The Interaction between Education and Globalization: Comparative Study of Four GCC Countries

Dr. Hebatalla Al-Semary: Hebatulla.Bahgat@uaeu.ac.ae
Dr. Mai Al-Khajah: Mai@uaeu.ac.ae
Dr. Kamal Hamidou: kamel.hamidou@uaeu.ac.ae

Abstract

This study is an attempt to clarify the impact of globalization of plans and curricula on the progress of the educational process of four GCC countries (UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman), the extent to which those plans could meet the needs of media students, the requirements of the media job market and how we can achieve the difficult equation of combining the thought of globalization and identity at the same time. To achieve the objectives of the study, three questionnaires were designed to gather information from the parties of the educational process triangle, the students, the faculty, and practitioners working in the media and public relations institutions.

Key words: GCC Countries. Education. Curricula. Globalization. Language. Identity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The plans and curricula that have been applied to the Mass Communication Department at the UAE University over the past ten years were varied and totaled three study plans (Plans of 1998, 2000 and 2003). Perhaps the most notable of those plans and the latest one was dubbed "the New Vision 2003." This vision is one of the repercussions of the concept of globalization, which recently swept the Arab world. The new plan was different from its predecessor and was characterized by bringing forward a different philosophy and thought, and became a major part of the transformation that is being witnessed by the UAE University at the moment, where the trend is towards globalization of education and the desire to graduate students whose limits of thinking and creativity go beyond the narrow borders of the homeland to broad international prospects, that is so-called "the Global Student".

And if the winds of change, which also included the areas of education, has swept across the various Arab countries, the pace of change or development, as it is known, was fastest in the Gulf states, mainly the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. Taking a quick look at the study plans of the colleges of mass communication across the Gulf region, we can conclude that the trend towards globalization of curricula was more pronounced in the UAE, particularly in the government universities, such as the Zayed University and UAE University. This approach has been linked with quality standards for global academic accreditation of the academic study programs. And for that same reason, the department of mass Communication and information science at Qatar University has also implemented a new academic plan, which requires students to take most of their courses outside the mass communication program; with at least 65% of the credit hours must come from the liberal arts. However, the trend in Oman and Bahrain tended more towards linking the various courses with technology as the tool which spreads the globalization approach, and through which minds can be penetrated.

The development witnessed by the UAE University at the moment includes the development of the educational process in two main trends:

1. The first trend: transitioning into Multidisciplinary education.

2. The second trend: switching to the English language as a basic language for education besides Arabic.

Those concepts have been reflected on the new plan for the Mass Communications Department at both UAE University and Qatar University, thus changing the language of teaching of 98% of the courses to English. The proportion of credit hours for courses of general culture has increased at the expense of specialization courses (2-1). And for the first time in UAE University, teaching of some practical courses was conducted in both English and Arabic (6.8% of the total number of 132 credit hours). The changes also included reducing the hours of field training from 12 credit hours to 6 credit hours only. Perhaps the highlight of the new vision is the trend towards the integration and overlapping of knowledge information rather than specialization. The new graduate nowadays is required to be a multi-knowledgeable student, who possesses knowledge broader than just the knowledge of his specialization, in line with the belief that this concept is sure to make available wider areas of work for the graduate. Therefore, 18 credit hours have been allocated in the new vision of mass communication department (UAEU) for the so-called "Thematic applications".

Amid the sweeping torrent of rapid changes witnessed by the Arab region, we find free voices calling for development, without abandoning our identity. Thus, a decree by Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, was issued to establish the National Identity Authority. Many seminars and conferences kicked off here and there calling for the preservation of identity. So, is it possible for us to make such a difficult equation: "Globalization of curricula while maintaining our identity?"

The first batch of students of the new plan has graduated this year. This called for the need to assess the experience of
globalization of the media curricula on proper scientific basis. Hence this study is an attempt to clarify the impact of globalization of plans and curricula on the progress of the educational process of the four GCC countries (UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman), the extent to which those plans could meet the needs of media students, the requirements of the media job market and how we can achieve the difficult equation of combining the thought of globalization and identity at the same time.

2. STUDY GOALS

This study aims to achieve the following goals:

1. Identify the impact of globalization of media curricula on the development of the educational process and its progress in the four GCC countries.
2. The extent to which these curricula can meet the needs of GCC students and the requirements of the media job market in GCC countries.
3. Demonstrate ways to combine the globalization approach and the preservation of identity.
4. Reach a set of recommendations that contribute in setting the development strategy currently adopted by those GCC universities in order to achieve the desired objective, which is to improve the level of the educational process.

3. STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the relation between switching to teaching in English and the issue of preservation of identity and how it meets the needs of the job market in GCC countries?
2. In the opinion of faculty members and journalists, did the new plan help enhance the level of the media student in the cultural and skills aspects?
3. Does globalization of the media curricula in these countries meet the job market needs or is it only a response to developments imposed by the concept of globalization?
4. From the standpoint of the parties involved in the educational process, how useful was the new plan for GCC media students?
5. From the standpoint of the parties involved in the educational process, what areas of development does the new vision need?

4. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of the study, we followed the survey method on several levels, including the parties of the educational process triangle, as follows:

1. A comprehensive survey of the students in the four GCC universities as follows:
   - UAEU: a total of 137 male and female students.
   - Sultan Qaboos University: a total number of 126 male and female students.
   - Qatar University: a total number of 122 male and female students.
   - Bahrain University: a total number of 117 male and female students.

2. A comprehensive survey of the members of faculty in the Departments of Mass Communication in the four GCC countries distributed as follows:
   - UAEU: a total of 11 members.
   - Sultan Qaboos University: a total number of six faculty members.
   - Qatar University: a total number of 5 faculty members.
   - Bahrain University: a total number of 5 faculty members.

3. A survey of a sample of officials in various media institutions and public relations institutions in GCC countries, which represent the work environment for the media students; a total of 66 media officials.

5. METHODS OF COLLECTING DATA

Three questionnaire sheets were designed as follows:

1. Questionnaire sheet for students of the new vision, which included the following themes: the opinion to shift the teaching of media curricula to English; areas of advantages of the new vision and areas of deficiencies; and areas of proposed additions or development for the new vision.
2. Questionnaire of faculty members, which included the following themes: the opinion to shift the teaching of media curricula to English; areas of the new vision which benefited media students; comparison of students of the new vision with students of the old plans; aspects which should be completed so that the new vision could achieve its objectives; and areas of development which the new vision needs.
3. Questionnaire of officials working in media and public relations institutions, which included the following themes: the skills that today’s media persons must have; qualities and deficiencies of GCC Universities graduates; status of the GCC Universities graduates; the difference between the former and new graduates of GCC Universities; needs of the job market for media graduates; and development proposals to improve the educational process.

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY COMMUNITY

First: Students of the “New Vision” at GCC Universities:
1. UAEU: 72.3% of the total sample were females and 27.6% were males, which is consistent with the percentages of students at the UAE University, where the majority are females. As for the cumulative grade point average (GPA), the majority of students (74.5%) came under the average rate category (2-3), while 12.8% only were B+ and A+ students (3-4). As for the hours completed, 21.3% of students had completed more than 100 credit hours, which makes their assessment of the new vision a more substantive one than the freshmen. Public relations students came in first place among the rest of the specialties of the department by 75%, versus 20% for students of television and 5% for students of journalism. Notably, none of the students of the new vision (journalism course) are males. This is due to the preference of citizen students to work in places requiring only day hours, such as public relations institutions.

2. Sultan Qaboos University: 26.9% of the total sample were females and 73.1% were males. As for the cumulative grade point average (GPA), all interviewed students came under the average rate category (2-3). As for the hours completed, 69.2% of students had completed more than 100 credit hours, which makes their assessment of the new vision a more substantive one than the freshmen. Public relations and journalism students came in first place among the rest of the specialties of the department by 75%, versus 20% for students of television and 5% for students of journalism. Notably, none of the students of the new vision (journalism course) are males. This is due to the preference of citizen students to work in places requiring only day hours, such as public relations institutions.

3. Qatar University: 68% of the students interviewed in Qatar were male and 38% were female, this sample does not reflect the reality on the ground since the majority of students are in fact females at Qatar University. Regarding the cumulative grade point average (GPA), all interviewed students came under the average rate category (2-3). As for the hours completed, 69.2% of students had completed more than 100 credit hours, which makes their assessment of the new vision a more substantive one than the freshmen. Public relations and journalism students came in first place among the rest of the specialties of the department by 34.6%, versus 30.8% for students of television.

4. Bahrain University: 70.6% of the persons of the total sample were females and 29.4% were males. As for the cumulative grade point average (GPA), 82.4% of interviewed students came under the average rate category (2-3), while 17.6% came above the average rate category (3-4). As for the hours completed, 35.3% of students had completed more than 100 credit hours, which makes their assessment of the new vision a more substantive one than the freshmen. Journalism students came in first place among the rest of the specialties of the department by 58.8% versus 17.6% for students of television and 11.8% for students of each of Public Relations and multi-media tracks.

Second: The GCC Media Practitioners Sample:

1. Males prevailed in the sample of media practitioners with 59.1% versus 39.4% only for females. GCC media practitioners (62.1%) were at the forefront of media practitioners in the study sample, versus (19.7%) for other Arab nationalities, especially Sudanese and Jordanian. (Table 1).

2. The majority of the institutions represented in the sample came from the public relations institutions (68.2%), compared to 31.8% only for media organizations. This is a result consistent with the predominance of students from the public relations course to students from other specialties. (Table 2).

3. 12.1% of the study sample media practitioners were decision makers in media organizations and public relations institutions, while job types varied among the rest. For example, the sample included such positions as a broadcaster, an editor, a monitor, an accounts officer and public relations officials, etc. (Table 3).

4. Degrees of the surveyed also varied and, as expected, most of them held a bachelor's degree (54.5%) and a large percentage had graduate degrees, like master and doctorate degrees (25.8%). This proves the high educational and cultural levels of the people surveyed and therefore gives better credibility to their answers. As it turned out, the percentage of no more than 6, 1% of respondents did not exceed the stage of general secondary school qualifications. (Table 4).

5. The majority of respondents were graduates from Arab universities inside GCC countries (60.6%). Graduates of Arab universities from outside GCC countries came in second position, with 33.3%, while the foreign university graduates only accounted for 6.1%. (Table 5).

6. It has become also clear to us in this study that the majority of those surveyed were graduates of Mass Communication from different universities working in media and public relations institutions, which confirms that talent alone is not enough to operate effectively in the field of media, but it must be refined through study. 43.9% of those surveyed were people with more than 10 years of experience in the field of media, versus 56.1% of those with little experience in the field of media. (Table 7).

Third: University Faculty at GCC countries:

Members of the faculty at the GCC universities are of various nationalities, which is something, we believe, in the interest of students who get exposed to different schools of media. As for their degrees all ranks are represented in the sample (Professors, Associates and Assistant Professors). The diversity also included their qualifications as they graduated from different media schools (American, European and Arab universities). They also represent the three different tracks of Mass Communication (P.R., Journalism and Radio and TV) in addition to the Multimedia Track in Bahrain University. As for
the years of experience at the university, 9, 1% have more than ten years experience, versus 36, 4% who have less than one year of experience. It is noteworthy that those with long experience are faculty members who are citizens, whose contracts are permanent, while the rest of nationalities have their contracts renewed every three or four years.

7. STUDY FINDINGS

First: General Findings:

The first question: What is the relation between switching to teaching in English and the issue of preservation of identity and how it meets the needs of the job market?

1. Opinions differed significantly on switching to English as a key language in teaching media courses. While more than fifty percent of mass communication students at GCC universities supported relying on English as the key language in teaching, because it leads to improving the level of enlightenment of students and provides them with better opportunities for employment, it is obvious that mass communication students at the UAEU and Qatar universities were more supportive to relying on English language as the main language of instructions more than mass communication students from the other two universities. This could be due to the fact that more than 90% of the courses in both UAE and Qatar universities are taught in English, while the main language of instruction in other two universities is still Arabic language. We found, on the other hand, that officials in media organizations (49.3% of them) and faculty members at the four GCC universities (81.9% of them) emphasized the importance of perfecting both Arabic and English by media practitioners. 29.6% stressed the need for media personnel to master other languages beside English and Arabic, such as French, Italian and German. Only 8% of officials stressed the need to master English only. (Table 8). However, officials in media institutions and public relations organizations, as well as faculty members emphasize the importance of language as a key to identity. Therefore, the Arabic language must be preserved and strengthened for the media student, because the majority of the state media institutions mainly use Arabic.

It is noted that more than half of the officials of media institutions included in the study sample confirm the low level of English and Arabic in some graduates of Mass Communication Departments (Table 9). Some also emphasized in their proposals for improving the performance of mass communication graduates on the need to pay attention to improving their English and Arabic conversation and writing skills.

We can see from all of the above that there is a strong relation between language and the issue of preservation of identity. The result which this study confirms is that the job market requires graduates who are primarily fluent in their mother tongue in addition to English as a second language, which supports the identity of the Arab media institutions in the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere.

2. It is noted that although more than half mass communication students support the use of English as a medium of instruction, however the same percentage underlined the difficulty of the scientific material being taught in English, which leads us to recommend the teaching of English language early at schools in order to prepare them for their undergraduate studies.

The second question: Has the new plan helped the development of knowledge and skills of the media student, in the opinion of faculty members and media practitioners?

While views differed about switching to English as the main language in teaching media courses, all parties in both UAE and Qatar universities involved in the educational process agreed that the new plan focused on strengthening the English language of the student and said that it added new areas of knowledge at the expense of skills needed for his media specialization. This is clearly demonstrated by 29.8% of the students requesting that training courses in different media aspects should be held in order to develop their media skills. Students of the Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo University also demanded the same thing (Ibtsam Al-Gendi, et al 2000). The third party in the educational process, who are faculty members (63.6%), also stressed that what the new plan has added was strengthening the English language to the student, while adding new knowledge came in second place (54.5%). No faculty member mentioned anything about the new vision contributing to the development of student’s practical skills. Upon calculation of the ratio of practical courses to theoretical courses in the new vision of both UAE and Qatar universities, it became clear to us that the ratio is 2 to 1, which proves that the new vision stressed the new developments reflected by the concept of globalization, especially multi-disciplinary education. This is evident by the availability in the student’s plan of courses, such as administration, psychology, sociology, politics, health, environment, nutrition and education by 63 – 65 credit hours from a total credits needed for graduation. This means that approximately 50% of the courses studied by media students or may be more are from outside the specialty. It also shows us that the specialty skill courses do not exceed 13.6 of the total courses studied by media students. All this confirms that the new vision added to the student’s knowledge, but not to his skills.

On the other hand, more than half of mass communication students at Bahrain and Oman universities stressed on the fact that they do not need additional training courses as their study plan already focus on the use of technology and on the practical skill courses. This may explain the reason beyond the fact that more than 50% of mass communication in these two universities confirmed that they have enough facilities. Recommendations of officials in media institutions for the development of performance of graduates of the Department also focused on the need to develop the skill of the student by 60.6%, by following these steps: (Table 10).

a) Need to focus on field training and increasing the amount of training 35.2%.
b) Focus on internal media courses and external scholarships 16.9%.
c) Increase practical courses in the study plans, which must include the drafting of news and writing reports 8.5%.

Here, we must recommend the importance of strengthening the practical skills of the media student at UAE and Qatar universities. This should be taken into account when setting the strategy to develop the new vision so that the student’s skills can be enhanced; an area criticized by 65.9% of the students. More than half of the survey respondents of officials in media institutions (52.4%) also reported that old graduates at the two mentioned universities are more distinguished on the skill aspect than graduates of the new vision.

The third question: Does globalization of the media curricula meet the needs of the job market, or is it only a response to the new developments imposed by the concept of globalization?

The trend to globalize the educational curricula is so clear in the new vision of both UAEU and Qatar University more than Bahrain and Oman universities who focus on technology as one of the inputs of globalization. This could be noted clearly from the study plans of mass communications departments in UAE and Qatar through:

- Focus on inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary education in the various areas of knowledge.
- Adoption of English as a key language in the teaching of media courses. On the other hand, requirements of the media job market, as described by officials of media institutions and public relations organizations, were as follows: (Table 11).
  
  o 1- Culture: the need for media personnel to be familiar with the developments in various areas of general and specialized knowledge.
  
  o 2- Communication skills: such as writing and speaking and the ability to use modern technologies in the various fields of media.

  o 3- Proficiency in Arabic language: a language spoken by the majority of media organizations in the country (22, 7%).

  o 4- Proficiency in written and spoken English (18.2 %.)

  o 5- The skills of media work: such as teamwork, creative thinking, agility, commitment to the rules of the organization, possessing a professional media sense, coping with work pressures and the art of dealing with others (15, 2%).

It is evident, therefore, that the concepts of globalization reflected by the new vision of UAE and Qatar universities have met only some aspects of the media job market needs while ignoring other important aspects, especially proficiency in the Arabic language and developing the skills of media students. Similarly, the study plans of Bahrain and Oman universities have met also some aspects of the media job markets as the skills of media work, Proficiency in Arabic language and Communication skills, while ignored others as proficiency in written and spoken English and culture. It is worth mentioning that 90.9% of faculty members at UAE and Qatar universities had stressed that the new plan lacked the skills aspect. In addition, mass communication students of those universities confirmed that they prefer practical courses instead of theoretical courses. At the top of the list of courses favored by those mass communication students came Photojournalism 21.9%, the integrated course 23.4% and writing for the radio 22.6%. The other theoretical were the least in preference, such as theories of communication (2.9%), public opinion, principles of oral communication and organizational communication (0.7% each). This conclusion is supported by the fact that 17.5% of students requested the bringing back of some practical courses from the old plan, such as the news programs course, because they wanted to develop their skills in writing news and news reports. Others added new practical courses to the new vision, such as film editing 26.3%, TV photography 20.4% and TV drama 16%. This all reflects the thirst of the students for the courses which develop their specialist skills. This view was supported by 54.5% of faculty members at UAE and Qatar universities who demanded the addition of similar practical courses, particularly TV editing, TV drama, news programs, social marketing, media production in the field of public relations, advertising and creative advertising.

Furthermore, 8.5% of the students emphasized the importance and necessity that the Arabic language must be the language of the teaching of those practical courses, especially writing courses, while 5.2% preferred teaching those courses in both languages. It is worth mentioning that only 5% of the new plan courses of UAE and Qatar universities are taught in both languages.

There is no doubt then that globalization of the media curricula was considered only in response to the developments imposed by the concepts of globalization. Therefore, it only met some aspects of the needs of the media job market, which, in our view, would require a comprehensive review of the new vision at those universities objectively in order to primarily meet the job market requirements and needs of the media students.

On the other hand, Bahrain and Oman universities study plans need also to be reviewed as mass communication students requested more theory courses such as media and democracy, media and technology and effective communication skills. Faculty members at these universities also requested more English language courses.

The fourth question: from the viewpoint of the parties involved in the educational process, what have the media students achieve from the new plan?

Views were again different on the extent of benefits that have been gained by media students from the new vision. as follows:

UAE and Qatar Universities: While 81.8% of the faculty members agreed that strengthening of the English language was at the forefront of benefit areas from the new vision (51.5% of students supported this), we find on the other hand that officials in media institutions and public relations institutions say that the most important thing about students of the new plan is teamwork (56.1%), respect for the rules of the institution to which they belong (46.1%) and creative thinking (41.5%) (Table 12). It is worth mentioning that the new vision has
emphasized the importance of collective rather than individual work in many practical courses, mainly the integrated capstone course.

One of the contradictions highlighted by our study is the students’ insistence that the most important benefit which they have achieved from the new plan is improving their competency in the English language. Nevertheless, the most important problem faced by students in the new vision was the English language itself! This we believe underscores the need to teach the English language to students from a young age at the primary school. Therefore, we would like to support in this regard the recent decision by the Ministry of Education in the United Arab Emirates, which approved the teaching of English from grade 1. We believe that this decision would bear its fruit during the undergraduate stage, when the students would be qualified to study some media courses in English.

From all the above it becomes evident that the most significant achievements of the new vision at UAE and Qatar Universities are:

- Improving the English language of students.
- Developing their teamwork skills.
- Developing their knowledge, especially in inter-disciplinary areas.

On the other hand the new vision lacks:

- Focus on Arabic as a language spoken by the media organizations.
- Developing the skills of the media student.

Members of the faculty stressed that there are some problems which impede implementation of the new vision to the fullest, mainly the lack of laboratories and equipment for media production in various media disciplines: press, radio, television, public relations and advertising (28.5%), in addition to lack of communication channels with media organizations that provide training opportunities for media students (21.4%) and UAEU faculty added the presence of the Mass Communications Department in Al-Ain City, thus making it difficult for students to experience the media work environment (90.9%).

On the other hand, the major problems which media students faced with the new vision of mass communication departments in UAEU and Qatar university were the ongoing changes that occur on the Department’s plan and methods of teaching the new plan (14.3%), then the lack of means of education (7.2%), then the lack of practical courses (3.6%) and the lack of scientific field trips (3.6%).

Of all the above it becomes clear that the students did not fully benefit from the new vision at these universities because of some obstacles and problems that can be overcome if a strategy of the plan can be developed.

On the contrary, mass communication students at both Bahrain and Qatar universities indicated that the main benefits of their study plans are the focus on practical courses which enhance their skills in different field of communication particularly writing and multimedia courses. They need more English courses and more theory courses. This note was also clarified by faculty members at those universities. These findings reveal the need to overview the study plans of these universities and strategy again need to be developed, but from a different perspective.

**The fifth question: What are the areas of development which the new vision needs in the opinion of the parties of the educational process?**

Parties involved in the educational process have agreed on certain areas of the proposed development, and differed on others.

**First: areas on which parties of the educational process have agreed:**

1. **Increasing the dose of training courses for students of mass communication departments.**

Officials of media institutions and those in public relations organizations view this as allocating the last year of study for internship practical training so that students graduate only after completion of that year, similar to the internship year of doctors’ training.

- Not allow students to study theory courses with practical training.
- Start the practical training as soon as the student joins the university.
- Hold local and outside training sessions for students to develop their skills and participation in conferences that are held abroad.
- Student’s contact with a variety of media schools in addition to the American School which is currently used, such as the French and Australian schools.

While faculty members viewed this aspect as follows:

- Increase the specialized practical courses.
- Organize scientific trips to domestic and foreign media organizations.
- Host leading and distinct media personalities in order for the students to benefit from their expertise.

On another end, students of mass communication departments prefer increasing the amount of training courses through the assigning courses in certain specialized aspects of media work, such as courses in television editing, graphics, animation and multimedia. This has also been recommended by the students at other universities (Heba Al-Samari, 2007). Mass Communications students also called for the need to increase the hours allocated for field training in the media and public relations institutions to 12 credit hours, as was followed in the Plan of 2000.
64.5% of all students stress that field training is considered a great benefit to them, because they can be closely involved in the media environment and actively participate in the production work of different media materials. Therefore, it is a job opportunity for the media student. Field training must not be limited within the country, but they should be allowed to join other media institutions, which have training centers for media, such as Al-Jazeera Training Center in Qatar, the Institute of Radio Training of the Egyptian Radio and Television Federation and the Trim Imran Center for media training.

Students and faculty members of mass communication departments demand that the trainees’ accommodation should be near the media organizations during the training period in order to utilize it optimally.

2- Attention to Arabic as a component of identity:

The officials in media and public relations organizations particularly at UAE and Qatar universities emphasized the importance of training the student on the arts of editing and writing in Arabic and the need for a course on radio speech to be delivered in Arabic, due to the great importance that it has in qualifying the student to work in the Arab media institutions, especially the press institutions as well as radio and television channels.

For faculty members of UAE and Qatar universities, that language issue was manifested in the need to increase the courses taught in Arabic. Emphasis was put on teaching writing courses in both Arabic and English and the need for language experts to be teaching a radio speech course.

Mass communication students of these universities, on the other hand, see the need to focus on the Arabic language through organizing poetry competitions, writing newspaper articles, teaching the practical courses in Arabic only and holding training sessions on radio speech in the Arabic language. This Arabic language issue and its relation with identity were not raised at all by neither students nor faculty members of Bahrain and Oman universities. This could probably due to the fact that the main language of instruction at these universities is Arabic.

3. Improving the English Language:

Parties of the educational process unanimously agreed on the need to improve the English language of students at an early age, so that when they reach the undergraduate level, they would be able to efficiently deal with the technological advances and information sources, which are usually found in that language. This outcome coincides with the findings of another study conducted in the College of Mass Communications, Cairo University (Mona Al-Hadidi, et al 1998).

In this regard, specialized courses in teaching English could be organized and students would be sent to foreign countries on scholarship to strengthen their English competency.

Second: Areas of differences among the parties involved in the educational process:

1- Develop the methods of teaching courses of the New Vision to achieve the desired goals:

This aspect is emphasized by only faculty members of mass communication departments, where they underscored the importance of relying on discussion methods and small group work, the use of video conferencing technology in communication, in addition to enhancing the dialogue with students of other universities, who represent diverse cultures. This further emphasizes the concept of globalization that was adopted by the new vision, which calls for a world that speaks one language and has one way of thinking.

2- Enhancing the student’s abilities in using the modern technologies:

This aspect was confirmed by both members of faculty and students, where all parties stressed the need to keep the student well informed of the technological innovations and increase his ability to deal with them efficiently, which can be achieved through the modernization of existing laboratories and providing them with the latest technology. This has similarly been recommended by the students of the Faculty of Mass Communications, Cairo University, in another study (Ibtisam Al-Gendi, et al 2000) and students of UAE University in the 1998 Plan (a study by Essam Nasr and Heba Al-Samari 2000). Parties were unanimous on the importance of having an advanced digital television studio and a satellite radio station, where students can practice the skills for contemporary radio work. Some members of the faculty requested the establishment of advanced educational information network, linking the different universities inside and outside the country. At the same time, members of the faculty who are specialists in the field of public relations and advertising stressed the importance of providing sophisticated laboratories that are equipped with the latest modern techniques of advertising and public relations.

3- Develop the skills of media work:

This was confirmed by officials of media organizations and officials of public relations in different institutions. To them, it is important to develop a spirit of teamwork and create motivation in the student for education and learning, in addition to the development of communication skills with others and working under time pressure, which are basic
skills that must be readily available in the successful media personalities.

In spite of all the observations made on the new plan, and despite the preference of the students of the old plan to students of the new vision, 52% of officials in media institutions and public relations executives find that students from the old plan are more distinguished than students of the new plan. Moreover, media students from the UAE and Qatar Universities are still ranked first among media students at other universities within their countries by a rate of 47.7%, with a substantial difference in percentage from students of the American University in Sharjah (UAE), who came in second place by 23.1%. Students from the Higher College of Technologies came in third place by 7.7%. This finding stresses the fact that the new vision and its adopted philosophy has had some positive aspects that cannot be overlooked, such as improving the English language and focusing on dialogue with different cultures and in the various fields of knowledge. This is a philosophy imposed by the concepts of globalization, which recently swept the whole world. However, there are some negative aspects that need to be reviewed and reconsidered, such as neglect of the Arabic language, weakness of the practical skills of media students and other requirements that reflect the needs of students and the requirements of the media job market. Therefore, these requirements must be included in prospective development strategy adopted by both UAE and Qatar Universities.

8. CONCLUSION

This study aims at identifying the impact of globalization of media curricula on the progress of the educational process and meeting the needs of students as well as the needs of the media job market. It was found, through a survey of students from Mass Communication departments of four GCC universities (UAE, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain) a sample survey of media officials and executives working in public relations institutions, as well as a survey of members of the faculty, who represent the educational process that the new vision has been a reflection of the developments adopted by the concepts of globalization without optimally addressing the needs of students and the requirements of the media job market. Therefore, we end this study with a set of recommendations that are considered a platform for action, which should be adopted by the development strategy of the new vision. These recommendations can be summarized as follows:

1. Strengthen the English language through a variety of training courses aimed at developing the English Language skills and facilitating the student’s understanding of the skills taught in that language. A group of students can also be sent to foreign universities as part of an exchange program between the different universities in order to improve the language and develop dialogue among the various cultures.

2. Bring Arabic back as a language for teaching the specialty skills courses in UAE and Qatar universities on the basis that the Arabic Language is an integral part of identity of GCC societies. In this regard, a full opportunity can be given for the student to select the language that he/she prefers through the study of practical courses.

3. Develop and enhance students’ skills by increasing the range of practical courses, and increasing doses of field training, which gives the student the experience of professional media work.

4. Link most of the courses with modern technology. In this regard, certain courses can be added, such as website designing, multimedia, animation by using computers, graphic design, advertising design and public relations.

5. Adopt modern methods of teaching, such as the promotion of dialogue, small groups’ discussions, simulations and relying on the Internet and scientific libraries as essential sources for deriving scientific material taught in various courses.

6. Update textbooks and promote the translation and authorship activity to enrich the Arabic library because it is the only way to protect our youth, our identity and our culture against the foreign cultural penetration.

7. Develop the creative and critical thinking of the student, which would create a generation aware of internal and external issues, and ways to solve them.

8. Modernize the laboratories and provide the equipment necessary to achieve the objectives of the new vision and meet the needs of students, especially those related to the development of their skills and exposure to technological innovations.

9. Strike the balance, which was demanded by media institutions and backed by media students, between the courses of general integrated culture and the specialty courses in order to achieve the difficult equation, namely to graduate world-class media personnel who are distinguished in their thinking and skills.

10. Develop the student’s media work skills through the various study courses, mainly team work, development of the media sense, respect to the rules of the institution to which he/she belongs and to encourage motivation among students to learn.

In conclusion, we hope that these recommendations will help fulfill the desired development of the new vision of GCC Mass Communication Departments to achieve the difficult equation: the adoption of the concepts of globalization while preserving our identity on the one hand, and to meet the needs of students and the media job market requirements on the other.
REFERENCES


