Journalism Education in the GCC Region: University Students' and Professionalism Perspectives

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This study investigates the perceptions of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) students and professional journalists regarding the quality of curriculum and training sessions that they received at the University and afterwards by looking at curriculum, training sessions and practical programmes related to journalism education, as well as the quality of academic staff and trainings for both GCC journalism students and professionals. A survey was administered to a random sample of 369 students at GCC universities and 34 journalists. Based on the analysed data, the study found that journalism education in the GCC regions is interesting and enjoyable, with respondents being found as ambition, talent skills and motivated. More practical rather than theoretical approach is needed to proof the quality of journalism in the region, though a good number of GCC journalists have had a formal academic journalism qualification. GCC journalism education attempts to reflect the developmental trends in the region.

Keywords: Journalism education, journalism training, GCC region, journalism curriculum, Arab journalism studies

One of the subjects that has been causing wide interest in mass media studies is the future of journalism professionalism. Professionalism always occupies a prominent position when considering journalism skills. Numerous studies (Deuze, 2004; Mensing, 2010; Pavlik, 2000; Terzis, 2009) have focused on the opportunities to improve the quality of production and journalism skills. Therefore, journalism has often been shaped by technology and training (Pavlik, 2000). For this reason, universities and training centres have vital rules in providing journalists with the tools they need to deal with everyday technology matters regarding news-gathering and presentation. Several seminars, workshops and conferences have been held around the world to train journalists (Saleh, 2010a). These events have helped to promote and share knowledge and skills about journalism and its future.

Journalism in the Arab world is not a new phenomenon. In the last three decades, there has been a transformation in the way in which some Arab countries deal with journalism. Not until recently, however, have Arab journalists learned their practices and skills on the job once they have completed high-school or even secondary-school education.

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However, with the technology around them, in recent years, there has been a clear trend towards university education for Arab journalists. The Higher Press Institute in Egypt was the first institution to teach mass-media courses (around 1939) and this was then rebranded as the Editing, Translating and Press Institute in the Faculty of Arts at Cairo University. However, in 1954, the Institute became an academic department which granted BA, MA and PhD degrees in media and journalism. In 1969, the department became an Independent Media Institute. In 1974, the Media Institute became a Faculty, the first in the Middle East (Abd El Rahman, 1988) to teach and award qualifications to professional journalists.

It can be said that, due to the political particularities of Arab countries, it has been difficult to develop a culture of journalistic professionalism faithful to one liberal model. One of the reasons for this is that almost all Arab countries were colonised or semi-colonised by different colonists, from the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century to the modern occupations of some Western countries such as the US, Britain, France and Italy. Those colonisers can be described as heavier or lighter colonists/occupiers depending on their roles and their influence in the countries they occupied (Reynolds, 2013). Ferro (2005) states that colonisation is a form that can be understood to be associated with the occupation of foreign land, with colonisation bringing land under cultivation and the formation of settlements by the colonisers. These factors still apply in Arab countries after they have gained their independence. They still follow their colonists' agendas and link policies and laws to the former occupations by implementing their laws and regulations.

Most of the time journalism does not grow in a vacuum. It reflects the interaction between different actors and systems and differences in social structure and historical and political context. For example, in most Arab countries, interpretative reporting remains the dominant model in covering news and setting the story, regardless of the commercialisation of the media and the market-driven orientation of the news media. Arab governments still have a heavy influence on the news and information that can be seen as the basic framework of today's journalism practices. Even though Arab journalists have a lower level of professionalism, this does not mean that they are less educated or less trained than their European or even American colleagues. Several Arab journalists are more likely to have a professional qualification such as university or college degrees from Cairo.

Arab Gulf Press Overview

Despite the early origins of the Press in the Arab world, dating back to Egypt in 1798, the press did not appear in the Arab Gulf until the 20th century. In 1908, the journalists' movement in the Hijaz began under the supervision of the Omani government with the launch of the al-Hijaz newspaper. This was followed by the publication of several local newspapers in different regions before the unification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by King Abdul Aziz bin Saud in 1924 (Yunus, 2007). In 1928, there emerged the Kuwait Magazine, launched by Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Rasheed. This magazine continued to be issued from Cairo before al-Rasheed suggested that Kuwait's ruler sponsor it and Sheikh Youssef bin Qinai was appointed as the observer of the magazine which continued to be printed in Cairo (al-Shayji, 1997).

In March 1939, in Bahrain, Abdullah al-Zayed issued the first weekly private newspaper called *Bahrain*. He and his partners were ambitious to issue a daily newspaper, but were not able to achieve this. The newspaper appeared during the Second World War and covered news related to war zones that directly affected the Gulf regions (Ezzat, 1983). In those days, the newspaper was attacked by Radio Berlin Nazi and by the Italian Fascist leader,

Benito Mussolini, because it stood against their ambitions in the region (Ezzat, 1983). However, as a local Bahraini and Gulf newspaper, it has also focused on the issue of the integration of the Gulf regions into one state, making a very early invitation to unite the Gulf regions in what is now known as the GCC States. As mentioned by Ezzat (1983), the Bahraini newspaper was withheld from publication in 1944 after six years of publication and remained withheld until 1956 when it was re-issued under al-Zayed's friends' supervision before being banned again.

In Saudi Arabia, *al-Yamama* was the first magazine to be launched in Riyadh (Najd Province) in 1953 during the later days of King Abdul Aziz. Meanwhile, in Hijaz Province, the *Hijaz Gazette* was issued in Mecca in 1908, but was withheld after one year and replaced by the *Shams Alhaqiqa* (Sun Truth) and *Al'iislah* (Reform) (Alqasheami, 2008). In Medina in 1909, *Alrraqib* (The Observer) and the *Medina Gazette* were launched, followed by *Almunhil* (Manhal), *Alhajj* (Pilgrimage) magazine, *Al'iislah* (Reform). In Jeddah, *Alghurfat Alttijariata* (Chamber of Commerce) was issued. After the end of the Second World War, *Albilad Gazette* (a Saudi newspaper) was launched as the first known daily newspaper in Saudi Arabia (al-Shamekh, 1982; Alqasheami, 2008).

It should be noted that the cultural differences between the GCC States have been reflected in the nature of their press. With the exception of Kuwait –which leads the GCC States in terms of a partially free press according to Reporters Without Borders (2016)– it is clear that the press in most GCC States are far from free, as censorship of newspapers and other printed publications in these regions began early after the emergence of the first Press law in Bahrain in 1954, which was followed by the second Press law in 1965.

This is to say that the press in the GCC regions also suffers several internal issues, such as the lack of local citizens working in journalism, as well as the lack of journalistic efficiency in some newspapers. Meanwhile, the external issue, which is beyond the scope of the press, is that most GCC governments are very sensitive to criticism and so they seek various ways to put pressure on the press to highlight *only* the positive aspects of their countries and to overlook the negative aspects. This has moved most of the GCC press closer to becoming government Press releases. In addition, the GCC press also suffers from a heavy reliance on news agencies for news and information and on government advertising as a primary source of financing (Jaffe, 2013).

Despite all these obstacles and problems in the region, the GCC press has been able to entrench itself more than ever. It has highlighted the spread of the press in the region, as the Gulf Press has developed and evolved with successive events in the Middle East and benefited from the technical development of successive trendsetters. The Gulf press has been inspired by general press experiences since its inception and has formed its own experience in a manner that is based on several stages which accommodate the circumstances of development at the community and media levels. Young people in the GCC have used their experiences in accessing the world of journalism, developing models and forming associations with their regions as well as benefiting from the development of the press in the Arab world and globally, such as the emergence of satellite news networks. It is fair to say that the Gulf press has been affected in various stages of its development by different political circumstances, such as the growth of political conflicts in the Middle East, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iranian Revolution and its effect on the region, the Iran-Iraq War and the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

In spite of the increased number of private daily newspapers in many GCC regions (Kuwait has 10 newspapers, Bahrain eight [five Arabian and three foreign newspapers], Saudi Arabia eight, Oman two and the UAE 10 [state-owned]), the rest of the GCC press is

still controlled (self-censorship) in the way it treats its news and therefore is characterised as intergovernmental in nature even though they are private and independent newspapers.

For the other Gulf countries, it is noted that the genesis of the press had started comparatively late. For example, the Qatar Press started in the Sixties after the emergence of Doha Magazine, while in the UAE, the emergence of the Press was different from one Emirate to another. For example, the magazine Ras al-Khaimah was founded in 1986 in the Emirate. In the same year, the Gulf magazine was issued in Sharjah and printed in Kuwait. The first daily non-government newspaper in the UAE was launched in August 1973 and called The Unit (Abdul Rahman, 1989).

Journalism Education in the Arab World

In the Arab world, there are around 135 university programmes teaching media and journalism, most of which have appeared in the last two or three decades. Of these, 19 programmes are taught at Egyptian universities, while seven are taught at Jordanian universities. The main problems in this field are that the academic journalism programmes are often lacking in practical aspects and spend too much time on theoretical approaches (Tweissi, 2015). It is also argued that most of the university programmes do not keep up to date with developments in journalism. Most Arab university programmes do not yet have digital media, a business environment or new technology (Self, 2015). This can be due to the fact that many Arab countries do not have a way of accrediting academic programmes or institutions, although the journalism programme at Qatar University, for example, is one of the leading programmes and is recognised by most Western universities. All this emphasises the poor quality of graduate students who have difficulties practising journalism in the real world. To get over some of these problems, some Arab governments, via their higher-education systems, send out new graduate students to study journalism at Western universities to gain teaching and professional skills. For example, not only has journalism become a graduate occupation, but there has also been a huge increase in the number of university journalism courses and degrees. This achievement can be seen from two different angles, those of scepticism and anxiety (Frith & Meech, 2007). It is argued that some Arab universities are unqualified to prepare new applicants for the realities of journalism after graduation. It should be noted that journalism, as an occupation in many Arab counties, does not require a high education level, nor formal training skills. Anyone can be a journalist as long as they can write and *obey* the censorship rules. However, there is now an expectation that a high level of education (university degree) is needed before being employed.

In 2007, UNESCO provided a model curriculum designed to help developing societies and to support these societies in adapting to the model. After a regional consultation meeting on the possibilities of adapting the model in the GCC region (held at the University of Bahrain), there was supposed to be a generic model which could then be localised and adapted to match each nation's specific needs. However, since then, UNESCO has promoted the model for all societies and this has only been updated in 2013 with new specialised syllabuses (Self, 2015). In contrast to the official claims that UNESCO is present and active in many Arab regions, most journalism schools and departments still lean heavily on theoretical studies due to a lack of adequate funds, overcrowded classes and inadequate supervision and management (Saleh, 2010a). Saleh (2010a) criticises the UNESCO model by saying that it ignores a key issue relating to the Arab world's environment and situation, the fact that journalism education curricula are not always the same. Any journalism in any nation reflects its historical memory and current settings, as we know that Arab pride

has influenced the introduction of journalism and its education in the form of a mechanism imposed by colonial and semi-colonial rule. According to Saleh (2010a, 2010b) many Arab countries lack proper journalism education and most mass media and journalism educators are incompetent with insufficient skills, resulting in skilled individuals being scarce in the field of education, in a drastic erosion of the civil service, a decrease in salaries and an increase in mass poverty, together instigating a struggle over the limited resources needed for the educational process. He also says that the concern about the UNESCO model is that it lacks the possibility of becoming localised because of its unsuitability in an environment full of different kinds of limitations.

Although it is impossible to develop an Arab curricula model, journalism education is seen as improving the quality of journalism by having university-level training and is 'one way in which society can intervene to influence the development of journalism', as Curran indicates (2005). Many non-national universities in the GCC region are staffed and managed by those who are not beyond the GCC region (Saleh, 2010a). In addition, the status of journalism education is still low as the result of several factors, such as a weak economic base, heavy political patronage, cultural fragmentation, a centralised geographic concentration, a low level of trust in journalists and the low prestige of journalism (Saleh, 2010b). Most Arab university media departments have worked to train journalists either before they begin practising or afterwards.

Table 1. Top GCC universities and their ranking

University	GCC ranking	Arab ranking	World ranking
King Saud University	1	1	383
King Abdulaziz University	2	2	540
King Abdullah University of Science & Technology	3	3	684
King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals	4	6	877
United Arab Emirates University	5	8	1129
Umm Al Qura University	6	9	1256
Qatar University	7	11	1349
Sultan Qaboos University	8	13	1434
Kuwait University	9	14	1598
American University of Sharjah	10	18	1804

Source: Ranking web of universities: http://www.webometrics.info/en/Arab_world

Journalism Education in the GCC Region

Saudi Arabia

Saudis, like other Arabs, were interested in establishing media and journalism courses to cover the local market and the demands of the media for specialised qualifications. In 1971, the University of King Saud launched the first media department in the kingdom, followed by the University of King Abdulaziz in 1975 (Abdulrahman, 2007). Other universities followed by offering similar courses in journalism with different degrees in both Arabic and English languages (as shown in the table below).

Table 2. Journalism education in Saudi Arabia

Institution	Type	Degree	Language
King Saud University	Media Department	BA and MA	Arabic
King Abdulaziz University	Media Department	BA and MA	Arabic
Imam Muhammad bin Saud University	Media and Communication Faculty	BA, MA, PhD	Arabic
University of Taibah	Media and Communication Department	BA	Arabic
Umm Al Qura University	Media Department	BA	Arabic
King Faisal University	Media and Communication Department	BA	Arabic
Jazan University	Media Department	BA	Arabic

In Saudi Arabia, there is also provision for continuing and extending education for media and journalism professionals and therefore there are several institutions specialising in this field. Government funds have given journalists the capability to attend courses, workshops and training sessions that are generally available for them or recommended by their employers. Saudi journalists are able to choose courses and training sessions that fit with their interests and abilities. However, these courses have to follow the country's regulations and principles.

Bahrain

Due to its size (as the smallest state in the GCC region), Bahrain has only one public academic institution that offers a degree in journalism. The Media, Tourism and Arts Department at the University of Bahrain granted four academic programmes on BA and Master levels and offers professional training to students who are working in leading positions inside and outside Bahrain. The department was launched in 1998-99 and since then, it has aimed to link its academic programmes and courses with local market demands. This, nevertheless, does not imply that the department's curricula do not include more knowledge-focused components. Most curricula include courses that allow students to frame and contextualise events and provide them with insights into media law, media structures and media ethics in Bahrain.

Table 3. Journalism education in Bahrain

Institution	Type	Degree	Language
University of Bahrain (Public)	Media, Tourism and Arts Department	BA and MA	Arabic
Ahlia University (Private)	Mass Media Department	BA and MA	Arabic
Gulf University, Bahrain (Private)	Media Department	BA	Arabic
Kingdom University (Private)	Media Department	BA	Arabic

Source: Higher Education Council, Bahrain http://moedu.gov.bh/hec
page.aspx?page_key=higher_education_institutions

The United Arab Emirates

The UAE Mass Communication Department was launched during the 1980-81 academic year in response to the high demand for media specialists in the region. Today, the Department of Mass Communication is one of the main academic units within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at United Arab Emirates University (UAEU). The approximately 200 majors in the department pursue courses of study in three of the most common tracks within Mass Communication programmes anywhere – journalism, broadcasting and public relations.

Table 4. Journalism education in UAE

Institution	Type	Degree	Language
Zayed University (Public)	Faculty of Media and Communication	BA	English
United Arab Emirates University (Public)	Mass Media Department	BA	English
Higher Colleges of Technology (Public)	Media Department	BA	English
Abu Dhabi University (Private)	Media Department	BA	Arabic
Ajman University (Private)	Media Department	BA	Arabic
Al Ain University of Science and Technology (Private)	Media Department	BA	Arabic
Al Qasimia University (Private)	Media Department	BA	Arabic
Al Falah University (Private)	Media Department	BA	Arabic
Al Ghurair University (Private)	Media Department	BA	English
American University in Dubai (Private)	Media Department	BA	English
American University in the Emirates (Private)	Media Department	BA	English
American University of Sharjah (Private)	Media Department	BA	English
Canadian University of Dubai (Private)	Media Department	BA	Arabic/ English
Emirates Canadian University College (Private)	Media Department	BA	English
Emirates College of Technology (Private)	Media Department	BA	English
Paris-Sorbonne University - Abu Dhabi (Private)	Media Department	BA	French
University of Modern Science (Private)	Media Department	BA	Arabic
University of Sharjah (Private)	Faculty of Communication	BA MA	(Arabic) (English)
Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (Private)		BA	English

Source: Ministry of Education - UAE: https://www.moe.gov.ae/Ar/EServices/Pages/ PrivateInstitutionis.aspx

Given the above discussion, this study examines the quality and level of academic preparation for journalism experienced by university students and professional journalists. It also aims to compare the views of those at university and at professional levels regarding the academic and professional preparation they have received. The study is based on a survey questionnaire that analyses the views of journalism students and professionals towards the quality of courses and programmes they have received at higher-education level and afterwards.

Research Questions

The research questions are concerned with the future of journalism education in the digitalisation age, looking at university students' and professionals' perspectives. They explore the attributes of both (students and professionals) towards the practical training programmes and the real world of journalism. This study is therefore underpinned by the following questions:

(i)   Questions related to journalism students at universities:

RQ1: What are the motivations for, and attitudes involved in, studying journalism?

RQ2: What are the obstacles that face students in their studies?

RQ3: To what extent have the practical training programmes contributed to the academic and professional preparation of journalists to carry out the tasks of journalism?

RQ4: How do journalism students evaluate the level of teaching journalism and academic staff performance?

(ii)   Questions related to professionalism in the workplace:

RQ5: What are the perceptions of professional journalists regarding the effectiveness of training programmes they received at universities in terms of practical journalism?

RQ6: Have journalists received any training and courses to support them at work?

RQ7: How do journalists evaluate their training programmes in the workplace?

Method

In order to examine the research questions against the background of existing literature on Arab journalism education, this study inquired into journalism students' and professionals' views in three GCC countries: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE. The public universities chosen for this study were determined by the academic networks among the collaborating researchers in these countries. For each country, universities that teach journalism were chosen. Due to problems in gathering a large amount of data from some universities, no focus was placed on the heterogeneity factor, however. Journalism students (across the various years of study) were mainly targeted in this survey. The questionnaire was developed by following existing work on journalism students (Becker, Fruit, & Caudill, 1987; Bjørnsen, Hovden, & Ottosen, 2007; Deuze, 2004; Hanna & Sanders, 2007; Mensing, 2010; Wu & Weaver, 1998). The questionnaire was developed as follows:

Survey A: Student

The questionnaire was administered to public-university journalism students in classrooms. These universities were King Saud University, the UAE University and Bahrain University and the questionnaire was conducted between October and December 2016. A random sample of journalism students was drawn up with the aim of matching the research

questions. In doing so, a set of different questions and statements concerning academic training programmes provided by GCC universities was developed, aiming to obtain an instrument for measuring students' perceptions and experiences of studying journalism at university level. The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions and was divided into three main parts. Part (1) was about demographic characteristics. Part (2) asked about respondents' reasons for studying journalism ('What is the main reason(s) for studying journalism?'), obstacles encountered ('Have there been any obstacles during your study?'), usefulness ('Do you think what you have studied is enough to become a journalist?'), resources ('How much do you benefit from the university library in your study?'), technology ('Do you think your subject is in pace with modern technology developments?'), evaluation ('Does your subject combine theoretical and practical aspects?') and field visits ('Does your department organise field visits to Press organisations?'). The last part (3) measured statements for assessing the evaluations of studying journalism and of the academic teaching level. The level of respondents' agreement with individual scale statements (five statements for the assessment of teaching methods and seven statements for the performance of academic staff) was measured on a five-point Likert scale, where 1=strongly disagree (SD) and 5=strongly agree (SA).

Survey B: Professionalism

The questionnaire was carried out between October and December 2016 with a convenience sample of 34 journalists in the same three regions: Saudi Arabia (SA), Bahrain and the UAE. The basis for sampling these journalists was that they worked in GCC press organisations and held a university degree in journalism. A self-completion questionnaire was sent to three GCC newspapers: Riyadh, al-Ittihad and al-Ayam. The questionnaire obtained details about respondents' personal demographics, with 18 questions related to their views and perceptions regarding training programmes and their professional preparation for practising journalism in the real world.

Respondents were asked to state to what extent they had benefited from their university studies in their professional practices, what impact their journalism studies had had on their professional work, what their opinions were on the training and courses provided in university, whether they had awareness of press legislation, how their organisations assessed their level of journalism and their performance, whether they had received any training courses in practical journalism and what type of training they had had, as well as further questions about organisers and locations, the usefulness of their course and what their reasons were for working in journalism.

Results and Discussion

Overall, the findings reported here were drawn from an original regional survey administered by several academic staff in three of the main GCC countries –Saudi Arabia (SA), the UAE and Bahrain– targeting journalism students (396) and professional journalists (34). Out of 369 investigated respondents, 58.8% were female and 41.2% were male divided in terms of native country as follows: SA (41.5%), Bahrain (37.9%) and the UAE (20.6%). Their study levels were as follows: 21.7% were in Semester 8, 20.3% in Semester 4, 20.1% in Semester 5, 16% in Semester 6, 11.9% in Semester 3 and 10% in Semester 7. Out of 34 professional journalists who voluntarily participated in this study, 55.9% were male and 44.1% were female. Their nationalities were: SA (44.1%), the UAE (29.4%) and Bahrain (26.5%). Their average age was 30.24.

Survey A: Findings

Motivations and Desires

For almost all respondents (93.8%), journalism was their desired topic of study (RQ1). Further, their reason(s) were: personal ambition and talent for journalism (60.2%); being good at writing and expression (47.4%); wanting to work in journalism after graduation (26.3%); the labour market being more open for journalism graduates compared with others (17.1%); friends' advice (11.1%); and parents' desires (2.4%).

To determine whether the differences between the desire to study journalism and the demographic variables (gender and nationality) were statistically significant, the study ran a Chi-square test (χ^2) for independence. There was no significant difference relating to gender and the desire to study journalism. However, a number of significant differences emerged regarding nationality, with Bahraini respondents (88.9%) being more likely than the others (SA [11.1%] and the UAE [0.0%]) to say that studying journalism was a family desire (χ^2 (df=2) = 10.261, *P*=.006). Bahraini respondents (63.4%) were also more likely to say that studying journalism was the result of friends' advice than were respondents from SA (34.1%) and the UAE (2.4%) (χ^2 (df=2) = 15.868, *P*=.000). Those who chose journalism because they wanted to work in journalism after graduation were divided as follows: Bahrain (57.7%), SA (30.9%) and the UAE (11.3%) (χ^2 (df=2) = 22.582, *P*=.000). Those whose choice was a result of their high-school scores were divided as follows: Bahrain (83.3%), SA (16.7%) and the UAE (0.0%) (χ^2 (df=2) = 11.130, *P*=.004).

There was also a significant difference regarding whether studying journalism was their desire, with SA respondents (41.0%) being more likely to give this answer than others (Bahrain 40.5% and the UAE (18.5%) (χ^2 (df=2) = 21.421, *P*=.000). Research has found that journalism degrees prepare students not only for successful careers in journalism, but also for other areas such as PR, marketing, advertising and other commercial services (O'Donnell, 1999; Hanna & Sanders, 2007). Hanna and Sanders (2007) found that the majority of surveyed students indicated that they were sure about working in journalism after graduation. Splichal and Sparks (1994) found that most students studied journalism because they liked it as a professional career, they had a talent for writing, or they liked to travel.

Further, 89.1% of respondents mentioned (either 'sometime' 52% or 'yes' 37.1%) that they faced obstacles during their journalism studies (RQ2). The main obstacles were: the difficulty of some modules (40.1%); the fact that the studies were based on a theoretical rather than a practical approach (30.6%); an inability to communicate with academic staff (28.7%); a bias in evaluation (24.2%); and a lack of suitable classrooms or training spaces (22.6%). A Chi-square test was run to see if there were any significant differences regarding obstacles in studying journalism. One significant difference emerged here. A total of 48.2% of Bahraini respondents indicated that they faced obstacles during their journalism studies compared with 34.3% of SA and 17.5% of the UAE respondents, (χ^2 (df=4) = 12.086, *P*=.017).

A Chi-square test was also run regarding the main obstacles facing journalism students. Only two obstacles were significantly different: 'difficulty of some modules' and 'inability to communicate with academic staff'. Female respondents (68.7%) were more likely than males (31.3%) to cite 'difficulty of some modules' (χ^2 (df=1) = 8.209, *P*=.007). SA respondents (46%) were more likely than others (Bahraini [45%] and the UAE [8.5%]) to cite 'inability to communicate with academic staff', (χ^2 (df=2) = 11.527, *P*=.003). Similar results were achieved by O'Donnell (1999) and Hanna and Sanders (2007) who found that students had quite different career expectations and goals.

Journalism Education Evaluation

Respondents were asked to evaluate their journalism modules (RQ3). A total of 38.2% of them reported that they did not think what they were studying was sufficient, while 31.7% said 'somehow' or 'yes' and 30.1% said that it was about enough. Those who thought that the modules taught were not enough (38.2%) were then asked to indicate the reason(s) for this: 32.2% of them said that most modules' content was similar, while other reasons given were that the modules were not commensurate with recent developments in journalism (22.6%), the modules were theoretical (17.8%), there were too many modules and these were less beneficial (14.2%) and most modules' content did not serve the journalist after graduating (13.2%).

Bahraini respondents (52.1%) were more likely than others (SA [34.0%] and the UAE [19.5%]) to say that the journalism modules were not sufficient, (χ^2 (df=4) = 18.782, *P*=.001). Female respondents (64.4%) were more likely than males (35.6%) to state that most modules' content was similar (χ^2 (df=1) = 6.206, *P*=.013). Bahraini respondents (46.1%) were more likely than those from SA (32.2%) and the UAE (21.7%) to mention that the modules were theoretical (χ^2 (df=4) = 6.505, *P*=.039). It seems that respondents were aware of the level of education they received at universities and wanted more improvements. These findings confirm the assumption that journalism education can play a vital role in shaping young journalists' values and attitudes (Hanusch & Mellado, 2014; Splichal & Sparks, 1994). For example, Splichal and Sparks (1994) indicate that university journalism education has a great influence on students' human values and attitudes.

University libraries are places where students can study, search and improve their knowledge. Respondents were asked about their university's library and whether or not they benefited from it in their studies. A total of 47.7% of respondents said they made use of the university's library in their studies, while 41.7% said they made only 'very little' use. These responses were further investigated with the result that 41.4% of respondents said that they relied on the Internet for studying with other reasons being that they had no need of the library to study journalism (30.9%), existing books were not up-to-date (14.7%), there were insufficient books and periodicals concerning journalism (9.1%) and they preferred to visit other libraries (3.8%).

SA respondents (73.7%) were more likely than Bahraini (26.3%) and the UAE (0.0%) respondents to say that they visited other libraries (χ^2 (df=2) = 9.855, *P*=.007). Other responses break down as follows: 'existing books are not up-to-date' (SA [52.1%], Bahrain [38.4%] and the UAE [9.6%]) (χ^2 (df=2) = 7.819, *P*=.020); 'relying on the Internet for studying' (SA [56.6%], Bahrain [43.4%] and the UAE [0.0%]) (χ^2 (df=2) = 124.081, *P*=.000). These findings are in line with other findings that university journalism education is a centrally important factor in providing a future career as a professional (Hanna & Sanders, 2007; Mensing, 2010; Splichal & Sparks, 1994).

Respondents also indicated that, during their studying, they visited some Press organisations for a 'field visit' (43.6% said 'sometimes' and 33.1% 'yes', while 23.3% said 'no'). Those who said 'sometimes' and 'yes' were further asked to list the type of field visit that they had: 26.7% went for Press editing, 20.3% for Press photography, 19.6% for training in producing Press releases, 18.8% for writing reports and 14.5% for newspaper training. When the Chi-square test was run, females (76.7%) were more likely than males (23.3%) to say that their departments did not arrange any field visits (χ^2 (df=2) = 15.108, *P*=.001). SA respondents (58.1%) were more likely than Bahraini (36.0%) and the UAE (5.8%) respondents to indicate so (χ^2 (df=4) = 117.826, *P*=.000).

Further, in order to understand how journalism students judged the level of teaching (RQ4), five general statements associated with levels of journalism teaching were provided: 'The style of lectures in its traditional form is a better method for communicating information'; 'lectures are better with the opportunity of discussion'; 'studying journalism lacks field visits'; 'the use of illustration and visual tools is better in journalism'; and 'lectures are based on books (theoretical approach)'.

Table 5. Level of journalism teaching

Item	SA (%)	DK (%)	SD (%)
Lectures are better with the opportunity of discussion	85.4	9.2	5.4
The use of illustration and visual tools is better in journalism	73.2	18.4	8.4
Studying journalism lacks field visits	53.7	15.2	31.2
The style of lectures in its traditional form is a better method for communicating information	27.6	26.3	46.1
Lectures are based on books (theoretical approach)	24.4	20.6	55.0

When analysing the general evaluated statements, the highest agreement score was for 'lectures are better with the opportunity of discussion' (85.4%), followed by 'the use of illustration and visual tools is better in journalism' (73.2%), 'studying journalism lacks field visits' (53.7%), 'the style of lectures in its traditional form is a better method for communicating information' (27.6%) and 'lectures are based on books (theoretical approach)' (24.4%).

Further analyses were carried out on these data using the Chi-square test to determine whether differences between different demographic variables were significant. There were several marked nationality differences in judging the level of teaching. SA respondents (38.1%) were more likely than Bahraini (34.4%) and the UAE (27.4%) respondents to indicate that 'the use of illustration and visual tools is better in journalism' (χ^2 (df=4) = 28.919, P=.000), while Bahraini respondents (53.9%) were more likely than SA (39.2%) and the UAE (6.9%) respondents to say that 'the style of lectures in its traditional form is a better method for communicating information' (χ^2 (df=4) =25.120, P=.000) and that 'lectures are based on books (theoretical approach)' (Bahraini [48.9%], SA [43.3%], the UAE [7.8%] (χ^2 (df=4) =31.511, P=.000)). SA respondents (51.0%) were more likely than Bahraini (46.5%) and the UAE (2.5%) respondents to state that 'studying journalism lacks field visits' (χ^2 (df=4) =133.763, P=.000). It seems clear that respondents were able to evaluate the main obstacles that faced them during their journalism studies and how the courses could affect their knowledge. Becker et al. (1987) found that students were remoulded by the university. At the same time, Hanna and Sanders (2007) found that UK journalism students had stable opinions and ideals which made them determined to become journalists. Bjørnsen, Hovden and Ottosen (2007) stated that, among Norwegian journalism students, most professional attitudes seemed to stay quite stable from the commencement of studies until the early stages of a career.

Respondents were even asked to judge the level of performance of the academic staff. Seven general statements associated with this question were provided: 'lecturers are able to deliver information efficiently'; 'lecturers have up-to-date knowledge about journalism'; 'lecturers encourage students to discuss and express their opinions'; 'lecturers encourage students to search and read outside lectures'; 'lecturers are characterised as tender, smart and kind in dealing with students'; 'lecturers do not have practical experience in journalism'; and 'lecturers have no experience or knowledge of modern journalism technology'.

Table 6. Level of journalism academic staff performance

Item	SA (%)	DK (%)	SD (%)
Lecturers are characterised as tender, smart and kind in dealing with students	78.0	12.7	9.2
Lecturers encourage students to search and read outside lectures	68.0	18.7	13.3
Lecturers encourage students to discuss and express their opinions	64.8	16.0	19.2
Lecturers have no experience or knowledge of modern journalism technology	63.4	25.7	10.8
Lecturers are able to deliver information efficiently	57.2	18.4	24.4
Lecturers have up-to-date knowledge of journalism	53.7	13.0	33.3
Lecturers do not have practical experience of journalism	53.1	18.7	28.2

The majority of respondents agreed with the level of the journalism staff's performance. The highest rated statements were: 'Lecturers are characterised as tender, smart and kind in dealing with students' (78%); 'most lecturers encourage students to search and read outside lectures' (68%); 'lecturers encourage students to discuss and express their opinions' (64.8%); 'lecturers have no experience or knowledge of modern journalism technology' (63.4%); 'lecturers are able to deliver information efficiently' (57.2%); 'lecturers have up-to-date knowledge of journalism' (53.7%); and 'lecturers do not have practical experience of journalism' (53.1%).

These data were analysed using the Chi-square test to determine whether differences between different demographic variables were significant. There were several marked nationality differences regarding the level of academic staff. SA respondents (37.0%) were more likely than Bahraini (34.6%) and the UAE (28.4%) respondents to indicate that 'lecturers are able to deliver information efficiently' (χ^2 (df=4) =19.192, P=.001), that 'lecturers have up-to-date knowledge of journalism' (SA [49.0%], Bahraini [44.4%] and the UAE [6.6%]) (χ^2 (df=4) =80.334, P=.000), that 'lecturers encourage students to discuss and express their opinions' (SA [40.2%], Bahraini [33.9%] and the UAE [25.9%]) (χ^2 (df=4) =12.815, P=.012), that 'lecturers do not have practical experience of journalism' (SA [48.0%], Bahraini [44.9%] and the UAE [7.1%]) (χ^2 (df=4) =111.280, P=.000) and that 'lecturers have no experience or knowledge of modern journalism technology' (SA [38.9%], Bahraini [34.6%] and the UAE [26.5%]) (χ^2 (df=4) =19.675, P=.001). Several studies have shown that education is just one of the factors that can potentially influence journalists' professional views (Wu & Weaver, 1998) and that the university education itself (with its academic staff) can be directly influenced by economic, political and cultural-level factors.

Survey B: Findings

Usefulness

Professional journalist respondents were asked whether they had benefited from what they studied at university (RQ5). A total of 55.9% said that this was the case, while 44.1% said that it was not. Those who reported that they did not benefit from their university study were asked to state the reason(s) for this. The most popular reasons were: 'The predominance of theoretical modules in the curriculum' (72.7%); 'lack of interest in keeping up with technologies in journalism' (54.5%); 'lack of cooperation or contact with newspapers' (45.5%); 'lack of interest in the practical aspect or training in journalism' (27.3%); and 'inadequate number of academic journalism staff' (9.1%).

Further, the majority of respondents (67.6%) indicated that they thought their journalism study had had a positive impact on their professional career, while 23.5% said 'sometimes' or did not think so (8.8%) (RQ6). However, 41.2% of respondents thought that they benefited 'little' from their university qualifications in their professional career, while some thought their university qualifications were 'very' useful (35.3%) and 'somehow' useful (23.5%).

Respondents also indicated that there were several methods that could be adapted to prepare a skilled journalist. The most capable training systems were said to be: on-the-job training within the Press organisation (70.6%); training during the study through the issuance of a student newspaper (11.8%); training in major Press organisations outside the country; and training and professional working during journalism study and in the country's media institutions (both 8.8%).

Following government lines and rules in the Arab world is very important for a journalist. Respondents were asked whether they were aware of Press legislation in their countries. A total of 55.9% of respondents were 'somehow' aware of Press legislation in their country and 26.5% said that they were 'very' aware, while 17.6% said that they were 'not' aware. Here, respondents were asked whether their department (university) had provided them with a full picture of this legislation and 52.9% said 'yes', they were made aware of the legislation, while 47.1% said they were not made aware.

Respondents were asked whether their institution evaluated its level of performance and skills and 73.5% said 'yes', while 26.5% said 'no'. Those who answered 'yes' were further asked how performance and skills were evaluated. The evaluations were: via circulation and the number of copies sold compared with other publications (57.7%); and through feedback from readers via phone calls, letters or face-to-face communication (42.3%).

Training is one of the important elements in improving the quality of employees at work (RQ7). Respondents were asked about their opportunities to take part in training courses and 94.1% said they had training courses, with only 5.9% saying 'no'. Respondents also said that different types of training were provided by institutions inside (68.8%) or outside (31.3%) the country. Most respondents (74.2%) indicated that they were trained with regard to Press releases, the technological Press, computers and the Internet (58.1%) and learning a different language (45.2%). These courses were provided by different organisations: 90.6% of them were offered at the workplace, 62.5% by public organisations (university or college) and others by Press unions (25.0%) and centres specialising in media technology and the Internet (21.9%).

Although trainings are important in companies, most respondents indicated that these training courses were only a 'little useful' (62.5%), while others said they were 'very useful' (37.5%). To investigate this further, respondents were asked to evaluate the level of use of their courses. Most said that the courses were useful for 'raising the efficiency of the trainee in press work' (87.5%), 'acquiring specialised skills in journalism' (68.8%), 'increasing the speed of journalistic performance in terms of writing news' (50.0%), 'providing the opportunity to learn the latest Press technologies', 'increasing public information about events' (both 31.3%) and 'bridging the gaps in the level of education and qualification that journalists acquired at university' (21.9%).

Finally, respondents were asked about their reason(s) for working in journalism. The most popular reasons were: 'journalism fits my scientific specialisation' (79.4%); 'it is my favourite hobby' (64.7%); 'for its effective role in society' (50.0%); 'for making money and fame' (20.6%); and 'lack of other work suitable for me' (2.9%). Splichal and Sparks (1994) found that those who choose to be a journalist do this because of the opportunity to change their societies or because they perceive there to be high salaries in journalism.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the perceptions of students and professionals regarding journalism education at universities and in the workplace. The results of this study indicate that journalism education in the GCC regions is interesting and enjoyable, as the respondents indicated. Most respondents believe that they have the ambition, talent, skills and motivation to become a journalist. It has been noted that different GCC universities have offered different degrees in journalism with curricula to match their aims and strategies. Despite the advanced level of journalism teaching in the region, respondents still wanted to see more practical training rather than a theoretical approach. For example, academic staff need to be able to deliver information efficiently and have up-to-date knowledge and practical experience of journalism.

Having a university qualification in journalism helps journalists to practice and improve their careers and skills. Most respondents thought that studying journalism had had a positive impact on their professional careers. Journalists appreciate journalism as career and it is their favourite interest. They can also make money and become famous.

Although this study has contributed to providing significant new data on journalism education in countries where prior research on this subject has been sparse, it comes at a vital time, with the journalism-education landscape in these regions changing dramatically over the last two decades. A new style of journalism has begun to emerge after the spread of direct satellite broadcasting in the Arab world. Most GCC countries, like many Arab countries, have witnessed a steady increase in the number and size of media organisations providing information and news services. In theory, media organisations in the GCC regions are supposed to play a crucial role in social progress. Given the level of professionalism of these organisations in the region, however, they have only played a role in promoting state and government interests even after the Arab uprisings in 2011 and there is overwhelming state control via media monopolies.

There are, however, a number of limitations to the study. Because this sample was a convenient sample of countries and universities, its scope is limited only to those countries studied. Future studies should therefore aim at more representative samples. Thus, we hope that this study can lay the ground for studies that can examine more definitively the professional views of journalism students and the ways in which they are shaped.

To sum up, for the sake of these countries' futures, GCC journalism education needs to strike a balance between journalism in reality and in theory and also new training methods which help to evaluate journalism education in the region. It is clear that several factors have helped to form journalism in the region and these will not change in the near future at least. For example, every state in the GCC region has played the role of censor, even in countries that claim to be more liberal. In each country, journalism feels the direct authoritarian control of years of permanent governance. Every state has played a vital role as a media owner or has had someone to do the job for them (allies of the government). Most GCC governments have total control of, or own, online and offline media, as well as having significant ownership of commercial or private media. In most GCC scenarios, every state has direct or indirect ways of acting to support its policies on ownership and to enforce the unwritten rules of power politics with a wide range of means of intervention to dispose of any media not following the rules. This can be via offering or withdrawing sizable financial support to certain Press organisations. Today, a good number of GCC journalists have had a formal academic journalism education, but this does not mean that GCC journalists meet the traditional criteria of the profession. It is fair to say that GCC journalism education attempts to reflect the developmental trends in the GCC media industries.

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