analysis and evaluation of media frames of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is based on the experimental resources of three academic colleges in Israel (two of them teacher training institutions), which encourage students to apply critical thinking to the functioning of older and newer media, and to offer alternative approaches to and messages about conflict coverage. In this way it offers students the experience, both as consumers and producers, of being critical citizens of current digital new media.”⁶²

The other joint project: Middle East Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow (MEET) focuses on information literacy. Established in 2005 under the auspices of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MEET works with Palestinian and Israeli secondary school children

in a three-year program that “enables its participants to acquire advanced technological and leadership tools while empowering them to create positive social change within their own communities.”⁶³ The teaching takes place at the Hebrew University, and, as it is in East Jerusalem, due to the Israeli restrictions on Palestinian access, is only open to Palestinian children from Jerusalem.

Educational needs

Education is one of the areas frequently suffering from the negative effects of the Israeli occupation, due to closures of schools, of roads, or to settler violence, as well as from flare-ups of the conflict.⁶⁴ The only locally produced publication specifically on media literacy is via the FOJO/Birzeit project. The IREX project includes a training manual in Arabic, but more focused on practical media skills than on the analytical approach of media and information literacy. While there is an excellent training manual for teachers in Arabic produced by UNESCO,⁶⁵ unfortunately this is not widely known, compared with the many resources on the topic in English. This reflects a real problem in that many of the educational institutions would like to provide media literacy, but have difficulty in finding educational and training materials for the reliable implementation of their programs. The authors of this chapter, for instance, were both introduced via materials in translation and via other projects.

In general, the Palestinian educational environment discourages media literacy by discouraging all forms of critical thinking and enquiry. The final high school exam, the Tawjihi, is based on rote learning in all subjects.⁶⁶ Even in science it is possible to achieve a grade of 99 per cent without ever having performed a scientific experiment.⁶⁷ Media literacy, by contrast, as a skill that develops a curious, critical and analytical approach, could and should ideally be taught even in primary schools.⁶⁸ It includes familiarity and “literacy” with the Internet. But while Internet literacy might seem to provide a possible entry point, unfortunately the vast majority of government and UNRWA, despite the introduction of technology as a compulsory subject from grades 5 to 10, many public schools do not have enough computers or Internet bandwidth. Many will only have one computer at most for the school principal, and none for the children. Schools often cannot afford to maintain an Internet connection (a cost of some \$40 per month). Despite major progress in the provision of materials, equipment and ICT, the challenge is to get evidence on their actual levels of use in schools and classrooms.⁶⁹ This means exploring to what extent they are really used, how intensively and in which subjects, what the level of curriculum integration is, and, most importantly, the impact on student performance and learning outcomes. All are key elements for the future agenda of improving quality and relevance of education in the West Bank and Gaza.

The issue of MIL in the Palestinian curriculum is essentially non-existent. There have not been any discussions or debates of MIL at the national level. Nor has there been any decision to incorporate the subject in the curriculum in spite of the huge and rapid developments in the media, and the growing presence of social media and their

increasing impact on students and schools. There is an urgent need to identify and develop sound approaches and teaching tools to deal with these new developments and to teach young people to analyze the mass of information in all the various media. While media literacy is much needed and is highly relevant in today's world for Palestinians as for all in the MENA region, it will take time and dedicated work with the Ministry of Education to convince policy makers of its importance as a separate subject of focus in the school curriculum before it can be mainstreamed.

Recommendations

MIL in its sense of understanding the media and being able to analyze and criticize, and in its sense of knowing how to use media and participate, especially via the use of digital tools, is crucial for the development and empowerment of individuals and societies.⁷⁰ The authors believe it essential to be included in the formal education system in the oPt, from primary schools through universities. The process of mainstreaming MIL can perhaps be done most effectively by a combination of a bottom-up and top-down approach. Bottom-up to make sure the needs of the general public, and especially women and youth and marginalized groups, are heard and addressed in any program. Top-down, to make sure that the process can be implemented throughout the education systems – primary, secondary and tertiary, and both formal and non-formal.

We therefore make the following specific recommendations:

1. A high-level multi-stakeholder consultation

One of the best ways to initiate and give immediate momentum to MIL would be to organize a high-level consultation with representatives from the UNAoC, UNESCO, and other development agencies with expertise in MIL and could thereby engage high-level officials from the Palestinian Authority and educational community in the appreciation of the importance of MIL and the formulation of a national strategy.

It would be important to incorporate monitoring and evaluation from the outset to make sure the project takes place as planned and that schools and teachers don't just put it to one side. It would be better to start small and prove the effectiveness of MIL.

2. Regarding primary and secondary education

MIL should be introduced to the main (compulsory) curriculum for primary and secondary schools, starting from first grade. It should be treated as an essential form of literacy in this day and age. The focus should be on practical exercises, not on theories, and on encouraging children to ask questions, not just learn by heart.

It is not enough to have it as an option. It needs to be included from primary school through to the final "Tawjihi" (terminal high school) exam.

The first step could be a workshop/consultation under the auspices of the UN, and especially in conjunction with the Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and

Information Literacy (GAPMIL)⁷¹ to raise awareness of the success in other contexts, and to share the tools such as the MIL curriculum for teachers, and the system for evaluation. In particular, it would be relevant for Palestinians to hear about the example of Argentina and work with young children in that country. Such a workshop would need to include all the local stakeholders, especially the UNRWA, that is responsible for roughly half the Palestinian schools. Since UNRWA has an extensive psycho-social program, it could contribute to how the MIL may help address these needs both in the oPt, and for other countries in the MENA region.

Teachers and officials would need to be trained, or at least given a thorough introduction to MIL. Monitoring and evaluation would be essential throughout the process.

3. Regarding universities/higher education

MIL should be a requirement for ALL university students (along with basic courses such as Islamic culture, etc.), and the emphasis should be on the practical not the theoretical.

A first step for higher education could be, in addition to the high-level consultation, a major conference under UN auspices, bringing international speakers and securing media coverage to get the subject into the discourse. There could be two days of conference and one day of very practical discussion on course building to help each participating university devise its own course for its specific student body.

Again, monitoring and evaluation should be built into the courses and participating universities and other higher education institutions would meet every few years for a follow-up conference to analyze the impact and results.

4. Regarding civil society

A manual should be produced – a Practical Guide for Civil Society – on how to deal with local and international media. This could also come out of the UN conference, and should include questions that arise during the conference. Ideally there would be a questionnaire and base-line study first. This would help with raising awareness about the subject and would help with both the conference and the production of relevant teaching and training materials. The survey would also provide a baseline for measurements and evaluation of various proposed programs.

Specific media literacy training programs for civil society should be developed and implemented by, and for, NGOs, based on the survey's responses.

The donor community should support such developments and training and other related projects, to raise awareness and establish at least a basic level of consciousness regarding the media. It would be important to include them in the conference and in the training to make it a really multi-stakeholder effort.

5. Regarding media outlets

There also needs to be training for media outlets to learn how to deal with feedback, to share in producing media, and to encourage people with media awareness to work

with them towards more openness, encourage media accountability and media ethics.⁷² One of the conference panels should deal with problems facing media outlets in the oPt, and media outlets should be included at all stages in both the consultation and the conference.

In addition, media outlets could participate in a national (even MENA-wide) campaign to promote MIL, via a series of radio/TV spots, apps, games, etc. This could be discussed initially at the consultation and the conference and would use the findings of the questionnaires. Perhaps one of the media outlets could develop cartoon characters, one male, one female, who learn, make mistakes, and are easily identifiable, to bring out the importance and relevance of MIL.

6. Regarding Palestinian society as a whole

Start establishing a more critical approach among civil society, media, and the general public, and promote the concept of media accountability. The conference could help by raising awareness and should produce an interactive page for the general public, perhaps linked with the GAPMIL initiative, to keep up an ongoing discussion.

For youth, MIL summer camps could be an attractive option, especially if they are international. Youth who have been trained in MIL could then become mentors and perhaps help with the development and rapid expansion of the program in primary and secondary schools.

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48. Rashid Jayousi, e-mail communication.
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51. <http://milunesco.unaoc.org/helping-palestinian-children-become-media-smart/>
52. UNRWA is the UN body responsible for the basic needs, notably the health and education of the Palestinian refugee population. This means it is responsible for roughly half the schools in the occupied territories.
53. http://www.palestine.rosalux.org/fileadmin/ab_palestine/pdf/RLF_newsletters_EN/RLF_PAL_Gerster_PNGOs.pdf
54. <https://www.irex.org/projects/partnerships-with-youth>
55. Project report – Annex 6b Milestone report No 1.
56. Sussex University published a book on this which includes a chapter on participatory video and another on the power of digital story telling: *‘Knowledge from the Margins: An anthology from a global network on participatory practice and policy influence’*. The publication is available here: <http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/4199#.U8aGllGfj2s>
57. The links for the films:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHs3otiFHfA> (Unhappy Birthday)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZiFSBZfezw> (The Swing)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81pcETn6sXI> (I Need Work)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWTFunqicE> (Blue I.D. Green I.D.)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48W2j1sN8Ag&feature=youtu.be> (A Day in Nebi Samuel)
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63. <http://meet.mit.edu/>
64. Outside the scope of this article, reports by NGOs such as the Sharek Youth Forum provide additional information: www.youthpolicy.org/national/Palestine_2009_Youth_Study.pdf
65. <http://unesdoc.unesdoc.org/images/0019/001929/192971a.pdf>
66. See note 65, Sharek Youth Forum, p.23
67. Many schools do not have labs. “Despite the undeniable overall success of the process of design and development of the new Palestinian curriculum, evidence from the first few years of implementation reveals a serious problem of overload. Principals and teachers, parents and students, supervisors and teacher trainers concur that the new curriculum is “too long” and “too demanding.” Opportunity to learn is undermined when there is too little time devoted to many of the key subjects; the fact that teachers and students voluntarily extend their classroom time in some schools to be able to cover the curriculum. A traditional approach emphasizing facts, descriptive knowledge and abstract theory does not leave curriculum space – or classroom time – to develop cognitive and citizenship skills required from graduates in the 21st century.
For more information, including details on the numbers of science or ICT labs, see <http://unispal.un.org/pdfs/ESASept06.pdf> The World Bank Group; Education Sector Analysis 2006 pp. 28 and 29
68. Personal communication from Dr. Rawan Assali, educational consultant, Faisal Hussein Foundation (an NGO that specializes in work with Palestinian schools).
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6. An Iraqi Perspective

Abdul Ameer Al-Faisal

Knowledge and cognition are key pillars to any country's growth and development, since information is considered a primary aspect of knowledge building and cognitive skills enrichment. Information is also a key tool of performance that contributes to the decision-making process. Hence, the failure and success of any administrative organization in achieving its goals hinges on the validity, credibility and accuracy of information used for drafting and decision-making by higher administrations. This, in turn, was the main impetus for many countries in the world to give increased attention to information and allocate funds to guarantee access to it. Iraq was not isolated from the rest of the world as is still witnessing a radical shift at all levels and in all fields. At the forefront of these changes comes the scientific and technological progress occurring in Iraq. All the more so with libraries, research centers and public opinion polls becoming the vital inexhaustible wellspring feeding progress to the scientific and technological movement. One might not be able to frame the information scene in Iraq, as it is evolving in a country that is swiftly turning to expanded use of information at all levels via unrestrained Internet access. The more developed societies become, the more complicated lifestyles get, the more information is accumulated and used, the more our need for additional data to help us make sound decisions.

The field of 'information' has been subjected to vital and fast-paced developments, dictated by cultural needs, coupled with a technological revolution that put forward the role of information as a cornerstone to various aspects of human activity, and as an effective primary resource which constitutes an integral part of social and economic development plans and programs. Hence, the current era is known as *The Age of Information*, given its prominence. To many observers today, we live in an information society as an alternative to the 'industrial society' which we experienced for most of the 20th century, with proof that working in the field of information has increased from 10 per cent to about 30 per cent of the workforce. In parallel, the size of the labor force

in agricultural professions has dropped to less than 4 per cent. Iraq has kept pace with the current boom in terms of the evolution and proliferation of information into which individuals and organizations tap, to promote advanced technological developments to monitor, collect, process, store, retrieve, transfer and use information via computers, microfilm techniques, and telecommunications, to name a few, and their coupling and association to form what we call 'information technology.'

The Internet and the media

Like previous new discoveries in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Internet technology has had an impact on media, with every medium preserving its character, strength and popularity. In the media industry, the Internet has caused a massive revolution in the Iraqi press, where the majority of newspapers booked sites on the Net, to present their outlets to readers online. This called for creativity and innovation as well as avoiding what was familiar and traditional. In short, the network imposed a new rationale that profoundly changed the news industry, with 134 (Iraqi) newspaper sites 47 magazines and thousands of electronic websites across Iraq. The Iraqi press has become increasingly interested in serious analyses, studies and comments. The Internet is considered a pivotal source and tool at the service of these journalistic genres that as it contains hundreds of newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, and news agencies, all of which are important sources of information sought by newspapers to present to the public.

The media at the service of the Iraqi national plan

Major changes in Iraq at all political, economic, social and security levels following April 2003 (U.S. invasion) required the emergence of an energetic national media movement able to accommodate those variables and based on high professional standards and mechanisms. That period saw an unusual proliferation of media and mass communication means, marked by the emergence of hundreds of newspapers and publications, satellite TV channels and online radio stations. This was made possible through the appropriation of a billion dollars by the U.S. government in 2004 to support the Iraqi media sector.

Successive Iraqi governments have focused on building a media framework aimed at ensuring news coverage in broadcast and print media, to highlight the country's social, economic and political issues and promote purposeful media. Iraq has undergone an unprecedented media experience as a result of the change that affected the philosophy of the new political system based on freedom of expression and democratic practices. These were approved by the Constitution in Article (2) of the fundamental principles – Section I, paragraph (b) stating that no law may be enacted contradicting the principles of democracy, provided such a law does not violate public order and morality, as per Article (36):

First: Freedom of expression by all means.

Second: Freedom of the press, publishing, advertising and media.

Third: Freedom of assembly and peaceful protest organized by law.

The National Information Technology Strategy in Iraq

The National Public Information Technology Strategy in Iraq includes a set of goals that can be summarized as follows:

1. To keep on developing the legal and regulatory environment to control, regulate and protect working and dealing in this field in line with developments related to information technology applications and systems.
2. To rehabilitate human resources and to allow them to plan, manage, operate and make optimal use of ICT applications.
3. To mainstream an IT culture and enhance the ability to own and use modern technologies among all segments of society, and to achieve computer literacy.
4. To enhance and encourage academic research capabilities and support innovation.
5. To disseminate and promote the culture of the use and development of open source software (Open Sources), mainly those that can be used in the development of new software packages.
6. To facilitate access to information and the use of the Internet by all segments of society.
7. To adopt the concept of true partnership between the public and private sectors in the development and implementation of plans for the transfer and localization of information technology applications and knowledge sources.
8. To protect individual data and institutional databases.
9. To protect the intellectual property rights of digital categories of works.

Information and national development strategy in Iraq

Information is at the core of all work, so success or failure in reaching key goals depend on understating it, organizing it and the ability to use it. Additionally, information is a source of economic wealth as the strategic plan to the planning operation depends mostly on correct information that leads to taking right decisions that achieve accurate results. Information has economic, social, cultural and political dimensions disseminated via libraries, information centers and systems. They serve as channels to market data and develop sources of information and their delivery to benefit researchers, workers and scholars in the field of development and the use of available technologies. A joint study was undertaken by the World Bank and United Nations to assess Iraq's needs and presented at the Madrid Conference in line with Iraq's national strategy that incorpo-

rates a comprehensive economic and social development program. The estimated cost of investments for the reconstruction of Iraq was set at about 136 billion dollars, but components of the national strategy did not address the design of a strategy for information policies or ICT infrastructure in the country, as it falls under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi Ministry of Science and Technology that is leading the transformation to information technology applications.

National information policy components

The components of the National Information Policy confirm the value of information and the legal and regulatory framework set for its promotion and management, including the government's role in this area. These elements include the policy on ICT infrastructure in order to develop it. Cultural aspects and the human factor are important elements of the national information policies, as is regional and international cooperation in this vital domain. They also represent the general framework of the national policy for information in Iraq, which supports all activities aimed at:

1. Identifying, using and promoting common standards in IT developments.
2. Pooling information sources to utilize them in the process of comprehensive decision-making.
3. Overcoming barriers that prevent information sharing, in conformity with the responsibilities of individuals and institutions, and that emphasize the privacy and unity of information.
4. Encouraging participatory approach within a favorable coordination mechanism that deals with social, sectoral and regulatory issues.
5. Encouraging efforts to create an information and communication. infrastructure considered urgent to link and exchange data.
6. Promoting efforts aimed at making Iraq a regional information center.

The stunning progress in all scientific and technological fields coupled with modern developments have resulted in an enormous increase in published information. This has had a direct impact on the economic and social development in each country, which has led to the establishment of institutions specializing in the collection, sorting, storage and retrieval of information before delivering it to researchers, scholars, decision-makers, scientists and others in a timely fashion.

Information technology infrastructure and communications in Iraq

At the beginning of the 19th and the 20th centuries, there were many libraries in mosques, as well as private libraries in the homes of dignitaries. Shortly thereafter, libraries spread in large cities, districts, and counties. The first such public structure in Baghdad, the *Peace Library*, was established in 1920. Other libraries followed suit

in Mosul, Basra and other Iraqi cities, with publications donated by people. A cultural and scientific embargo was imposed on Iraq as a result of various wars. But the resolve of those working in the field of information never faltered as conferences, seminars, workshops and meetings have been held on several occasions since 1995. A conference was held at the University of Mosul that included the role of information among other topics. The university's Department of Information and Libraries at the Faculty of Arts approved theses related to that topic. On the Arab and international fronts, the efforts materialized in the preparation for the World Summit on Information Society, initiated in stages in Geneva in December 2003. Similarly, ESCWA (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) held an experts meeting on the Promotion of the Digital Arabic Content, in June 2005 at the United Nations House in Beirut, aimed at empowering Arab states in general and Asian countries in particular to raise Arab online standards and specify the most efficient strategies and mechanisms in this field.

Information institutions in Iraq

Public libraries proliferated in Iraq in the mid-1950s, following the enactment of legislation on local provincial administrations in 1945 in a bid to support libraries and provide them with books and magazines, and in recruiting professionals to manage, organize and support them with the necessary funding. However, due to the uncertain jurisdiction of, and affiliation with, the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Interior, the libraries became ineffective and did not provide proper services. The exceptions were the National Library and the National Archives and Books that provide services to researchers such as professors, students and others. Public libraries numbered 54 in the province of Baghdad and 176 in other provinces of the country.

Having a *school library* in every school should be the goal of the Ministry of Education, especially at the secondary level, since a library is an integral part of the objectives of educational curricula to which the state aspires. Curricula cannot be enhanced without cooperation between the librarian, who is a member of the teaching body and of the school's administration. Cooperation with the Directorate of School Libraries is also a must to select the resources, according to school directives and curricula, and in line with students' aspirations, to allow them to compare, have extensive access to information, and the opportunity to connect academic subjects and prepare them for life, good citizenship, and aware of all aspects of their economic, social and political lives. School library activities provide students with the means to understand the situation of their countries, its history and its realities through information sources and modern technology. The table below lists the number and types of school libraries:

Table 1. Number of libraries in schools in Iraq per year (1971, 1988, 2005 and 2013)

Year	Number of primary school libraries	Number of secondary school libraries	Number of vocational school libraries
1971	358	648	305
1988	5 692	1 524	-
2005	1 783	217	-
2013	2 371	7 543	2 156

Table 1 shows that the number of school libraries does not meet the aspirations of the teaching body's aspirations, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of schools, students and number of teachers members for all academic levels in Iraq

Levels	Number of schools	Number of students	Number of the personnel of the teaching body
Primary education	9 115	3 507 975	165 738
Secondary education (Middle and lower secondary education)	3 138	1 132 106	65 681
Vocational education	234	65 377	6 636
Teacher training institutes	151	42 669	1 620
Open colleges	18	6 000	369

As for the availability of audio-visual materials and modern technologies like computers and CD-ROMs and telecommunications, i.e. the Internet and online access to information, it is a different matter, since their use spread widely especially among the youth and students. But since Iraq has over 12,600 elementary, vocational and secondary schools, about 4.75 million students, and nearly a quarter of a million teaching staff members, 13 million of them need access to information and education to provide their services to Iraq.

The number of *academic libraries*, colleges and research centers affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, according to statistics shown in table 3. Table 4 shows Iraqi universities in the province of Kurdistan. According to tables 3 and 4, there are 59 research centers, 240 colleges and 1,342 departments affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. In the Province of Kurdistan, there are 71 colleges and 234 departments. This means 1,946 libraries in Iraqi public universities, in addition to more recently established community college libraries that need to be supplied with modern facilities such as the Internet, necessary hardware and the training of specialized and qualified personnel to operate all the resources.

It is known that *specialized libraries* are interested in specialized intellectual products in particular subjects, based on the goals and functions of the parent institution. Some libraries serve industrial or commercial companies, others serve ministries, hospitals, mosques, museums, and prisons as well as specialized professional associations.

Specialized libraries are as follows:

Table 3. Iraqi universities

No.	Universities	Centers	Colleges	Depts	Number of teachers	Number of students in primary education	Ratio of teachers to students	Number of students in higher education	Year founded
1	Baghdad	11	24	100	4 391	63 289	15:1	1 556	1956
2	Basra	8	17	61	1 728	32 877	13:1	55	1963
3	Mosul	5	21	71	2 548	26 802	11:1	418	1964
4	Mustansiriya	6	11	48	1 788	39 137	22:1	225	1965
5	Technology	7	13	As faculties	832	13 660	17:1	264	1975
6	Kufa	2	10	29	549	10 399	19:1	152	1987
7	Tikrit	1	11	41	674	7 728	12:1	248	1987
8	El-Qadisiya	1	12	31	492	11 947	24:1	52	1987
9	Al-Anbar	1	12	47	596	9 343	16:1	89	1987
10	Mesopotamia	3	6	13	324	1 676	5:1	454	1988
11	Al-Iraqia	0	4	10	74	2 315	31:1	83	1989
12	Babylon	4	13	39	648	13 625	21:1	198	1991
13	Diyala	2	9	33	374	12 608	34:1	77	1999
14	Karbala	2	6	13	223	4 564	21:1	4	2001
15	Kar	1	6	14	245	4 858	20:1	10	2001
16	Kirkuk	1	7	18	154	4 502	29:1	11	2002
17	Waset	0	4	14	130	4 901	38:1	18	2002
18	Central Technical Education Authority	4	36	280	2 300	13 000	6:1	129	1969
19	Iraqi Council for Medical Specializations	-	-	-	16	-	-	438	-
20	Iraqi Computers and IT Authority	-	-	-	47	-	-	12	-
21	Community Colleges	-	18	89	671	24 719	-	1 988	-
	Total	59	240	1 342	18 804	291 950	-	4 493	-

Table 4. Iraqi universities in the Province of Kurdistan

No.	Universities	Centers	Colleges	Depts	Teachers	Number of students (in thousands)		Higher education	Year founded
						Morning	Night		
1	Salahuddin	-	19	49	1 023	12 741	-	-	1968
2	Sulaymaniyah	-	16	41	486	8 197	1 795	-	1992
3	Dohuk	-	11	34	377	4 041	408	-	1992
4	Koya	-	10	23	122	1 522	426	-	2005
5	Technical Education Authority, Erbil	-	8	45	-	-	-	-	-
6	Technical Education Authority, Sulaymaniyah	-	7	42	12	410	-	-	-
	Total		71	234	2 020	26 911	2 629		

- At research institutions such as the Center for Arab World Studies at Al-Mustansiriyah University.
- Industrial and commercial enterprises such as the Library of the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce.
- Ministries and their government departments.
- Professional and grassroots organizations such as the Iraqi Women's Association or the Iraqi Engineers Association (Ministry of State).
- Museums and historical archives.
- Disabled people and people with special needs

The Iraqi Academy of Sciences library is one of the best in social sciences and humanities in the country, notably on the Arabic, Kurdish, and Syriac languages and literature, history, geography, expeditions, Arab and Islamic heritage, providing academics and researchers with information. The library is divided into five sections, the largest being the Arabic section, which includes (160,000) books and volumes. Collections of books are obtained by purchase or dedication, and more than 30 magazines arrive monthly at the library.

Private libraries, such as the libraries of mosques, hussaynias (Shiite Muslim gathering halls), churches, monasteries, and parishes, have been the main source of knowledge for scholars and researchers for the preservation of Arab, Islamic and other religious heritage, since ancient times. The state was in charge of their construction and maintenance. These libraries were fed with rare books and manuscripts. Most of the collections relate to religions, languages, literature, philosophy, and history. Some of them were previously affiliated with the Ministry of Religious Endowments, others to dignitaries as part of private libraries, but mostly rare resources from donations, dedications, endowments and purchases.

The National Manuscript Center is considered one of the libraries that specializes in manuscripts on various topics and languages. It includes the rarest and most expensive manuscripts, totaling 42,146, and dating back to the history of Iraq and the Islamic nation. The manuscripts were either purchased or received as gifts from institutions, noted figures, or seizure and confiscation of libraries, mosques and religious schools.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Iraq's information technology footprint began in 2003, and has witnessed quantum leaps. It has managed to make clear changes in the IT's general performance.

Note

No references available in this article.

7. An Algerian Perspective

Redouane Boujema

Traditionally, knowledge and culture were at the core of several philosophical debates as well as various social, political and ideological conflicts. The current education systems and institutions were no exception. Since the second decade of the last century mass communication has played at least a pivotal role in either overestimating or underestimating the importance of education. The same applies more or less to Algerian society, which has greatly suffered from high rates of illiteracy due to colonialism and its negative consequences. However, since its independence, Algeria has sought to build an education system, with the aim of expanding and spreading education, a goal, which has been relatively achieved, according to available quantitative data and statistics; however, the quality challenge has not yet been met, especially in terms of integrating media and communication into the education system by using ICTs. Since 2001, the education system has failed to address one of its main concerns, namely digitizing schools. Before sharing some figures and statistics on training and equipment which are part of a strategy on integrating ICTs in the education system – training teachers and students on various types of ICTs – it is essential, from a methodological perspective, to refer to some theories on media literacy as well as the relationship between education and media in general.

Media literacy:

evolution of a concept and the explosion of new technologies

The concept of education through means of communication deserves a separate study as a result of a wide and rich academic debate on education and on media and communication. However, in order not to lose sight of this dilemma, only the main concepts of this subject are to be discussed in the present article. The term ‘media literacy’ may be defined as the process of optimally using means of communication

in order to meet the goals stated in the state's education and communication policy. Another definition is that the process consists of teaching and training students as well as teachers on how to deal with media content selectively and consciously in order to avoid their negative impact, leading to an awareness in dealing with media messages and images. The concept of media literacy has received special attention from various international organizations and institutions, which produced dozens of reports in this field. The Thomas report (1990), for example, has defined media literacy as "the ability to read and process information in order to be fully involved in one's community." The *ED-MEDIA 1999 World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia & Telecommunications* defined it as "education specialized in dealing with all media and communication means including printed words and illustrations, audio, silent and motion pictures presented through any genre of technologies." This definition encompasses evolutions in modern ICTs especially that such evolutions have brought structural changes into both the communication and education systems. These changes increased the existing competition between ICTs and education, a competition that will escalate the theoretical and conceptual debate on education and communication and on media literacy where education goes beyond time and space especially with its evolution through the Web.

Education and communication in Algeria: the triangle of competition, contradiction and homogeneity

The majority of societies have recognized the increased competition and even contradiction in some cases between education and communication systems where competition has led to various contradictions in individuals' perceptions and ways of thinking. While the education system is based on competition in terms of attainment and achievement and on teaching critical individual thinking, the information system is based on mass communication where disseminating what is new is valued, without stopping to contemplate its content, while presenting, while presenting enjoyable entertainment programs that are easy to understand, regardless of their weakness in style and linguistic structure, all of which indicates clearly the contradiction between education and communication.

This contradiction has produced a confrontational relationship between educational institutions and the media where a clear discrepancy emerged between the academic knowledge-based schooling culture and media-based information culture, which revolves around promotion, entertainment, pleasure and publicity, which in turn reflect the existing relationship between media organizations and commercial, political and security bodies. Despite their contradictions, education and media share a kind of homogeneity and similarity that cannot be overlooked. Both institutions take part in the communication process and contribute to social development of individuals who spend much time exposed to media or as learners in classrooms, although many indicators confirmed since the end of the last century that a child in France, for example, spends

an average of 1,200 hours a year watching TV against an average of 900 hours in the classroom. Studies in sociology of communication as well as cultural studies have concluded that the effects of mass media on the new generations' behavior, values, habits and trends, have greatly increased especially with uninterrupted satellite broadcasts. This has led the media and educators to end their estrangement by seeking to cooperate and put media at the service of education and vice versa. Thanks to modern technology and since the end of the 1990s, education and communication have become more homogeneous with media and ICTs becoming an integral part of the education process. Teachers began resorting to multimedia and the Internet in preparation of learning materials. Distance education, e-learning, the virtual university, and education websites have become important areas for educational institutions in technologically advanced and a real challenge in developing countries like Algeria.

Post-Independence illiteracy in Algeria exceeds 86 per cent

We cannot understand media literacy in Algeria without examining the reality of education and the history of the country, which was under colonial rule that imposed a racist educational system. In 1962 – the year of liberation from French colonialism – illiteracy exceeded 86 percent. This figure is essential if we are to understand the lack of media literacy and the qualitative deficiencies in the inclusion of new communication technologies in education. In 1962, education covered only 20 percent of children who reached school age. Algeria also inherited only a few educational institutions where the French language dominated. Education was limited to specific groups and categories. Since then, Algeria has been trying to address this intolerable situation by seeking alternatives and different reform measures. Reform measures and policies can be summarized in three major phases: The first phase from 1962 to 1976, a transition phase with several shortcomings where progressive adjustments were made as a prelude to the establishment of an educational system commensurate with development requirements. The priority was to systemize education by establishing facilities to be extended to remote areas while gradually introducing the Arabic language. These measures increased the enrollment percentage of school age children from 20 per cent in 1962 to 70 per cent by the end of 1976.

The second phase from 1976 to 1999 witnessed the execution of Decree 76-35 of April 16, 1976, which organized education and training in Algeria. The decree introduced educational reforms to keep pace with economic and social transformations, which manifested themselves in the consecration of compulsory free education. The decree was implemented in the academic year 1980-1981, and was called the 'basic school system' with a scientific and technological scope.

The third phase has been ongoing since 2000. It is the period of major reforms, which matters most for us since it coincides with the use of modern communication technologies and the school digitization projects, at the recommendations of experts overseeing reforms workshops calling for the use of modern teaching tools in education.

Quantitative developments and the challenge of quality

It is only natural that the demographic growth rate, which is relatively high in Algeria, associated with the principle of democratizing education, has contributed to increasing the school enrollment rate by more than ten times; the number of enrolled children during the academic year 2014-2015 exceeded 8,600,000. The number of successful candidates in the baccalaureate degree increased from 42 per cent in 1962 to 23 per cent in 1976, 23 per cent in 1979, 25 per cent in 1999, and to nearly 59 per cent in 2012. To counter the rise in the number of pupils, it was natural that the employment rate of teachers increase significantly – a rise of 16 times from 1962 to the present, reaching 326,000 in 2000, with 170,000 at the elementary level, 101,000 in basic education and 55,000 in secondary education.

The supervision percentage at the national level (number of pupils per teacher) was estimated at 54 per cent in primary schools, 97 per cent in intermediate schools, and 10 per cent at the secondary level. It is worth noting, from a sociological point of view, the progressive rise in the feminization of the teaching profession, with 130 women versus 100 men in 2010-2011, throughout the various grades, against 89 females in 2000-2001, with 121, 149 and 117 women in primary, intermediate and secondary education consecutively against 100 men, while it was completely non-existent in the wake of independence.

As far as education facilities are concerned, since 1962, Algeria has managed to build more than 24,932 institutions (elementary schools, intermediate and secondary schools) against an estimated number of 21,000 institutions in the year 2000 i.e. 355 primary, 79 complementary (intermediate) and 32 secondary schools every year.

Table 1. Number of educational institutions in Algeria 1964 and 2000

Type of institution	1964	2000
Primary schools	3 050	19 040
Secondary schools	49	1 218
Total	3 099	20 258

But these figures, which were often a source of pride for Algerian officials, hide another reality manifested in a crisis of quality. Experts talk about a sick and stricken school from the perspective of quality. This diagnosis opened the door to a reform process in 2000, which aimed at mainstreaming modern communication technologies in the various stages of education.

ICTs at all levels of education and training in Algeria

Algeria embarked on comprehensive and in-depth reforms of the educational system in 2000 following work undertaken by the National Commission for the Reform of the Educational System, established May 13, 2000. The Commission conducted a number

of workshops, namely the *training of trainers, radical pedagogical renewal, strengthening and supporting the Arabic language, upgrading the Amazigh language (Berber language) and openness to foreign languages, civic, moral and religious education to make citizens feel proud of their values and their country while being open to the world*, in addition to the inclusion of new ICTs at all levels of education and training. The commission also came up with a number of proposals, namely: Improving the level of teacher training, review of curricula and teaching materials, specifying a new policy for school textbooks, establishing an evaluation system, modernization of education's management system, and introducing modern ICTs in schools.

In order to improve the level of teachers, a new policy for the training of trainers was conceived as a means to teach academic knowledge in parallel with professional skills. The content of curricula was also reviewed, as were teaching methods, to keep pace with the evolution of technological or pedagogical scientific knowledge to ensure schools' openness to the outside world. The aim is to respond to the needs of the new Algerian society generated by profound political, economic and social transformations in Algeria. The commission concluded that it is a priority to use ICTS if the educational system is to be reformed.

School digitization

Therefore, bearing in mind the need to optimize the use of ICTs, the Ministry of Education introduced IT in the education process as part of comprehensive reforms. The official discourse, as well as resolutions related to education, confirms that IT literacy is indeed a strategic goal and that the targeted groups differ from one grade to another. In primary education, for example, students should learn how to use the basic functions of a computer and how to produce an electronic document. In intermediate school, students should be able to process and exploit data. Such capacities are to be developed for students to be ready for university and scientific research. The introduction of IT in education and the development of modern ICTs is an integral part of 'the school digitization' strategy that is divided into three levels: e-Education, equipment for school facilities and the digitization of the pedagogical and administrative content. In order to achieve the objectives of this strategy, a plan was developed as follows below.

Continuous training: recycling over 200,000 teachers

A training program was developed for teachers in primary, intermediate and secondary schools and has been applied since 2001. It targeted 50,000 teachers from secondary schools between 2001 and 2003, and over 18,000 teachers in the primary and intermediate school between 2003 and 2004. The sector succeeded in the period from 2006 to 2008 in training and recycling more than 102,000 teachers in primary education, 63,000 in intermediate schools, and 36,000 at the secondary level. The training sessions addressed four educational topics: introduction to the use of new technologies, inclu-

sion of new IT rules while incorporating them in distance learning. These figures are expected to multiply significantly by 2020, as it is likely that the training will become more specialized, notably since the Ministry of Education plans to use smart boards and make ICTs accessible in all levels of education.

Equipping school facilities: one computer for every 15 students

The Ministry of Education earmarked a portfolio of 800 million dinars to equip educational institutions to connect to 'intranet' and 'Internet' networks. It is a project of major importance for public authorities that are seeking to achieve a so-called 'modernized education system,' notably in administrative and pedagogical management. This project consists of three phases: 1) Connecting the Ministry of Education with all its relevant institutions; 2) connecting 2,000 secondary and 5,000 intermediate schools; and, 3) introducing the 'intranet' and 'Internet' into all 15, 000 primary schools. Education officials in Algeria have ascertained that the aim of the project is to introduce the "video conferencing" system to allow schools in the south of the country to benefit from the lessons provided by schools in the north. It will also store data, post, digitize and record all lessons and lectures on the Web to make them accessible to students and teachers.

It is worth noting that 68 educational institutions have so far been connected to the official website of the ministry, with 84 per cent Internet connectivity in secondary schools, 77 per cent in intermediate schools and 23 per cent in primary schools. Significant amounts of money have been allocated to equip secondary and intermediate schools with computer labs. Figures indicate there is one computer for every 44 students in secondary schools as opposed to one computer for every 120 students in intermediate schools. However the short-term goal is to have one computer for every 15 secondary students and one for every 30 intermediate students, as well as connecting all educational institutions to the Internet in the short term.

Digitization of pedagogical and administrative content

The training of human resources was not limited to teachers since it also covered inspectors, directors and administrators of educational institutions. The plan aims at developing a network, which would connect central bodies to the various directorates of education, a process that has made significant progress so far. The plan also seeks to link the administration as a whole to training institutes, the aim being to digitize the pedagogical content, particularly the curricula. This is a huge process given that the education sector in Algeria employs about 650,000 people, 400,000 of whom are teachers who cover 25,000 educational institutions.

Digitization will create a kind of flexibility in the education system, which can, in turn, contribute to improving the level of students and compensate for deficiencies in training. Digitization should help students in the training process and will enable them

to take advantage of the digital bag, so they won't have to carry and bear the burden of traditional books and copybooks, which exceed 15 kg.

Conclusion

One can conclude that media and information literacy in Algeria never received much attention until the end of the 1990s, due to historical and structural circumstances in Algerian society. Illiteracy in 1962, the year of liberation from French colonialism, exceeded 86 percent, which explains the failure of introducing communication means in the educational system and how attention to it has helped introduce ICTs into the learning process.

However, the challenges are many, mainly the quality of education, as experts acknowledge the existence of a deep crisis in a 'sick and stricken' school.

The education sector in Algeria currently employs about 650,000 people, among them 400,000 teachers in 25,000 institutions. Therefore, the introduction of modern ICTs will create a kind of flexibility in the system, which can, in turn, contribute to improving the level of students and compensate for deficiencies in training. Digitization should help students in the training process and will enable them to take advantage of the digital bag, so that they won't have to carry traditional books and pamphlets whose weight exceeds 15 kg.

However, the introduction of technologies alone will not have a significant impact unless it is associated with new educational practices along with other educational activities and a new dynamic; a dynamic which will pave the way for a collective knowledge-building process. Such a process is a good summary of the challenges facing the education system in Algeria through communication means and modern ICTs. Quality challenges as opposed to quantity.

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8. A Moroccan Perspective

Abdelhamid Nfissi & Drissia Chouit

Images in the media shape understanding, interpretation, and interaction amongst and between people, nations and groups in an increasingly globalized world. Media messages may be harmful, conflicting, confusing and confounding and may not often be uniformly understood or acted upon by their heterogeneous audiences. In this context, media and information literacy (MIL) becomes imperative to empower audiences to be more critical and discriminating in their reception, evaluation and use of information and media. Media ethics are often violated by journalists and media organizations, which may have a big impact on people if they are not media and information literate consumers. This is why it is of prime importance to develop high critical and analytical skills to be active and responsible media consumers and to understand how to demystify media and information as they depict social realities. MIL enjoys a very important status and is integrated in curricula in some developed countries. However, it is unknown or poorly developed in developing countries. This chapter examines the state of the art of MIL in Morocco, highlighting the actions undertaken by Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in this field.

Media and new information and communication technologies are a means for social and economic development. However, the potentials of media and information cannot be realized if people lack the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media content. Increasingly, media literacy and information literacy are viewed as operators for the acquisition of such skills and knowledge, and compulsory elements for all levels of education and every member of society. Yet, media literacy and information literacy (henceforth MIL) is still in its infancy in many developing countries and faces many challenges. The aim of this article is to examine the state of the art of media and information literacy in Morocco. It addresses the following issues: (1) it shows how media and information literacy is introduced in Morocco; (2) it highlights the actions undertaken by Morocco to promote MIL to better prepare citizens for the information age, and (3)

it intends to inform the national and international reader of the main action plans and initiatives which will be undertaken in the future.

Media and information literacy in Morocco

Media and information literacy is still in its infancy in Morocco. It is not included in the educational system. It is not on the agenda of activists, policy makers and educators. People are not even informed about it to consider it. For many Moroccans, 'literacy' means the ability to read, write, and interpret printed messages. Yet, in today's multi-media world, it is not sufficient to teach this form of literacy only. We know that the information about what happens in the world comes to us not only through print but also through sounds and powerful images. So, providing individuals with the skills and tools to critically evaluate, process and interpret the content of messages, sounds and powerful images of our multimedia culture becomes a must. In fact, new information communication technologies and media culture have been shaping people's lives and reframing the way they reconstruct societies at the national and international levels. That's why we have to equip ourselves with the necessary skills to know how to use media and information contents in our lives.

Integrating media studies in the Moroccan educational system

Aware of the importance of the Internet in our daily lives, and aware of the challenges posed by the information age, the Moroccan Emergency Plan for Higher Education introduced in 2009 Media Studies and Cyber Culture in the curriculum of all departments of English at the faculties of Arts and Humanities in Morocco to help students understand the functions of media and their impact on society.

The course is taught in semesters 2 and 4, introducing students to the world of new and old media and cyber culture. The objective of this course is to help students learn how media work. This provides for us a good opportunity to include media and information literacy in the curriculum to enable students to critically interpret the media messages, information and the images we are bombarded with in our daily lives.

Teaching MIL at the Faculty of Arts Sais-Fez (Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines Sais-Fes): Personal experience

When I started teaching the course of introduction to media studies in semester 2 and media studies and cyber culture in semester 4, four years ago, my students expressed their dissatisfaction with Moroccan media programs, which, according to them, constitute a threat to their identity and culture. The first thing I did was to integrate MIL in the curriculum. MIL added value to media studies by equipping students with analytical skills to become responsible viewers, readers and users of different media and information content.

Media literacy

My students were introduced to media literacy (ML) by understanding the following key concepts:

1. Media messages are constructed to gain profit and power.
2. Critical thinking is vital to identify erroneous beliefs fostered by media content.
3. The media have an impact on individuals by shaping their values and points of view.
4. It is important to ask questions about the contents of media messages such as:
Who is the target audience?
What techniques are used to convey specific information?
What values and lifestyles are promoted in this message?
What is the credibility of information conveyed in a specific message?
5. It is important not to be addicted to one source of information since the media use different ways to present information about a topic.
6. It is important to go beyond the surface and be able to detect prejudice, stereotype, defamation, manipulation, misinformation, disinformation and distortion of information for specific purposes.
7. How can we invest in media for sustainable development and for world of peace?

These issues have helped my students know for the first time that there are skills to take into consideration when reading print, watching media formats and surfing the Net. They recognized that these skills provided them with reflective learning on the dynamics of mass media: the nature of the media landscape, its processes and functions, which raised their awareness on how the media shape the frames of reference of individuals, their value systems, attitudes and behaviors. It also provided them with the capacity to access, decipher, evaluate, interpret and make informed and responsible use of media forms and hence become active and responsible consumers of media content.

Information literacy

Information literacy (IL) has not yet been fully integrated into the Moroccan university curriculum. Information literacy includes library skills, computer literacy, thinking skills, visual literacy and culture literacy, in addition to research skills and evaluation of print and online sources. The exposure to a rich variety of information resources requires the acquisition of novel skills and competencies to evaluate information and media content to become competent readers and researchers able to make informed decisions. These skills provided the framework for students to learn how to find, critically evaluate, seek, check and use information in a variety of forms and in different contexts. Through IL, students were taught to:

1. Evaluate the authority, credibility and the accuracy of the materials required while carrying out academic research;
2. Question the reliability of online sources because they are much less controlled than the resources available in a library;
3. Identify their needs for information in cyberspace;
4. Check the accuracy of a piece of information retrieved from the Internet;
5. Know how to visit the right and useful website;
6. Know how to use information and communication technologies effectively. One obstacle to the efficient use of these technologies in developing countries is the lack of information literacy.

My students discovered that information literacy empowered them (1) to be competent and responsible researchers in their academic studies; (2) to be active consumers and creators of information; (3) to ethically use information to participate in building a culture of peace in their society and in the world community; and (4) to use ICTs effectively and efficiently.

MIL combined

After teaching ML and IL separately in semester 2, the course on Studies in Media and Cyber Culture taught in semester 4 involved the combination of ML and IL since it included both *studies in media* and *cyber-culture*. We seized the opportunity to highlight that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) took the lead in combining media and information literacy and encouraging its integration in educational systems as a set of competencies, aiming to equip individuals of all ages and genders with the skills and competencies to be more critical in their reception, evaluation, and use of media and information. The UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers, launched at the First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy on June 15, 2011, puts teachers at the center of this process, towards achieving the goals of the Grünwald Declaration (1982), the Alexandria Declaration (2005) and the UNESCO Paris Agenda (2007).

We can conclude that MIL is taught in the departments of English at the faculties of Arts only. It is imperative to extend its teaching to all faculties and institutions. In this case, MIL will be most effective to teachers, parents, youth, decision-makers, etc. What is important to know is that the main working languages in Morocco are Arabic and French. The first step is to translate the main documents on MIL into Arabic to make everyone take advantage from these literacies. Since MIL is not known in Morocco, and believing strongly that it is important for youth, parents and for every citizen, we decided to organize an international conference on the topic to make it known to Moroccan academics and to raise individuals' awareness of its importance in their lives.

Conclusion

In recent years the Internet and other network technologies have emerged as a major issue for development worldwide. They have shown their potential to increase productivity and competitiveness in the economy, to create new ways to deliver education and health services, and to be driving forces for the modernization of public services. They also facilitate easy access to information.

Due to the explosion of information, media and information literacy becomes a must to help citizens handle and tailor this information to their personal, academic and social benefits. This article focused on the importance of media and information literacy in the digital age and highlighted the plans and actions taken by Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University to promote MIL in Morocco.

We are at the stage of setting a network of Moroccan and Arab universities interested to work with us as associate members to promote MIL in Morocco, the Maghreb and Arab region. But, there are major challenges facing us, notably:

1. We need to adapt MIL actions and research to the Moroccan and Arab contexts and to serve in the best way the needs of Moroccan youth and people of the region;
2. The illiteracy rate in Morocco is high, which prevents people from taking advantage of MIL.
3. Poor mastery of foreign languages and lack of references on MIL in Arabic constitute a real handicap.
4. Libraries in Morocco still operate in traditional ways.
5. Users of the Internet cannot fully profit from this medium because they are neither media literate nor information literate.

Activities undertaken by Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in media and information literacy

First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy

Under the Auspices of King Mohammed VI, the First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy was organized by the Research Group on Mass Communication, Culture and Society; the Laboratory of Discourse, Creativity and Society: Perception and Implications; the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes; and Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco, June 15-17, 2011 at the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy in Fez, with the collaboration of UNESCO as lead partner, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC).

Project leaders

The project was conceptualized by Dr. Abdelhamid Nfissi, Chair, International Forum on Media and Information Literacy, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco; and Dr. Drissia Chouit, Vice Chair, International Forum on Media and Information Literacy, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco.

Rationale of the Forum: Grounds for combining media and information literacy

The Forum examined both media and information literacy because in the digital age and convergence of communications, these literacies should go hand in hand to achieve full human development, to build civic societies, and to lay the foundations for world peace and constructive intercultural dialogue. The Forum was the first of this magnitude since UNESCO initiated the blending of the two concepts to empower audiences to be aware of the functions of media and other information providers, and to be more critical and discriminating in their reception, evaluation and use of information and media.

Objectives

The Forum aimed: (1) to raise awareness and understanding about the importance of MIL in the information and communication age as a prerequisite to human and economic development; (2) to draw up plans to integrate MIL in the national educational programs to encourage the development of media and information literate users/audiences/producers, thereby maximizing the potentials of the media and information at the service of democracy, justice, sustainable economic models, and development at all levels of society; (3) to sensitize participants to legal, political, economic and ethical issues in information and media literacy, and to discuss scientific

approaches for media and information sourcing, sharing, evaluation and utilization; (4) to examine conceptual issues regarding verbal, visual and digital literacy; (5) to focus discussion on media and information literacy from cross-cultural perspectives, giving voice to the concerns, preoccupations and aspirations of countries of the South and stressing the importance not only of North/South cooperation but also South/South to promote MIL, and (6) to come up with the Fez Declaration on MIL and Plan of Action to this effect.

Outcomes of the forum: Fez Declaration on media and information literacy

The First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy came up with the Fez Declaration on MIL. Participants urged UNESCO, UNAO, ISESCO, ABEGS, and other stakeholders worldwide to:

1. Reaffirm their commitment to initiatives relating to Media and Information Literacy for all and consider this International Forum on MIL an international platform for MIL;
2. Dedicate a week as World Media and Information Literacy Week to highlight to all stakeholders the value of promoting and pursuing Media and Information Literacy throughout the world. It was proposed that this should be celebrated on 15-21 June every year;
3. Integrate media and information literacy in educational curricula both in the formal and non-formal systems, to (i) ensure the right of each and every citizen to this new civic education, (ii) capitalize on the multiplier effect of educators to train learners for critical thinking and analysis, (iii) endow both teachers and learners with MIL competencies to build up media and information literate societies, setting the stage for knowledge societies;
4. Include the production and distribution of user-generated content (UGC), particularly youth-produced media, as part of the overall framework of MIL;
5. Conduct research on the state of media and information literacy in different countries so that MIL experts and practitioners would be able to design more effective initiatives;
6. Pursue appropriate follow-up to the regional consultations for the adaptation of the MIL Curriculum for Teachers and the promotion of MIL and Intercultural Dialogue;
7. Expand the UNESCO-UNITWIN-UNAO Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (UNESCO-UNITWIN-UNAO-MILID) Network to include other universities representing all regions of the world; and encourage the setting up of national, regional and international institutes or centers or clearing

houses on media and information literacy in all regions to support media and information literacy initiatives worldwide; making this network a driving force for fostering MIL throughout societies at large, thus contributing to building sustainable peace around the world;

8. Foster media and information literacy for development of local cultures and as a platform for intercultural dialogue, mutual knowledge and understanding;
9. Ensure that media and information ethics are embedded in all curricula, and advocate for ethical values on the part of communication, information, and media providers;
10. Endorse the setting up of a regional MIL Institute or Center that will operate under the umbrella of Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco, and cooperate with this Institute/Center to enhance its international relevance within the framework of the UNESCO-UNITWIN-UNAOC-MILID Network;
11. Convene biennial meetings of the International Forum on Media and Information Literacy to provide a venue for continuing interactions on MIL across borders, cultures, fields of study and professional practice. The Second Edition of the International Forum on Media and Information Literacy is proposed to take place in 2013. The exact dates will be specified in consultation with all partners.

International seminar on media and information literacy at the university level

In celebration of the first anniversary of the Fez Declaration on Media and Information Literacy, the Research Group on “Mass Communication, Culture and Society;” the Laboratory of Discourse, Creativity and Society: Perception and Implications; the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Sais Fes; and Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University organized an International Seminar on “Media and Information Literacy at the University Level” June 19-20, 2012 at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Sais Fes, Morocco.

Objectives of the seminar

The seminar grouped teachers, activists, media specialists, journalists, librarians, and archivists to raise students’ awareness of the vital importance of Media and Information Literacy in their academic and professional lives. It also emphasized the idea that in an increasingly digitalized world, and in view of the explosion of information, information literacy and media literacy form the basis for lifelong learning.

Regional Center for Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue

The regional Center for MIL and Intercultural Dialogue endorsed in the Fez Declaration operates under the umbrella of Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco, and cooperates with the UNESCO-UNITWIN-UNAOC-MILID Network. The objective of the center is to:

1. Promote MIL in Morocco and the Arab World;
2. Highlight the critical role media and information literacy can play in building a culture of peace towards intercultural dialogue, mutual knowledge and understanding among civilizations;
3. Emphasize the importance of media and information literacy for social, economic and cultural development;
4. Promote the principal that media and information literacy is a fundamental human right, particularly in the digital age of explosion of information and convergence of communication technologies;
5. Highlight the importance of MIL in developing countries and its effects in the age of knowledge societies;
6. Reinforce the role of universities both as centers of knowledge and vectors of sustainable development.

Workshops on media and information literacy for future educators

The research group on “Mass Communication, Culture and Society” affiliated with the Laboratory of “Discourse, Creativity and Society: Perception and Implications” organized two workshops for future and current educators February 18-19, 2013 and March 26-27, 2014 at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Fez, Morocco with the collaboration of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), Moulay Ismail University, Morocco, and the Doha Centre for Media Freedom.

First workshop on media and information literacy for future and current educators

It is evident that today students live and learn in a world that is constantly changing. This workshop provided support for teachers to help students think critically about using and evaluating the vast amounts of information available to them for solving real-life problems, abilities and knowledge that will be vital for living productively in the 21st century.

The objective was to train teachers to be able to teach media and information literacy to primary and secondary schools students. This workshop aimed to:

1. Show current and future educators the importance of media and information literacy in the media-saturated world of the 21st Century;
2. Explain to them the basic media processes,
3. Introduce them to media and information providers and the world of information communication technologies for a better understanding of how traditional and new media work, what impact they have on individuals and society, and how they shape attitudes and behaviors.
4. Focus on analysis and critical thinking to make current teachers informed citizens, active users of mass media, able to read between the lines and decipher tendencies to manipulation and distortion of information.
5. Make them aware that media and information literacy is important given the amount of information available in contemporary society. Being exposed to a great deal of information will not make people informed citizens; they need to learn how to use it effectively.
6. A society that is capable to access, evaluate, use and communicate information in an effective and efficient manner is called a media and information literate society. When we educate our children with the necessary information literacy skills, society becomes information literate.

The papers presented at the event were diverse in subject matter, theoretical orientation, and methodological approach. A number of key common themes and issues were raised and discussed by different speakers and members of the audience.

Second workshop on media and information literacy

The rapid growth of media and information and communication technologies and the explosion of information make it imperative that MIL be taught at schools as young people are easily influenced by media and information content.

Enhancing MIL among students requires that teachers become media and information literate. In this context, the second workshop was devoted to exploring the main modules of the *Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers* published by UNESCO in 2011. This publication is designed to equip teachers with the skills and methodology to teach MIL in class.

Study day on information literacy in the information age

The research group on “Mass communication, Culture and Society” affiliated with the Laboratory of “Discourse, Creativity and Society: Perception and Implications” organized a Study Day on *Information literacy in the Digital Age* February 20, 2014 at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences Fez, Morocco.

The study day grouped teachers, researchers, activist, information specialists and librarians to raise people's awareness to the importance of information literacy in the digital age.

The Internet and other communication technologies are the greatest media of information for all people in the world. The information we are exposed to on the Internet determines and shapes our attitudes, our understanding, our interpretation, our beliefs, and our views about the world. Although the Internet and ICTs are a means for social and economic development, there are equally unprecedented numbers of mistakes, prejudice, stereotypes, propaganda, defamation, manipulation, misinformation, and many types of distortion of information.

In this context, information literacy becomes imperative to empower audiences to be more critical and discriminating in their reception, evaluation and use of information and to develop highly critical and analytical skills to be active and responsible information consumers. The study day tackled important issues such as key aspects of information literacy, integrating information literacy in the classroom, citizens' role in the digital age, cultural literacy, computer literacy, cinema literacy and news literacy.

Study day on cultural literacy

The growing use of information technology is increasing the demand for programs that address information and culture literacy. Such programs in the West are developed, as the rate of literacy in these countries is high. Besides, these countries enjoy economic and political stability, which provides a healthy platform for MIL.

However, the use of ICTs in the developing countries is very complex and suffers from many drawbacks. Today, in the Arab world, lack of literacy, lack of political security, and lack of economic stability are a handicap for the Arabs to be media and information literate as the programs of MIL cannot be easily implemented.

The objective of this study on culture literacy is two-fold:

1. To examine how to effectively and efficiently use ICTs in the Arab states.
2. To raise awareness on the right to access to information, the value of information and the right of freedom of speech.
3. To foster media and information literacy for development of local cultures and as a platform for intercultural dialogue, mutual knowledge and understanding.

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9. An Egypt Perspective

Samy Tayie

Egypt lies in North East Africa with part of the country, the Sinai Desert, jutting into Asia. It has long borders on both the Red Sea in the east, and the Mediterranean in the north. Egypt has the largest population in the Arab World, exceeding 85 million (Statistics published by the National Population Centre, 2014), living mainly along the banks of the Nile River, which crosses vertically the heart of the country. It is estimated that 95 per cent of the population live on only 3 per cent of the land. The capital Cairo is home to about 18 million. Young people under the age of 25 represent two-thirds of the population, with some 17 million being students at schools and universities.

Education in Egypt is compulsory for all children who attend government or private schools until the age of 12. Public schools provide almost free education. Children have to pay only a small amount of money for fees (sometimes about 10 dollars for the whole school year). If they cannot afford these fees, they may be waved. Textbooks are also provided for free. Children are admitted to public schools at the age of six. They represent nearly 1.5 million students (National Population Centre, 2014). Some private schools' fees are quite elevated. They can go up to 20,000 US Dollars a year, as is the case with most American and British schools in Egypt. Such institutions provide quality education. Most public schools lack quality education because classes are overcrowded and teachers are not highly qualified. Private and international schools follow the American, French, British or German systems. Egyptian students usually spend up to 12 academic years in school.

Media in Egypt

Egypt has a wide range of public and private media. The Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), which is a part of the Ministry of Information, oversees and 'controls' radio and television. There are three national TV channels and six local stations. Na-

tional channels broadcast to the whole country whereas local outlets broadcast to only specific areas such as certain governorates. Channel Two, a national station, broadcasts mainly in English and French. It is meant to serve expatriates living in Egypt. There are more than 20 private TV channels that sometimes compete with the official (state-run) stations and have a higher viewership than the national channels. Viewers in the Arab World are exposed to hundreds of satellite channels. In addition to the TV stations, there are as many as 696 satellite outlets: governments own 97 while 599 are private (Arab League, Statistics, 2014)¹. They broadcast through 17 satellites orbiting the Arab World. Among the state-run channels, 49 offer the usual mix of news and entertainment fare and 48 broadcast specialized programs like education or entertainment. Egyptians are also exposed to European, North American, Turkish and other channels. Egypt has seven radio networks drawing listeners from across the country. One network, Overseas Radio, broadcasts in more than 40 languages. There are local radio stations in all parts of the country as well as private FM radio stations that broadcast mainly light fare and music programs. They are the most listened to by young people.

On the print media front, there are three important state-run publishing houses that produce dozens of newspapers and magazines in Arabic, English, French and German. Private entities and political parties also publish newspapers such as *Al Wafd* and *Al Ahaly*. It is estimated there are over 600 newspapers and magazines in Egypt, according to Higher Press Council figures for 2011. Issuance of private and political party newspapers is subject to the approval of the Higher Press Council, which is the regulatory organization for print media. Egypt's film industry and its reach in the Arab World is similar to that of Hollywood in the West. Egyptian films and TV programs are very popular. Most Arab TV channels rely on these programs. In other media, subscriptions to mobile phone services total 125 per cent of the total population of Egypt, as subscribers often have more than one line, and the number of Internet users exceeds 40 million (Ministry of Telecommunications, 2013).

Young people in Egypt are in tune with new technology. They have been keen to use the Internet since 2002 when the Ministry of Communications launched an initiative to provide free service for all Egyptians. According to an agreement between the Ministry of Communications and Internet Service Providers (ISPs), Internet service was made available for all with the cost of normal telephone calls – (30 per cent of a call's cost went to the Egyptian Company for Communications and 70 per cent to the ISPs (Morad, 2012, p. 76). In 2004, the government launched high-speed Internet service (ADSL), placing Egypt first among Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries in terms of Internet users. Social media soon became the most important communication vehicle among young people (Tayie, 2014).

Since 2004, the number of young online political activists and human rights advocates has increased rapidly and the role of social media has changed. They became important tools to mobilize young people against the misconduct and corruption of the ousted government of then president Hosni Mubarak. Social media have become important and effective tools because of their speed and efficiency in enabling mobilization, instant

feedback, and rapid actions by large numbers of people in response to socio-political issues. Media outlets' convergence and the ubiquity of multimedia have also contributed to the changing scenario and landscape. For young Egyptian activists inside and outside Egypt, social media provided an opportunity to express their views, join groups, and engage in discussions on current events and political issues. Such discussions paved the way for the January 25, 2011 events that took the form of uprisings to protest against unemployment, rising prices and corruption.

Social media:

- Made it easy to reach a large number of people and keep them engaged in discussions about political issues.
- Made it possible to participate in groups and discussions without the need to reveal one's identity. This was a crucial issue at a time when Egyptian authorities were paying close attention to political activities and when marshal law was enforced for 30 years (Chebib & Sohail, 2011, p. 140).
- Enabled Egyptian youths' political participation, which was prominently highlighted in April 2008. Egyptian activists created a page on Facebook to plan and organize a general strike of workers in textile factories at Al Mahalla Al Kobra (a governorate north of Cairo) to protest against their low wages and deteriorating working conditions. Thanks to the use of social media, more than 70,000 protesters participated in the action that was terminated decisively by security forces who used tear gas to quell the demonstration. It is worth noting that the number of Internet users jumped from 1.5 million in 2004 to 13.6 million in 2008.

In 2009 a young Egyptian university student and activist called Mahmoud Al Heeta created a group on Facebook called *Al Baradei for President in Egypt*. Tens of thousands of young Egyptians joined the group that was transformed into a popular movement to support Mohamed Al Baradei to be Egypt's new leader. Al Baradei was a famous political activist who was admired by many young people. He was the head of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for more than eight years and when he retired he came back to Egypt and form an opposition movement against the Mubarak regime. He succeeded in recruiting supporters among young people who were fed up with corruption and deteriorating economic conditions.

In 2010, Wael Ghoneim, another young Egyptian activist, who worked for Google, created a new pro-Al Baradei website. The number of young followers exceeded 100,000. When Al Baradei created an account on Twitter, he attracted more than 10,000 followers in a short period of time (ibid). In June 2010, Ghoneim created another Facebook page entitled *We Are All Khalid Saeed* in the wake of Egyptian police's torturing to death of a young man from the port city of Alexandria, and aimed at persuading people to rebel against police brutality and corruption. Ghoneim then expanded the page's activities and discussions to protest against violations of human rights in Egypt and police misconduct. Followers of the page exceeded a quarter of a million in September 2010. The

followers reported news, exchanged information, and shared photos and video clips in support of an uprising. This page had more of an impact than any other medium or source of information in Egypt. Young followers relied on this website to organize gatherings and street demonstrations. When the number of followers reached 365,000, they called for street protests to rebel against injustice and police brutality (Masin, 2011, p. 19). Young people responded with fervor.

During the events the Egyptian government shut down the Internet and mobile phone connections from January 28 to February 1, 2011, a clear admission of the strength of social media and the Internet in mobilizing young people. Despite these measures, the number of followers of the webpage *We Are All Khalid Saeed* jumped from 365 000 to 640 000. After January 25, 2011, the number of Internet users in Egypt increased by 1.9 million in 2011 (Tayie, 2014), reaching 23.1 million, and the number of Facebook users also rose by a million, reaching 5.2 million for that period. Meanwhile, the number of Twitter users in Egypt jumped from 26 800 to 44 200 in 2011. More than 8.7 million webpages on YouTube were viewed during the last week of January 2011 (Lou, 2011, p. 2).

Media and information literacy in Egypt: late initiatives

Media and information literacy in the Arab world lags behind many other countries. By the turn of 21st Century, university students began knowing about this concept. More than 1,200 international participants, including representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the European Commission attended a conference organized by the Mentor International Association for Media Education and sponsored and launched by the late Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdel Aziz. Participants, mostly from the fields of academia and the media, took part in the event that introduced the “new” concept of *media literacy* in the Arab world.

The more inclusive *media and information literacy* (MIL) concept is still not very well known. It is more common to use ‘media literacy’ than ‘media and information literacy’. Following this key regional event, a few initiatives emerged in the Arab world, promoted by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, the Doha Centre for Media Freedom, and, universities and schools of journalism in the MENA region.

In the last few years, from the turn of the 21st century, a few initiatives related to media and information literacy took place in Egypt. Five important initiatives from the event worth are mentioning:

1. The introduction of MIL as a curriculum in university education

In 2005, the Faculty of Mass Communication at Cairo University introduced a course on Media and Information Literacy for undergraduate students. Other public and private universities followed suit. From the year 2000, I believe MIL has been taught at all 18 public and 29 private universities in Egypt. Additionally, a few M.A. and Ph.D. theses were conducted in the field of MIL.

2. *The introduction of MIL to young journalists, information specialists, and researchers*

In line with UNESCO's policy to promote media and information literacy globally, Cairo University organized a workshop for young journalists, information specialists and researchers in collaboration with the Autonomous University of Barcelona and with support from UNESCO. The three-day workshop (February 14-17, 2013) was initially planned for 25 participants, but because of high demand from the target groups, it was expanded to accommodate 65 persons from different Arab countries. Two trainees from Afghanistan and Ghana were also among the participants. An important outcome was extensive media coverage of the event and media and information literacy in print, radio and television outlets.

3. *The production of a MIL teaching kit*

Cairo University, in collaboration with the Autonomous University of Barcelona and support of the UNESCO Office in Cairo, produced a kit aimed at making available resources for university professors to use in their teaching of MIL courses at different public and private institutions.

The kit includes materials on the following:

Intercultural Dialogue and MIL (cultural diversity and MIL, stereotyping, reconstructing stereotypes, media cooperation);

New Media and Young People (the use of media, social media, risk and advantages);

Global Experiences in MIL;

Media and Information Literacy: Curriculum for Teachers (the UNESCO Curriculum, Media and Information Curriculum around the world: case studies);

An Introduction to Media and Information Literacy (definition, historical perspective, global framework, media and information literacy in formal learning);

Media Values and MIL (analyzing the news, entertainment, advertising, political persuasion);

How to implement Media and Information Literacy Curriculum (Methodology and Resources);

Freedom of expression and MIL;

MIL in the school (New languages and codes, new learning spaces, new learning approach, MIL competencies);

Impact of status of Freedom of Expression and Press freedom on MIL in MENA countries;

Eleven teaching videos;

List of available resources.

4. *MIL for secondary school teachers*

The Faculty of Mass communication at Cairo University, in cooperation with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), organized a two-day workshop (November

19-20, 2103) for secondary school teachers in Egypt that was attended by 34 participants from different parts of the country. Representatives from the Ministry of Education also attended the workshop that dealt with different areas of Media and Information Literacy (MIL). The first day included three sessions on the concept of MIL, and planning for media and information literacy in schools' curricula (the strategies and the challenges).

The second day included four sessions. The first was about the media and information literacy and representing media from different cultures. The second session was about applying the media literacy program in schools. The third session was on who is to produce media material for children. The fourth session dealt with training and basic media production. The closing session was open for discussion and questions from participants as well as suggestions on how to improve the education process in Egypt using the media literacy program.

5. MIL for senior students at Cairo University's Faculty of Mass Communication

In collaboration with Filmpedagogerna of Sweden (an associate member of UNITWIN), a network of universities was created in Fez (Morocco) in 2009. The network's main goal is to encourage collaboration among member universities. Cairo University organized a two-day workshop for senior students. They were trained on MIL and the production of media materials, some of which were presented on Media Education Day in Sweden on January 29, 2014. The materials were well received by the Swedish audience.

Challenges to, recommendations for, the future of MIL in Egypt

The main challenge to media and information literacy in Egypt lies with policy makers. There is no policy on the matter. Some scholars and experts tried to include representatives from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education in most of these activities but the problems and obstacles usually came from policy makers and those working at the Ministry of Education. Another challenge is related to the lack of awareness about media and information literacy. So there is a need to work closely with media people, to encourage them to publish and broadcast more information about the matter and to engage with them. It is hoped international organizations such as UNESCO and UNAOC will try to influence the Egyptian government to adopt policies on MIL.

Note

1. Editors note: reference not found.

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10. A Jordanian Perspective

Yasar Durra

My first encounter with the term MIL (Media and Information Literacy) was during discussions with UNESCO in 2012, while working on developing ideas for a series of European Union-funded training workshops to enhance professional and accurate media reporting on the electoral process in Jordan¹. Prior to that, MIL for me was a series of fragmented values and goals taught within different media training curricula that did not include young school children. The term has now become part of the jargon used by staff and students at the Jordan Media Institute (JMI) and has assumed ever-greater momentum as students are regularly invited to take part in MIL Workshops. JMI's training programs were aimed at mid-career journalists and young users of social media. Such training comprised most of the values, if not all, presently grouped under MIL.

In 2013, the term assumed even greater weight and importance for me. I was invited by UNESCO to participate in the Abuja, Nigeria, 2013 launch of the Media and Information Literacy Global Network (GFPML), a/k/a the Global Forum for Partnership on Media and Information Literacy². The Forum's theme was "Promoting Media and Information Literacy as a Means to Cultural Diversity." The presentations and discussions at the conference sessions and outside were an eye opener and revealed the extent of work needed in the part of the world I represented. Unfortunately, other more immediate training priorities due to the technological upheaval the media were undergoing, and the absence of a MIL platform in Jordan, reduced the topic to a serious aspiration. The extent of my involvement in MIL training programs at that stage was confined to promoting the concept and asserting the great urgency with which it needed to be embraced by educators and parents. I made it a point to underscore the importance of the issue in every interview, meeting or talk I gave to students and visitors to the Jordan Media Institute. Since I started searching for evidence of MIL in Jordan, I came across United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) training manuals in the Arabic language. They were well written in user friendly Arabic and

did not vary much from the manuals we use to train young journalists except in being more comprehensive and extensive.

Furthermore, following interviews I conducted with Ghada Kakish who is currently involved in MIL educational programs, her response can only be described as passionate engagement in the subject. She finds the manuals to be most adequate. She described the fulfillment and great satisfaction of the teachers, students and parents involved in the MIL programs she supervises.³ Although there is no national database or reference to seek information on MIL programs implemented in Jordan, UNESCO-Amman and active NGOs led to a trail of limited activities and programs carried out in the country.

The Ministry of Education does not implement a MIL curriculum. However, a positive indicator was the comments by ministry officials that appeared in the press in 2007 supportive of MIL programs and values.⁴ Inquiries made by phone to the ministry were met with encouraging replies of positive intentions to integrate MIL in the curriculum but without a definite date.⁵

Integrating MIL in the curriculum

During the last few years, successful MIL training initiatives took place. In May 2013, The National Commission for UNESCO and the Arab Women Media Center collaborated to incorporate media and information literacy into the Jordanian school curriculum by providing high school teachers and students the training to gather, analyze and utilize information.⁶ The project targeted 40 male and female students aged 16 and 17 from four UNESCO Associated Schools representing the northern, central and southern regions of Jordan. Officially titled “Integrating Media and Information Literacy into Jordanian Schools,” the project consisted of two phases. The first was training teachers who would be involved in the project, followed by a second phase during which specialists and teachers provided hands-on training to the students on journalistic writing skills, debating techniques, web search, website development, and, management and dissemination of information through modern media tools.

The aim of the project was to demonstrate a MIL activity and raise the profile of the topic to support a curriculum planner in its adoption in the Jordanian curriculum so that it can be taught on a sustainable and impactful basis. The project was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in its goal to promote an enabling environment for freedom of expression, with a special focus on the Arab region. The highlight was a public event marking the end of the program in which two teams competed in an open debate that was attended by high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Education, observers, representatives of NGOs, and members of the public. As a witness to the event, the enthusiasm displayed by teachers, trainers, students and the audience underscored the importance of MIL to the ministry officials attending the event and the public at large. The success achieved demonstrated the positive impact it had on the students who took part in the exercise and who displayed remarkable open mindedness and tolerance in their debating skill.

MIL training and workshops

UNESCO's efforts extended to encompass training of journalists and young social media activists in partnership with the Jordan Media Institute in a project to enhance the quality of media reporting for the 2013 parliamentary elections. The workshops, which were EU funded, concentrated on training journalists on independent media coverage of elections. They covered key topics such as understanding Jordan's elections laws, as well as a review of elections and democracy practices in Egypt and Lebanon. The training also focused on comparison of Jordan's election laws with international standards, elections from a gender sensitive perspective, and guidelines to independent and professional election coverage.

For the young activists in the governorates, the workshops focused on basic news writing and other journalistic skills in covering elections, interviewing techniques, and examination of candidates' election manifestos' credibility, requiring basic research skills to help pose informed authoritative questions. The training involved brainstorming with the participants and helped them focus on urgent priorities in their respective local communities. Other partners were involved in different components of the project such as Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) and Community Media Network (CMN), a not-for profit organization aimed at raising the level of cooperation within the same society and stimulating the development of communications between citizens within it. The combined effort gave impetus to enhanced independent coverage of the elections in a more professional manner than in previous elections.⁸

UNAOC also contributed to the training activities in Jordan with a two-day workshop in April of 2013. The theme was *Digital Tools for Newsgathering and Reporting Across Cultures* and was held at JMI, for a group of editors, journalists and bloggers from the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. UNAOC and Google, in partnership with the World Bank Institute, created an environment during the workshop, for the participants to interact and acquire new skills and tools that strengthened their ability to communicate across different cultures. They learned many supplementary skills and approaches to online journalism using Google tools, Google maps, infographics and advanced browsing and search skills.⁷ It was a good learning experience in view of the number of expert speakers and trainers who over the course of the two days introduced new skills and tools that participants could make use of and impart to their colleagues and trainees.⁸

The most extensive and long-term MIL-focused training in Jordan, however, took place in 2006 as part of the Newspapers in Education NIE Development Project. It was supported by Norske Skog, the Norway-based newsprint producer and was implemented by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). The Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists in Jordan (CDFJ), also in partnership with the Jordanian Ministry of Education and three leading daily newspapers, Ad Dustour, Al-Rai, Al Ghad, and the mobile telephone service provider Zain also cooperated for the most serious MIL program yet. Twenty teachers were selected from 25 participating schools at the initial phase of the project (five schools eventually opted out leaving 20

active members). Teachers were trained for a period of three days on the use of tools prepared by WAN-IFRA. A weekly period was dedicated to NIE in each of the 20 schools participating in the program. The newspapers supplied the schools with daily editions for the use of students participating in the NIE classes. A “Press Club” was established in each of the schools, and a wall newspaper and school morning broadcast became a part of the club’s responsibility.

In one of the participating girls’ schools in Amman, the students purchased a video camera and production of videos started almost immediately. Topics ranged from female harassment to other gender-related issues. Another school composed a special *Press Anthem*. Enthusiasm was huge and the learning curve of participating students improved greatly according to parents interviewed after the program ended. WAN-IFRA also organized a Training of Trainers (T.O.T.) program for teachers. The new trainers held eight workshops, attended by teachers from different parts of Jordan. The topics designed for training were drawn from local issues. Three teachers collaborated in writing a guidebook for NIE, which was distributed to teachers. The reaction of some students who participated in the program, as recorded in the video report they produced, indicated a heightened sense of curiosity and a growing-up experience as a result of sharing a product thought to be the domain of adults. Parents of participating students reported that their children had matured and the project’s coordinator, Ghaith Shoqairi, said they had improved their reading skills. Aralynn MacMane, WAN-IFRA’s project coordinator said: “What began with 25 government schools in and around Amman has now expanded to 170 governmental and private schools all over Jordan. By 2010, more than 6,000 classrooms were doing NIE.” The project also created a national team of teachers who could train their colleagues in NIE. Two of those teachers, Raja’a Al Khatieb and Ghada Kakish, became WAN-IFRA Teacher Ambassadors and explained NIE to media executives attending WAN-IFRA’s Arab Free Press Forum. “Media are no longer only used by politicians and politics, all people use media as a source of knowledge and to engage in the political scene,” said Nidal Mansour, executive president of the CDFJ, who led the project. “Media are now present everywhere – in homes, cafés, at work – and they should also be present in schools and in classrooms.”⁹

Private schools were the principal long-term beneficiary of the program. Almost all major private schools have introduced MIL classes and show great commitment to its sustainability and values. The Jubilee School is one of the success models for MIL implementation in Jordan. The staff has embraced the ideals and the idea as they noted marked improvement in students’ reading skills, general knowledge and critical thinking, according to MIL teacher Ghada Kakish. To this end, the school uses a variety of tools to reinforce MIL values. It also supports and promotes musical activities and school plays that enable students to gain profound understanding of various forms of expression. During student council elections in September 2014, students simulated campaign activities of a real election. Candidates published their manifestos and engaged in serious mature debates to explain or defend what they had declared to be their action plan if elected. Advertisements and posters carrying slogans were posted around the school.

Parents were invited as observers to ensure the fairness of the process.¹⁰ Other private schools have also conducted similar exercises successfully. However, the vast majority of schools and particularly those in remote parts of the country can barely offer the most basic services to students due to limited resources and rapidly expanding student numbers given the unprecedented population growth and an influx of refugees from Syria.

Democratic Empowerment Program

By virtue of its precarious geo-strategic position and location, Jordan is extremely sensitive to developments in neighboring countries, which can best be characterized at this juncture of history as unstable and dangerously volatile. The steady flow of refugees, whose numbers vary from one day to the next and depending on how the calculations are made, are in excess of 615,000 for those registered, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Substantial unregistered numbers have settled outside refugee camps in towns and villages. Schools in northern Jordan, in the vicinity of the Syrian frontier, have suffered the most as their infrastructure and resources were never designed to withstand such a population explosion.¹¹ The already limited resources have been stretched to the limit, altering priorities and shifting attention to daily survival issues.

However, a major initiative by the King Abdallah II Fund for Economic Development has launched programs whose goals converge with those of MIL. The Fund's activities include debating clubs in schools, democratic empowerment programs, responsible citizenship through active participation, and embracing open minded approaches to culture, the arts and philosophy, which were considered necessary educational luxuries in recent years. According to Yousour Hassan, the Democratic Empowerment Program manager, 1,800 students in the 14-17 years age group participated in the debating clubs. The pilot program, which comprised 92 schools, was based on guidelines drawn after 23 brainstorming sessions with teachers. The Ministry of Education supported the pilot project by dedicating two class periods weekly, for a whole semester. They revolved around values of tolerance, enlightened intellectual discussion, and meaningful debate where emphasis on disagreement and constructive opposition were based on positions grounded in fact, not impressions, hearsay, or populism. The program also targeted 6,500 students with poor reading skills during the same period and yielded satisfactory results.

During the summer of 2014, 44 Ministry of Education summer camps provided a healthy environment for youth to discuss wide-ranging issues. They touched on matters that covered local pressing issues in the framework of nurturing democratic practices to broad cultural topics such as poetry, music and the arts. One thousand three hundred and twenty students participated in the discussions over the summer period. The experience provided program officers a valuable opportunity to appreciate the issues that mattered most to students and served as an indicator for planning similar future events to meet the program's objectives. Students had someone listening attentively to what they were saying for a change, instead of being at the receiving end of lectures from

grownups. Many felt a certain degree of fulfillment and some felt empowered, having learned about their rights. Others felt the experience had turned them into responsible grownups able to participate in making decisions that affect their lives when electing competent candidates to represent them in local councils and municipalities. Under the same program, other initiatives were launched such as *Khan Al Funoun*, a festival activity designed to stimulate appreciation of the arts. Artists, poets, musicians from different parts of the country and the region were invited to perform. Young people who live in remote parts of the country and who were unable to participate were bused from their towns and villages for the day to attend the events and interact with young people from different parts of the country.

Another novel activity was the *Hakawaty Festival*, an enabling environment for people with special narrative skills to entertain the public with stories from their heritage or improvise and develop stories based on heritage themes. The events were well attended and held in busy and much frequented parts of the capital that attract a young age group. The events and activities created a positive atmosphere where people communicated through a medium that was the domain of the television screen. In another bold experiment, a *Speakers Corner* was established at Al Hashimiyah University in Zarka. A blog with guidelines was set up by the students. The topics were announced in the blog and once a week, students gathered and spoke freely to a crowd of curious *Speakers Corner* listeners. The event picked up momentum and became a regular feature of student life at the university. It enforced the principle of free expression, encouraged enlightened debate and fostered an ambience of friendly cordial challenges instead of violence and confrontation, a feature that had plagued some universities in recent years and resulted in the occasional loss of life.¹²

NGO's Building MIL skills

On the NGO front, activities take place on a regular basis. Unfortunately there are no surveys or data available on the number of activities, their precise nature, or numbers of participants. The NGOs selected are the most visible at the national level. However, It is hoped that the work which the Information Research Center (IRC), the King Hussein Fund on a National Youth Survey of Jordan, with funding from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), will be nearing completion after over a year of focus groups and the careful creation of survey tools to ensure quality assurance of the research conducted. The survey tools will be available for the collection by Jordan's Department of Statistics: this important contribution will provide credible and representative information on the diverse issues that Jordanian youth face today. The tools were redeveloped in the context of the post-Arab Spring world, so the survey will provide insight on youth civic engagement, political awareness, job readiness after education, and other elements related to their aspirations, perceptions, and opportunities in today's world.¹³

One of the innovative and active NGOs is MO7AKA, meaning *Leaders of Tomorrow* – a youth-led independent non-profit organization, active since 2007 in Jordan and

regionally. In the absence of a national MIL policy or program, it works energetically on different initiatives that deliver a number of MIL objectives. The most relevant MIL initiatives are *Fadfed*,¹⁴ meaning “Let it Out,” and MO7AKA. Fadfed is a youth initiative that provides an open, low-key and free platform to encourage citizens to creatively express their opinions on sensitive issues on white papers in public places. By live-tweeting these opinions to decision makers, experts and officials, the citizens bridge the gap between the offline and online communities, hold decision makers accountable and keep experts in touch with the grassroots. Citizens also document public opinion, analyze it and write qualitative scientific research and reports. MO7AKA is a creative initiative that gets youth in an intense, mind-changing experience and builds their critical thinking and problem-solving capacity through a simulation and role-playing environment that provides eye-opening experience on human rights issues and contentious social and political subjects in an unconventional public space.¹⁵

In October 2014, Jordan Media Institute (JMI) trained 30 young students in a program funded by the Jordan River Foundation on basic social media and journalism skills. It incorporated components consistent with MIL culture. The participants who came from remote communities, received intensive training in critical thinking, evaluation of media and information sources, narrative skills that enabled them to produce basic reports using their mobile phones, in addition to simple slide shows and blogging on community issues. The program also focused on elections culture and democracy and how to evaluate and report on local municipal affairs. In the course of their stay, they visited a newspaper, a television station and a high-tech computer and IT facility where video games are designed. It is hoped that such a program will empower the participants and raise their awareness of local issues in their communities and empower them to blog and produce reports for social media outlets. JMI, in collaboration with Journalists for Human Rights (JHR), launched the Amman-based project *Expanding Public Dialogue on Human Rights Issues*. The project, which is supported by the U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), includes mentoring and training journalists, journalism students and representatives of civil society organizations on the power of data to help “make this dialogue more effective and informed.” Designed and managed by JHR, Canada’s leading media development organization, and implemented by the JMI, the project was meant to engage two more local partners: Community Media Network (CMN), a media and community radio organization, and the Centre for Defending the Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ), a regional press freedom organization based in Amman.

At the core of the project is the use of data journalism tools to run major investigations on human rights issues. The initiative is supported by the use of “a citizen reporting crowd-sourcing tool developed by CMN – the first in the Arab world – which aims to help a more informed and participatory public dialogue on these issues.” CDFJ will be facilitating the communications training and public engagement elements of the project. This project will support journalists through training and tools, including closely tracking a breaking story, reaching out to the public via snap polls, gauging civil society’s mood about key issues. On the research and training side, the project will

develop curricula to increase data-driven reporting on human rights, and monitoring media coverage of human rights issues.¹⁶ JMI's involvement in the implementation of this program will give momentum to its leadership of MIL campaigns along with its active partners. The launch of its fact-check website *Akeed* with the support of the King Abdallah II Fund for Economic Development, will equip more students and journalists with tools and skills to consolidate future MIL programs. The website has already contributed to creating a culture of awareness of the need for accountability, the right of access to information, and the application of professional criteria in content analysis, thus contributing to raising media standards and underscoring the importance of good journalistic practices.¹⁷

Recommendations

In the present unsettled climate in the region where blame is laid on the failure of education systems to address the issues of pluralism, freedom of expression, and the right to information, it is imperative for the Ministry of Education to integrate MIL in the national curriculum as a matter of priority. Such a move, accompanied by a visibility campaign in the national media expounding MIL's attributes and impact on youth in the promotion of harmony and tension reduction will go a long way towards preparing young people to play their part in the democratization of society. A vigorous campaign to mobilize parents and civil society organizations to take interest in supporting MIL programs would accelerate its implementation and encourage its adoption by teachers and schools. The impact will manifest itself in improved reading skills, expanded horizons, critical thinking and the development of an inquisitive mind. It will enhance acceptance of differences of opinion, and encourage free uninhibited self-expression and respect of human rights. The Jordan Media Institute, the Press Syndicate, media departments at universities, private schools that already implement MIL programs as well as NGOs and UNESCO, would be natural partners in such an endeavor. Their united drive would support the Ministry of Education in its efforts to introduce MIL and in securing additional financial appropriations needed to this end. The national media: principal newspapers, news websites, social media, radio and television stations, should all be lobbied to provide sustained exposure and support to the project.

UNAOOC curricula and modules provide a rich and ready-to-use resource of material for schools and teachers. In areas where there is limited connectivity, NGOs and civil society volunteers can be invited to help. Poor Internet coverage in some areas should not be a pretext for delaying decisions to accelerate the introduction and institutionalization of MIL in schools. The current crisis in the Middle East gives impetus and urgency to decision makers and major donors interested in peace and stability in the region to support the scheme.

T.O.T. and training programs for teachers and administrators will need to be addressed. There is no shortage of innovative means to achieve tangible outputs. Criteria for the assessment of outputs and the program's impact should be developed simultaneously.

Schools with established experience in MIL should be invited to share their experience and contribute their know-how in the development and implementation of the project. Their achievements should be lauded and given a high profile and acknowledged by the local media and civil society. The public should be made aware of the value of their pioneering efforts to give them further encouragement and incentive to consolidate and expand their existing programs.

The setting up of an MIL digital teaching platform by the Ministry of Education would be a cost effective means to launch the program. It would provide resources needed for its efficient implementation by making needed educational material readily available to schools throughout the country. It would also help the program's administrators measure and evaluate its impact and provide a feedback channel for comments and constructive suggestions from students and teachers. The student discussion topics would be carefully selected and designed to nurture the generation and formulation of questions that enrich and enlighten. The skill of formulating questions would create awareness of the drawbacks of intransigence, hate and bigotry.

The daily school broadcast, part of Jordanian students' diet, is an opportunity that should not be missed by the ministry to promote MIL education. It is an opportunity to weave MIL values into the content of the schools' broadcast with content designed to inform, stimulate and inspire with narratives that fire the imagination. Resources can be dedicated so that schools can access new ideas and fresh material for the daily broadcasts with a leitmotif of human rights, freedom of expression, the bounty of pluralism, and responsible citizenship.

A new dynamic format for these broadcasts incorporating content streaming from different parts of the country, with MIL in the foreground, would turn these broadcasts into an agent for change that would, hopefully, chart the way for young generations to live in peace and harmony with themselves, "the other," and the rest of the world.

A report on the state of education in Jordan released to the national daily Al Rai on October 4, 2014¹⁸ presents a huge challenge to the people, the government and international community to allocate resources to save the present generation.

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11. A Sultanate of Oman Perspective

Naifa Eid Saleem

At a time when the importance of the media's role is being increasingly felt in modern times by society and peoples it is important to develop Omani media to undertake their mission of developing citizens' capabilities and enlightening them about their key role in building their nation.

In some instances, information may be undeclared, costly to assimilate, or difficult to interpret (Shinnick & Ryan, 2008).

Today information plays a key role in strengthening and reinforcing rulings by decision-makers. Without the appropriate information for the right person at the right time, decision making can be off track as the process of taking decisions is no longer dependent on experience or hunches alone but on the availability of reliable data from diverse sources. In today's ubiquitous information environment, no institution can afford to do without modern sources of data. Rather, most institutions compete to establish in-situ libraries and centers to provide and deliver accurate and appropriate sources of information for decision-makers and other beneficiaries.

According to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), access to information is possible through three steps: 1) observation and experimentation; 2) conversation, dialogue and communication with other people; and, 3) consultation of data storage and memory vehicles, namely data centers and institutions as well as libraries (IFLA, 2014). Not long ago accurate and important data were kept secret from citizens, notably concerning health, consumption and salaries. Failing to inform citizens led them to lose confidence in higher authorities. Citizens were denied the right to express themselves freely. The development of ICTs and the huge flow of information has made it easier for civil society actors to share information with each other, which Sultan Qaboos addressed at the Council of Oman in November 2008 when he said: "Information and communication technology have now become the key engine

propelling development in the third millennium, which is why we have focused our attention on finding a national strategy to develop the skills and abilities of citizens in this domain with the aim of furthering eGovernment services.”¹

In the wake of the Arab Spring in 2010, with citizens in most Arab countries implementing what they considered their fundamental right to freedom of expression and to livelihood, some of them did not express their legitimate rights in a proper and systematic way, and instead became unruly, as noted by Calkins (2013). He believes the Arab Spring provided the Arabs with the first opportunity in decades to have their voices heard, but that the establishment of new governments and constitutions is ongoing and several countries are facing a backlash regarding freedom of speech. The correct and effective way to provide citizens benefiting from government services with appropriate skills and information is through Media and Information Literacy” (MIL). MIL includes knowledge and behaviors as well as the skills to:

- 1) Access needed data;
- 2) knowing when to obtain them;
- 3) how and where to get them;
- 4) how to analyze them, criticize them, and arrange them;
- 5) and, most importantly, how to use them ethically.

The MIL concept goes beyond information and communication technology to include learning, critical thinking, analysis and interpretation skills inside and outside the scope of learning and teaching. As for sources of information, the concept includes oral, printed and digital data from various sources (IFLA, 2014; Van de Vord, 2010). To help Arab and other countries learn and properly implement Media and Information Literacy by empowering citizens, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) produced the *Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers*² that covers the following:

Key elements of information literacy:

- 1) Define and articulate information needs
- 2) Locate and access information
- 3) Assess information
- 4) Organize information
- 5) Make ethical use of information
- 6) Communicate information
- 7) Use ICT skills for information processing

Key elements of media literacy:

- 1) Understand the role and functions of media in democratic societies
- 2) Understand the conditions under which media can fulfill their functions

- 3) Critically evaluate media content in the light of media functions
- 4) Engage with media for self-expression and democratic participation
- 5) Review skills (including ICTs) needed to produce user-generated content

The objective of this article is to shed light on the following points:

- 1) Media and information in the Sultanate of Oman and their links to the *Media and Information Literacy* curriculum.
- 2) The Ministry of Education and its role in promoting media and information literacy initiatives.
- 3) The Ministry of Higher Education's institutions and the culture of media and information literacy.
- 4) Introduction to the *Media and Information Literacy* curriculum.
- 5) Arab intellectual output and the culture of media and information literacy.
- 6) Convergence of the *Media and Information Literacy* curriculum and the Sultan Qaboos University curriculum.

Media and information in the Sultanate of Oman and its link to the *Media and Information Literacy* curriculum

Most Arab countries have a Ministry of Information, which is separated from the Ministry of Culture. In Saudi Arabia it is called the Ministry of Culture and Information, in the United Arab Emirates it is the Ministry of Information and Culture, in Qatar the appellation is Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, in the Kingdom of Bahrain it is called the Ministry of Culture. In Oman, there is a Ministry of Information and another entity called the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, in addition to an IT body whose aim is to “transform the Sultanate into a sustainable Knowledge Society by leveraging Information and Communication Technologies to enhance government services, enrich businesses, and empower individuals.”³

Regardless of their names, the ultimate goal of Oman's ministries and public agencies is to provide citizens and residents with accurate information in addition to helping people process information and develop critical and analytical thinking. On closer inspection of proposals and initiatives launched by the above-mentioned ministries and agencies, it seems none ever suggested adoption of a systematic curriculum on media and information literacy. Arming citizens with media and information literacy is a fundamental human right and one of the civil rights that have emerged in recent times supported by digital technology. The importance of this curriculum is its call for social integration and the bridging of the information gap between rich and poor (IFLA, 2014).

The Ministry of Education and its role in media and information literacy initiatives

In addition to the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and the IT body, the role and mission of educational institutions should not be overlooked. The latter provide information and communication literacy skills, namely where to find and how to select information. If a media and information literacy curriculum is absent from the early stages of education, it should be incorporated into undergraduate, not graduate, studies. It is recommended that the curriculum accompany the student from the first educational stages without delay. What matters is to introduce it sooner or later. Despite the absence of a curriculum on media and information literacy, probably because its content does not match any existing program, the institutions and the schools of the Ministry of Education are equipped with so-called learning resource centers that are an equivalent of school libraries.

Since he came to power, Oman's Sultan Qaboos has paid special attention to the development and modernization of education, notably the establishment of school libraries. From nine school libraries in 1977, the number increased to 134 in 1990 spread across the country's provinces and regions (Ministry of Education, 1990). In the academic year 1998-1999, the Ministry of Education implemented the primary education system in 17 schools aimed at providing a quantum leap in education, to ensure quality outcomes and keep up with the explosion of knowledge and technological developments (Al Hanai 2007⁴). The new education system consisted of allocating resources to establish a learning center in each school to replace the traditional library and provide a technological environment and a variety of information sources. If the content of the proposed 'Media and Information Literacy' course does not correspond with the Ministry of Education's specific guidelines and benchmarks, the Learning Resources Center is expected to provide the course as it is directly linked to the media and information programs following approval by the Ministry. It appears from the above-mentioned key elements of media and information literacy that they help individuals effectively process information and have a clear picture about media, as the curriculum focuses on providing technological skills as well as the capacity to ethically evaluate, organize and use information. A survey of undergraduates by the author on the ethical use of the Internet revealed that students had no reservations about exchanging passwords to access online content despite their awareness of their unethical behavior (Saleem 2013).

The Ministry of Higher Education's institutions and media and information literacy

If learning resource centers affiliated with the Ministry of Education do not offer this curriculum, Sultan Qaboos University – the only public university – or private institutions such as Sohar University, Nizwa University, Dhofar University, the German

University of Technology or other institutions of higher education, should incorporate the curriculum within their education plans and make it a requirement for all students. The study plans of those universities were reviewed.

Both departments offer requirements related to media and society, and media and technology. At Sultan Qaboos University, the Media Department offers the following required courses:

Table 1. Required courses related to media and information at the Sultan Qaboos University Media Department

Required Course	Course Name	Semester	Credit Hours
1	News in the Media	2	3
2	Radio & TV Technology	4	3
3	Media Law & Ethics	7	3

Table 2. Required courses related to media and information at the Sohar University Journalism and Media Department

Required Course	Course Name	Semester	Credit Hours
1	Media & Society	2	3
2	Institutions & the Role of Media in Society	2	3
3	Communications & New Media & Society	2	3

The Department of Information Studies at Sultan Qaboos University offers a course called *Information Awareness*. Sadly, despite its importance in introducing students to accessing, organizing, evaluating, and using information through different sources, it is an elective, not a required, course. No private universities mentioned above include a Department of Information Studies, hence the need for such an entity to play a role in providing society with the requisite information awareness skills.

Mohamed (2008) undertook a study on universities that offer information awareness courses namely, Maricopa Community Colleges in the U.S. State of Arizona, Dakota State University, and Oregon State University in the United States of America. These institutions demonstrate their commitment to the inclusion of information awareness skills within the academic plan where instructors are required to teach the course in an effective way in collaboration with information experts.

There is no real course on media and information literacy at Sultan Qaboos University or private institutions. Required courses in the Media or Information Studies Departments at that university focus on each major's specialty separately. There is no single course that combines contents and components from both.

Introduction to the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Curriculum

This researcher was introduced to the *Media and Information Literacy* curriculum in June 2011 while attending the first International Forum on Media and Information Literacy, organized by UNESCO in cooperation with the Educational, Scientific, Islamic Organization and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), and the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States in Fez, Morocco.

During the forum, the curriculum was distributed to the teachers. The curriculum focuses on information and media from the perspective of understanding the role and functions of the media in democratic societies, critically evaluating media content in light of their functions as well as engaging with media for self-expression and democratic participation. Additionally, it is good to have a well thought out curriculum that addresses the use of information and communication technology skills in information processing. We need for our teachers and students to be aware of how to communicate information, to know its sources, to assess it, to define it, and most importantly, to make ethical use of it. Unfortunately, I could not, in my capacity as a researcher interested in the elements and basics of media and information, undertake research related to the curriculum. But in one instance I addressed ethics in dealing with the Internet, and in another examined the various behaviors of undergraduate students in dealing with information in a changing technological era.

Arab intellectual output and media and information literacy

There is a shortage of intellectual content in the Arab world addressing this curriculum, its basics and its components. The author could only find a conference held in Qatar in June 2013 that recommended the teaching of sound media literacy in a comprehensive way to help young generations avoid the negative consequences of the media⁵.

Convergence between the curriculum on *Media and Information Literacy* and the requirements at Sultan Qaboos University

Sultan Qaboos University is the only public institution in the Sultanate of Oman, and the only university that hosts a department of Information Studies offering a course called *Information Awareness*.

Media and Information Literacy is a comprehensive course offering components of two majors, media and information, so it is fitting to adopt it after 'Omanizing' it, i.e. adapting it to fit the reality and nature of Omani society in a bid to turn out students aware of information and media and their issues.

Recommendations

The author, therefore, recommends the following:

1. Implementation of a *Media and Information Literacy* curriculum.
2. Incorporation of a *Media and Information Literacy* curriculum in the plans and curricula of the Ministry of Education at the early levels of education and later during university studies.
3. Addition of the curriculum to the educational plans of Sultan Qaboos University by setting it as requirement for all university students, the aim being to ensure the transfer of knowledge and skills to everyone.

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12. A Lebanese Perspective

Magda Abu-Fadil

Do Middle East/North Africa (MENA) consumers and producers of media in all their permutations and across countless platforms fully comprehend what they are doing and how they fit in the larger scheme of things?

Do various groups and individuals take the time to deconstruct messages, processes, outcomes and repercussions of all the interactivity, integration, convergence and overwhelming flow of communications that keeps morphing into new shapes at speeds we can hardly keep up with?

It's as dizzying as Mork from the planet Ork, American comedian Robin Williams' famous TV character, credited in part with paving the way to our truncated media consumption habits from back in the 1970s. "Robin Williams Was An Unwitting Prophet of the Internet Era," headlined *Business Insider* to a story about Williams' frenetic and breathtaking influence on us.¹ According to writer Aaron Gell, Williams channeled culture; his cut-and-paste style echoed what rappers were doing with samples, and like them, he occasionally got into trouble for borrowing material. "It's only now, in retrospect – in the era of broadband and 'an app for that,' Twitter and subreddits, and binge-watching and channel-surfing and emojis and Google Now and instant everything everywhere at all times – that we can really see where he was coming from, acknowledge the debt we owe him and spot the warning flares he was sending up," Gell said. When news went viral of Williams' suicide in August 2014, media and citizen journalists worldwide were all over the map reporting it – many in very poor taste.² A day later Lebanon's *Future TV's* website upped the ante by showing a photo³ purportedly of Williams' corpse with the mark of the belt he used to hang himself around his neck, which several websites later said was a fake.⁴ Such sights and other earlier violations got this writer interested in the 1990s in media ethics (or the lack thereof), explaining the media's role and power, demonstrating how to use media to create better engaged

and more tolerant citizens, as well as developing awareness about the need for media and information literacy on all fronts.

A Lebanese MIL chronology

While serving as coordinator of the journalism program, director of university publications and eventually director of the Institute for Professional Journalists (wearing three hats) at the Lebanese American University, I participated in a virtual cross-cultural academic and journalistic experiment with a professor and students from the University of Missouri's School of Journalism. It was entitled *Internationalizing a Journalism Curriculum Using Distance Education Technology: A Pilot Project Between Lebanese American University and the University of Missouri – Columbia (Missouri School of Journalism)*. A paper about it is available online.⁵ It was a rich exercise in cross-cultural communication, values, newsworthiness, the use of nascent technology (notably the Internet in Lebanon) and finding out what really mattered in a media environment to people on two different continents.

Fast forward to 2002 when I examined how Lebanese and Middle East media covered the September 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S. in an article for the (defunct) *Lebanon Journalism Review's* Spring 2002 issue entitled *Keep Kids in Mind When Writing that Story: Are Detailed Graphics Really Worth It?*⁶

Children were glued to TV sets, along with adults, when passenger jets slammed into the World Trade Center Towers in New York, the Pentagon in Washington and into a field outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on September 11, 2001.

Reactions were varied, but often based on their own experiences with violent TV shows, epic Hollywood movies, or, science-fiction video or computer games. But when the reality began to sink in, thanks to the endless replay of the horrific footage, fear and incredulity also took hold.⁷

In May 2004, this author presented a paper entitled *Media Literacy: Awareness vs. Ignorance* at the seminar *Young People & the Media* organized by the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, Egypt.⁸ In it, I asked if children knew what they received as information, if they evaluated content, if their parents and teachers were helpful in selecting programming, or if they let young people judge for themselves what was suitable for reading, listening, watching or browsing:

Subliminal messages tucked into programs may influence purchasing patterns. Conflict-filled episodes or video games could incite violence and lead to aggressive behavior. Even innocuous-seeming serials could traumatize young people into confusing fantasy with reality. All with the end result that an unsophisticated approach to the consumption of news, entertainment, and even the more popular "edutainment" may contribute to dysfunctional societies and individuals, or, at the very least, confusion about how to react to the cacophony of messages overloading our sensory circuits.

It may then be worthwhile exploring the realm of media literacy to help young people – and their parents, teachers, counselors – understand the impact of the media and how their values and views are shaped by them.⁹

In November 2004, I delivered a lecture entitled *Lebanese Youth & the Media: Social & Political Influences* at the *German-Arab Media Dialogue* a conference organized by the German Foreign Ministry and Institute for Foreign and Cultural Affairs in Berlin.

In any country, when the state is a key partner in the media, or somehow linked to them, there's no hope for liberal media to operate," wrote Lebanese media professor and analyst Jean Karam.

He added that regardless of the state's liberalism, openness and democratic stance, there was no hope it would give up its hegemonic attitude, notably when it senses its political or economic plans or diplomacy are threatened by every journalist's legitimate free expression. (Media Pot Boiling, Jean Karam, Ink and Moons, An-Nahar, 29-10-2004).

Nordicom's Clearinghouse in Sweden published it as a chapter in the book *In The Service of Young People? Studies and Reflections on Media in the Digital Age* in September 2005¹⁰. This writer hammered on the theme again in a lecture entitled *Obstacles & Prospects for Women & Youth in the MENA Media Landscape* delivered at the seminar/workshop *Media, Women & Youth in the Middle East & North Africa* organized by the Olof Palme International Center at the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, Egypt in February 2005.

In March 2007, I presented a research paper for the UNESCO Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy in Doha, Qatar entitled *Media Literacy: A Tool to Combat Stereotypes and Promote Intercultural Understanding*:¹¹

Media literacy and awareness have long been neglected in the Arab world, often leading to unfavorable consequences and exacerbating a volatile situation spawned by political, economic and social unrest, not to mention lack of leadership. Media literacy as a subject is rarely taught in schools in any organized way and is often couched in vague terminology within university courses that fail to address the *raison d'être* of mass communication tools, their financial support systems and the various influences that could transform them into weapons of mass deception.

The very concept of critical thinking that underpins media literacy seems alien to young people weaned on a steady diet of rote learning and passive intake. This is particularly evident in schools following the French and Arabic educational systems where the very idea of questioning authority has, traditionally, been anathema. Even British and American systems have sometimes fallen short of their stated goals of effective learning and questioning.

Raja Kamal, an associate dean for resource development at the Harris School for Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago, said higher education in the Arab world had performed inadequately and produced graduates who were having a dif-

difficult time integrating and assimilating into the global economy. ‘The vast majority of Arab universities teach their students what to think instead of how to think,’ he said. ‘Unless this mentality changes fast, little hope of progress will be seen on the horizon’ (Kamal, 2007). Kamal urged Arab countries to incorporate higher education into their strategic planning and create a partnership between the private sector and educators.¹²

In January 2008, this writer presented a paper at a UNESCO conference on cultural diversity and education entitled *Fostering Critical Capacities and Fighting Against Unilateral Points of View: Finding Common Ground and the Subject Matters Amenable to Cultural Diversity Learning – The Journalism Education & Training Dimension*:

Stereotypical images and misunderstandings arise when there is lack of information, when information is distorted and mis-communicated and sometimes when there is ill intent. So we need a solid media education, proper media literacy, adequate research, perseverance, patience, an enterprising spirit and willingness to see and think outside the box.

A major report grew from the initial event in Barcelona, Spain and was launched at the UN’s Alliance of Civilizations in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in May 2010. The author’s recommendations in the first conference paper were included in the report.¹³ Since then, I have lectured on the topic and conducted workshops on media and information literacy in Lebanon, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen. Elsewhere in Lebanon, others seem to have picked up the mantle. The American University of Beirut established the Media & Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut¹⁴ grouping participants and speakers from across the Arab world and beyond. Its efforts have yet to translate into implementation of a viable and sustainable program involving all educational institutions in the country and in all three major languages of instruction. International College¹⁵ (IC), a private K-12 school with two campuses in Beirut and Ain Aar, Lebanon, has been a keen adopter of media and information literacy concepts and practices. Its teachers, coordinators and section heads have undergone some initial training in media and information literacy but still need further immersion in the subject. On the student front, IC has devised what it calls a *Responsible Digital Citizenship Contract* for pupils at the elementary, mid- and secondary levels focused on respecting, educating and protecting themselves and others.¹⁶ Students are expected to sign this agreement of rules for Internet safety and digital citizenship with their parents in a bid to create awareness and foster responsibility online. A similar arrangement needs to be adopted nation-wide.

Elsewhere, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Beirut introduced e-books in the classroom to replace heavy texts students carry as part of the ‘EDUVATION’ school network¹⁷ grouping three institutions under its jurisdiction.¹⁸ The ‘eBok Book Series’ developed by the school system educators of the Ecole des Trois Docteurs, Beirut Annunciation Orthodox College and Saint Mary’s Orthodox College cover Arabic, Social Studies, English, French, Mathematics and Science for grades 1-3.¹⁹ Students are required to provide their own tablets (iPads, etc.), but there’s little indication the critical thinking skills they’re trained to use include deciphering media messages. The ‘eBok Book

Series' seems more focused on developing ICT skills to complement the learning process than delving into the realm of digital messages and multimedia. The daily newspaper *Annahar*²⁰ went through several phases of producing children's and youth supplements – as have other print media – and was briefly involved in a modest experiment with the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers' (WAN-IFRA) *Newspapers in Education* program²¹. However, the plan did not go far and was unsustainable.

In May 2012, Lebanon's then education and higher education minister Hassan Diab and former telecommunications minister Nicolas Sehnaoui announced the provision of tablets to public school students at grades 10 and 11 to improve curricula and advance the country's educational system. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education had received an initial gift of 1,500 tablets to use as testing samples in public and private schools. The ministry also set up a media and information literacy program aimed at establishing a network to serve schools across the country (Ministry of Education & Higher Education 2012). But little else has emerged about the scheme. That particular Lebanese cabinet (and the ministry) changed hands, political life in Lebanon has gone through several stumbling blocks, security has been adversely affected, and the school educational system has since been riding on a public and private teachers' syndicate-led roller coaster of strikes and school disruptions, thereby paying scant attention to what might be considered of secondary importance.

Moreover, the ambitious plan to promote MIL has had to contend with absurd recurring inconveniences like chronic power cuts and shortages and slow Internet connectivity despite official claims of providing ADSL service. Sadly, a culture of media and information literacy has not yet permeated Lebanon's academic institutions at the elementary, middle, secondary and university levels. Parents have not yet been fully engaged in the process. The government has not yet allocated adequate resources to provide MIL programs in all public schools. Most of all, content and materials for MIL have not been made widely available in Arabic (the country's official language) as well as French and English for schools where those are the languages of instruction, and, to a lesser extent, Armenian, the language of the largest national minority in the country.

Conclusion

How do we contribute to media and information literacy in Lebanon? Gaming is one way to channel young people's energy and is a booming industry that caters to multiple tastes. Games, particularly the electronic and virtual varieties, are used in education to teach life skills, mathematics, science, languages and a host of topics, both as standalone software and as applications. Want 'better adjusted' children? An hour of video gaming a day (and no more) might help, advise experts:

Playing video games might actually be good for child development according to a new study from the University of Oxford, but only if kids play for less than an hour a day.

Research undertaken by experimental psychologist Dr Andrew Przybylski suggested that young people who played video games for just a few hours a week were better adjusted, more likely to care about the welfare of their peers and presented fewer behavioural problems over all.²²

But games and ‘apps’ also come in sinister forms with a heavy emphasis on violence, wars, and deviant behavior. With wars raging in various Arab countries and instability ruling the day in Lebanon, it’s important to demonstrate to impressionable young people that games based on conflicts are not necessarily good examples to follow. Animated cartoons, another form dear to young and old, can be instrumental in promoting and perpetuating stereotypes, reflecting positive and negative images, and in prompting actions and reactions. The trick is to capitalize on the positive.

Their predecessors, comic books, have also had a similar effect on readers who sometimes mixed myth with reality. They are still a popular form of media and can be used to good effect in teaching and learning. In Lebanon, comic books are available mostly in Arabic, French and English, although these publications can also be found in other languages. Tie in the lure of advertising across various platforms and its power of influencing behavior, and the mix can swing either way – positive and negative messages. Throw in posters and street signs for good measure and you’re starting to get inundated. Newspapers and magazines are not as dominant as digital and mobile media and radio plays a secondary role to online audio and video content. Television was once termed a ‘babysitter’ when parents sought to pacify their children. It has since taken a back seat to all things mobile and online and in which user-generated content is ubiquitous. In an environment of mash-ups and media mixes, it’s easy to lose sight of ethics, copyrights and violations of privacy. The Lebanese have had a longstanding struggle with copyright laws and registered trademarks. They flout them. Understanding all these concepts and practices and how to navigate the choppy waters is imperative in a globalized 21st Century world.

In Lebanon, MIL is tied to education, pedagogy, religion, and media in the general sense. Information is often brought in as an adjunct, with technology playing a supportive role. Implementation of programs that promote digital knowledge along with media literacy is where the heavy work is needed and given the country’s geographic location, there’s an urgent requirement to provide more practical content in Arabic, while producing materials in French and English to cater to the different sub-groups. Meanwhile, Dennis Hayes, a professor of education at the University of Derby in Britain, offers a contrarian view to what we’ve been hearing and preaching to these many years. In a blog post entitled *Let’s Stop Trying to Teach Students Critical Thinking*, Hayes suggests that concept is not a skill. It means indoctrination and critical theories are uncritical.²³

The truth is that you can’t teach people to be critical unless you are critical yourself. This involves more than asking young people to “look critically” at something, as if criticism was a mechanical task.

As a teacher, you have to have a critical spirit. This does not mean moaning endlessly about education policies you dislike or telling students what they should think. It means first and foremost that you are capable of engaging in deep conversation. This means debate and discussion based on considerable knowledge – something that is almost entirely absent in the educational world. It also has to take place in public, with parents and others who are not teachers, not just in the classroom or staffroom.

On that note, this author would ask readers to think about the issue, engage in deep conversation, debate and discuss in public, and involve others in a bid to better serve media and information literacy.

Notes

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13. Empowering Children and Youth in Tunisia

Carmilla Floyd & Gabriella Thinz

Tunis, early morning February 2014. The first rays of sun were trying to break through the haze, the air was cold. Every news channel highlighted the anniversary of the murder of Chokri Belaïd, the secular politician who was killed in the street outside his home in Tunis a year earlier, on 5 February 5, 2013. There was tension in the air – or was that our imagination? Because we knew that Tunisia and Tunis – a vibrant city of millions, a mix of new and old worlds, tradition and modernity – had gone through more than one would think possible in only a few years. We were a small team of media trainers on our way to Beni Khaled, a small town an hour's drive from Tunis, to hold the first of a series of media and information literacy workshops. Our project, *Empowering Children and Youth Through Media and Information Literacy: Fusing Education and Media* had existed on paper since 2011. Now, in February 2014, we were about to hit the ground to try to transform ideas and concepts into practice for the first time.

In the afternoon we would meet children and young people frequenting a local youth center, to give them a crash course in Media and Information Literacy (MIL). Before that, a morning session was set up with a group of youth leaders working at the center. But our car was still moving at a crawling pace through the rush hour of Tunis city center as sidewalks filled with people on the move. We spotted soldiers and police officers in riot gear, and passed a government building surrounded by barbed wire and tanks. What we did not know was that only hours earlier, a few kilometers away, a terrorist cell was blown up – literally. So, the tension was not imaginary. We finally made it out of the cramped city center and drove on narrow, winding streets. While central Tunis bears the marks of modern city landscaping, there are huge contrasts between the city center, suburbs and countryside. After an hour on a bumpy highway we finally reached Beni Khaled and parked outside a graffiti covered building in the midst of busy streets. We were nervous and excited to get started. But first a word about Tunisia and the background to this project.

Why Tunisia?

It was here in Tunisia that the Arab Spring began. In December 2010 a street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Sidi Bouzid, a small town in central Tunisia. This became the spark that ignited the uprisings in Tunisia, then in Egypt and Libya. The consequences of the revolution from a media perspective are almost impossible to grasp.

Picture this: A regime that unscrupulously controlled the media was forced to give up power. Before the revolution, censorship was commonplace. Journalists were often subjected to harassment.¹ For the first time, during the revolution Tunisian journalists went out on the streets and reported live – letting the public voice their opinion without any censorship. With the fall of the regime, the Ministry of Information, a once-feared instrument of media control, was abolished. Suddenly there was free speech. An explosion of new radio stations, TV channels and online news sites followed, while state broadcasters re-organized, and an endless stream of information and news was shared through online news services and social networks. After the first euphoric sense of freedom, people became weary. State-owned media that turned into public service broadcasters were desperately trying to convince audiences they had changed, but were still considered by many to be part of the old regime. And since virtually all mainstream Tunisian media were once connected, to a greater or lesser degree, to the deposed Ben Ali regime, people remained cautious. The media were flooded with rumors, all sides wanting to give their own versions of the past and present. At the center of the turmoil one found a young population – at least half of all Tunisians are below the age of 20². They grew up being told certain rules applied, only to find they had to learn quickly it was no longer important. Who should one listen to, who could one trust?

According to a 2013 study from the Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement and the British Council, media in post-revolutionary Tunisia are still largely viewed by young people as “commercial and manipulative, and agenda-driven rather than truth-driven,” unprofessional and responsible for spreading bogus news. While the role that social media played in the revolution is undeniably positive, the research shows that perception among youth is that its influence has shifted from a positive to a negative one: “Though social media previously contributed towards mounting awareness, many now fear it as an unwieldy tool for fostering division and spreading rumors. Social media’s current use for political mobilization has further led to stereotyping and manipulation that have made many of the study participants consider its revolutionary role to be over.” However, in spite of these fears, there is an overall positive but cautious attitude amongst young respondents in the study towards media and the newly experienced freedom of expression. These changes are considered important and positive by youth and there remains a persistent conviction that media can be used as a tool for democracy³. This makes for fertile soil for an MIL project. The project Tunisian and Swedish partners were about to embark on in February 2014 had a broad approach. Early on, we had decided to involve capacity building not only for youngsters and educators but also for media

producers. The ultimate project goal is for children and young people to become active and have a voice in matters of human rights and a democratic Tunisia. To achieve this, we believe that adults also need to become media and information literate – teachers, youth leaders and parents. In addition we were determined to reach out to those who produce the media: journalists, editors, newsroom managers, TV producers and bloggers. These worlds must meet to promote inclusion and cross-fertilization of knowledge, ideas and insights. We believe media producers must listen to children and youth and include them in their creative processes. In this way, media can become more relevant for young people and contribute to their participation in a democratic society. Put simply, if the media disseminate a biased message without checking sources – instead reinforcing stereotypes, with no concern for their audience – does it really matter if young people become media literate? The opposite is also true: How can the media evolve if young people from all walks of life don't have the skills to 'read' the media and their subtexts?

Meeting reality

Back to Beni Khaled, where we were standing on a street corner looking for the entrance to the youth center with an interpreter who would translate English and French into the local Arabic dialect, Darija used by most teenagers here. A group of young people called out to us and pointed to a doorway. One of them said: "You must be from Sweden, right? Welcome!" A group of youth leaders were waiting for us, offering tea, sweet cookies and many questions. We answered and asked our own, slowly forming a picture of their views, knowledge and awareness on media in general and MIL in particular.

The center in Beni Khaled is one of over 300 similar locales around the country⁴ that were established during the Ben Ali regime and sometimes used as hubs for propaganda by the ruling party. Since May 2011 they have been legally governed by Revolutionary Decree that give the centers more freedom vis-à-vis the government. The youth leaders described their area as 'socially vulnerable,' an industrial and rural region with high unemployment numbers. The Director said that many, perhaps a majority, of the children and youth that use the center come from poor families and face many problems including poverty, drugs and domestic violence. Together we discussed how their young charges used the media and were affected by them. We talked about social media, gender stereotypes and politicization. The youth leaders were open minded, and very sharp. All were passionate about supporting the young people at the center, but felt that children and youth had no voice in the mainstream media. Due to financial constraints, they said, young people in Beni Khaled had limited access to social media, otherwise an arena where many young Tunisians have taken an active role. All of the youth leaders felt issues concerning the media were very important in today's Tunisia, but also said the MIL concept was virtually unknown in schools and at youth centers, and at the Bir El Bey Advanced Institute for Youth and Culture, where practically all youth leaders in Tunisia get their degrees in youth recreation pedagogy and leadership. Shortly before lunch we toured the small center and its bare but brightly painted rooms. With pride

the youth leaders told us about their latest project: a simple web radio station that would broadcast from the youth center with content produced and presented by young people. We visited the small, makeshift studio and they asked our opinions.

This was our first visit to a Tunisian youth center and we did not realize how far they had come in Beni Khaled compared to many other centers around the country. We did not know how many barriers existed for a non-commercial, secular and apolitical venture to be heard on the air, notably one involving young people. This we realized much later, after traveling to other parts of the country, meeting many more people and visiting other youth centers that had barely any equipment or space. The passion for change and youth empowerment was evident everywhere. But to actually, in practice, be able to offer children and young people the opportunity to make their voices heard on the air was rare. In the afternoon we met the young people for the first time.

We had asked for a group of about 15, but at least 30 eager girls and boys between the ages of 12–20 were waiting for us in a large room otherwise used for everything from after-school tutoring to dance practice and rap music performances. Kids continued to drop in all afternoon to participate in the workshop, as schools closed and the rumor spread that something was happening at the center. We started with the basics. Using simple, interactive learning activities we explored how the youngsters defined media and what they meant to them. Some of the older teens had cheap and simple mobile phones, but they managed to use them to access Facebook and Google. To watch YouTube clips they used the few computers at the youth center, or went to one of the local Internet cafés. Very few had access to computers at home. The workshop was to continue the next morning and when we returned to the center we were surprised to see young people already waiting in line outside.

More than 60 youngsters, an equal number of boys and girls, crammed into the room, sitting around tables, along the walls and on the floor. “They are hungry for knowledge, anything that is new,” explained one of the youth leaders. It was slightly daunting – the largest group any of us had ever worked with using interactive classroom activities. We began with a classic counting heads activity, dividing the youngsters into smaller groups and asking them to count women and men, but also children and youth in photos in a week’s batch of local and national newspapers. Not surprisingly, we found that women and children were practically non-existent in the news. Teenagers were slightly more visible, but only as victims or delinquents. We trainers were expecting this, after many studies over the years have shown that this ratio repeats itself in nearly all forms of media around the world.⁵ But the young participants in the room were surprised, then angry. “Why is there nothing about me? About us?” asked a young girl who for the first time had discovered that she and her peers, especially the girls, were nearly invisible in the media. During the rest day, we focused on turning anger and frustration into action. We tried many different activities; writing headlines and captions; analyzing social media posts and short videos; forming a mock editorial room, letting the teenagers plan their own news show. Afterwards, we were exhausted but filled with enthusiasm and new knowledge. We felt we were on the right track.

A joint effort

The idea for launching an MIL project in Tunisia came from *Le Centre Africain de Perfectionnement des Journalistes et Communicateurs (CAPJC)*, the African Center for Training Journalists and Communicators. CAPJC, that celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2013, underwent a complete overhaul after the revolution. A new leadership was appointed after the ousting of the president in 2011, to restructure and upgrade the organization and its services to be able to respond to existing and emerging needs and challenges faced by Tunisian media. Early on, CAPJC identified the need for empowering young Tunisian media consumers through MIL education and sought a partnership with Swedish Radio's Media Development Office⁶ (SR MDO). SR MDO runs as part of Swedish Radio⁷ (SR), a Public Service Broadcaster that has for several consecutive years been the most trusted institution in the eyes of the Swedish public.⁸ SR MDO has 20 years of experience of development cooperation in Asia and Africa, and can provide competencies and expertise for journalist training and media development from all of the public service institutions in Sweden: SR, Swedish Television⁹ (SVT) and the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Corporation¹⁰ (UR). UR has a special mission to work actively to promote Media and Information Literacy. Annually it produces numerous educational and general knowledge programs and educational multimedia packages for the educational sector, from pre-school to high school. It has been especially successful in building bridges between the media and schools. UR is also part of a national network¹¹ working to implement MIL in the educational system.

Collaborating with international partners is an important part of CAPJC's re-structuring. It also works with International Media Support (IMS), Denmark, a non-profit organization aimed at strengthening the capacity of media to reduce conflict, strengthen democracy and facilitate dialogue; Deutsche Welle Akademie (DW), Germany's leading organization for international media development; and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), a German institution that supports projects for human rights, rule of law and democracy. Additionally, CAPJC is in charge of a European Union (EU) assistance program to Tunisian media¹², along with the European Center of Journalism at Maastricht and other Tunisian partners.

Covering a three-year period, the program aims at strengthening the role and professional capacities of Tunisia's journalists and media through deepening ties among the media, socio-economic development entities and civil society. Here, MIL can also play an important role. CAPJC and SR MDO designed the MIL project together as a tool for democratization and empowering youth, drawing on our different experiences and expertise. Key people involved in the project had previously developed and run other international MIL projects in, for example, Palestine and Belarus. Inspiration also came from different Swedish national and international MIL projects, including a successful national campaign that combatted gender stereotypes and promoted civic engagement for adolescent girls across Sweden in 2005. Run jointly by Sweden's Ministry of Social Affairs and a network of NGOs and media outlets, it targeted teachers, middle and

high school students, and the media, conducting workshops and launching a public awareness campaign. The CAPJC and SR MDO MIL project in Tunisia is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency¹³ (Sida), in line with the Swedish Government's strategy for development cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa¹⁴: to foster stronger democracy and greater respect for human rights; and, sustainable development that improves conditions for peace, stability and freedom in the region. In the MENA region Sida provides support to groups in civil society that promote democratization and human rights by means of lobbying, opinion building and through independent media and journalism.

Fusion of media and education

After the training in Beni Khaled, several workshops were held at other youth centers. Several seminars and meetings were also organized in and around Tunis to establish an MIL network with different actors who were passionate about empowering youth in the media, including bloggers and policy makers, social activists and university professors, film producers, journalists, teachers and artists. Meetings were also held with international and local institutions and organizations working in Tunisia.

In April 2014 SR MDO and CAPJC organized a second series of MIL workshops. This time, the objective was to include media professionals, primarily TV and radio producers as active participants. When the team members from Sweden arrived in Tunis in April, the political climate had calmed down. Street cafés were filled with people of all ages, women and men, girls and boys, talking, arguing and smiling. A new constitution was finally in place, being applauded worldwide as unique, forward thinking and progressive. Parts of the country that we had previously been dissuaded from visiting only two months earlier were now opening up.

In this series of workshops, producers and journalists were asked to create a series of short videos focusing on youth and the media in Tunisia, through a participatory learning process. Workshops were held in Tunis and Sfax, and the media professionals had to work closely with youth leaders, children and teenagers. The key words were inclusion, cooperation and innovation.

The first workshop was held in Tunis at the CAPJC training center. Before we let the journalists loose on the stories, we gave them the basics of media and information literacy, using the same learning activities that we had run in February 2014 with youth leaders and youngsters at the youth centers in Beni Khaled and beyond. When the journalists performed the counting heads activity, counting males and females, children and adults in the media, they were just as surprised and provoked as the 15-year-old girl who was sitting on the floor of the youth center in Beni Khaled. "What is this?" asked one of the journalists, pointing to the results on the board. "Are only middle-aged men allowed to be seen?" We had invited youth and youth leaders who had participated in the February workshops in Beni Khaled to meet the media producers in Tunis. And it was at this very moment that the practical aspect of MIL became visible to all of us in

the project team: When a media producer includes her or his young audience in the creative process, it affects the finished media product in a very positive way. Suddenly children and youth had leading roles in telling the stories. The participating journalists remarked that it was the first time they were talking *with* young people instead of *about* them. A reference group was formed with young people that later were invited back to evaluate the short videos produced by adult workshop participants. All the important questions were asked: How are the subjects portrayed? What is being said and what is not being said? Are there any hidden messages? The youth's presence and feedback made the journalists question their work more and in a new way.

After the workshops in Tunis we traveled to the south and Sfax, Tunisia's second largest city. Sfax is more polarized than Tunis, with a strong leftist movement as well as many influential conservative and Islamist groups. Again we worked with local journalists, primarily from radio and local newspapers, youth leaders and young people. We more or less replicated what we did in Tunis but here everything became sharper and clearer. The yoke of decades of censorship and exercise of power could still be felt at the media organizations and youth centers. The journalists with whom we worked said they had practically never interviewed a child or a young person before, but that they were ready for a change. What they said mirrored an interview¹⁵ with the head of DW Akiademe's Tunis, Rüdiger Maack: "For 25 years journalism didn't really exist (in Tunisia). They (journalists) simply held out a microphone to those in power and recorded them, but never in a journalistic sense with viewers or listeners in mind."

Looking to the future

The April workshops resulted in several short videos about current topics seen from the perspective of Sfax youth. The participating media felt they had learned new important skills, not least through interacting with the youth. The youth said they felt more confident in sharing their views and ideas with the media. Actually, none of the participants wanted to leave when the workshops were over, irrespective of age, experience or gender. One young female radio journalist said: "We used to do things because we were told to do them. Now, we want to meet and have a dialogue about what we do and why. We have to listen to each other."

To us in the team, the workshops and resulting videos provided important input to the continuation of the project, since one of our key objectives was to develop a locally adapted approach and MIL toolkit containing training methods and materials, through a participatory process. Thus, the first year of activities – workshops, seminars, network meetings and trainings for journalists – all had a common goal: to map local needs and try out different learning activities that could be included in the locally adapted educational package. And as the first project year drew to a close in August 2014, we felt we had reached further than we had even hoped. We had met with hundreds of young people, youth leaders and media professionals who helped us shape the design for the next phase, that started in 2015. Together, we had drafted an outline for our toolkit

and media guidelines suited to the specific circumstances and needs of Tunisia and its fast changing media landscape. Young people, youth leaders and media producers had been actively involved in the creative process, while, at the same time, improving their own capacity and skills.

As we look to the future, we are happy to also have a wide network in place, including representatives from international and national organizations and institutions such as UNESCO¹⁶, UNICEF¹⁷, OHCHR¹⁸, The Institute of Press and Sciences Information¹⁹ (IPSI), Association Tunisienne de Défense de Droits des Enfants²⁰ (ATDDE), or the Tunisian Association for Defending the Rights of the Child, The Tunisian Department of Youth and Culture, Centre National d'Innovation Pédagogique et de Recherches en Education (CNIPRE), or the Center for Pedagogical Innovation and Education Research. Although few other MIL projects are up and running in Tunisia, a multitude of media development initiatives and activities were implemented in the country after the revolution. Many touch on, or include, MIL aspects. For example, international non-profit organization Internews has trained young journalists and bloggers through a series of workshops on political talk shows, covering human rights issues through radio reporting, and investigative journalism in dealing with corruption²¹. The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) has supported the Tunisia Youth Media Network (TYMN), a two-year project that started in 2011 and involved the training of young journalists and bloggers in best practices, as well as establishing Internet centers as publication and training hubs, and community radio stations²². A pilot project to strengthen citizenship and human rights education was launched in 2012 under the coordination of UNESCO, grouping six UN agencies (OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNICEF), the Tunisian government, the Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR) and local NGOs. Its aim is to create citizenship and human rights school clubs in seven regions of Tunisia.

Although there are no national MIL policies or strategies in development yet, there has been overwhelming consensus during all our meetings and activities regarding the need for MIL education in the dramatically transformed media landscape of post-revolution Tunisia. Government officials have also expressed a strong interest, not least since they recognize that strengthening democratic values lies at the very core of MIL. The need for MIL was also stressed in meetings with La Haute Autorité Indépendante de la Communication Audiovisuelle²³ (HAICA), the Independent High Authority for Audiovisual Communication – Tunisia's principal organization set up in May 2013 to regulate the audiovisual sector in the country. The Authority clearly stated, as have all our other network partners in Tunisia, that all Tunisians and especially children and young people are in desperate need of skills to filter, analyze and process a never-ending flow of messages that fill their daily lives. In this project, we feel that we have taken a big step forward through enabling, in practice, a qualitative encounter between media producer and media consumer that results in new ways of thinking and acting.

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