PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF COMMUNICATORS IN SAUDI PRESS (A STUDY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE APPROACH)

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ABSTRACT

This study is classified as a descriptive exploratory research that is not limited to collecting data on the phenomenon under study, but rather goes beyond it to classifying, interpreting and analyzing data and facts and drawing out useful results and indications from them. the performance. Having completed the field study data collection, the data was encoded and entered into the computer, then the statistical results were processed, analyzed and extracted. The researcher used (SPSS), version (21), to analyze the data of the field study, and the following statistical transactions and tests were used: Frequencies and Percentages, Mean Chi-square test, (Z) Test to measure the relationship of the difference between the tabulated value and the calculated value of the study variables.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Saudi Press, Professional Practice, Communicators

INTRODUCTION

The practice of media professionals and journalists has become one of the research topics that need further research, as a result of the rapid technological developments in the field of media and communication. Where the concepts of the profession and how to practice it varied, to include the journalist, his characteristics, his roles, and the requirements that must be fulfilled in him, in addition to what is related to the standards, principles, values, legitimacy and sources of the profession, or what results from it as a final output, and the circumstances and variables surrounding it.

Accordingly, it is not possible to consider a single concept of the profession from a certain aspect and neglect other aspects that are no less important than it, or to consider the profession as a traditional, routine practice without keeping pace with the professional developments that have occurred in many of the well-established professions today, and turning them into a self-contained industry.

Since the profession of journalism is characterized by its competitive nature, and operates within a renewed, continuous and familiar framework of professional steps and procedures, individual visions and judgments have become dominant, despite containing a number of special editorial policies, and often accommodating a large group of specialists, in addition to being one of the open professions to society, and reflects its own values, ideologies, and orientations, making it more difficult to control their limits.

Accordingly, the profession of journalism, like other professions, needs principles that stem from it, frame its practice in the intellectual and professional aspects, and qualifies journalists at a high level of abilities to perform their practices, in accordance with the established and agreed upon principles and standards for practicing the profession, and to control their behavior and professional trends through the principles of knowledge, skill, and ethical nature of professional journalistic practice.

Studies of professional practice have included media and press studies, but they did not accurately identify the factors that affect the performance of the professional communicator, nor did they indicate the extent of their impact on the status of his professional practice. Most of these studies were limited to the personal and professional characteristics of the communicator in the newspapers, his tendencies, trends, job satisfaction within the institution in which he works, and the level of his training and qualification.

Professional practice approach is considered as one of the most important ways to the study of the communicator, and the job role he plays as a "gatekeeper" in selecting and highlighting news materials, addressing its content, directing and controlling media practices, allowing the possibility of forming ideas and trends about the issues and events raised, and determining the public's priorities by controlling the information flow of events.

Professional practice approach considers the concept of a profession as jobs that require specialized knowledge to a large extent, and also that require the availability of certain skills that are partially gained through training courses that are based on theoretical foundations and not only through practice. The concept also refers to jobs whose occupants provide services more than they relate to the production and distribution of goods.

Through studies and scientific research, many professional levels have emerged that show the roles of the gatekeeper, such as: the individual level, the media organization level, and the societal level. These levels made it possible to understand the role of the gatekeeper as a joint process between several inputs inside and outside the newspaper to reach the final exit which is consistent with the nature of each level, and the size of its impact on journalistic practice. The researcher "Shoemaker" has identified new dimensions for the three levels, as follows:

The first level: It includes the individual role of the gatekeeper, the social and psychological factors that affect him, namely: upbringing, guidance within the organization, role concepts, values and trends, decision-making strategies, perception vectors, thinking models, job model, and life experiences.

The second level: It includes "gatekeeping" within the work environment of the media organization, including communication systems, organizational characteristics, and daily practice of transmitting messages after passing through several channels to reach the audience in its final form.

The third level: It deals with the general collective level of gatekeepers, and includes the dominant ideology in society, and the impact of institutional and social factors on the process of selecting content, such as: information sources, advertisers, pressure groups, public relations, government, and other social institutions.

Other levels of Professional practice approach also emerged, represented by: the communicator and personality trends, the media organization and its own criteria in evaluating the performance of the communicator and his relationship with it, in addition to the societal forces that exert pressure on the organization, and interfere in its media treatment of issues, and modern technologies that facilitate the collection and transfer of information to the gatekeeper.

Consequently, the role of the gatekeeper has become an interactive role between journalists, the media organization and other community institutions, without separating them. The political system or information sources - for example - may exercise the role of the gatekeeper in blocking or passing information. Also, the media organization may exercise the same role in line with its own editorial policy orientations. Also, the journalist at the scene of the event " plays the role of gatekeeper when he selects the facts, and on the way to present them, and therefore, part of his subjectivity and his tendencies has been extended to the press material" but the link between these three levels is that the gatekeeper at each level decides the extent of consistency of information entitled to pass through its "gate" ; with the trends, attitudes, values, beliefs and interests of the communicative system prevailing in society.

Professional competence is the highest level of performance. Professional competence is the minimum acceptable level of performance, skill, ease, accuracy, speed, mastery, and economy in time and effort in the performance of work.

Competence is more comprehensive and general than skill, and often includes a number of skills that are added to knowledge and trends. From this point of view, the research aims to identify the professional competence of the communicator in the Saudi press, represented by journalist editors and the like, in order to identify the reality of their professional performance, and the standards of journalistic treatment of events and pressures that obstruct their work, in addition to understanding professional competence and discussing working methods in Saudi press institutions.

Significance of Study

The significance of the current study stems from the following considerations:

- The current study is one of the recent studies, which addresses an important topic, as it studies the professional competence of the communicator in the Saudi press.
- The importance of identifying the factors affecting the performance of the communicator and their implications for the professional practice of journalistic work in the Saudi press.
- Keeping abreast of recent trends in gatekeeper studies, and professional practice in newspapers as a process that integrates with each other and is constantly determined.
- This type of studies has not been paid due attention despite its scientific and professional importance, and this study was carried out as a scientific contribution in this field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher deliberately presented a literature review according to their geographical field, starting with foreign studies, then Arab studies, and finally local studies.

On the level of foreign studies, the study carried out by Defleur (1992) dealt with "job satisfaction of the communicator in the media in the United States". The results revealed that media workers are more satisfied with their work compared to workers in other professions.

The study showed that the main reasons for their satisfaction were due to the financial return and the social status granted to them by the media.

Susanne (2013) studied news media editors and critics in the United States. The study showed that editors and critics have a significant effort to self-regulate the media, but this effort is not a bold or heroic act, as they still follow the news of managers in the media more than they follow the news of politicians and businessmen, and their dependence on professionals as sources of news and press reports has not appeared. and that few journalists consider themselves advocates for the public.

The study carried out by Rose & Battle (2013), showed that the media system in the United States differs from the media system in Spain from the point of view of journalists in both countries according to their professional roles in journalistic work, due to cultural, political and historical differences, and the media system between the two countries.

A study carried out by Postamant (2014) revealed that there were strong effects that limit the performance of Mexican journalists who work as editors in the northern states of the country and their professional and functional roles, represented in the effects from outside newsrooms through the commission of crimes, acts of violence and intimidation of journalists, in addition to the effects at the individuals level such as lack of prior training on journalistic coverage of conflict and armed conflict, occupational safety concerns, then the effects at the institutional

level, including newsroom policies and their negative impact on journalistic practice, as well as the effects of other media.

On the level of Arab studies, the study carried out by Al-Rasheed (1989) dealt with the professional qualities of journalists working in Kuwaiti newspapers. The study concluded that there was a lack of training and a low percentage of journalists with a specialized qualification, and the opinions of journalists differed about the editorial and administrative pressures that they suffer from.

A study by Abd al-Rahman (1992) showed that the vast majority of journalists find it difficult to deal with their sources, and that nearly half of them receive few and insufficient financial returns.

A study by Taysir (1997) has revealed the existence of financial and administrative factors and pressures that affect the performance of journalists in their work, including lack of training and poor financial return, difficulty in obtaining information, and lack of cooperation from sources.

A study carried out by Al-Muhanna (1999) confirmed that the development of the communication and information revolution further strengthened the bonds of communication between members of the community and helped its members to participate in the event and information, and thus, this led to the identification of news values that affect news selection and editing.

The study has stated the stages of development of the study of news values such as the concept of the gatekeeper and the organizational and routine factors of journalistic work, and the third stage was the process of combining the studies of the gatekeeper with studies that emphasize the impact of organizational factors and the bureaucratic and production pressures they produce.

A study carried out by Bakhit (2000) showed that journalists' uses of the Internet are concentrated in browsing, searching for information, and looking for new news, and they use it to a moderate degree in checking their e-mails and accessing electronic newspapers, while they are used to a small extent in participating in discussion groups.

The study carried out by Omran (2003) also found that (75%) of the reporters face difficulties in obtaining information from its sources, and (67%) suffer from administrative problems within their newspapers to which they belong, and (72%) of the reporters face obstacles in publishing their press materials.

The study also showed the presence of press reporters who abuse the profession of journalism, by employing the journalistic profession for personal interests, failure to report news honestly, lack of credibility in transmitting information, and personal misconduct.

A study conducted by Mohammed (2004) showed that the professional practice of the communicator in Palestinian newspapers is greatly affected by the conditions of the external environment, where the communicator is subjected to threats and temptation from senior Palestinian officials, security and money men, in addition to the repressive behavior of the Israeli occupation. As for the personal environment of the communicator, it is still affected by the lack of security and protection for them, their failure to understand the regulations of the Journalists Syndicate, and professional pressures from their responsibility in the newspaper.

A study conducted by Haris (2011) revealed the existence of a set of challenges facing Egyptian journalists in general, including professional, security, and then legislative challenges, in addition to other challenges represented in the loss of faith in journalists to turn them into tools of conflict instead of exercising their professional roles and contributing to the awareness and advancement of society.

In addition, the study revealed the existence of a professional environment that is not conducive to professional development and commitment, as a result of the absence of fair

standards and corruption of press leaders, the decreasing awareness of the message of the press, and the absence of its real and guiding role by the leaders of press institutions.

A study by Mahmoud (2012) confirmed that web editors work without cover from any institution, organization or ministry, and the most aspiration of some of them is to be hired employees in companies that provide semi-official cover for websites, so that they are covered by health and social insurance.

On the level of local studies, the study carried out by Al-Jamaa (2010) dealt with "the factors affecting the reality of professional and non-professional practice, and the extent of the impact of each of them on the reality of professional practice among Saudi journalists."

The study has revealed a vision for the future of professional practice in Saudi newspapers, and professional journalistic work, and emphasized increasing full-time journalists, improving their salaries, and looking into the performance of the violations committee for Saudi journalists.

The study by Nassar (2015) showed high levels of internal professional sufficiency for journalists and self-abilities, which include dedication to work, ability, creativity, and dealing with technical and professional ethics of journalists in the study sample. With regard to the levels of external sufficiency, the percentage of those who do not know that their work affects the readers has extracted, and the percentage of those who do not trust has also extracted with a percentage exceeding (10%). The study called for the necessity of paying attention to electronic journalism and improving its professional standards.

The study conducted by Al-Hazmi (2012) found that Saudi journalists, according to the integrative vision, were among the groups that deal with the most electronic press, with a rate of (89.4%). The study also concluded that one of the most important shortcomings facing them was the lack of Arabic content, which has ranked first (32.2%), and that the integrative relationship was one of the best forms of the relationship between the electronic press and the print press, as it has ranked second (52.5%).

The study carried out by Al-Mahaya (2015) concluded that the editing of local news was affected first by factors related to new media, media factors, social factors, political factors, the influence of personal factors and then economic factors.

Comments on Literature Review

- The researcher has benefited from the theoretical and methodological aspects used in previous studies, the tools for collecting information and how to measure and analyze it, which will increase the depth of the study and its implications.
- The lack of local studies that dealt with the study of the professional practice of the communicator in the Saudi press, as many studies neglected the skills of media education, and the interactive relationship between the communicator on the one hand, and the audience on the other hand, which the communicator is proficient in, which is what this study seeks.
- Previous studies were remarkably interested in the theory of the gatekeeper in studying the relationship between the communicator and the media institution, and most studies neglected the entrance to professional practice that studies professional work, except the study carried out by (Al- Jumaiah).

Problem of the Study

Based on the findings of previous studies regarding the importance of research and studies dealing with the professional competence of journalists, the factors of developing

professional performance in professional practice, and the urgent need to monitor and analyze these factors, and try to discover ways to develop the performance of journalists.

Given the importance of the human element in collecting, selecting, and disseminating news within the various media organizations, the functions of media production within these institutions, and the circumstances that affect their dissemination and interpretation, which calls into question the extent to which the human element's capabilities are compatible with technological development, and the extent to which editors in Saudi newspapers are able, from keeping abreast with this development. This is what the current study will attempt to reveal by identifying the professional competence of those communicating with the Saudi press.

Objective of the Study

1. Providing a basic database on the communicators in the Saudi press.
2. Revealing the extent to which the communicator enjoys professional competence in the Saudi press.
3. Disclosing the nature of the pressures and restrictions that the communicator suffers from in the press institutions.
4. Determining the goals that the communicator in the Saudi press seeks, and the means to achieve this.
5. Determining the factors affecting professional practice and their implications for journalistic work in the Saudi press.
6. Identifying the professional standards of the communicator, and how to select news within the framework of the editorial policy of newspapers and assessing the professional performance of journalists.
7. Keeping abreast of recent trends in professional practice studies in newspapers as a process that integrates with each other and is constantly renewed.

Questions of the Study

1. What are the factors that affect the professional performance of journalists in the study newspapers?
2. What are the methods of communication available between journalists and business leaders in the study newspapers?
3. What are the means of developing professional performance in press institutions?
4. What skills do journalists have in Saudi press institutions?
5. What are the professional considerations that contribute to the selection of journalistic topics?
6. What is the scientific and professional background of Saudi journalists in the newspapers subject of the current study?
7. What difficulties do journalists face in obtaining press information?
8. What are the benefits of using information technology in professional journalistic work?

Theoretical Framework of the Study

In its theoretical framework, the current study relies on professional practice approach that focuses on the communicators as they represent an essential party that has an impact on the effectiveness of the communicative message. The communicator affects the extent to which the public accepts the content of the communicative message.

The study of the communicator, his economic status, methods of rehabilitation and training, his opinions, beliefs and vision of the public, the mechanisms of professional performance, the difficulties and obstacles that prevent him from exercising his professional responsibilities, and the professional and administrative pressures to which he is exposed, as well as his awareness of the role he plays in society is useful in identifying this basic party from the communication process.

Proponents of this approach explain that many studies related to the approach to professional practice rely primarily on theories of management, behavior and professional sociology, which are very useful in enriching the knowledge of the media process in its applied framework.

This approach refers to the study of the social processes through which media content is produced in media institutions, which is one of the main determinants that contribute to knowing the interrelationships between the level of political and social construction and the conditions of production and presentation of these materials.

Professional practice approach is largely related to the trends and characteristics of the communicator's professional practice, and is also affected by other factors within the scope of scientific and professional qualification and administrative organization in the institution, job levels, the influence of the decision-maker's personality, external professional pressures, the degree of job satisfaction, and others that affect the attitudes of media practice in media organizations.

Researchers have divided journalistic professional practice into two main parts:

Traditional Journalistic Professional Practice

It includes steps, procedures, roles, and expectations, from the beginning of the journalistic idea to the final product, where journalistic professional practice takes various forms that are usual, repeated and continuous that journalists use during their daily professional practices, as acceptable professional models for performing their duties.

The routine journalistic professional practice includes collecting the necessary information for the journalistic material, processing it, then dealing with it, and evaluating it in light of the flowing amount of this information, and in light of the movement of events, development and social mobility.

Regular Professional Journalistic Practice

It means the set of systems and policies that express the communicative system prevailing in society, define the framework of journalistic practice, and direct its course during planning and implementation.

It is a realistic embodiment of media policies, plans and legislation, through the method of work in the media organization. These include the political media organizations in society and the press organizations that branch out from them, and the editorial policies of each newspaper.

One of the most prominent concepts that dealt with regular professional journalistic practice is the general framework that governs journalistic practice, and expresses the philosophy and policy of communication in any society, through which newspapers practice the professional roles assigned to them, within the framework of their commitment to responsibility towards the society in which they operate with its systems and its political, social, intellectual and cultural components, in addition to the determinants associated with the nature of ownership and the owner's orientations and interests, and the orientations of stakeholders and pressure groups within society.

As for the conditions that must be met by the communicator according to this approach, they are: the availability of the communication skill (writing - speaking - reading - listening), the attitudes of the communicator towards himself, towards the subject, towards the recipient, the level of knowledge of the source and his specialization in the subject, and the position of the communicator within the framework of the economic and cultural system and the nature of roles.

The social system in which the media operate is one of the main forces that influence communicators. Any social system includes values and principles that it seeks to endorse, and works to be accepted by citizens. This is related to the function of socialization or normalization, and the media reflects this interest in its attempts to preserve prevailing cultural and social

values. There are a number of criteria that affect the performance of the communicator, and they are as follows:

Subjective Criteria

Where the personal characteristics of the communicator play a role in exercising the role of the media gatekeeper, as interaffiliation is a specific element of personality determinants because it affects the way of thinking or interacting with the world around an individual.

Professional Criteria

The communicator is exposed to a number of professional pressures that affect his work, and lead to his compatibility with the policy of the media institution to which he belongs and the expectations that determine his role in the communication system.

Professional criteria include, media organization policy: news sources, labor relations, and readers standards. There are a number of editorial policy factors that media outlets follow in the prevention and dissemination of news. This policy is as follows:

1. The policy of the state in which the newspaper is published: The state-owned newspapers are keen to publish internal and external news that are consistent with the government's policy. The newspaper that is not owned by the state is also keen that what it publishes of international news does not conflict with the foreign policy of the state, and not all newspapers do this, and the matter is due to the extent of freedom enjoyed by the press in each country.
2. The newspaper's policy: the newspaper's policy is one of the conditions of the news and its publication, and one of the foundations for its evaluation. If a particular newspaper refrains from publishing a specific news because it contradicts its policy, the news does not negate its status as news, and it does not prevent other newspapers from publishing it.
3. The nature of the newspaper's readers: News that is suitable for publication is excluded according to the interests of the expected readers, as the newspaper aims in the first place to satisfy its readers.
4. The space allocated for news: The space left for news in the newspaper negatively affects the selection of news, its publication and the way it is presented. It negatively affects such news when the space allocated to it is larger than the news received by the newspaper. Therefore, the newspaper is compelled to publish news that does not have basic news values or resort to exaggerating, extending or adding to news.
5. The editor-in-chief's considerations: who may request the publication of a particular news with no values for personal reasons.
6. Capabilities of the newspaper: If the number of editors is sufficient in the news department, the news space of the department head increases. But if the number of editors decreases - and thus the number of news they get for the newspaper decreases - the head of the department may resort to publishing news that does not have basic news values.
7. External pressures: The newspaper may be exposed to many pressures, whether from commercial advertisers or from pressure groups such as politicians, or stakeholders.

Study Type and Method

This study is classified as a descriptive exploratory research that is not limited to collecting data on the phenomenon under study, but rather goes beyond it to classifying, interpreting and analyzing data and facts and drawing out useful results and indications from them. the performance.

This study belongs to descriptive research that is concerned with studying the reality of events, phenomena, attitudes and opinions, analyzing and interpreting them, in order to reach scientific conclusions, either to correct, update, complete or develop this reality. For the purposes of discovering and blinding the facts associated with it

The researcher used the sample survey method, which is one of the most prominent methods used in media research, and it is a scientific effort to obtain data, information and descriptions about the phenomenon, or the group of phenomena in question. This approach was used in all the data and information necessary for the study to collect, organize, characterize and analyze facts related to the factors that affect the current level of performance of editors in Saudi newspapers, and ways to develop this performance.

Study Information Tool

The data collection tools, on which the study in question relied, are specified in the questionnaire. The researcher designed a questionnaire through which he was keen to achieve all the objectives of the study, answer its questions, and verify its objectives, through a variety of different questions. The questionnaire included a number of questions on several axes, including: professional characteristics of journalists, skills related to the use of information technology in journalistic practice, the role of the media institution in the development of journalists' skills, factors affecting the performance of journalists within the newspaper, pressures related to sources and access to information, and editors' suggestions to develop Performance in journalistic practice.

Validity and Reliability Tests

The validity of the questionnaire in collecting data was tested by conducting its validity and reliability tests, as follows:

Validity

Apparent validity means the validity and accuracy of the scale used in measuring the theoretical variable or concept to be measured. In order to verify the validity of the scale used in the study, the data (the questionnaire) was presented to a group of experts and specialists in research methods, media and statistics.

Reliability

It is intended to reach a balanced agreement in the results between researchers when they use the same foundations and methods by applying to the same media material, *i.e.,* the researcher's attempt to reduce the percentages of variation to the least possible extent by controlling the factors that lead to its appearance in each stage of the research, which was carried out as follows:

The researcher applied the Reliability Test on a sample representing 10% of the original sample after obtaining approval of the questionnaire, and then re-applied the test again on a sample of 5% of the respondents two weeks after the first test, which scored 97%, which confirms the stability of the form and its validity for application and generalization of results.

Study Population and Sample

The study population consists all journalists working in alriyadh newspaper and Okaz newspaper. Alriyadh newspaper and Okaz newspaper were chosen for the following considerations:

1. Being the two largest governmental newspapers issued by two different institutions.
2. alriyadh newspaper is published in the capital, Riyadh, while Okaz is published in Jeddah.
3. The most widely distributed and readable Saudi newspapers.

The study was conducted on a non-probability sample; the researcher used the method of a volunteer sample of (74) journalists from the two newspapers (alriyadh and Okaz), who expressed their willingness to participate in providing information and data for the research by (41) journalists of alriyadh newspaper, and (33) of Okaz newspaper, from Wednesday 20/1/2021 to 15/2/2021.

Statistical Tests

Having completed the field study data collection, the data was encoded and entered into the computer, then the statistical results were processed, analyzed and extracted. The researcher used (SPSS), version (21), to analyze the data of the field study, and the following statistical transactions and tests were used:

1. Frequencies and Percentages: They are used to measure the relative frequency distributions of the characteristics of the sample members and their responses.
2. Mean: The Central Integrity Scale is used to measure the average answers of the respondents.
3. Chi-square test: to identify the extent of independency or dependency of the two variables under analysis, which is here to measure the significance of the statistically significant relationship between the two newspapers.
4. (Z) Test to measure the relationship of the difference between the tabulated value and the calculated value of the study variables.

Terminology of Study

Professional competence

It is the upper limit of professional performance in the practice of journalistic work in media institutions.

Professional Practice

The rules, methods, and practical procedures that journalistic professionals and practitioners follow and apply during their professional practice in Saudi newspapers.

Communicators

means the full-time and collaborators who receive a fixed remuneration in Saudi newspapers; who prepare press materials for publication.

Professional Criteria

They are the legislative and regulatory controls that govern the work of the communicator in the study newspapers (alriyadh - Okaz).

CONCLUSION

The researcher used (SPSS), version (21), to analyze the data of the field study, and the following statistical transactions and tests were used: Frequencies and Percentages, Mean Chi-

square test, (Z) Test to measure the relationship of the difference between the tabulated value and the calculated value of the study variables.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Study Recommendations

- Unifying more attention to the communicator through professional practice and the preparation of intensive training courses and workshops, in which specialists in journalism and its various branches participate; to develop the skills of journalists and refine their talents and professional capabilities.
- Work on preparing the integrated journalist by enabling journalists to be familiar with the skills of press editing, so that the journalist can prepare his journalistic material and produce it at the same time.
- Addressing the shortcomings and working on developing the professional performance of journalists by activating the technical and editorial skills of journalists in practical training courses and intensive discussion sessions, which would enhance the journalistic capabilities efficiently and effectively.
- Paying attention to computer media and digital media on the Internet and how to use them, in order to enhance the professional and technical capabilities of journalists.
- Focus on raising awareness of the legal and ethical controls for journalists, so that they are fully informed and aware of their rights and professional duties.
- Creating effective channels of communication between leaders and journalists to overcome all difficulties and obstacles that may face their work and limit professional performance within the journalistic environment.
- Activating the effective communication mechanism between journalists and their audience, in order to strengthen the principle of interaction between journalists and society, and its positive impact on the performance of professional work with permanence and continuity.

Suggestions for Future Studies

- Professional development for communicators in the Saudi press, a critical-prospective study.
- Evaluating the creativity of communicators in the Saudi press, as seen by faculty members in the media departments of Saudi universities.
- A proposed program for training those in charge of media education in the Saudi press.

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