



ZOOM Meeting with Dr. Zahi Azar
Thursday, April 9, 2020

On Thursday, April 9, 2020 at 3:00 pm Beirut time, the Arab House for Adult Education and Development held an online meeting on ZOOM, which included topics of interest to adult Education and development in light of the current conditions facing our region, with the attendance of about 35 participants. Moderated by: Mr. Refat Al-Sabah the president of "AHAED".

Presented Dr. Zahi Azar, a lecture entitled: "What cultural, educational variables ... after Corona?" The most important axes that were touched upon: First: the emerging pandemic of Corona, the epistemic rupture, and it affects culture and education. Second: The end of globalization and the beginnings of other globalization and its implications for education as a whole. Third: Towards "education ... without education", and the implications for formal education, adult education/learning, distance learning, and education by artificial intelligence. Fourth: The crises of Arab civil society and the possibilities of its revival. Followed by questions and interventions from the participants. Mrs. Elsy Wakil the General Secretary of AHAED presented to the attendees the path of the Arab Academy for the year 2020, followed by Mrs. Ola. Issa informing about the idea and content of the AHAED online Newsletter, confirming that members will be contacted to contribute to its content.

Zahi Azar speech

Epidemics affected history of civilizations. Several civilizations and empires were subjected to epidemics that have caused them to downfall and brought major changes especially in the political and social approaches. The Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire... all had fell by epidemics. The epidemic disrupts life and all its course, not only at the military and political level, but also, at the intellectual and educational level. So, empires dissolve and other empires emerge. Societies dissolve and other societies emerge. Humanity doesn't end up.

In these circumstance, we want to mitigate predictions, and focus on understanding and analyzing the reality. We cannot predict, but we can talk about

transformations. We will not be able to accurately talk about future, but we will try to set some foundations for the features of the future. There are three themes that we address in this regard:

Theme One: The Cognitive Estrangement

It is an estrangement in everything. In a month or two, the Corona pandemic in a short period of time ruined the world. This world would not have been ruined! Modernity has blinded us to real life. It has blinded us to the frailty of the modern capitalist life that dazzled us. We did not imagine reaching to this situation because of this great advancement. The prestige of the great major countries fell, the economy tumbled in countries we thought were much stronger.

We called the analysis that is based on some changes as “Cognitive Estrangement”, which, in all standards, are convictions that breakdown and fall. **And, the whole society, both individuals and groups, think about this estrangement: What will happen? And, what future awaits us?**

What we are living today is an outcome of the economic life manner. Societies are tumbling economically. In the reality of this collapse, there is a general fall in politics. There were, undoubtedly, transformations that preceded the Corona pandemic, and this pandemic has abounded for this new reality. 50% of the known jobs started to disappear and this is a huge number, and with Corona, 70% to 75% of the jobs are on the verge of disappearing. 200 million employments have disappeared so far during Corona.

This cognitive estrangement started economical and it became political and also social, and especially cognitive. Today, we pause with several question marks about everything. This is educationally true at all social levels as well. This is educationally valid and on all social levels as well. The fragility of the regimes in the West broke the dream the world was living towards democratization, even the third world! During this crisis, it seemed that these regimes were hesitant to choose, or they made a preliminary choice to save the economy instead of saving people's lives. The United States, Britain, and Germany allowed the Coronavirus to spread in order to avoid economic disruption; however, However, it fell before the will of the people who refuse to die! At the same time, these countries stumbled politically. There is an “inward” orientation. There is no longer a noble approach to the idea of democracy. Each country is oriented to its people, and every group within the communities are becoming more self-oriented. There is the tendency towards the idea of extreme close-mindedness.

The European project is disintegrating and doubting each other. There are major countries that are stealing and hacking medical aids. The increased unemployment

in light of this new stage has completely broken the economy in these countries. The spark of these western regimes fell politically, ideologically and educationally.

Theme Two: Practically, what is going on today?

In the midst of the Corona crisis, practically, there is a struggle over who will be the victor. The victor will be the focus of the new globalization. The victor will be the focus of the new globalization. What we are witnessing is the end of a globalization, and the birth of a new globalization. The end of a globalization is the end of the power and domination of the West which already began to downfall a while ago. Europe is sinking in its problems and the United States no longer has those huge financial capabilities and is currently withdrawing from the world, from here and there, and is mired in many problems. The bond between Europe and the United States is at its worst. There is what is called the NATO and it is also at its worst. Europe is thinking out a new treaty other than the NATO by the Corona. Whoever eliminates the Coronavirus will be the focus of the new globalization, and economically, China is a candidate for that. China's capacity has become super and she will play the victor over Corona while the world is still floundering. China will play a strong economic and political role as they started to promote this globally. The Chinese media is pushing towards that direction and beyond. It seems that there is an ongoing game over being the focus of the new globalization, and Corona is accompanying this change and crowning China as the victor in it, to make it a leader of the new trend of globalization. China has strong relations with the Asians, especially with India, and there was a meeting for this purpose in one form or another. China has begun to dominate many African countries. Despite the fact that there are major companies in America, the major companies in China is being pushed towards that direction, and those companies may ally together to structure the new globalization. In this new stage, a pyramid is seen, and the economically giant companies on top of it. These companies with their huge mechanisms are greater than the countries. These companies will be more inclined to the state and that will shape an authority in the sense of, more or less, controlling people, not serving them.

The Arab world is in trouble, especially that its production is low, and it was greatly affected, maybe the most affected regions, by Corona. According to the ESCWA report, currently there are 4 to 5 million unemployed in the Arab countries other than the Gulf countries, and this number is ascending. This is in addition to the period of the global decline and need for oil, and the decrease of its prices to less than a third of what it was. All these play a role in the deterioration of the economic situation of the Arab countries in light of their low production.

Theme Three: Towards teaching without education

Practically, what is going on in this new situation?

The old world order is collapsing. Countries are trying to quickly keep the pace with the new globalization system, and we cannot speculate on that. Sure enough, there is a downfall of societies. The world is living at the expense of 5 to 7 producing countries in the world, and working to open markets for them; and the third world is helping them open a market for these countries, and sometimes by assisting them in production. In the light of this new economic transformation, these countries will be followed more fanatically. It is clear that in the third world the countries are poor and they will become even poorer according to the just mentioned scenario. And unfortunately in this scenario, education is not isolated from this trend, rather, it will follow it. Nothing will be isolated from these changes, and education won't be a priority and will pay the price.

Education has three basic blocs:

The Elite Private Education Bloc: This is to serve the local and international authorities, and it belongs to the affluent, but it remains a world of its own.

The Formal Education Bloc: This is the catastrophe! The current crises will deepen. The crisis in the government schools will increase and less teachers will be employed. Competence will not be a priority. There will be lack of job insurance for the teacher. The teachers' crises will double! Due to the financial scarcity as well as the lack of vision, school dropout will massively increase in our societies.

The Adult Education and Learning Bloc: Because of the previous two blocs, the number of the adults who will need education will increase significantly. In every country unemployment will increase, or at least, will double because of the increasing rates of school dropouts and the large number of those who will not be enrolled in schools due to their need to work, as well as, because of the ordinary illiteracy. And there is the indirect illiteracy that must be placed in this bloc. If this block forms the 40%, it will increase to the two-thirds. Those who work in the field of adult education and learning will face many challenges due to these post-Corona changes. The poor will become poorer and the educational process will be affected.

The distance learning will increase during the Corona crisis. Some countries have adopted this method of education after the Coronavirus, and this is very limited and only succeeds exceptionally due to its pace, and the fact that it occurs during emergency. It is a quick and inadequate arrangement and is done on minimal standards. Distance learning is an exception and is not destined to succeed because

of the circumstances, quick procedures, and the imposed pressure on teachers to follow this system.

It is important to talk here about a new idea. Before Corona there were a number of private schools that adopted educational systems taken from the new artificial intelligence systems. Nowadays, there are limited experiences that are considered to be fairly successful in these schools! What the countries will discover, in form or perception, is that artificial intelligence in education will solve many problems for them in the context of the increasing poverty. There was a Chinese-European-American struggle to build indivisible artificial intelligence systems, because it is a very complex and advanced project to dominate people and life. We have a fascination with technology that prevents us from delving in it, and there are people in the West who go deep into that in terms of human rights. The artificial intelligence is a solution in the face of the poverty of the countries and their budgets for education; it is cheaper. Education through artificial intelligence doesn't require salaries for teachers, no budgets for schools. The artificial intelligence is an integrated system with low cost, as it represents 15% of the budget of the current countries. Any country that uses artificial intelligence saves 85% of its budget, and these represent progressive solutions for the future, unfortunately, parallel to the dominance of the new globalization represented by China. Europe was neutralized and America lost in this race against China in the field of artificial intelligence. China has giant companies that are able to build this system, from the first mobile to education and learning in all its forms and methods. Everything is ready. Curricula that can be bought at inexpensive prices, and over time they become very cheap. The artificial intelligence is knocking all doors and it already entered the West.

Teaching without education means working on the non-academic outcomes because it builds societies like the citizens, reconciles and serves the surrounding, serves the human rights, women's rights, citizenship... and all of this will be separate from education. This is why we call it "Teaching without education". There is a minimum move in education through artificial intelligence. The teacher persona would be over, or negligible. There will be some supervisors or coordinators in the learning process. In front of the power of artificial intelligence and the power of authority in every country that wants to adopt it, the society will be compelled to accept these systems and interact with them! Also, there will be resistance from societies to this new system. Success in artificial intelligence will be the student's individual effort, and the need will be met by elite special education. Success in artificial intelligence will depend on student's individual effort, and the need will be met by elite private education.

As for adult education

Illiteracy will increase as well as the students. The mechanisms of artificial intelligence in adult education will be ready. You might supervise the relationship of learners with this system but it is an integrated and complex system, and your country and government will agree to it because it is less expensive and perhaps it involves less responsibility. The authorities will be more indifferent to the educational sector and education in general. Despite this bleak painting, which is a major curse, it is considered an opportunity for adult education and learning, because pressures by the authorities on this field will be little and driven by indifference. Opportunities will multiply somewhere for those working in this field to renew their visions. There is a blessing prospect in dealing with this new reality. The objective will be clear, because this platform is independent. All people are pedagogically and educationally interested. This community that is parallel to the community initiative must be rehabilitated.

The distance between the local and international authorities will approach in the projects of domination, and this curse can be transformed into an opportunity through this renewed visions regarding to the topic of healthy and cognitive interaction, human rights and women's rights... It is, at the same time, an economic empowerment. One of the challenges of learning is the real economic empowerment. Only later comes the talk about the fourth goal of the sustainable development goals with its various components.

What are the possibilities of mobilizing civil society?

The picture is not completely bleak. The human ultimately seeks attempts to dominate, but societies are invincible, and they have forms of resistance. Is the civil society, especially in the Arab world which has proven to have many possibilities of resistance (both direct and indirect), able to be up to the level of this future change capable of being at the level of this future change? Undoubtedly, the Arab civil society is in the making, and this is not something bad. The civil society needs a real revolution in its beliefs as a whole. The civil society starts forming through associations which may begin sincere, but unfortunately, soon adheres to the financier who is looking after it. We cannot continue in the same way regarding to any formations of civil society with respect to external financing. Often, the external funds will run tight, and the international organizations that we know will not have this capacity anymore. They will be weakened a lot and will go towards priorities only, and their financing for civil society and its formations will be weakened.

The civil society revolution must be first an honest and correct revolution on the self, and a breakthrough towards the directions of its people. It should look for funding of its own by, first, looking for the financiers who come to an agreement with them and the goals of its people. We need to build a globalization of resistance with them. We cannot be shattered for funding in the future. We do not know the West and we deal with them as a single bloc, and unfortunately, there is a range of people... there is the friend and the enemy! The poor societies do not have this vision. One of the dimensions of the civil society revolution today is the protection of civilization, which is represented in the: needs, thought, mentality, and the cultural and historical accruals. Is civil society aware of these challenges? Or rather, follows the same pathway it has become accustomed to, although it might have some advantages, but it is not enough because the civil society in our country is still marginalized.

In this revolution which is envisioned by the civil society, this society must be in a permanent dialogue with the state or the authority.

We do not exclude anyone in this vision that builds a permanent dialogue with the state or the internal authority on the one hand, and initially searches for internal financing, and continues building partnerships and networking within the state, both on the Arab and international levels.

A Final Word:

Those who want to eradicate teaching from education, and they are many, and eradicate everything that has been built through our labor so far at the level of what we called the non-academic educational or cultural outcomes, human rights, citizenship... and they seek to crush teaching and separate it from education, we say: Our people, after Corona, are the only ones who are capable of facing the coming globalization, and build their globalization with all the partners in this world.

This challenge is a challenge for all of our people and it must succeed through self-awareness and revolution on the self which will qualify them to make education the starting point for a new society, a resistant society. And if the resistance is popular, it will win.