



Media Education and the Enhancement of Media Literacy: Requirements and Challenges

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Abstract

The central theme of this research paper lies in the significance of media education in fostering critical thinking and responsible use of media. Beginning with a definition of media education, the paper then addresses the necessity of integrating media into educational processes. It traces the historical trajectory of media education benefits, along with international and Arab initiatives in this domain. The article also examines the primary requirements for incorporating media education into school curricula and the challenges that hinder such integration. Furthermore, it discusses the importance of media education in an era characterized by the proliferation of digital media, where education about media becomes essential for preparing students to navigate the complexities of information and online communication. In this context, the pivotal role of media literacy emerges in promoting critical thinking, ethical digital behavior, and responsible media consumption.

Keywords: *Media education, enhancement, media literacy, requirements, challenges.*

Résumé

Le thème central de cet article de recherche porte sur l'importance de l'éducation aux médias dans le développement de l'esprit critique et l'utilisation responsable des médias. Après avoir défini l'éducation aux médias, l'article aborde la nécessité d'intégrer les médias dans les processus éducatifs. Il retrace l'évolution historique des avantages de l'éducation aux médias, ainsi que les initiatives internationales et arabes dans ce domaine. L'article examine également les conditions préalables à l'intégration de l'éducation aux médias dans les programmes scolaires et les défis qui entravent cette intégration. En outre, il traite de l'importance de l'éducation aux médias à une époque caractérisée par la prolifération des médias numériques, où l'éducation aux médias devient essentielle pour préparer les élèves à naviguer dans les complexités de l'information et de la communication en ligne. Dans ce contexte, le rôle central de l'éducation aux médias apparaît dans la promotion de la pensée critique, d'un comportement numérique éthique et d'une consommation responsable des médias.

Mots clés : *Éducation aux médias, amélioration, éducation aux médias, conditions préalables, défis.*



Introduction

Media is no longer merely a medium but has become a form of authority. Media education has thus emerged as a significant academic project within school curricula and, indeed, an existential necessity for protecting young generations and building a cohort capable of producing conscious content that reflects societal values while reinforcing critical thinking in an era where images hold greater power than text, and "news" is often crafted beyond the boundaries of truth. This has given rise to the urgent need for the concept of "media education" as a civilizational imperative in a world where media outlets have transformed from mere transmission platforms into active forces shaping minds and directing societies (Al-Masoudi, 2025).

With the advent of the Internet, media content is no longer produced solely by professionals in traditional media outlets but also by ordinary individuals. Through numerous and diverse websites and applications, information circulates without filtering or verification. Traditional media have also undergone shifts in news production and presentation methods, posing a challenge to the role of conventional media. Consequently, media education and the promotion of media literacy have become essential for wise interaction (Lee, 2010, p. 2) with an era of rapid change and open knowledge, where the boundaries between reality and the virtual, truth and representation, increasingly intersect.

This has highlighted a profound issue in the field of education: What is the position of educational action relative to media action? Can media be separated from the

educational and learning process in an age where screens serve as windows to the world, directing minds? To address these questions, a conceptual analysis is required to elucidate the notions of "media education," "media instruction," and "media literacy" as indispensable core concepts for the quality of education in the 21st century (Qubha, 2025). This is particularly pertinent as mass media have been described by some as a form of "parallel school" or "second teacher." Mass media are not merely communication tools; they constitute a real environment that shapes thought and determines behavior. Therefore, education systems must respond to the "hidden curricula" of mass media—a reality already acknowledged by many countries and civil society organizations.

Interest in "media education" is not new. Since 1982, UNESCO has called for preparing youth to live in a world dominated by the power of visual, written, and auditory messages (Al-Hamdani, 2015, p. 95). In 1992, the organization dedicated several seminars to discussing media education. In 2001, UNESCO distributed a questionnaire on media education across 52 countries, addressing three core issues: media education in schools in terms of scope, objectives, and foundations; current concepts, data, evaluation nature, and student production; and the involvement of media institutions and regulators in media education (Al-Masoudi, 2025). In 2023, UNESCO issued a curriculum titled *Media and Information Literate Citizens: Think Critically, Click Wisely!* This framework provides a comprehensive competency model for media and information literacy, offering structured pedagogical suggestions for educators and learners. It details various components that equip individuals with the required competencies to navigate the communications ecosystem.



Received: 28/12/2025 Accepted: 03/02/2026 Published: 10/03/2026

The resource links media literacy to the necessity of media education, artificial intelligence, digital citizenship education, education for sustainable development, cultural literacy, and the exponential rise in misinformation and disinformation. Through effective use of media literacy curricula, everyone can become literate in media and information (Gordon, 2023, p. 14).

UNESCO remains the foremost global advocate for media education, with its conferences emphasizing the importance of media education through the statement: "We must prepare youth to live in a world dominated by the power of image, sound, and word." This underscores media's influential authority over values, beliefs, orientations, and practices across economic, cultural, and social dimensions. Media education is regarded as part of every citizen's fundamental rights worldwide, with recommendations to integrate it wherever possible into national educational curricula, non-formal education systems, and lifelong learning (Al-Shumaimari, 2020).

Many countries recognized this reality early on, leading to clear interest in media education. The United Kingdom was among the pioneers in embedding media education in general education curricula, followed by France, Germany, and the Netherlands, where increasing attention focused on training students to engage with media and eradicate media illiteracy. Australia, for instance, incorporated media education as a compulsory subject (Al-Masoudi, 2025). Among Arab countries, Lebanon teaches five sessions titled "Media Education" within the National and Civic Education subject in the first intermediate grade, and four sessions for third-

year secondary students under the same subject titled "Media and Public Opinion" (Al-Shumaimari, 2020).

As calls persist to strengthen media culture and education in formal and non-formal learning spaces, educators' understanding of media literacy skills and objectives remains complex. In 2021, a team of researchers led a multi-method study on media culture education in the United States, focusing on impact and equity. Results indicated that educators are committed to equity and equality but unclear on integration into practice. In response, the research team developed a field guide outlining equitable media culture practices for classrooms and communities.

Governments have recognized the need to invest more resources in equipping learners with media education and literacy competencies—typically understood as access to, analysis of, creation of, reflection on, and action through media. In May 2024, Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott announced an additional \$1.8 million for education and training through the city's Digital Equity Fund. According to reports, more than half of U.S. state legislatures have held hearings or voted on policies and initiatives related to media and culture education. California passed legislation redirecting funding to media and culture education curricula in primary and secondary education. Among the most extreme measures, some states like Florida imposed bans on TikTok in public schools as a temporary solution to perceived sources of misinformation and behavioral issues among children (Mihailidis, 2025, p. 135).

Thus, the core topic is the fundamental importance of media education in a world saturated with traditional and—more specifically—digital media. This extends beyond mere technical skill acquisition, emphasizing the urgent need to



Received: **28/12/2025** Accepted: **03/02/2026** Published: **10/03/2026**

promote critical thinking and responsible media use. It begins by defining media education as a discipline focused on critical engagement with media messages, recognizing media as cultural entities shaping perceptions and identities. While not a new field, its current application to digital media traces roots far back in communication history and systems. From the emergence of writing – with Plato's harsh critique of the medium for literary or philosophical purposes, favoring direct dialogue – to radio challenges, and later television, media education has always been intrinsically linked to media technology evolution (D.T. Michele, 2025), from its simplest to most complex forms.

The current digital media era has witnessed rapid developments in social media platforms. With the rise of generative artificial intelligence and declining public trust in information from traditional media, public institutions, or social media, the ability to critically interact with information and understand supporting technologies and mechanisms has become essential for preserving democratic civic discourse, public safety, and meaningful freedom of expression (Havlicek, 2025, p. 4). Anyone browsing social media today may encounter breaking news, health "hacks," AI-generated images, and viral videos – all blending in a stream where truth and falsehood are often indistinguishable. In this crowded information space, media and information literacy (MIL) skills are fundamental for navigating what is real and reliable (UNESCO, 2025), as MIL interconnects competencies related to information.

MIL is central to protecting information integrity by equipping individuals with capacities to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce information across diverse formats

and platforms. These skills must support not only personal empowerment but broader goals such as democratic resilience, public trust, civic participation, and social cohesion. As the information landscape grows more complex, MIL becomes essential for distinguishing reliable information from lies and manipulation – particularly with AI-generated media (Havlicek, 2025, p. 4) and emerging technologies producing hyper-realistic fake videos, blurring boundaries between reality and fiction, raising urgent questions not only about truth but the nature of perceived reality.

Paradoxically, despite information abundance in our environment, there has not been a corresponding increase in human capacity to understand, manage, share, and productively use this vast wealth of information. Practically, the explosion of communication and information is a mixed blessing: it offers more choices but demands new concepts and competencies to comprehend and respond appropriately to these opportunities (Kubey, 2017). Fake news and misinformation spread astonishingly fast across digital platforms, complicating the distinction of accurate and reliable information.

Hence, addressing media education is vital, as it provides foundations for critical analysis and source evaluation, enabling youth to gain deeper understanding of received content. Media education extends beyond helping youth comprehend the media reality; it empowers them to participate more effectively and responsibly, enhancing social security (Kiday, 2024). By developing these skills, youth become better equipped to handle modern media environment challenges, emerging as more aware and influential citizens. In response to these issues, this research paper aims to explore:



Received: 28/12/2025 Accepted: 03/02/2026 Published: 10/03/2026

- The concept of "media education" and its overlap with related concepts.
- The system of integration between media and education.
- The benefits of education through media, international initiatives, and Arab efforts.
- Challenges and requirements for incorporating media education into educational curricula.
- The importance of media education amid digital transformation and conscious engagement with media.

1. Media Education and Related Concepts

Definitions of "media education" vary depending on the perspectives from which researchers approach the term. Through a review of scholarly articles, scientific topics, and books addressing media education or education about media, significant debate emerges among scholars in attempting to delineate this concept into a clear term with identifiable dimensions. Some use the terms "media education" (Media Education) and "media literacy" (Media Literacy) interchangeably as representing the same concept, while others distinguish between them.

One of the most prominent definitions comes from the European Charter for Media Literacy, which provides a consensual definition of media education: "Media education aims to make every citizen active, autonomous, and critical toward any document or media content they receive or use. It also seeks to enable individuals to comprehend media languages and to train in tools for interpretation, expression, and communication through media. From this perspective, it

prepares individuals to become responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development of a democratic, supportive, multicultural society open to other cultures, and ensures equal opportunities for all in achieving social emancipation. Media education concerns all printed, audiovisual, or electronic media, regardless of their technologies. It is not limited to a specific type of medium and thus covers all forms of communication, whether public or limited, informational or persuasive, entertaining or interactive" (Bachmair & Bazalgette, 2007, p. 80).

The French Ministry of National Education, Higher Education, and Research (June 2025) considers media education, through the "Project for Media and Information Education Programs in the Fourth Cycle," as a key component in education for citizenship and critical thinking. This is evident in the inclusion of elements of media and information education within the Moral and Civic Education program. It contributes to preparing students to live in society as responsible, free, and aware citizens of the principles and rules governing the public space on which democracy is based. It aligns with the student's civic pathway and the artistic and cultural education pathway, involving all educational actors within the institution, in addition to education on culture and digital citizenship (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2025).

Dr. Bushra Hussein Al-Hamdani defines it as "the formation of the ability to read media contents, as media awareness is not limited to reception and criticism alone but must extend to conscious and purposeful participation in producing media content." She adds: "Media education has begun to adopt an empowering approach aimed at preparing youth to understand the media culture surrounding them, to



Received: 28/12/2025 Accepted: 03/02/2026 Published: 10/03/2026

select and interact with it appropriately, and to participate in it effectively and efficiently" (Al-Hamdani, 2015, p. 94).

1.1. The Concept of Media Literacy

Definitions of media literacy vary, remain contested, and continue to evolve. In 2007, the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) defined media literacy as the ability to "access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication." It broadens the concept of literacy to encompass all forms of media, integrating multiple literacies in developing aware consumers and creators of media:

- Like print literacy, which requires both reading and writing, media education includes analysis and expression.
- Media education intersects with other literacies, such as information literacy, digital literacy, social literacy, and emotional literacy.
- Media education directs learners toward participation in a wide range of media experiences, whether personal or online, through print, visual, audio, and digital media (NAMLE, 2023).

The European Union regards media literacy as a key factor in effective participation in the current information society. Through a 2007 communication, the European Commission launched a European approach to media literacy policy, aiming to promote critical thinking and online safety among EU citizens. These communications emphasized the importance of media literacy in the digital era and encouraged Member States to develop their own media literacy strategies.

In the political guidelines for the incoming European Commission (2024-2029), Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphasized the need to "focus on societal resilience and preparedness through increased digital and media literacy." The Commission's 2025 work program notes that "democracies in the European Union and around the world are under attack from rising extremism, threats against journalists, election interference, and the spread of information manipulation and various forms of hybrid threats. This is exacerbated by digitization, which enables the rapid dissemination of misleading information at unprecedented speed" (Laaninen, 2025).

Empowerment and protection have long been identified as central themes in media literacy education, reflecting a tension and debate between those who view media literacy education as a means to address harms, risks, and challenges associated with growth in a media- and technology-saturated cultural environment, and those who see it as a tool for personal, social, cultural, and political empowerment. These distinct perspectives are informed by the emergence of a community of scholars and practitioners who consider media literacy an extension of traditional literacy, understood as the exchange of meanings through spoken and written language. Media literacy can also be understood as a form of advocacy or social movement, particularly targeting youth, children, and parents. Many view it as a specialized academic field linked to either media studies or education (Hobbs, 2025).

In an important article titled "A Local Lens on Global Media Literacy: Teaching Media and the Arab World," author Katharina Schmoll defines media literacy as "the ability to access information, analyze it, evaluate it, and create messages across diverse contexts." She particularly considers



Received: 28/12/2025 Accepted: 03/02/2026 Published: 10/03/2026

analysis and evaluation as the core of media literacy, stating that "there is no point in access or analysis without judgment." Thus, the goals of analysis, evaluation, and judgment depend on the approach adopted toward the concept of media literacy in a concrete and precise manner. She adds that media literacy means encouraging audiences to ask questions about whose voices we hear, whose are marginalized, distorted, or absent. This requires recognizing individual subjectivity and awareness that audience consumption of media is never neutral but involves meaning-making. Understanding audiences – and students in particular – as active participants in meaning-making and decoding messages, rather than passive consumers of information, enables a dynamic understanding of acquiring media literacy skills as a social practice achievable in the classroom. Notably, it promotes media literacy education focused on civic awareness and responsibility (Schmoll, 2021, p. 64).

1.2. The Concept of Media Culture

Dr. Ahmed Jamal Hassan defines media culture as "the primary function that focuses on the individual's ability to analyze audio-visual symbols transmitted through various media, in addition to possessing the skills and experiences that enable them to creatively benefit from those media, thereby developing sufficient capacity to evaluate, translate, and produce new media texts" (Hassan, 2015, p. 45). In a recent study titled "Fostering Media Literacy: A Systematic Evidence Review of Intervention Effectiveness for Diverse Target Groups," media culture is defined as encompassing specific knowledge and skills that facilitate critical understanding and media use. It inherently includes digital

skills. Digital skills—such as proficiency in using digital devices, platforms, and tools—are considered a major subset of media culture. These skills equip individuals to navigate the digital media landscape effectively, enabling informed decisions and protection from misinformation and digital threats (d’Haenens, 2025, p. 2).

1.3. Media Instruction (or Media Education in Instruction)

Media instruction is itself a dense concept that integrates several interrelated dimensions and concepts. Discussing "instruction" expresses not only requirements related to knowledge and skills but also self-knowledge. Media instruction weaves a set of competencies related to mastering media tools—i.e., access to tools, particularly computer-based ones, used to receive, process, create, and disseminate information—as well as ethical and intellectual behaviors that form the context for thoughtful and responsible use of these media and information platforms, skillfully exploiting and critically evaluating them (VADEMECUM, p. 5).

Another definition describes media instruction as "educating the individual to understand media." It is an educational process aimed at developing "critical awareness" and "analytical competence" in learners toward media contents in all forms. It does not focus on what media say but on how and why they say it, who is behind it, and what mechanisms and techniques are used to influence. Media instruction enhances education quality through:

- Building aware citizens: Preparing a generation capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood and participating in the public sphere with awareness and responsibility.



Received: 28/12/2025 Accepted: 03/02/2026 Published: 10/03/2026

- Promoting lifelong learning: Equipping individuals with research, analysis, and evaluation skills for independent learning beyond school walls.
- Protecting cultural identity: Enabling youth to understand cultural globalization mechanisms and resist intellectual and cultural infiltration attempts (Qubha, 2025).

In another definition, "media instruction is an educational discipline focused on critical and conscious engagement with media and their languages. It serves as a preparatory stage aimed at developing interpretive and critical skills related to media themselves. The goal is to foster deep understanding of media as cultural and social phenomena, emphasizing that they are not mere technical tools but carriers of meanings and values that shape perceptions of reality and identity formation" (D.T. Michele, 2025).

1.4. The Concept of Media and Information Literacy

UNESCO has devoted significant attention to media and information literacy (MIL). In the second edition of UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy Curricula for Teachers and Learners (2023), MIL is defined as "a set of competencies that help people maximize benefits and minimize harms. MIL covers competencies that enable individuals to engage critically and effectively with communication content" (Gordon, 2023). It links MIL to media education as one of the essential conditions for improving media and information literacy, as it is the skill that enhances communication capacities, enabling individuals to use communication tools as instruments for expressing processes of development and social change.

Although these concepts differ in their core meanings, they converge on the objective. Media education can be regarded as the umbrella encompassing all these concepts, as it is a decisive matter of utmost importance that unites efforts to promote media literacy and create a society and individuals with media culture and information literacy. Globally, the development of media education and instruction is encouraging; there is consensus that media education is essential. Despite variations in foundations, definitions, and concepts, there is agreement on the goal of media education and all related aspects: forming media-knowledgeable citizens capable of interacting with media intelligently and responsibly. Therefore, media education and the enhancement of media literacy remain the adopted terms covering a broad range of skills, knowledge, and understanding related to modern communication media, and the questions that media-literate individuals know how to ask: "Who made this? For whom? In whose interest do they speak? What was included and what was omitted?"

2. The System of Integration Between Media and Education: Why Do We Need Media Education?

Mass media—whether traditional or modern digital—serve as tools to meet audience needs, such as obtaining news and information, entertainment, and social communication. However, media are not a mirror of reality, and their content is not always complete, accurate, or unbiased. In addition to consuming traditional media, children and adolescents spend considerable time with new forms of media. Consequently, concerns about adolescents in this regard have intensified. These concerns encompass media influence on violence, aggressive behaviors, crime, academic performance, body



Received: **28/12/2025** Accepted: **03/02/2026** Published: **10/03/2026**

image, diet, rising obesity rates, participation in sedentary activities, and changes in conversational language structures.

As a result of the evolution of mass media, the 20th century witnessed strong theoretical questions about their impact. Various scientific currents questioned the power of media and what they do to audiences, particularly youth (e.g., the hypodermic needle model). Numerous studies have addressed the issue of influence, indicating that media effects can be balanced by what audiences can do in response to media, provided they master them. The acute question regarding media influence on individuals and masses has raised educational concerns, leading to the emergence of new pedagogical approaches through the exploitation of media and information tools within schools (Lee, 2010, p. 2). Therefore, the use of media in education has garnered widespread attention in most countries worldwide, although the efficiency of this use varies across educational systems. One of education's tasks is to develop students' readiness to evaluate the society in which they live, where media play a crucial role—especially amid the duality of media and education, which has given rise to a new social science termed "media education."

This concept reflects an aspect of the necessary integration between educational institutions and media institutions, making its application an entry point to ensure optimal use of media in alignment with educational goals for achieving comprehensive growth at the scientific and ethical levels (Al-Sharif, 2014, pp. 92–93). Media education is an instructional approach designed to enhance critical thinking by improving media knowledge, increasing awareness of media influence, refining the ability to evaluate media representations, and

aiming to develop individuals' skills in understanding media messages, recognizing biases, distinguishing reliable sources, and comprehending media effects on individuals and society (d'Haenens, 2025, p. 4). Experts in this field have focused on the potential of communication tools and media to achieve tangible educational benefits "as teaching aids." In recent years, the concept of media education has evolved from merely a "defensive project" to also an "empowerment project," aiming to prepare youth to understand the surrounding media culture, select and interact with it appropriately, and participate in it effectively and influentially (Mohamed, 2024). By integrating media education into school curricula, students' abilities can be improved in identifying fake news, enhancing writing skills, and engaging more actively in their communities.

3. The Benefits of Education "Through" Media: International and Arab Initiatives

3.1. International Initiatives: A Historical Perspective

Since the 1970s, a new subject area emerged: "media instruction" or "media education," which involves studying media to promote media literacy. In 1973, UNESCO proposed the following introduction: "Media education is the study, learning, and teaching of modern means of communication and expression as a specific and autonomous field of knowledge within the theory and practice of education, distinct from their use as tools for teaching and learning other fields of knowledge, such as mathematics, sciences, and geography" (UNESCO, 1977, p. 3).

However, substantive international discussion on media education and instruction began in 1982 with the Grunwald Declaration, promoted by UNESCO in recognition of the



Received: **28/12/2025** Accepted: **03/02/2026** Published: **10/03/2026**

importance of improving the relationship between education and communication in our society. A group of educators, journalists, and researchers from 19 countries, participating in an international symposium held in Grünwald, Federal Republic of Germany, from January 18 to 22, 1982, at UNESCO's invitation, adopted the Grunwald Declaration on Media Education. The declaration states: "Rather than condemning or approving the powerful influence of media, we should accept as a fact their significant impact and global extension, while recognizing that they constitute an important element of contemporary culture. The role of communication and its means in the development process should not be underestimated, nor should the instrumental function of media in promoting active citizen participation in society. Political and educational systems must bear the responsibilities placed upon them to promote critical understanding of communication phenomena among citizens....

Media education will be more effective if parents, teachers, media personnel, and decision-makers recognize that they all have a role in fostering a sharper critical awareness among listeners, viewers, and readers. Strengthening the integration of education and communication systems undoubtedly represents an important measure to make education more effective... We therefore appeal to the competent authorities to:

- Organize and support integrated media education programs extending from preschool to university and adult education.
- Develop training courses for teachers and various types of facilitators and mediators aimed at improving

their knowledge and understanding of media and introducing them to appropriate teaching methods.

- Stimulate research and development activities related to media education in fields such as psychology, sociology, and communication sciences.
- Support and strengthen UNESCO's actions and planned initiatives aimed at encouraging international cooperation in media education" (AEEMA, 2011; UNESCO, 1982).

The recommendations adopted at the Vienna Conference (Austria, April 18–20, 1999),¹ titled "*Educating for the Media in the Digital Age*" (Éduquer pour les Médias à l'ère du Numérique), with 41 experts from 33 countries participating, are also noteworthy. Based on these recommendations, preparations were planned to relaunch this work in UNESCO Member States through media education programs and the creation of a dedicated media space for youth.

The conference also presented a set of principles and guidelines in the field of media education and instruction, enabling individuals to develop a better understanding of how media operate in society and acquire the necessary skills to use them for communication with others. These principles teach individuals how to: analyze and adopt a critical approach toward media texts and create their own media messages; identify the sources of media texts and their political, social, commercial, and/or cultural interests within their context; interpret the messages and values conveyed by media. The conference regarded media education as part of every citizen's fundamental right to freedom of expression

¹ Vienna Conference <http://aeema.net/2011/01/recommandations-adoptees-a-la-conference-de-vienne/>



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and information, serving as a tool for building and preserving democracy. While acknowledging profound differences in the nature and evolution of media education across countries, participants recommended integrating media education wherever possible within national and higher curricula, as well as in non-formal lifelong learning (AEEMA, 2011).

The discussion on media education and instruction continued with the Prague Declaration in 2003², titled "*Towards an Information Literate Society*" (UNESCO, 2003), organized by the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and the National Forum on Information Literacy, with UNESCO support. Representatives from 23 countries across all seven continents attended the meeting in Prague, Czech Republic, from September 20 to 23, 2003. The declaration proposed fundamental principles for information literacy, the most important being that "information literacy must be an integral part of 'Education for All,' which can contribute decisively to achieving development goals" (Bernhard, 2003).

In the context of combating information manipulation, the French Ministry of Culture launched an ambitious plan for media and information education in March 2018, accompanied by a budget increase from 3 to 6 million euros annually. The ministry has reaffirmed this priority each year since then, manifested through national project calls managed by the Ministry of Culture for initiatives of national or inter-regional scope, continued support for regional media and

² Prague Declaration: Towards an information literacy society, UNESCO 2003 https://www.produktive-medienarbeit.de/ressourcen/bibliothek/positionspapiere/unesco_prag.shtml

information education actors, and ongoing backing for media education activities in libraries and archival services (Normandie, 2025).

Building on the National Assembly report on the school in the digital society (October 2018), the Economic, Social, and Environmental Council's report on media literacy outcomes (December 2019), the digital education statement (June 2020), and the expert group's report on strengthening media literacy and digital citizenship (July 2021), the French government formalized a concrete project on November 16, 2022, titled "*Media and Information Literacy in the French Education System with International Actors*." This initiative decided on: providing tools for decoding news; organizing Media and Press Week in schools; training teachers in information literacy; producing media and information literacy resources; and addressing a new theme: digital education (CLEMI, 2022).

France also established the "*Programme d'Éducation aux médias et à l'information 2025*" (Media and Information Education Program 2025). Targeted audiences include all citizens, especially youth, regardless of their status (school time or non-school time), special circumstances (special education centers, youth protection, care institutions, second-chance schools, dropout institutions), professionals, trainers, assistants, or mediators. The program stipulates that media education must enable every individual to exercise active citizenship in media, broaden horizons, understand the world and its complexities, develop critical thinking, free themselves from paths dictated by social media, their algorithms, and continuous flows, and comprehend media, networks, information phenomena, and digital culture in all dimensions: economic, social, technical, and ethical.



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Particular attention was given to media education projects in libraries and archival services, recognizing them as the primary cultural network in the region—historically dedicated spaces for documentary research, promoting diverse yet reliable content, making them key actors in media and information education for diverse audiences (Normandie, 2025).

In the United States, the report "*Snapshot 2024: The State of Media Literacy Education in the U.S.*" (NAMLE, 2024) outlined key points, including definitions of media literacy and media literacy education (media instruction), media literacy in research and policy contexts, in education contexts, and in public understanding contexts. This report built on NAMLE's inaugural "State of Media Literacy Education" survey from 2018, designed to understand who teaches media literacy in the U.S., how it is taught, the resources used, and barriers faced. Based on survey responses, six recommendations were identified to improve media literacy education: expanding professional development and training opportunities for media literacy education (including new and practicing teachers, teacher education faculty, program coordinators, post-school/out-of-school programs); communicating with diverse groups to support their involvement, grants, and development of new programs; supporting research areas such as case studies and comprehensive ethnographic studies to understand structures enabling or hindering media literacy practice; developing a clearer picture of implementation and assessment in classrooms and other environments; creating a centralized online repository to collect, organize, and aggregate resources (including content materials, full course designs, and lessons for various ages, grades, and contexts

with clear learning objectives, aligned assessments, and relevant teaching methods); publishing an annual survey to measure changes, improvements, and challenges in research, practice, and assessment; advocating for public understanding through awareness campaigns clarifying the purpose and necessity of media literacy (NAMLE, 2024).

The U.S. has also prioritized legislation for media literacy. In recent years, leaders at local and national levels have noted the significant gap in the education system. According to Media Literacy Now (MLN)'s latest policy report, as of 2023, 28 states had passed media literacy legislation or had pending bills on media literacy or digital citizenship. Of these, seven states (California, Delaware, Florida, New Jersey, Ohio, Texas, and Washington) were classified by MLN as having taken "significant steps toward comprehensive media literacy education through the legislative process." Twelve additional states enacted legislation that "advances" media literacy (Bailey, 2025). The report provided state-by-state analysis, highlighting progress and identifying areas needing attention.

Globally, UNESCO released a new report on October 27, 2025, titled "*Media and Information Literacy for All: Closing the Gaps*," launched during Global Media and Information Literacy Week 2025. The report revealed global gaps in media and information literacy policies and empowerment in education. It presented the first global mapping of MIL policies and curricula across 194 UNESCO Member States, uncovering notable regional disparities and urgent opportunities for progress. According to the report, 171 countries reference MIL skills in national policy frameworks, indicating growing political recognition. However, only 17 countries have developed independent, dedicated MIL



Received: **28/12/2025** Accepted: **03/02/2026** Published: **10/03/2026**

policies. Europe and North America lead, with 91% of countries integrating MIL into curricula. Progress remains uneven elsewhere: only 9 of 54 African countries and 15 of 46 in Asia-Pacific have introduced MIL elements into national curricula. MIL is typically taught at primary and secondary levels, often across multiple subjects rather than as a standalone course – an approach that can complicate impact measurement and sustainability but highlights recognition of MIL as cross-disciplinary competencies. The report emphasized that dedicated or hybrid MIL policy frameworks correlate with more comprehensive classroom integration. This global analysis conveys a clear message: recognition of MIL skills is high, but implementation remains fragmented. To build resilient communities in the digital age, the shift from awareness to action is essential. Countries with dedicated policies are far better positioned to integrate MIL across education and society (UNESCO, 2025). Accordingly, UNESCO called for strengthening national MIL policies, sustainable funding, and cross-sectoral collaboration involving governments, schools, civil society, and international partners to explore integrating critical analysis of media texts, tools, and technologies into primary, secondary, higher education, libraries, museums, and other non-formal learning environments. Today, media literacy initiatives occur in many countries, with clear differences in cultural values, press freedom, media systems, education structures, policies, and media technology shaping the direction, objectives, implementation, and evaluation of media literacy initiatives worldwide (Hobbs, 2025).

3.2. Arab Initiatives and Efforts

The idea of media education emerged in the Arab world during the first decade of the third millennium as an urgent necessity to enhance knowledge in the analytical and critical aspects of media texts, whether presented by Arab or foreign media. The American University of Beirut marked the first Arab starting point when it held the inaugural scientific workshop in 2006, serving as a launchpad for introducing and disseminating this concept across universities and some schools in collaboration with UNESCO (Al-Badrani, 2016). Lebanon has been a pioneer in promoting media education at both university and community levels, thanks to a relatively free media environment, high academic freedom, and the presence of numerous media programs alongside a diverse range of curricula. Consequently, Lebanon offers substantial potential for developing a strong local brand of media culture and education and reinforcing it throughout the region.

In the fall of 2009, the first full course on media culture was launched at a Lebanese university, driven by a curriculum developed at the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, a global group producing media culture curricula since 2007. The course quickly attracted numerous students at the American University of Beirut. To advance media culture and education in Lebanon and the region, the university hosted an international conference in 2011 titled "Digital and Media Culture: New Directions," supported by the Open Society Foundations. Many attendees expressed interest in implementing media culture and education at their institutions but highlighted challenges, particularly the scarcity of Arabic-language curricular materials and the lack of teaching skills for the course. The conference outcomes report recommended establishing an annual academy to train



Received: **28/12/2025** Accepted: **03/02/2026** Published: **10/03/2026**

Arab media professors in teaching digital and media culture and producing Arabic-language curricular materials (Melki, 2013).

In Iraq, the Ministry of Education issued a clarification in 2021 regarding the addition of media education as a subject in school curricula. The ministry's spokesperson told the Iraqi News Agency (INA) that "proposals are typically submitted as official requests to any institution, after which committees or specific workshops may be formed to discuss any topic proposed as a media subject, curricular material, or subject that can be taught in schools, potentially allocated to educational stages from any level where these curricula begin." He emphasized that "this topic takes the form of an official letter submitted to the ministry" (Al-Zaydi, 2021).

Additionally, the College of Media at the University of Baghdad launched the "Renewed Pathway for Media Curriculum Development" program in 2025, attended by official members of the Deans' Committee of Media Colleges in Iraq and a select group of academic figures. This qualitative step aims to align the educational environment with global digital transformations and enhance students' and academic institutions' capacities to produce professional media content compliant with labor market requirements. The Dean of the College of Media affirmed that "the program represents a strategic platform for rephrasing media education methodologies by reviewing traditional training methods and introducing hybrid education models that combine practical application with modern cognitive approaches." He noted that "the program will open broad horizons for scientific cooperation between Iraqi colleges, media

institutions, and digital platforms" (Al-Markaz Al-Khabari, 2025).

In Jordan, academic and educational specialists recently affirmed (2025) that media and communication tools have become the most prominent contemporary life manifestations, occupying the largest share of individuals' interests in general and youth in particular. Given this role, it is essential to incorporate specialized courses in media education and literacy to achieve competencies, capabilities, and skills among students in handling these tools, receiving directed messages based on knowledge and awareness, subjecting them to critical scrutiny to verify accuracy and intent, and dealing with them accordingly. They explained that specialized curricula grounded in systematic construction can protect youth from extremist ideas, increase awareness of the dangers of improper use of these tools, and enhance their ability to address challenges and changes (TLB News, 2025).

In the Kingdom of Morocco, regional academies for education and training are conducting extensive consultations aimed at reviewing school curricula, in line with the Kingdom's efforts to develop its education system in accordance with contemporary requirements. Among the topics strongly emerging in these consultations is the inclusion of "media education" as a core component in educational programs. This step responds to the rapid technological transformations reshaping the world, which have redefined ways of thinking and interacting with information. The initiative seeks to empower learners with critical thinking tools and strengthen their capacities to navigate the flood of digital content that has become an integral part of their daily lives (Al-Haw, 2025).



Received: **28/12/2025** Accepted: **03/02/2026** Published: **10/03/2026**

At the Arab world level, Al-Fanar Media launched a guide to media culture and information literacy for Arabic- and English-speaking readers. This free online resource is designed to equip students, teachers, and aspiring journalists across the Arab world and beyond with vital skills to navigate today's complex media landscape. Key emphases include integrating theoretical insights with practical applications, providing numerous tools and resources to deepen skills in areas such as fact-checking and source evaluation. The guide adopts a sustainable approach by offering training materials, direct training for faculty and trainers (as in the "Train the Trainers" workshop in Istanbul), and engaging graduates in long-term content creation initiatives like the GenZ project and mentoring program. Efforts also included hosting academics in online seminars and podcasts, inviting them to write opinion pieces on media culture for wider reach, and highlighting regional efforts in Jordan as the first Arab country in this domain (Nabeel, 2025).

Among the most prominent efforts in this field is the international symposium organized by ICESCO and Naif Arab University for Security Sciences in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in collaboration with the League of Arab States (represented by the Media and Communication Sector, Technical Secretariat of the Arab Ministers of Information Council) and the Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Communication of the Kingdom of Morocco at the organization's headquarters. At the conclusion of its proceedings, it issued a package of important, practical, and applicable recommendations, including the importance of embedding global citizenship values to contribute to building a more just and peaceful world through investing in media

education across educational stages; calling for the preparation of a series of guides to enhance its presence; developing youth awareness of digital ethics in content production and circulation; and preparing a professional, legislative, and ethical charter for the use of artificial intelligence in media work (ICESCO, 2024).

4. Challenges and Requirements for Incorporating Media Education into Educational Curricula

In his book *Media Education*, Dr. Ahmed Jamal Hassan states: "... it is necessary to specify how to implement media education curricula across all educational stages as an independent subject... in addition to the necessity that media education teaching extend beyond the educational system through the family and civil society institutions... with a focus on popular texts in media education. Since the purpose of media education is to protect youth and children from the negative effects of media, it is essential to empower youth and encourage them to make correct decisions regarding media exposure and how to actively deal with negative content – this is what he termed the issue of protection versus empowerment" (Hassan, 2015, p. 9).

Given that the primary objective of media education is to develop the ability to read media contents, media awareness is not limited to the reception aspect alone but must extend to conscious and purposeful participation in producing media content. From this perspective, the goal of media education becomes transforming the consumption of media messages into an active critical process to help individuals form awareness about the nature of those messages and understand their role in shaping perceptions of the reality they live in (Al-Hamdani, 2015, pp. 94–95). To achieve these



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requirements, it is essential to confront a set of challenges that can be summarized as follows:

4.1. Bridging the Linguistic Gap in the Arab Region

Reliable Arabic resources on media culture remain extremely limited, while abundant English-language materials exist on the topic (Nabeel, 2025). In a study titled "Media Education and the Challenges of New Media," the author notes: "... 'Franco-Arabic' language has been invented, where writing in English letters pronounces Arabic words, serving as a link between Arabic and English. This has led manufacturing companies to refrain from supporting Arabic in programs and games entirely. Recently, the increased use of English has prompted major companies, led by the software giant Microsoft, to release some programs in 'Franco-Arabic' as an alternative to Arabic" (Sulaiman, 2019). In light of these challenges, media education programs that must be consolidated should undertake to embed Arab cultural specificity and achieve a balance between preservation and renewal without compromising Arab constants, foremost among them the language. These challenges can be overcome by training a generation of university academics, school teachers, and civil society trainers, and motivating them to introduce media education and culture into their institutions (Melki, 2013).

4.2. Bridging the Digital Media Divide

Empowering older adults through media education is crucial, as technological constraints and resource shortages can hinder the consolidation of media education and culture, particularly in rural and underserved areas. The digital

divide between youth and older individuals poses a significant barrier. In a recently published article titled "*Éducation aux médias : un enjeu pour l'avenir*," the author observes: "What draws the attention of educational actors today is the growing gap between adolescents' media uses and those of adults. We still have deeply ingrained parental practices: watching news bulletins, listening to the radio, subscribing to a local newspaper. Meanwhile, their children and youth use entirely different tools." School and university students obtain information by following interests on social media platforms, through specialized creators, and other smart digital applications. Moreover, they receive media education from first to final grade. From primary school onward, students learn to distinguish between opinion, interpretation, and reliable information. In second grade, they study stereotypes in media; in third grade, information construction; and in middle school, cyber violence and digital moderation. This shift toward networks does not make them more vulnerable. "Our students are not the generation most exposed to fake news. They have a somewhat developed critical sense." They can easily distinguish between entertainment, opinion, and information. In fact, older individuals are more susceptible to falling into the trap of fake news (Grave, 2025). This is corroborated by a study conducted under the "Aging in a Connected Society" project, involving a sample of 32,000 seniors. It found that the most used application among those aged 65 and over is WhatsApp, with approximately 52% of seniors using it daily to stay connected with family and friends. This highlights the positive side of new technologies in communication and reducing isolation. However, these uses do not necessarily reflect advanced digital literacy. Many seniors face difficulties



Received: 28/12/2025 Accepted: 03/02/2026 Published: 10/03/2026

with more complex functions, such as managing attachments, documents, protecting against unwanted messages, and accessing multimedia resources like videos. Furthermore, in more digitally advanced countries, the ability to use digital identity systems and access government services online has become an essential skill. This presents an additional challenge: many seniors find themselves relying on children or grandchildren to navigate these complex systems of digital citizenship, making them vulnerable and often dependent on younger generations. This situation underscores the need for lifelong digital education that extends beyond classrooms to all life stages. Digital literacy programs must be designed to meet the specific needs of seniors, enabling them to navigate the digital world independently and safely. In particular, practical courses should not only teach common application usage but also provide skills to defend against online threats such as scams, spam, and fraud, while educating seniors on the importance of privacy and security in digital transactions. Integrating seniors digitally enhances not only their quality of life but also fosters a more equitable society, where all generations can actively participate in the digital realm without feeling marginalized or dependent (D.T. Michele, 2025).

Without overlooking social and economic disparities and inequalities in access to technology and digital tools, which limit the scope of media literacy education. Students from disadvantaged communities are disproportionately affected, leading to unequal opportunities for developing critical media skills (Livingstone, 2020). This restricts marginalized students' opportunities for meaningful participation in the digital world. Without intervention, the absence of media

literacy education risks reinforcing passive information consumers rather than critical thinkers, undermining informed citizenship and democratic engagement. Therefore, addressing this issue is vital for preparing students in an increasingly connected and media-driven society...

4.3. Promoting Critical Thinking and Responsible Integration of Technology in Media Education (For Conscious Use of Technologies)

Media education encompasses important domains, beginning with the cognitive domain, primarily related to knowledge, understanding, analysis, interpretation, criticism, and balancing the media materials youth are exposed to. The affective domain concerns emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values. The behavioral domain involves actions such as practice, mastery, and creativity in producing and disseminating beneficial media content. The nature of media education is viewed as a defensive project aimed at protecting youth from media risks, such as exposing fake messages and inappropriate values and encouraging rejection. However, media education has shifted toward an empowering approach related to skills for handling media and their contents and participating effectively (Sulaiman, 2019, p. 27). To confirm these domains, a study titled "*Impact of Media Literacy Education on Knowledge and Behavioral Intention of Adolescents in Dealing with Media Messages According to Stages of Change*" sought to determine the effect of media skills education on knowledge and behavioral intention among adolescents in handling media messages according to stages of change. The study used a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-tests for control and intervention groups. Approximately 198 female students participated, including



Received: 28/12/2025 Accepted: 03/02/2026 Published: 10/03/2026

101 in the intervention group and 97 in the control group. The educational program employed interactive teaching and learning techniques. Data were collected via a reliable, valid self-administered questionnaire in three phases: pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 14, employing descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed a significant increase in the intervention group's mean knowledge scores post-training ($p=0.001$), while no significant difference appeared in the control group ($p=0.200$). A large percentage of participants in both groups were in pre-contemplation and contemplation stages pre-test. Post-intervention, a significant improvement ($p=0.001$) occurred in the intervention group's stages of change compared to the control group. Thus, the study concluded that planned educational programs are effective in improving adolescents' knowledge and behavioral intention in dealing with mass media messages (Geraee et al., 2015).

4.4. Media Socialization and the Role of Parents and Teachers in Managing Media Exposure During Childhood

Socializing children through media is a complex phenomenon offering both opportunities and challenges. Exposure to violent or inappropriate content raises parental concerns about children's behavior and emotional well-being. It is essential to recognize that children are not mere passive recipients of information but actively engage with media, reinterpreting experiences and integrating them into daily life. In this context, parents play a crucial role: they must not only monitor content but also teach children to develop critical media literacy (D.T. Michele, 2025). In this regard, a

study titled "*Families and Social Media Use: The Role of Parents' Perceptions about Social Media Impact on Family Systems in the Relationship between Family Collective Efficacy and Open Communication*" aimed to deepen understanding of parents' perceptions of social media effects on family systems within family functioning, particularly the relationship between collective family efficacy and open communication in families with adolescents. A questionnaire assessing family communication openness, collective efficacy, and perceptions of social media impacts on family systems was administered to 227 Italian parents with one or more adolescent children using Facebook and WhatsApp for communication. Results indicated that these perceptions mediate the relationship between collective family efficacy and open communication, suggesting that not only the actual impact of social media on family systems matters but also parents' perceptions and their sense of ability to manage their and their children's social media use without harming family relationships. Therefore, enhancing parents' positive perceptions of social media's potential impact on family relationships is essential. Strategies to promote knowledge about functional social media use can be effective (Procentese et al., 2019). The study highlighted the importance of parents' positive perceptions of social media's influence on social interactions and family relationships in promoting good family functioning and open communication among family members. It also suggested that relying on family capabilities to manage daily tasks and face challenges can serve as a strategy to recognize that social media-related challenges, consequences, and potential risks can be managed with sufficient information and negotiation of changes in family communication, habits, interactions, and rituals. Thus, parents can use social media positively and



Received: 28/12/2025 Accepted: 03/02/2026 Published: 10/03/2026

functionally, viewing it as educational and participatory spaces that enhance broader, more open communication with children and foster critical, responsible awareness in them simultaneously.

5. Media Education and Conscious Engagement with Media in the Context of Digital Transformation

The roots of media literacy and the consolidation of media education can be traced back to critical pedagogy movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Scholars during that period emphasized the need for learners to become critical thinkers capable of analyzing societal power structures through media. With the emergence of the Internet in the 1990s, media literacy expanded to encompass digital platforms and user-generated content. Today, digital literacy and media literacy frequently overlap, as both are essential for effective navigation of the online environment. Integrating media and digital literacy into education equips students with the skills necessary to navigate the digital landscape (Mishra, 2025). Research indicates that students who receive media literacy education are better at identifying biased or false information and exhibit greater skepticism toward online content. Critical media literacy also helps individuals understand the algorithms that shape their online experiences. By recognizing how platforms amplify certain content, users can become more aware of echo chambers and filter bubbles. This is affirmed in an analytical study titled "*Media Literacy in a Digital Age: Taking Stock and Empowering Action*," which aimed to "assess and advance media education and digital skills" through an analysis of 12 articles exploring the transformative potential of media education, digital competencies, and

information and communication technology interventions across diverse contexts and populations—from adolescents and youth to individuals with special needs, university staff, and professional educators.

The study underscored the necessity of fostering interdisciplinary and international collaboration, highlighting the pivotal role of media education and digital skills in promoting empowerment, equity, and resilience amid the complexities of the contemporary digital era. It emphasized creativity, collaboration, and professional preparation alongside digital competence to support diverse learner needs. The study also shed light on barriers such as workload pressures and limited access to tools, calling for flexible, participatory training programs that blend self-assessment with practical tasks (d’Haenens, 2025).

Despite the significant opportunities provided by digital media to facilitate many aspects of life, these technologies are not without drawbacks, which represent a new pattern of existential challenges across contemporary societies in various social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions. These media challenges have imposed new cultural and civilizational imperatives, foremost among them the necessity of providing citizens and individuals with media competence and critical media awareness. There is no doubt that fostering critical awareness of the risks posed by the digital media revolution constitutes one of the most important requirements for life in the 21st century. This means that any society lacking advanced critical media awareness—encompassing the experiences and advanced skills related to both manifest and latent functions of media—will inevitably be vulnerable to risks that threaten its existence and identity (Wutfu, 2024). Consequently, building



Received: **28/12/2025** Accepted: **03/02/2026** Published: **10/03/2026**

advanced critical media awareness among individuals and society serves as a safety valve for cultural life and socioeconomic and cultural development in the modern era.

Conclusion

Media literacy does not aim solely to teach students how to use communication technologies; rather, it focuses on enhancing critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and understanding of how media messages are constructed and disseminated. Media education and the promotion of media literacy constitute an educational discipline centered on critical and conscious engagement with media and their languages. It functions as a preparatory stage aimed at developing interpretive and critical skills related to media themselves. The objective is to foster a deep understanding of media as cultural and social phenomena, emphasizing that they are not mere technical tools but carriers of meanings and values that shape perceptions of reality and identity formation. Furthermore, integrating media literacy into education addresses not only media consumption but also production. Students learn to create responsible and impactful digital content, bridging the gap between passive consumption and active participation in the digital world. This proactive approach ensures that students are not mere spectators but active contributors to the information ecosystem, thereby enhancing civic participation and global dialogue.

Particularly in the digital landscape, media literacy has become an indispensable skill for students, enabling them to

navigate the complexities of an information-saturated world. Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using various forms of communication. This capacity is essential for preparing students to become informed and responsible digital citizens capable of deep engagement with media content while avoiding risks such as misinformation, cyberbullying, and online manipulation. As digital platforms become central to education, communication, and daily life, equipping students with these skills is more critical than ever.

Nevertheless, implementing media literacy education presents challenges, including unequal access to technology, the need for teacher training, and the rapidly evolving nature of digital media. Despite these obstacles, integrating media literacy into education is vital for preparing students to succeed in a digital world, where the ability to navigate and contribute to the media landscape is central to personal empowerment, critical engagement, and lifelong learning. Accordingly, this research paper offers recommendations to improve educational practices, teacher training, and policy development in the field of media literacy. The rapidly evolving media landscape, driven by the pace of technological advancement and the proliferation of new media platforms, poses ongoing challenges for educators to keep content relevant and up-to-date. This necessitates continuous curriculum reviews and professional development.

Therefore, future research should seek to expand its scope through interdisciplinary and multilingual studies, particularly in Arabic, to ensure a comprehensive review of media education and literacy literature. Responsible authorities must also strengthen media education curricula



Received: 28/12/2025 Accepted: 03/02/2026 Published: 10/03/2026

within school programs to grant students information, media, and digital culture that ensures a balanced and calm relationship with news and information of any kind; the ability to question and analyze their own information practices; distinguish reliable information sources; critically understand and analyze topics; practice producing beneficial information, including publishing and sharing; and engage in responsible and ethical use of media, particularly social media platforms.

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