

Dealing with University Issues under Emergency Conditions

(Scientific Paper)

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There are a number of justifications and motives that require urgent treatment in university and technical education. As the war in Yemen enters its sixth year, there are no real international indicators and orientations to stop the bloody conflict to bring peace at that moment, and as long as international support is directed towards the humanitarian response without supporting the issues related to education aiming to preserve the remaining components of economic and social development which means destroying the future of the Yemeni people, through the perpetuation of conflict that will inevitably create defeated, corrupt, or dependent generations on external support, and this is a disaster that will be compounded in the near future and will require decades to address. And with the long duration of the conflict, continuity in response programs will logically turn into a disaster itself, as it has not expanded to include programs supporting development, and their essential component is education at all levels.

The challenges and imbalances of the Yemeni education sector have grown, and one of the most pressing issues today is the advocacy of teachers and students, and the development of contemporary disciplines etc. The 2020 AD study showed that there were insufficient solutions to the economic, social and educational crises that have resulted from war in the Higher Education Institutions in Yemen. In this article, we put forward emergency solutions that do not require strategies and large financial allocations, which are among the alternatives available to decision-makers and other actors that are commensurate with the conditions of deep wars and crises. It is acknowledged that war has created catastrophic situations, as the components of a single country have become fragmented, and many external challenges and internal crises facing Yemeni university education have emerged, one part of which has a strong and clear impact, while the other side is still not apparent and its effects on the near future will be more severe.

Advocating the teacher

The education sector is one of the vital sectors and is supposed to deviate from any conflicts, but in the Yemeni reality, it has been directly affected by the conflict, with a large proportion of the education cadres' salaries suspended. This situation was not among the potential dangers and to such a catastrophic degree, given the very serious risks it has on the teacher as he was threatened by financial, social and psychological instability, and thus, advocating the teacher at this point is a priority even with the continuity of war.

The current problems faced by teachers have increased, their survival have been affected, and their bad financial and psychological conditions have deepened as a result of many factors, notably the loss of salaries almost four years ago for the largest proportion of teachers in the Republic of Yemen. These serious problems are affecting their families, students, future generations and development which made a number of professors from public and private universities leave the country and the immigration still continues. Thus, the concerned authorities and actors can alleviate the severity of the disaster in addressing emergency and urgent issues. Not only has the professor been affected in public universities, but the impact has reached private Yemeni universities, as most of them have curbed their expenses rather than rationalizing them, by cutting out part of the academic cadre and reducing the salaries of professors, and in some universities, the number of weekly working days has been reduced.

To carry out a successful advocacy campaign for teachers that includes planning and mobilizing all available and possible resources (for the Sana'a government, public and private sector institutions, non-governmental organizations, donor countries, regional and international organizations, and guardians) and then implementing advocacy and evaluation programs and activities to ensure that teachers are supported financially, materially and psychologically. Among the emergency treatments for university professors whose salaries are cut off, they include:

1. Ensuring the disbursement of monthly sums equal to the minimum basic needed that preserve his life and status.
2. Payment for transportation costs from and to lectures.
3. Delegating more powers and authorities to the boards of state universities and colleges instead of the center of treatments to deal with core teachers' issues from the revenues allocated to them.
4. Exempting or lending their children government fees, regardless of whether they are linked to the needs that are necessary and have a direct impact.
5. Postponing part of the claims to pay the financial obligations that they owe during the war period or until the regularity of the salary's payment.
6. Instructing universities and colleges to guide applied and scientific research during this phase towards urgent response issues, cases and sustainable development cases that touch the current reality.

Guiding Scientific and Applied Research

Given the fact that the conflict has been going on for years and that there is no prospect of peace in the near future, we urgently need to implement emergency responses that depend not only on response programs, but we must move immediately to find realistic responses to the disastrous issues that will confront the Yemeni society in all its spectrums. Among these treatments, research and studies are directed towards issues of response, peace and reconstruction, as well as development issues, particularly those that continue to have a negative impact on our generations over the coming decades.

The Yemeni Scientific Research Sector is weak in terms of components and capabilities, as the number of Yemeni state and private research centers does not exceed 96 centers registered in the records of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and these centers are either suspended because of war or without real impact as a result of the suspension of funding by organizations and donors. In addition, most of the research that is conducted is individualized and aims at specific ends, either simply for promotion or as work requirements and thus far from the problems and contemporary needs of the society.

It is noticeable that the higher education community, universities and technical colleges, have not issued any instructions or decisions instructing researchers that their research and studies should be linked to contemporary Yemeni issues in accordance with their priorities and urgent importance and have not emphasized the use of applied research results as a developmental function and as a service to the society with the reality of contemporary Yemeni issues particularly those related to the response and issues of the future effects of war on our generations.

We also lack the vision and strategic directions of the nature of applied research in Yemeni universities and the mechanism to link it to contemporary reality, so that it can be targeted and facilitated by researchers during the current war period and during the future recovery period. The process of motivating researchers to focus more on applied research than descriptive research, which tends to collect and analyze information without providing practical solutions that benefit society in priority areas.

Applied and development research is one of the external services that universities and research centers should provide to the society, as this research

is guiding directly to solving the community problems, both in the field of production and services, and to solving social and developmental problems. Although applied research is important in addressing development and community issues, it is largely lacking in Yemeni universities and specialized scientific research centers. In this context, the process of participation and collaboration of multidisciplinary researchers and various experiences is not effective in the current research centers.

Moreover, there is an absence of application of applied research results that aims at the development and improvement through developmental research activities. Among the missing elements is the lack of business incubators to facilitate the process of networking between researchers and support institutions, highlighting scientific and applied research and student innovations, and marketing their research results and entrepreneurial ideas.

Joining the United Nations Academic Impact Program

Given the difficulties and complexities that limit the establishment of links and networks with global educational institutions in the face of ongoing bloody conflicts in Yemen, in order to take advantage, we recommend universities, technical colleges and other Yemeni educational institutions to join the United Nations Academic Impact Program. This program is an initiative that aims to align the programs and activities of higher education institutions with the United Nations with the aim of supporting and actively participating in achieving the goals of the United Nations.

The initiative was launched in November 2010 and since then the initiative has built a vibrant and diverse network of students, academics, scientists, researchers, research centers, higher education institutions, continuing education institutions, and educational unions in more than 130 countries that include millions of people in the education and research sectors around the world. The initiative also provides a common link for all these academic institutions to emphasize that the international community guides the energy and creativity of youth and the research community to serve humanity, and any subject or field of knowledge will have the imprint of the United Nations.

The United Nations Academic Impact seeks to:

- ✓ Aligning higher education, scholarship, research institutions and the United Nations with and among them in order to address the priority issues to the United Nations, in particular the Millennium Development Goals.
- ✓ Involving educational institutions around the world and across the academic community.
- ✓ Highlighting the contributions of universities to the sustainable development goals, as well as the free circulation of information and its wider dissemination in a more balanced manner.
- ✓ Developing and protecting human rights, providing education for all, sustainability and conflict resolution.
- ✓ Supervising a special series of articles and issues related to sustainable development goals.
- ✓ Submit reports annually to the Committee on Information through the Secretary General's reports on special awareness services.

The educational institutions with membership are the centers of the United Nations Academic Impact Program as they are selected as research and innovation centers on the specific principles of the United Nations Academic Impact Program. The work of universities is vital to achieving the sustainable development goals with ideas, inventions, and new solutions to a number of global challenges facing them.

Among the most important benefits that university or educational institution can achieve after joining the program are the following:

1. Enabling the cadre and students of the educational institution to receive the benefits and offers provided only by the programs or the members.
2. Joining the sustainable development solutions network and education partners.
3. Spreading the university efforts in the fields of community service and sustainable development.
4. The program provides information to the university as a basis for how to increase the consistency of its research activities and curricula with the work of the United Nations.

This initiative also helps educational institutions to spread information through United Nations initiatives and activities, provides ideas on implementing these activities at the local level in colleges, classrooms, and communities, and provides a platform through which university students, academics, and researchers can link and exchange ideas and research resources for the sustainable development of the United Nations goals.

Membership to this program is free and the educational institution will have to demonstrate its support for at least one of the program's principles each year. They are selected for a renewable two-year period and these institutions are supposed to develop and collect research on the relevant principles, and host seminars, workshops, web-based discussions, group discussions and conferences on the principle chosen by these educational institutions and advanced research, and analysis and policy on that principle in teaching and training halls, on campus and in their communities.

University students support during war

The future depends on youth and students on a higher degree, as they are an active group of the society and represent the real stakeholders in all universities. During the conflict, the majority of students suffer from complex problems and extremely harsh conditions and need comprehensive local and international advocacy that is implemented nationwide and goes beyond individual initiatives that may be implemented by a few universities by providing emergency services to students ranging from the simplest ones by providing transportation for their access to classrooms to the most influential ones, such as covering their tuition fees for those affected by the disruption of salaries, student counseling academically, professionally and psychologically, and addressing the low secondary school outputs that have emerged more widely during the current years of war.

Academic counseling aims at guiding students to obtain the best results and adapt to the university environment by providing them with academic skills that not only raise their level of educational attainment but also to strengthen the relationship between students and guardians on the one hand, and faculty members on the other. Whereas, vocational guidance means helping the individual choose the discipline and the profession that suits him/her, and prepare himself/herself for it and achieving progress, career advancement

and increased production and its quality.

It also includes assisting students in choosing the type of study and profession appropriate to their talents, abilities, preferences and needs of the society, as well as enlightening them of the educational and professional opportunities available and providing them with information and their admission requirements so that they are able to determine their future.

The student counseling process is a continuous one as it is the responsibility of all faculty members and not only the officer of the Academic Support and Counseling Unit (if any), but there is a role for the department to ensure that all faculty members participate in academic and professional supervision activities for students in order to enhance their self-confidence, train them to assume responsibility, instill in them a positive spirit of participation in public life and the value of freedom.

It is imperative that student counseling includes the functions of planning, coordinating, and supervising to achieve student counseling, in cooperation with departments and faculty members, to ensure that they have access to professional and academic guidance and counseling through the provision of services that help them understand themselves and their problems, and enable them to exploit their own capabilities in terms of abilities, skills, preparations and tendencies while taking into account the potential of their environment.

With a view to developing career guidance and counseling in Yemeni universities, (Al-Ashmouri and Al-Hajj 2018) submitted a proposal that includes the following:

1. Establishment of a career guidance and counseling center
2. Establishment of extension services units in each college
3. Implementation of the (advising preparation) program for students before and after their transfer to their new academic classes
4. Forming the educational and vocational counseling portfolio, which includes the latest available leaflets, brochures and publications, and working on providing student counselors to assist them in the development of educational and vocational extension services.

One of the serious issues is the wrong choice of specialization because of its personal and material dimensions on students and their guardians on the one hand, and developmental dimensions nationwide on the other, which limits its ability to make real changes in the field he has chosen. This important issue clearly confronts us in our Yemeni society and has become a realistic issue, as many of us and our acquaintances are either studying in disciplines that are inconsistent with their preferences and abilities and work in a field other than what they have studied as a result of the wrong choice of specialization and find out the error during the years of study or after graduation and other cases during the practice of work. Here we need to empower the student and their guardians to properly plan the choice of their major. The student is usually empowered to choose the appropriate specialization according to the priorities, criteria and factors, the most important of which may be:

1. The field he desires
2. The extent of his mental and strong management capabilities in particular, and the availability and diversity of his skills
3. The support he will get from the university, his relatives and acquaintances in the form of expertise or relationships that will facilitate his in-depth and specialized practice.
4. The scarcity and novelty of specialization with great need
5. The state orientation (government, private sector, organizations ...) in particular and global orientations in general. Here, it will have to provide information bases on the labor market and its future needs to be accessible to students.

Developing and establishing contemporary educational programs

Given that most of the study programs offered by Yemeni universities are traditional and general disciplines or not developed to match their outputs with the needs of the local and regional labor market and with the requirements of the comprehensive development, this issue will remain among the most important and urgent development issues because its dangerous results affect Yemen as a whole as it reflects its impact on our generations. Not only is the problem here, but its teaching and evaluating methods may not, in fact, follow the right strategies and methods that are keeping pace with the present era. While it is good that a few Yemeni universities have begun to develop disciplines that are of great need in modern times and in the near future, in-

dividual initiatives and efforts have not included the development of most modern disciplines. Moreover, their output will not be sufficient to meet the market needs at the national and regional levels. It is known that there is no strategy at the country level, as well as future foresight mechanisms to define contemporary disciplines, and this important topic is one of the responsibilities of university and technical education community (a major responsibility), as well as the participation of universities and other educational institutions. We must not overlook the high school graduates and their guardians, because they have an influence in this regard while there are also actors such as the private sector, the government sector, and organizations operating in Yemen. Therefore, these entities will have a collective responsibility and role to take urgent practical steps to open up modern disciplines, develop the current traditional disciplines, and create the climate to develop a practical strategy without waiting for war to stop.

Generally speaking, the process of identifying the most needed specialties of this era must be carried out by specialized bodies. This process is based on many factors related to the study of the labor market, the strategic directions of countries and companies, the level of technological development in each country separately, and the capabilities of universities and other educational institutions to qualify and train in expected most needy disciplines. Undoubtedly, the continuation of war and conflict in our country has created difficulties and complications for the development of a comprehensive strategy that is agreed upon among all the relevant actors and parties. Therefore, it is not possible to wait for such difficulties to be overcome, as there are exceptional alternatives and treatments for this issue that has a profound impact at present and in the near future. It is logical if decision-making and collective action are provided and if Yemen's educational community, universities and technical colleges benefit from international studies and experiences, and through coordination and networking with those in need in the private sector, government sector and civil society organizations, we will be able to develop contemporary study programs while ensuring that they are implemented and evaluated to guarantee the relevance and consistency of graduates with the labor market and the sustainable development requirements. The responsibility in the first place is supposed to fall on the leading authorities, as they are the party authorized to manage this issue, have powers and authorities, and tools and procedures through which they can exercise pressure and obligation. As a result of the ongoing conflict, the challenges that may exceed their current capabilities

have multiplied. While the parties are trying to address them, they remain attempts without setting priorities and following several practical steps that include the use of Information Technology Center services, as well as the creation of a department for graduate affairs and the labor market that is specialized in accounting and monitoring graduates, and carrying out statistics on the local labor market.

From the perspective of universities and other educational institutions, they have the most prominent role in adding modern vital disciplines that may need to open new courses in order to meet the requirements of development and the needs of the labor market. This role is not limited to universities with high international rankings seeking excellence and leadership only, but it will be in the interest of all universities to review the non-required study programs and then develop and provide advanced academic programs, not only at this stage, but also to cover their needs of lecturers and trainers. In addition, they shall have to direct their practical research towards this strategic topic, as well as through academic guidance for students enrolled in particular to the appropriate disciplines, and by contributing to raising awareness among high school graduates and their guardians in general about the importance of disciplines that keep pace with the labor market and also in conjunction with the sectors involved in the new specialization, as there is a joint collaboration among them that includes the practical application of the field in which graduates will work in the future.

In this context, we cannot review all the active and influential actors, as there are active roles that are supposed to be played by other parties. It is necessary for the Yemeni Universities Union to have the role of coordinator and organizer to come up with an urgent action plan that contains a chronic program with realistic indicators. The Council for Accreditation and Quality Assurance also has a primary responsibility to oversee the process of supporting university graduates with the labor market needs, development requirements and community service.

The private sector and civil society organizations also have active roles, including the creation of a database that clarifies its current needs and orientations in the near future, to be among the university indicators. As citizens, we also have a direct responsibility in the process of guiding and directing our children towards the best modern vital disciplines within the framework of their desires and capabilities.

In general, and with contemporary developments and recent international events, universities will have to expand the development of programs and disciplines that have become more specialized and accurate, in the fields of computer, medicine, engineering and finance, especially information security (cyber security that includes Internet and networks security), artificial intelligence (the development of self-evolving smart machines with human intelligence characteristics), road engineering, chemical and nuclear engineering, biomedical engineering (mixture between engineering and medicine as a specialty in medical equipment), respiratory care, legal accounting, financial analysis, vision sciences, optics, renewable alternative energy, telemarketing, software engineering, mechatronics, legal translation, social services, etc. It is worth noting that there are many specializations that are not much needed in the Yemeni market for the time being, and this does not mean that there is no importance or need for them. Yemeni universities and technical colleges will not only target the local market, and future needs will remain in a special list, with the reconstruction programs that will be implemented with the achievement of peace.

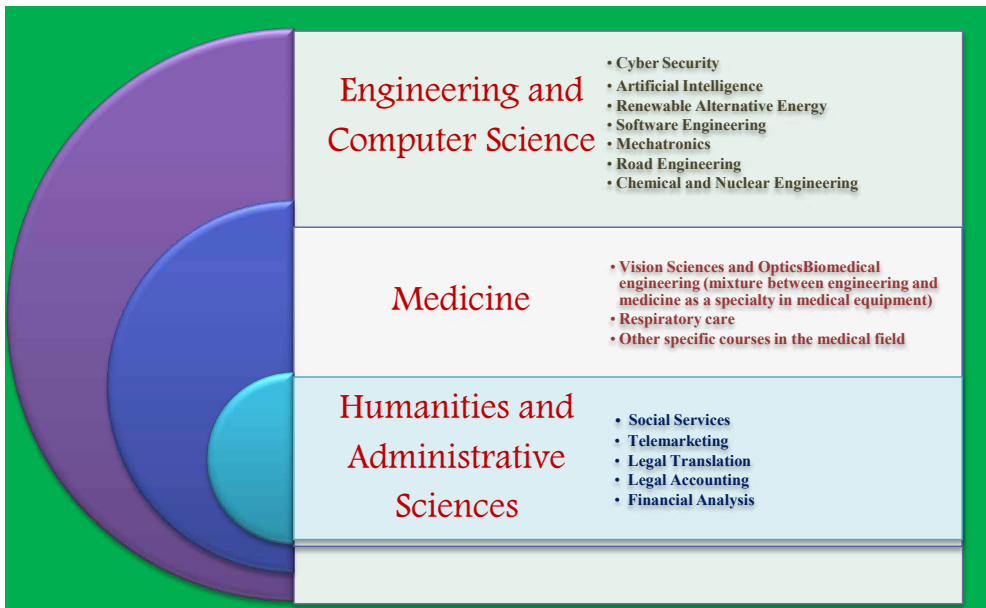


Figure 1: The most important disciplines needed at the present time

General Recommendations

Among the most important priorities to be undertaken by the higher education community in partnership with Yemeni donors, universities and other actors during this critical phase are:

1. Developing an emergency education plan with specific measures for the sustainability of education.
2. Integrating donors for education among the support priorities related to humanitarian response plans, while bringing emergency learning processes and activities into line with the minimum standards of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE).
3. Establishing a fund, in partnership between Yemeni governments and emergency education agencies, to address the lack of funding in matters related to emergency educational issues.
4. Imposing additional taxes and fees on a number of luxury activities and services, foremost of which is raising the “Qat” tax, while allocating its revenues to address urgent educational issues.
5. Establishing a database of scientific research at the level of the Republic of Yemen and linking it to the Internet to make it accessible to researchers, supporting bodies and other interested actors.
6. Issuing scientific research guidelines that contain priority matters and issues in various sectors with a focus on issues related to response, development and peace.
7. The initiative of Yemeni universities and technical colleges to join the United Nations Academic Impact program to take advantage of the benefits and opportunities available therein.
8. Mobilize charitable and voluntary initiatives to provide urgent requirements for the affected students and to rationalize expenditures in Yemeni universities and technical colleges that are not necessary, especially those associated with ceremonial activities, in return for a partial exemption from the obligations of war-affected or at least a postponement of the demands for part of their financial obligations for the time being.
9. Providing treatments for displaced students through cooperation among Yemeni state universities and ensuring their basic needs.
10. Promoting the return of Yemeni universities to the world ranking list of university education worldwide.
11. Making use of distant learning techniques, especially from e-learning platforms while enabling university and technical education

affiliates to use such techniques.

12. Working on quick treatments to reduce the negative impact of low secondary school graduates.

13. Finding solutions to the problems faced by undergraduates as a result of the ongoing war, especially those whose homes have been affected by asylum, with priority being given to students who have reached advanced academic levels in their studies and have to complete one to two years of their university or technical studies.

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