Divergence on Convergence:
U.S. and Egyptian Journalism Professionals and Educators Respond

Naila Hamdy, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
The American University in Cairo
Cairo, Egypt
nailah@aucegypt.edu

Phil J. Auter
Associate Professor
Department of Communication
The University of Louisiana at Lafayette
U.S.A.
philauter@gmail.com

Abstract
This comparative study examines concerns in both the media industry and in media education brought up by media convergence in the U.S. and pre-revolution Egypt. A survey was conducted among a purposive sample of media professionals and educators to find out how they defined the meaning of convergence, to understand more about the changes caused by the phenomenon, to extrapolate information on the type of skills required for contemporary journalism professionals and increase knowledge about curriculum modifications to meet new needs. Respondents had varied perceptions of media convergence but agreed that it was occurring, although several concerns arose in terms of resources and newsroom practices. The interviewed journalists and educators stressed the importance of journalism fundamentals such as writing and reporting, but U.S. respondents also emphasized the importance of cross media training whilst their Egyptian counterparts did not. Media educators in both the U.S. and Egypt believe that curricula should meet the demands created by the advent of convergence. However, U.S. educators believe that most plans of study have addressed these changes whilst this has not been the case in Egypt.

Keywords
Convergence, journalism, journalism education

There is little debate today that convergence has reshaped the media landscape worldwide. It is no longer whether convergence is real or happening, despite the variety of definitions both in the West and the Middle East. The questions posed have shifted. Instead it has become rather how educators are to modify curriculum to train future workers and meet the needs of the evolving media industry.

The concept of convergence has different definitions in literature. Gordon (2003) has pointed out that today, as it relates to media, the term "convergence" has been used to describe corporate mergers, developments in technology, marketing partnerships, position descriptions, and more interactive story telling that is capable within the multimedia medium that is the Internet. Like others, he has pointed out that to have a coherent discussion of media convergence, the term must be clearly defined within the context of the conversation to avoid the ambiguity that typically arises.

The term was coined more than two decades ago by Pool (1983, p. 24) when he described "convergence of modes" as the process that blurred the lines between media. In this early view, Pool envisioned a collapse of divisions between media industries due to the influence of digital inventions. Prior to Pool's publication, many professionals and academics had begun discussing the concept that the "new media" would ultimately affect how all the traditional media worked (Gordon, 2003). Nicholas Negroponte called attention to the phenomenon in his fund raising speeches to build the Media Lab of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) at a time when it was almost impossible to imagine that communication technologies could be viewed as anything but single entities. (Negroponte 1995). Fidler (1997) later confirmed this concept naming it "MediaMorphosis". Jenkins (2001) attempted to refine the concept by expanding the meaning to fit the cultural, social and global aspects of convergence. He deemphasized the technological aspect and instead focused on the explosion of new areas of creativity that lay at the intersections of media, industry and consumers. He also detailed the concept of cultural hybridity, the outcome of the global circulation of media content.

In more recent literature, Quinn (2005) has stated that the term convergence in the U.S. mostly refers to a business model where media organizations partner, share resources and cross promote products. He also states that there is a competing definition, that of a journalistic model, which emphasizes better quality output, higher standards of

journalistic values and encourages that they prevail in the move to multiple-platform distribution.

According to Lowrey, Daniels and Becker (2005) definitions range from the merging of media corporation assets, the integration of technological processes, the merging of staff, and the assimilation of production and information processes. However, as their study concerns the teaching of future workers they define convergence as the merging of separate knowledge areas associated with organizational work for individual media platforms. Their definition does not assume a merging at the corporate level nor does it assume the blending of technologies such as TV and Print.

Dupagne and Garrison (2006) propose a model of media convergence recognizing that the concept represents more than a common technical platform, a business strategy and regulatory systems. They also acknowledge its multidimensionality including convergence effects. Amongst convergence effects is the impact upon education. Whereas an increasing number of journalism schools have modified their curricula to adapt to the era of media convergence.

Deuze (2008) has attempted to develop some underlying theories related to media convergence. In his work, he considers not only convergence of industries and techniques, but also the convergence of the "citizen-consumer" and the creator of news. In the converged and online environment, consumers regularly comment on stories and also create and provide stories for traditional media outlets. CNN has developed an entire section of their website called "iReport" (alluding to the iPod/iPhone/iPad generation) where consumers dubbed "iReporters" can contribute their own video news stories. (See http://ireport.cnn.com). Deuze considers this new form of journalism, which includes consumers as reporters, as "a corrective to traditional or otherwise entrenched notions of what it means to be a journalist" (p. 112). This suggests not a narrowing, but an expansion of the concept of media convergence, and yet another issue that editors and news directors must deal with. Numerous U.S. studies have revealed that the majority of news directors and educators are practicing/teaching convergence in some manner. Although debate continues on exactly what is considered convergence and whether it should be practiced in a full or minimal manner. (Tanner, & Duhe, 2005)

In fact, at the level of news productions, literature appears to suggest that

convergence is more of a case of evolution rather than revolution. Developments are taking place as the media industries are converging and adapting their practices to meet new demands. Media companies are triggered by both the growth of the Internet and the economic slump to change from single media to multimedia applications.

From June to September 2004, Dailey, Demo, and Spillman (2005) conducted a survey of 372 newspaper editors to find out if they have converged partnerships with TV stations, and how those convergences operate. They found that less than one third of those surveyed had partnerships, and that the way the partnerships converged varied widely from organization to organization. At the time, very few appeared to be truly committed to convergence, although cross-promotion was encouraged. The trend may be growing however. Although these findings appear to show a stalwart resistance to convergence, there is evidence of the slow evolution toward this approach to journalism. Kraeplin and Criado (2006) performed two similar surveys – one in 2002-2003, and a follow up in 2004-2005. Their findings showed an expansion of media convergence in the U.S. from the first to the second survey.

For instance, recent moves by large media outlets indicate that U.S. newsrooms are heading toward the "all platform" journalism model. For instance, CNN increased the number of non-traditional reporters adding convergent journalists who can provide grassroots coverage of breaking news and other stories. (Elber, 2008)

Educators also believe that convergence is the future and thus they are highly influenced to change their curriculum to include convergence although professional newsrooms vary in their adoption of convergence practices. However, educators are still finding difficulty in determining precisely how to prepare students for future journalistic careers. (Tanner, & Duhe, 2005)

The Arab region and Egypt in particular also lack a definition to describe exactly what is considered convergence. Although scholars recognize the concept of convergence there is no agreement. In fact, to date there is still struggle over translation of the term.

This confirms Quinn's (2005) analogy with beauty lying in the eyes of its beholder, that each definition will depend on the perspective of each person defining it, varying from country to country, region to region and culture to culture in reference to his

idea "that convergence has as many definitions as the number of people who attempt to define it" ranging from the journalistic ideal to the business ideal to references of convergence being a mindset. In fact, Quinn concludes that global convergence has as many interpretations as it has advocates.

More recent discussions and examples indicate strong evidence that media convergence has emerged. Perhaps the most dominant paradigm has been the technological convergence which has been harnessed and promoted by the government of Egypt, from establishing a Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) to forming agencies such as National Telecommunication Regulatory Agency (NTRA) in 1998 by which infrastructure drive was instituted. Several related initiatives were launched and continue to promote the integration of media content in their convergence strategies. (Abdulla 2005, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2010)

Cultural forms of convergence can be witnessed through websites on Egypt's internet space. At a minimum and for some time now, many newspapers and broadcast stations have had internet sites since the arrival of Internet connectivity in the 1990's. (Abdulla, 2005) Although most of the content has consisted of shovel ware thus far, more recent entries to the market have been producing original content for the web. Several newspapers such as *Al Shorouk* newspaper, *Al Masry Al Youm* , *Al Youm al Sabee*, The Daily News Egypt and others have updated, dynamic, interactive sites with original content written purposively for the web. [1]

Another manifestation of the cultural aspect of media convergence has been the mushrooming of blogs and social networks in Egypt. This has brought to the forefront the notable benefit to civil society, activists, and citizen journalists in Egypt. (Abdulla 2005, Hamdy 2009, Ajemian 2008)

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[1] Egyptian Arab language newspaper sites can be viewed at the following links
http://www.shorouknews.com/
http://www.almasryalyoum.com/
http://www.youm7.com/Default.asp
Egyptian English language sites can be viewed at the following links
http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/
http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en

In addition, since convergence is a global phenomenon, there is evidence that media organizations worldwide have been embracing it, albeit at different speeds. Strategic alliances and mergers have occurred within Arab media providing examples of convergence as early as 2002. The Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) and the London-based Pan Arab newspaper *Al-Hayat* formed a joint venture in which the newspaper's journalists supplied news for the LBC bulletins. (Quinn & Quinn-Allen, 2005)

There is also an indication that Journalism programs are adapting curricula to meet industry changes. For instance, The Faculty of Mass Communication at Cairo University is one of the core Egyptian media partners in The Media Development Program, a five –year capacity building program funded by USAID. (Media Development Project)

Coming aboard this project at its inception has meant that the faculty has indeed over that time period addressed their curriculum bringing it to date with global counterparts. This is evident in the mission, vision and learning outcomes of the various departments within the school. This is quite significant due to the faculty's leadership amongst other national university programs in the country. (The Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo Univeristy, Egypt (Arabic)) Other Journalism and Mass Communication programs at private universities in Egypt have also adapted their curriculum following the lead of the influential, educational trend-setter, the American Univeristy in Egypt. However, all of these adaptations are in flux whilst educators continue to negotiate the meaning and changes stimulated by convergence. (Hamdy, 2008)

As such, the study will use the theoretical underpinnings of diffusion theory to explore media practitioner's and media educator's reactions to convergence of their newsrooms, and their curricula and to consider implications of the ongoing diffusion of convergence as an innovation.

Diffusion theory seeks to explain the spread of new ideas and has been widely applied to media studies. In his seminal work, Rogers defines "diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system." (1995, p5) The four key elements of social change are:

- the innovation itself, an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by those who face a decision about adopting it. The perceived characteristics of the innovation, including its relative advantage, its compatibility with the values, needs and experiences of potential adopters; its perceived complexity, its trialability or the degree to which it has been tested, and its observability, or the extent to which the results are visible in the social system are of importance. (Roger, 1995)

- The communication channel through which the message about the innovation is shared, with interpersonal channels viewed as the most effective in persuading individuals to adopt a new idea. (ibid)

- Time, which involves the period between when an individual first becomes aware of the innovation and when an adoption decision is made, the speed with which the adoption of the innovation is made, and moment in time when an individual adopts the innovation in comparison to others in the social system. (ibid)

- Finally, the social systems determine diffusion of the innovation. Roles of opinion leaders and change agents who conform to system norms can act as behavioral models for other individuals. Adoption decisions can be made by individuals, or a collective of individuals seeking consensus of the majority. (ibid)

Diffusion studies have tracked technological change in mass communications. Studies have ranged from those with a focus on adoption dynamics of consumer media, such as personal computers, the internet and multimedia cable television to others with a focus on newsrooms practices and journalist adoptions of new technologies and skills. (Singer, 2004)

Fourthly, the researchers will attempt to identify competencies deemed necessary for graduates of journalism programs and to see whether there is a gap between media practitioner's and media educator's perceptions in both U.S. and Egypt which fall at opposite regions of the globe.

Finally, the study will probe into future directions proposed by both practitioners and educators.

Research Questions

Clearly, there is no single definition for convergence, making related studies challenging. Adams (2008) and Dupagne and Garrison (2006) chose to address the

confusion over definitions by asking participants to describe the term convergence and what it means to them. Despite the attempts to define convergence, there still seems to be much ambiguity regarding the term's use in relation to the media, both with academics and industry professionals. Consequently, the first research question of this study is the following:

RQ1: How do industry professionals and media educators in the U.S. and (pre revolutionary) Egypt define media convergence?

Prior research has shown that some news organizations are avoiding convergence while others embrace it. Additionally, the research indicates that approaches to convergence vary widely from organization to organization. It's important to find out how convergence is being addressed, not just to gain insight on the issues that impact the evolution of the industry and academic programs (Dupagne and Garrison, 2006) but to compare such developments and perceptions in two different cultural settings. Therefore, the second and third research questions are:

RQ2: How has media convergence affected the work environment for both U.S. and Egyptian professionals?

RQ3: How do U.S. and Egyptian media professionals rate their own skills relative to working in converged media environments and what skills do they think should be taught in journalism programs to address these needs?

Finally, the researchers will also examine how media educators have chosen to respond to media convergence by adapting their curriculum. Such changes have been detected in earlier studies of circular changes (Lowrey, W., Daniels, G., & Becker, L. (2005) and will be compared to similar responses in Egypt. Thus, the final research question is:

RQ4: How have media educators chosen to respond to media convergence?

Methodology

Intensive interviews were used as the method to gather data on the topic of media convergence and news convergence as well as the adaptation of university programs to this phenomenon. This method was chosen as it "provides more accurate responses on sensitive issues" (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003, p. 127) and can be used to understand

complex social and organizational issues.

In this study, we focused on interviewing a non random purposive sample of media professionals who are currently employed in a variety of media outlets which include print, broadcast and online. We also interviewed academics who teach in journalism and mass communication programs both in Egypt and the U.S. This qualitative method was used because it was felt that these in depth interviews would help the researchers to obtain detailed insight on the phenomena of convergences. It is believed that these frank comments on the issues will help the researchers to develop a better understanding of issues surrounding convergence and perhaps in the future develop a quantitative measure of the phenomenon.

Participants were guided with a set of open-ended questions to help them respond to queries posed by the researchers. They were however able to discuss and give details and share anecdotal stories in depth. The researchers used the Tampa News Center study conducted by Michel Dupagne and Bruce Garrison as guide to areas that should be explored such as understanding what media convergence means, and the changes in newsroom practices. Other areas explored are skills required for new entrants to the journalism field and curriculum changes and modifications made to adjust to convergence. The interviews also probed participants for indications of plans for the future. Open-ended questions were completed with one close-ended Likert scale question designed to test for expert opinions on competencies required for graduates of journalism and mass communication programs. The researchers used a scale devised by Dickson and Brandon (2000) and adapted by el-Nawawy (2007) in a study of education standards for journalism students in Egypt and Jordan. These included competencies learned through the study of basic journalism skills, media ethics and law, computer skills and others. For the purpose of this study, two media convergence related scales were added. These focused on digital technology skills, and cyber culture knowledge.

The participants were selected in a manner that attempt to avoid duplication and be representative of various types of media and media educators. The sample for Egypt which was gathered before the January 25 revolution included managers in state television, newspapers, news websites, and one regional broadcaster. The academics included a mixed sample of professors in national universities, private Egyptian

universities and one foreign university. Both of these groups were selected based on their role in their institution with a conscious effort to choose diverse roles. A purposive sample of 13 respondents, 7 academics and 6 professionals, were interviewed. As there is no rule on a recommended sample it is considered a generally sufficient number for a study of this type. (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003)

Participants in the U.S. sample were obtained by contacting academics and media professionals throughout the country. Professional respondents included a newspaper production director, a converged media publisher, a PR professional, a TV news anchor, and the executive director of a cable public access channel. Academics included a mixed sample of professors from public and private universities of various sizes in different states. This composed total of 25 respondents, 20 academics and 5 professionals were interviewed.

Interviews were conducted during the month of September, 2010. Several were conducted at the premises of the participants. Egyptian data was primarily obtained through one-on-one interviews while U.S. data was solicited via emailed surveys.

Findings in Egypt

Research Question 1

Meaning of Convergence (Educators and Professionals)

The interviewed media professionals and academics identified their experience with media convergence over the past decade. The overwhelming majority of respondents viewed media convergence as a technological advancement that had varying levels of impact. The single most reoccurring theme reflected the opinion that media convergence is a process whereby different technological systems and media forms evolve toward performing similar tasks.

> "Media convergence means integration between the means of mass communication that lead to a degree of similarity between the services that each can provide. In order for the media to converge, two main things need to occur. First, computers, televisions and cell phones must be able to be content interchangeable. Second, people must be sufficiently interested in being able to view the same content on both devices to make implementation of this interoperability commercially viable."

> "Media Convergence to me, means putting together different forms of media or

elements of these forms in order to present a new product all together. It does not mean the ownership of various media forms. "

"When we talk about media convergence we are talking about how the borders and distinctions between how the editor, a photographer and a videographer's work have fallen."

Notably a few respondents did acknowledge an economic interpretation to the meaning of media convergence.

> "Media convergence cannot be ignored, it means enabling one media to provide the service offered by other media at the same quality. Its main component is the economic component, for me, media convergence is an economic strategy in which communications companies seek financial benefit by making the various media properties they own work together. For instance, in Egypt, we see Chinese cell phones with all the modern capabilities sold at less than 300 Egyptian pounds (less than 60 U.S. dollars). The Chinese strategy is a product of three elements: 1) corporate concentration, whereby fewer large companies own more and more media properties; 2) digitization, whereby media content produced in a universal computer language can be easily adapted for use in any medium; and 3) government deregulation, which has increasingly allowed media conglomerates to own different kinds of media."

Academic respondents had the natural tendency to be able to define the phenomena of media convergence easily whilst the majority of professionals were not necessarily aware of the use the term itself but were highly aware of the occurrence of the phenomena. Nonetheless, professionals mostly referred to the phenomena as one that was mostly affecting print journalism. A typical response would only refer to print and online.

> "Technology has a huge impact on the field of journalism, which led to the emergence of another type of print press, that of electronic journalism"

Similarly, the broadcast journalists spoke at length about the "Masry Al Youm" Egypt's relatively new independent newspaper as it has become a leader in terms of providing consumers with an interactive website that incorporates print and broadcast media's journalistic output. In fact, from discussions with interviewees it became clear that several newspapers are followingthat direction. The former and first publisher of Masry Al Youm, Hisham Kassem is in the process of launching a new independent newspaper that from the onset, plans to start with a converged newsroom and Al Ahram Egypt's semiofficial newspaper for launching an online only daily English newspaper which will follow a similar model.

Interviews with professionals indicated that Egypt was on the verge of going through a second wave or phase of convergence. The first wave refers to launching the online versions of newspapers followed by broadcast stations. The second wave refers to the launch of multimedia supportive, interactive sites. The main catalyst has been the availability of broadband access in Egypt and the impact of media training. There has been an emphasis on media training that has become available through various donor agencies in the last five years.

The local broadcasters are consciously aware of the need to harness new technologies to be able to enhance their content. State-owned television stations are beginning projects to initiate and use converged content but it is at an early stage. Regional broadcasters felt that the powerful players such as Al Jazeera and Arabiya are aggressively pursuing "convergence" policies but still lag behind their Western counterparts.

> "As for broadcast and television in particular, there are several steps that have been taken that we also take for granted. The majority of broadcast stations have websites and many have material archived although each is at different stages of development. BBC Arabic for example has had convergence as a strategy from their onset whilst Al Jazeera and Arabiya are incorporating these strategies now".

There was a consensus amongst both academic and professional respondents that as far as convergence is concerned, Egypt was at an infancy stage. Although the majority of respondents did acknowledge that there has been great progress in the last five years.

Definitions also included a change in the news environment, more freedom, more choices, a change in the process of reporting stories and a notion of the globalization paradigm.

Another recurring theme, regardless of whether the respondent was an academic or a journalist with a newspaper, broadcast station or online site was the question of resources. Several felt that resources available to Egyptian journalists were not adequate to allow for harnessing the benefits of convergent technology.

> "Convergence has not been adopted by our station yet. We don't even have proper online presence yet. Lately we have made individual efforts by creating Facebook groups but this is not part of a strategy."

> "We don't have the training or technological facilities in Egypt yet. We see

international journalists work as a one-man show that only comes with training"

On the other hand, others expressed the opinion that it didn't take much for a journalist to function across platforms with newspaper journalists becoming more like television reporters, able to capture video and prepare reports for broadcasts, particularly when it comes to the emerging journalists.

> "I am glad that this is not the case with the very new journalists. Now the trend is that they can pick up the camera, shoot, edit, do it all by themselves."

Research Question 2

New Skills Required for Professionals (Professionals)

Further probing with a question that addressed media convergence practices in their organization caused respondents to describe how it has changed their practices. The media practitioners echoed themes that revolved around changes in newsroom practices and culture, with some references to changing relationships with audiences.

Most prominent of these subthemes was the change in the work culture. Their duties have increased as they have more to deal with and more to learn but the barriers between the traditional structures of a news organization have fallen.

> "This concept has manifested itself in many ways for example we, the editorial team, now work closely with the design team to create a functional design for the best possible outcome. We work and plan together. They may offer us the best possible design solution to enhance our content and vice versa and we give them ideas on how to improve the design. There is no longer the traditional segregation between various sections of a newspaper at all. "

> "We have our own social network team who monitors responses and discussions to stories and feed us with information on what we should be covering and what our audiences are interested in. Not just to interact but to use the interaction to guide our input. This is an in-house team, which identifies cyber communities around the world and their debates. "

However the change in work culture was not necessarily a drastic change in a newsroom and can just be a change in the way journalists seek information. This really appeared to depend on the ownership type with state-owned media lagging behind yet attempting to catch up.

In reference to the quality of journalism offered since media convergence began to affect journalism, most respondents recognized the potential that embracing the

multimedia approach could bring, although they were also concerned that the new convergent practices were eroding the quality of journalism provided by Egyptian and regional media outlets.

Comments following the touting of convergence technologies were almost always followed by their concern of the downside. For instance, a former print journalist and current manager of a web based independent news paper said:

> "It makes you challenge your own premises. It makes you look at different angles. But these challenges have affected quality because you cannot cook the story properly"

Whilst a broadcast journalist commented that:

> "It does improve the quality of journalism if we can develop it the way it has developed on U.S. television by making all material available online leading to healthy levels of transparency. On the hand, it may lead to distracting a good reporter and overloading them with too many technical skills. Also, in Arab societies it takes away from the prestige of being a journalist."

One journalist also commented that despite some organizations having good websites, they still have staff divided and in competition with other departments in their organizations.

> "So far in most Egyptian media organizations there is an internal struggle between those who provide news for each of the platforms. They don't recognize that they are working for the same company and the same brand. "

Research Question 3

Modifications in Curriculum to Address Needs (Educators)

The media academics had a different response to the practice of media convergence in their organizations. The academics from the private universities expressed a full commitment to taking the convergence approach to journalism education, although, they may be at different stages and ultimately still struggling with questions regarding the future and what approaches should be taken.

> "You have to be able to do it all. I think that convergent education is necessary. ……… What does it mean if we say a student is convergent? We are saying that a student is able to perform journalism on multiple platforms. We have several faculty members who are also described as convergent."

> "We have changed our curriculum to address media convergence. We are offering a special minor in multimedia where students learn different software that enables

them to deal with media in different forms. In addition, the journalism major is not structured the way it is at other universities. In fact we have a print and electronic journalism major. So a student in the Journalism major learns how to write a script, shoot the film and edit a news documentary. He learns how to write for the internet as well as writing for print. So I think that through our practical classes our students learn to use different media forms to deliver the media message."

Comments from academics teaching in national universities did not indicate that there was a change in curriculum but perhaps more a belief that the focus should remain on basic journalism training since the new skills are available to anyone who desires.

"Let me tell you frankly about teaching media and the future, I am here to convey the Alven Doffluer "the fall of the White Goddess", who talked about the end time of Medicine when it became no more sacred, now we can talk about the fall of "the gods of the information" where media skills became also available for all people through the social software and open-source applications."

However, whether they had addressed these changes in their curriculum or not, there was a consensus amongst the academic community that convergence has changed the way journalism is practiced in Egypt.

"The emergence of web sites on the internet is a kind of techno invasion of journalism, and this has a positive impact on journalism in terms of speed and achieving scoop but its impact has been disastrous to newspapers which don't have an electronic version."

Respondents also referred to media freedoms and transformations that have occurred because of the emergence of convergent technologies.

"Our media is not completely free. Most media are owned by government such as the ERTU (Egyptian Radio and Television Union), although it has improved because of the current competition. They realize that we are going find the truth elsewhere."

Beyond the technological interpretation of media convergence, several respondents referred to global convergence, which appears to be both a reference to the cultural hybridity that results from the global movement of media content and the global impact of news stories in the world today.

"This definitely occurs in all media and academic institutions, but I think that the social impact resulting from the proliferation of information has been the strongest. It is particularly evident in the increase in intercultural communication and maybe more so in cultural convergence. "

Further probing on recommended job skills for graduates of journalism programs revealed that media professionals/managers and journalism educators do not always agree in terms of the importance they place on new hire's convergence skills. Furthermore, journalism educators do not always agree either.

The overwhelming majority of media professionals were more concerned with basic reporting and journalistic skills. This is due to the fact that language skills and command of language whether Arabic for Arabic language media outlets or English for English language media outlets is equally as important.

> "Problems that journalism programs have are related to the deterioration of education in Egypt" There is a trend of students moving toward English language education and graduating with little Arabic language skills. This has created graduates who do not have a command of their own language, weakening the quality of journalism. On the other hand, the very same graduates are internet savvy and more advanced in their technical skills.
> It is a dilemma. We like the Western education but we need the language skills to be Arabic. How to bridge that gap is the most important thing now."

Or another indicative comment from an online news website was:

> "Universities should continue to teach basic journalistic skills. Most people that we hire have gained convergence skills through a socialization process. Maybe they need more web training but that doesn't need to happen at universities."

Conversely, the educators who had a strong conviction toward convergent curriculum commented on the importance of convergent skills. One faculty member felt that despite the move to a convergent curriculum, students need to learn more related skills in the area of computer assisted reporting.

> "Mining sensitive data for information including data from human rights reports and employment data can be difficult if students don't have the know-how. The Egyptian government can tell them anything and our students won't have the power or defensive mechanisms to scrutinize that data. In a digital world, that is really one area that we are not meeting."

Yet, some educators did not believe that these skills were of such importance. Comments indicated that basic skills are definitely of more importance.

> "They need to be able to write.. They need to have skills like how to put the reader's needs first and structure stories for publication. They need to learn how to write to deadline and to a specified length, and be able to edit stories for style and

length. They need to know how to research stories, to learn what interests the Egyptian audience has and how to find new stories they want to read before they even realize they want to read them."

Others recognized the need for convergence skills but did not feel that universities could offer them at the moment.

"Unfortunately, Egyptian universities don't teach most of the skills despite their importance, given the educational crises in Egypt and many of the Arab countries such as the high illiteracy rate, the bad condition of educational buildings and the crisis of educational curricula."

Others were more pessimistic.

"Graduates are not qualified for press work."

In essence findings suggest that, Egyptian journalists see many advantages of convergence although they do not appear to have ruled out traditional newsrooms. This "idea" of convergence has not been rejected but in fact, is going through a process of adoption. Advantages include global reach, higher freedoms, competitive edge, and service to their profession. On the other hand, disadvantages included fear of barriers such as lack of resources, lack of needed skills, the perceived lowering of journalistic standards and threat to personal career. They are also concerned with differences between newsroom practices and cultures as conflict is often a distinctive feature of the changes imposed by convergence.   Amongst academics, the advantages of convergence were well recognized, with some making curricular changes to meet the demands of a convergent era. Others are not able to implement changes within large educational systems due to bureaucratic blocks to curricular changes.

Findings United States

Research Question 1

Meaning of Convergence (Educators and Professionals)

Responses in the U.S. sample were varied, but did not seem to break down by gender, age, or profession (academic vs. industry). Some defined convergence as business term that referred to how conglomerates were buying various types of media outlets and housing them under one large corporate umbrella.

"Well, I had not heard the phrase until now, but I would assume it means some

kind of merging of all the mediums we currently have (newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, internet) into some kind of combined medium where they either work together or the public can easily access all.

The convergence is a technology driven change which is supported by social and economic benefits. As our society becomes more mobile and further interested in multiple sources of communication and feedback there will be greater media convergence."

Other respondents saw convergence as strictly a technical issue that related to how newer technologies and services have resulted in cross-platform programming and instant information available almost everywhere.

"The gumbo of production and distribution of information is being made. Simply put, next generation participants will multi-format, multi-task and multi-distribute and multi-consume information. This is huge and will impact everything so I'm unsure how to answer the second part of the question"

"How various media, which in the past were really separate, have overlapped in terms of how they're used? An example might be how many of us get our news. Traditionally, it may have been a television broadcast and/or a local newspaper. Now the newspaper will have an online presence, which may include audio or video clips, an opportunity for reader feedback and discussion, or a blog written by the reporter or editor. The television station will have a website with clips, a blog, and an opportunity for viewers to respond, provide feedback, or even additional news. It all overlaps."

A few considered convergence to exemplify both of these concepts.

"To me, it means increasing ownership of outlets by a single corporation, with the possibility of limited messages, especially in areas that are controversial to the economic future of the ownership. It also means the increasing possibility of access to information and entertainment via varied media, from phones, TVs, computers, and the like."

"The lines are being blurred between the various forms of media. Companies that once focused on only TV, Print or Internet are delivering their same information through multiple platforms, making the most of a single story in hopes of reaching a wider audience."

A few of the respondents felt that the industry was not converged, nor was there any necessity at this time for convergence to be taught. Convergence was described by most as necessary or "inevitable" but as often as not this was not described with pleasure but disdain.

"Probably (necessary).   Newspapers and magazines are folding in record numbers, radio is suffering due to satellite radio, etc. Might there be a way to save journalism as we all know it?"

"Pervasive technology and social forces are changing the media game, and nobody's in control enough to determine if it's necessary or not. If mainstream media would like to participate, yes, they have to learn to tweet, video, podcast and whatever else is out there. I'm in PR and that's what we're doing. Journalism is going to be more about "the think, not the ink" as we used to say."

"It is completely, absolutely, totally unavoidable, way beyond necessary. It is critical to the life of anyone or any organization that wishes to actively participate in their existence."

"It's not really a question of necessity. It's inevitable in terms of the technology. And the more we utilize various aspects of the overlapping media, the more we will take it for granted and expect it. We cannot ignore it."

Some respondents found convergence to be an annoyance that was being foisted upon audiences and media professionals alike, while some other respondents considered it to be an exciting evolution in the media.

"Adapting to change is necessary, not necessarily convergence. But convergence is one way to adapt. Convergence is the product of a technological explosion in communication, the fragmentation of audiences for traditional mass media with the introduction of new delivery systems and a move away from 20th century mass culture. News, corporate communication and other content-creating organizations must accommodate these social, cultural and technological changes or risk irrelevance."

"Media convergence is necessary because the technology exists to make it happen, and our audiences are familiar with this technology. Therefore, they expect the media to also be familiar with it and put it to use."

"I don't think it is necessary but once the technology is developed to allow it, it will be driven by human interest. People will want the walls separating existing media (newspapers, TV, radio, etc.) to come down. Consumers of media today want news and information to be available on different platforms, whichever is the most convenient for them at any particular time. They may also want to send "tweets" to their friends and maybe post comments to their Facebook page for anything they find of interest."

Research Question 2

New Skills Required for Professionals (Professionals)

The limited number of U.S. professionals responding to the questionnaire (six) had a few common feelings about the skills needed by professionals in the "new media environment." Some felt it was critical for 21st century journalists to be Jacks of all trades, able to shoot video, write for print, edit, take photographs, and upload all of the above to the web.

> "Journalists of today must be multi-media specialists. They must be able to report, shoot, edit and distribute content on traditional over-the air AND digital media (web, etc.) formats."

Other professionals felt that the key to a future in the media is centered on strong journalistic values and solid writing skills.

> "ANY JOURNALIST (sic) must be able to convey the story---tools do not make journalist. There are people in the system who understand the technology but only those with a special talent can handle the STORY, those should be the journalist. The basis of knowing how to tell a story is knowing your audience and the tools of distribution determine that---there's the reason a journalist needs a foundation on the distribution methods."

In one case it was made clear that writers must be able to prepare stories in multiple formats for a variety of platforms and content delivery systems.

> "Reporters need not just technological training but how to write for different audiences. E.g. writing for a mobile phone/blackberry screen is different than writing for blog or newspaper."

> "Journalists need to know how to report and write for the eye and ear as well as for print, digital platforms, audio delivery and video. Some universities have adjusted their curricula to this cross-platform approach. Others are still focusing on a single-medium major and letting students pick up cross-platform skills on their own. Journalism programs should be focusing on teaching writing/reporting and analytical/critical thinking, not trade skills. The entry-level skills needed five years ago aren't the ones needed today and won't be the ones needed five years from now. Journalism graduates need to be prepared not only for their first job but third and fifth jobs after school. Consequently, students need to acquire writing and thinking abilities that apply no matter what the medium."

Some professionals felt that emerging journalists must have both advanced technical abilities as well as superior journalistic and writing skills.

"In addition to journalist skills (knowledge of history; ethics; writing skills; communication skills; investigative journalism; analysis of ideas & information) an individual must be competent with the emerging computer & software technologies as well as photo & video skills."

One respondent stated that they actually had "no idea" what was needed by journalists in the future converged marketplace. Another felt that the skills previously mentioned were critical, but that universities are doing precious little to train budding journalists:

"I have no first-hand knowledge of what's being taught in university journalism programs but from observations of what I have available for my consumption there' not much journalism being taught at all. Not tools, not technique, not storytelling."

Research Question 3

Modifications in Curriculum to Address Needs (Educators)

Most U.S. educators responded in some fashion or another that university curriculum needed to be updated to deal with the converging media of the 21st century. These opinions of curriculum revision generally fell along two lines, teaching students how to write for different platforms, and teaching students the technological skills to operate in different media. Some felt that their programs were already doing this…and in fact that many programs were. Others did not and felt there was work to be done in this area.

"New journalists need to be savvy across a wide range of technologies in addition to being adept at producing content for multiple forms of media. Most serious journalism programs I'm aware of are dealing with these trends and have or are updating curriculum to meet these needs."

"All journalism students need to be able to deliver media products on a variety of platforms. The best journalism programs are teaching their students to live in such a world."

Some respondents were almost frustrated that students must now be taught how to do "everything" if they are to be prepared for the new converged industries.

"As many skills as possible is the short answer. These include not only reporting and writing, but also writing for different media. On top of that, integrating skills that some may see as being specific to individual media is important. Whether it be web design, the various behind-camera roles in television or the design and photography aspects of print journalism, students (and working professionals)

must become well-rounded."

Multi-tasking, something the students do in their personal media use, was also suggested as an important professional skill to emphasize in the curriculum.

"In addition to knowing the fundamentals of news writing and reporting, the needed skills are versatility and the ability to do multi-tasking. These skills are being taught in most university journalism programs to an increasing extent."

Additionally, many traditional skills such as solid writing, regular reading, business acumen, etc. were emphasized by some respondents. Despite this variety of answers, the overwhelming majority of respondents felt that journalism programs must teach students the writing and technical skills to work across multiple platforms.

Research Question 4

Ranking of Competencies for Graduates of Journalism Programs

Journalism practitioners in Egypt and the U.S. were asked to rank the importance of 13 competencies that graduates of journalism students should acquire during the course of their studies. The competencies were ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 (The numbers represent averages from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).The competencies were adapted from a scale adapted and used by el-Nawawy (2007) based on a scale devised earlier by Dickson and Brandon (2000). These competencies included practical journalistic skills, basic computer skills, knowledge of journalism ethics and law, community-oriented reporting, thinking analytically, problem solver, leadership skills, widely read, knowledge of foreign language and knowledge of statistics. Two competencies reflecting skills that may be required in the convergent era were added by the researchers; digital technical skills, and ability to be involved in the cyber culture. A third competency addressing verbal and visual communication was also added.

Table 1

	U.S. Professionals	U.S. Academics	U.S. Total	Egypt Professionals	Egypt Academics	Egypt Total
N	18	7	25	7	6	13
Gender						

Men	6	13	19	3	5	8
Women	1	5	6	2	3	5
Mean Age	54	56.59	55.83	42.17	44	43.15
Skills Needed of new Journalists						
Practical basic journalistic skills.	4.33	4.65	4.57	4.33	4.71	4.54
Basic verbal, written, and visual comm. Skills.	4.5	4.82	4.74	4.5	4.57	4.54
Basic computer skills.	4.5	4.7	4.65	4.33	4.14	4.23
Digital technical skills.	3.67	3.76	3.74	3.33	3.71	3.54
Knowledge of journalism ethics and law.	4.5	4.47	4.48	4.5	4.43	4.46
Ability to focus on community-oriented reporting.	4.17	4	4.04	4	4.14	4.08
Knowledge of foreign language.	2.67	3.18	3.04	4.67	4	4.31

Widely read.	3.67	4.18	4.04	4.5	3.57	4
Ability to be involved in cyber culture.	3.8	3.53	3.59	4	4.43	4.23
Analytical skills.	3.83	4.24	4.13	4	3.71	3.85
Leadership skills.	3.33	3.35	3.35	3.67	3.43	3.54
Problem solver.	4	4	4	3.5	3	3.23
Knowledge of statistics.	3.4	3.35	3.36	3.67	4.43	4.08

The results showed that Egyptian and U.S. practitioners and educators had similar perceptions of the importance of a number of competencies; practical journalism skills, basic verbal and visual communication skills, basic computer skills, knowledge of journalism ethics and law, and community-oriented reporting. Digital technical skills and leadership skills were perceived as least important by both groups of respondents. U.S. respondents perceived the knowledge of a foreign language, involvement in cyber culture, and knowledge of statistics as less important than the Egypt respondents. Egypt respondents ranked the importance of analytical skills and problem solving higher than U.S. correspondents.

Discussion and Conclusion

For the past decade, practitioners and educators have been struggling with the meaning of media convergence and what that means to the newsroom and to the curriculum. Is newsroom convergence occurring in Egypt and does it compare to the adoption of this innovative idea in the U.S.? This article has attempted to examine this phenomenon in both countries using components of the diffusion theory. It has also attempted to understand whether journalism and mass communication educators are embracing a convergence curriculum and whether educators value teaching students to

think, report, and write cross media platforms or whether this may hamper the training of quality journalists and whether professionals are on the same page.

Meaning of Media Convergence

Movement in the direction of convergence in newsrooms is beginning to take place in Egypt. Newer entrants to the market are integrating convergent news desks in their operations. Independent newspapers recognize that if they are to continue to publish news then cross platform operations is a necessity. State-owned operations are also attempting to catch up. Broadcast operations are behind at this point in time. Broadcasters and particular television newsrooms have not changed their operations possibly due to their current popularity with Egyptian viewers.

Convergence is predominately viewed as technical. Convergence in the economic sense is still at an experimental stage. Other manifestations of convergence were recognized as highly important particularly those that alluded to global convergence, cultural convergence and the freedoms brought by digital technologies.

Egyptian educators have not reached a consensus on the meaning of media convergence, its effects or their response to the changes. This is likely to depend on the type of academic institution that they teach in; national, private or foreign as constraints vary. Nonetheless, it is for each of these educators a well recognized actuality. It is to be noted that rather than academics following the lead of newsrooms, some are instead ahead of existing newsrooms in Egypt.

U.S responses are similar to those in Egypt. Convergence is moving slowly through the industry but is occurring. It is more often emerging from an unpaid additional task on the part of existing staff. New hires are expected, more and more often, to know how to do tasks outside their normal areas.

Industry and academic respondents alike are somewhat confused regarding the definition of convergence. They seem to see it as "everything coming together," but are unclear as to whether everything is business, technology, writing styles, or all of the above. Perhaps in some cases they are wary as the concept of converged media has changed over the years in the U.S. with the advent of new technologies and services. So rather than develop a concrete definition of convergence, something more fluid has

developed that can encompass future change.

Required Skills for Journalism Graduates

      The job of an Egyptian journalist is being transformed. The challenges created by media convergence have begun to impact their work in unexpected ways. Emerging journalists are expected to be multi-skilled particularly if they expect to be hired by independent newspapers and news outlets. Newsroom practices are evolving as journalists are carrying more duties than before as convergence has brought the concept of writing across platforms to Egypt. However, the online, social media and mobile news aggregation is still not viewed with complete "respect" and thus not completely integrated in all newsrooms. Journalists often work in separate platforms at the same organization and the outlet does not share their resources fully. The old newsroom culture persists.

      However, journalists see numerous advantages of convergences, including better public service and advantage over competitors, less government censorship and further reach. Egyptian news workers are favorable to convergence suggesting that application of diffusion theory would suggest success. The innovation is not fully compatible with perceptions yet, and adoption is not complete but the idea has not been rejected but rather accepted in so far as management and ownership policies has allowed so far.

      Newsroom mangers tend to believe that basic communication, reporting and writing skills are the core competencies that they are looking for when hiring young journalists. Knowledge about multimedia skills, social media and other cyber environment related skills were not as important but noted particularly with regards to social media.

      They are mostly skeptical of skills taught in journalism programs and were not highly aware of their content.

      U.S. professionals feel that journalists entering the marketplace must have both writing and technical skills that will allow them to multi-task, producing content for any media channel. They feel that this is necessary for new journalists, and the industry, to survive. No evidence suggests that they feel like these skills warrant additional pay or significant acknowledgement. Rather, this is the wave of the future and any journalists

(or organizations) that miss the boat will be left behind.

Modifications to Media Curricula

Egyptian educators realize that convergence has implications on curricula. They also realize that they may not always have the freedom to change curricula or even to modify it. Challenges are many, including faculty resistance, administration resistance and confusion over industry directions.

Yet, educators have modified their curricula with visions that often surpass the reality of Egyptian media. Media educators have the issue of convergence on their minds and have often moved or are moving toward converged journalism education. Egyptian educators are open to new ideas through reading, research, participating in international conferences and training. Their perception that the news industry will converge in the future has driven their curriculum changes. Accrediting bodies have also been a catalyst for journalism programs to make these changes. In the case of foreign and private universities it has been overseas accrediting bodies and the case of national universities it has been new efforts from national accrediting bodies. The idea of converged curriculum and media convergence has been adopted by educators. It is likely that the future will see their enthusiasm cause programs to become fully convergent.

U.S. academics feel that that convergence is upon us and it's incumbent on higher education to incorporate this into the curriculum. Many believe that it is already included in newer, modified plans of study. But others believe that there is yet work to be done in this area. Part of the dilemma results from diverging beliefs about what should be added to the curriculum – and what should be removed – in order to update it. And the challenge of teaching more information within a consistent, and sometimes shrinking, number of credit hours in the major is certainly daunting.

In essence, media convergence has been a concept that has defined changes in the media landscape worldwide. In the U.S. this has been a topic of debate with proponents including technical, economic and regulatory aspects in their conceptualizations of the phenomena. In Egypt the focus has been mostly on the technical manifestations of convergence. Despite variances, there is no agreement to date on the meaning of media convergence but rather an adherence to a loose meaning that allows for flux during this

period of media transition.

Nonetheless, convergence effects in both the U.S. and Egypt have included changes in the way newsrooms practice the profession of journalism, in beginner journalism preparedness and in journalism education.

The findings of this qualitative inquiry cannot be generalized but insights gained from this study will be used for a future quantitative study.

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