Codice di autoregolamentazione Internet e minori

Genova, 8 gennaio 2003
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Secondo l'"**Osservatorio della Società dell'Informazione**" di Federcomin, il numero di utenti Internet in Italia appare costantemente in crescita.
Il **luogo preferito per l'accesso al Web è la casa**.
E' una rivoluzione silenziosa e reale quella che sta entrando nelle famiglie italiane, sempre più tecnologiche, senza differenze significative fra sud e nord.
Un'innovazione robusta, in grado di tenere il passo con i Paesi maggiormente sviluppati.

Nel complesso, gli utenti della rete risultano **21 milioni alla fine del primo semestre 2003** e quasi **23 milioni alla chiusura del 2003** (**15,5%** di crescita rispetto al 2002).
Dei 23 milioni di utenti italiani, **oltre 17 milioni** si collegano da casa ed oltre la metà di ragazzi tra i 10 e i 18 anni è compresa tra essi. Stiamo parlando di circa **2,5 milioni** di persone.

La casa e quindi la famiglia rappresentano pertanto il luogo più importante sul quale intervenire per far maturare una corretta educazione all'uso consapevole di internet.
Guardando al di fuori dell'ambiente scolastico, il luogo che si colloca **al secondo posto** per importanza **è la scuola**, anche se l'utilizzo della piattaforma informatica a scuola è ancora deludente.
Infatti, secondo i dati Federcomin (dal **Rapporto *E-family***) almeno il **60%** degli studenti di ogni ordine e grado utilizza Internet, ma lo fa da casa.

Tuttavia non possiamo fermarci qui.
Un fenomeno interessante è la progressiva **tendenza alla mobilità**, che apre la strada a nuovi modelli di accesso a Internet e di fruizione di contenuti digitali in misura crescente nelle varie modalità tecnologiche (Gsm, Gprs, Umts).
Se a questo aggiungiamo, infine, il prossimo **sviluppo della TV digitale interattiva** che aprirà ulteriormente il mercato, vediamo come sia di enorme importanza il tema che oggi affrontiamo.

Il mondo delle imprese dell'*Information and Communication Technology*, rappresentate da **AIIP** (l'Associazione degli Internet *Providers*), **ANFOV** (l'Associazione per la convergenza nei servizi di comunicazione), **ASSOPROVIDER** (l'Associazione degli Internet Service Provider Indipendenti) e **FEDERCOMIN** (la Federazione che rappresenta le aziende di comunicazione, informatica e radiotelevisione) ha aderito con entusiasmo all'iniziativa, nata in seno alla Commissione per l'assetto del sistema radiotelevisivo del Ministero delle Comunicazioni, **di rendere "più sicuro e consapevole l'uso della Rete da parte dei minori", pervenendo alla definizione del Codice di autoregolamentazione**.

L'autoregolamentazione, infatti, rappresenta uno strumento flessibile ed efficace, **capace di definire "dal basso" le regole che gli utenti richiedono**.

E' un procedimento che tende a creare un ***habitat*** con connotazioni di flessibilità, sviluppo, sicurezza, e fiducia, ed il sistema delle imprese crede fermamente nella potenzialità di tali strumenti.
Ci sono alcuni esempi, infatti, che vanno già in questa direzione, ***best practices*** **realizzate dalle associazioni di imprese** firmatarie del Codice.

Anfov ed **AIIP** hanno già sottoscritto nel 1997, con la partecipazione di altre organizzazioni, **Codici di autoregolamentazione, con l'obiettivo di prevenire l'utilizzo illecito o potenzialmente offensivo della Rete** attraverso la diffusione di una corretta cultura della responsabilità da parte di tutti i soggetti attivi sulla Rete.
Gli obiettivi dei Codici già sottoscritti possono così riassumersi:

- fornire a tutti i soggetti della Rete **regole di comportamento**;
- fornire agli utenti della Rete **strumenti informativi e tecnici** per utilizzare più consapevolmente servizi e contenuti;
- fornire a tutti i soggetti di Internet **un interlocutore** cui rivolgersi per riportare eventuali casi di violazione del presente Codice;

Federcomin, per fare un altro esempio di autoregolamentazione, ha lanciato il **Progetto Fiducia**, un'iniziativa nata con l'obiettivo di **migliorare** appunto **la fiducia delle imprese e dei consumatori verso l'utilizzo in Rete del commercio elettronico e delle transazioni *on line***, attraverso l'adozione di regole **rigorose** e trasparenti.

Il Progetto Fiducia ha raggiunto un numero elevato di adesioni e di soggetti interessati, dimostrando ancora una volta la validità e l'efficacia delle forme di autoregolamentazione e dei Codici di condotta su internet.
Ci auguriamo ovviamente analogo successo per l'iniziativa su Internet e minori.

Le esperienze già realizzate possono fornire un contributo prezioso per diffondere il Codice che oggi firmiamo.
Perché, sia chiaro, questo è solo il primo passo di un itinerario più lungo che ha l'obiettivo di promuovere queste regole e, soprattutto, di **comunicarle**.

Le norme del Codice si snodano attraverso **sette articoli** che prevedono gli **obblighi e responsabilità** dei diversi operatori, gli **strumenti per la tutela** del minore, il **Comitato di vigilanza e garanzia**, le **procedure e le misure di autotutela**.
Alla base della procedura vi è il **marchio "Internet @ minori"**, che gli aderenti al Codice sono autorizzati a pubblicare nei propri siti a garanzia dell'adesione e della conformità degli atteggiamenti agli impegni assunti.
Se viene accertata una violazione delle norme di comportamento, l'utilizzo del marchio viene vietato.

La prima norma è l'obbligo di apporre nella *home page* del sito la scritta **TUTELA DEI MINORI**, che diventa anche un LINK per navigare su pagine *web* "sicure".
L'operatore è tenuto altresì a mettere a disposizione degli utenti i servizi c.d. di "**navigazione differenziata**", che rendono possibile l'accesso o l'esclusione di alcuni contenuti del *web*. Nel caso in cui vengano utilizzati sistemi di individuazione dell'età dell'utente, questi deve essere garantito nella sua *privacy*.
Il Codice **vieta di tracciare un profilo elettronico** dell'utente minorenne, **impone l'identificazione**

di coloro che pubblicano documenti nonché **l'identificazione della natura e dei contenuti** dei messaggi trasmessi.
Chi entra in rete da un Internet *point* pubblico è obbligato a fornire le proprie generalità.

Sovrintende al rispetto delle regole un **Comitato di garanzia** di **11 esperti** nominati dal Ministero delle comunicazioni di concerto con quello dell'innovazione, che restano in carica **tre anni**.
Gli esperti vengono così selezionati: **4** in rappresentanza delle Associazioni di categoria firmatarie del Codice, **2** in rappresentanza del Ministero delle comunicazioni (uno con funzioni di presidente), e **2** del Dipartimento per l'innovazione e le tecnologie, **3** vengono designati dalle Associazioni di tutela dei minori e dal Consiglio nazionale degli utenti.

Possono rivolgersi al Comitato i cittadini che ritengano violate le norme del Codice. Un controllo "dal basso" che vuole affiancare la strategia di monitoraggio effettuata dagli organi di polizia.
E' sufficiente compilare un **apposito modulo** che si trova nelle pagine *web* informative. L'atto fa scattare una procedura che prevede: **sette giorni per comunicare** all'operatore l'infrazione da parte della segreteria del Comitato, **15 giorni all'operatore** per mettersi in regola, **60 giorni al Comitato** per concludere il procedimento, con una decisione che viene assunta con una **maggioranza di due terzi**.
Le **sanzioni** previste vanno dal richiamo, alla censura, alla revoca del marchio "internet @minori", che viene resa pubblica fino al momento in cui l'operatore non si adegua alle regole.

Come ho detto all'inizio, Federcomin, con le sue imprese, ha aderito con entusiasmo all'iniziativa perché rappresenta un ulteriore progresso verso la **responsabilizzazione di tutti nell'uso e nella diffusione delle nuove tecnologie**.
Una società colta ed evoluta si misura con il mercato senza perdere di vista il patrimonio di regole e di valori che tiene unita la società civile.
Le aziende del mondo dell'*Information e Communication Technology* sono le protagoniste di una "Società dell'Informazione", anzi di una "Società della Conoscenza" perché fanno da *driver*, con le loro tecnologie, alla "conoscenza", intesa come desiderio di ricerca e di approfondimento, ma anche come strumento di comunicazione.
Le nuove tecnologie digitali e la diffusione della larga banda contribuiranno notevolmente alla diffusione di questo grande progetto.

Il contrasto alla diffusione in rete di fenomeni di abuso dei minori e del loro sfruttamento è anche l'obiettivo del **disegno di legge** approvato dal Consiglio dei ministri lo scorso 7 novembre, con il quale il nostro Paese recepisce la decisione quadro della Commissione europea presentata al Consiglio dell'Unione e di prossima adozione.

Codice e legge si muoveranno ovviamente su piani diversi, ed è dalla loro sinergia che potranno derivare risultati efficaci.
Si tratta, infatti, di integrare un'azione combinata che vede la collaborazione della magistratura, delle forze dell'ordine e degli operatori del mercato, responsabilizzando le famiglie, la scuola e gli educatori in generale.

Concludo con una riflessione finale: un *computer* rende più profondi i confini della conoscenza di ogni ragazzo.
Allarghiamo il mondo dei giovani.

Internet è uno strumento formidabile di studio, lavoro, divertimento, semplificazione di procedure burocratiche.

Non dobbiamo permettere che gli abusi, o un utilizzo deviato della Rete, non consentano di sfruttare gli enormi vantaggi che già ha apportato e continuerà ad apportare Internet.

Education in Conflict Situations: Palestinian Children and Schooling in Hebron[1]

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Abstract:- *This paper presents the plight of Palestinian primary school children in the city of Hebron in the West Bank, and documents the attempts of the Palestinian community to provide an education against all odds. Drawing on field work, observations and interviews carried out by the author in November 2001, the case study provides a background and context, highlighting the difficult situation that Palestinian families find themselves in due to the curfew restrictions imposed by the Israeli Military during the second Intifada. The paper then goes on to describe the way the Palestinian community mobilised itself, with UNICEF support, in order to ensure that children do get the basic education they are entitled to, largely through the development of the 'Distance Remedial Education Project' (DREP). Details of the DREP are given, particularly in relation to the development of self-learning education worksheets, extension remedial programmes, and the use of local TV stations to broadcast lessons. The case study of self-help, decentralized programmes with a high level of school community involvement using locally-available resources and materials is shows great promise in the challenge of providing educational services in the context of political conflict and violence, as well as in more regular situations. Not only did students attain the minimal competencies expected at their grade level, but also by far the greater majority remained engaged with the school cycle. Interviews with education officers, heads of schools, teachers, parents and students themselves also suggest that aspects of the programme provided psychological and social support to students who would have otherwise been even more vulnerable to the distressing effects of the political violence that they witnessed in their daily lives.*

Introduction

The present account of the educational initiatives in a context of political conflict and violence – in this case in Hebron, West Bank – is part of a UNICEF series of case studies of successful basic education innovations. The aim behind this series is to give greater visibility to such initiatives, both because they deserve to be highlighted in the educational community regionally and internationally, and also because that same community can learn from the efforts of individuals and groups that creatively respond to new situations and challenges by developing novel educational practices. In describing and analyzing such innovations, UNICEF is also responding to the call made at the ARAB EFA 2000 Assessment Conference which took place in January 2000 in Cairo, where the need for qualitative information on basic education successes in the MENA region had been both recognized and stressed.

The description of the Hebron *Distance Remedial Education Project* (DREP) is important for another reason. The past two decades have seen a proliferation of armed conflict in several parts of the world. There has been an increasing concern about the impact that such conflict has on the educa-

tional process, a concern that has been most comprehensively signaled by Graça Machel's omnibus study *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, and presented to the United Nations in 1996. Armed conflict is, of course, not a recent phenomenon. However, in the past, governments and humanitarian agencies have tended to prioritize such critical needs as food, water, shelter and medical care, with education being seen more as a long-term development concern (Lowicki, 1999). Donors too have tended to be wary of prioritizing education in the initial emergency phase, fearing long-term commitments (Hammock, 1998). In some cases, governments may not even allow such interventions, either because they consider educational needs less pressing than other priorities, or because of lack of consensus over curricula. Additionally, the importance of education may not even be recognized, particularly in the areas of health, psychological and social wellbeing and protection. Increasingly there have been calls for educational responses to situations marked by political violence, and for a better understanding of the ways in which educational provision at the outset of an emergency can provide structure, stability and a sense of normality to the lives of children (Machel, 1996; Boyden & Ryder, 1996; CICE, 1999).

In the sections that follow, the focus will be on precisely these issues and concerns. **Part One** will look carefully and in some detail at the situation of Hebron in the West Bank, caught up as this is in the conflict of the second Palestinian *Intifada*. **Part Two** will give an account of the educational responses of the Palestinian Hebronite community in a situation marked by political violence, with a focus being largely placed on the basic rather than secondary education level. Finally, **Part Three** will highlight some of the most important achievements of the set of initiatives described, and will tease out the lessons that can be learnt from the Hebron case study, and that might guide policy-makers in responding to the educational needs of children internationally, whether these are caught up in war situations or other emergencies. The point will also be made that there is much to be learnt from DREP that is applicable to regular situations as well.

Critical reflections about the data gathering exercise are attached in a methodological note in **Appendix I** of this report. Given the qualitative nature of the present study, it is important in this context to at least provide an overall idea of the extent and nature of the fieldwork. The data was collected in the course of a three-week visit to the West Bank. A first aspect of this data collection exercise involved desk research; this included the perusal of official documents, analysis of educational material, and viewing of a sample of 15 half-hour recorded TV programs – all related to the remedial education project. A second aspect of the research involved observations of the situation in Hebron during two field visits on two different days (29 and 31 October 2001). A third and related aspect included semi-structured interviews, which were held with key people from UNICEF (Jerusalem office) and the Ministry of Education (Ramallah), and with five education officials (one of whom was female), five head teachers (four females), eighteen teachers (fourteen females), sixty students (forty females) and fourteen parents (eight mothers, five fathers) in Hebron. Interviews in Hebron lasted from 20 to 50 minutes, and were generally held in the context of focus groups, though much information was also gathered from individuals informally, in offices or in streets while walking to the schools that were visited. Further information was offered spontaneously by teachers and students during classroom and school visits. Four of the five schools visited were situated in the old Hebron area, and were primary level establishments. The fifth was a large secondary school for girls situated outside old Hebron, and in this case was not directly involved with the project that is the subject of the present case study, but provided a useful contrast as well as fresh insights and sensitizing concepts.

Visits to Hebron were made under tight security measures because of the volatility of the situation. Violence had abated during the week in which the visits were made, though during the second visit a house in Hebron was shelled by an Israeli helicopter, killing a Hammas activist, and leading to the evacuation of students in the schools in the surrounding area.

Part One: Hebron in the context of the second *Intifada*

"Every morning, at dawn,
you hear the voice of Israeli soldiers on the loudspeakers,
in jeeps or in tanks, shouting out… in Arabic…
'Stay inside your homes… Do not go out… You will be shot'… "
(Teacher, Basic School, old Hebron).

The Al-Aqsa Intifada

The conflict between the state of Israel and Palestinians is now several decades old, and has gone through periods of negotiated settlements and tense peace accords to outright armed conflict under various guises, be these frontal attacks, guerilla-like incursions, or *Intifadas*, i.e. popular uprisings against the occupation by the Israeli army of the Palestinian territories. The second *Intifada* – also known as the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* – started in September 2000, and has had an impact on all sectors of life, intensifying the psychological and social distress that comes with exposure to violence and repression.

From September 2000 up to November 2001, at least 998 people have been killed. Of these, 797 are Palestinians, 190 are Israelis, and 11 are foreign citizens (see PRCS, 2001; B't Selem, 2001). A total of 194 children under 18 years of age have been killed, with 166 being Palestinian, 27 Israeli, and 1 foreigner (DCI/PS, 2001). Thirty-five percent of these children and youths died from injuries sustained to the head, while 31 percent were shot in the chest (DCI/PS, 2001). As many as 16,570 Palestinians have been injured, including more than 7,000 children (PRCS, 2001), while the corresponding number for the Israelis is 1,810, of which 517 are soldiers, 1,240 civilians, and 53 children (B't Selem, 2001). An estimated 2,500 Palestinians will experience long-term disabilities because of their injuries, including some 530 children (World Bank, 2001; Solidaridad, 2001).

The escalation of violence and repression has led to the deterioration of the quality and conditions of life of many Palestinian households, with important negative consequences to delivery of health services, including immunization and polio testing. Forty-three percent of households have reported problems in accessing health services, while 59 percent have experienced difficulties in paying for the cost of treatment (PCBS, 2001). There has been a 15 percent increase in home deliveries, with postnatal care dropping by 52 percent (UNRWA, n.d.).

Curfews, closures, and intensification of restrictions on free movement through the multiplication of checkpoints have also had a major impact on the Palestinian economy. Forty-eight percent of households have lost more than half their usual income, with 46 percent of households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS) expected to fall below the poverty line by the end of 2001, compared with 21 percent prior to the current conflict (World Bank, 2001). Unemployment rose from 10 percent before the crisis, to 24 percent in the second quarter of 2001 (UNSCO, 2001). Child poverty increased by 55 percent between September and December 2000 (World Bank, 2001).

The second Intifada *and its impact on Education*

Palestinians have made major investments in educational infrastructure and in the delivery of quality education to their children, and despite a great number of adversities, have managed to chalk up a number of impressive achievements, both by MENA and by international standards (see Sultana, 2000 for an overview; also Unesco, 1995; Diwan & Shaban, 1998). Many of these gains have been jeopardized in the context of the current crisis, particularly as the evidence suggests rather strongly that schools and education have fallen into the line of fire of Israeli troops, with as many as 275 schools being situated close to flash points in the current conflict (MOE, 2001). As a result,

- 93 schools have been shelled, with 6 schools being obliged to close down for a period of one to two months during the first eight months of the *Intifada* (MOE, 2001);
- An estimated 31,117 student school days have been lost in the West Bank in the last school year, and 7,400 in Gaza (MOE, 2001);
- 36 percent of 5-17 year-old students indicated that their school day was reduced due to the conflict (PCBS, 2001);
- Achievement scores have fallen in main subjects. In UNRWA schools in the West Bank, for instance, passing grades declined from 71 percent to 38 percent in Arabic and 54 percent to 26 percent in Math from 2000 to 2001 (UNICEF, 2001).

The Intifada*, Hebron, and Education*

Hebron – a city under siege

While all districts in the West Bank and Gaza have been affected by the current crisis, some areas have been more strongly marked by violence and repression than others. In the West Bank, for instance, Hebron, Nablus, Jericho and Ramallah were the most affected districts. In this case study, the focus is on Hebron. Here, schools have had to reschedule 45 days of schools to make up for lost time due to curfew conditions. Eighteen percent of students in Hebron could not attend classes regularly compared with 6 percent nationally. Twenty percent of teachers in Hebron could not get to their school on a regular basis, compared with 9 percent nationally (MOE, 2001).

Hebron – or Khalil al-Rahman, as it is known among Arab communities – is one of the oldest continuously inhabited towns in the world. The town's name, in both the Hebrew and Arab version, ironically conjures up images of fraternity and love, referring as it does to Abraham as "God's friend". The old part of the city hosts one of the holiest sites dear to both Jews and Muslims, with the Tomb of the Patriarchs – a cave believed to contain the remains of Abraham and his family – being topped by the al-Haram al-Ebrahimi mosque. The mosque itself has been occupied by Israeli forces, with Muslims having access to only a small area for their prayers. In that sense, there is arguably no stronger symbol of both the closeness and distance between the two religious and political communities than this site, where reverence to the prophet Abraham is both a source of devotion and of conflict. The tension is strongest in the old quarters around the mosque, a hostility that has been fed by the demographic imbalance between the two communities: thus, 120,000 Palestinians attempt to coexist with 400 Jewish settlers.

Hebron is now divided into two parts: H1 is controlled by Palestinians, while H2 is controlled by Israeli settlers supported by the Israeli army. The two zones are marked by concrete blocks placed in

the middle of streets, and it is part of the surreal nature of these borders that it is often possible to have one foot in HI and another foot in H2 as one goes around the so-called 'contact points'. Israeli soldiers occupy the surrounding high ground, with machine guns placed atop houses and other buildings, and trained on roads and open spaces. Signs of the conflict are everywhere, with the market place and square, as well as several buildings such as shops and schools, bearing the telltale pockmarks of rifle and machine-gun fire. Israeli soldiers patrol H2 on foot, in jeeps, and occasionally in tanks.

At the height of the crisis, closure, curfew and strict security measures were imposed in Hebron. City entrances were closed, with the town increasingly living a siege-like reality, and with mobility outside one's home being severely restricted for adults and children alike. Economic activity came to a standstill, with shops and stores often remaining closed. Unemployment and poverty have mushroomed, and the economic and social consequences of restricted mobility can easily be imagined.

Education in old Hebron

The Education Directorate of Hebron has overall responsibility for 165 government schools catering for 73883 pupils, who receive instruction from a staff complement of 2896 teachers. There are 39 private schools, 75 kindergartens, and 23 cultural centers. While some of these establishments were visited during the field research period, the attention was focused rather more on the schools in old Hebron, and particularly on those primary level institutions that are at, or close to, the 'contact points' in the H2 zone. Old Hebron has 32 schools in all, with 11650 pupils and 450 teachers. Five of the schools are situated at the contact points, and these establishments cater for 2357 students, with 87 teachers on their staff list. Three of these schools, normally serving 1,835 elementary level pupils, have been taken over by the Israeli army and turned into military camps and warehouses for storing weapons and other military equipment. These schools are still occupied by the Israeli soldiers at the time of writing, with students being redirected to other schools where a shift system has had to be adopted to cater for the new influx of pupils.

The 29 schools still functioning in old Hebron suffered the consequences of curfew restrictions, and of being targeted by Israeli forces. Several interviewees referred to the fact that teachers and students were shot at on the way to and from school. Up to 20 February 2001, 300 students had been injured, while nine had been killed. Gas and sound bombs are regularly thrown into schoolyards, with several schools being shelled, both at night and during school hours. Israeli soldiers stop pupils and teachers at check points, searching and occasionally confiscating their bags. During the most intense period of the *Intifada*, between September and December 2000, attendance in non-secure schools in the contact areas plummeted. At the start of the new academic year in September 2001, attendance fluctuated between 80 percent and 90 percent, depending on the intensity of shelling or gunfire.

Interviews with pupils in both primary and secondary schools, as well as with some of their teachers and parents, provide us with an insight into the way lives are lived in conditions of direct and indirect exposure to conflict and violence. Movement was severely restricted. Children spoke of their fears and insecurities, about going around feeling that "you could be shot any time, anywhere, for no particular reason at all". At home, they were constantly told to be careful not to linger behind windows, because they could be shot. Children said they felt angry seeing Israeli soldiers "walk around happily", and the settlers "going about freely", when they could hardly leave the house to play with friends for fear of being beaten up. They were terrified when they heard soldiers on the roof of their

house, setting up a machine gun post there, and "throwing their rubbish around". "They take our freedom for themselves," said one nine year-old boy, "They block roads and streets…"

Getting to school – a challenge

Going to and returning from school was difficult at the best of times. Mothers spoke of the way they watched carefully from behind doors to wait till soldiers moved away, "and then we tell our son: 'Quickly! Now! Rush to school!'" One eight year-old girl exclaimed: "Israeli soldiers stop us… all we have are our books…. They don't need to do that!" Another spoke about the way "Settlers harass us on the way to school… They throw gas bombs in our house… They shoot at us. They even burn our clothes when mum puts them out on the line to dry!" One girl who lived in a refugee camp recounted how settlers tried to run over her several times on her way to school. Others described how settlers and soldiers "curse us and use bad words when we come down to the school – all we want is to get an education – even going to our mosque is difficult. The soldiers sometimes run after the girls…" A fifteen year-old girl told me: "You see the tanks in front of you, in front of your house… the Israeli soldiers in the street… and you keep going on… that's what we have to face… how many children our age would have to face something like that?…and then they call *us* terrorists!" One eight year-old girl claimed to have confronted a soldier telling him: "Don't you want your children to go to school? Why won't you allow me?!", becoming an instant celebrity among her friends and in her neighborhood, with the story reaching an Education Supervisor who recounted the story with evident admiration and delight. Another eight year-old girl got so frightened when followed by soldiers that she preferred to jump down a terrace in order to get away from them, breaking a leg and an arm in the process, and having to be hospitalized.

But even when students did make it to school – a place normally associated with safety and security – students did not feel at peace. It was clear that schools were being targeted by Israeli troops – a long-standing feature of Israeli-Palestinian conflict (see Azzam, 1996; Goodwin-Gill & Cohn, 1994). All the institutions visited in the course of the present research had bullet marks in windows, walls, and furniture. Water tanks on school rooftops were an easy and tempting target. Gas and sound bombs were thrown into schoolyards, and occasionally Israeli soldiers did not allow students to leave the premises. One primary school reported that soldiers poked their rifles through classroom windows that looked onto streets and alleyways, scaring pupils and teacher alike. In a secondary school outside of the H2 zone, students recounted how there was a sudden panic when shots were fired into classrooms during lessons. Children panicked, "but the teachers told us to stay down on the floor, and those of us who came from H2 and who were used to hearing shooting helped the others calm down…"

Teachers too were being harassed – a not unusual phenomenon in situations of armed conflict because teachers are often regarded as important members of the community, and also tend to be more politicized than other citizens (Graham-Brown, 1991; Boyden & Ryder, 1996; Richardson, 1999). Children were regularly exposed to scenes of violence, some reporting that they had witnessed the beating up of their own teachers, or the shooting and killing of a person in the street.
But schools too tend to relay images of violence to the children. Most schools visited had pictures of children and youths that had been shot dead by Israeli: these posters of 'martyrs', as they are commonly referred to, were prominently displayed on office and classroom doors and on walls, icons signaling

resistance to occupation, and graphically proclaiming the value of laying down one's life for an ideal. Visual aids hanging in classrooms and corridors, and portraying confrontations with Israeli soldiers and tanks, also reminded children of the violence prevailing outside. Adults found it difficult to restrain themselves from expressing hostility towards those who were daily constraining their lives and injuring loved ones. Student visits to Palestinian victims in hospital were organized by schools, and while this is again an understandable reaction, it does highlight the difficulty – if not impossibility – of inculcating peaceful values in children when adult role models are built on conflict.

The impact of conflict and violence on children

A context strongly marked by conflict is not conducive to healthy and balanced lives. Despite the fact that there is some evidence that children adapt to situations of "normal abnormalcy" (Martín-Baró, 1990; Flores, 1999), this does not mean that continued exposure to violence does not have a major detrimental impact on the children's psychological and social development as well as on their education. Nationally, there are reports showing that in the areas most affected by the conflict, i.e. Salfeet in the north West Bank, north and south Gaza, Hebron and Bethlehem, 75 percent of adults think children are experiencing greater emotional problems and behavioral change. That finding is supported by two separate opinion polls that found that some 80 percent of parents think that their children's behavior has changed (Birzeit University Development Studies Program Survey – February 2001; June 2001; MOSA, 2001). The MOSA study also indicates that repeated exposure to the sounds of shelling and shooting is the major cause of psychological problems among children. In Hebron, parents told counselors that their children manifested a series of problems in reaction to the situation of political violence. Among these were repeated nightmares, bed-wetting, insomnia and irregular or changed sleeping patterns, increased fear of darkness, parental clinging, fear of sleeping alone, inordinate anxiety related to leaving the house, to meeting strangers, to loud noises and to sudden movements. Some children develop phobias, especially of the sources of violence such as tanks, soldiers, helicopters, and settlers. Many children – particularly the younger ones – act out their fears through imitating soldiers, and often project their fears while at play, and when drawing.

Other problems that have been reported include stress, anxiety and irritability, accompanied by the appearance of psychosomatic symptoms including headaches, stomach cramps and skin diseases. Children find it increasingly difficult to concentrate and remain focused on a task. Some children also withdraw from friends and family, engage in risk-taking behavior, rebel and reject authority, become aggressive or depressed and pay less attention to personal care. Others show high levels of anxiety, fear losing their parents. Many children have less social and recreational activity, and as a result experience boredom, are more prone to brooding about life, tend to watch more TV and as a result see more of the violence. Increasingly children feel trapped, discouraged, tense, hyperactive, sad about life, angry, and distrustful of authority. While the majority of young people are do their best to avoid direct clashes with Israeli troops, others are propelled to risk acts of rebellion because of a complex mix of anger, bitterness, frustration, patriotism, fatalism and excitement. The results can be violent, unpredictable, and tragic.

In a situation so deeply steeped in conflict, learning suffers. Children lost interest in schooling, preferring to stay at home watching television, or dong their own thing. Mothers interviewed noted a marked deterioration in their children's achievements at school. Teachers and heads also noted that the achievement of children had been much affected, and this showed up because they knew that colleagues of theirs in H1 schools were managing to cover much more of the syllabus than they themselves were managing to do in H2 schools.

Teachers too reported that the situation of conflict had had a major impact on their personal and professional lives. Some reported being beaten up. One of the female teachers interviewed was severely hit to the extent that she still found it painful to walk one week later. Another teacher, over fifty years of age, had physically injured herself when trying to run away from a soldier on her way to school. Many teachers reported that they were always alert and expecting to be hit by a bullet. Teachers noted that soldiers were no longer differentiating between men and women, with one saying that "They're willing to shoot at us as much as at the men… They just want to occupy, settle, evict…" Like the children, teachers too reported feeling distracted and incapable of focusing, often forgetting what they wanted to teach as they used up a lot of their personal energies and resources just to avoid soldiers on the streets, by taking a round-about way of getting to school. As one teacher said: "Instead of teaching I find myself often looking through the window, wondering what's happening, who's getting hurt…. It's difficult for teachers to concentrate these days… you try to concentrate on the curriculum, but other things which are more important come up."

They noted how their roles changed, from being teachers to being guardians of the pupils in their class. "We go out before sending the kids home, to see if it is safe", they said. They felt worried when seeing the children off, wondering if they would get into trouble. Some hid children in their own homes, waiting until the roads were clear of soldiers. One headmistress, accompanying a group of children home, came across a tank in a street. The tank kept moving towards them: "The children were terrified, and we stayed flat against the wall of a house… When the tank arrived next to us, it honked its horn…and we all jumped out of our skin with fear…But there was something wrong with the horn, and it sounded like a beep, so I made fun of that in order to help relieve the children from their fright…And we all laughed and the next day the children told their friends at school: 'The tank beeped!'"

Part Two: The Palestinian Response to the Educational Challenge

"The Israelis want to stop us from sending our kids to school… That's why they keep harassing us and our children. They want to drive us out of here, so that they can move in. They want to create an uneducated generation… but it's going to be difficult for them to do that…. Education will help us achieve our goals…I want my children to be better than I am… to have a better life…to be free."
(Father, interviewed in a boys' primary school in H2)

"We are determined to get an education… the pen is our gun… we will not be stopped by the Israelis… they want us to miss education, in order to have us ignorant, for us not to understand…"
(Fifteen year-old girl, from a secondary school in H1).

The Importance of Education to Hebron

Initially the *Intifada* and the Israeli reaction to it caught the Directorate of Education in Hebron off its guard, with students missing several days of schooling because of the violence on the streets and

the targeting of schools. "But we soon learnt…", said one Education Supervisor. Teachers and students were instructed to go to the nearest secure school, and a TV campaign was launched with the assistance of UNICEF to encourage students to return to school. Students from needy families whose economic situation became even more precarious due to the crisis were provided with school bags, and were exempted from paying fees. The whole Palestinian Hebronite community was mobilized to ensure that resources would flow towards the educational effort, with $150,000 being collected in a few weeks, and with homes and mosques being made available to function as schools. As one headmistress of a primary school situated at a contact point said, "The school building does not determine schooling…You can learn anywhere… That's our motto".

There is little doubt that, like many other Palestinians, the Hebronite community values education. Whatever their socio-economic background, Palestinian mothers invariably aspire that one of their children becomes a doctor or a lawyer. But education has more than an occupationally instrumental value for the Palestinians in Hebron. For the Directorate and for parents, education is a key strategy for keeping children out of violent clashes, since having young people at school helps reduce the risk of confrontation with Israeli troops and settlers. They also have the opportunity to socialize and to be involved in doing something other than brooding all day long. As one Education Supervisor noted, "There is a sense of seeing the school as a source of support. Kids have an opportunity to talk, to tell their friends what they are going through and what they feel, to play…."

But education has also come to be the act of resistance of a people who will not be put down. Nothing catches more powerfully the determined pursuit for education in Hebron than the *Fatayyat Al-Asatih* – or the "roof-top girls", as they have come to be called by teachers. These gritty primary-age girls, scrambling from one roof-top to another in order to get to their school, thus beating the Israeli soldiers at their own game, powerfully symbolize the resoluteness with which Palestinians are pursuing their right to education under very trying conditions.

The Palestinian Response

The loss of school days due to curfew conditions, the difficulty of focusing on education in a situation of conflict and violence, the psychological and social distress related to the daily experience of violence or expectation of violence – one and all and more led, as can only be expected, to difficulties in the delivery and reception of education. These same difficulties inspired educators to imagine alternative strategies to ensure that students in old Hebron made up for the missed schooling, and to remain engaged in learning the set curriculum. The Directorate asked heads and teachers in the non-secure schools to suggest ways of responding to the situation, and a set of inter-related initiatives started emerging and taking shape. As one education supervisor noted, "Reality itself led to these initiatives… things you never thought of doing before… the situation pushed you to think of innovative ways of responding…" A project management Committee was set up at the Directorate in October 2000, soon after the outbreak of violence, with the implementation phase kicking into gear in January 2001. The committee was made up of fifteen members and included education supervisors, subject specialists, head teachers, teachers and parents.

The three key elements of what came to be known as the **"Distance Remedial Education Project"** (henceforth referred to as **DREP**) all had a separate but linked committee. The first took responsibility for the "remedial self-learning work sheets", the second took charge of the remedial after-school program, while the third directed the TV program initiative. Each committee was made up of

five to six members, and in the first two cases led a team of fifty teachers. On its part, the TV program committee led a team of fifteen teachers. Teachers had a key role at all the phases of planning and implementation of the initiatives, because, as one supervisor said, "they are the ones who are in touch with the pupils after all." Parents too had an important role to play, and their views and reactions were channeled through the very active PTAs (Parents-Teachers Associations), and their regular informal contact with schools. Evaluations of the different aspects of the project were carried out by Hebron education officials and presented to the MOE. Financial support was provided by UNICEF, which gave a grant of US$50,107 to the project, of which US$29,152 were provided in cash, and the rest covered supply assistance and training. UNICEF also provided technical support, in the design of the project, as well as in the development of the self-learning sheets, besides, of course, giving national and regional visibility to DREP, a factor that actively contributes to the dynamic evolution of any innovation. A key MOE official indeed felt that the project could not have happened without the support that UNICEF was able to provide.

It is important to give details of each aspect of the DREP, and to also understand the 'distance education' and 'remedial' dimensions of each initiative. It must be noted that prior to the *Intifada*, the idea of distance learning had not seemed to be relevant, because of the smallness of the Palestinian territory – though it must be noted that distance learning and distance teacher training were first introduced by UNRWA among Palestinian refugees following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war (Inquai, 1990). 'Distance', however, is a relative term, and in the context of H2, as has been pointed out, even a few hundred meters can represent a major obstacle to mobility, an obstacle that can only be overcome through the use of tools made available by distance education strategies – including pre-planned and pre-packaged teaching and learning materials which give prominence to work assignments and learning by oneself at home. The term 'remedial' has at least two meanings in the context of the DREP – it is remedial both because its aim was to make up for the deficit in learning caused by the crisis, and also because it set out to help the least achieving to keep up with the curriculum relevant to their age group. As will be seen, the project's scope widened as it went from the planning to the implementation phase, and as ideas moved from the drawing board to the complex crucible of classroom and community life.

Table showing statistics relating to the different aspects of the Distance Remedial Education Project (data provided by the District Education Office in Hebron)

		Primary Grades	Secondary Grades	Total†
Number of schools involved in	Work sheets	30	2	32
	After school sessions	15	2	17
	Summer camps	4	/	4
	TV Programs	30	2	32
Number of teachers involved in	Work sheets	470	30	500
	After school sessions	65	15	80
	Summer camps	65	/	65
	TV Programs	12	10	22
Number of teachers trained to prepare / lead	Work sheets	500	/	500
	After school sessions	65	15	80
	Summer camps	65	/	65
	TV Programs	12	10	22
Number of students who took part in	Work sheets	10000	2000	12000
	After school sessions	1548	539	2087
	Summer camps	800	/	800
	TV Programs	10000*	2000*	12000*

† There are overlaps in the number of persons or institutions involved in the different aspects of DREP
* Targeted, but not necessarily reached

The Self-learning Worksheets

The idea of preparing self-learning worksheets had already been raised by some Palestinian educators in the context of the first *Intifada*. That that idea was revived in Hebron in the second *Intifada* is partly due to UNICEF's proposals for a contingency plan that had been tabled to the MOE, and which had suggested the use of such worksheets as a flexible response to a number of educational scenarios that could arise in the context of further political upheaval.

The basic idea behind a self-learning worksheet is that the regular curriculum is presented in the form of exercises that the pupil can fill in at home on his or her own, or under the guidance of parents or elder siblings. Worksheets had both an evaluative and an extension element to them: they helped evaluate whether a pupil had learnt a particular curricular unit, and also extended his or her knowledge in a specific area of study. In the context of the DREP, worksheets were initially trialled out with first grade children and then extended up to Grade 7, and while they were largely aimed at primary level pupils, worksheets for higher grades were also prepared.

Preparation of the self-learning worksheets

In the early stages of the project, 230 worksheets covering all curricular areas and different grade levels were prepared as samples of instructional material by 35 teachers who had followed a one-week training course for the purpose.

Arabic, Math, Science, Religion	Grade 1-4	80 worksheets
Arabic Language	Grade 5-12	30 worksheets
Math	Grade 5-12	25 worksheets
Science	Grade 5-12	25 worksheets
English language	Grade 5-12	30 worksheets
Social study	Grade 5-12	20 worksheets
Religion	Grade 5-12	20 worksheets
Total number of worksheets produced		***230 worksheets***

All the samples were perused in the course of the present research, and both on the basis of this analysis, as well as from comments made by teachers and supervisors during interview sessions, one can deduce the set of educational principles underpinning their design. The sheets were generally visually and pedagogically attractive, so that children could enjoy filling them in, and could more easily take their mind off the conflict-related concerns and anxieties and focus on learning. The emphasis was placed on providing a wide variety of activities in each worksheet, and to ensure an association between learning and fun. Good worksheets were characterized by several interviewees as those having clear instructions as to what is to be done by pupils, a focus on one topic, a range of activities that involved play and activity, and which had drawings or pictures.

Each worksheet announced the topic as well as the Grade level it was meant for. Many of the activities were of the 'filling-in-the-blanks' type, but some of the more innovative drew on experiential learning strategies. Worksheets required the use of materials that are often found in most households. Each worksheet had to connect and build on the regular curriculum, and indeed often referred pupils to specific pages in the school textbooks, in order to avoid the danger of creating a parallel non-formal educational initiative that did not reinforce regular and formal schooling. The worksheets also included detailed guidelines and clear instructions on what to work on every week and how. Parents and elder siblings or members of the extended family were invited to supervise the children while these filled in the worksheets at home.

Evaluation of early material showed that teachers tended to introduce themes from the conflict in the worksheets, both because that was never far from their own personal preoccupations, and because some felt that it was pedagogically sound to build on the reality of the prevailing situation. They were however discouraged from this practice, since one of the targets of the exercise was the healing of the psychological and social distress caused by exposure to violence, and it was felt to be inappropriate by some to constantly draw the children's attention back to the conflict and to use school-related activities to represent images of violence.

Utilizing a cascade model, the 35 teachers trained in preparing sample worksheets trained 465 other teachers between March and June of 2001. Teachers were encouraged to be creative and to develop their own style in designing worksheets, and to work in teams wherever possible in order to share

ideas, to learn from each other, and to encourage a more holistic approach to the curriculum, keeping the model samples as a rough guide. Much of the work was done voluntarily by teachers, with UNICEF resources being used to cover the costs of reproduction of material for students.

Worksheets were either filled in at home, or else used during after-school remedial 'camps' or 'programs' – another aspect of the DREP which will be described below. The delivery and collection of worksheets to and from homes proved to be quite a challenge for teachers at times. Depending on the severity of the conflict, worksheets were generally picked from schools whenever curfew was lifted – to allow people to go out shopping, for instance. Occasionally, however, worksheets were delivered by teachers directly to the pupils' homes. Since the situation was often totally unpredictable, the teacher-pupil contact could not be regulated, so every window of opportunity was made use of to flexibly respond to needs and to deliver such services as the correction of worksheets and remedial work.

Reactions to the self-learning worksheets

The self-learning worksheets seem to have been very well received both by students and parents. Teachers were obviously proud of their achievements, and were very keen to show off the worksheets they had designed to visitors. Indeed, education supervisors claimed that some of the material prepared by teachers in schools – even when this was designed by hand, without the aid of a word processor – was superior to the model samples that had been prepared at the outset of the program by specially trained staff using computers. Heads invariably praised teachers for the effort they had put in preparing the sheets, claiming that the enthusiasm and creativity of the staff had increased after the initial demoralization that overwhelmed many after the start of the crisis. As one headmistress of a basic school in H2 said, "Because we have to work in such difficult circumstances, achievement is sweeter… we organize our school and the learning sheets according to the needs of the different families – and the focus is on what each child manages to achieve… not on criticizing: we constantly emphasize achievement, the positive." The only complaint from teaching staff was that schools were often in short supply of the kinds of materials that were needed to produce the worksheets and activities linked to them – including library resources, art supplies, educational games, transparencies, and so on.

Parents too showed a good deal of enthusiasm for the self-learning worksheets, feeling that the directorate and the school really cared for the well-being of their children, and had come up with a simple but effective strategy to overcome some of the difficulties that arose during the *Intifada*. During a focus group interview with seven mothers in a boys' primary school, for instance, satisfaction was expressed at the fact that the sheets distracted their sons' attention from the conflict. "We try to isolate them from this reality, to get them away from the window where they keep watching what the Israeli soldiers are doing, and placing themselves in danger". These mothers felt that the worksheets gave continuity to schooling, and encouraged children to remain focused on education. They also helped them understand what their children were expected to learn by organizing the knowledge is understandable units. "I used to find the curriculum difficult to understand," said one parent, "but the worksheets have made it easier for me." "They summarize the curriculum", said another, "and are a good organizing tool."

Many parents were relieved that the worksheets gave them something "tangible" to do with their children, with fathers noting that they too got caught up in working with their boys and girls. "It gave us something to do together when we were cooped up in the house all day long… other than quar-

relling…", said one dad, "…and producing even more children!", rejoined another, with a twinkle in his eye – referring to one unintended consequence of curfew, confirmed by an education supervisor who pointed apprehensively at the hospital in old Hebron saying that it had been "producing one classroom a day" ever since mobility restrictions had been enforced.

Some parents noted that it would have been a good idea for the school to have given them some basic training in understanding the worksheets and the role that they were expected to play. While many had caught on, they knew of some parents who themselves had literacy problems, and who had experienced difficulties, not quite knowing what to do and how to help their children. They did however acknowledge the fact that there had been a lot of informal contact with teachers, and that guidance and help was given in that way.

The Remedial Learning Workshops

The remedial classes – which were sometimes referred to as "camps" or "workshops" by teachers and parents – complemented the learning achieved through the self-learning sheets. The 'distance learning' element came in because teaching was often done away from the formal context of the students' regular school. The remedial classes were initially conceived as educationally supportive interventions focused over a short period of time, and aimed at those students who had fallen backwards in the coverage and integration of the curriculum due to their own learning difficulties, which had become exacerbated during the *intifada*. Schools in old Hebron were divided into nine clusters, in which at least one remedial education center was established to help lower attainers keep up with curricular requirements. Five of these centers were schools, two others were housed in homes made available by the community, while another two were mosques. A total of 17 schools (15 primary, 2 secondary) were involved, with 80 teachers (65 primary, 15 secondary) trained to lead remedial sessions that involved a total of 2087 students (1548 primary, 539 secondary). The focus with the primary students – with whom this case study is largely concerned – was on mastering basic literacy and numeracy skills, or making up for some achievement delay due to lack of school attendance.

An extension of the remedial education in centers was also planned as a "summer camp" – and indeed four primary schools managed to organize such camps for two weeks between June and July of 2001, involving 800 pupils. Other schools had planned to follow suit, but with the intensification of the conflict over the summer, had to give up on their plans, and instead organized the "remedial camp" after regular school hours. In most cases, that meant starting regular classes at 0700 in the morning instead of 0745, with the remedial shift starting at 1200 and lasting two hours.

The rationale behind the summer and after-school interventions was quite similar, in that the main goal was to engage students in further learning in a social context marked by activities, games, music, and theatre that were both educationally sound and enjoyable at the same time. Prizes were also given as further incentives to students. Both modalities in the delivery of the remedial program involved teachers as well as student helpers from higher grade levels (referred to as "*mustajadat*"). Self-learning sheets were used to structure the formal, curricular aspect of the program, but these were supplemented by informal educational activities such as trips and visits outside H2 and Hebron whenever possible, as well as plenty of physical and recreational activities. UNICEF provided children with a cap and T-shirt to wear, which helped to give an identity to the project, and also distributed refreshments every day. "Whenever you feed them, they're happy", said one teacher with a big smile, "So many of the fathers are not working, and it's really getting tight for most of us." UNICEF also

subsidized a stipend of US$5 an hour for teachers who taught in the after-school program, an extra income that was greatly appreciated and scaffolded sagging morale.

Reactions to the remedial education camps and workshops

Both summer camp and after-school workshops lasted two weeks, but feedback from parents and teachers has encouraged the Directorate to consider extending the after-school program to a one-day a week initiative lasting all year through. The Directorate is also thinking of including other elements in the program, such as a communal meal to which parents will also be invited, and a variety of cultural events.

Once again, a great deal of enthusiasm for the remedial education program was expressed by heads, teachers, parents and students. Indeed, while initially the intention was to only have students in need of remedial help on the programs, this soon had to be modified in most centers due to the demand on the part of other students to join in. Initial parental concern about the lengthening of the school day and the consequent increase in the time of exposure to danger soon changed to a high regard for the program. Parents felt that the Directorate, heads and teachers really cared for their children, and were competent and professional enough to respond flexibly and creatively to a challenging situation. Parents invariably noted that both the psycho-social and the educational goals were being met by the remedial initiative. They were pleased to see their children re-discovering a motivation to go to school and to engage in learning, spiced as this was with fun and social activities. “It dissipated the element of fear,” said one mother, “and it occupied the kids and gave them something fun to do”. “It was a break from routine and from the shooting – a way out…it provided incentives: there were trips, food, games and activities – it would be really good to have this one day a week throughout the year”, said another. A father noted that when it was the day for the remedial workshop, “the boy is really keen to go to school.” Another dad said: “It took them out of the prison they were in – even though it extended the school day by two hours.” The levels of enthusiasm were probably highest for this facet of the overall Distance Remedial Education Project, with parents, teachers and students expressing disappointment when the two-week program came to an end, and all wanting it to be extended over a longer period of time.

Both parents and teachers preferred to have the remedial classes offered in the children’s regular schools by the children’s regular teachers, rather than in other remedial centers by teachers unknown to pupils or parents. On their part, teachers felt that some special training for the remedial project would have helped them in their work, and that the one-day orientation program organized by the directorate had focused largely on the logistical rather than on the educational aspects of the initiative.

Remedial Lessons on Local TV Stations

This third aspect of the Distance Remedial Education Project was, for the Hebron community and possibly for West Bank and Gaza overall, the most innovative and challenging, both technically and professionally speaking. Three Hebron TV stations – *Al-Amal*, *Al-Majd*, and *Al-Nawras* – agreed to broadcast lessons from the curriculum related to all subject areas for several grade levels. Twenty-two male and female teachers with a reputation for excellence were invited to deliver half-hour lessons in a studio environment. Each lesson sequence was filmed and transmitted twice, once at 1600 hours, and then again the next day at 0900 hours.

The TV production schedule was spread out over two stages: the first stage lasted from November 2000 to January 2001, and involved all three stations. A total of 43 lesson sequences in Arabic, Math, Science and English were broadcast to secondary-level students. April 2001 saw the commencement of the second stage of broadcasting, with *Al-Amal* TV station transmitting 39 lesson sequences in Arabic, Science, Math and English to primary-level classes, and Physics to secondary-level classes.

Lessons focused mainly on those topics requiring a greater effort on the part of the learner to acquire the new knowledge. Teachers did this work on a voluntary basis, proud of the fact that their abilities had been recognized and were being put to good use in a community in crisis.

The media environment for the broadcasting generally followed one of two formats. One format involved a teacher giving a lesson, with the style being mainly expository in nature, and with use being made of white board and chart. This was largely used in the first phase of broadcasting, with lessons aimed at secondary-level students. Other than zooming in and out on the teacher in order to either highlight the face, or the writing on the whiteboard or chart, few if any filming techniques or resources were used to enhance the visual appeal of the lesson. There were no photo or video clip inserts to illustrate the session, and no use of Overhead Projectors or computer-generated images. This was TV broadcasting at its most basic, utilizing a "talking head" approach that does not exploit the potential of the TV medium or the more recent advances in education and information technology. Having said that, in most cases teachers' diction was clear and poised, with an emphasis being placed on a carefully paced delivery, and with several examples used to ensure comprehension. This was competent if traditional teaching where the emphasis was on subject matter, with teachers drawing on their experience of pedagogical content knowledge to facilitate learning on the part of the viewers. When one keeps in mind that none of these teachers had received any formal training in TV broadcasting, and that the studio resources were quite negligible, then their achievement, however modest, can be more easily appreciated.

The more attractive format involved a teacher giving a lesson to a small group of ten primary-level children sitting in a classroom environment. The latter format was more interactive in nature, with the teacher – generally a female – using a wider repertoire of teaching strategies and resources. The more successful sequences had the teacher use flash cards, colorful posters and charts, singing, and many other resources, with pupils being asked to come out to the white board, to put on masks while they role played or sung, and with peer tutoring being encouraged. Students appearing on the program had clearly been carefully selected, and while some of the lessons were recorded in schools that were not under curfew, the overall atmosphere created never seemed to approximate to a 'real' classroom environment – admittedly difficult under any circumstance.

Reactions to the TV programs

Notwithstanding the great deal of effort that must have gone into preparing these broadcasts, feedback about them from the field was less enthusiastic than for the other elements of the DREP. Despite prodding on my part, few heads, teachers, parents or students referred to the TV programs. One parent contrasted the learning sheets with the TV lessons, noting that while the first were interactive, the second were rather static. Another parent said that there were problems of who wanted to watch what in a context of large families – particularly in a situation where, as one MOE official later noted, the main focus when watching TV was on 'breaking news', with channels being changed all the time to discover what reporters had to say about the situation in the West Bank and Gaza. Some households

had problems with good reception. The main problem however seemed to be that children did not have the patience to watch the lesson sequence from beginning to end. "There was little to excite one's interest…you often see nothing but the teacher or her back… my boy became quickly bored, even though he was at first intrigued by the fact that there were children his age on TV, and that he could recognize some of them and even some of the lessons that had been covered at school", said one mother. It is of course possible that the TV programs were more successful with secondary-level students who, being more self-disciplined and motivated, and possibly less restless, could cope with a less than stimulating broadcast. One aspect which might have limited the impact of the TV programs was the fact that the links with the other components of DREP – i.e. the remedial classes and worksheets – remained weak and under-developed.

Despite these limitations, the TV broadcasts certainly have potential, particularly in a situation marked by conflict. In the first instance, there is no limit to the impact of the remedial lesson sequences transmitted: interview material with education supervisors suggests that students other than those targeted were watching the programs, both in the H1 area in Hebron, and elsewhere. Indeed, one supervisor reported that some teachers in Gaza had watched the TV programs and recorded them, because they had a good reception of some of Hebron's channels over there.

Part Three: Achievements and Lessons Learnt

"Teachers, parents and students have risen to the challenge –
we note higher levels of motivation because of the challenge..."
(Education Supervisor, Hebron Education Directorate)

In the last part of this study the focus will first be on the achievements of the DREP, whether these results were intended and purposefully planned, or whether they are unintended, arising out of the dynamic processes generated by the project as it evolved through different implementation phases. In addition, an attempt will also be made to tease out the implications that this project might have for those who are called upon to provide educational services in the context of political conflict and violence in other parts of the Palestinian territories or internationally. The point will also be made that education policy-makers generally have much to learn from the DREP experience, even if they are operating in a context of regular schooling.

Impact on Students

The fundamental *raison d'être* of the DREP was to facilitate student achievement, despite the debilitating context of political conflict and violence. It is to the impact on learning that we therefore direct our attention first.

Given the difficulties of the situation, there is no hard and fast statistical evidence that shows with a high degree of certainty that student involvement in one or more aspects of the DREP made progress in assimilating the curriculum. The assessment unit at the MOE could not function due to the chaos caused by the crisis, and the relevant statistical information could not be collected in a regular or reliable manner. But over and above these limitations, one should perhaps point out that any causal claims in education are difficult to make with any degree of 'scientific' accuracy because, even in regular situations, it is all but impossible to reproduce laboratory-like conditions to control for all the variables that might be said to be responsible for varying degrees of achievement. Nevertheless, if

one goes by reports that are available, there does seem to be some evidence that, if considered cumulatively, suggests rather strongly that students did benefit greatly from the availability of the different initiatives that made up the DREP. Let us consider these one by one.

Different elements of the DREP were reported to have re-engaged students in learning, regenerating interest and motivation which had been weakened or lost due to the situation of political conflict, and the stress that went along with it. This re-vitalization of the learning process could be seen both formally and informally. Formal evidence refers to achievements at the final examination of each grade level, where in one remedial education program, for instance, out of the 57 children enrolled, only one failed his final examination, and that despite the fact that students had only followed half that year's curriculum in a regular classroom. Even though this case study is mainly concerned with primary education levels, it should be noted that in secondary schools, results obtained in the Tawjihi examination at the end of the twelfth grade had, according to the Directorate, never been better. Formal evidence also refers to rates of attendance and drop-out rates, which remained normal, taking a downward turn only when levels of conflict intensified and made movement either impossible or unwise.

Informal evidence refers to the qualitative, impressionistic type of reporting made by teachers and occasionally parents and with reference to the positive impact or otherwise of the remedial education efforts. While not 'reliable' in the precise and scientific meaning of that term, the cumulative evidence of positive reporting by different actors in various interviews does add up to a clear vote of confidence and approval of DREP – especially since there was no hesitation in pointing out and criticizing the weaker elements of the initiative, as has already been seen. Supervisors, heads, teachers and parents, while noting that H2 students were at a disadvantage, and thoroughly cognizant of the fact that less of the curriculum had been covered by those in their care than that covered by their H1 counterparts, nevertheless expressed a great deal of satisfaction at what had been achieved. Students had remained engaged with the curriculum, and a pragmatic set of solutions had been found to structure learning around the main themes and units that were appropriate for their grade level.

That sense of satisfaction was also strongly expressed in terms of the psychological and social benefits for students involved in DREP. Parents were particularly relieved to see their children occupied, their attention drawn away from the violence, and with plenty of activities to take part which not only channeled restless energy, but also helped avoid any perilous encounters or confrontations with Israeli soldiers or settlers. Children had not become 'TV-addicts' due to their increased confinement at home, but were rather involved in the completion of meaningful tasks that must have contributed to the building up of self-confidence, particularly in the case of those students who had fallen back in their learning.

Impact on Teachers

Supervisors and heads of schools that were interviewed were unanimous in their appraisal of DREP as a source of professional development for teachers. When this view was expressed, they were not only referring to the formal training that some of them had received in preparation for the various elements of DREP. Rather, they were highlighting the fact that teachers rose to the challenge of being innovative in very challenging circumstances, evincing a great deal of creativity in designing learning sheets and other educational material that could benefit students in the remedial programs. There seemed to be a greater understanding on the part of the educational community that children could

do a lot of learning on their own, supported by well-prepared and appropriately structured educational material, and by helpful siblings, elder students, and parents. This is a major development in an educational system characterized by a curricular culture of top-down, "teaching by preaching" approach, where little if any credit is given to the role of the pupil as an active learner (Sultana, 2000; UNICEF & Palestinian Authority, 1995). Equally important are the skills developed and the confidence attained in utilizing experiential, activity- and game-oriented teaching/learning methods, as well as in creating one's own resources and visual aids – a particularly critical set of competences given that many schools are under-resourced in ready-made and commercially produced materials. Some of the heads also reported that teachers understood better how homework could be more creatively set and utilized for learning purposes.

Education leaders were careful to note that the remedial project initiatives built on skills and attitudes that had already been present – teachers had used a broad repertoire of teaching methods prior to their involvement in DREP – however, these were developed further through training, practice, and emulation. One headmistress pointed out, for instance, that many of her teachers were varying their pedagogy to reflect some of the ideas and practices promoted by the self-learning sheets that the Directorate had made available as samples. An education supervisor echoed this saying that teachers had also learnt a lot just by watching their colleagues teaching on TV.

Educational research on innovations tends to strongly suggest that initiatives are most successful when teachers change their perception of their professional roles. Such perceptual shifts and changes are more likely to help teachers restructure their "routines of practice", nudging them out of comfort zones that they had become habituated to (Sultana, 2001). In this case, teachers were clearly keen to try out new strategies in a situation where necessity becomes the mother of invention. Teachers reported that they had been pushed to do research in order to come up with interesting and stimulating worksheets, which they proudly showed off to visitors to the school. They reported that they were more likely to discuss their work with colleagues, to share ideas for improved professional practice, and to make connections between curricular areas in the preparation of their self-learning materials. After-school remedial programs, as has already been noted, led teachers to reconceptualize their role, becoming more open to the idea of mixing fun and pleasure with the business of teaching and learning, and being more ready to develop closer relationships with children, who responded warmly to their teachers, whom they were seeing in a different light. Indeed, it was very clear that students and their parents were touched by the risks teachers were taking on their behalf, and by their exemplary caring and dedication that often went beyond the call of duty.

Another important perceptual shift that seems to have taken place among the educational community in Hebron, and which has major implications for the definition of roles, is the increased trust in the ability of teachers and heads to respond to situations in an educationally sound way. The notion of "subsidiarity" – by which is meant the conviction that those who are closest to the challenge are more likely to be able to come up with strategies to address the situation – overlaps the notions of "decentralization" and "empowerment", a particularly central transformation in attitudes and practices in a system that, like many others in the MENA region, has been locked in a centralist mode of government that has tended to make it both rigid and unresponsive to real needs.

Impact on Parents

Mention has already been made of the important fact that the DREP set of initiatives reinforced –

indeed increased – the trust that parents had in the Education Directorate. There was an evident sense of appreciation and gratitude towards educators for taking so many risks and going to such lengths in order to ensure that their children remained engaged with learning. Parents became even more convinced that the Directorate had the education of their children at heart, and the tense situation that prevailed served to bridge the gap between the school and the home. Teachers and heads reported that the PTAs had never been as active as under the second *Intifada*. This was not just due to improved relations, but also because parents now had a much more specific and direct role in the education of their children, given that they were expected to supervise and support their offspring in the filling in of the self-learning worksheets. As one mother declared during a focus group interview in a boys' primary school in H2, "All this made us get closer to the school… students now rely a lot on their family for their education." It seems that parents often went to school to ask teachers as to how to deal with some of the issues that arose in the worksheets, and that several of the PTA meetings in schools focused on both the educational process and on learning strategies to help children to cope with stress and anxiety. Both the situation and the increased educational interaction seem to have had a positive impact on parent-child relations.

While no opportunity arose to delve deeper into the matter, it appears that a number of illiterate or semi-literate parents became engaged in learning to read and write as they supervised their children, with the TV sessions proving to be particularly effective in this regard. Others, it seems – impressed by the community effort in investing in education against all odds – were less prompt to channel their children into paid work, even though falling family income made this option particularly tempting.

Lessons Learnt

...Lessons for educators working in situations of armed conflict

The Distance Remedial Education Project, then, seems to have left a positive impact all round. It not only ensured a degree of continuity in the provision of education, but also contributed towards the normalization of children's lives, despite a situation marked by political conflict and violence. This is a major achievement, and one that has implications both for other parts of West Bank and Gaza that have seen an escalation of political violence, as well as for other situations internationally that are experiencing a situation of armed conflict. This achievement can best be appreciated when one takes into account the conclusion of a recent historical study on education in conflict zones. The author, noting the dearth of studies on the subject, concludes that such an "absence can have an extremely negative impact on children and youth. It is time that the devastating impact of schooling disruption receives the recognition it deserves" (Richardson, 1999, p.733).

Certainly, at the most fundamental level, the decision by the Palestinian community in Hebron to tenaciously provide education under what can only be described as siege conditions is admirable and worthy of emulation in any similar context. The emphasis on continuity in schooling is valuable not only because it signals a profound belief in the empowering potential of knowledge, but also because it is one of the best-known antidotes to the psychological and social distress caused by the daily experience of political violence. In many cases worldwide it has been reported that communities, and particularly international aid agencies, tend to adopt the discourse of trauma when dealing with the situation of children caught in armed conflict. This conveys the idea of victimhood and a victim-identity, which is counterproductive to healing (Beirens, 1999; Boyden, 1999). Indeed, many well-meaning agencies use a trauma terminology that leads to the pathologization of the population, even

though such terminology, whether used by the community or by agencies, can be very effective in drawing attention or financial support (Agger, 1999).

While the Hebron community did highlight the psychological and social impact of the violence on children, and indeed provided counseling support and organized workshops for parents in order to train them to help their offspring cope with stress, it did not stop there. The set of strategies that were put into place to maintain the delivery of education ensured that children remained engaged with the curriculum, while at the same time providing them with an opportunity to process their experience through the use of imagination, story-making, drama, play, and the arts.

...Lessons for educators more generally

The DREP initiatives also have implications for educational situations that are not marked by political conflict and violence. After all, it does not need – indeed, it *should not* need – an emergency situation to generate the creativity, flexibility, sense of shared purpose and commitment that are the hallmarks of this particular project. Regular educational contexts have much to learn from the DREP experience, in the way curriculum and materials development can happen at the level of the school and the classroom, in the way teachers can produce excellent educational resources when motivated and trained to do so, even if they have limited access to technology and to funds. Indeed, it is a well established fact that the most up-to-date, expensive and sophisticated educational resources and materials – including computers, for instance – will not necessarily have the desired impact on the way teachers teach, either because these were provided without any concern for what educators wanted or were prepared and trained to use, or because they fail to connect with the realities of the context in which they are to be applied. It is notoriously difficult to shift teachers from the assumption that a single type of learning program suffices for all, that knowledge should be handed down, and that mastery comes through acquisition, internalization, rehearsal and digestion – a shift that, in many cases, has not been achieved despite the introduction of new information and communication technologies in the classroom (Salomon and Almog, 1998; Salomon, 2000). And yet, the DREP initiatives seem to have managed to do just that, with the situation jolting teachers out of comfortable pedagogical routines, pushing them to extend their repertoire of teaching strategies – a leap in professional practice which could happen because of a clear vision and sense of mission, and thanks to the support provided by further training, parents, effective leadership – and a modicum of funding.

The DREP case study, therefore, provides a significant model of good practice, one that should encourage teachers everywhere to believe in their ability to develop strategic responses to educationally challenging situations. Distance education strategies, for instance – such as self-learning worksheets – can be a simple, cost-effective, yet immensely valuable way of providing educational opportunities to children who would otherwise be hard to reach, or to students who drop out before the official school-leaving age. While not an alternative to regular school programs, they can be a useful interim measure to ensure that children who are barred from attending schools – such as girls, for instance – do at least have access to the minimal curricular competences that they have a right to. After-school programs that put a premium on the use of attractive and effective educational resources, and on the use of a broad range of pedagogical strategies that include games, peer tutoring, experiential learning, and so on, can help provide remedial education opportunities and second chance schooling, building up self-confidence and fundamental curricular competences in children who might otherwise give up on formal learning. TV and radio programs – especially if they are linked to other distance education strategies such as self-learning materials – can cross boundaries –

of space or prejudice – in a most effective manner to deliver an education that would otherwise be denied.

The Hebron initiatives underscore the value of decentralization or 'subsidiarity'. Local educational communities can be surprisingly innovative when they feel they have the power to develop their own responses to challenges that they have to face. Systems that operate as command centers encounter major difficulties in motivating educators to proactively and creatively engage problems. This is largely due to the fact that they tend to encourage institutional and professional cultures that are dependent on chains of commands that pass through complex and bureaucratic hierarchies. Participatory approaches, on the other hand, believe that those most familiar with the situation are more likely to develop ecologically sound responses to challenges. They therefore function as support systems, providing training, funding, resource persons, useful contacts and so on, which scaffold homegrown initiatives. As the Hebron initiatives show, such participatory and empowering approaches lead teachers to own a project, and to invest it with their own professional and even personal identities. It is these high levels of motivation and professional pride that ensure the continued success of innovative practice.

The DREP initiatives also highlight the importance of parental involvement, especially when this is not a public-relations exercise in 'power-sharing' and 'community empowerment' that is more symbolic than real. The Hebron initiatives are therefore another important example confirming growing international consensus around the fact that genuine parental involvement can have a most positive impact on the levels of learning achievement of young children. Parents in Hebron showed that they could rise to the occasion when they were given the opportunity to do so, and that they were ready and keen to learn new skills and to expand their supervisory roles to ensure that their children did register progress. Traditional and conservative educators tend to perceive parents as intruders, ever ready to criticize the efforts of schools. This is not the way parents came across in Hebron – rather, as genuine partners, they supported teachers in the most difficult of circumstances, were ready to share the burden of the responsibility for educating their children, and expressed gratitude and esteem for excellent teachers who were clearly showing concern, care and commitment towards their sons and daughters. The bridging between school and home went beyond formal representation of parental concerns through PTAs: while the latter institutions are important, and certainly need to be a regular feature of any school community, it is the sense of purposeful partnership that grew between teachers and parents in an attempt to face a common challenge that is most edifying.

Replication

High levels of involvement and commitment on the part of teachers, parents, and education officials generated a sense of communal pride, as well as high standing in the national community: "Many experts have come to see what we have done and achieved", noted the Director at one stage, with a great deal of satisfaction. The reputation of DREP has grown to such an extent that the Palestinian Authority's MOE has declared its intention to extend the project to other directorates, with Hebron providing its own staff to train others in communities in both the West Bank and Gaza, who were living in the same situation of closure – even though, of course, and as one high ranking MOE official noted wryly, the hope was that improvements in the political situation would make such replication unnecessary.

These developments – together with the idea that one can 'learn lessons' from a successful innovation - raise the complex issue of replicability. Many innovations are successful because they are ecologically linked to the situation in which they are embedded. They respond to challenges in a manner that is appropriate, taking into account the material and human resources available, and in a way that is in tune with the cultural codes and expectations of the community. There is often a keen sense of purpose, driven by an excitement that comes with the satisfaction of developing imaginative and creative solutions to problems that others may have found intractable. Thus, for instance, one can understand why teachers will tend to be more motivated if they are using self-learning worksheets which they themselves designed and produced, than if these are provided as part of a ready-made package that has been pre-prepared for them by other educators.

The sense of excitement and the dynamic synergy that is a feature of innovative contexts are immensely difficult to transport to other environments, where a different community's motivation is expected to ignite because the innovation they are being encouraged to adopt has worked well elsewhere. Certainly, the distance education strategies adopted by the Palestinian Hebronites may serve as an inspiration to other communities. Educators will here find useful ideas as they attempt to come up with their own flexible and innovative responses to the challenge of barred schooling – whether this is due to political violence, gender discrimination, natural disasters, or whatever. Each community, however, has to develop its own strategies, ones that are appropriate to the ecology of the situation, and which makes best use of the human and material resources that are available. In the case of Hebron, for instance, the options chosen emerged from the socio-economic as well as cultural reality of the community itself. As such, some of the strategies pursued there can only be replicated in contexts that are similar. It is only in middle-income countries, for instance, that there is likely to be an already-existing broadcasting infrastructure that can be used to transmit lessons, or where families have easy access to television sets. Similarly, the self-learning worksheets could really only work well in Hebron because each school had its own photocopying facilities, and access to at least a minimal amount of resources such as paper, colors, and so on. Furthermore, not all communities will have a majority of literate parents who are capable of supervising their children's education at home.

The fact nevertheless remains, however, that the Palestinians in Hebron provide the international community with an inspiring account of how initiatives led by educators and parents can counter challenging situations marked by political conflict and violence in order to ensure that their future generations do get what the world has agreed – both through its Declaration on the Rights of the Child, and the commitments at the Education for All conference – that is theirs by right.

Notes:

1. This is a slightly revised version of a case study first published by UNICEF in the MENA Occasional Paper series, R. Sultana (2003) "Education…against the odds: The Distance Remedial Education Project in Hebron – A case study of a successful educational innovation". Amman: UNICEF. Thanks are due to UNICEF for permitting me to share the results of that research with a wider community of readers.

Acknowledgements: I should like to express my gratitude to Staneala Beckley (Regional Adviser, Education, UNICEF MENA regional office, Amman), who entrusted me with the writing of this case study, and to all the staff at the UNICEF office in East Jerusalem, for the hospitality, friendship and care they extended towards me during my stay in the West Bank. In particular, thanks are due to Pierre Poupard (Special Representative), Bertrand Bainvel (Program Officer), and Basima Ahed-Ahmad (Project Officer), who were directly responsible for helping me with accomplishing my brief. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Basima and Jumana Haj-Ahmad (Assistant Project Officer), who accompanied me on my field trips to Hebron, and to the district officers, heads of schools, teachers, parents and students in the town of Hebron, and to MOE personnel in Ramallah, who shared their experiences with me so openly. I am also indebted to Staneala, Bertrand, Basima and Carlos Mazuera (Project Officer) for their detailed feedback on earlier drafts of this case study. Needless to say, I take full responsibility for the shortcomings that remain in this report.

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Appendix

Methodological Note

Researching education in situations of armed conflict is fraught with difficulties, and many of these go beyond the issues of personal safety and security that limit access to the field and to actors caught up in that context. There are epistemological challenges that have to be faced, with the research exercise having to maintain a fine balancing act between respecting criteria of scientific objectivity on the one hand, and being drawn into adopting normative positions on the other. All research constitutes a political act – in contexts of armed conflict, however, not only is the field so highly charged emotionally that the researcher is drawn to take sides in the conflict, but any attempt to claim impartiality or objectivity are immediately interpreted as either a sign of moral weakness, or as outright treachery. Situations of armed conflict, where feelings in both camps run high, do not tolerate ambiguity, manifest very low tolerance thresholds when it comes to understanding the 'other', and render the search for 'objective truth' – if there ever was or is such a thing – secondary at best, and often irrelevant to the main object at hand: survival.

This epistemological difficulty was rendered even more challenging by the fact that to a non-Arab (and non-Arab-speaking non-Arab at that!), access to the field, and to actors in the field – both physically and linguistically – could only be accomplished via the direct mediation of Palestinians. While the latter did this with the utmost generosity, and in a spirit of dedication and professional good will, the fact remains that their perspectives naturally tended to prevail as they chose which schools to visit and who to meet, and represented views of interviewees through their 'filters' when they translated from Arabic to English for my benefit.

Some of the dilemmas related to research in situations of armed conflict also pose challenges of an intractable ethical nature. Chief among these is the issue of fairness or 'impartiality'. The product of research is often a report of some sort, a narrative which, like all other narratives, is ultimately a construct, a way of interpreting a situation and of representing it to others through the connections made between events, through emphasis placed here rather than there, and through rhetorical devices that are consciously or unconsciously always used by writers. In this case, it is only the viewpoints of Palestinian Hebronites that were documented, with Israeli settlers and troops being quite inaccessible to the author. A special effort was made to meet with Israeli academics – an economist, an anthropologist, a psychologist, and twelve education scholars – with whom perceptions of the situation were shared, providing them with an opportunity to challenge these perceptions from their own perspective, and to ensure that potentially contrastive views would enable me to maintain a degree of objectivity about the context in which the present case study is rooted. It is important to point out that many of the present author's perceptions remained unchanged after such interchange, though deeper insights into the motivations behind actions on the part of settlers and troops that had been quite incomprehensible – such as the intentional targeting of schools and children – became more understandable, even if remaining, of course, thoroughly unjustifiable.

A second ethical dilemma arises from the very nature of qualitative research, in the sense that the main purpose of the exercise is to enter the perceptual field of 'the other' in order to represent it in 'all' its existential richness. While this could be empowering in that it gives 'voice' to groups that are either marginalized or subaltern, it does raise issues of loyalty towards – and caring for the safety of – the actors in the field. The details provided regarding the educational strategies adopted by the H2

community to overcome the constraints of mobility during curfew situations are, of course, of major interest to educators – but they might also give ideas to the other 'camp' which, thanks to the present report, now has enough knowledge to better limit the educational capabilities of Palestinians, if the present conflict draws on or is repeated. It is not a coincidence that anthropology, the parent discipline of qualitative research, is rooted in 19th century colonial practices of empire-building. Does the well-intentioned researcher here become an unwitting informer and collaborator? And in a small society such as that of Hebron, does giving details of the inspirational qualities of key leaders jeopardize their safety in any way?

Finally, like reporting, research can, when carried out in the context of armed conflict, easily succumb to the temptation of voyeurism and sensationalism, with the more 'news-worthy' stories getting the limelight, even if they are not particularly typical or representative of the prevailing situation. It is hoped that while the drama of the situation in Hebron has been caught by the present account, the conflict itself and the educational strategies that have been developed by the community, have not been romanticized in any way. While the kind of resistance that the community has mobilized in order to safeguard an education under siege is admirable, nothing remains as important as the peaceful and just resolution of a situation which is threatening the lives and causing deep damage to the psyches of oppressor and oppressed alike. As one education official wisely, if sadly, remarked, "Do not ask me whether we should replicate the project… I'd rather speak about the coming about of a situation which makes such replication unnecessary."

Inshallah!

About the author

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UNIVERSITY OF ROME "LA SAPIENZA"

Learning while having fun: kids and the world of the web

Renata Metastasio, Francesca Cini, Chiara Lanza

GOAL OF THE RESEARCH

analisys of formal and content features of web sites aimed to kids

to evaluate:

- potentiality;
- possible risks for younger people.

SAMPLE OF THE RESEARCH

- adoption of a non probabilistic sampling
- different channels of research
  - ö on line search engines
  - ö portals
  - ö web pages
  - ö catalogues
- final analisys over a sample of 135 web-sites

DATA SURVEY TOOL:
CONTENT ANALISYS GRID

103 voices divided among 4 thematic areas:

- **General features**
  - Sites authors self-presentation
  - Target age
  - Prevailing thematic area
  - Site goals
- **Formal and structural features**
  - Sound
  - Written language
  - Colors
  - Graphic animations
  - Character design
  - Direct interactivity
- **Content features**
  - Environment
  - Relational interactivity
  - Prevailing content areas
  - Advertising
- **Values and Neeeds**

DATA MINING:

- pre-test on a reduced set of analisys unit;
- individual data survey through three analysts;
- common analisys, comparison, collegial decision and final codification.

DATA ANALISYS:

- Frequencies analisys (SPSS)
- Cluster analysis (SPAD_N).

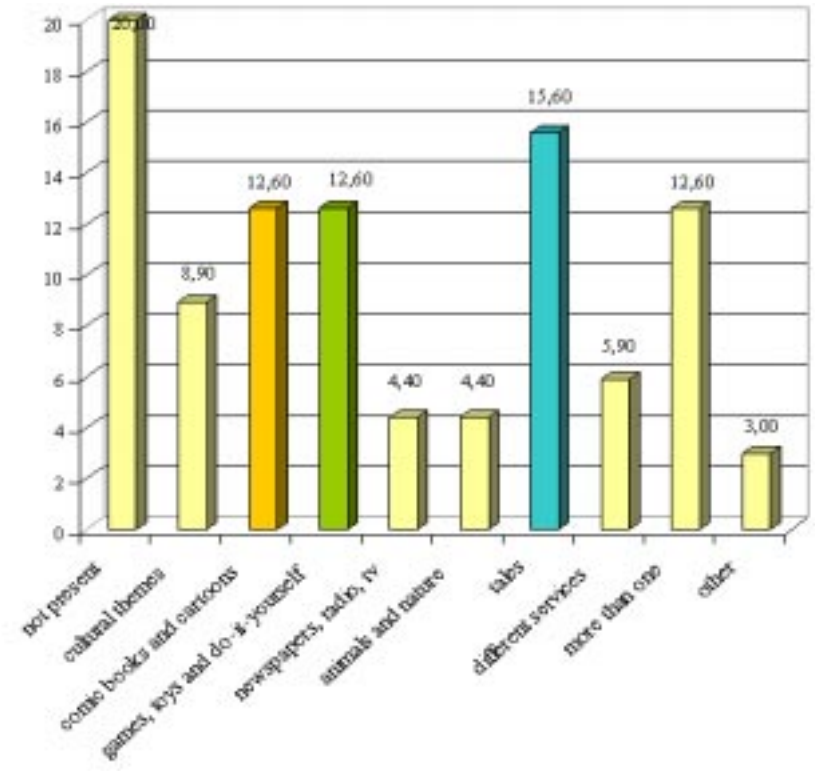
RESULTS

General features

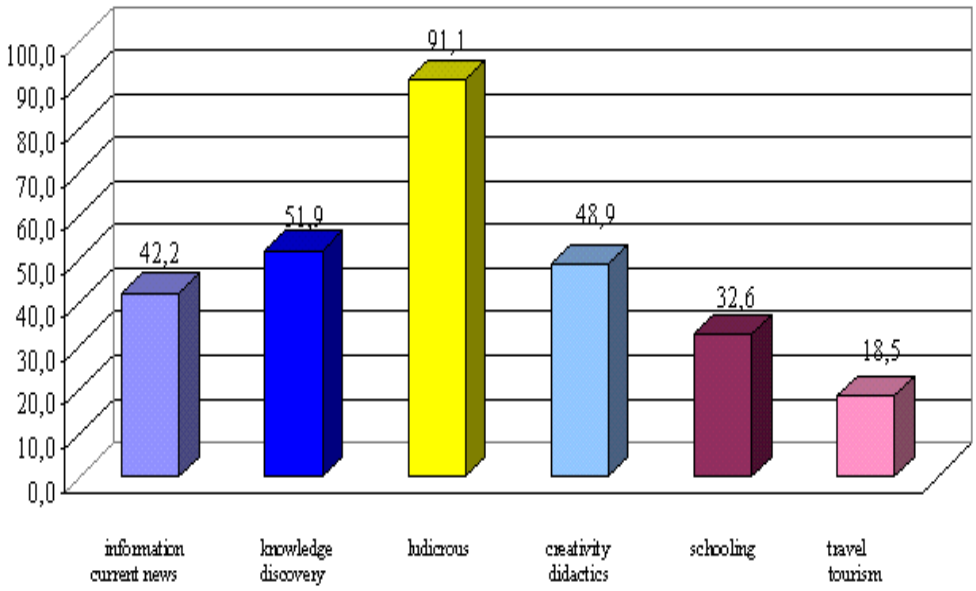
- ***lonely net-surfing***
  (the section for adults is not present in 63.7% of sites);

- ***no genre differentiation;***

*When a specific **thematic area** is present, it is usually about tales, toons, toys and games.*



The web for children and teens is usually configured as ***vacation and discovery environment***



Formal features

Sound: ***not very present in sites of the sample***

- *spoken language in 21.5% of cases;*
- *narrator voice in 10.4%;*
- *music in 48%.*

Written language : ***always "present"***

Neologisms, fantastic-language and emoticons are not very used.

Graphic:

use of colors

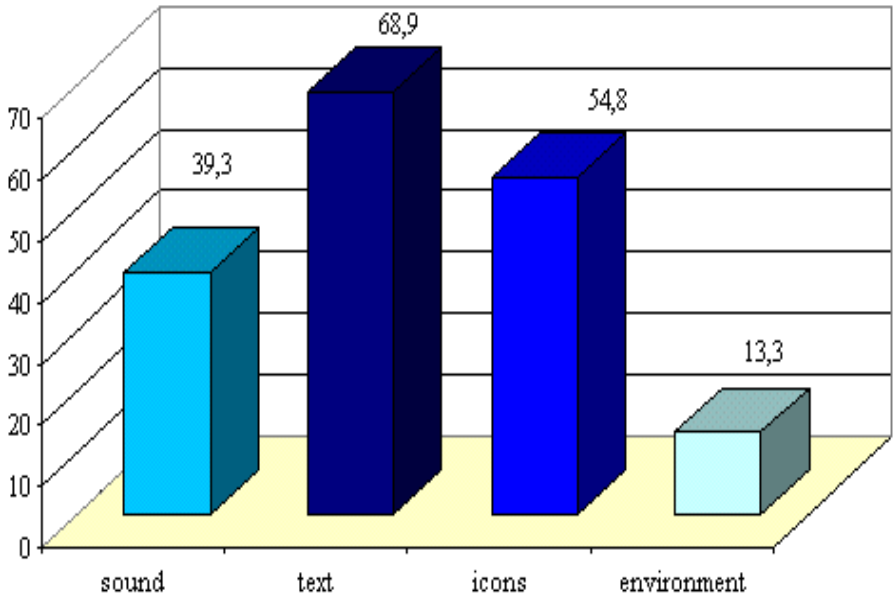
- ***single color*** *in 51.9% of sites;*
- ***use of different colors among different sections*** *in 22% of sites;*
- ***use of contrasting colors*** *in 48.9% of sites;*
- ***prevailing*** *"lively"* ***tonalities,*** *both hot as cold.*

graphic animation

- ***motion of objects*** *in 63.7% of sites;*
- ***motion of figures*** *in 65.2% of sites.*

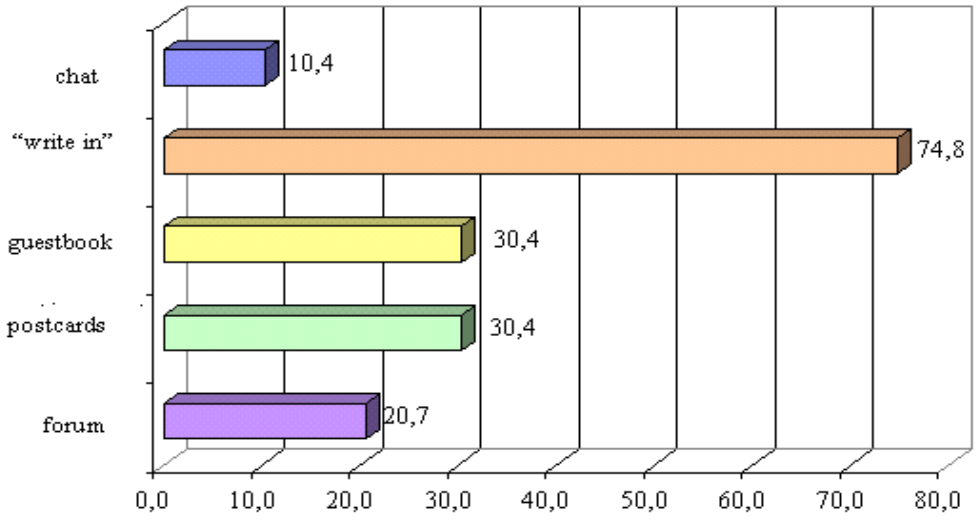
Direct interactivity:

sounds, images, text and environment *modify themselves after user interaction*

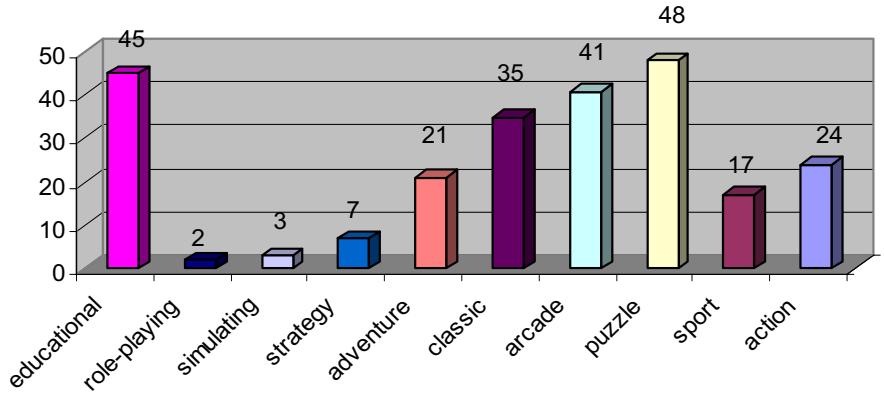


Content features

- ***narration*** *is present in about 20% of the sites*
- ***advertising banners*** *are present in 54.1% of the sites*
- ***relational interactivity forms*** *(selective and partecipative) are present*

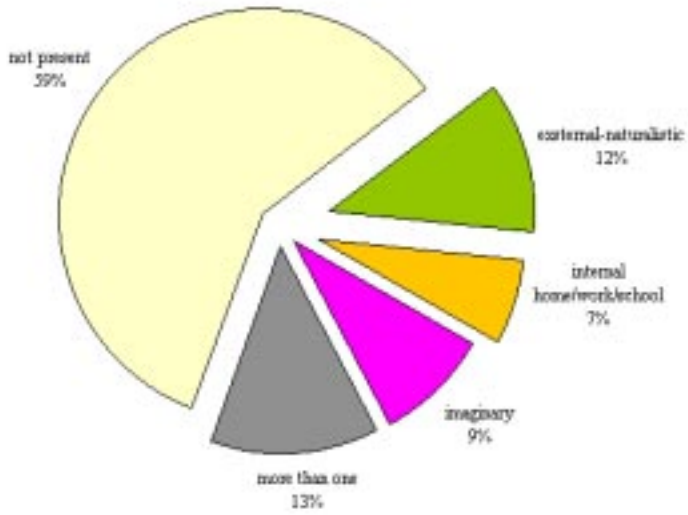


- *there are* ***interactive games*** *mostly "puzzle" and "educational"*



• *the **environment,** sometimes interactive, is present in the sample in different ways. The external-naturalistic environment is the most present.*

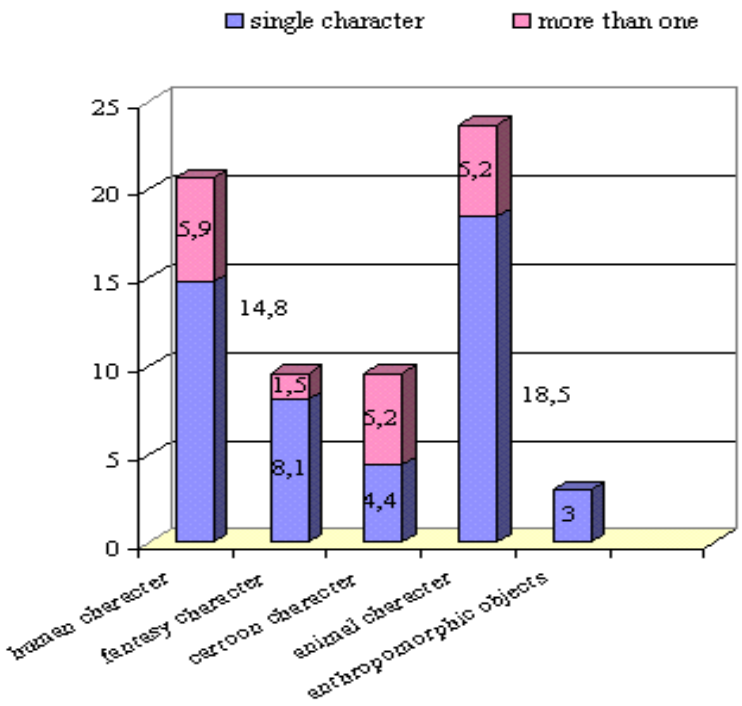
Environment in the sites



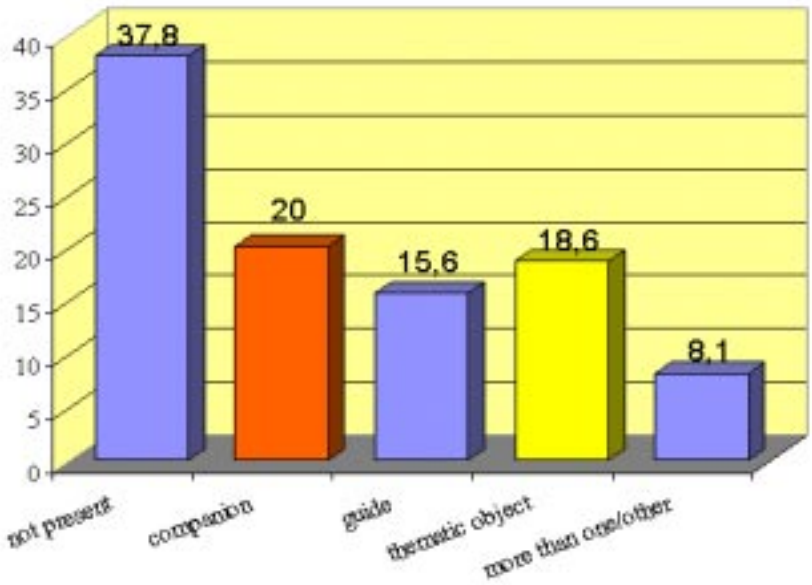
Example of external-naturalistic environment

• *the **main characters'** form is usually animal or human with the guide function.*

Main characters

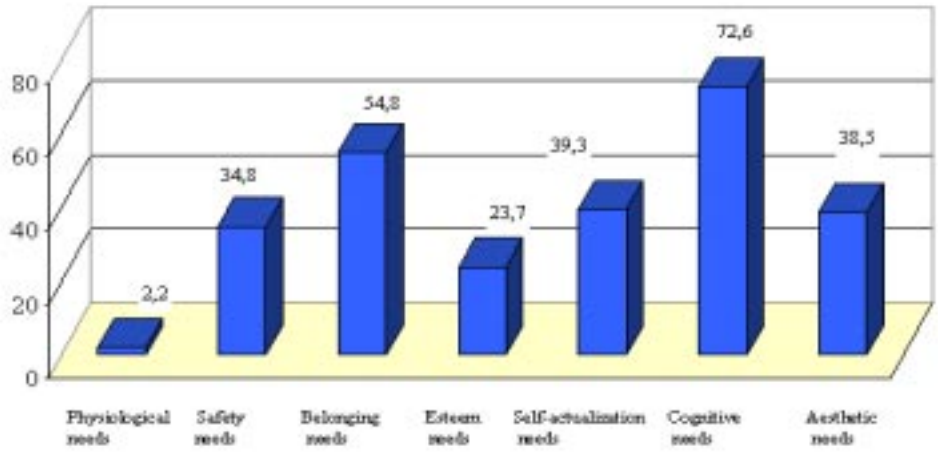


Main characters functions

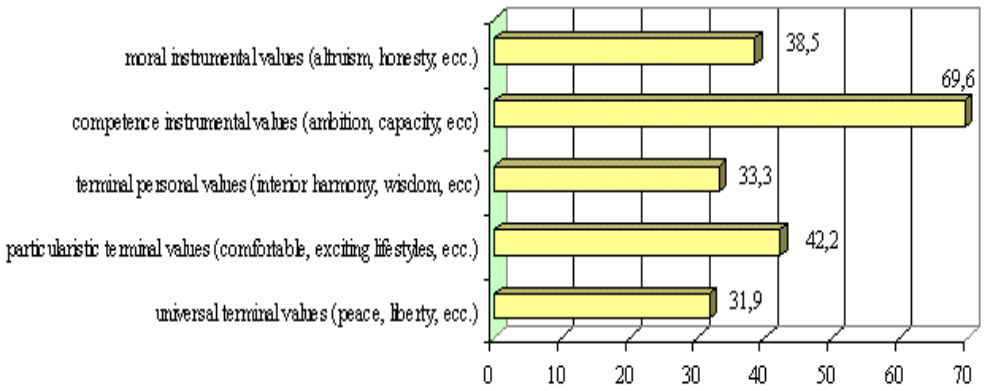


Values and needs

• *the attention is prevailing on "cognitive", "belonging", "self-making" and "aesthetic"* ***needs***



• *the most present values are about personal features, such as enjoynment, creativity, ambition.*

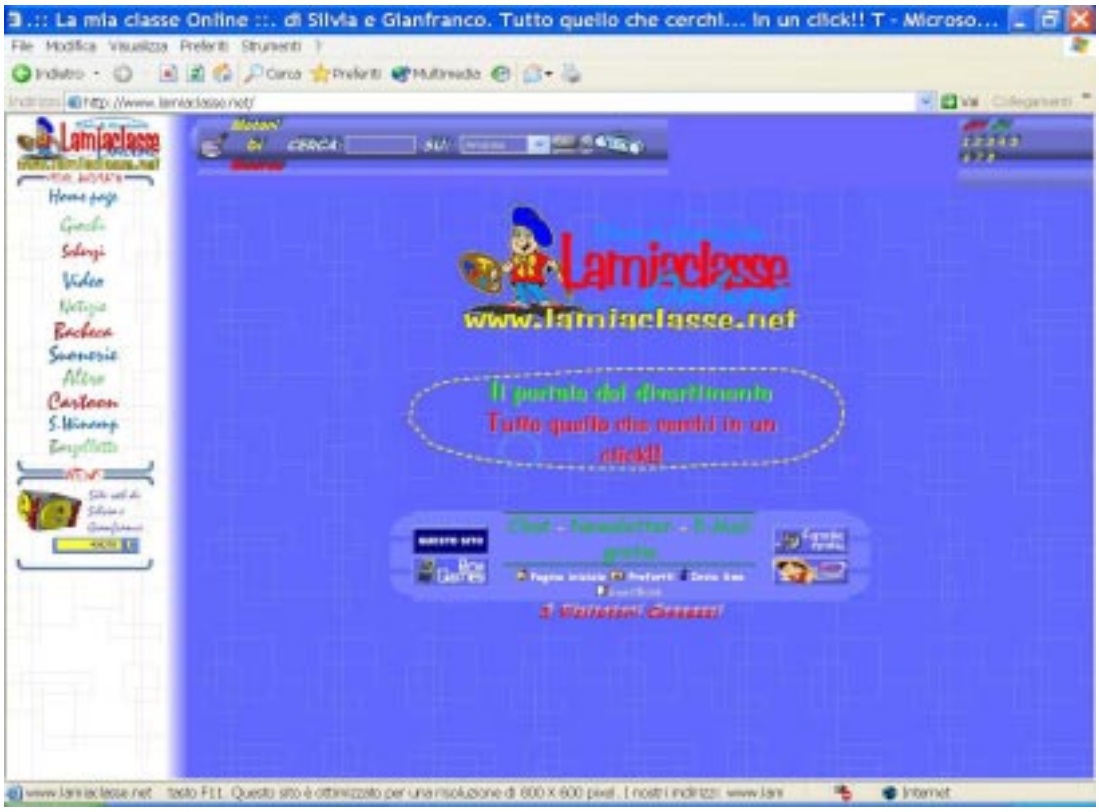


Formal features' Cluster

The formal features' Cluster analysis allowed the division of the sites in four groups named:

- "very complete" (1° cluster, 24 sites, 17.8%);
- "fun & games" (2° cluster, 33 sites, 24.4%);
- "portals" (3° cluster, 37 sites, 27.4%);
- "simple " (4° cluster, 41 sites, 30.4%).

1° cluster: "very complete sites" (24 sites, 17.8%);



- *Most of the **games** are of an **interactive** type.*
- *The **graphic** is **lively**, through animated and rich scenes, movie clips, contrasting colors, moving objects and figures.*
- *Different forms of **direct interactivity** (interactive environment, interactive suonds, download areas) and of **relational interactivity** such as selective and partecipative (forum and chat).*
- ***Sound** in the form of spoken language and narrator voice.*
- *The **written language** is average.*
- *The **content areas** contain information and news.*
- *There isn't a prevailing **thematic area**.*

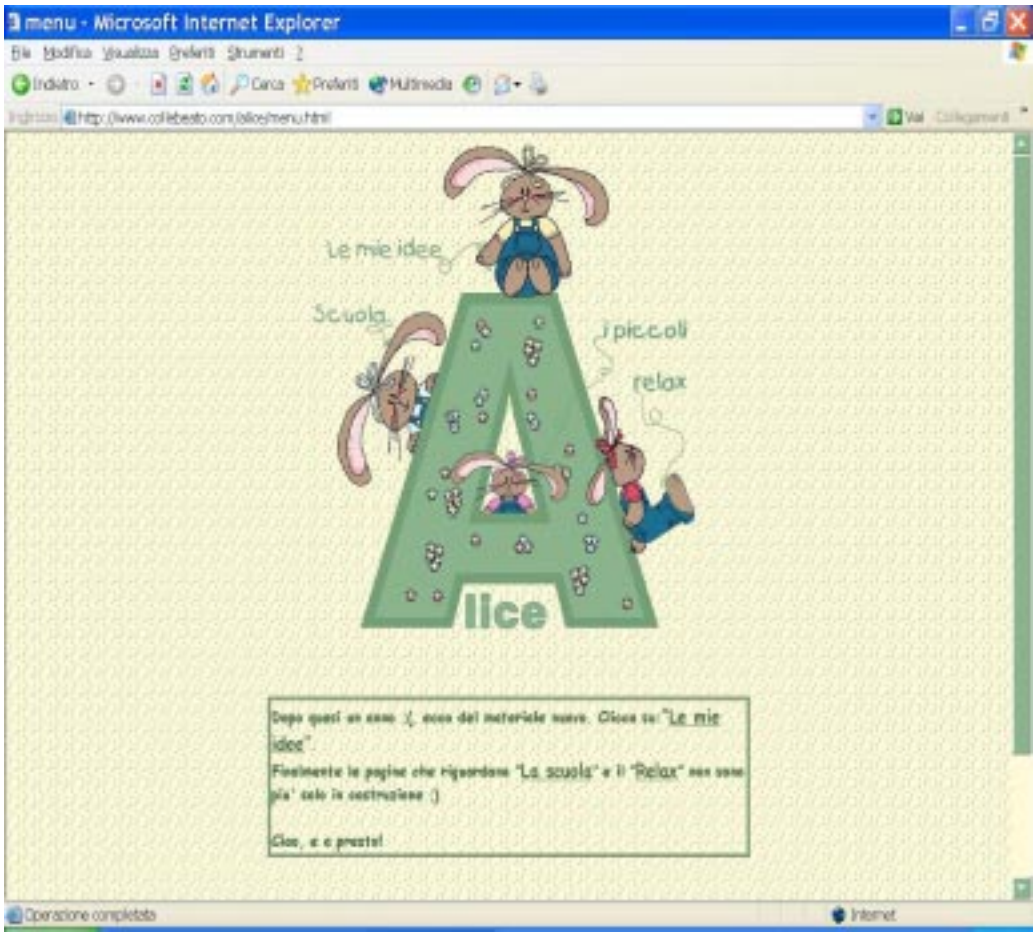
2º cluster: "games & fun sites" (33 sites, 24.4%);

- *The **interactive games** are mostly puzzle, educational and arcade.*
- *The prevailing **thematic area** involves toys and games.*
- *There are different forms of **direct interactivity**: interactive sounds linked to the presence of videogames and interactive icons.*
- ***Sounds and effects** as strong as weak/average.*
- ***Graphic** is composed from motion of objects and figures.*
- *The **written language** is "weak".*
- *There are no content areas about knowledge and discovery.*

3° cluster: "portals" (37 sites, 27.4%);

- *There are **advertising banners** regarding services and products.*
- *There are no interactive games and sounds.*
- *There are no spoken language, narrator voice and movie clips.*
- *There are **"strong" written language** and neologisms.*
- *The **goal** of these sites is research/exploration.*

4° cluster: "simple"
(41 sites, 30.4%).



- *The only present element is color tonalities:* ***cold colors*** *are prevailing.*
- *There are no: advertising banners, dynamic graphic (moving objects and figures, contrasting colors..), interactivity, information/news areas, interactive games, sounds.*

Content features' Cluster

The content features' Cluster analysis allowed the division of the sites in three groups named:

- "Fan sites"
  (1° cluster, 46 sites, 34.1%);
- "Guided surfing sites"
  (2° cluster, 20 sites, 14.8%);
- "Surf, explore, learn"
  (3° cluster, 69 sites, 59.1%).

1° cluster: "Fans' sites"
(46 sites, 34.1%)

- *The **main characters function** is: "thematic object of the site".*
- *The **main character** is usually single and in the form of cartoons, fantasy characters and animals.*
- *The **environment** is imaginary.*
- *The **target age** is twelve-fourteen years.*
- *The **prevailing thematic area** is "toons and comics".*
- *The **goal** is entertainment.*
- *There is no "didactic" area.*

2° cluster: "Guided surfing sites"
(20 sites, 14.8%)

- *The **single main character** is usually an animal.*
- *The **relational context of the main character** is relational/emotional.*
- *The **main character function** is: "guide/ illustrator".*
- *There are animals with the function of **secondary characters**.*
- *The characters are represented through more interaction (one to one, one to more, more to one).*
- *Self-making **needs** are present.*
- *The **environment** is internal (home / work / school).*
- ***Interactive games** are present.*
- *There are no words and phrases in other languages.*

3° cluster: "Surf, explore, learn" (69 sites, 59.1%);

- *The **content areas** are about "school/didactic" and "kwoledge/discovery".*
- ***Cognitive needs** are present.*
- *There are no main human, toon, fantasy or animal characters, nor secondary animal and human characters, action, decorative icons and self-making needs.*

CONCLUSIONS

General features

• young surfers in a " lonely journey "

• web-surfing for younger generations is characterized from an equal offer aimed at both genders.

Formal features' Cluster

The formal features' Cluster analysis allowed the division of the sites in four groups named:

- "very complete" (1° cluster, 24 sites, 17.8%);
- "fun & games" (2° cluster, 33 sites, 24.4%);
- "portals" (3° cluster, 37 sites, 27.4%);
- "simple " (4° cluster, 41 sites, 30.4%).

Enjoyment on the web

- The game area is present in more than 90% of the sites;
- The interactive games are present in more than half of the sample, with a prevalence of "puzzle" and "educational" games;
- The most retrieved goals are "entertainment" and "educational".

There are:

- weak and average sound effects;
- animated and lively graphics;
- "weak" written language;
- absence of content area about "knowledge and discovery".

Future research goals:

Implications

The possibility to explore the World Wide Web, a large network of documents containing texts, images, sounds and animations, distributed through the Internet's nodes, and linked each other to build a virtually endless web.

Potentiality:

- Build individual paths following personal interests and curiosities;
- Exercise personal capacities to integrate and select information. Actively partecipate with more consciousness to the building of individual knowledge.

Possible risks :

The multiform, sometime untouchable, nature of Internet: on the net any information could be gained by any user.

"Education to Internet use"

- Acting on the critical sense of young surfer.

- Stimulate adults, parents and educators, in the role of guide and companion in this complex growth and discovery process.

Multi-facets of technology enabled child-care

The children are the future of globe. With increasing urbanization rates and industrialization, we are now challenged about issues concerning child-care in urban areas. Children need to be educated of their rights adequately and ensured of sufficient care and protection. The society around them has a highly responsible role to play but is currently highly fragmented and hence not working up to its fullest potential.

The paper presents different aspects of child-care while highlighting the feasible means of using technology in the areas of health-care and education. A networked society gives access to critical information to those who are empowered to take appropriate action. Expertise regarding child care or their education could benefit immensely with the use of ***knowledge banks*** or databases and archives. Professionals handling children must be trained with basic Information and Communication Technology skills so as to emancipate from the limitations of time and distance. With and use of connectivity they will function in an efficient manner while implementing the life-long learning process in their professional areas.

Examples of certain ***collaborative technologies*** and probable use are also within the scope of this paper. Certain strategic issues that are applicable to knowledge societies involving information sharing are addressed briefly. Such issues include privacy, intellectual property, freedom of speech, information ethics, etc. Technology is not a panacea to all the problems of social inequality but as far as health and education are concerned it make great strides in moving forward. This is a vital direction for Mediterranean and middle-east countries with large a percentage of young children.

ON THE MAKING OF A SEX EDUCATION WEB SITE

Nagwa Farag

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to document the major findings along the process of developing a web site on sex education for Egyptian adolescents, age 12 to 15 years, girls and boys. This intervention is described as a pilot initiative to provide culture sensitive, age appropriate information on sexuality, in Arabic language, through the Internet, to young Egyptian people. The focus of this paper is to document a) the reasons for undertaking an elaborate pre-testing exercise prior the launching of the site, b) description of the process adopted to refine the design and contents of the site, and c) the major findings along the pre testing with various audience segments involved. In conclusion, the paper calls for concerted efforts and advocacy for culture sensitive, age specific sex education programs for adolescents in Egypt.

The idea of developing a web site on sex education for Egyptian adolescents came from an IT expert (Mr. Yasser H. Youssef) awarded a small grant through the Culture and Health Program (CHAP), an initiative managed by the Program for Appropriate Technology (PATH) in four African countries: Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. The Ford Foundation is providing the fund for the grants in the four countries. In Egypt, the International Population Council provides the administrative support for the various projects under this initiative. The grantee, requested the writer of this paper to undertake the pre testing of the web site contents with parents and adolescents, and subsequently to adjust the contents of the web site before final production and launching. The project was developed, tested and produced during 2003. Launching of the site is due early 2004.

Problem Statement

Recent studies and surveys conducted among adolescents in Egypt reveal that young people lack access to credible sources of information on sex education and reproductive health.

First, there is lack of communication among parents and adolescent on issues related to sexuality. Parents abstain from conveying information about sexuality to adolescents being convinced that ignorance encourages chastity. Parents ignore their children exposure and access to other sources of information on sex and they are not aware of the negative effect it might have on the healthy development of their children.

Second, appropriate educational materials on sexuality, in Arabic language, for adolescents' age 12 to 15 years in Egypt are, inexistent. The only credible information provided to the young ones is the conventional biology lesson on human reproduction taught in the third preparatory school grade. The age of boys and girls in this grade is around 15/16 years. With the exception of a few books translated from English and targeting an older age group getting ready for marriage, young people do not

have access to credible source of information on sexuality, which is age appropriate and culture sensitive, in Arabic language.

Third, the school curriculum provides little or no sexuality education for adolescents. Teachers do not feel comfortable speaking about sexuality even in the biology classes. This is due to the fact that most teachers did not receive special training on the subject as well as the pressure of culture and religion which makes any such discussion of sexuality a taboo and unacceptable in the class room situation.

Fourth, the issue of sexuality education is still a controversial one at the policy making level. Although there is growing demand for sex education among those concerned with adolescents' health and development, there is still strong resistance at the public level. Opposition is based on the false believe that sexuality education for adolescents will encourage early engagement in sexual activities.

Fifth, in their search for information on sexuality, adolescents are exposed to a wide range of lifestyles, visuals and information about sexuality through the satellite TV channels and the World Wide Web, in addition to getting information from peers. Most of the information provided through these communication channels target adults of other cultures and not Egyptian adolescents and none of these sources motivate young people to take responsibility for their actions. The thirst for information on sexuality, combined with exposure to adults lifestyles and imposed taboos, may have a negative effect on adolescents' health and development.

Denying information about sex to adolescents and young people in general, positions sexuality apart from the societal value system. As a result, the impact of culture on sexuality behaviors of adolescents is rather diluted. However, some other values such as virginity for girls and abstinence from sex till marriage are still deeply routed values, consistently stressed without consideration to the changing environment and youth exposure to other value systems. In this environment of taboos and silence, it becomes more difficult to promote and accept concepts such as gender equality, respect of the opposite sex, responsibility for ones acts…etc

Finally, the findings of a WHO-commissioned study covering some one thousand scientific articles on youth sex education, confirm that there are no evidence to prove that appropriate sex education programs lead or encourage early engagement in sexual activity among young people. In the contrary, it was observed that these educational programs helped young people to abstain from early sexual practices and risky behaviors and encouraged the use of contraceptives in some society.

Adolescents' access to appropriate information is to be looked at from another angle. Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) stated that "*States Parties…shall ensure that the child has access to information and materials from a diversity of national and international sources especially those aimed a the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and mental health".* Provisions under this article stipulates "*Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being…."*an important subject within the right for appropriate information is the child access to appropriate information on sexuality and reproductive health. In the absence of appropriate information on sexuality, adolescents search for information through sources, which may not necessarily provide information, appropriate to his or her age and thus harm their development.

Target Audience of the Website

The web site was conceived for the following audience:

1 Egyptian adolescents age 12-15 years, girls and boys. Adolescents who may access to a computer and to the Internet are a small group, not exceeding 5% of the total population. These are children of rather affluent families from the upper socio-economic groups. Observations suggest that adolescents, who have access to a computer and Internet, do search for information on sexuality via the World Wide Web. This specific age group was selected for the following reasons:
   – At this age adolescents develop interest on the issues of puberty and sexuality.
   – There is a lack of appropriate information on sexuality education for this specific age group.
   – They have the right for access to appropriate information.
   – They are exposed to a wide range of information on sexuality through the satellite TV Channels that may negatively affect their development.
2 Parents of adolescents of the above-mentioned socio-economic situation: for parents who are eager to engage in dialogue with their adolescents' children about sexuality, this website could serve as a model or an icebreaker.
3 Adults interacting with adolescents such as teachers, youth leaders, NGOs working with young people.

Basic Contents of the Website

WWW.MORAHAKA.COM: Morahaka in Arabic language means Adolescence.

Age group of the primary audience and socio-cultural environment implied the contents as well as the classification of the information in the site. Based on the results of the pre testing, the final contents of the website are classified under 6 main topics. Each topic contains a set of subtopics in bullets style. Each bullet contains one specific fact presented in few lines. The six main topics and subtopics - following amendments resulting from the pre test - are:

1 What is Adolescence?
   – How does adolescence/puberty starts for girls and boys.
   – Physical changes associated with adolescence for girls and boys.
   – Mental and spiritual growth for adolescents.
2 Sexuality, Love and Adulthood.
   – Sexuality for human being
   – Relationship with the opposite sex
   – Love and relationships
3 Questions and Answers.
   – What is puberty?
   – What is menstruation?
   – What is a wet dream?
   – What is masturbation?
   – What is virginity?
   – What is female genital cutting?
   – What is intercourse?
   – How pregnancy does occur?
4 Risky Behaviors.
   – Sexually transmitted diseases
   – HIV AIDS

- Sexual Abuse.
- Rape.

5 Friendship & Relationships
- How do I make good friends?
- Some specific problems faced by Egyptian adolescents' girls.

6 Reproductive Organs for man and Woman.
- Illustrations and captions from the biology lesson of the school curriculum.

Underlying Concepts

- The site avoids any direct preaching. However, a set of underlying concepts is elaborated across the six main topics. These concepts may be summarized as follows:
- Sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living.
- All persons have a sexual identity.
- Sexuality involves physical as well as psychological and emotional dimentions.
- Males and females are equally entitled to dignity and self worth.
- Sexual relationships should never be exploitative.
- All persons are entitled to love and care.
- All sexual decisions have effects and consequences.
- Adolescents learn about their sexuality as a natural process of achieving sexual maturity.
- Abstaining from sexual relationships during adolescence is possible and is the only effective method to avoid risky behaviors.
- Premature involvement in sexual behaviors poses risks.
- The media often presents an unrealistic image of what it means to be male or female and to be in love.
- The media may not portray positive aspects of sexuality.

Culture Sensitive Contents

It was not the intention of the designer of the website, or that of the writer of this paper, to impose any set of values on the users of the site. From the onset of the project, it was agreed to provide factual and non-biased information based on the comments and queries of the young people, the primary audience. As for the underlying concepts promoted via the contents of the site, they are, to a great extend, universal concepts and not specific to a certain value system. Within this perspective, what is meant by "culture sensitivity" is to address young people concerns and respond to their thirst for information on specific issues relevant to their environment without imposing a specific judgment.

For example, there were lots of queries among young people on the link between female circumcision, menstrual pain and/or sexual relations after marriage. These queries are culture specific since female genital cutting is still widely practiced in Egypt despite on-going efforts by the government and the civil society to combat it. The practice in deeply rooted in the culture and is linked to modesty and virginity values. The site discussed the negative effects of female genital cutting from scientific view point, negating any link with religion and discussed the common misbelieves that female circumcision protects girls from early engagement into sexual activities.

Being a pilot initiative in sex education in Egypt, it is important for the designers of the site to"win" allies to the need for and to the possibility of developing sex education programs for adolescents by presenting a simple, non controversial model, which on the same time, responds to adolescents' information needs. The designers intentionally avoided going into lengthy debates and arguments about some specific topics that are still controversial in the society, such as sexual orientation. These

debates may hamper other more substantial exercises for the design of sex education programs for adolescents in Egypt.

Language

The language and vocabulary used in the site suits the primary users of the site. The site uses simple Arabic language, simpler than the one used in schoolbooks of the target audience. Synonymous for the same word or expressions are all mentioned including words borrowed from English or French languages. For example, there are three words used to mean menstruation in Arabic, in addition to one in French (*les regles*) and one in English (*period*). Correct names for reproductive organs and sexual acts were used. Jargon used by young people was avoided, as the jargon is not universally used across the various regions of the country. The language addresses equally boys and girls. Each bullet contains short and factual information varying from two to five lines only. Literature about users of the net, suggests that – in average – only 30% of the contents of a web site is read. This justifies the style of short statements. The pre testing ensured that the language used was understood and accepted by adolescents and their parents.

Website Design

Tow main characters, a boy and a girl, guide the users. The illustrations of the two characters were pre tested and made appealing to young people while being inoffensive to parents. The site comprises six main scenes, with six different layouts, one for each topic.
Frequently asked questions, is one of the six topics. Within the website there is room for questions by young people. Additional young users' questions will be recorded and later answered, uploaded and inserted in the contents of the frequently asked questions segment.

Pre Testing Procedures

The contents of the site were pre tested through two rounds of focus group sessions with Egyptian parents followed by twenty in depth individual interviews with young people between 13 and 17 years of age

Pre testing the site's contents with parents:
Focus group sessions are an exploratory method utilized in qualitative and formative social research. A focus group meeting is a discussion in which a small group of informants of about 8 persons, guided by a facilitator or moderator, talk freely and spontaneously about themes considered important to the investigation. Parents participating in the two focus group sessions were chosen on the basis being parents to adolescents accessing the Internet, and whose opinion and ideas are of interest to the topic of sex education. They were equal number of fathers and mothers of adolescents' boys and girls. Couples were avoided in order to avoid possible bias. Parents participating in the pre testing were given the contents of the site few days prior the actual discussion group. Contents of the site were amended following parents comments after each round of testing. Results of pre testing with parents are detailed below.

Pre testing the site's contents with young people:
Selection of the 20 young people participating in the pre testing followed several steps. First, it was necessary to obtain their parents consent and their respect to the confidentiality of the interview. Contents of the website as well as the set of guiding questions were presented to parents who gave their consents. The second step was to work directly with young people on one-to-one basis. Some of the interviewees were among an older age group i.e. 15 to 17 years old. For this age group it was

easier to express concern and recall their experience and search for information on sexuality, few years earlier… Young people needed assurance that what they will share during their individual interview will not be communicated to their parents. Each in-depth interview with a boy or a girl consumed some 120 minutes in average in order to obtain as much depth as possible. Superficial answers or moving too quickly from one topic to another, were avoided. After all amendments were made on the contents of the site, following the 20 in-depth individual interviews with young people, a final pre testing took place with a group of adolescents 12 to 15 years old, to ensure that the site is user-friendly and easy to navigate through.

Pre test Findings

The pre testing of the contents and the design of the website, and the subsequent amendments are the guarantee for culture sensitivity.

The site name: several options for titles were presented and discussed by parents and adolescents. Adolescents – both boys and girls - opted for this name "Morahaka" while having no objection on the blunt use of the word "sex". Adolescents consented to the present name after learning parents' reservations on the word "sex". Parents agreed on the name "Morahaka" as they wanted to avoid the use of the word "sex" because of its negative connotation and cultural taboos. Worth noting that, in Arabic, the word "sexuality" is encompassed into the word "sex" and is not a separate term. The project design comprises the production of a specific flyer to promote the site and to be distributed in preparatory schools, youth clubs and NGOs, Internet café…

Results of pre testing the site contents with parents:

First, parents were curious about what could be the contents of a sex education web site for adolescents. Therefore, it was necessary to explain to them that sexuality education is not the same at teaching young people how to make love and that it is not advisable to tell the adolescent everything all at ones.

In both rounds of testing, the majority of parents acknowledged the need for sex education for adolescents and the absence of appropriate materials for adolescents on sexuality. With the exception of two references to one "teen magazine" published in Egypt in English language, parents admitted they were no other source of reliable information.

Two mothers complained from the fact that despite their efforts to establish dialogue on sexuality with their adolescent daughters, daughters refused to discuss it with them. "She shut me off" one mother said. There was information presented in the site that some parents ignored: for example, the fact that a girl may become pregnant without having complete intercourse. Some parents had questions about female genital cutting. But in general, the two groups of parents were open and expressive. Mothers of boys were more expressive of their concerns than fathers of girls.

Thanks to parents' feedback, information on rape and sexual exploitation were added. Later, young people omitted proposed additions of parents stressing societal values and religious beliefs. Parents agreed that the final contents of the web site would be useful tool for dialogue with their adolescent children. Two parents participating in the pre testing were schoolteachers. They advised that teachers may also refer preparatory and secondary school students to the website.

Results of the pre testing depth interviews with young people:

Frequently asked questions of young people are classified below:

– Virginity, 13 inquiries: (11 girls and 3 boys) about the location of the hymen, how to make sure the hymen is "safe" (7 girls and one boy) if the hymen could be seen with a mirror (4 all girls), fear among girls of loosing the hymen during sports, biking or ablution (4 all girls). "You mean

my mother is not virgin?" (one boy).
- Menstruation, 11 inquiries: 3 inquiries from girls about the link between menstrual pain and female circumcision. What is menstruation? (5 boys + one girl). Why is menstruation shameful? (One girl and one boy).
- Female circumcision, 17 inquiries: female circumcision and religion (7 queries by girls + one boy), effects of female circumcision (6 queries by girls + one boy), is girl's circumcision necessary (one girl), why other countries do not perform it (one girl).
- Pregnancy, 10 queries: is the pain during menstruation a proof of fertility? (One girl) how to know now about fertility later? (2 girls), is it possible for a girl to become pregnant while having her menstruation? (2 girls, one boy). Is wearing tight pants leads to infertility later for boys? (Two boy), does hepatitis C is transmitted from mother or father to fetus? (One girl), is mobile "bad" for girls fertility? (one girl). Worth noting there were no queries or comments about the use of condom or contraceptives.
- Masturbation, 16 queries and comments. The practice had several other slang names. What is masturbation? (4 girls and 3 boys), why is masturbation bad for health and sight? (3 girls + 2 boys), what does religion say about masturbation? (2 boys), does masturbation affect the hymen? (2 girls).
- Adult life and marriage 8 queries: why do girls fall in love? (2girls), I don't want to get married at all (one girl and one boy), parents will never believe that I am in "real" love (one girl), "my parents fight all the time but I think they make love every Thursday while I am at the club" (one boy). Afraid of the first night of marriage (2 girls).
- Puberty and physical changes associated with adolescence 9 queries: what do I do in order to have small breast, not a big ones causing me embarrassment? (2 girls), size of girls breasts don't matter (2 boys). Does the hair in specific areas increase or decrease after marriage? (one girl). When will my voice change to be like my father? (one boy). Personal hygiene (one boy and one girl), will I gain some weight with maturity? (One girl) where can I find more information on puberty? (One boy).
- Male organs 4 queries: is it true that manhood is related to the size of the penis? (2 boys), does masturbation affect the size of the penis? (One boy), I wish I had one to be able to pie like boys (one girl).

Young people comments during the in-depth individual interviews were in lighting and much valuable. It helped re-drafting the contents of five topics. It is also thanks to their comments that the topic on "friendship and relationships" was drafted and edited. In several instances, it seemed to the interviewer, that adolescents wanted the site to convey a message to parents too in order to facilitate understanding from the young people perspectives.

Launching of the Website

At this stage plans are under way to launch the website. The designers of the site opted to have the site and the launching under the auspices of a national authority concerned with youth programs and in a position to advocate for concerted efforts at the national scale for sexuality education for adolescents. It is hoped that the launch event will generate public interest and will invite young people to use it. A simple brochure is under production to promote the name of the site, its contents and advocate for further efforts.

Conclusion

The lessons learnt from this exercise are many. First it is important to explain to parents, teachers and policy makers that sexuality education is a process that involves helping young people have a thor-

ough understanding of who they are as boys or girls as well as to assist them cope effectively with the physical, emotional ad social changes at each stage of development. Second, they need to know that silence about sexuality conveys a wrong message. Third, it is to be clear to parents that the level of knowledge and of communication will depend on the stage of development of the adolescent.
On the other hand adolescents need to know that some of what is on television and Internet, in books and magazines, are facts and some are not. As well they are to be informed some media programs are not appropriate for them, and that they can refuse to watch and/or listen to anything that offends them. Young people need to discuss the fact that mass media promotes gender role stereotype and may not portray positive aspects of sexuality.
Ina nutshell, sexuality education for adolescents' girls and boys in Egypt is necessary, if we are to assist our children go through life successfully.

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ON THE MAKING OF

MORAHAKA.COM

A Sex Education Website

Presented By:
Nagwa Farag

Objectives

- **Justification**
- **Process Adopted**
- **Major Findings**

Conclusion

Problem Statement

- Lack of communication with parents
- Absence of educational materials on sexuality
- School System and Teachers
- Policy Dialogue
- Rights Approach
- Adolescents' exposure to lifestyles

Findings of WHO commissioned study.

Target Audience

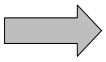
- Egyptian Adolescents age 12-15 boys and girls
  - WHY?
- Parents
- Adults interacting with young people

Basic Contents of the Website (www.morahaka.com)

- What is Adolescence?
- Sexuality, Love and Adulthood
- Questions and Answers
- Risky Behaviors
- Friendship & Relationships
- Reproductive Organs for man and woman

Underlying Concepts

- Sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living.
- All persons have a sexual identity.
- Sexuality involves physical as well as psychological and emotional dimensions.
- Males and females are equally entitled to dignity and self worth.
- Sexual relationships should never be exploitative.
- All persons are entitled to love and care.



Underlying Concepts (Continued)

- All sexual decisions have effects and consequences.
- Adolescents learn about their sexuality as a natural process of achieving sexual maturity.
- Abstaining from sexual relationships during adolescence is possible and is the only effective method to avoid risky behaviors.
- Premature involvement in sexual behaviors poses risks.
- The media often represents an unrealistic image of what is means to be male or female.

Cultural Sensitive Contents

- **Provision of factual information**
- **Universal concepts**
- **Avoid controversial issues**

Website Development

- Language
- Website Design

Pre-testing Procedures

- Focus Group Sessions with Parents
- In-depth individual Interviews with Children

Naming the site

Results of pre-testing with Parents

- Additions: rape, sexual exploitation
- Wish to stress societal values and religion
- Facts ignored by parents

Results of pre-testing with Young People

Frequently asked questions:

- Virginity (13)
- Female Circumcision (17)
- Masturbation
- Physical Changes with Puberty (9)
- Menstruation (11)
- Pregnancy (10)
- Adult Life and Marriage (8)
- Males Reproductive Organs (4)

Additions and Revisions

Conclusion

- Need for parents- child communication
- Tips for parents
- Contents of sexuality education
- Sexuality and the media

Saudi Children and the New Information Technology

By Dr. S. Kattan
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Deputy Dean of College of Arts
University Saud King
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Introduction:

Children in many countries are growing up in an environment of rapid and continuous technological change. The last ten years have shown an unprecedented proliferation of computer-based technology.

Families and policy makers are encouraging the use of computers and the Internet at home and in schools as tools for learning and advancing knowledge.

Objectives and Methods

The main objectives of this paper is to explore the ways in which computer technology influences children of all ages and examines the following issues/research questions:

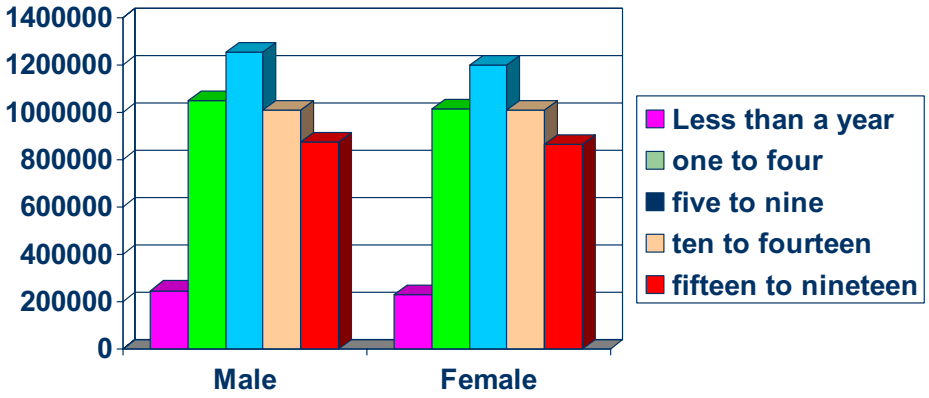
- What are the main factors that influence the use and effect of computers on children?
- What are the sources of computer impact on children?
- What role can parents and the government play in protecting children from the risks involved in using the new technology?

Review of the literature will be used in Addressing these questions or issues. The paper will also highlight areas which need to be covered for further research on the subject.

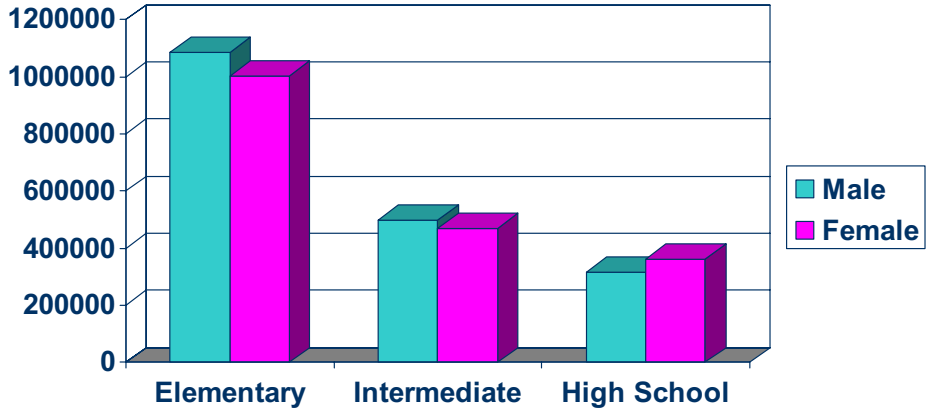
Children in Saudi Arabia:

- The population in Saudi Arabia totaled 20,846,884 in 2000, of which 15,588,805 are Saudis with 8,794,256 in the age group 0-19. Saudi Arabia is characterized by a young population as the age group (0-14) represents 42.4% of the total population and the birth rate is 37.25 per 1000.

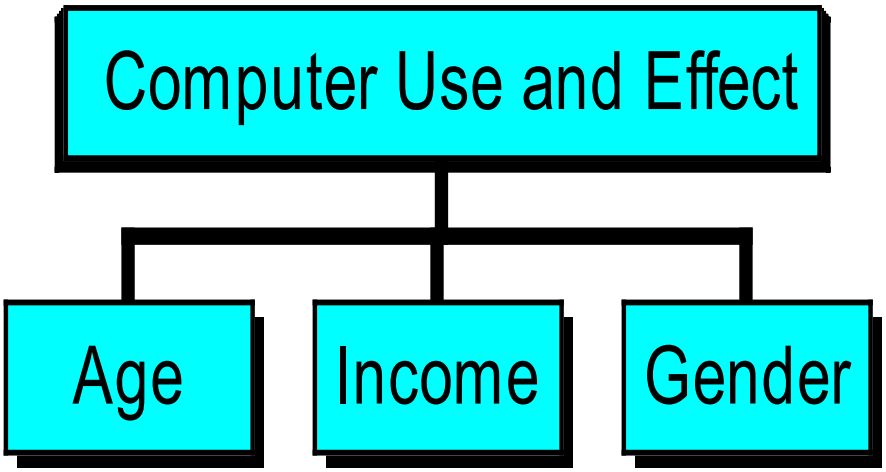
Number of Children in Different Age Groups (2000)



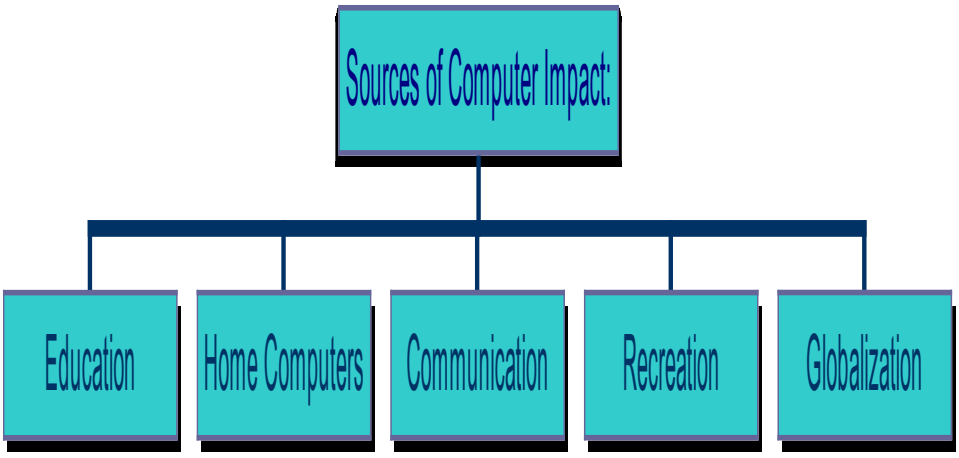
Number of Students in public schools (2001)



Factors That Influence the Use and Effect of Computers on Children



Sources of Computer Impact:



Impacts of Technology on Children at Each Stage of their lives:

- **Preschool Children**:

By the age of three or four, children may be increasingly attracted to using Computers and Game machines which are widespread in Saudi Arabia. Many games expose children at an early age to stress from playing for long hours and, consequently, reduce the time spent in outside activities.

There is great concern about the type of games children play at early age.

Even though many children do not always choose the games they buy and parents make this choice for them, many parents do not have enough knowledge about the content of the games they buy, apart from being just age specific and there are no guide-lines or ratings for such games. .

Impacts of Technology on Children at Each Stage of their lives:

- **Elementary School Children**:

Many computer programs for young children may have their first impact at this age group. Children who understand that learning can be enjoyable and who have practiced with computers at home have a significant advantage over less privileged children.

But one child in two uses the computer as a means of seeking information and acquiring general knowledge. The use of the computer as an aid in doing school work is more frequent among older children because they are better equipped to exploit the potential of the computer. However, children only use a tiny part of the true range of the computer's potential. Game-playing occupies the first place in these activities.

Impacts of Technology on Children at Each Stage of their lives:

¸ Adolescents:

The availability of a home computer system has both positive and potentially negative impacts upon this age group. This is a relatively critical period academically for adolescent children where computers can provide a tool with which to increase academic performance.

Adolescent development is related to increasing social consciousness and involvement with others of the same and opposite-sex. Computer systems allow adolescents to interact with others in their community and around the world without even involving issues of physical appearance and behavior. With access to the Internet adolescents can communicate and share software with others around the world.

Impacts of Technology on Children at Each Stage of their lives:

¸ Adolescents:

However, one of the potential problems raised by this technology is the availability of inappropriate information such as pornographic materials (some of which may be so extreme as to be locally illegal). But such filtering systems are typically insufficient to stop a determined individual from gaining access illegitimately.

The availability of non-rated, violent computer games (which are also the most popular) is also an issue of concern for parents whose children's computer use is difficult to supervise.

Parents Role in Protecting Children

Access to a computer is a complex issue but several research studies have found that families use several ways to regulate computer use.

Mainly seven concerns can be identified where families used to regulate computer use:

Parents Role in Protecting Children

1. Making access complementary with family routines. Family made it clear that computer access should not interfere with other valued aspects of domestic life. Computer sessions should be scheduled with other household activities.
2. Sanctioning recreational choices. As a general practice, parents monitored family recreational activities and some families established a requirement for children to ask permission for computer use.
3. Session length rules: Families set time limits on computer sessions to control compulsive use or to avoid arguments and ensure equitable time or turns for all siblings. Another reason for setting time limits in some families is for health concerns.

Parents Role in Protecting Children

4. Censoring software choices: Some games were described 'mindless' or 'pointless' so that access was controlled either by time limits on their use or by parents refusing to buy them. Parents might even hide offending programs.
5. Care for equipment: Safety of the computer was a concern for some families and led to rules over how to be a good user.
6. Economy of use: Issues of expense were made explicit by parents particularly in relation to Internet use. Paper and ink use was an issue too for some families.
7. File space privacy: Families had to govern access to personal files by not allowing children to access these files.

Censorship and the Computer

As mentioned above, in reference to the potentially negative impacts of computers on adolescent children, there is some reason to believe that computer technology will need to be controlled.

Large scale international computer networks have almost unilaterally decided to allow users to make their own decisions regarding what kinds of material they will access. However, what about children who can not be considered to have sufficient maturity (or legal authority) to make these kinds of decisions for themselves? This warning includes people that children might meet in "cyberspace".

Censorship and the Computer

However, with new and rapidly evolving computer technologies where children's skills might surpass parental skills, this may be a pragmatically impossible task for parents, many of whom are overwhelmed by a variety of far more tangible and time-consuming responsibilities

Internet access was delayed in Saudi Arabia until filtering technology was implemented by the government in 1999 to protect the country's moral and religious values. All Internet connections routed through a state server at the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology. By 2003, however, there were over 22 ISPs with 600,000 subscribers and 1.5 million users, which is expected to triple over the next two years. This raises more concern about the issue of censorship.

Conclusions:

As illustrated in this paper, several research studies have examined issues believed to be important in the effects of technology on children. Several themes have emerged, in particular, which include:

1. Personal attributes of age, gender and family income influence the computer effects on children in various ways according to local culture and tradition.
2. The negative effect of computers on children increases by age where adolescents face the greatest risks because of their extensive use of computers, exploring non-educational materials. Younger children face risks of isolation and decreased social activities.
3. The negative effects of computer use are minimized in school by the controlled school environment which fosters continued monitoring and supervision of computer use for education, with little opportunities for games or other non-educational activities.
4. Monitoring and supervising computer use at home by parents is more difficult because of the rapid advancement of computer technology and because of the children's ability to conceal their unauthorized use.

Conclusions:

5. Computers affect children's activities with regards to types of recreations and types of communications with others. Thus, children are more inclined to play games of increasing violent nature and communicate with other individuals on a global scale.
6. Local governments try to censor or screen use of the Internet to avoid the negative or offensive use by children and help the parents' computer supervision. But the governments' role is complicated by calls of freedom of use of the Internet and by the advancement of technology which makes monitoring more difficult if not impossible.

Conclusions:

Because computer and Internet technology will continue to take a more significant role in Saudi children's life and because of this technology's recent and rapid introduction in the home and school, it is recommended to carry out further studies on the effect of the new technology on Saudi children at home and at school.

The result of such a study could lead to a new policy and action plan to help parents, educators and decision-makers appreciate their monitoring and guiding roles towards children for a positively productive use of the computer and the Internet.

January 2004

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WORKSHOP XIII

Saudi Children and the New Information Technology

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The legal approach to the protection of minors in the Information Society

The EU Safer Internet Action Plan 1999-2004 on promoting safer use of the Internet and a comparative analysis of the related legal frameworks in France, Germany, UK, Italy and Spain.

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§. Introduction: the EU's approach to the protection of minors in the Media system and Internet network.

Internet offers positive benefits in particular in education, by empowering consumers, lowering the barriers to the creation and distribution of content and offering wide access to even richer sources of digital information. However, the amount of harmful and illegal content carried over the Internet, while limited, could adversely affect the establishment of the necessary favourable environment for initiatives and undertakings to flourish. So it is essential, in order to ensure that consumers make full use of the Internet, that a safer environment for its use is created by combating illegal use of the technical possibilities of the Internet in particular for offences against children and trafficking in human beings or for the dissemination of racist and xenophobic ideas.

To this regard, the European institution have since 1996 adopted specific acts aimed at strengthening the protection of minors in the Media system and Internet network. These acts can be summarised as follows:

(a) on 24 April 1996 the Council requested the Commission to produce a summary of problems posed by the rapid development of the Internet and to assess, in particular, the desirability of Community or international regulation;
(b) on 23 October 1996 the Commission transmitted a communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on illegal and harmful content on the Internet and a Green Paper on the protection of minors and human dignity in audiovisual and information services;
(c) the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, in their Resolution of 17 February 1997 welcomed the report of the Commission working party on illegal and harmful content on the Internet and requested Member States and the Commission to undertake a number of actions;
(d) in its Resolution of 24 April 1997 on the Commission communication on illegal and harmful content on the Internet, the European Parliament called on the Member States to strengthen administrative cooperation on the basis of joint guidelines and on the Commission to propose, after consulting the European Parliament, a common framework for self-regulation at European Union level;

(e) in the Ministerial declaration adopted during the International Ministerial Conference entitled "Global Information Networks: Realising the Potential", held in Bonn on 6 to 8 July 1997 at the initiative of the German Government, Ministers stressed the role which the private sector can play in protecting the interests of consumers and in promoting and respecting ethical standards, through properly-functioning systems of self-regulation in compliance with and supported by the legal system; whereas they encouraged industry to implement open, platform-independent content rating systems, and to propose rating services which meet the needs of different users and take account of Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity; whereas Ministers further recognised that it is crucial to build trust and confidence in Global Information Networks by ensuring that basic human rights are respected and by safeguarding the interests of society in general, including producers and consumers;
(f) on 24 September 1998 the Council adopted a Recommendation on the development of the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and information services industry by promoting national frameworks aimed at achieving a comparable and effective level of protection of minors and human dignity.

§ 1. The Multiannual Community Action Plan 1999-2004 on promoting safer use of the Internet by combating illegal and harmful content on global networks.

Considering that the promotion of industry self-regulation and content-monitoring schemes, development of filtering tools and rating systems provided by the industry and increased awareness of industry services as well as fostering international cooperation between all parties concerned will play a crucial role in consolidating a safer Internet environment for children, the EU has launched in 1999 the so called "Safer Internet Action Plan" which has the objective of promoting safer use of the Internet for children by combating illegal and harmful content on global networks and of encouraging, at European level, an environment favourable to the development of the Internet industry. The Action Plan initially covered the period 1999-2002, but it has been recently extended to December 31st, 2004.

The Action Plan provides the following main actions:

(a) promotion of industry self-regulation and content-monitoring schemes (for example, dealing with content such as child pornography or content which incites hatred on grounds of race, sex, religion, nationality or ethnic origin);
(b) encouraging industry to provide filtering tools and rating systems, which allow parents or teachers to select content appropriate for children in their care while allowing adults to decide what legal content they wish to access, and which take account of linguistic and cultural diversity;
(c) increasing awareness of services provided by industry among users, in particular parents, teachers and children, so that they can better understand and take advantage of the opportunities of the Internet;
(d) support actions such as assessment of legal implications;
(e) activities fostering international cooperation in the areas enumerated above

§ 1.1 The Safer Internet Action lines in detail.

The action lines, in conjunction with the Recommendation 24 September 1998 on protection of minors and human dignity, are a means of implementing a European approach to safer use of the Internet, based on industry self-regulation, filtering and rating and awareness.

A. Action line 1. Creating a European network of hot-lines and encouraging self-regulation and codes of conduct.

An effective way to restrict circulation of illegal material is to set up a European network of centres (known as hot-lines) which allow users to report content which they come across in the course of their use of the Internet and which they consider to be illegal. Responsibility for prosecuting and punishing those responsible for illegal content remains with the national law-enforcement authorities, while the hot-line aims at revealing the existence of illegal material with a view to restricting its circulation. Differences in national legal systems and culture must also be respected.

So far, hot-lines exist only in a limited number of Member States. Their creation needs to be stimulated so that there are hot-lines operating covering the Union both geographically and linguistically. Mechanisms for exchange of information between the national hot-lines, and between the European network and hot-lines in third countries need to be put in place.

In order for this network to develop its full potential, it is necessary to improve cooperation between industry and law-enforcement authorities, ensure Europe-wide coverage and cooperation, and increase effectiveness through exchange of information and experience.

This action will take the form of a call for proposals for participating organisations (20-25) to establish a European network of hot-lines, and links between this network and hot-lines in third countries, develop common approaches and stimulate transfer of know-how and best practice.

The participating organisations will be supported by a cross-section of industry actors (access and service providers, telecoms operators, national hot-line operators) and users. They will have to demonstrate a forward-looking and innovative approach, in particular in their relationship with national law-enforcement authorities.

For the industry to contribute effectively to restricting the flow of illegal and harmful content, it is also important to encourage enterprises to develop a self-regulatory framework through cooperation between them and the other parties concerned. The self-regulatory mechanism should provide a high level of protection and address questions of traceability.

In view of the transnational nature of communications networks, the effectiveness of self-regulation measures will be strengthened, at European Union level, by coordination of national initiatives between the bodies responsible for their implementation.

B. Action line 2. Developing filtering and rating systems and facilitating international agreement on rating systems.

To promote safer use of the Internet, it is important to make content easier to identify. This can be

done through a rating system which describes the content in accordance with a generally recognised scheme (for instance, where items such as sex or violence are rated on a scale) and by filtering systems which empower the user to select the content he/she wishes to receive. Ratings may be attached by the content provider or provided by a third-party rating service. There are a number of possible filtering and rating systems. However, their level of sophistication is still low and none has yet reached the "critical mass" where users can be sure that content in which they are interested and content which they wish to avoid will be rated appropriately and that perfectly innocuous content will not be blocked. Uptake of rating systems by European content providers and users remains low.

The measures under this action line will focus on demonstrating the potential and the limitations of filtering and rating systems in a real world environment, with the objective of encouraging the establishment of European systems and familiarising users with their use. Filtering and rating systems must be internationally compatible and interoperable and developed with full cooperation of representatives of industry, consumers and users.

C. Action line 3. Encouraging awareness actions.

The public is increasingly engaging in Internet activity and reaping the benefits of the new services. At the same time, there is a degree of uncertainty as to how to deal with every aspect of network communication; parents, teachers and children need to be made aware of the potential of the Internet and its drawbacks and do not always have sufficient knowledge about the means to protect children from undesirable content. Awareness actions contribute to the trust and confidence of parents and teachers in safer use of the Internet by children.

Awareness is also the necessary complement of Action lines 1 and 2, since the actions of industry to implement self-regulation and filtering and rating will bear fruit only if users and potential users are aware of them.

European action, on the basis of actions undertaken by the Member States, will contribute to reinforcement of synergy, in particular through exchange of information and experience. The Action Plan will initiate awareness actions that will build on the dissemination of information from access providers to customers, and also develop material for use in the education sector.

D. Action line 4. Support Actions.

The Internet operates on a global basis. The law operates on a territorial basis – national or, in the case of Community law, covering the European Union. It will contribute to the effectiveness of the other action lines by considering legal questions not dealt with by other Community initiatives, in particular including questions of applicable law and procedure.

Coordination with similar international initiatives and sharing of experience and good practices between operators and other concerned parties in the European Union and their partners in other regions of the world is necessary to ensure coherence between European action and similar initiatives in other parts of the world. Regular concertation meetings will help to achieve this.

§ 1.2 The Safer Intern Action Plan results at the end of the year 2002 and the further steps.

On November 3, 2003, the EU Commission has adopted a communication (COM 2003 653, hereinafter "Communication") on the evaluation of the Safer Internet Action Plan Programme 1999-2002 (hereinafter "Programme"). The evaluation was carried out by a team of external consultants, who recognised the positive impact of the current programme, particularly in fostering networking and providing a wealth of information about the problems of safer use of the Internet and their solutions and who recommended the continuation of the Community efforts in this area through a follow-up programme.

The Communication concerns the evaluation of the Programme. The objective of the Programme, as specified in the European Parliament and Council Decision adopting a Multiannual Community Action Plan on promoting safer use of the Internet by combating illegal and harmful content on global networks [1] , was promoting safer use of the Internet and encouraging, at European level, an environment favourable to the development of the Internet industry.

The Programme covered the four-year period from January 1999 to December 2002 with a reference budget of 25 million euro. The programme was implemented through three main action lines:
creating a safer environment (creating a European network of hot-lines and encouraging self-regulation and codes of conduct);
developing filtering and rating systems;
encouraging awareness actions.

During the years 1999 – 2002, 37 projects were co-financed, involving over 130 different organisations.

Two service contracts were concluded for advice to self-regulatory bodies and for exchange of information about best practices . The Decision 199/276/EC was amended by Decision No. 1151/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 June 2003 extending the duration of the programme until 31 December 2004, increasing the indicative budget by 13.3 million euro and making a number of changes (i.e. including the new ten EU Member States from may 1st, 2004) to the title and scope of the programme and to its implementing actions.

§ 2. Italy: the current legal framework about the protection of minors in the Media and Internet systems.

With regard to the Italian initiatives aimed at protecting minors in the Media system and with regard to the use of the Internet, the following analysis points out: (A) the current Italian legal framework (B) the most recent activities carried out by the Italian Government, Parliament and Ministerial authorities.

§ 2.A) The current Italian legal framework: the legislative rules.

The relevant national provisions in force on the matter concerned are the following.

Law of August 3rd 1998 No. 269 "*Provisions against the exploitation of prostitution, pornography and sexual tourism in damage of minors as new kinds of reduction in slavery*", published in the Italian Official Journal of August 10th, 1998 No. 185, has introduced new articles in the Italian Criminal Code[2].

According to the new article 600-*ter* of the Italian Criminal Code – which introduces the crime of *child pornography* - whoever exploits minors (i.e. individuals under legal age of 18) with the aim of realizing pornographic exhibitions or of producing pornographic materials is punished with the imprisonment from six years to twelve years and with a penalty from € 25.882 to € 258.228[3]. To the same sanction is subject whoever trades such pornographic materials. In addition, whoever – except the mentioned cases – with any means, also using telematic systems, distributes, spreads or promotes pornographic materials related to minors, or distributes or spreads news or information aimed to solicit or sexually exploit minors is punished with the imprisonment from one year to five years and with a penalty from € 2.582 to € 51.645. Furthermore, whoever, except the hypothesis above mentioned, consciously transfers to third parties – even free of charge – pornographic materials produced by means of sexual exploitation of minors, is punished with the imprisonment till three year and with a penalty from € 1.549 to € 5.164.

Article 600-*quater* of the Italian Criminal Code (*Holding of pornographic materials*), as introduced by Law 269/1998, provides that whoever consciously holds, gets or in any way has at his disposal pornographic materials produced by means of sexual exploitation of minors, is punished with the imprisonment till three year and with a penalty not less than € 1.549.

It has be to pointed out that the above mentioned provisions shall apply – as provided by article 604 of the Italian Criminal Code (*Fact committed abroad*) as amended by the Law 269/1998 - also when the mentioned facts are committed abroad by an Italian citizen or in damage of an Italian citizen or by a foreign citizen in concurrence with an Italian citizen. In the latest hypothesis, the foreign citizen can be punished only if for the related crime is provided the sanction of imprisonment not less than five years as a maximum and if a specific request by the Ministry of Justice has been submitted.

Other interesting provisions are those set forth in article 600-*quinquies* of the Italian Criminal Code as amended by the Law 269/1998 and in article 16 of the Law 269/1998. According to the first provision, whoever organises or promotes touristic initiatives aimed at carrying out prostitution activities in damage of minors is punished with the imprisonment from six years to twelve years and with a penalty from € 15.493 to € 154.937. It is interesting that article 16 of the Law 269/1998 provides that tour operators organising collective or individual journeys in foreign countries are subject - for a period at least of three years – to the obligation of inserting in their commercial brochures, catalogues, journey documents or web sites the following disclaimer: "*Compulsory communication as per art. 16 of the Law 269/1998 – The Italian Laws punish with the imprisonment the criminal acts related to child prostitution and pornography, even if these facts are committed abroad".*

Tour operators falling to comply with this obligation are subject to an administrative penalty form € 1032 to € 5.164.

Following a sentence for the criminal facts provided by articles 600-*bis,* 600-*ter,* 600-*quater*, 600-*quinques* above analysed, some additional sanctions are in any case applied: (a) seizure of commercial activities aimed at committing the related crimes; (b) revocation of commercial licenses; (c) revocation of broadcasting authorisations for Radio-TV broadcasting stations.

Finally, Law 269/1998 introduces specific investigation and interception powers in favour of the competent Telecommunications Policy (i.e.: carrying on investigation activities by means of telematic tools).

It must be pointed out that currently several bills are pending before the Italian Parliament, with the aim of amending Law 269/1998 by introducing more severe criminal sanctions, especially with regard to the use of ICT technologies as means to favour the committing of crimes against minors.

* * *

Other relevant legislative rules aimed at strengthen the protection of minors in the Media system, can be recalled as follows.

According to the so-called *Law on Press* of February 8th, 1948 No. 47, its article 14 provides that the provisions of article 528 of the Italian Criminal Code shall apply to all the publications addressed to minors, if these publications can favour violence instincts or social indiscipline amongst children. This provision shall apply also to multimedia contents. In fact, the law 62/2001, article 1, paragraph 3, which is a general law also containing specific provisions on editorial products and electronic or telematic means, specifically recalls the provisions of Law 47/48 (art. 528 of the Italian Criminal Code included) to be applied in case of "Editorial Products". Editorial Products are defined as 'products made on paper or computer support intended to publication or diffusion of information to the public by any means, also electronic, or by sound or television broadcasting, except discographic and cinematographic products'. This definition includes on-line newspapers and information websites.

Finally, Law of August 6th, 1990 n. 223 "*Discipline of the public and private Radio and TV system",* article 15, provides that it is forbidden the broadcasting of programmes which could harm to the mental or moral developments of minors due to their contents characterised by 1) pornography 2) uncalled-for violence 1)[4]

§ 2.A.1.) The current Italian legal framework: the role of the Italian Communication Authority and of the Ministry of Communications aimed at protecting minors in the Media and Internet systems.

With regard to other non-legislative initiatives aimed at protecting minors in the Media and IT systems, the related activity carried out by the Italian Communication Authority must be pointed out.

The Italian Communications Authority has launched since October 4th, 2001 a Public Consultation entitled *"Protection of minors and prevention activities with regard to the access to telematic networks*". The initiative was aimed at getting directly from the interested subjects (i.e.: parents' associations, Internet Providers, etc) indications useful to the future adoption of specific Decisions to be enacted by the Authority. The preliminary investigation carried out by means of the Public Consultation was focused on 1) web contents to be supplied to minors and 2) conditions related to minors' access to the Internet.

The Public Consultation concerned has given relevant results, which have led – amongst others – to the adoption of a specific self-regulation Code on the protection of minors on the Internet (see after, paragraph 2.B.1.).

With regard to the protection of minors within the Media system, and according to the tasks given to the Italian Communications Authority, as per Law of July 31st 1997, n. 249, article 6, it must be pointed out that this Administrative Body has to ascertain that the regulations for the safeguarding of

minors in the radio-television broadcasting sector are observed, taking account of self-regulation codes that may be in place concerning the relations between minors and television, as also the guidelines provided by the parliamentary commission for general policy and superintendence on radio and television services.

With regard to the above, a specific Self-Regulation Code has been enacted since 1997 by the most important public and private Media corporations. The Self Regulation Code about TV broadcasting and minors, adopted on November 26th, 1997, provides specific rules for the protection of minors (i.e: protected time slots for minor, high quality programmes aimed to children, sensitization with regard to the children problems in the broadcasting activities, etc).

A news version of the Code has been signed by RAI, Mediaset, LA7, Mtv and other sectorial associations at the end of the year 2003[5], and introduces new guarantees for children. For example, the new self-regulation Code provides for the first time a set of sanctions for cases of infringement[6] and a specific Committe for monitoring the compliance of the TV activities with the Code has been set up, consisting of 15 members (5 representatives of the broadcasters, 5 representatives of the public Institutions and 5 representatives of sectorial associations). Further, a Regulation for the practical application of the Code (including the discipline of the Monitoring Committee activity) is attached to the Code itself.

The main new rules contained in the self-regulation Code released in the year 2003 can be summarised as follows: (a) for TV programmes broadcasted in the viewing time included between 7:30 p.m. and 22:30 p.m. (the so-called "*protected viewing time*") – when several minors watch the TV – the TV broadcasters must previously inform parents or adults in general – even by means of proper signals on the TV screen - about the contents of the TV programmes, suggesting if these programmes are or not addressed also to children; (b) TV broadcasters holding at least three networks dedicated to generic programming (and not specific, like sport or music TV channels), by signing the Code have undertook to dedicate to children the viewing time included between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. (the so-called "*dedicated viewing time*"), addressing to minors "secure" TV programmes broadcasted at least on one network, without harmful contents or advertising potentially risky for the development of minors; (c) TV broadcasters holding more networks must guarantee every day, in the prime time, the broadcasting of TV programmes suitable for children and families at least on one of their networks[7].

* * *

Other interesting Deliberations enacted by the Italian Communication Authority, and implying the protection of minors in the Media system, must be recalled. For example, the Decision 127/00/CONS *"Regulation related to the satellite diffusion of TV Programmes*", article 15, provides that these programmes can not be broadcasted if their contents can compromise the moral or mental development of minors, except the case of programmes broadcasted in the time slot 24:00 p.m. – 07:00 am and only if they are conditioned access programmes.

Further, the Decision 435/01/CONS "*Regulation related to the terrestrial Radio and TV broadcasting by means of digital techniques*", article 11, provides a specific rule to protect minors. Authorized or licensed subjects must adopt specific signalling systems and parental control systems with regard to the digital contents broadcasted. On requiring the license or the authorization, these subjects must attach to the application form a relation containing a short description of the technical measures they intend to adopt to protect minors against harmful contents. After the issuing of the

authorization or license, these subject must update the mentioned relation every 24 months, considering the technical developments.

§ 2.B) The most recent activities carried out by the Italian Government, Parliament and Ministerial authorities for the protection of minors in the Media and Internet systems: the new Bill on Child Pornography.

On November 7, 2003 the Italian Government has adopted a bill on child pornography, aimed at combating child pornography and the exploitation of children in the sex industry, including the child pornography on the Internet and electronic networks. This new bill – which seeks to counter the spread of child pornography via the Internet and which is actually under discussion before the Italian Parliament - is based on two main guidelines:

(a) strengthening the current criminal legal framework, in force since 1996, by updating the legal measures according to the development of technologies;
(b) combating the child pornography on the Internet.

The main points of the Government bill can be summarised as follows:

(1) specific electronic tools aimed at blocking payments by credit cards for purchasing images and movies involving minors and available on the Internet are provided. The aim is that of combating and preventing illicit activities carried out by subjects using the web to commercialize paedophile materials;
(2) the formation of a special national centre – set up by the Ministry for Internal Affairs - to monitor the paedophile phenomenon. The centre will be responsible for accepting reports of instances of child pornography, including from outside the country. The Centre shall also set up "black lists" of web sites dealing with or selling paedophile materials, with the aim of applying procedures of financial block and of prosecuting the responsible subjects;
(3) Internet Service Providers are obliged to adopt filtering systems suitable for the purpose of hampering the spread of paedophile materials on the Internet;
(4) subjects convicted of paedophile crimes are perpetually debarred from holding any kind of teaching task in the schools or other tasks in any institution attended by minors;
(5) the legal definition of "child pornography" is increased, including (and prosecuting) the activities of realizing, commercializing and holding paedophile materials, even in the cases where the subjects represented in these materials are not minors but seems to be minors. The new legal definition of "child pornography" shall apply also to "virtual images" of children within paedophile materials or contents;
(6) tour operators organising collective or individual journeys in foreign countries are subject to the obligation of inserting in their commercial brochures, catalogues, journey documents or web sites a specific disclaimer informing that the Italian Laws punish with the imprisonment the criminal acts related to child prostitution and pornography, even if these facts are committed abroad"[8];
(7) the imprisonment sanctions become more severe, by providing new aggravating circumstances;
(8) a property liability is also provided for legal bodies involved in paedophile crimes, beyond the criminal liability for individuals legally representing such bodies.

§ 2.B.1) The most recent activities carried out by the Italian Government, Parliament and Ministerial authorities for the protection of minors in the Media and Internet systems: the new Self-Regulation Code "Internet and Children".

On 19 November 2003, the Minister for Innovation and Technologies and the Minister of Communications unveiled a self-regulatory code of conduct, ("the Internet and Children Code"[9]), which is intended to create a safer Internet environment for young people. The content and services available within the protected area will screen out material that could cause psychological or physical harm to children, and protect their dignity. The code has been sanctioned by the leading Internet providers and greeted enthusiastically by ICT operators, which have undertaken to abide by its guidelines, and indicate their compliance by including the "*Internet & Children*" label on their products. Compliance with the Code will be guaranteed by an Oversight Committee consisting of representatives of the two Ministers, participating Internet service providers, associations for the protection of children and the National Council of Consumers.

According to a recent survey carried out by the Italian Ministry for Innovation and Technologies, Internet is more and more used by children. In the third trimester of the year 2003, more than 1,7 millions of children has browsed the World Wide Web (the 3% more respect the year 2002), and about 548 thousands were under the age of 12. Further, the time spent on-line is constantly increasing: on average, young people under the age of 18 have spent – in the third trimester of the year 2003 - more than 11 hours on the Internet (compared with the 8 hours spent in the third trimester of the year 2002). This trend is confirmed at a European level: at the end of August 2003, more than 13 millions of children under the age of 18 (4 millions were under the age of 12) have browsed the Internet in France, Germany, UK, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Netherlands, with an increase of the 27% with respect to the year 2002.

§ 2.B.1.1) Purposes of the Code "Internet & Children".

Taking into account the indications above, the Self-Regulation Code "Internet & Children" (hereinafter also defined as "Code") aims to:

(a) Direct adults, children and families towards a correct and attentive use of the Internet, bearing in mind the needs of children;
(b) Provide appropriate protection against the risk of minors coming into contact with content that is unlawful or harmful for their development;
(c) Give minors, in accordance with national and international law, equal opportunities for accessing the resources of information technology, and promote secure access to the same;
Protect the child's right to privacy and ensure correct processing of personal data;
(d) Collaborate fully, in accordance with current legislation, with the competent authorities in the prevention, restriction and repression of cyber-crime, especially with regard to the exploitation of children through prostitution, pornography and sexual tourism on the Internet;
(d) Facilitate the protection of minors, in accordance with article 9 of the Legislative Decree of 9 April 2003, no. 70 (Implementation of Directive 2000/31/EC concerning certain legal aspects of the services offered by the information society, especially electronic commerce, in the internal market), from the potential risks of unsolicited commercial information, and the exploitation of the vulnerability of children, as referred to in article 130 of the Legislative Decree of 30 June 2003, no. 196 concerning unwanted information;

(e) Propagate the contents of the self-regulation code to operators and families.

§ 2.B.1.2) Subjects, Definitions and obligations.

The Code, promoted by the signatory associations, applies to all adherents that underwrite it either directly or through the said associations. "Adherent" shall be the subject conducting Internet business activities, even when this does not directly involve money considerations for "Clients"(the legal subjects stipulating a contract with the Adherent) and "Users" (the subjects, not necessarily the Client, utilising the services furnished by the Adherent), agreeing to accept the Code either directly or through the signatory associations.

The Code provides specific obligations of the Adherents, in particular the voluntary adherence to the Self-Regulation Code entails a firm commitment to (a) accept integrally the contents of the Code itself and to accept the surveillance activities and sanctions therein; (b) adapt the contractual conditions of the services provided to the provisions of the present code.

The Code shall apply also to the following categories of subjects:

1. *Access provider*: the subject providing Internet access services to the user as part of his or her business activities;
2. *Hosting/housing provider:* the subject providing a computer system that is accessed by a user working at a remote location (shared/dedicated hosting provider) or connecting the client's computer to the Internet (housing provider);
3. *Content provider:* the subject providing, directly or indirectly, data, information or programmes that can be accessed by a user, through whatever technical means or protocol;
4. *Internet Point Administrator:* the subject providing the non-exclusive use of rooms and instruments for Internet access.

§ 2.B.1.3) Instruments for the protection of minors.

Information for Families and Teachers.

The home page of the Adherent's Internet services will clearly display the words 'PROTECTION OF CHILDREN', with links to special web pages providing information on the safest way to use the Internet, on the instruments that are most commonly used for the protection of minors, and on how to send notifications of any code violations to the Guarantee Committee set up by the Code. The Guarantee Committee will define minimum content requirements for the web pages. The *'Internet and Children'* logo can be used by the Adherents on their web sites to identify the subject adhering to the Code and to certify that he or she carries out business activities on the Internet in accordance with the obligations undertaken. The logo will be selected by the Guarantee.

Differentiated navigation services.

The Adherent will, on the basis of available technology, provide differentiated navigation services, which must be clearly identifiable as such, to families, teachers, schools, libraries and youth organisations, or direct Clients and Users to other providers of differentiated navigation services. In

accordance with the principle of non-discrimination, these services may not block access to secure content offered by Content Providers adhering to the Code.

Content classification.

Content providers adhering to the Code can apply classification systems to content which, they believe, should be subordinated to conditioned access.

Age Identifiers.

Adherents may utilise age identification systems provided that, in accordance with laws concerning the processing of personal data, the utmost privacy, security and dignity is safeguarded and guaranteed. In particular, these systems must rule out that the child's identity, home address, email address, pseudonym ('alias' or "nickname"), Internet address (IP number) become known, and must not, in any event, allow third parties to trace him or her directly or indirectly.

Profiling and hidden processing.

In accordance with the Italian Code on Protection of Personal Data (Legislative Decree 30 June 2003, no. 196 in force starting from January 1st, 2004), the Adherent cannot carry out any profiling of the child user nor process any of his or her personal data without prior and explicit authorisation of the parental authority, and only after clear and transparent information has been given on the type of profiling that the said Adherent intends to carry out and on the use that he or she intend to make of it.

Safeguarding of passwords.

The Adherent will safeguard the password accessing the services assigned to the User through appropriate security measures. The Adherent agrees to allow the User to change password.

Protection of Anonymity.

The Adherent may allow Users to remain completely anonymous. In any event, the Adherent must be effectively informed of the real identity of the subject that is allowed to remain anonymous. The Adherent must also warn Users that non-authorised processing may occur, carried out illegally by third parties unknown to the Adherent, and which could lead to their identity being traced.

Identification of the User.

The Adherent provides services only and exclusively to users directly identified or identifiable through unequivocal, albeit indirect, elements.

Fiduciary services.

Adherents offering fiduciary services (such as the registration of a domain name on behalf of a Client who wishes to remain anonymous) are obliged to provide positive identification of the Client requesting such services, whilst maintaining utmost privacy.

Management of data useful for the protection of minors.

Identification of data.

To access the Internet, the User is assigned a permanent or temporary Internet address (address IP). In accordance with the limits imposed by current legislation, the Adherent stores the following useful data:

IP address assignment registers;
IP number utilised to access any content publication functions.

Where assignment of an IP address is temporary, stored information will include, in addition to the temporary IP number, the start and end date for the assignment, and the telephone number utilised (if applicable).

How long and by which means should data be stored

The Adherent stores data in a way that guarantees a reasonable degree of reliability and un-deniability, and, in all events, in accordance with current laws in this matter.
The said data is to be stored for six months, unless there is a wish on the part of the subject to store it for a longer period, without, in all events, exceeding the temporal limits provided for in current legislation.

Means of communicating data

Where action is taken by judicial authorities, the Adherent will provide written documentation of the operations that have been carried out.

In accordance with provisions laid down in laws relating to the processing of personal data (Legislative Decree 196/2003), the Adherent will provide the Client only and exclusively with the information that concerns him or her, and, in all events, subsequent to written request and after making certain of the identity of the applicant.

Combating on-line pornography and paedophilia.

The Adherent, in accordance with current laws regarding use of personal data, agrees to keep the User's IP number for accessing content publication functions, even if hosted free of charge.

The Adherent will take any necessary steps to further collaboration with the competent authorities, and in particular the Post and Communications Police, to help identify the assignees of network resources utilised for the publication of contents hosted on his or her servers, as emerging from their respective contracts or equivalent documents, within, and no later than, three working days after receiving notification from the authorities in question.

§ 2.B.1.4) The Guarantee Committee and types of disciplinary measures in cases of violation of the Code.

The correct, impartial and transparent application of the Code is the responsibility of a special Guarantee Committee (hereafter referred to as 'Committee') made up of eleven experts appointed by a ministerial decree issued by the Minister for Communications, in tandem with the Minister for Innovations and Technology, namely:

(a) Four representatives of the Adherents, designated by the signatory associations;
(b) Two members, including the Committee President, representing the Ministry for Communications;
(c) Two members representing the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department of Innovation and technology;
(d) Three members designated by the associations for the protection of minors and the National Users Council. First appointments will be selected from the participants of the Internet@minori working group, set up at the Ministry for Communications.

The types of disciplinary measures can be summarised as follows:

Warning

In the event of the Guarantee Committee ascertains that there has been one or more violations of the obligations stipulated by signing the Code, the Adherent will be sent a warning and a request to comply, within 15 days, with obligations accepted on signing the Code.

Censure

Where the Adherent fails to comply, in the prescribed time, with the terms contained in the warning, or where violations of the Code are particularly serious or numerous, the Committee will send those concerned a communication of censure, with a request that they comply, within 15 days, with the terms of the measure adopted.

Revocation of the authorization to use the 'Internet and Children' logo

In cases where the Adherent does not comply, in the prescribed time, with the terms of the communication of censure, the Committee will revoke his or her authorisation to use the 'Internet and Children' logo. The use of the logo will re-authorised by the Committee once it has been ascertained, at the request of the Adherent, that his or her conduct is in accordance with the obligations adopted.

Where, after authorisation has been temporarily revoked, conditions arise warranting a second revocation measure, the Adherent must wait one year before seeking re-authorisation to use the Internet and Children' logo.

The Adherent who has lost the right to use the 'Internet and Children' logo may not use the said logo until he or she has been re-authorised to do so. All revocation measures will be put on record and published.

* * *

§ 3. The legal approach to the protection of minors in the Information Society: a comparative analysis of the related legal frameworks in France, Germany, UK, and Spain.

The following paragraphs shows the legal situation (updated to November 2003) on the protection of minors in the EU Member States with regard to the Media and Internet activities . There is no binding Community legislation on this subject.

§ 3.1 France.

Law 2000-719 of August 1, 2000 on audiovisual communication, amending the Law of September 30, 1986 on freedom of communication, is interesting because some provisions are specifically aimed at protecting children.

According to this law, Providers of access to on-line communication services (except for private correspondence purposes) must inform their subscribers of the existence of technical means to restrict or select access to some services (i.e. parental control software), and provide them with at least one of these technical means.

A Bill on the digital economy was adopted in first reading by the National Assembly on February 26, 2003. It will amend the Law on audiovisual communications by supplementing the existing provisions on the liability of hosting and access service providers and adding provisions on the liability of telecommunications operators. The bill seeks to implement the provisions of the Electronic Commerce Directive 2000/31/EC.

Further, in France:

(a) Publication of pornographic and violent messages that can be seen by minors is prohibited in all media.
(b) Publication of material relating to an absconding or abandoned minor is prohibited in all media.
(c) Publication of the identity of minors involved in legal proceedings is prohibited in all media.

In Apri12002, a Court sentenced the operator of a pornographic website to a fine of € 30,000 for not having sufficiently blocked the access of his website to minors (Court of Appeal of Paris, April 2, 2002).

The website included a disclaimer specifying that some images were pornographic and prohibiting minors from accessing them.

Legal referrals:

1. Criminal Code, article L.227-24 Article L.227-23
2. Law of July 29, 1881, article 39 bis and 39 ter.
3. Law 2000-719 of August 1, 2000 on audiovisual communication, amending the Law of September 30, 1986 on freedom of communication.

§ 3.2 Germany.

The Federal Act on the Protection of minors of July 23, 2002 and the Interstate Agreement on the protection of minors are the relevant legislative acts.

The Federal Act on the protection of minors integrates two former federal laws (the "*Act on the protection of minors in the public*" and the "*Act to regulate the dissemination of writings and media contents harmful to young persons*"). This Act complements the Interstate Agreement on the protection of minors.

The Act on the protection of minors is of a general nature but does not apply to on-line content as fit relates to the protection of minors in the public sphere (such as in bars and amusement arcades). It also includes specific provisions on the protection of minors in off line media such as films on DVD or video games.

The main points of this law can be summarised as follows:

(a) Films, videos, PCs and other screen games have to be labelled by a self control institution or a State authority through different binding rating systems according to the target age of the material;
(b) Off-line content which is harmful to minors is entered into a list of banned media (called Index). This content cannot be provided to minors. In addition, some content is harmful and therefore forbidden per se (without the need for is to be included in the Index (see similar provisions in the Interstate Agreement on the protection of minors).The Index is controlled by the a Federal Authority
(a) The provider of illegal content to minors can face a fine of up to E 500,000 or a prison sentence.

Electronic services including broadcasting services are covered by the Interstate Agreement on the protection of minors, which provides specific rules:

(a) electronic information and communication media (providers of teleservices, media services and broadcasting services) are subject to the Treaty;
(b) the Treaty defines a catalogue of illegal and forbidden contents to not be provided to children. These materials are included and listed in a specific Index;
(c) contents which could affect the development of minors can not be transmitted except if the service provider has taken steps to ensure that children or adolescents will not normally be exposed to the contents in question. Providers shall have to set up restriction measures;
(d) similar measures must be taken also with regard to advertising or sponsoring in the broadcasting services;
(e) a specific Commission for the protection of minors in the field of Media has been set up, with monitoring tasks;
(f) providers can face up a penalty of up to € 500.000 or prison sentence for breach of the respective provisions of the Intestate Treaty.

Further, in Germany distribution of illicit or harmful contents is prohibited if:

(a) it falls under §§ 130, 131, 184 of the Criminal Code (on incitement to hatred, attacks against human dignity, violence, and dissemination of pornographic writings), or
(b) it is obviously capable of seriously endangering the integrity of children or adolescents.

Content which could endanger the physical, mental or emotional well-being of children or adolescents cannot, in the case of point-to-multipoint services, be transmitted unless the operator of the media service takes steps to ensure, through scheduling or other means, that children or adolescents

will not normally be exposed to the content in question. In the case of on-demand services, the provision of such content is allowed if the operator supplies procedures to disable access (to be implemented by himself, an intermediate provider or the user).

In addition, information society service providers have to appoint a Commissioner responsible for the protection of minors if the service is generally available and might include content morally harmful to youth. The Commissioner serves as a contact for users and advises the service provider on questions relating to the protection of minors. The provider can also delegate a self-regulation organisation to take over the duties of the youth protection Commissioner.

Legal referrals:

1. Sections 15, 16, 18, 24, 27, and 28 of the Federal Act on the protection of minors and;
2. Sections 4, 5, 22, and 23 of the Interstate Agreement on the protection of minors.
3. The Federal Act on the Protection of minors of July 23, 2002 and the Interstate Agreement on the protection of minors.

§ 3.3 Spain.

The Spanish Criminal Code specifies that it is illegal to provide pornographic content to minors by any means of communication.

In 2001, a number of websites were shut down and several lawsuits have been filed against content providers of illicit material on the Internet, including web sites diffusing child pornography on the Internet.

Legal referrals:

1. Article 186 of the Spanish Criminal Code.

§ 3.4 United Kingdom.

The are no legal regulations on this matter yet but the Home Office was involved in discussions between the police and Internet service providers (ISPs) which led to the setting-up of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF). This is an independent organisation which has established a hotline so that users can report the presence of pornography on the Internet. The IWF will determine whether or not the material is illegal and, if so, will request the ISP to trace the originator and ask for the removal of the material. Details will be passed on to the police or the National Criminal Intelligence Service if the originator is abroad.

A new taskforce has been set up in response to a report by the Internet Crime Forum “Chat Wise Street Wise - Children and Internet Chat Services” (http://www.internetcrimeforum.org.uk/) on child safety in Internet chat rooms. The taskforce includes representatives of the Internet industry, child welfare organisations, the police, and Government. The taskforce members will work to identify and implement the best ways in which children can be better protected when using the Internet. Areas for action include:

(a) reviewing Internet content rating systems and developing a "kite marking" scheme for chat rooms which deliver child-friendly services;
(b) developing "safe surfing" education and awareness campaigns for parents and children;
(c) enhancing co-operation between police and communications service providers in the course of their investigations;
(d) reviewing existing legislation to ensure that the law continues to protect children from abuse and is kept up-to-date with changes in technologies.

The "Home Office Task Force on Child Protection on the Internet" has published its "models of good practice for child safety on the Internet". These codes of practice which deal with safety in the area of chat services, instant messaging and web-based services, are available at www.homeoffice.gov.uk.

1 Decision no 276/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 January 1999 adopting a Multiannual Community Action Plan on promoting safer use of the Internet by combating illegal and harmful content on global networks (OJ L 33, 6.2.1999, p. 1).
2 See the whole text (in Italian) at: http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/98269l.htm .
3 The criminal sanction is increased in these cases: (a) if the minor involved is under the age of 14; (b) if the facts are committed by means of violence or menace; (c) if the facts are committed by parents, relatives or other subjects (teachers, employers, etc); (d) if the facts are committed against in damage of handicapped (physically or psychically) minors, even if the handicap is provoked on purpose.
4 A new law, amending and replacing the Law 223/1990, shall enter into force in the first months of the year 2004 (the so-called "Gasparri Law", proposed by the Minister of Communications). The provisions on the protection of minors shall be strengthened, also according to the use of new ICT technologies.
5 See the whole text at: http://www.comunicazioni.it/it/index.php?IdPag=591 .
6 Such sanctions have been already applied with regard to the TV show "The Big Brother".
7 It must be pointed out that the Ministry of Communications has recently enacted a ministerial decree setting up the national emergency telephonic service "Number 114", specifically dedicated to report by interested citizens cases of images, dialogues or messages spread by TLC means (including web sites, radio or TV programmes) and deemed harmful for minors' development.
8 This provision was already contained in article 16 of the Law 269/1998, but the obligation is now made permanent by the Government bill (and not only for three years, as previously provided). Further, tour operators falling to comply with this obligation shall be subject to imprisonment from 1 year up to 3 years, and to an administrative penalty from € 2.500 to € 40.000 (Law 269/1998 provided only an administrative penalty form € 1032 to € 5.164).
9 See: http://www.innovazione.gov.it/ita/intervento/normativa/allegati/codiceinternetminori.pdf .

The Messages transmitted to children in the Arab States by Mass Media

Hoda Rizk

Introduction

Most common questions about children and mass media are related to how much and how often do children use various information and media means, for which purposes, and in which ways.
Data show nothing about children in rural and non electrified areas, or homeless children, and the absence of audience ratings doesn't allow to have a full picture of children's access to mass media.
What does mass media offer for children in Arab states? Does it transmit all kind of information, entertainment, sports, education, does it teach, or inform?
Media and communication means do not concern mature people only, and are not reserved to specific individuals or social classes, but also have a stretch among young people and children who constitute 37 ? of the population.
Our study aims to have a closer look on the role of media, information and communication technologies in development in Arab states.
According to the United Nations' convention on child's rights in 1999: "The child shall have access to information and materials from a diversity of national and international sources especially those aiming at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual, and moral well-being" (article 17).
Are mass media and information technology available, easily reached, and widely spread among youth and children in Arab states?
Child's rights related to media and communication means cannot be realized if the basic demand of all children to have access to media means is not firstly fulfilled.

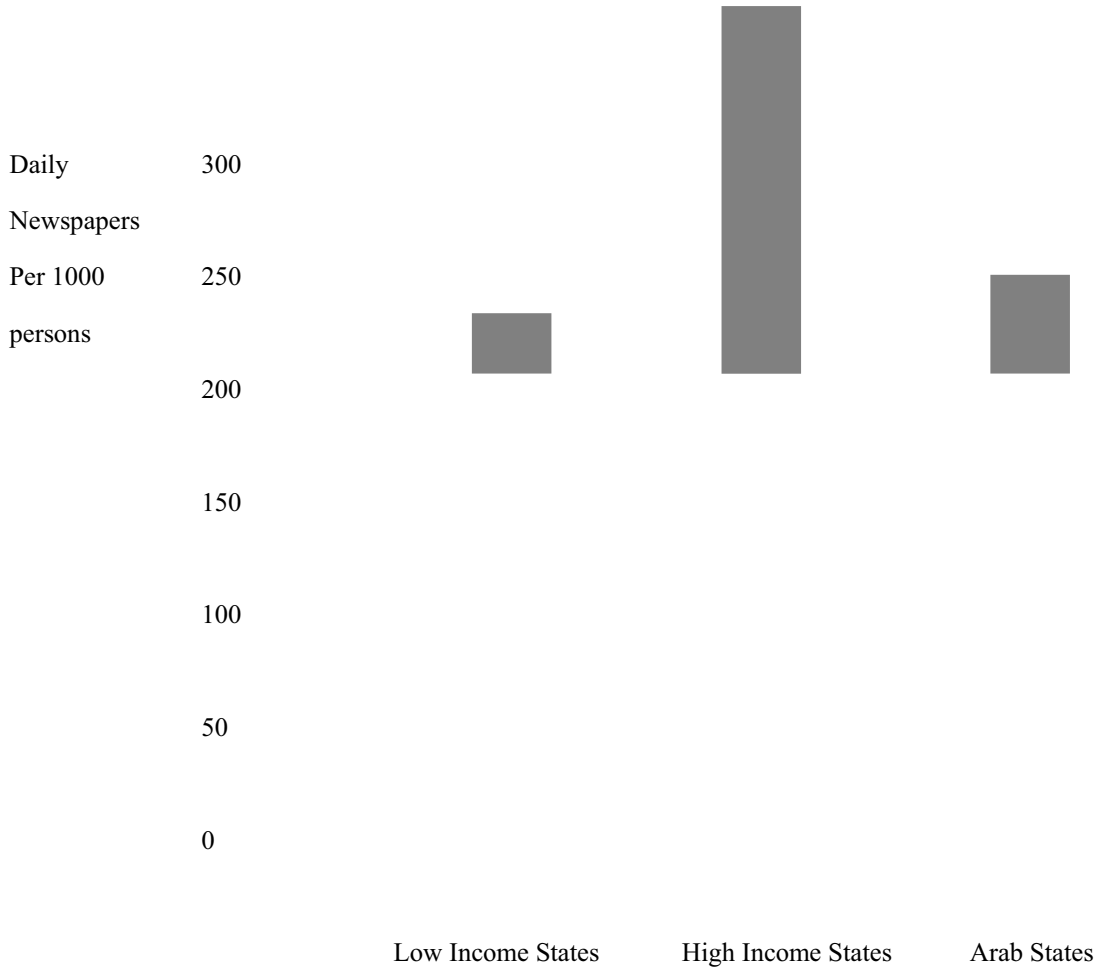
The Use of Mass Media and Information and Communication Technology in the Arab World

International statistics and census confirm that the citizen in Arab states cannot have full and sufficient access to media and communication means. This fact clearly appears through out the comparison made on one hand between the census of the population in Arab states, and the number and size of available media and communication means; and on the other hand through out a comparison of these data and facts with data and facts in other regions and countries in the world.Compared with world's average, and with the medium income, rates and proportions of media means, newspapers, radio, television per 1000 individuals are decreasing. These data show the weakness of mass media and information structure.

The abundance and availability of radio and television sets in all Arab states are still below the average of countries with medium income, and the world's average. Nevertheless, a big disparity exists between Arab states concerning the possession of media and information means. For instance, in Somalia, the ratio of newspapers per persons is 1 newspaper per 1000 persons, while the rate in

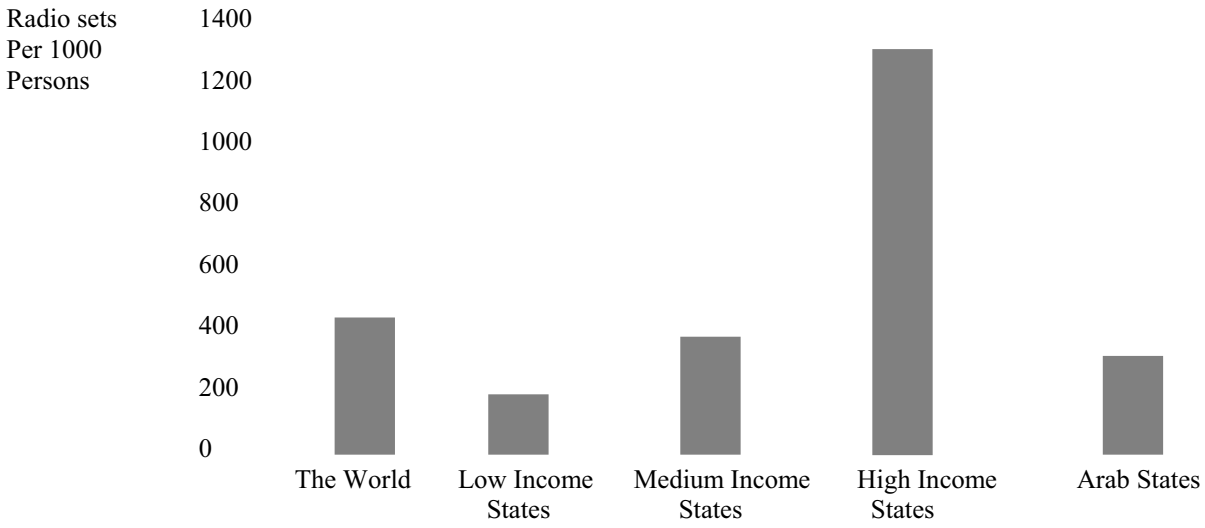
Kuwait reaches 374 newspapers per 1000 persons. Lebanon is considered among the states where radio sets are very widely spread and used, with a rate of 678 radio sets per 1000 persons. However, the rate reaches 1280 radio sets per 1000 persons in states with high incomes. Oman is considered to have the largest rate of use and diffusion of television sets among Arab states (563 television sets per 1000 persons) since this rate is approaching the average of states with high income, that is 641 television sets per 1000 persons. Yet, Arab states with medium income are still below the average of television sets' diffusion reached in other states of the world with medium incomes, which constitutes 275 television sets per 1000 persons, since the rate of television sets per 1000 persons doesn't exceed 67 sets in Syria, 198 sets in Tunisia, and 189 sets in Egypt.

Daily newspapers for the population in Arab states and other regions in the world, 1998



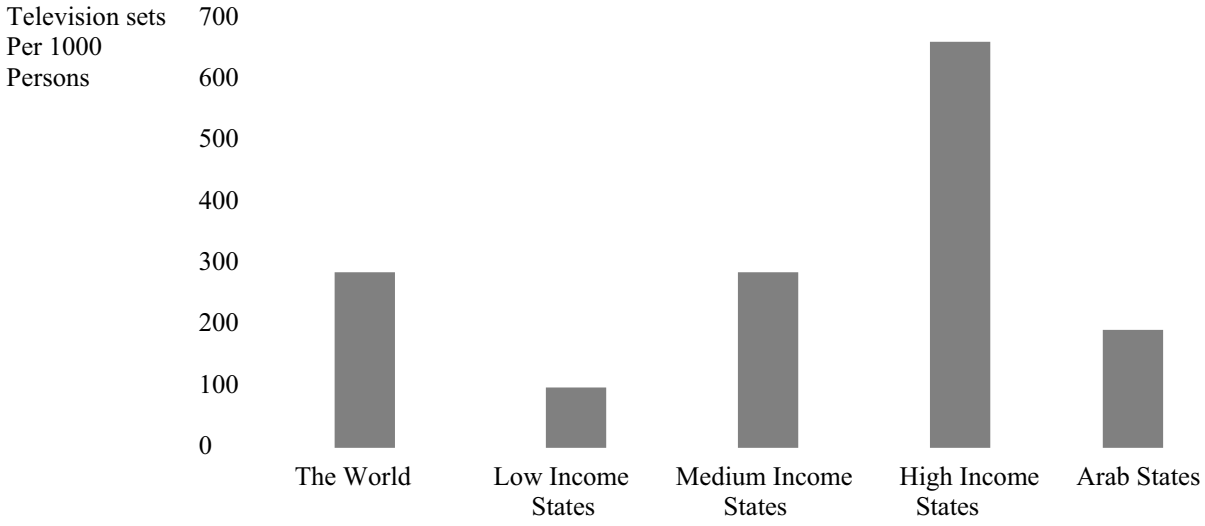
Source: World Bank, 2002.

Radio sets for the population in Arab states, and in other regions in the world, 2000



Source: World Bank, 2002.

Radio sets for the population in Arab states, and in other regions in the world, 2000



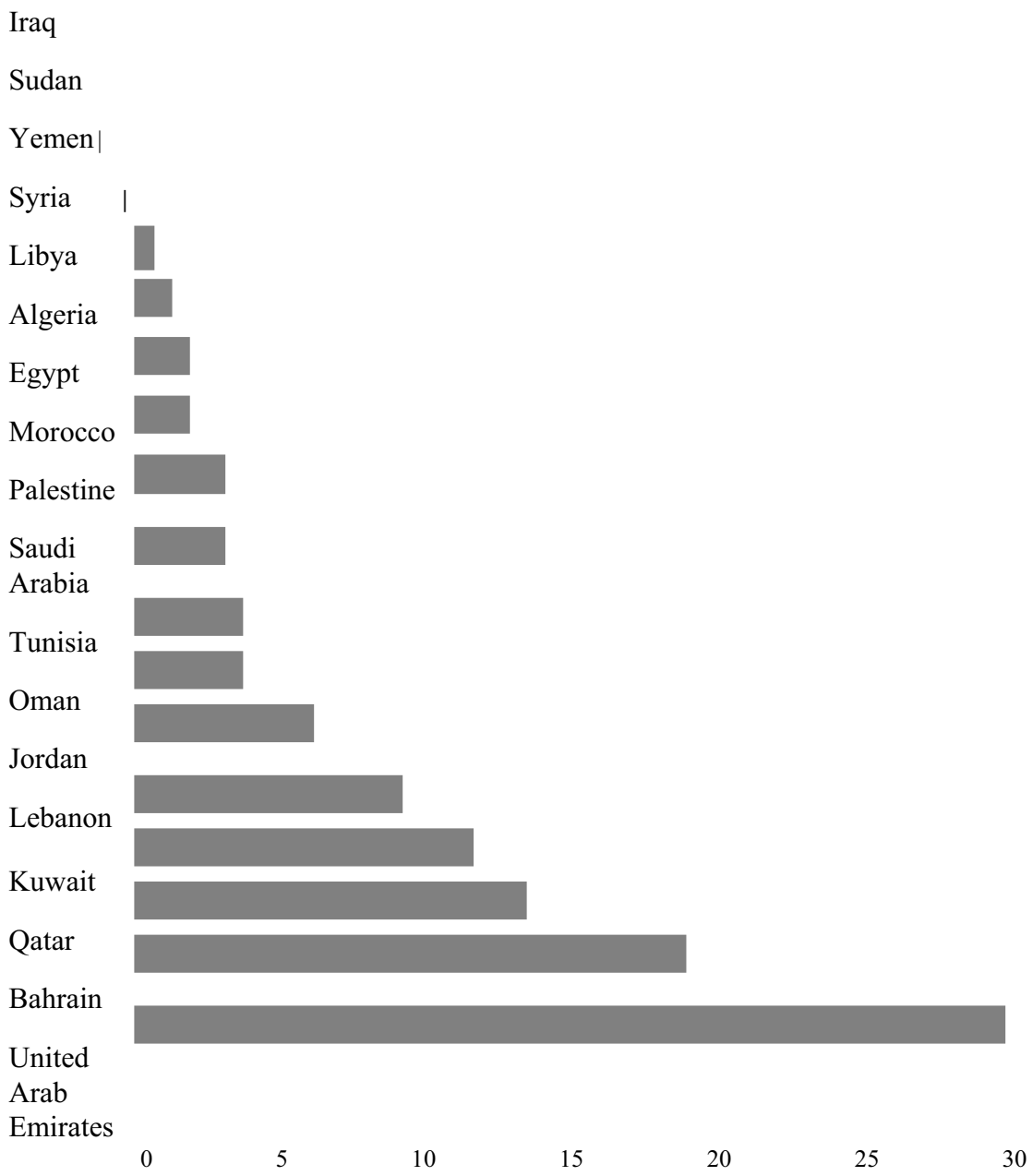
Source: World Bank, 2002.

As for the size of communications satellites and the number of international - satellite television channels, they have increased to reach 120 TV channels broadcasting via Arab satellite (Arab Sat., the Arab Satellite, the Nile Sat.), more than 70 ? of those TV channels are owned by official governments, and a group of Arab satellite channels is owned by Arab private sector, and broadcasts all its programs in Arabic language, but this group doesn't reflect the real image of the Arab society.
Access to information, as well as referring to the sources of news and information are hindered by

many complications and difficulties, and these TV channels rely, to a large extent, on foreign sources of information, especially on Western International News Agencies.
Nevertheless, some exceptions were noted in the Arab case, and appeared through some Arab satellite TV channels which succeeded in achieving news scoops on an international level (during the war in Afghanistan), such as Al Jazira, and Abu Dhabi channels.

Many Arab information institutions do not have information centers including libraries and archives. Even those who have such information centers, they are still archaic, and didn't introduce information technology system yet

The extent of Internet use in Arab states, rate of users among population, 2001



Percentage of Internet users among population (?)

Source: World Markets Research Center, 2002.

Concepts and substances

The role of mass media in different Arab states is similar, and if we review what media and communication means offer, we can notice the dominance of entertaining concepts, where superficiality and resemblance in the content prevail:

- Emphasize on consumption values and norms.
- Roar the importance and value of work through programs to win and gain money easily and faster, which aim at promoting and diffusing the dream of making fortune without efforts and work.
- Screen and diffuse mostly Western, American, French, and English programs and films, which can not reflect the situation and reality of the Arab world.
- Transmit traditional images and stereotypes on woman, and her role and functions in the society.
- Some channels diffuse religious culture, but do not take care of diffusing the culture of democracy.
- Focus on the screening of imported violence and sex films.
- Some Arab News Channels (Al Jazira, Qatar International Channel, Al Manar TV channel in Lebanon) succeeded in offering modern and advanced presentation through the diffusion of the democracy of dialogue that has authorized competition, and has enlarged the space for pluralism, and has raised some important cultural, political, and social issues.
- Pornography and scandal magazines and newspapers are largely spread, they rely on sex and scandals news and information in order to maximize their gains, and increase distribution.

Modern mass media and communication networks in Arab states

The essence of information sciences is the information and communication technology, computer networks, programming computers, networks, data base, and telecommunication services and providers.

The abundance and availability of information contribute in increasing the faculty to use and take advantages of information, to coordinate all efforts done in the fields of research and development with the available and obtainable means, to secure a basis for knowledge of major issues and problems, and to raise the level of efficiency and adequacy of social activities. The pursued aim from media and communication means is to contribute in assisting human brain in his process of knowledge, to guide his decisions, and help in production.

Arab infrastructure witnessed improvement and development in this field, but general features remain restricted in the lowest indicators on the international level. Number of telephone lines in Arab states reached 109 per 1000 persons, while it reached 561 lines. Also there is one telephone line per 10 citizens in Arab states, while there is one line per 1.7 citizens in developed countries.

In the years 1990s', the density of telephone use has doubled, there are four international projects for telecommunication and information technology in which all Arab states participate and contribute in order to develop information and telecommunication sector.

The existence and availability of computers are considered among basic standards for measuring size and extent of information and communication technology. However data indicate an important shortage in all Arab states. There are less than 18 computers per 1000 persons in the region, compared to World's average which reach 78.3 computers per 1000 persons. Number of Internet users in Arab states reached 4.2 million persons in 2001, this number constitutes 1.6 ? of the population in the Arab world. The decline in number of internet users in Arab states is due to several reasons, mainly weak and low level of knowledge in computer processing and internet use, and the increase in used telephone lines costs and subscription fees.

Children's Access to Media and Information and Communication Technology

The Impact of Conventional and Traditional Mass Media

There is no real and effective interest shown in Arab states regarding the impact media, information and communication technologies can have on children. Main concern is about child's literature, traditional story books, or on video programs imported from Western countries. The category of small ages, children between two and ten years old, receive care through Arab television programs. These media means teach children about colors, shapes, games, how to behave and eat correctly, etc…Entertaining games prevail in all those children programs.

However there is a great lack of guiding and instructing programs for children between nine and sixteen years old, as if this category of age doesn't exist, therefore sometimes they are treated as children, and some other times as grown-up people. The majority of those children consider themselves adult and mature, they watch dialogue programs, news, political programs, violence and sex films, etc… some of those children watch Western and Arab video clips, which constitute a common and wide spread trade that doesn't offer children any kind of education and information, but introduce to them very strange world, according to the kind of music they listen, or the music bands and singers they watch, and transmit and diffuse to children sexual and violence images, some cheap arts, quick and easy profits. Most of those programs are commercial, and have significant impact on children since they are tempted to imitate all what they see. There are no programs helping children to know and understand their rights, or encourage them to acquire democratic behavior, or even gender. Woman's image diffused through these media means is the traditional and conventional image, as well as man's image; The major problem resides in the fact that most of the Arab satellites TV channels broadcast Arab and Western commercial, artistic, humorous and comical programs. The cable vision is widely spread in the Arab Gulf region, while the majority of citizens in Arab states with medium or lower incomes (Syria, Morocco, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan) is still unable to own a television set.

Choices that can be made through cable and satellites are wide since many international channels can be received.

In Lebanon, most of the children watch American, Canadian and French programs broadcasted via Arab and foreign satellites TV channels. The fact that draws our attention is the existence of number of channels with no codes, broadcasting violence and sex programs and films, that are within reach of children. This situation raise a state of anxiety and concern about what do those children watch, especially since most programs do not diffuse real or objective images on the Western sexual liberty, and on Western society in general. This fact lead to the development of many reactions among Arab children such as:

1. Try to imitate blindly and subjectively the images they receive through media means which do not correspond to their reality, and are not applicable in their world.

2. Feel antipathy towards this image, and severely and subjectively judge all Western societies as societies with no moral values.

Children want and like to see their image, their reality and lives through television screen, and if they don't see and watch themselves and their images, they will surely be tempted to imitate other images, especially because images they receive do not reflect either Arab children's lives and situations, or Western children's situations. Unfortunately, these received images will have negative impacts on the dialogue between two different cultures, and the mutual understanding and knowledge of the other. For these reasons, the Lebanese International Future channel "Zein", for youth, failed somehow in creating adequate and specialized television channel aiming at dealing with issues and problems encountering children aging between nine and sixteen years old. On the other hand, this channel was mostly destined for relatively rich social classes, and deal with the problems and issues of children of these rich social classes, who imitate the western way of life, and specific Western phenomena. This fact resulted in the decrease in spectators number who are no longer interested to follow these programs. The television channel "Zein" was therefore obliged to close, after paying great amounts for losses and damages. On the other hand, international television stations, broadcasting through satellites, such as Al Jazira and Al Manar, do transmit and reflect social and political real facts that Middle East region is witnessing, in Palestine and Iraq. Children between the age of ten and sixteen are affected and impressed by the images of violence, killing, expelling, displaced and homeless people…these fats reflect rancor, hostility, and coercion. Most of the time, children watch what adults watch, specially since the family owns one television set. Children and adults watch and follow news, political programs, dialogues Children are affected by adults' reactions and opinions, and develop their own following reactions:

– Emergence of state of psychological and social instability, where children become victims of violence and contra-violence.

– Emergence of attitude of violence against the other (Israeli and Americans).

– The diffusion of media and communication means, international TV stations broadcasting via satellites created a form of political awareness that political parties failed to create in the previous decades. The transmission of bloody images on wars, conflicts and on local and regional disputes succeeded in the transmission and diffusion of two kinds of images: The first image is a positive one, since it reflects that news surveillance and control start to vanish, in the existence of competition. This fact allows public opinion to know and understand views and opinions of the

other, and this is a considerable step achieved in the process of democratization. The second image is negative, because it has reflected a state of anxiety among Arab children after watching clearly on the TV screens the murdering and death of the Palestinian child Mohammad Al Dorra, in 2000. Children were deeply affected by these images that arise in them the fear of violence, and at the same time the adoption of violence. Children start doubting about the security their parents can offer them, specially after seeing the child Mohammad Al Dorra killed while he was taken in the arms of his father. This picture confirms and illustrates the concept of violence that children are used to hear about, but couldn't yet see it clearly! What would be the opinion, conception, and reactions of those children regarding violence practiced frequently, and continuously in the Middle East region. This phenomenon can contribute in arising reactions inciting and encouraging violence.

The impact of Information and Communication Technology on Children in Arab states

The wide spread of information and communication technology in the last decade of the 20th century raised in all Arab states the challenge of technology, and the necessity to adopt it, to introduce it in the administrative and educational institutions, to promote and encourage it, and to diffuse it.

A survey study conducted in some schools in Lebanon, that include children from the upper social classes, show a significant disparity in the use and possession of computers. Schools do encourage children aging between nine and sixteen years old to use computers in their home-works, and in their work of research. But on the other hand, schools do not consider the necessity to assign sufficient hours and classes to teach children the computer use and processing. Therefore only children who have computers in their houses can get benefit of it and have larger access to knowledge. This fact allow children belonging to the upper social classes to be more informed than children of the middle social classes who cannot afford to buy and own computers. The phenomenon of "Internet Café", starts to spread in all city districts in Arab states, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt…, where children and teenagers aging between eight and eighteen years old get benefit of computer and internet services. The size and number of these Internet cafés increased in the last few years, between the year 2000 and 2003. Children and teenagers belonging to this category of age are considered to be among most interested categories in computer systems, information and communication technologies, in possessing mobile phones, and in its various uses…But the proportion of those owning or having access to computers at home is still small and minor. Children primarily use the computer for playing games, still fewer have access to the internet.

Challenges facing Arab Mass Media and Information Means

In the context of quick, successive, and continuous evolution and developments of telecommunication sciences and technology, mass media, information and communication technologies are facing some obstacles and constraints related to the following facts:

- Insufficient rate of penetration of information and communication means in Arab states, compared to the number of population in these states.
- Failure in realizing and securing the participation of the population in these information and communication means, either as efficient and positive actors, or as negative or passive receivers.
- Incorporate and merge media and information means with public authorities and governmental institutions, and the compliance with those institutions.

– Absence of knowledge about the public needs and expectations from the media, information and communication means. Absence of public opinion surveys, ratings, and statistics on the role and functions of mass media, information, and communication technologies in child's development process.

In the light of the afore-mentioned facts on the real status of the use of mass media and information and communication technology in Arab states, we consider it fair to raise the issue of disparity related to children's access to media means, information and communication technology, specially in the case of children aging between nine and eighteen years old. This disparity is due to three major reasons:

1. Lack of serious and efficient care and concern in children, on the cultural level, as well as on the level of development and improvement of their human capabilities, and their auto-sufficiency. Even civil society institutions, and international organizations are not seriously pursuing these aims. Two major issues are still to be taking seriously into account: health and education. We are still far from achieving those aims.

2. Poverty facing Arab rural regions, and the disparity existing between the situation of children in those regions, and children living in the city. The latter benefit from health and educational care, and better opportunities for access to information and entertainment through conventional and traditional media means (Television and radio…), and via modern information and communication technologies.

3. Absence of capacity to purchase and own computers, in the cities, in the first place, and even among middle income families.

Role of Media in Development

Media is an essential element contributing in the formation of critical and objective thinking, and is necessary for the participation and for the Democracy.

Mass media and information means struggle to obtain and diffuse information, and strive for attaining social justice, and forming citizenship able to criticize, and to give objective judgements.

In today's democracy, most of the decisions depend on conceptions and impressions received through mass media. Media and communication means gain an ever- lasting greater role in society, where public discussion and communication take place. It is through mass media that we form many of our ideas, opinions, and judgments. Therefore, mass media ought to be an important tool for democracy. Teenagers between ten and sixteen years old are inspired by what they watch on television, and if they don't see themselves through the TV screen, they will imitate someone else. Mass media should diffuse and promote child's rights, democracy, and gender equality through entertainment programs. Nevertheless, development cannot be achieved if the basic demand of all children to have access to media and communication means is not fulfilled in the first place.

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The Role of Media and IT in Knowledge Transfer for Children - Children and ICT - The Case of Egypt

Information and Communication Technology: The Modern Age

Information is the oxygen of the modern age (Ronald Reagan: 1989).
A statement as simple as the above gives a clear description of the world today. It, in addition, indicates the magnitude of information as a means of survival.
"The rhetoric of the information society is common today: we are constantly told that we are living in an age of new technology, where information has become the new currency."(Caroline Harding, 2000)
However, the fact remains that although information has, in consequence, become a target to be sought on a global scale, there is an obvious disparity not only among individuals but also among nations in the availability of information, and more so, the accessibility to it.
It follows that the term "Information and Communication Technology" (ICT) has come to be coined as the creed of the modern age. ICT stands for a number of technological devices that include televisions, videos, CDs, cassette recorders, telephones, musical keyboards, as well as fax machines. However, as the term is commonly used, it tends to focus on the most obvious example—namely, computers.
It must be mentioned that the whole concept of Information and Communication Technology is relatively recent. The phenomenon itself emerged in response to the rising needs of globalization, and is on a continuous process of growth/expansion as global requirements take over.
Especially the use of computers has only been an event of the very last decades, and since its importance came to be felt, what is close to an explosion has taken place, leading to an extensive, and at the same time intensive, wide demand. Other forms of ICT may have come into wide use earlier than computers, but the real revolution in ICT came with this innovation.
In this world of growing information, leading to the pursuit of knowledge, children face an increasing challenge. As they grow up, they discover that they are surrounded by the continuously developing technology - in fact, they grow up "in a world immersed in technology" (Harding), a technological environment that they have to handle, or else be left behind.
Education systems, therefore, have been trying to introduce ICT in the schools as an integral part of the learning experience of children. However, as above- mentioned, the same disparity that is found in the accessibility and availability of information among

individuals and nations is reflected in a disparity among schools in the accessibility and availability of ICT, not only among countries, but also in the same country.
This paper attempts to approach the situation in Egyptian society with respect to ICT. The paper addresses the issue from a sociological perspective, in order to help understand the socio-cultural milieu where technology operates.
The major starting point here is that Egypt is not only a developing country with special features that may not be conducive to the introduction/development of certain types of technology, but it further includes a number of constraints that may not facilitate the expansion of ICT. Nevertheless, some successful examples have emerged, and the pursuit of ICT is growing at quite a rapid pace. Whether this pace can keep up with the global marathon is a question that only time can answer.

Children and ICT: Positive and Negative Perceptions:
There is no doubt that in the world of today, computers are reshaping people's lives, not excluding children, who are confronted with the challenge of the increasing emphasis on the use of computers. For some children, computers have invaded their lives even in early childhood. The impact is definitely profound. It becomes necessary, therefore, to investigate this impact from different perspectives. Here positive as well as negative aspects have been addressed. What potential harm can lie in the growing dependence on ICT in general, and computers in particular, considering the great benefits provided? In other words, is ICT a total blessing, or are there those side effects that may constitute an undesirable impact on children and consequently may be a source of worry to parents?
In this attempt, use of ICT by children has been the special focus of social scientists. On the one hand, there is the dominant positive outlook to the children's exposure to ICT. A world of information opens up to them. They are no longer confined to a limited environment, where they are restricted to a narrow range of knowledge. Computers are also time-saving. Children can get in a short time what may take them hours to research. It is only "at the touch of a button".
Research published by the University of New Castle-upon-Tyne in 2000 has revealed that literacy skills improved five times more quickly than average among primary schools where teachers made good use of computers. (National Literacy Trust: 2000)
A positive attitude towards the benefits of the computer to children, in particular the Internet, as a learning experience, is expressed by the psychologist Susan Blackmore. She believes that,
"Children are voracious suckers-up of information. What's exciting is that if children have the idle curiosity about something, if it's easy to satisfy by going online, they'll do it."(Literacy Trust)
Furthermore, children by having access to the computer, can become increasingly independent, once they get started through help, whether from parents or teachers.

Another academic who has expressed an opinion backing up the pro-internet stance is Richard Dawkins, who emphasized its power in making information available, considering it "the most radical shift" in education since the invention of the printing press. (Literacy Trust)

On the other hand, there appears a negative attitude towards computers in general, and the Internet in particular. The facility with which the child gets the information may reduce the child's ability to think. According to Susan Blackmore, the growing influence of the Internet on education could damage the child's ability to learn. She says,

"*The rapid advancement of new technology would mean so much information was available at the touch of a button that humans would no longer need to gain knowledge in the traditional sense by storing information in their own memories. Navigating knowledge would become more important than storing it."(*Literacy Trust)

In support of the same attitude, there is the view presented by Dr. Jean Healy, an American psychologist. After two years of researching the use of the computer in the classroom and at home, she came up with the conclusion that their harmful effect is probably more than their good one.

"*Small children would be better off playing with the box the computer came in and making a playhouse out of it than playing with the computer*," she believes. (Literacy Trust)

Another aspect of the possible harm that can affect children when they use computers is seen in the impact of the violence inherent in most video games. As the world is witnessing violence every day, both at the individual and global levels, the increasing exposure of children to it cannot go unquestioned.

One other perception that cannot go unheeded is the fear expressed by parents towards the Internet as a threat to morality. There is that belief among many that the Internet exposes the young at an early age to information/knowledge of a deviant nature— e.g., pornography, gay culture, drugs, etc. Especially in traditional societies, and in traditional segments of some societies is this view prevalent. It, consequently, leads to restrictions on the use of ICT, not only computers, but may extend to television and video.

The Egyptian Situation:

The question then arises as to the position of Egypt in the midst of this broad arena of ICT. Egypt, like other countries of the developing world, has been trying to catch up with the challenging leaps in ICT. The introduction of the new technology is relatively recent in the country. Cassette tapes/ recorders, television, video, CD players were first to be known. Computers came later. The new technology has helped open new vistas to the population. The fact remains, however, that, again like its sister countries of the developing world, Egypt faces a number of constraints that may impede its rapid progress in this respect. These constraints are the following:

1.Parallel to the digital divide that characterizes Egyptian society is a "linguistic divide". Language plays a key role in ICT. Since English is the dominant language for the flow of information, it creates a problem for users of the computer. Knowledge of the English language is not widespread among the majority of the population. Neither is it of a good standard in schools. An intensive movement towards Arabizing the computer language for Arab countries in general has been growing, but it has not achieved full coverage. ICT, therefore, remains the privilege of the minority who has knowledge of the English language. An average school child cannot cope with the computer language, therefore, unless it is in his /her native tongue. The process of Arabization is, however, moving at a good pace to help bridge the already existing digital divide.
2.ICT is a factor in social exclusion. The current economic conditions are not supportive of ICT. It is a costly endeavor. Those who cannot afford computers at home cannot compete with others who can. In this case, their opportunities are limited in both accessibility and availability of information. Moreover, the situation extends to include schools. The Egyptian education system is dominated by public schools, where education is offered free from tuition, in line with socialist policies implemented since earlier periods. These schools cater for the majority of the population. They are not all equipped with ICT. The small number that is privileged in this respect serves only an equally small segment of the children. There is a parallel system of what are known as private schools, which require high fees, in most cases beyond the means of the average Egyptian family. These schools are better equipped, and have access to ICT. It follows that children from poorer families who attend the public schools can therefore be considered information poor, whereas their counterparts from rich families are more privileged with the opportunity to be familiar with ICT.
Needless to say, the information poor are usually those who are socially and economically deprived. Consequently, "the contrast between the information rich and the information poor seems to be more marked in the age of rapidly advancing technology."(Harding)
3. As has already been mentioned, there is a predominant belief among traditional segments of society that ICT has harmful effects on children and youth, and consequently is a means to immorality because of the corrupt values it propagates. The result is a strong resistance towards it. The association of ICT in all its forms with immorality leads to its rejection among certain segments of the population, especially those that hold negative perceptions of Western culture. The Egyptian family, dominated by patriarchal authority, gives limited freedom of choice to the child. Parents can, therefore, impose restrictions on him/her in the use of ICT.
4. ICT at school necessitates teachers who are trained in ICT. The current situation of the teaching staff reflects a deficiency in this respect. Teachers are neither qualified nor trained in ICT to be able to monitor the school system. There is a growing trend to create the trained personnel for this task, but there are not enough of them at present.

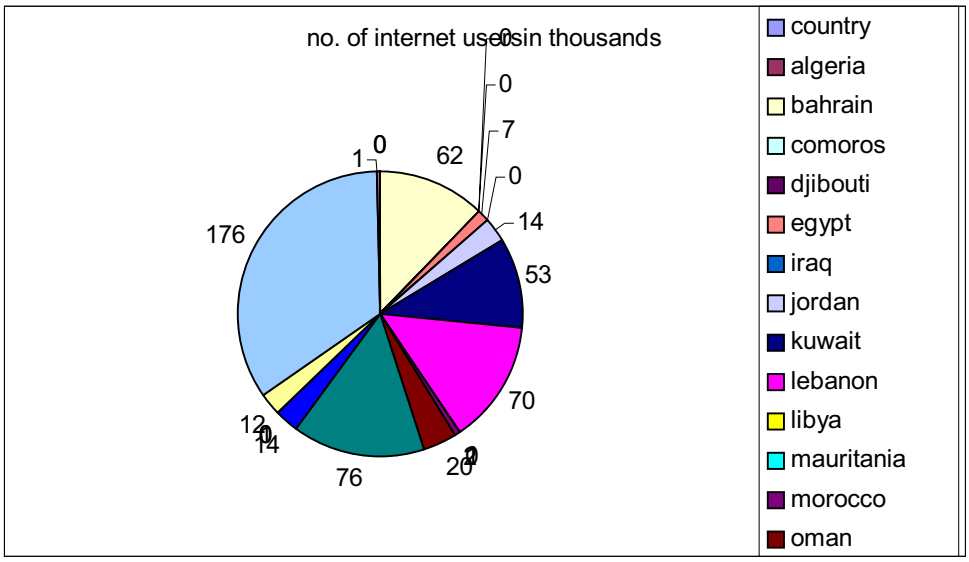
A glance at the situation of Egypt with respect to ICT can help clarify the environment where children lie. It must be mentioned that Egypt is not so much different from other Arab countries of the region. ICT in the broader milieu of Arab culture tends to reflect itself similarly in all countries of the region, with slight variations among them. The following table shows the digital divide in Arab countries:

Table (1)
The Digital Divide in Arab Countries: 2000

country	no. of internet users in thousands
Algeria	0
Bahrain	62
Comoros	0
Djibouti	0
Egypt	7
Iraq	0
Jordan	14
Kuwait	53
Lebanon	70
Libya	1
Mauritania	0
Morocco	2
Oman	20
Qatar	76
Saudi Arabia	14
Somalia	0
Sudan	0
Syria	1
Tunisia	12
Un. Ar. Emirates	176
Yemen	1

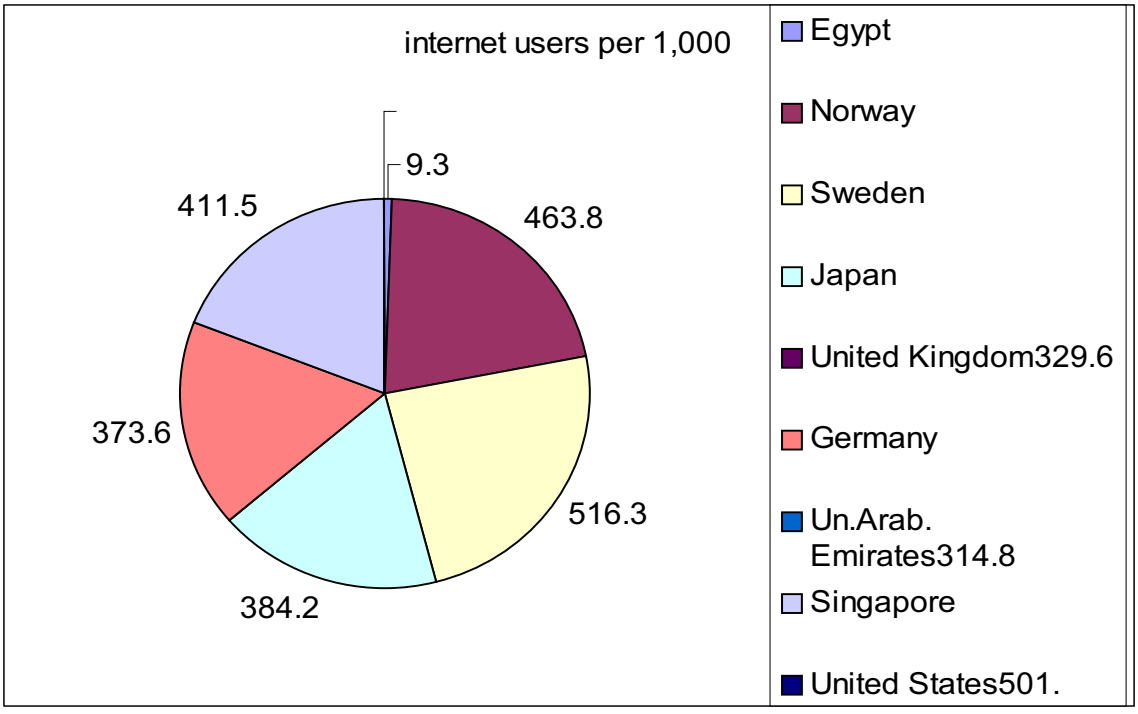
Source: Arab Human Development Report:2002

Although the general situation is similar in all the Arab states, there are variations that range between the absence of users in countries like Sudan and Mauritania, and relative high numbers as is found in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, as is represented by70, 76, and 167 respectively, the latter being the highest among this group of countries. Egypt is represented by only 7. The situation as reflected here raises questions as to the economic dimension in the digital divide. In general, Arabs represent only 0.5 percent of Internet users in the world, although they represent 5 percent of the world population.(Arab Human Development Report:2002)
The digital divide can also be clarified through the following chart:



Source: Arab Human Development Report: 2002

It is interesting to note that a comparison between Egypt and other countries outside the Arab world reveals how low is the representation of ICT in the former. The following chart gives this comparative view, showing Internet users in some selected countries, including Egypt:

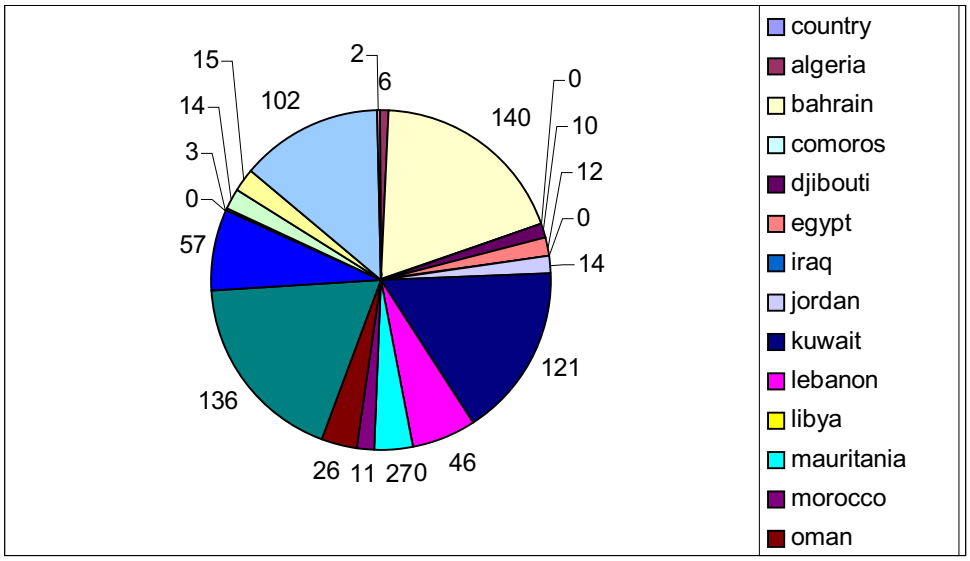


Internet Users in Some Selected Countries 2001 - Figure (2)

Source: Human Development Report: 2003

The above chart shows how Egypt lags far behind other more developed countries. It must be mentioned that there are major attempts in the direction of expanding ICT. The Ministry of Education, which is in charge of the public school system, is embarking on a series of measures to provide the schools under its administration with computers for the students, in the hope of catching up with the increasing use of ICT. However, for reasons mentioned earlier, the process has not yet reached full coverage.

What may help explain the situation in all Arab countries is that the availability of computers is not widespread. The following chart shows the number of personal computers in the Arab countries:



The Number of Personal Computers in Arab Countries 1999 - Figure (3)
Source: Arab Human Development Report: 2002

Again, although in general there is a low representation of PCs in the Arab countries, there is a variation among them, with the Gulf States ranking highest, in consistence with Table (1), again raising the question of the relevance of the economic factor. However, Arab countries lag far behind in global comparisons with respect to the ownership of PCs. In the whole region, available data estimate less than 18 PCs for every1000 population, compared to the international standard of 78.3 for every 1000 population. The percentage of Internet users is only 1.6% of Arab population. Telephone lines in these states do not reach one fifth of those in the developed countries (Arab Human Development Report: 2003).

Efforts in ICT in Egypt:
There are individual attempts by organizations to help in meeting the growing global

challenge of ICT. One such attempt has been made through the efforts of the World Bank Institute together with the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region and the Ministry of Education in Egypt under the title of ICT for Education Program. The objective here is to assist Egypt as a developing country to prepare its youth to enter the information age and into the global community. The program is active in other developing countries as well.

One other organization, namely— the Regional Information and Software Engineering Center (RITSEC), is taking the responsibility of advocating ICT in an educational context. It has been involved in a number of projects catering to school children in the region. The following section will give an overview of the main activities of some of its projects.

A.Global Teenager Project:

The goal of this project is:

"to offer educational virtual exchange progrmmes to secondary school students worldwide, dedicated to promoting cross-cultural understanding through new ways of learning, with the use of ICT."

This project was initiated by The International institute for Communication and Development (IICD), with the objective of promoting teacher/student cooperation, as well as creating a circle of teams from different schools simultaneously working on the same topic. A variety of themes are offered, the language being French and English. In this way, students can exchange information and learn from each other. These teams are known as "learning circles". Implicit in the project objective is the addition of a new, exciting dimension to classroom teaching, as well as connecting cultures through the exchange of information. Egypt joined the project in January 2003.

What is interesting to note is that in March 2003, out of seven (7) schools from Egypt that participated in the project, one came third in the program contest among 165 schools from 19 countries throughout the world.

B.Think Quest Africa:

This is an annual competition for creative work in ICT for the youth in the age group 12-19 from the African continent. The content of the competition is the creation of educational websites.

In 2003, the youth succeeded in cooperating to create websites in the following fields:

1.science and mathematics
2.sports and health
3.social sciences
4.arts

It is important to mention that the youth met a multitude of problems throughout their work, and faced a number of challenges as they proceeded in their endeavor. Examples

of such hardships can be seen in the unavailability of the proper technological infrastructure in most, if not all, countries. Moreover, time differences among the different countries and the diversity of cultures were no help. These, in fact, were challenges that they could overcome.

The educational aspect of this competition can be seen in the forum that is created for the youth to express their views, exchange ideas/information, and become aware of new knowledge, as well as disseminate it.

C. iEARN:

iEARN is a nonprofit organization made up of over 4,000 schools in almost 100 countries. Its objective is to allow teachers and young people to work together online at very low cost through a global communication network. School linkages as such enable students to engage in meaningful educational projects with peers from different parts of the world. Involving teachers in the forum is a positive point for their training, considering the deficiency in this respect in Egypt.

A Final Word:

In the final analysis, Egypt faces a great challenge with respect to ICT in general, and in the education of children in particular, since the trend in globalization has no room for the information poor. Obstacles inherent in the culture are a major setback in this respect. Language barriers as seen in the dominance of the English language in ICT; economic constraints represented by the high cost of the technology; cultural impediments as apparent in the resistance to innovation; and more so, the shortage in trained teachers to cope with the equipment - are all points that need to be addressed with the utmost consideration, if any progress is to be made in catching up with the global race. The fact that there is an information gap between those that own PCs at home and those that do not creates a situation of inequality paralleled by the same inequality between schools that are equipped with ICT and those that are not. The Ministry of Education is making major efforts to achieve close to complete coverage of schools with respect to equipment, but again budget concerns and shortage of staff interfere, in addition to the fact that the procedure takes time.

A major step that has been taken in Egypt in the attempt to propagate ICT is making the use of the Internet free. No charges are made on the accessibility to the web—a situation which facilitates the use of computers at home. There are also Internet Cafes available for utilization, and their number is increasing all over the country. However, the issue of cost is a case in point.

It must be mentioned, however, that there is more use of other audio-visual media as a tool of education than computers. Television and video programs have been in use for more than three decades, and they have been in widespread reach of children on a vast scale. School curricula have been incorporated in these programs, and a big audi-

ence of school age has been benefiting from them. Even some literacy programs are included in the state television, especially in rural areas where there is a high illiteracy rate. These have achieved a reasonable level of success, considering that there is a wide audience for television in the countryside.

Similarly, telephone mainlines and cellular phones have been increasing in number, the latter being a recent innovation that is on the rapid increase. According to the Human Development Report of 2003, the number of telephone mainlines in Egypt in 1990 was 30 per thousand population, and has reached 104 per thousand population in 2001. Cellular subscribers are 43 per thousand population in 2001, and it is expected that the number has risen significantly for the later years, as the device has come to be in wider use. The fact remains, however, that comparisons with developed countries are not in favor of Egypt, considering that they reveal the wide gap between its situation and that of the others. As an illustration, data for the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Canada show that the number of telephone mainlines for the year 2001 are 667, 587, 732, and 676 per thousand population respectively. In addition, the number of cellular subscribers for the same countries and the same year are 451,770, 815, and 362 respectively.

The situation is, therefore, one of disparity along different levels. ICT reflects the gap that exists among nations, highlighting the North-South dichotomy. It is further a reflection of the disparities within the same society, revealing the discrepancy between the rich and poor. As such, ICT cannot be understood apart from the broader context of the socio-cultural and economic milieu. It is a function of the variables that operate in this respect, and hence have their impact on both its availability and accessibility.

What can be said here is that Egypt is trying to find a place in the global arena of ICT, coupled with a focus on its use in educating children, especially as there is the need, and correspondingly a call, to create a generation of users that can cope with future conditions.

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The Role Of Media and Technology in Knowledge Transfer for Children

Children and ICT

The Case Of Egypt

Dr.Madiha El Safty

Objective

This paper attempts to approach the situation in Egyptian society with respect to ICT in the education of children from a sociological perspective, not excluding the constraints in this respect. Some successful examples are also mentioned.

Contents

Information and Communication Technology: The Modern Age

Information is the oxygen of the modern age (Ronald Reagan: 1989)

•ICT stands for a number of technological devices that include televisions, videos, CDs, cassette recorders, telephones, musical keyboards, and fax machines. However, as the term is commonly used, it tends to focus on computers.

•There is a disparity among nations and individuals in the availability of information, and the accessibility to it.

•Children face the challenge of the continuously developing ICT.

•Schools have been trying to make use of ICT, also reflecting a disparity among them.

Children and ICT: Positive and Negative Perceptions:

•Since computers are reshaping people's lives, children included, the impact is definitely profound, and needs to be addressed from different perspectives, both positive and negative.

•**Positive:**

•With children's exposure to ICT, a world of information opens up to them. They are no longer confined to a limited environment of knowledge.

•Computers are time-saving. Children can get "at the touch of a button"what may take them hours to research.

•Literacy skills improved five times more quickly than average primary schools where teachers made good use of computers.(research published by the University of New Castle-upon-Tyne in 2000)

•By going online, children have an easy way to satisfy their curiosity about matters.

•Computers help children become independent, after they get the help to start.

•Computers are seen as "the most radical shift" in education since the invention of the printing press.(Richard Dawkins)

Negative:

•The facility with which the child gets information through computers may reduce his ability to think.

•*Children would be better off playing with the box the computer came in and making a playhouse out of it than playing with the computer.*(Jean Healy)

•The increasing exposure of children to violence inherent in most video games has its negative impact on their behavior.

•Traditional cultures view the Internet in association with immorality—e.g.,pornography, gay culture, drugs, etc. Consequently, parents may lay restrictions on children's use of the computer.

The Egyptian Situation:

•ICT is a relatively recent concern, and Egypt is trying to catch up in this respect.

•Cassette tapes/recorders, television. video, CD players were first to be known. Computers came later.

Constraints:

- **Language**:

Parallel to the digital divide in Egypt is a "linguistic divide". English being the dominant language of the computer, knowledge of it is not widespread among the majority, and neither in schools. Arabization of the computer language is , therefore, moving at a rapid pace.

2. Social Exclusion:

ICT is a factor in social exclusion, creating disparities between those that can afford its cost and those that cannot afford. The latter is represented in home computers as well as public schools that are not properly equipped.The small number of private schools that cater to the equally small segment of the rich have access to ICT.

3.An Attitude of Resistance:

A prevailing attitude among the traditional segments equating the Internet with immorality creates resistance to its use, especially among children.

4.Shortage in Trained Teachers:

The shortage in teachers trained in ICT raises a problem with respect to its use in schools. The growing trend to create the trained personnel is moving at a rapid pace.

•Egypt is similar to other Arab countries with respect to the situation of ICT.

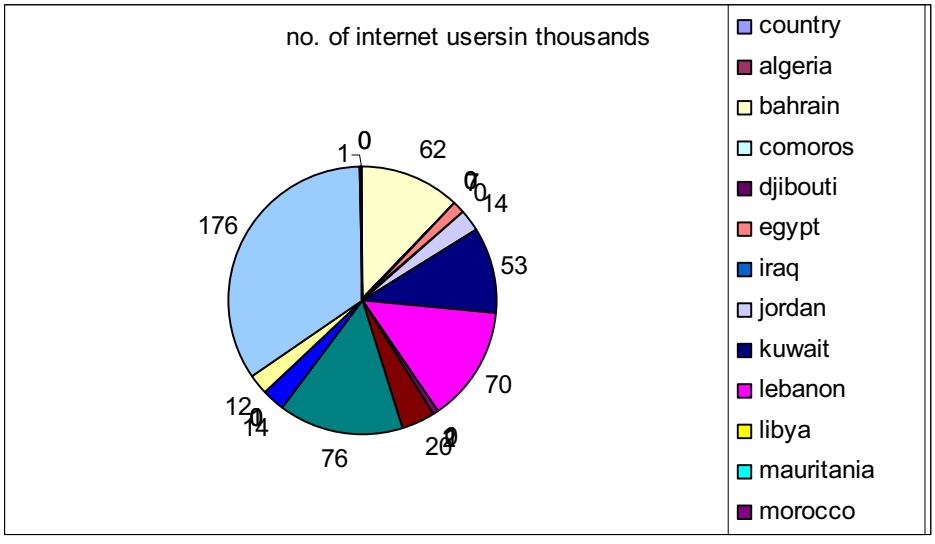
•To help clarify, the following table shows the digital divide in some selected Arab countries: (Arab Human Development Report:2002)

Country	Internet users in thous.
Bahrain	62
Egypt	7
Jordan	14
Kuwait	53
Lebanon	70
Morocco	2
Oman	20
Qatar	76
Saudi Arabia	14
Tunisia	12
United Arab Emirates	176

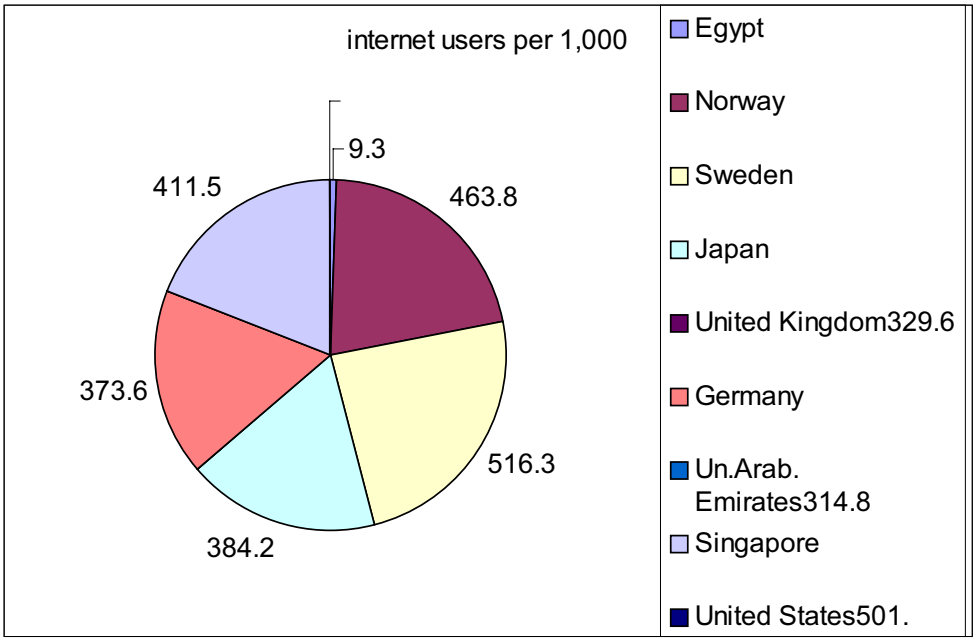
· The table shows variation, with the Gulf States ranking higher, raising the question of the economic factor in this respect.

•In general the number here is relatively low in global comparisons. Arabs represent 0.5 % of internet users in the world, while they represent 5% of world population.

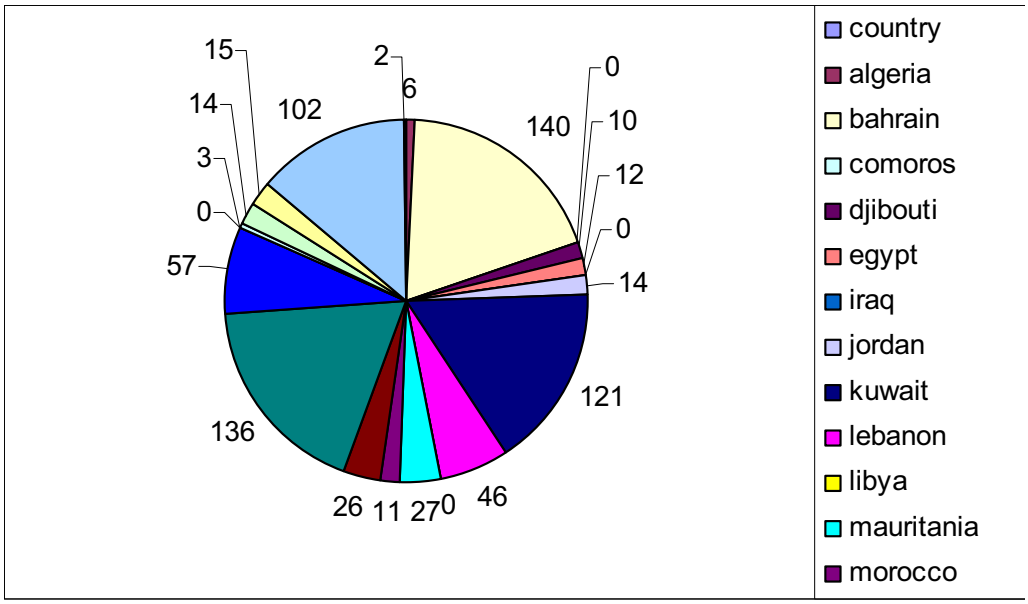
•The broader view of the digital divide in Arab countries can be seen in the following figure, based on the above table:



•From a different perspective, the following figure gives the number of Internet users per 1,000 population in some selected countries, including Egypt:(Human Development Report:2003)



•What may help clarify the situation further is the availability of personal computers. The following chart gives the number per thousand population: (Arab Human Development Report:2002)



•Again, there is a variation among them, with Gulf states ranking high.In the whole region, available data estimate less than 18 PCs per thousand population, compared to the international standard of 78.3.

•The percentage of internet users is only 1.6% of the total Arab population.

•Telephone lines are less than one fifth of those in the developed countries. (Arab Human Development Report:2002)

Efforts in ICT in Egypt:

•The World bank Institute with the Ministry of Education under the title of ICT for Education Program.

•The regional information and Software Engineering Center (RITSEC) sponsoring programs. Examples are the following:

A. Global Teenager Project:

- The project aims to promote teacher/student cooperation,as well as creating a circle of teams from different schools simultaneously working on the same topic.
- The language is English and French.
- Implicit in the project objective is the addition of a new, exciting dimension to classroom teaching, as well as connecting cultures through the exchange of information.
- Egypt joined the project in January 2003.
- Seven schools from Egypt participated, one of which came third out of 165 schools from 19 countries.

B. Think Quest Africa:

- This is an annual competition for creative work in ICT for the youth between 12-19 from Africa.
- The content is the creation of educational websites.
- In 2003 the youth covered websites in the following fields:

1. Science and mathematics
2. Sports and health
3. Social sciences
4. Arts

- Challenges they met: unavailability of the proper technological infrastructure, time difference among countries, and diversity of cultures.

C.iEARN:

•This is a nonprofit organization made up of over 4,000 schools in almost 100 countries.

•Its objective is to allow teachers and young people to work together online at very low cost through a global communication network.

•Involving teachers in the forum is a positive point for their training, considering the deficiency in this respect in Egypt.

A Final Word:

- Egypt faces a great challenge with ICT in general, and in the education of children in particular as seen in the following:

1. Language barriers
2. Economic constraints represented in the high cost of the technology
3. Resistance to innovation
4. Shortage in trained teachers

- A situation of inequality exists between owners of PCs and non-owners; between schools equipped with ICT and those not equipped.

•The Ministry of Education is attempting to achieve coverage of schools with respect to computers, but there are budget constraints.

•Attempt at propagating ICT has been made through the free accessibility to the Internet, the cost being only that of the telephone use.

•Other audio-visual media for education have long been in use, and have been in widespread reach of children.

•School curricula have been incorporated in the public television, and a big audience of school age has been benefiting from them. Literacy programs are also included.

•Telephone mainlines and cellular phones have been increasing in number, the latter being a relatively recent innovation that is on the rapid increase.

•Comparison with the developed countries reveals an expected wide gap.

•In conclusion, the situation of ICT reflects the North-South dichotomy. It is a reflection of the disparities between the rich and poor, not only among nations, but also within the same society.

•In this context, Egypt is trying to catch up, with special emphasis on the education of children.