



# MAJALAT DIRASSAT I'LAMIYA



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## In This Issue:

### INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION: A NEW MODEL CURRICULUM

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  2. It should be genuine and creative.
  3. The volume of the research should vary between 3000 and 5000 words and should be printed on A-4 format paper, in two copies, in addition to a third hard copy, on a CD and.
  4. An abstract of one page, in English and Arabic should be attached to the research.
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## INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION: A NEW MODEL CURRICULUM

**Dr. Mohamed Osman Elsayed Mukhtar (\*)**

This paper presents an integrated communication curriculum using an hourglass model as means to overcome the challenges of the 21st century within Sudanese and Arab media, mass communication and journalism higher education and subsequently within professional media institutions. It begins with a brief history of the communication and journalism programs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Further, it highlights common problems and pitfalls within higher education and professional institutions. Finally it outlines, in detail, an hourglass integrated communication model, consisting of three consecutive stages.

This model includes current developments in new media, communication and journalism curricula, which will take the MENA region successfully into the 21st century. Stage one includes a general emphasis on media, communication and journalism foundations, combined with a digital media core, journalism professional skills, current topics and media eco-systems in order that students gain basic knowledge and skills of the trade. Stage two builds on the general requirements from phase one, by going deeper into five highly specialized and technical areas: the broader process of journalism, strategic communication, speech communication, digital media arts and design, and creative writing, dramatic production, and filmmaking. Finally, stage three integrates and broadens, through convergence, the areas discussed in stage one and stage two.

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\* Mohamed Osman Elsayed Mukhtar, PhD, University of Bahrain, 2017

## **Origins and General Features**

Mass media, communication and journalism programs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have early and geographically diverse origins. In 1937, the region's first journalism program was initiated by Syracuse University professor M. Lyel Spenser, in conjunction with the American University in Cairo. (Ayish 2016) Initially, it was exclusively and narrowly focused on journalism, as exclusively Mr. Spenser, a journalism specialist, originally developed it. It became quickly throughout the region, with thousands of students joining in its first years of operation. (Ayish 2016)

Shortly after the development of the Cairo program, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) launched its first Arabic language radio service, in 1938. These two developments by the Americans and subsequently by the British influenced and encouraged the Egyptian authorities to start a state sponsored journalism program in 1939. (Ayish 2016) This government run program, The Higher Institute of Journalism (HIJ), launched by Mahmoud Azmi and the renowned scholar and literary figure, Dr. Taha Hussain, was also the first of its kind in the Arab world, focusing on both journalism and translation. Having been influenced by both the American University and the BBC, students at the HIJ studied Arabic language, journalism as well as radio production. The institute was later renamed the department of journalism and translation. (Ayish 2016)

In 1964 an additional journalism program was initiated in Baghdad, Iraq, closely following the Egyptian model. Two years later, in 1966, the Islamic University of Omdurman became the third higher education institution in the MENA region to establish a similar mass media and journalism program. The Sudanese program was also heavily influence by the Egyptian model, however, Sudanese professors who were graduates from American Universities, added additional components to the program, building

on the original Egyptian model. For the first time in the region, they broadened the scope of studies within this type of program to include mass communication to be taught in conjunction with the journalism courses. (Ayish 2016)

The Egyptian model used by both Iraqi and Sudanese Universities (and later Libyan and other North African countries) teaches theoretical and practical skills with emphasis in journalism. However, this model lacked, and still lacks, any emphasis on the humanities or social sciences. The program treats mass communication as an isolated field. In contrast to the French model that influenced Francophone countries in West and North Africa, which does include social science and humanities underpinnings. (Ayish and Breslow 2014)

In North African countries, such as in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, a French-influenced curriculum was also being developed in the 1960s. These programs combined vocational skills, and theoretical knowledge with particular emphasis on sociological and semiological ideas. (Ayish 2016) Additionally, there were select institutions in Jordan, as well as universities in the Arabian Gulf that adopted an American-influenced curriculum in mass communication. (Ayish 2016)

Despite their rigor and diversity, there remain challenges that exist throughout the region's mass media, communication and journalism programs. Professor Awatef Abdul Rahman, from Cairo University, has identified 5 general systems that exist among the Arab media schools. (A. A. Rahman 1985)

- 1) The Foreign Type: Represented by the two American Universities in Cairo and Beirut.
- 2) The Pro-French Type: Represented by Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania.
- 3) The Pro-American Type: Represented by Qatar, The UAE, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, The North Part of Yemen, Sudan and Somalia.
- 4) The Semi-Independent Type: Represented by Egypt, Syria, The formerly south part of Yemen and Libya.

5) The Overtly Islamic Type: Represented by the Higher institute for Islamic Propagation of Faith at Imam Ibn Seoud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia, The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Al Azhar University in Egypt, and the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Umdurman University in Khartoum, Sudan. (A. A. Rahman 1978)

### **Issues and challenges in media education and professionalism**

As demonstrated in this brief history of media education in the MENA region, communication and journalism as a discipline, to a large extent, was influenced by the United States and Europe. Although normative and theoretical concepts and terminology have been translated and incorporated into the curriculum by Arab media schools, that cannot be said for professional values and standards. Basic yet fundamental professional values regarding accuracy of information, verification of facts, proper source attribution, balance, transparency, deadline punctuality, and avoidance of conflict of interest are only discussed in theoretical terms, as an ideal, not a reality. These values that are crucial for high functioning institutions are seldom emphasized in practice, nor are media professional held to account for a high standard regarding these rules and conventions.

Further, in the process of transferring the systems from Western societies, a great deal was lost in translation, literally and figuratively. Entire processes, techniques, and modalities that relate to professional skills were neglected, ignored, or misunderstood, resulting in deficiencies in the practical courses taught throughout most of these Arab institutions. Because the process of knowledge transfer from advanced countries in North America and Europe, is slow and cumbersome, much of the Arab institutions' course content and teaching methods are outdated or even obsolete. (Elmasry, Basiony and Elkamel 2014)

A close examination of course content from various Arab and Sudanese universities reveals significant gaps in the pedagogy as it relates to journalistic professionalism. This is true of nearly the process of journalism, starting with methodologies for news gathering and reporting all the way to the point of publication and broadcasting. Professional reporting skills and instruction in news writing are seldom taught or practiced in any systematic or detailed manner. Journalistic standards and writing mechanics either are non-existent or they were based entirely on the subjective preference of the professors, who themselves perhaps never learned the process in any systematic way. Editing as a concept is often confused with basic word smithing and even spell checking. Even more problematic, it is commonly confused with writing itself, on account of the fact that the Arabic word for editing is the same as the word for writing. Thus the idea of editing is completely ignored, once the writing has been completed. Similarly, style rules and standards are either taught subjectively or are non-existent all together.

Moreover, entire concentrations can be ignored or overlooked due to a failure to understand the complexities and nuances of such sub-disciplines as photojournalism. Photojournalism is commonly confused with artistic or strategic photography used for advertising, without any respect or appreciation given to it as an independent discipline.

Finally, significant limitations that exist both with the academic media education systems, as well as the professional practice of journalism and communication within various types of media outlets is a limited, or total lack of formatting protocols that go beyond the reporting and production of hard news. Those formats that are largely ignored all together include complex in depth interviews, personality profiles, features, kickers, investigative reports, in-depth data mining reports, and documentaries.



The lack of rigorous, comprehensive and detailed instruction and professional values and skills have led to significant gaps in both the educational and professional systems, resulting in stagnation of media professionals and institutions throughout the region, in print as well as broadcast journalism.

### **An overview of new trends**

There are numerous and unique trends that can be identified within the fields of media, communication and journalism covering ideas around skills, ethics, practice, and globalization. First, according to the former President of North Eastern University, Professor Richard M. Freeland, liberal arts colleges are following an emerging trend towards what he calls “practice-oriented education”. (Freeland 2004)

Slowly but surely, higher education is evolving a new paradigm for undergraduate study that erodes the long standing divide between liberal arts and professional education. Many liberal arts colleges now offer courses and majors in professional fields...” “Moreover, universities are encouraging students to include both liberal arts and professional courses in their programs of study, while internships and other kinds of off campus experience have gained widespread acceptance in both liberal and professional disciplines. Gradually taking shape is a curricular “third way” that systematically integrates liberal education, professional education and off campus experience to produce college graduate who are both well educated and well prepared for the workplace. (Freeland 2004, 1)

Practice or “professional” oriented education in the field differs from theoretical education, by offering students an experiential learning environment in which they will obtain hands-on practice. Further, it differs from vocational education in that it

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based in, and informed by, conceptual, ethical, aesthetic, and cultural considerations.

Another emerging idea that is having profound effects on the overall practice of journalism is that of storytelling as a description that could commonly serve to replace what is traditionally described as news reporting journalism. The process of storytelling has become intimately intertwined within all six skill components of the process of journalism, all of which are described below. Storytelling maintains the factual nature of journalistic reporting, but infuses it with techniques borrowed from dramatic and creative writing such as character development, multiple plots and complex narrative structures. While bringing together both fact and storytelling, the canons of journalism including accuracy, balance and evidence are kept firmly in tact. Adopting this method of news reporting has resulting in wider audiences and lead to an overall increase in news and journalism consumption, as audiences have found it to be both more entertaining and engaging. (Kormelink and Meijer 2015)

Additionally, in the 21st century, a significant paradigm shift has taken place, and continues to grow in the field of professional and academic communication. One of the primary features of this paradigm shift is the emergence and proliferation of digital and social media. (Bruns 2018) With this, data journalism and social media analytics have emerged. Strategic communication has also witnessed new changes in that public diplomacy and the strategies of soft power have taken root.

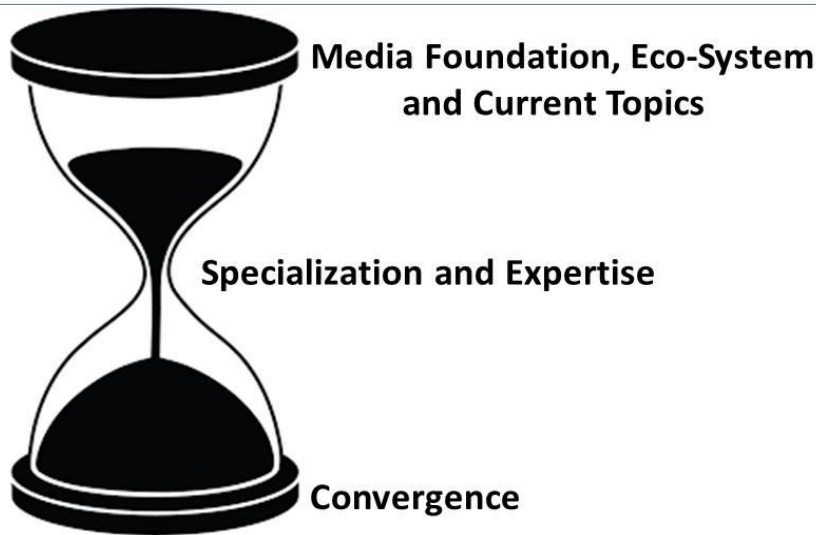
Further, in this age of globalization, there are burgeoning ideas around international ethics that bring together multiple worldviews and perspectives. This coming together has been in an attempt to formulate overarching ethical principles that would serve to guide media professionals worldwide. (Ward 2013)

Finally, any of these ideas around the new integrated communication model have been crystallized and formulated by the

late Steven Buttry, the former director of student media at Louisiana State University. He suggested in “Curriculum Advice for Journalism Schools”, to include courses such as social media, interactive database and computer-assisted reporting, programming, mobile journalism, business for journalism, community engagement, digital content in specialized courses, visual journalism, live coverage, managing digital content, design, blogging and law and ethics. These new trends and ideas as presented above, have been integrated into, and are reflected in the integrated communication new model curriculum as detailed below. (Buttry 2009)

### **Integrated communication: A new hourglass model curriculum**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought with it advancements, growth and potential, the likes of which the world has never been seen before. With this phenomenon, come both benefits and challenges, as described above. The advancements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have led to a system that no longer affords students the luxury of being either generalists or specialists in any one particular area. To ensure success in a media market in which on the job training for new professionals is no longer a priority, students must acquire basic fundamental concepts and skills making them both generalists and experts in a wide variety of specializations. (Dickson 1999) Thus, the introduction and rationale behind integrated communication represented by this author as the hourglass shaped curriculum with three consecutive stages.



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**Integrated Communication: Hourglass Model**

In addition to providing a positive outcome for students, the hourglass model seeks to limit common shortcomings present in typical media models used throughout the Arab and MENA region today. These challenges include, namely, a lack of comprehensive and consistent professional standards, and/or confused professional standards that have been inherited from previous generations of media professionals but that have become outdated, many of which are being implemented without any consideration as to why such standards are still in use.

In this era of outdated Arab media models and educational systems, the hourglass model provides the relief required by universities bearing the burden of being both an engine for education and training as well as the savior maintaining responsibility for correcting the shortcomings of the current media environment. This model ensures that students entering the workforce cannot only perform, but correct, develop and create new systems to replace those that are still in use but obsolete.

Further, throughout the field of media pedagogy the conversations taking place surrounding the idea that integrated communication could be the solution to many and varied challenges faced by both academics and professionals alike are growing. Dickenson suggests that by adopting an integrated communication curriculum throughout higher education, a fractured and segmented system could be remedied. Integrated communication combines traditional media fields as well as new media fields. Traditional media fields include journalism, mass communication, mass media, media studies, and speech communication. New media fields include social and digital media. Based on the concept of integrated communication Dickenson proposes a new model curriculum in undergraduate education. (Dickson 1999)

To explain, this model curriculum could be described as falling into three successive stages. Stage one includes a broad range of general courses followed by a second stage of specialized courses and finally ending with the third stage of convergence. Convergence allows the students and professionals- who narrowly, during stage two, learned multiple and highly specialized skills- to apply them broadly, to all forms of media. The three stages are outlined below.

➤ **Hourglass Model Stage One: Media Foundation, Eco-System and Current Topics**

This stage encompasses all of the wide and varied foundational requirements within the field of integrated communication that should be required by all students regardless of their different concentrations and/or sequences detailed in phases one to 11 below.

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## 1) Digital Media Core:

Developing a digital media core is no longer a luxury but rather it is perhaps the most urgent and necessary component of general education for mass media and communication students. It should be emphasized that this digital media core is a requirement for all students in all media fields. This is unlike the recent past when digital media skills have been only required by certain tracks such as multi media. Each and every student in the broad discipline of communication must master the basic skills of digital media production. (Royal 2016) This core should include courses focusing on five distinct areas:

- a. The fundamentals of digital / online media
- b. Web publishing including content, design, mobile programming and multimedia.
- c. Advanced analytics in social media that includes strategy, research, and analytics as related to media careers
- d. Media innovation focusing on creation, technology and the development of a capstone project.
- e. Coding and data skills for media design, multimedia, journalism, visual storytelling, mobile media, and documentaries.

Further, the digital media core must include not only the technicalities of, for example, editing on Photoshop, but also an emphasis on the aesthetics, ethics and Theories of proper sophisticated digital media application. It must be more than simply a vocational training without the ethical nuances necessary for today's complex modern age. Finally, cultural references, considerations, benefits and drawbacks from varying cultures that would influence one's use of digital media must be considered and debated.

## **2) The Journalism Process: An overview of six skill components to be taught successively.**

The idea of “storytelling” as an integral part of journalism process has been recently gaining momentum. Many journalism courses at advanced universities have been redesigned with the of idea storytelling at their core, emphasizing the importance of this new dimension within the discipline. Storytelling for journalism should be divided into three levels, each one building on the former, giving the students a deeper and deeper understanding of the art as they progress through the program. (Kormelink and Meijer 2015)

With this, to be on the cutting edge, it is now of the utmost importance that the new model integrated communication curriculum recognize and comprehensively adopt the practice, ideas and art of storytelling for journalism, with appropriate understanding and adaptations for genuine integration into Arab cultures and communities. Arab universities, and Sudanese universities in particular, would benefit tremendously from broadly applying techniques and methods of this nature to its media, journalism, communication programs, including incorporation into all six skill components that comprise the journalism process, detailed below. (Missouri 2018)

a. Reporting skills: Reporting, and information gathering, using scientific methods that are informed by news values as in print journalism.

b. Writing skills: Professional writing utilizing approved journalistic writing mechanics.

c. Editing skills: Editing and style in all types of journalism, based on sound and well-recognized style rules such as the AP style book or equivalent.

d. Design skills: Design, layout, and presentation, to be closely aligned with the editing process, as expressed by Jan White in *Editing by Design*. (White 2003)

e. Productions skills: Production techniques in all types of media, following professional guidelines in pre-production, production and post-production.

f. Broadcasting and distribution skills: Identifying, and effectively reaching target audiences.

### **3) Media Ethics**

An important corner stone of the general requirements for communication majors must be specific courses and preparation focused on media ethics, and applied media ethics. Applied media ethics that are taught in the new curriculum model should focus on situational ethics, analyzing and studying ethical conflicts and questions based on specific case examples. Applied ethics should be taught using a reflective and critical approach. By doing that, students not only learn the particularities of applied media ethics, but they develop critical thinking skills necessary for reaching independent, logical and sound conclusions, regardless of the common line being towed by anyone around them. (Christians, Fackler and Richardson 2011)

### **4) Media Law**

Typically, communication courses do not address foundational laws, practices or protections that may or may not be in place for journalists. The new model must provide courses that address media law including the foundations and constitutional issues relating to the practice of professional media. Additionally, once these courses are presented, the legal logic of these and other laws must be further discussed and debated. This teaches the students to think critically and to argue and analyze that which they observe around them. (Robertson and Nicol 2008)



## **5) Media History**

The history of communication and mass media must be presented and taught to media students from both a local and international perspective. Attention must be paid to the social, cultural and political conditions that have given rise to both the successes and failures of any given media environment. (Crowley and Heyer 2010)

## **6) Media Theory**

Students must be required to learn, understand, and internalize media theories and varying paradigms, methodologies, and schools of thought such critical media schools, pragmatic, cultural, political economy, or post colonial schools. (Mcquail 2010)

## **7) International Communication and Globalization**

Courses must be offered in which the global forces and international trends of communication are deconstructed and analyzed. Comparative studies of international media and institutions provide students with a comprehensive, sophisticated understanding of how to place and understand their role and their environment as one part of the larger world. (Merrill and de Beer 2008)

## **8) Media Literacy**

Currently, these courses are keenly relevant given the growing phenomenon of fake news, in what David Roberts described as the post truth political era. (Kilheaney 2016) This is an era in which critical thinking skills are needed to analyze media content and recognize trends such as media manipulation, distortions, biased framing of issues, and deliberate manipulation of

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information to popularize certain policies, institutions, and/or ideologies. Media literacy courses teach students to decipher techniques of soft power as individuals, groups, and/or state actors apply them to media campaigns. (Yildiz and Keengwe 2015)

### **9) Current Media Issues**

These courses equip students with current knowledge of topics and ongoing debates regarding public current events and phenomenon. These should be taught in debate format with dialogue and contestation to enhance students' critical and analytical skills and to further enable students to develop their presentation and debate skills. (Dennis and Merrill 2005)

### **10) Business and Entrepreneurship**

Courses focusing on business administration, marketing, investment, finance and entrepreneurship will provide students with the final areas of general knowledge required for long-term growth and success. The idea behind this set of courses is to equip students with the necessary skills to establish their own media companies in the future. In the Arab and MENA region, it is not uncommon for young professionals and recent graduates to simply wait to be given jobs by the government or to a lesser extent, private institutions. (Ferrier and Mays 2016) However, this set of courses will empower new graduates to take control of their futures and destinies by giving them the skills necessary to create their own jobs leading to not only personal professional satisfaction, but to the growth, development and betterment of the overall media environment of their community.

### **11) Media Eco-System**

This area includes several courses that focus on the connectivity between media production, processes, content and consumption in relationship to the surrounding social and political context. Within this area the following course could be included: sociology of media production, media systems and political

economy, media in the public sphere, media and globalization and information and communication ecology. Further, it is in this model, where an emphasis on equality and justice within media is placed, by focusing on the equal treatment and representation for women and minorities. (VanDam 2018)

### ➤ **Hourglass Model Stage Two: Specialization and Expertise**

After mastering all of the general educational concepts in the media field required from stage one, stage two of the hourglass model presents students with the opportunity to gain highly specialized and technical skills. However, the specialized skills that will be taught also cover varied topics, giving students wide expertise in five specific areas. Further, following the mastering of the specializations, students must undergo practical training in the form of professional internships and/or media volunteer experience in order to practice the five skills they master during stage two. This will expose students to real professional media outlets, production environments, and provide them with continuous observation and evaluation as well as feedback from real professionals in the field. The five areas include: 1) journalism, 2) strategic communication, 3) speech communication, 4) digital media arts and design, and 5) creative writing, dramatic production, and film-making, all of which are detailed below.

#### **1) Journalism**

Stage two journalism distinguishes itself from stage one journalism by not simply covering the basic fundamentals required for journalism understanding, but rather it identifies and trains for specific types of journalism including: print journalism, broadcast journalism, online journalism, photo journalism, data journalism, mobile journalism and investigative journalism, all of which can include information gathering, writing, utilizing proper mechanics,

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editing and following recognized style rules. (University 2018)

## **2) Strategic Communications**

This specialization focuses on persuasive communications, typically including public relations and advertising. However, to deepen students' understanding and expertise of this area, additional modules including public diplomacy and modalities of soft power should be included. (University of Colorado 2018)

## **3) Speech Communication.**

Although this is a traditional and well-recognized area, speech communication is not included in any standard curriculum for media and communications studies in the entire Arab world. Speech communication addresses topics vital for top-tier professionals in media and communication by focusing on rhetoric, persuasion, interpersonal communication, intercultural communication, presentation skills, and media management, all of which are crucial for the development of well-rounded students and professionals alike. (Northeastern 2018)

## **4) Digital Communication, Arts and Design**

This is a new field that utilizes digital media technologies and techniques as well as traditional skills such as design, photography, and moving images. The field of digital communication arts and design branches into: digital design, digital photography, digital animation, 2D/3D animation, game design, and video production. However, as stated above in stage one, the courses focusing on digital media must not mimic vocational courses teaching technical skills alone, but rather they must include an emphasis on philosophy, aesthetics, and ethics of managing images. (Northwestern 2018)

## **5) Creative Writing, Dramatic Production and Filmmaking**

In the sequence of creative writing, dramatic production and filmmaking, emphasis should be given to developing solid creative writing skills in the areas of fiction, and non-fiction alike. Further, dramatic production and filmmaking include courses that cover television series writing and production, short films, and documentary. (Northwestern 2018) In the area of filmmaking, special emphasis should be given to the emerging format of Virtual Reality (VR). VR as a new format is gaining recognition and wide attention among both professionals and cinema going public and has been utilized in a wide range of media platforms. Documentary production further is treated in several formats: ethnographic documentary, investigative documentary, narrative documentary, and artistic. (Iowa 2018)

### **➤ Hourglass Model Stage Three: Convergence**

Media conversion is both an academic reality as well as a professional reality. In the age of new media, nearly all media platforms now have developed deep structural connection between each other, with the same content shared and appropriately modified for multiple media platforms. Media outlets today require professionals to be able to successfully navigate among different media platforms, producing media content that combines traditional media skills that emphasize depth, accuracy, and comprehensiveness, with new media skills that include speed, vividness, and connectivity. As such, a third and final stage in the integrated communication new curriculum is logical, relevant and even mandatory for today's media age. (Missouri 2018)

Convergence as a concept and pedagogical modality became an important requirement in accrediting media programs across the world. (ACEJMC 2012) Media institutions such as BBC require

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reporters to file different versions of the same reports in order to be distributed across various types of platforms, including both television and radio, as well as their various online and social media platforms. This practice is now the rule among media networks, not the exception. Thus, this third and final stage of the hourglass model is the coming together of the 1) general education knowledge and 2) the area's of expertise, that are subsequently applied to 3) all areas and types of mass media and communication.

### **Conclusion**

Despite a strong start and many rigorous systems in place throughout the MENA region, there remain significant challenges that are preventing both Arab people and institutions from reaching their full potential. As described above, there are various types of systems that have been implemented in the region, none of which overcome all of the challenges that this region faces. Further, because these systems have, to a large extent, been models from outside, they do not take into account both the strengths and weaknesses of the cultures in which they are being implanted.

Thus, all of this author's recommendations should be considered in the context of the country in which it is operating. With this important consideration at the forefront of curriculum development, the integrated communication model is the key to take the Arab media systems into the 21st century. Because the hourglass model is comprehensive, with an emphasis on both the technical aspects of media and journalism, as well as the aesthetic and ethical aspects of professionalism, it is a model to overcome all of the challenges currently faced by the people of the Middle East and North Africa, and specifically, of Sudan.

The hourglass integrated communication model serves to empower both people and institutions by giving them a broad base of understanding of the discipline as a whole. This is followed by ensuring that students gain expertise in a wide range of areas that includes both classroom and real world practical experiences.

Lastly, all that they have learned is then applied and comprehensively integrated into all different types of journalism and integrated from print, to online, to broadcast journalism and more. Finally, throughout the entire hourglass model curriculum, on account of the important emphasis placed on ethics, standards, aesthetics and the communication eco-system speaking to culture and society, there is a defacto respect given to the cultural considerations that need to be thoughtfully considered, thus avoiding the pitfalls of the original foreign models that have been in existence since the early 20th century, bringing together the best the cutting edge innovation of advanced systems of the West, while adapting it to fit the cultural and traditional considerations of the East.

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