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Paths of Bridging the Gap Between Academic and Media Practice: The Professors' Vision in Media Faculties

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Abstract: The article aims to explore paths for bridging the gap between academic qualification in media faculties, departments, and institutes, and media practice from the point of view of media professors in Jordanian universities. A descriptive approach has been adopted to achieve the article's aim, using a survey questionnaire of 50 practitioners of media institutions, and conducting 15 interviews with professors in media faculties and departments at Jordanian universities. The results indicated a gap between academic qualification and media practice. This gap had been due to the different requirements of the market, and the sufficiency of media institutions in terms of media professionals, besides the absence of criteria for accepting students in media faculties, and the academic plans focusing on theoretical aspects more than practical aspects. The results finally concluded that six paths might bridge the gap between the academic media path and media practice: applying the mechanism for accepting students in media majors, developing curricula and plans to keep pace with the requirements of the digital age and the needs of the labor market, recruiting experienced and competent professors and involving professionals in the teaching process, preparing advanced training programs for students; and developing training centers in media faculties.

1. Introduction

In the twenty-first century, interest in evaluating university performance has emerged within the framework of comprehensive quality standards. In order to meet the educational outputs and requirements of the labor market, and to face the challenges posed by recent developments in the field of media, universities have begun to adopt teaching strategies centered on the "university student" as the main element in all aspects of development in universities, as well as the main axis in the education process.

Today, media faculties in all academic institutions have become the main body responsible for graduating thousands of students according to certain criteria and conditions, which is represented in preparing them to enter the media work path in all media institutions, by employing knowledge and research foundations and various skills through curricula and courses prepared for this purpose. From here, there must be a specialized media qualification in order to practice media work in media institutions, before entering the labor market to practice media work[1].

Therefore, academic qualification is the main role played by media faculties, departments, and institutes in universities, in addition to training, which is a scientific and practical way to raise students' competence, by developing their capabilities and skills. Therefore, it is required to achieve a balance between the theoretical and practical aspects on the one hand, and the objectives and results of training in a way that suits the needs of the media labor market on the other hand.

Training is considered an essential pillar for qualifying students for the labor market and helps them develop their performance and raise their abilities to be more capable of performing the tasks and jobs required by working in media institutions, keeping pace with technological and digital development[2].

"Academic qualification" is an important stage in the course of university students, as this stage lasts four years, in which students learn through lessons and lectures the sciences of journalism, media and communication, and related theories, models, media legislation, ethics, scientific research methods, and other theoretical lessons, as well as applied training in journalistic, radio writing and techniques, and preparing radio and television programs and other applied models, which culminate in a "Bachelor's" degree in media, which qualifies them to enter the media labor market.

However, the reality of the academic qualification of journalism and media students in Jordan raises a set of questions

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about the quality of the students' educational outcomes in a way that qualifies them to be employed in media institutions. Students need a theoretical-scientific qualification through curricula designed to provide them with information, knowledge and sciences related to media. They also need practice - training in order to acquire the practical skills that qualify them to enter the labor market.

In this article, the author seeks to reveal the impact of academic qualification in reducing the gap between the academic and practical practice of the media, and to what extent academic qualification is compatible with the professional requirements of media institutions. So, the article will identify the paths through which it is possible to bridge the gap between academic qualification in media faculties, departments and institutes, and the reality of professional practice in media institutions.

1.1. The Problem Statement

Academic qualification in media faculties is an important stage in the path of university students, as this qualification allows students to enter the field of media work and practice it. However, the reality of practice and the daily work routine in media organizations has been greatly affected by technological and digital developments. So, it has become necessary for media institutions to develop their media tools according to their economic fundamentals, and their ability to provide the necessary tools and equipment to keep pace with the requirements needed by the media work. This, in turn, was reflected in the ability of academic institutions to simulate the reality in media institutions and the conditions of professional practice. In light of the above and in the framework of the results of studies such as Kirchhoff, Jin & Ren, and Wang, [3]–[5] which confirmed the existence of a gap between media academic education and the reality of practice in media institutions, and the results of the survey conducted at practitioners in media institutions, which emphasized a gap between the reality of academic qualification in media faculties and media practice, the problem is to identify the paths through which the gap can be bridged between the academic side in the faculties of media, and the media practice. So, the main question of article is what the paths through which the gap can be bridged between the academic side in the faculties of media, and the media practice? To answer this question, I will begin to answer the following sub questions: (1) what is the current description of the academic qualification in the faculties of media? (2) What is the extent of the gap between media academic qualification in the faculties of media and media practice? (3) What are the reasons for the gap between media academic qualification and media practice? (4) What are the paths through which it is possible to bridge the gap between academia in media faculties and media practice?

1.2. The importance

The importance of the article is due to the importance of the subject itself, i.e., the importance of identifying paths through which the gap between academic qualification and media practice can be bridged, in addition to the importance of a theoretical approach between the reality of practicing media professionals, and the ability of media faculties to qualify media professionals who are able to practice media work in line with the requirements of the labor market.

The results will also help in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the courses in the faculties of mass media and the degree of their suitability for the media labor market, thus taking the necessary measures to bridge the gap between the academic side and media practice. Also, this article can be a reference for lecturers in media faculties in improving the teaching process, developing courses, and linking them to the labor market in a manner that is reflected in the actual media practice.

1.3. The aims

The article aims to identify the paths through which it is possible to bridge the gap between the academic side in the faculties of media and the media practice, from the point of view of professors and faculty members in the faculties of media in Jordanian universities.

The following sub-goals derive from this objective:

1. Exploring the reality of academic qualification for students in media faculties in Jordanian universities.

2. Knowing the extent of the gap between media academic qualification in media faculties and the reality of media practice.

3. Explaining the reasons for the gap between media academic qualification and media practice.

1.4. The Terminology

Academic qualification: Qualifying media students in academic institutions, and providing them with the necessary knowledge, information and skills to practice media, through curricula that depend on two aspects: the first one is a theoretical-cognitive which provides theoretical and scientific information on media and communication, and the

second: a practical aspect related to the practical skills acquired from training and the application of knowledge acquired by students during their study period.

Media practice: It is the continuous media performance in media institutions, linked to the rules, principles, and standards that media professionals adhere to when they practice the media profession. This practice is subject to ethical, professional, and legal values and standards, whether when preparing, producing, publishing, or broadcasting media materials.

Digital skills: It is a set of abilities needed to use digital tools and applications via the Internet, in order to access information and data, produce integrated digital content, and share it effectively through the media.

2. Literature Review

This article is based on a reading of the reality of media academic qualification and its relationship to media practice, by reviewing and analyzing what has been presented in the literature of scientific studies that focused on academic qualification and professional practice.

The academic education of journalism and media programs in Jordan began in 1981 when the first journalism department was established at Yarmouk University, which was converted into a faculty of media in 2008 with three majors: journalism, radio and television, and public relations and advertising[6].

Until the current year 2022, there are eleven public and private academic institutions in Jordan that teach journalism and media: Yarmouk University, Jordan Media Institute, Middle East University, Petra University, Zarqa University, Philadelphia University, Jadara University, University of Applied Sciences, Arab Open University, Faculty of Al-Khwarizmi Technical University, and Aqaba University of Technology. Among these institutions, five offer graduate programs.

The Jordanian Higher Education Accreditation Commission is the official body responsible for defining the programs of media faculties. The commission has set accreditation standards for journalism and media majors in cooperation with media faculties and institutes in Jordanian universities. The bachelor's degree program consists of 132 hours, which includes a set of compulsory and elective courses at the faculty and university levels. It also includes six hours of field training in media institutions. The standards required media faculties to have radio and television studios, photographic equipment, a periodical or newspaper produced by students, and other requirements[7].

Previous studies related to the academic aspect and media practice confirm that there are problems in media academic qualification, such as academic curricula, the predominance of theoretical aspects over applied aspects, the existence of a gap between the curricula and the requirements of the media labor market, and the lack of developing qualitative curricula that suit the successive technological and technical developments. However, the hours devoted to teaching some courses are not distributed in a balanced manner between the scientific and practical aspects. In addition to the traditional teaching methods used, the lack of consideration for students' creative skills, the discouragement of students from research and investigation, and the absence of developing self-learning methods, all of these were reflected in media practice[8].

In his study on the reality of media curricula, teaching practices, and practical requirements for professional journalism in the digital age, Kirchhoff[3] stated that journalism digitization is fully integrated into school curricula, but there is a gap related to innovation and teaching of certain subjects, which is reflected in the practice of the profession of journalism and media. Jin & Ren [4] emphasized the necessity of reforming education and teaching, focusing on talent development in the faculties of media and communication, besides adapting to the employment needs of the modern media industry, through successful teaching team building and professional teaching reform.

In the same context, Wang[5] studied the contradiction between supply and demand in training journalistic talents and how to confront them. He also studied vocational skills and their compatibility with the curricula in media faculties, by analyzing the content of curricula in (120) universities studying media in China, as well as analyzing (724) Job offers submitted by various institutions on the professional skills that must be available in the applicant for the job. Wang concluded that media organizations and companies tend to hire graduates with digital media, video production, and data analysis skills, and ignore traditional journalism skills.

Fakhr El-Din[9] conducted a study in which he evaluated the academic qualification of students of Egyptian public and private media departments and faculties and showed their suitability for the changing labor market requirements. He concluded that the most important skill required for the labor market in the digital age is mastering the use of communication technology in the media field and knowing the needs of the new media labor market and its changing requirements.

Some studies have shown that universities focus mainly on theoretical courses, research methodologies, and elective courses, in addition to that educational programs are not ready to adapt to recent changes in the media profession, as the practice of the media profession has been greatly affected by technological and digital developments and changes. This was reflected in the educational outputs of universities, which are now suffering from the dilemma of dealing with these changes, and there has been a disconnect between the reality of teaching and actual work in the field of media. This confirms the lack of compatibility between the study of media and the new professional scenario. Which requires radical modifications and modernization of the curricula, and the need for educational institutions to conduct a permanent dialogue with employers to continuously adapt to the needs and requirements of the labor market[10].

Regarding technological and digital developments, Wang[11] explained that these developments motivated teachers to have a major and active role in guiding and teaching students everything related to technologies, applications, and modern tools in the media, and for them to become experts and users of the latest multimedia, and this is achieved by changing their ideas and not to reduce the contents of the curricula of digital media, as the main task for teachers is to understand the direction of new media practice and provide relevant experiences, relying on technology and data algorithms and developing logical and rational thinking of media students, in addition to changing the educational philosophy that is based on continuous updating, improving the experience and vision of teachers in enhancing students' creativity and developing their curiosity.

Many of the previous studies had focused on media academic qualification, media practices, and the skills that should be available to students of media faculties, journalists, and media professionals in various institutions. It also had shown that there is an interdependent relationship, as media students need an academic qualification that combines the theoretical and applied aspects, and they need vocational training after their graduation in order to practice journalism and the media profession efficiently.

3. Methodology

3.1. Method

For an in-depth understanding and a comprehensive description of the article, the author adopted mainly the qualitative approach through explanation and analysis, as well as collecting information and achieving a better understanding of it[12]. The researcher conducted (15) interviews with professors of media faculties in Jordanian universities chosen for their relationship to the subject. The interview questions included describing and analyzing the reality of academic qualification for students of media faculties and presenting pathways through which they can bridge the gap between academic qualification and media practice.

3.2. Data Collection

The interview study used a tool to collect data from media professors at Jordanian universities. The interviews were conducted using the written interview form (open-ended questionnaires), which allows giving greater freedom for the professors in answering the questions in the manner, language and terminology that suits them, so that their answers reflect their experiences and personal experiences about academic qualification. An electronic questionnaire was designed by (Google Drive) and then sent via e-mail, the Facebook website, and the WhatsApp application to media teachers during the period (1-28 August 2022). The author sent the interview questionnaire electronically because it was not possible to interview all the professors in person. Because they are busy with teaching or traveling outside Jordan, or they had preferred to send questions via e-mail. To ensure the validity of the study tool (questionnaire), several professors who have extensive research practices reviewed it, verified its validity, and judged its validity for application.

4. Results and Discussion

The responses of the media professors showed a wide range of information related to the subject of the study. This information was sorted within the study questions, as follows:

4.1. The description of the academic qualification

The media professors agreed that the academic qualification of students in the media faculties is very good, and there are continuous attempts to keep pace with modern development, and the procession of developments in communication and media, in order to rise to the optimum quality.

Media professors have shown that media faculties are keeping pace with recent developments and developments in the media field. "The Digital Media Program was created, which required the addition of new academic courses that are compatible with digital media developments such as: digital photography and montage, digital cinema, applications in

digital media, data journalism, mobile journalism, social media platforms, and other courses." Murad explained[13]. Rather, the laws of Jordanian universities oblige the teacher to prepare study plans based on modern references whose seniority does not exceed five years - as explained by Oreqat [14] - which was reflected in the quality of information provided to students, and the classrooms are equipped with all the tools of modern education, such as computers and screens. The presentation contributed to improving the teaching methods used, presenting information, and presenting it with examples in a modern manner that is in line with the requirements of the times, which was reflected in the quality of educational outcomes."

As for the practical courses, Al-Manaseer[15] indicated that "the academic qualification in the media faculties through applied courses is characterized by quality and excellence through the availability of faculty members, technicians and specialists with experience and competence who transfer their expertise and practical experiences to students, and the availability of Laboratories and studios that contain all the tools, equipment and equipment necessary to raise students' efficiency and develop their skills and abilities in order to qualify them to practice media work.

4.2. The gap between academic qualification and media practice

There are different views of media professors about the existence of a gap between media academic qualification and the reality of media practice. Some of them believe that there is a difference between what students learn in media faculties and what they later practice in media institutions, either because of the different requirements of the market, or the adequacy of practitioners in the media institutions. This led to a gap between the two sides. While others believe that media academic qualification is in line with the requirements of the labor market and media practice; what students learn in media faculties is mainly the result of the requirements of the media labor market, but this market is variable and subject to a group of factors that affect it.

Khasawneh asserts that "the academic qualification in the media faculties is commensurate with the nature of the media work in the future, as there is no gap between what the student studies and what he applies later in the labor market, and that the courses are consistent with the requirements of the media labor market. In addition, the media faculties provide students with what they need in the media job market, theoretically and practically"[16].

In contrast, Al-Mashaqbeh believes that there is a gap between academic qualification and media practice. However, this gap is related to media faculties, administration, study plans, teacher qualification, and students' willingness to learn, not the labor market. However, media faculties are mostly not interested to prepare students for the labor market, but rather to provide students with media skills and knowledge."[17]

In a survey conducted by the researcher to find out the opinions of a sample of media practitioners, (48%) of them agreed that academic qualification in media faculties differs from media practice, while (25%) of them saw the opposite, and the neutrals were (22%). 56% of media practitioners agreed that the academic qualification is not compatible with the professional requirements in media organizations, while 26% saw the opposite, the neutrals were only 18%. Their answers explained this result about comparing the theoretical aspect of practice, 82% agreed that theoretical aspects trump practical aspects in media faculties, while 4% disagreed and (14% were neutral). Finally, 38% believed that the academic qualification did not sufficient to practice media work, 42% agreed that the academic qualification was sufficient in media faculties, and the neutral ones were 10%.
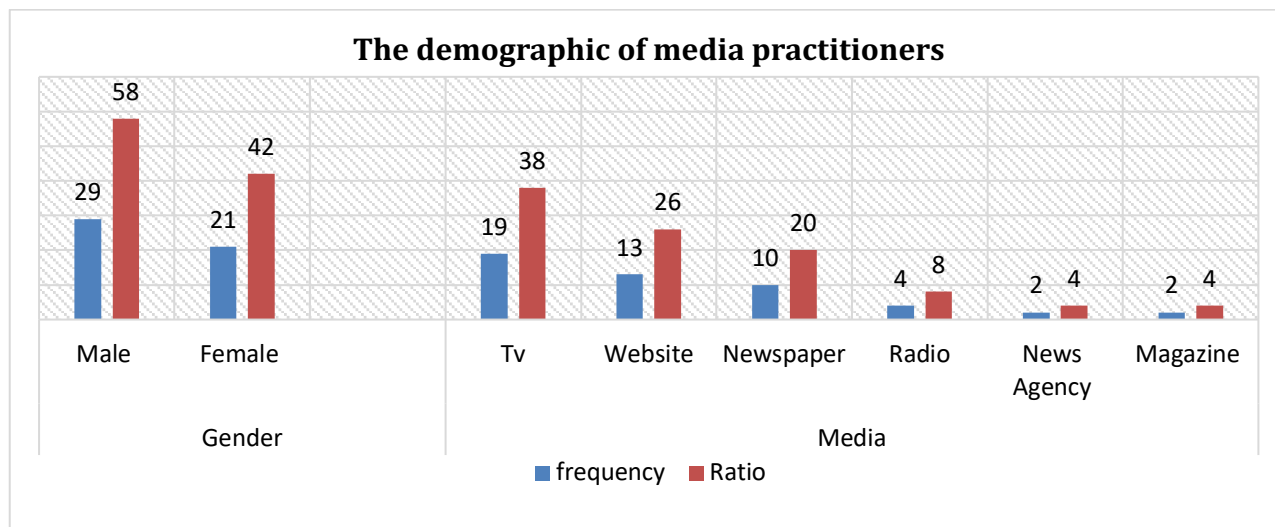

Fig. 1. The demographic of media practitioners   Source: the researcher

In the following result, we explore the reasons for the gap between academic qualification and media practice:

4.3. The reasons for the gap

Many reasons have been indicated by professors for the gap between academic qualification and media practice. These reasons can be divided into the following topics:

4.3.1. Reasons related to media faculties:

According to media professors, the most prominent reasons associated with media faculties are "the acceptance of large numbers of students in all media majors due to the absence of criteria and foundations for accepting students, with the exception of the cumulative average in high school, and the lack of conditions that take into account the talent, creativity and passion of students. This was reflected in the quality of educational outcomes, consequently a large number of students graduated who are unable to practice media work[18]. While Ahmed Al-Ananbeh attributed the reasons related to the faculty "that the courses and study plans of media faculties focus on the theoretical aspects more than the practical aspects[19].

Despite the importance of the theoretical aspect in providing students with basic knowledge in the field of media, since the skilled media person needs theoretical rules that help him practice his profession, there is a need to balance between the two sides, so that students are qualified theoretically and practically within the media faculties, in accordance with recent developments in media field. As for Mahroum, he asserts that "the lack of harmonization between academic programs and their curricula in media faculties, and poor coordination between Jordanian faculties and media institutions are the main reasons for the gap between academic qualification and professional practice"[20].

On the other hand, Ashraf Al-Zoubi pointed out to the low level of competence of some professors in the media faculties, pointing out that "the lack of a qualified educational staff with practical experience that accompanies scientific experience, was reflected in the educational outcomes of students, and caused the graduation of large numbers of them, in comparison with the media institutions that they need it to media practice [18].

Many professors and faculty members explained the reasons for this to the appointment mechanism used in public and private universities, in addition to the inability of some teachers to teach some courses in the best way, whether this is due to weak teaching methods, skills and competence, or because there is no specialized professor in these courses. In addition to the absence of periodic evaluation of the performance of a faculty member to measure his efficiency and his teaching, professional and research skills, as well as the absence of periodic training courses in faculties to train and qualify teachers, in order to keep abreast of developments in the field of media. In addition, teachers do not develop themselves to keep abreast of what is new in the media.

In this regard, Al-Mashaqba pointed out that "the failure of training centers in media faculties to keep pace with advanced technological and modern developments, and the inability of centers and studios designated for training to receive large numbers of students", as well as the underdeveloped infrastructure such as: the lack of computers, cameras, and advanced programs that affected on training as essential in developing their skills and building their media capabilities[17].

4.3.2. Reasons related to students

Ashraf Al-Zoubi attributed some of the reasons for the gap between academic qualification and media practice to the students, pointing to "the shallowness of their cultural and intellectual capabilities, and the lack of desire to learn, because the practice of media requires the ability to" work in the field ", in addition to developing the skills they need in their professional practice." Al-Zoubi added other reasons for the gap related to students, stressing that "some students seek to obtain a university degree without effort, meaning that their goal is to obtain a university qualification, rather than to be convinced of their specialization, so it is difficult for such students to work in the media."[18]

On the other hand, Amer Gharaibeh said that there are other reasons, such as: There is a misconception among some students that the media major is an easy one, compared to other majors, and some of them seek to reinforce this misconception, but the media major is mainly based on talent, creativity, and hard work in developing skills[21]. While Oreqat pointed to another different reason behind the gap, he said that "the reliance of some students and their families on personal relationships with media institutions and training and media production centers has contributed to the growing gap between academic qualification and media practice, as once a student graduates from university, he tends towards those institutions without having the professional ability to practice media"[14]. Some professors put forward other reasons related to the inability of some students to adapt to working in media organizations in terms of salaries, incentives, and job guarantees, in addition to work methods and policies within these institutions. This reduced their motivation to continue working in the media field.

4.3.3. Reasons related to the media labor market

According to Sharadqa, the most prominent reasons related to the media labor market, or the media environment are represented in "the inability of governmental and private media institutions to employ all graduates of the media specialization, due to the sufficiency of these institutions with available jobs, although there are distinguished graduates who are able to practice the profession"[22].

Also, the absence of joint committees or real actors between Jordanian media institutions and media faculties, in order to provide visions and perceptions about the needs of employers in terms of educational outputs for students in media faculties, was reflected in the inability to meet the needs of media institutions in terms of the required competencies[13].

In addition to other reasons related to employment policies that govern recruitment and employment in government media institutions; according to Oreqat[14], "Some jobs are not announced in the official gazette, and even if they are, some of them are not governed by clear criteria for the appointment mechanism or include difficult conditions for applying for the job," adding that "personal relationships greatly interfere in order to facilitate the appointment and employment of certain people. Private media outlets, if they need media professionals, they want them to be professionals in media work with certain experiences and capabilities that some of them may not have, and low salaries and increased job burdens in media work become an obstacle for efficient media professionals in these institutions".

On the other hand, Makanai stated that the gap and the absence of equal opportunities for graduates in media institutions had been due to unprofessional institutional behavior, as they employed those who are not specialized in media, combined several jobs at the same time, or employed part-timers who do not have university degrees in media, and paid huge salaries just for the sake of the name or fame of the person concerned, to promote the media institution[23].

Another reason, as indicated by Gharaibeh, was "a negative view of the media work community, as it is a professional environment that is not attractive to media graduates and practitioners." Gharaibeh explained this by three reasons; the first: the absence of fair competition between journalists and their institutions. The second: the lack of the necessary techniques and tools to practice media work in some media institutions, even if the techniques or tools are available, but they are not of sufficient quality to keep pace with the requirements of the digital age. The third one: the absence of criteria for evaluating professional performance and job promotion and adopting personal relationships and courtesies[21].

Some professors have put forward other reasons related to the editorial policy adopted by some media institutions, which some may not be able to adapt to, such as not publishing certain media materials, distorting and changing these materials, or forcing them to give up some professional standards in order to satisfy the owners of those institutions, or because of the common interests of the parties, such as advertisers and financiers.

4.4. The paths of bridging the gap

The faculty members proposed a set of paths through which the gap between academic qualification in media faculties and media practice can be bridged. These paths are closely linked with each other, and can only be implemented with a well-defined strategy with specific objectives, as follows:

4.4.1. The first path: applying the mechanism for selecting students for admission to media majors

Murad believes that the first path to bridge the gap between academic qualification and media practice is the mechanism for selecting students in all media majors. These mechanisms include personal interviews or tests that take into account awareness, culture, and faith in the importance of this profession and its mission, in addition to the availability of skills, talent, creativity, and passion at minimum level, because accepting students who are far from the field of media, only for a degree, abuse of the media and the labor market[13].

Most media professors agreed with this vision. The current admission criteria depend on the student's high school average, through which he competes for admission to media faculties. These averages may not compete with higher rates in other majors, so students apply to these majors based on their averages and not based on their personal desire. In addition, private universities accept students in all media majors on the "Parallel Program" with discounts that may reach 100%, without any motivation, willingness, or seriousness for the student to be a journalist in the future.

4.4.2. The Second Path: curricula and plans that keep pace with the requirements of the digital age and the needs of the labor market

In the context of the rapid technological and technological development witnessed by the field of media work, media faculties are faced with the inevitability of developing their curricula, courses, and plans. To keep pace with the

requirements and needs of the media labor market, by introducing new practical courses that keep pace with future jobs and ensure a balance between the theoretical and practical aspects; To qualify graduates who are proficient in modern media tools, techniques and applications, such as photography, video, editing texts and how to shorten them, as well as editing and design programs[19].

Oreqat called for "creating coordination and joint committees between universities to unify the course descriptions for all media majors, and to prepare unified theoretical courses to be a systematic course for students in their years of study, with a review at the end of each academic year. The difference in course descriptions and content causes confusion for students in obtaining on the information".[14].

This vision is confirmed by Murad: "The main task of the joint committees is to visit the field of the labor market periodically to find out the reality, conduct survey studies, find out the actual needs of media institutions, and come up with results that contribute to the formulation of educational curricula in a systematic manner, in a manner that keeps pace with media practice.[13]"

Murad added, "Increasing the hours of field training would bridge this gap so that it becomes (9) hours, distributed over three consecutive semesters, at the end of each semester, then review the training and evaluate it to provide suggestions and recommendations in order to increase its efficiency.

And it appeared through the interviews that what is required is attention to the practical side with the theoretical building of students, and this confirms that the media profession needs training, field practice and experience in order to succeed and excel in this field, but what is required is a balance between the two sides, in order to refine and develop applied skills, based on the foundations of knowledge Theory and scientific[16].

Some media professors pointed out that a common misconception was conveyed by many university academics, professionals, and technicians in media institutions, and they tried to consolidate it. This idea is that "the media major is an absolute applied training major, and a successful media professional can only be prepared through training, and this is one of the common mistakes." The professors asked, how can a media student prepare a radio program without learning the basic rules for script preparation? How can one prepare a documentary film without learning the main foundations of scriptwriting? Is it reasonable to ignore the foundations, standards, and theoretical values in journalistic editing? In addition to the values and standards related to professional values, standards, media legislation and ethics, these must be learned theoretically by the student first before applying them.

4.4.3. The Third Path: Recruiting experienced and qualified professors

The teaching staff in the media faculties is the essential element in a successful academic qualification that meets the students' aspirations to be media professionals in the future. Therefore, some of professors believe that one of the most important paths to bridge the gap between media academic qualification and media practice is to re-evaluate the criteria for appointing faculty members in media faculties[14].

That most appointments in universities are made through the conditions of academic qualifications away from testing capabilities and practical skills, especially since there are many PhD holders who have not practiced media work at all, nor practiced the media profession, or developed themselves in line with the changes and developments in the media field. Therefore, there should be criteria and conditions that take into account the experience and competence of the professor, in addition to the scientific and practical qualifications.

On the other hand, some professors called for "the need to change the teaching mechanism, and this responsibility rests with the media faculties"[24]. Despite the presence of academically qualified teaching staff, some of them lack seriousness and motivation in the teaching process and are satisfied with what the courses contain without adding anything new to the students. Also, some of them have a weak method of teaching besides the inability to link between the theoretical and practical aspects because they did not practice the media. Al-Zoubi believes that "holding training courses for faculty members would bridge the gap between academic qualification and media practice," as the "media" labor market is changing rapidly due to technological developments [18], as there are indispensable tools and applications in education and media practice.

Al-Manaseer agreed with this vision, and explained that "activating the role of the practicing professor is reflected in the practical aspect of teaching courses," and motivating teachers to join in training courses, especially since many of the training workshops are provided by media institutions for free, such as the Areej Academy and the International Journalists Network, and Reuters news agency, which will be reflected on the academic level of faculty members[15].

4.4.4. The Fourth Path: Involving professionals in the teaching process in media faculties

One of the most important challenges facing media faculties is the mechanism of integrating theory and practice in the academic qualification process, especially if a faculty member teaches a course that requires a practical aspect in order

to apply it - as Murad indicated - so it has become necessary to involve professionals in the teaching process so that Media faculties give training, teaching and qualification opportunities to journalists and media professionals who have experience in media work, by training students within the media faculties within practical courses, in exchange for rewards or salaries, or for the faculty to appoint them as part-time lecturers[13].

Some faculty members (professors) point out that this trend has become prevalent in media faculties, but not to a sufficient extent. Some faculty members involve professionals, media professionals, and journalists by hosting them in lectures, or by taking students on field visits to media institutions in order to find out about the media reality and experience it, but this is not done officially. Therefore, there must be joint agreements and contracts between these professionals and media faculties, to involve them in the teaching process, to raise the level of students and provide them with media work skills and methods.

4.4.5. Fifth Path: Preparing advanced training programs for students

Media professors emphasized that preparing and organizing advanced training programs that keep pace with modern media innovations, technologies, and applications, and employing them in the production of media content, is one of the most important paths through which the gap between the academic side and media practice can be bridged. Most of the media institutions have become equipped with the latest technologies and modern equipment, and they depend mainly on them in the production of their media materials, and therefore they need qualified cadres who are able to deal with these technologies[19].

In a similar context, Sharadqah stated that media faculties have to focus on the practical side more than the theory to meet the requirements of the local and regional market[22]. Therefore, it is the responsibility of media faculties to qualify students and prepare them by developing their skills in how to use modern applications, and employing them in the production of media materials, and this is achieved. Through the existence of program plans that keep pace with the rapid changes in the field of media work and focus on preparing qualified students to practice the profession. Al-Khasawneh also pointed out the need for media faculties to seek to enhance students' skills through training, while media institutions open the way for students to benefit from the applied side[16].

Therefore, media faculties must organize joint training programs with media organizations like field training that would contribute to meeting the needs of the labor market, by signing cooperative agreements that oblige media organizations to hire distinguished students at the end of the training.

4.4.6. The Sixth Path: Developing Training Centers in Media Faculties

Media teachers believe that "the development of training centres in media faculties and providing them with equipment and modern tools is one of the most important paths of bridging the gap between media academic qualification and media practice[20]. Despite the assurance of media professors that training and development centres in media faculties keep pace with recent developments in the field of media work, they stressed that these centres need further development by keeping pace with technical innovations, modernizing radio, television, and digital laboratories and studios, and providing modern photography equipment and programs and digital applications, and other equipment in the media field, and can be achieved by providing budgets allocated to training centres and increasing cooperation with media agencies and institutions.
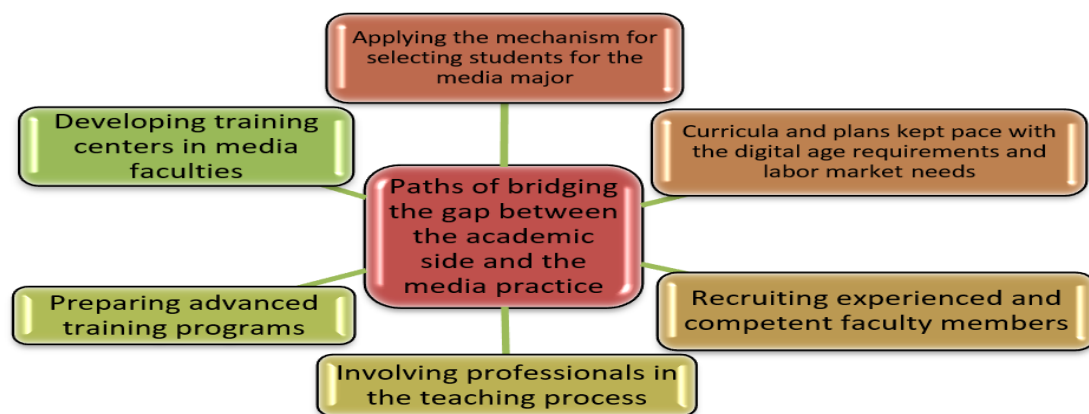

Fig. 2. The paths of bridging the gap   Source: the researcher

5. Conclusion

Bridging the gap between academic qualification and media practice requires several tracks that are closely related to each other. These paths can only be implemented with a strategy with clear objectives to link education to the labor market, in addition to conducting assessment interviews with students who apply to study media to find out their desire and willingness to join the media major. It is also required to balance between the theoretical and practical aspects, and to appoint qualified teaching staff who can play a major role in qualifying students academically while instilling and developing modern media skills. The gap between some teachers and students must also be taken into account, in terms of assigning courses that require technological and digital skills to professors with more experience in these fields.

6. Recommendations

- Media faculties should develop their curricula, courses, and study plans in line with the rapid technological and technological development by focusing on applied aspects more than theoretical ones.

- Media Professors should encourage students to develop their skills while studying, especially methods of producing digital content, and artificial intelligence techniques, which will reflect on their professional practice.

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Conflict of interest:

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