



ED/UNP/UNLD/2008/PI/H/8

United Nations Literacy Decade

Research paper prepared for the UNESCO Regional Conferences in
Support of Global Literacy
(Doha, 12 - 14 March 2007)

Media Literacy A Tool to Combat Stereotypes and Promote Intercultural Understanding

Magda Abu-Fadil

2007

This paper was commissioned by the United Nations Literacy Decade Unit for the Conference 'Literacy Challenges in the Arab States Region: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches', held in Doha on 12-14 March 2007. It has not been edited by the team. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and should not be attributed to UNESCO. The paper can be cited with the following reference: "Research paper commissioned within the United Nations Literacy Decade". For further information, please contact literacy@unesco.org

‘The art of communication is the language of leadership’ – James Humes.

Media literacy and awareness have long been neglected in the Arab world, often leading to unfavourable 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 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.

Having taught university undergraduates in Lebanon an introductory course in mass communication in the fall of 2006 at an institution following the American academic model, I was astounded at how alien a concept critical thinking was. It surprised me how willing the students were to be recipients of all manner of media messages without giving much thought to how those messages were affecting them, why they were acting in certain ways, who was behind the persuasion, who ultimately paid for their production and dissemination, where it was all leading, what they stood to benefit from the plethora of converged and globalized media and how they (the students) planned to deal with the media once they did become more aware.

Tragically, as Carol Travis, co-author of ‘Psychology’ wrote, ‘In classrooms and in companies people fear ‘looking stupid’ or asking something that is ‘dumb.’ So teachers and employers must start removing conformity and the fear of dumbness from the classroom and workplace’ (Facione, 1998). Travis was quoted by Peter A. Facione in a paper entitled ‘Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts’ which I gave out as a first reading assignment of the semester. It was a key component of the course and helped students develop an understanding of the links between literacy and power, the relationship between communication and culture, and, the impact of technology and money on that relationship. It was particularly important to start them off on the right foot, notably since they come from various backgrounds and are the products of different educational systems. In Lebanon, for example, students study in Arabic, French, English and Armenian – not necessarily in that order – in schools that frequently offer classes in two to three languages. Another issue worth examining is that the Arabic language comes in different forms: high-brow classical Arabic used by scholars and touted as the language of the Holy Quran, standard classical used in the media and news, and colloquial Arabic with all its regional and national variations across the Arab world. Since Lebanon is also a nation of emigrants, there is no shortage of returnees who cannot function in Arabic. The same is true of other Arab countries with emigrant communities, notably the large North African presence in Europe.

In an unusual twist, Algerian youths are rebelling against their country’s dialects, in favour of the Levant’s more widely used Arabic seen primarily on Lebanese satellite channels, since the Algerian variations are impenetrable to non-users. ‘The reason the Algerian dialect is confined to the country’s borders is because Algerian media do not offer content relating to the country’s cultural heritage and since Algerians often use others’ dialects to communicate,’ wrote Jazia Rawabhi. She said young Algerians, notably women, chat online with Arabs from the eastern Mediterranean who ask that the language of communication be one popularized by the media – Lebanese or Syrian (Rawabhi, 2007). On the flip side, in Morocco, young people are turning to their country’s colloquial Arabic to send each other instant

messages via cell phones. The dialect is considered easier to understand than classical Arabic and more conducive to communication (Binslam, 2007). The influx of hundreds of thousands of mostly Asian domestic workers caring for Arab children has added to the *mélange* of languages (or misuse thereof) as have countless expatriates who join the mix to make countries like Lebanon or the Gulf states an interesting cocktail of cultures.

Since private education in the region is viewed as a ticket to advancement in life, given the resources available in institutions with better funding, parents work hard to ensure that their children graduate from private schools and colleges. But that is not always a panacea. A recent indictment of Lebanese schools said they are producing young people 'who simply lack the skills they need to compete in a globalized world.' An international test measuring eighth graders' mathematics and science knowledge indicated Lebanese students scored below the average by regional and international standards. This 'punctured any illusions about the quality of instruction in a country that prides itself on a well educated, multilingual force,' according to a World Bank study of the test and showed that 'even the highest quality schools in Lebanon are not producing competitive students at the international level' (Ohrstrom, 2007).

The shortcoming means the education sector requires major reforms, starting with a focus on teachers who are woefully under-paid and under-trained (Lutz, 2007). So any media literacy scheme would have to take all these influences into consideration. And that is just in one country. In other Arab countries where private universities are the exception, there are more limited choices, curricula are painfully outdated, and uses of Information and Communication Technologies are often a luxury. A journalist from a less economically developed Arab country told me her government-run alma mater's media curriculum dated back to the 1960s and 1970s and that the use of computers, much less Internet access and advanced research tools, were almost non-existent.

I travel extensively to lecture, conduct workshops and speak at conferences from the Gulf to North Africa and find there is a need to update university-level curricula, to institute media literacy as a recognized programme in schools and universities, and to ensure continuous training for media people themselves. In Mauritania I conducted workshops for journalists and found them in great need of many things we take for granted in the eastern Mediterranean. While most used cell phones and a good many were computer literate, they still lacked solid grounding in internationally agreed upon journalistic standards. Their education, training and media literacy need developing. A former Mauritanian journalist now working for a western embassy in Nouakchott said only a handful of the country's journalists had acquired a media education. The workshop participants were the cream of Mauritania's media. So on a wider scale, the general population's literacy levels would not be as advanced. Therefore, we need to teach them to walk before they can run or fly. Such disparities in a region as vast as the Arab world means the challenges are enormous, but not insurmountable.

How do media shape ideas and beliefs of young Arabs?

This is part of a larger existential question: what is Arab identity? According to Sadek Jawad Sulaiman, a former ambassador of Oman to the U.S. and chairman of Al-Hewar Centre's advisory board in Virginia, the Arabs are defined by their culture, which, in turn, is defined by its twin constituents of Arabism and Islam. 'Beyond that, he or she might be of any ancestry, of any religion or philosophical persuasion, and a citizen of any country in the world,' he said. 'Being Arab does not contradict with being non-Muslim, or non-Semitic, or not being a citizen of an Arab state' (Sulaiman, 2007). To understand the Arab identity well, one has to understand at some depth the Arab culture that shaped and formed it, he said, adding that such a culture was not averse to peace, progress and cooperation with others.

Sulaiman argued that the timeworn arguments of lack of freedom, mediocre educational systems, despotic governments, religious and social strictures were valid enough but secondary causes of the Arab nations' lagging behind other countries. The sad reality, he said, was that 'the Arab intelligentsia, upon whose expertise both the Arab governments and people have relied, the former for their loyalty, the latter for their leadership, have yet to sufficiently appreciate the crucial importance to their nation of uniting, democratizing, and moving progressively ahead' (ibid.). The Arab intelligentsia has been more prone to follow or reflect or even amplify the trend and mood of the day than to elucidate, educate, leading to a shortfall in equal citizenship rights, democratic governance, and comprehensive human development, he

said. So we are starting with some heavy baggage but any attempt to lighten it means we need serious introspection, self-correcting measures and practical steps to move ahead and make inroads.

The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) organized a conference on 'Arab Child Language in the Age of Globalization' in February 2007 at the League of Arab States in Cairo during which organizers sought to help salvage young participants' loss of Arab identity, severely undercut by globalization, teachers and the media. Dozens of children from 19 Arab countries met to discuss their mother tongue and difficulties of learning its complicated grammar, as well as harsh teachers who turned them off the subject, and satellite channels peppering them with commercials, 'edutainment,' movies and video clips of their favourite songs and stars that further undermined what little grounding they had in Arabic. The upshot, according to Dr. Sulaiman Al Askari, editor of the Kuwait-based magazine 'The Young Arab,' is that the Arabic language is slowly dying as it makes way for borrowed terminology and expressions derived from technology such as Playstations and iPods that far outpace Arab innovation and are easier to pronounce than guttural Arabic-sounding offerings (Khairy, 2007).

Sibawayh, the Arabs' historical grammarian, is turning in his grave, critics believe, given the daily massacre of the language on TV by insisting on using foreign (read English) words to headline or name their shows, to advertise breaks between segments, and to be mixed in with Arabic in the crawls (tapes running at the bottom of the screen) for call-ins or messages broadcast during popular entertainment programmes. 'If we add the horror of the language used in subtitling (foreign) movies and series...it makes understanding them very difficult,' lamented Ibrahim Al Ariss in a commentary on cultural and linguistic distortions (Al Ariss, 2007). It sometimes borders on comical to read Arabic subtitles of foreign programmes that expose the ignorance of their writers who translate words literally, not knowing what the sense is, or what the expressions, slang or nuances are. When picked up by young people with weak command of the language, miscommunication sets in. Other varieties of programmes include the dubbing into classical Arabic of countless Brazilian or Mexican soap operas costing less than American Hollywood-produced serials. Some have very wide followings, judging from how young people relate to them and recount the episodes, but there are no solid statistics on viewership in the region.

Not only are young Arabs bombarded with TV commercials, radio jingles and highway billboards with catchy phrases promoting fast foods, computer games and attractively packaged consumer items that make a clean sweep of their respective markets, there exists an unsettling dichotomy between what they learn at school in classical Arabic and what they ingest as media messages in colloquial Arabic or local dialects that are easier to fathom. One has to also differentiate between regional dialects and whether the media's commercials carry from one end of the Arab world to the other. Lebanon's terrestrial LBCI TV channel has commercials in colloquial Lebanese, classical Arabic, English and French. Its satellite channel, broadcasting mostly to the Gulf region but also viewed in different parts of the world by Lebanese expatriates, airs commercials in Gulf Arabic dialects and classical Arabic, often starring actors dressed as Gulf Arabs. 'As if that weren't enough, the Gulf countries are undergoing an even more dangerous phenomenon which is the 'constant involuntary borrowing by children of foreign terms and clichés written and heard in their personal and public surroundings,' Amina Khairy quoted a university professor's reference to the influx of foreign workers in that region (ibid.). The 'Arab Child Language in the Age of Globalization' conference, organized by the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, coincided with international festivities marking World Mother Language Day and was held jointly with the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, UNESCO, the Arab League, the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations, and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

One may surmise that there is much in common between Arab and Western youth given the plethora of satellite television channels offering a wide array of entertainment, news and documentary programming in a multitude of languages. And, much as their Western counterparts, Arab youth find news a turnoff, and perhaps more so given its often stagnant two-dimensional qualities of political parades and reception lines of who received whom and which leader met with which other leader to 'discuss matters of mutual interest' without shedding any light on the substance of their talks or providing some logical context. Former *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* correspondent Youssef Ibrahim noted that Arab media sift news through a vantage point of fear, disguised as if it were the standard and cloaked in civility and political correctness, enveloped as guidelines from ministries of information turning reality into fiction. He attributed this phenomenon to a quality acquired from the media environment, whereby a journalist is the product of unilateral and hereditary rule and power, the rejection of a culture of democracy, and the control of men over women, which excludes the female gender from equal treatment, as well as the kissing up to centres of power to get ahead (Ibrahim, 2004).

A feeble attempt to cater to young audiences with an acceptable news format was the defunct Zen (pronounced Zein) TV, an offshoot of Lebanon's Future Television. It produced a special trendy newscast based on speed, young reporters and editors, and a 'cool' studio where journalists spoke in a language closer to that used by their contemporaries and operated out of a 'funky' studio. But the channel failed to draw the requisite number of viewers for news or any of its talk shows. It reverted to (entertainment) type and redesigned its programming to rely more on video clips and recorded songs. Diana Moukalled, who oversaw the Zen newscast, attributed the youth channel's failure to the lack of reliable research about young people before the venture was launched, adding that it reflected 'the general confusion we're living in the Arab World vis-à-vis this large segment of society that is not being factored into politics or freedom' (An-Nahar Daily Newspaper, 2004). Something as elementary as asking young people what they liked, how they may receive such news broadcasts, and whether they would like to be part of the production process was not even considered.

Moukalled, a regular columnist for the pan-Arab daily Asharq Al-Awsat and a Future Television stalwart, later busied herself with launching an all-news channel in 2007 for the Future brand that is set to focus on Lebanese events but will also report on regional and international news. In a bid to expand their already wide reach, Lebanese and Gulf television companies have been focusing on providing Maghreb-specific news and entertainment programmes to viewers in North Africa. Saudi-owned Middle East Broadcasting Centre was first to target the Maghreb countries, followed by Lebanon's Arab News Network and Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation channels. But Al Jazeera seems way ahead with a daily Maghreb news broadcast from Rabat.

The North Africa market caters to a large population of young people, various economic problems, high unemployment, a rich ethnic and tribal assortment, a mix of one-party rule, royal government or emerging democracies. So the media cannot be monolithic or static – they have to cater to the needs of readers, listeners and viewers. What impact the Lebanese or Gulf imports have on North African youth remains to be seen, as young viewers in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania have also been known to tune in to French channels. But once these French 'bouquets' became encrypted by the companies providing the programmes in order to prevent piracy, viewers sought free programmes on other stations. 'Whatever the case, French channels are still ahead in terms of professionalism in dealing with North African issues, due to their deep understanding of social, political and cultural realities,' and their colonial ties to the region (Al Zubeiri, 2007). To their credit, a number of North African presenters have overcome the symbolic language/dialect barrier between Maghreb and Levantine Arabs by succeeding as anchors and correspondents at channels like Al Jazeera. They would, however, have a harder time if they were not journalists.

Penetration of Moroccan, Tunisian or Algerian shows in those local Arabic dialects, with mixtures of Amazigh, or dialogue drawing on the Berber culture, are not even on the radar screens in the eastern Arab world. They are even less marketable than American episodes of the series 'Friends' or the Arabic rendition of 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?' Television, at least in Lebanon, wins hands down over other media; so young people's media literacy is greatly influenced by 'the box.' A slightly dated poll showed that 88.5% of the 18-24 age group watched TV, mostly during peak evening hours, when favourite shows like 'Star Academy' and 'Super Star,' fashioned after the high ratings 'American Idol,' air. But there were no recent figures to update the findings or to gauge younger viewers' choices (Information International: Opinion Poll, 2003). Lebanese intermediate and secondary school students surveyed three years later by the same company were asked which politician they admired the most, presumably influenced by the media and their families. Thirty percent of the respondents were almost evenly split between Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Future Movement MP Saad Hariri, son of slain former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, while others named assorted Lebanese political figures. Arab pop music and movie stars got high grades as well, thanks to constant fare provided on 24/7 music and movie TV channels (a fraction of some 300 Arab satellite stations filling the airwaves), while Hollywood megastars Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise got second billing (Information International, 2006).

Culture, heritage and media

Other than pseudo news programmes like Zen TV's, young Arabs are the targets of an onslaught of broadcast, online and interactive entertainment as well as mobile communications. Arab youth's views

seem forged by what they watch, hear and read in/on their countries' and region's media. An abundance of daily strife and carnage from Palestine, Iraq, and Darfur, as well as a summer war and instability in Lebanon have not been limited to TV screens. The execution of Saddam Hussein, captured on a mobile phone video, hit the airwaves and cyberspace and was instant messaged to one and all, including Arab teenagers. The import of Western cultural trends and adapting them to young Arab tastes from fashion, tattoos and body piercing, to music, to TV talent shows have had their fans and detractors. Hip-hop and rap, originally considered the sanctuary of angry urban blacks in America have become hot and interactive outlets for frustrated and besieged Palestinian youths in the Gaza Strip and Palestinian occupied territories, for example. Flashy wealth, gangster attitudes and fast women have been substituted with 'a gritty hybrid expression of the Arab-Israeli conflict,' according to a report in Time magazine. The lyrics of one rapper group's songs are filled with death caused by bombs, Israeli Mossad agents or feuding Palestinian gangs against a background rumbling beat akin to an approaching Israeli tank.

But the performances have caused consternation among the Gaza Strip's conservative residents some of who turned on the rappers. Islamist youths, outraged by a group's 'arms thrusts and crotch grabs, rushed onstage and beat up its four members' (McGirk, 2007). Hip-hop, viewed widely on Western TV channels, is not on state-run Arab stations' hit parades, so creative performers have turned to cyberspace to webcast their Arabic-language interpretations of this popular music/art form, notably on personalized sites like MySpace.com (ibid.). Lebanese rappers, for their part, are thought to swim upstream and a popular group was banned from performing at the American University of Beirut for lyrics in one of their songs that insulted U.S. President George W. Bush. 'We sing what we see and feel; we sing people's pain and the reality they live and suffer from; we strip off society's clothes...in a loud and harsh voice,' an unidentified rapper was quoted as saying. A rapper identified only as Saad Eddine said music company producers refused to distribute their songs that were considered too hard hitting, leading at least one group to go underground. Another rapper, Mohammad, described American rap as the refuge of gangsters and mafias, whereas the art form is off-limits to Arabs. 'We can't say harsh things' (Aad, 2007).

Young peoples' frustrations with the steady drumbeat of news about Arab strictures, Arab failures and constant Arab humiliations are vented in inventive ways through the Internet, cell phones and a myriad other media outlets, as they take circuitous routes around parents, teachers, or 'al mutawa'a' (religious police) in Saudi Arabia, for example, in defiance of social taboos. Saudi young men and women, who cannot mingle socially unless they're related and chaperoned, have discovered they can phone date through text messages and Bluetooth'd mobile phones. They furtively exchange phone numbers, send SMSs or write their numbers on pieces of paper casually dropped within pick-up range in shopping malls or other locations. I've even seen the practice in downtown Montreux, Switzerland, where thousands of Arabs vacation. But mobiles with cameras -- a standard of the industry, a tool that has turned average citizens into journalists, and is the bane of conservative Saudi authorities -- were banned in Saudi Arabia in 2004 because of their alleged 'assault on women's modesty and privacy after photos of women without their veils,' were shot and made the rounds of the Internet. Permission to sell the phones was later granted when authorities realized they'd be eliminating most mobile sets (Sullivan, 2006).

A more recent outlet for Arabs' energies have been blogs (web logs, or cyber diaries) through which young people express fears, aspirations, anger, and through which they have grown to defy authority, particularly repressive governments. Several bloggers have also been jailed for their cyber outbursts. During Israel's summer 2006 onslaught on Lebanon, young Lebanese bloggers abounded. They recounted and showed in pictures and video the horrors of the conflict and provided an interactive alternative to mainstream media that sometimes skewed the news. Some closed shop after the war ended, others took other forms. According to Gal Beckerman, last summer was a watershed moment for the Middle Eastern blogosphere. 'The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah not only brought attention to the many different Arab conversations that had taken place on homemade Web sites in the past two or three years, but also launched thousands more of them,' he said, adding that they were more than just a handful of aberrant voices. Beckerman said the blogs reflected a new culture of openness, dialogue, and questioning. 'And unlike the neoconservative notion that these ideals can be dropped on a foreign population like so many bomblets, the push for change here is coming from within. Whether it is a Jordanian student discussing the taboo subject of the monarchy's viability or a Saudi woman writing about her sexual experiences or an Egyptian commenting with sadness at an Israeli blogger's description of a suicide bombing, each of these unprecedented acts is one small move toward opening up these societies, he argued (Ackerman, 2007).

So creativity in Arab online content is on the rise and has been bolstered by young people willing to take chances and to become more visible. Kuwaiti engineer Manar Al-Hashash insisted on preserving

one's local identity in any electronic production, noting that it should reflect the reality and needs of young people because they are best able to determine such needs. She told a conference on electronic content in Cairo of countless Kuwaiti experiments overseen by her country's youth as individual initiatives to highlight their skills and that had succeeded in creating distinctive products that surpassed traditional content, including the use of local terminology to preserve Kuwaiti identity (Elaph, 2007).

On another front, the avalanche of broadcast and online media, while dizzying, have, apparently, had a positive effect on newspapers and have led to greater access to information and more demands for accountability. 'Our readers can now find controversial articles we couldn't have been able to publish three or four years ago,' noted Mohammad Al Mazl, deputy managing editor of the UAE daily Gulf News, adding that online publishing and satellite channels had provided more leeway to cover news as it happened without government interference and excessive interference from censorship departments in information ministries (Hamza, 2006). But print materials, it would seem, still get short shrift in the Arab world. While youth and children's supplements in newspapers do exist, they don't always meet demand and reading itself leaves a great deal to be desired. Besides, children and young people rarely buy newspapers, instead relying on their parents to provide them, if they do, or if they can afford them. Interesting, non-academic Arabic books printed in an attractive marketable way to compete with foreign language fare, are inadequate. Only recently have writers and graphic designers started paying attention to the need to overhaul their content and packaging to compete with imports.

Public libraries are considered a caprice, notably in economically strapped countries, and young people's sections of adults' libraries are almost an afterthought. Unlike resources available to young people in more developed countries, where libraries provide printed materials and multimedia offerings, Arab libraries – where they exist – are poorly supplied and staffed and have slim pickings. My teenage daughter, a voracious reader who also surfs, blogs, SMSs and is fully digital, rued the fact that Lebanon does not have public libraries in towns and villages like the ones in the U.S. where she indulges in her reading and knowledge acquisition passion.

In December 2006, a French NGO provided a Lebanese civil society group with funding for a youth centre equipped with public library, lecture hall, cinema and Internet connection to assist children with special needs, underprivileged young people and juvenile delinquents in prisons. It was a noble gesture but many more like it are needed, particularly in Lebanon's war-ravaged zones. Arguing that Lebanese broadcast media usually sidestep coverage of social issues, and that since economic hardships prevent many young people from even buying newspapers, the Lebanese group 'Social Movement' set up the Knowledge Solidarity Centre to empower Lebanese youth in the use of digital technology and to provide diverse sources of information that enable them to better cope with 21st century challenges (Hariz, 2006). In all this where does culture belong? Who defines it? How is it shaped? How receptive are young people to it in an environment where one's heritage is associated with centuries past? And what are the media doing to promote it?

The Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, has been a trailblazer in providing young Arabs with a TV station just for them. Al Jazeera Children's Channel is an innovator in more ways than one. The channel produced the classical Arabic literary tales of 'Kalila wa Doumna' as a 26-part cartoon series, using the best animation and digital technology while not losing track of the stories' rich Arab heritage, and taking over two years in the making at a cost of 2 million US\$. The effort was aimed at familiarizing children with valued literary works in their original language in a format they did not find cumbersome, as they do in schoolbooks. But some critics argued it also required parents to watch along with their children to help them understand the flowery language, symbolism and complex fables (Al Zein, 2007). 'Dunia Media,' another programme broadcast by Al Jazeera Children's Channel, features Arab and international science news presented in an interesting format for young people. Further enhancing knowledge acquisition, Al Jazeera, which set the standard for Arabic all-news channels over a decade ago, has added a documentary station to its lineup of offerings that include English news, children and sports – all steps in the right direction. The documentary channel aims at promoting the Arab documentary tradition, turning to human interest stories primarily in the Arab world and highlighting the region's rich heritage as a means of building intercultural bridges. 'It's too early to judge this channel's performance, but suffice it to say that a station of this unfamiliar genre in the Arab world is a necessity, imposed by the rush to invest Arab funds in stations based on cheap entertainment, 10th rate stars, and broadcasting low quality songs around the clock...where we have some 300 channels, of which no more than 10 are worth viewing,' was the critical assessment of available choices (Hajj Abdi, 2007).

Impact of the Media

How, then, are young Arabs to deal with the media's social and political impact? Will they be given an opportunity to express their views and implement their reform-minded projects to build better nations and keep step with the requirements of globalization in the 21st century?

Amy Hawthorne, editor of a publication on Arab reform at the Carnegie Institute for Peace, said human rights and civil society activists in the Arab countries were divided into a minority calling for foreign interference to initiate change, another minority that regards the United States and its supporters as enemies, and a majority that seeks reform but in a moderate way, far from the arrogance and hegemony in demands for human rights and democracy, particularly given the United States' track record of support for dictatorships in the Arab region (Council on Foreign Relations, 2004). Since she wrote those comments, the mood has been exacerbated by the continuing conflict in Iraq and Palestine, which has deepened the U.S.–Arab rift, with growing costs to both sides, according to results of a 2006 Arab American Institute/Zogby International poll in five Arab countries. The results showed overall Arab attitudes toward the U.S. had worsened; negative attitudes had hardened, and, interestingly, attitudes toward American values, people and culture had declined as well (Zogby International). Adding fuel to the fire in recent years have been U.S. President George W. Bush's misuse (intentional, or otherwise) of the word 'crusade' against terrorism, the flap over cartoons in a Danish newspaper that sparked riots worldwide, and a lecture by Pope Benedict XVI in which he quoted an emperor who spoke ill of Islam, thereby reinforcing notions in the Arab and Muslim worlds – particularly in the post-9/11 environment -- that there is a concerted campaign to vilify a religion claiming over a billion followers. 'The best way forward is via authentic dialogue between Christians and Muslims, based on truth and inspired by a sincere wish to know one another better, respecting differences and recognizing what we have in common,' the Pope said in an effort to undo earlier damage (Moore, 2007). To mark the 41st World Communications Day on May 20, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI sent a message entitled 'Children and the Media: A Challenge for Education' in which he acknowledged that the challenges facing education were often linked to the media's pervasive influence, a clear outcome of globalization. Media education should be positive, the Pope said reflecting on the formation of children and the media, and children exposed to what is esthetically and morally excellent are helped to develop appreciation, prudence and the skills of discernment. 'Any trend to produce programmes and products – including animated video games – which in the name of entertainment exalt violence and portray anti-social behaviour or the trivialization of human sexuality is a perversion, all the more repulsive when these programmes are directed at children and adolescents,' he said (Vatican).

Some Arab media have been accused of inciting violence, of racism and anti-Semitism (which is ridiculous since millions of Arabs trace their roots to the original Semitic tribes and since Arabic is a Semitic language), and of making sweeping statements about entire countries or peoples. This 'unbalanced' handling of news is not limited to the Arab world. In the West, it takes other forms, with the use of words that could be very subjective, with adjectives that place the burden of proof on the victim rather than the assailant or with acutely biased and racist descriptions of people, their backgrounds, their religions and their traditions. Arab journalists have expressed outrage at Western media's coverage of conflicts in the Arab world – Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon being the obvious battlefields. Najwa Qassem of Al Arabiya TV admitted she was biased in her reporting of the war in Lebanon, particularly since she is originally from Beirut's southern suburbs that were pulverized by Israeli firepower. She complained that foreign media covering the same scenes were biased toward Israel, by inadequately showing how disproportionate Israeli retaliation was to Hezbollah provocation. 'Why should I be more royalist than the king by being just a correspondent (and providing unbiased reports) when I see them not showing the whole picture and then coming and preaching to us about freedom of expression and democracy and objectivity and technology and the old school of television?' she asked rhetorically. 'They come to cover with preconceived ideas, thoughts and fixed agendas' (An-Nahar Daily Newspaper, 2006).

The assertion or rejection of Arab/Muslim identity in an increasingly confused globalized world is a dynamic we need to face, and we would best serve our charges (children or young adults) when we ourselves bridge cultural gaps and take it upon ourselves as communicators and educators to lower the volume of shrill discourse that has taken over the thorny debate. Stereotypical images and misunderstandings arise when there is lack of information, when information is distorted and miscommunicated and sometimes when there is ill intent. So we need solid media education, proper media

literacy, adequate research, perseverance, patience, an enterprising spirit and willingness to see and think outside the box.

Good media education

If we require the media to be professional and want our youth to benefit from them, we need to start by providing solid media education. It is a much-debated issue that has tormented scholars, media educators, social scientists, and journalists. There are no ironclad formulas on the best curricula, but there are international efforts to find acceptable models built on common grounds that can be adopted worldwide, with certain elements of adaptability to take cultural and linguistic differences into account. As a former foreign correspondent and editor with international media, and as an academic, and a trainer of journalists, I see where knowledge gaps exist and try to fill them through curricula, programmes, courses and workshops suited to such needs.

Let us first deal with course requirements. University media programmes are the victims of bureaucratic and administrative turf wars whose fighters sometimes care more for what courses they like and wish to teach than what the students really need as professionals. So universities often graduate functional illiterates who rely on 'wasta' (connections) to secure jobs or who end up in other fields. There is a disconnect in many Arab countries between what is being taught and what the market needs. Skills to function in a fast-paced, multi-lingual, technologically transformed world are sorely lacking. I have worked on curriculum development programmes at the university and as an international consultant on journalism/media education to introduce courses allowing students to learn how to practice their future professions and to acquire some work experience prior to graduation through internships. But a recurring obstacle has been the ever-important introduction of online journalism courses. While other regions of the world have moved at warp speed and online journalism courses (including the study of blogs) have filled curricula in countless universities, there is still little enthusiasm to promote and sustain such courses at the university level in many Arab countries. That is because journalism is often viewed as a second-class citizen, compared to other programmes like radio, TV and film that get the lion's share of funding, the best equipment and technical support, and attract the largest number of students, who are all under the illusion they will become instant stars and make piles of money in key media positions.

A colleague was part of a committee drawing up a revised curriculum for a journalism programme that attempted to take the media's evolution into account, while not forgetting market needs and what employers are seeking in fresh graduates. It was long overdue and could probably still use some updating. This came about following an assessment that there was a lack of statistics and reliable market research on communication programmes in Lebanon and how graduates were faring in their respective jobs. So the faculty members studied other academic programmes in local and regional universities, got some feedback from alumni working in local and regional media along with those who pursued higher education abroad. One thing that academics always have trouble deciding is the size of classrooms. I favour smaller classes where faculty members – preferably those who combine backgrounds in both the media and academia -- can interact on as personal a basis as possible with their students. Lecture halls holding dozens (or even hundreds) of students are not conducive to the learning process, particularly in a field as dynamic as journalism, where you really need a lot of hands-on practice.

I served on a committee of international experts who have been meeting and consulting in person and online to produce a model journalism curriculum to be used in journalism schools and colleges in developing countries and emerging democracies. Discussions to date have focused on the context of journalism education and the media landscape, the required content of a model journalism education and training, and the use of online learning delivery systems in journalism education. The final report was presented at the first World Journalism Education Conference in June 2007 in Singapore. At the initial meeting, the editor-in-chief of *The Hindu* newspaper said that the functions and methods of journalism needed fresh and critical study given the media's declining public credibility, the rise of new technology, market pressures and rapid socio-political changes. He noted that journalism education, training and research were a proven way to build professional and intellectual capabilities. We should keep in mind that a well-rounded education requires a combination of liberal arts courses, some natural sciences and social sciences, college level mathematics, languages and a mix of electives.

One of the areas not given adequate attention is the learning of languages. Communicators must have the ability to ask questions and understand answers in at least a second language. It is imperative that any self-respecting journalist be fluent in two or more languages. Tragically, untold journalists operate as if they know it all and through their ignorance misinterpret and miscommunicate information. I see this in our students and in our reporters and editors. I have also seen it in correspondents parachuted into countries to cover a story without enough background information about the place or who rely on interpreters with an agenda, and who may be misleading the reporters. It is no wonder that young people on the receiving end of media messages are misdirected and confused. Complementing education is the need for constant training. People in the media need to improve their operational skills and become familiar with the latest developments in their respective specialty areas through workshops, seminars and conferences at home and abroad. It is important for Arab communicators to come into contact with counterparts from countries around the world to form a learning community in the interest of growing tolerance and respect between Arab and Western societies and cultures at this critical juncture. With that in mind, I have conducted courses and workshops in Lebanon and across the Arab world (from the Gulf to the Maghreb countries of North Africa) in Arabic and English (with French thrown in when needed) that have aimed at upgrading and updating journalists' skills in such areas as news reporting and writing, editing, media ethics and investigative journalism, to name a few. Training is an essential part of a journalist's growth and development. Too often news organizations do not offer such possibilities to their staffs due to lack of funds or because there is never enough time. But it is a big mistake.

On both sides of the cultural divide and beyond we find that media are influential in shaping socio-economic developments. In the Arab world they have been playing a role in shaping perceptions of the West, in focusing on violence, in demanding a greater share of the economic pie and in resolution of festering issues like the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the war in Iraq, instability in Lebanon and greater freedom for the peoples of the region. The explosion of satellite channels and availability of the Internet have made it possible for journalists to access information from all over the globe, despite attempts to block websites by certain regimes and the fact that not all news or views available are necessarily accurate, fair or balanced. But site bans have been cramping browsers' style. When plastic surgeon Dr. Mohammad Sabet Salahia tried to go to *ebreast.com*, he found it blocked by the United Arab Emirates phone company Etisalat because the site contained pictures of women's breasts. He was preparing for a lecture to present to a conference of Arab cosmetic surgeons in Dubai. Similar sites, he said, were also unavailable. The reason: the site's content was 'inconsistent with the religious, cultural, political and moral values of the United Arab Emirates' a note on the screen said. The physician said that pre-operation photos similar to the ones he sought were available in hospital brochures and magazines and that the state-run Etisalat was censoring blindly, not selectively (Saber and Al Serkal, 2005). Preset criteria, web and email filters and other obstructions are not keeping up with the dynamic changes in technology, according to experts. In an effort to stem the flow of cyber crime, hacking, and spreading viruses, controllers are sometimes tripping over the wrong issues, notably since there are countless ways to circumvent the system by resourceful users – usually young browsers and hackers. In addition to workshops, seminars and training courses, I have organized three media ethics and freedom of expression conferences to highlight the importance of these issues and what impact they have on our lives. When we discuss democracy we always take into account the media's role as a vehicle for change. The West is familiar with the power of the media to help the process of political and social change by promoting the rule of law and democratic institutions, acting as a watchdog of government transparency and accountability, bringing attention to ignored issues and championing the rights of minorities and marginalized groups.

On the other hand, the media can reinforce stereotypes and prejudices, silence critics (particularly when they are used by the state to intimidate the opposition), turn a blind eye to abuses of power and ignore social and political issues deemed risky. British journalist Polly Toynbee said a few years ago that journalism should 'paint a portrait of what life is actually like' to test the grand economic and social theories that suggest what people's lives should be like. For her, journalism was a matter of high personal and social seriousness and constructive goodwill, not a means for making mischief or just making money. These are very lofty ideals that are not always pursued. The Tower of Babel that has become 21st Century media, while providing us with multiple choices and diversity we could never have imagined a generation or two ago, is also echoing dissonant voices calling for strife, division and upheaval. Prof. Roger Gafke of the Missouri School of Journalism wrote that after travelling to the Middle East and Gulf in recent years he had become acutely aware that the image of that region among his American journalist colleagues and the portrayal of the region in American media did not match his understanding and knowledge of that

part of the world. 'In addition, formal academic studies of Arab and American media frequently reveal a tendency in media reports for stereotyping and superficial presentations of complex issues,' Gafke wrote in a proposal for a media training and literacy programme, adding that it was often hard to recognize each other's countries in such press reports.

In 2002, I presented a paper about online journalism at a media conference in which I asked whether participants' young neighbours armed with digital cameras, laptop computers, cell phones and fast Internet connections could be considered journalists if they ran to the scene of a crime or disaster before traditional journalists and reported on them by sending out the news to their friends or even to media outlets, in sharp contrast to so-called 'professional' editors sitting behind big desks at newspapers and still unable to download attachments to email messages. Bloggers were recognized as journalists and accredited to cover the Democratic and Republican national conventions in the United States in the last presidential election. In the 2006 mid-term legislative races, they were fully recognized as part of the body of journalists covering the news. There's also a fascination with citizen journalism, where average citizens provide information to media outlets or create their own media (online and otherwise) and cover their communities' affairs in more detail than would a reporter for a local paper or a journalist sent to cover an event from another region and whose presence there is temporary. Technology has facilitated all these possibilities and created a new cadre of non-conventional communicators, as we saw in amateur footage or Web content of the tsunami and Hurricane Katrina disasters, the London subway bombings and the war on Lebanon in the summer of 2006. Citizen journalism has also become part of media curricula in universities.

Recommended media literacy programmes

To develop solid media literacy programmes for the Arab world, I propose working on two tracks: teaching/training young communicators in universities and in the field, and initiating children and their parents into the world of media through school programmes and at home.

Children and Parents

Media literacy programmes would be aimed at parents and children to acquaint them with the role the various mass media (print, broadcast and online) play, how such media affect them and how they can make good use of them. I would create materials, organize training workshops, plan media awareness events and organize conferences on media literacy. Given the growing concern among educators, parents, young people, community activists, religious authorities and others about the media and their impact, I would help parents and their school-age children:

- Understand words and concepts of media literacy;
- Introduce the words and concepts of media literacy into the mainstream local culture;
- Understand the impact of media;
- Involve communities in addressing their issues to the media;
- Develop media skills at the community and local levels.

The impact of a 'media literate' society could also result in encouraging good governance and poverty reduction in under-developed areas and have a ripple effect by translating positive outcomes from the community and local levels into national level schemes. According to Dr. Ann Hudock, Senior Advisor for Democracy and Governance at the Washington-based organization World Learning for International Development, many governments do not support free media, so people in developing countries tend to be unaware of the role of international financial institutions and poverty reduction processes. The result, she said, is that without knowledge, citizens cannot adequately contribute to policy discussions, monitor their government, or even formulate informed opinions to convey to civil society organizations and political representatives.

Additionally, the media would be better served by providing coverage of news and creating entertainment that is suited to audience needs. Consumers of news and entertainment who can articulately and rationally convey their likes and dislikes are more credible interlocutors and more likely to succeed in their quest. According to the *Media Channel*, in the 21st Century, the ability to understand, evaluate, access

and use media is a form of literacy as important and basic as reading and writing. Teaching media, it argues, can:

- Build critical thinking and questioning skills;
- Support creative youth expression;
- Inspire active, informed citizens;
- Address issues of self-esteem and respect for others;
- Engage students through the news, advertisements and pop culture that surround them.

I propose starting the project with parents in various areas of Lebanon with the aim of including children in the process. Pending success at the local and national levels, the programme would later be exported to other Arab countries. The programme, spanning two years, would incorporate the following:

- Identification of target audiences;
- Organization of media literacy activities, such as 'Media Weeks' in different regions and schools of the country, talks, discussion groups, workshops and interactive presentations countrywide;
- Development of media literacy toolkits for parents and children;
- Organization of a media literacy conference grouping parents, children, media practitioners, academics and others involved in the field;
- Evaluation of various phases of the project.

Media literacy activities would focus on advertising/marketing, consumerism, propaganda and privacy, representation of gender, race, social relationships, stereotypes, violence in news and entertainment, news/journalism, bias, public relations and ethics, and, teaching media in any subject. It is important to familiarize parents and children with who sets the agenda for free expression and what obstacles they face in the Middle East/North Africa region, such as stifling media laws, unclear guidelines, uneven implementation, penalties, the blocking of websites, censorship and the lack of information access.

University Students and Young Professionals

Today journalists are bound by closer geographic proximity thanks to globalization. But cultures have also been intertwined for centuries, so communicators are duty-bound to forge ties of friendship and cross-cultural harmony. To attain such harmony, I would recommend the following steps:

- Create media literacy programmes for students and journalists on both sides of the proverbial 'cultural divide' so that they learn the languages, cultural backgrounds, history, politics and traditions of each other in a sustained and comprehensive fashion. Tragically, what we have today is very superficial and rather distorted. Parachute journalism and the use of translators can be more harmful than informative;
- Institute solid journalism programmes at universities that provide rich curricula that not only teach reporting, editing, photography and blogging, but that also emphasize media ethics, sensitivity training, and that require comprehensive language skills;
- Encourage exchange programmes between students and journalists (each category separately) so that they can appreciate the hardships faced by their colleagues in their respective countries;
- Encourage journalists to contribute to each other's media, when and where possible, to provide cross-pollination of ideas. An article, a feature, an audio report, an Internet posting, a TV segment may help alleviate the tension;
- Create networks that provide support and solidarity in times of crisis. Sometimes it is not what you know, but who you know that gets you out of trouble;
- Create an unofficial watchdog mechanism to monitor offensive media reporting and work to defuse tensions as soon as they emerge and before things get out of hand. Work cooperatively to promote genuine good relations;
- Very importantly, give more of a voice to women and youth to contribute to the media dialogue and ensure that they are fully empowered, not marginalized or discredited.

Conclusion

Dialogue between the U.S. and the Arab world has been sought and encouraged, notably since 9/11 and its aftermath. Individuals, NGOs, news organizations with a stake in bridging the cultural divide and others have taken the initiative to lower the shrill voices of recriminations. The Washington-based Arab American Institute's president, James Zogby, who hosts a talk show on Abu Dhabi television, proposed creating live, interactive TV programmes that allow students from Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, the United Arab Emirates and the United States to exchange ideas and overcome distrust and ignorance. The 2006 Clinton Global Initiative (named after former president Bill Clinton) praised the proposal as did former secretary of state Madeleine Albright. This is long overdue and needs to be bolstered by other efforts. Ten young Omanis joined over 260 young people from around the world on a 60-day cruise organized by the Japanese government as part of an exchange programme to promote learning about other people's cultures and languages, and to acquire a balanced view of world events. The Intercultural Youth Exchange Organization's scheme to foster basic leadership skills and international cooperation included youths from 14 countries on a tour of various ports, including those of the countries represented. Egypt and Yemen were two other Arab countries whose young people participated in the journey ending in March 2007 in Japan.

The 'World Youth Ship's' activities featured crafts, drama, sports, lectures by academics supervising the programme and discussion groups (Bin Abdel Reda, 2007). It is a brilliant concept and can easily be duplicated in the Arab world and elsewhere to bring young Arabs and Westerners together to debunk mutual myths. In 2002, I proposed the creation of an online news service for children, run by children ages 8-18, under the guidance of adults. Its reporters would reach out to others around the world. We need to explore such possibilities and implement them. But they have to be sustainable, so financing them is an important step and should not be tied to political agendas (Abu-Fadil, 2002).

A place I loved visiting in Washington was the Newseum (or news museum) – where history, interactive displays and learning facilities about the media come alive. It has been a magnet for anyone interested in news. We could easily have something like that in Lebanon, for example, dedicated to the news business, with exhibits in at least three languages and user-friendly, computer-generated, interactive exhibits and useful media-related games in three languages. Children can have their own TV newscasts, newspapers and magazines. The Scandinavian countries have a history of being active in promoting children's print, broadcast and web content. Danish television, for example, is often used as a model for other countries wishing to develop these concepts. The Swedes have countless programmes.

In Britain, the former editor of *The Daily Mirror* launched a weekly tabloid called 'First News' for 9-15-year-olds in May 2006 at a cost of 1 Pound Sterling, five pence of which goes to children's charities. The paper covers politics, business, music, stars' news, sports, computer games, entertainment, analyses, interviews with celebrities, fashion trends, and a weekly column by young chef Jamie Oliver. According to editor Piers Morgan, the paper is an educational tool to help children understand their world in a simplified way. Its staff is a mix of writers specializing in children's issues as well as young reporters writing in a style suitable for the targeted readers (Elia, 2006). This fits in nicely with the World Association of Newspapers' (WAN) efforts to encourage young people to read. WAN's Young Reader Development Programme has helped promote 'My Newspaper Goes to School,' under its Newspapers in Education (NIE) supplements inserted in dailies in various countries. WAN also supports an annual World Young Readers Prize aimed at content, education, public service and branding. The association helps organize workshops for trainers who then teach others to use newspapers as teaching tools in classrooms. The project covers over 60 countries and should be adopted more widely by Arab media and schools. NIE as an education tool (not as a curriculum) has been introduced to Iraqi, Moroccan and Egyptian teachers.

Research into issues of common interest between the Arab world and the West and how the media operate are a necessity. We should develop critical thinking skills in young people so that they avoid assumptions, shun stereotypes propagated by the media, become culturally sensitive to others and are not easily duped by what is aired, written and posted online. But research does not answer all questions; it helps provide some answers. It should be coupled with logic, and a truthful approach to information and communication.

As important as research is, it's all about common sense in the end...Think about it. If you can't really read the world's great works of literature in only five minutes using a system peddled on TV, how do you explain

that gentleman on the infomercial who aces those tests? (Foit, 2005).

References

- Aad, T. 2007. Lebanese Rappers Swim Against the Tide: Our Art Reflects Issues of Downtrodden...Their Art is Nonsense. *Al Hayat*. p. 19.
- Abu-Fadil, M. 2002. *Globalization of the Media: A Bicultural Woman's View*. Paper presented at the Fourth Forum of the Arab Women's Summit 'Arab Women and the Media'. 1-3 February. Abu Dhabi.
- Ackerman, G. 2007. The New Arab Conversation. *Columbia Journalism Review*. January/February 2007. <http://www.cjr.org/issues/2007/1/Beckerman.asp>
- Al Ariss, I. 2007. Oh, the language! *Al Hayat*. p. 21.
- Al Zein, H. 2007. Cartoons More Mature Than Children. *As-Safir*, <http://www.assafir.com/Article.aspx?EditionId=555&article> (Accessed 2 February 2007)
- Al Zubeiri, A. 2006. Eastern Satellite Channels Invade the Maghreb. *Al Hayat*. p. 21. (In Arabic)
- An-Nahar Daily Newspaper. 2004. Youth Journalism in a Number of Arab Countries: Inconclusive Experiments Despite Some Inroads. *An-Nahar*. Education page.
- An-Nahar Daily Newspaper. 2006. Interview in TV supplement. *An-Nahar*. Lebanon. p.11.
- Bin Abdel Reda, H. 2007. Youth Ship Sails On. *Elaph*. <http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/ElaphGuys/2007/1/23> (Accessed 23 January 2007)
- Binslam, N. 2007. Colloquial Moroccan Takes Over SMSs. *Al Hayat*. p.19.
- Council on Foreign Relations. 2004. Is U.S. 'Beacon of Hope' or Enemy No. 1 to Arab Reformers? Interview with Amy Hawthorne. *Council on Foreign Relations*. http://www.cfr.org/pub7464/bernard_gwertzman_amy_w_hawthorne/arab_specialist_hawthorne_i_s_us_beacon_of_hope_or_enemy_number_1_to_arab_reformers.php (Accessed 19 October 2004)
- Elaph. 2007. Youth in Electronic Production. *Elaph*. <http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/ElaphGuys/2007/3/216641.htm> (Accessed 6 March 2007)
- Elia, J. 2006. Children Follow Adults' News Their Own Way. *Asbarq Al-Amsat*. <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/print/default.asp?did=364259> (Accessed 21 May 2006)
- Facione, P. A. 1998. *Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts*. California Academic Press.
- Foit, R. 2005. I'm Very Interested in Hearing Some Half-Baked Theories. *The Onion*. Issue 41•45. <http://www.theonion.com/content/node/42384/print> (Accessed 9 November 2005)
- Hajj Abdi, I. 2007. Al Jazeera Documentary Channel: Promoting Documentary Culture in the Arab World. *Al Hayat*. p. 20.
- Hamza, B. 2006. Satellite Channels and Websites Liberate Print Media. *Elaph*. <http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/Politics/2006/3/1332> (Accessed 6 March 2006)
- Hariz, S. 2006. Social Movement Establishes 'Knowledge Solidarity Centre' for Youth. *An-Nahar*. p.20.
- Ibrahim, Y. 2004. The Fear That Chokes the Arab World. *International Herald Tribune*.
- Information International: Opinion Poll. 2003. Issue 13.
- Information International: Opinion Poll. 2006. Issue 54.
- Kamal, R. 2007. Oil Won't Last: Invest in Arab Education. *The Daily Star*. p. 9.
- Khairy, A. 2007. The Arab Child and His Mother Tongue: Torn Between Globalization, Teachers and the Media. *Al Hayat*. p. 18.
- Lutz, M. 2007. How Much Can Students Learn from Teachers Who Are Under-paid and Under-trained? *The Daily Star*. p. 4.
- McGirk, T. 2007. Taking the Rap. *TIME*. International edition. p. 47.
- Moore, M. 2006. In Turkey, Pope Reaches Out to Islam. *Washington Post Foreign Service*. p. A14.
- Ohrstrom, L. 2007. Schools in Lebanon Get a Failing Grade. *The Daily Star*. p. 4.

- Rawabhi, J. Young People Rebel Against Algerian Dialect. *Elaph*.
<http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/ElaphGuys/2007/1/24>. (Accessed 24 January 2007)
- Saberi, M. and Al Serkal, M. 2005. Isn't It Time to Stop Kidding? *Gulf News*.
<http://gulfnews.com/Articles/SpecialReportsNF.asp?ArticleID=151585> (Accessed 2 February 2005)
- Sulaiman, S. J. 2007. *The Arab Identity*. Presentation at DC International. Fireplace Mansion, Washington, DC.
- Sullivan, K. 2006. Saudi Youth Use Cellphone Savvy to Outwit the Sentries of Romance. *Washington Post Foreign Service*. p. A1.
- Vatican. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/message
- Zogby International. <http://www.zogby.com/news/ReadNews.dbm?ID=1220>