

Arab Academy for Adult Education and Development

Educational Training Strategies in "Adult Education"

10-15 December, 2019

Hotel Le Crillon - Broummana - Lebanon

Narrative Report

Day One: Tuesday, 10 Dec., 2019

Opening Session

Dr. Zahi Azar welcomed the honorable attendees during the opening session of the fifth meeting of the Arab Academy for Adult Education and Development. He addressed the attendees by saying that the work in the Arab civil societies is exciting but at the same time it's full of challenges not only because of the weakness of these societies, but also because there are very few initiatives for development. He also said that education is not among the priorities of many Arab countries and is not sufficiently budgeted and taken care of, highlighting the fact that there is almost no interest in the issue of adult education to the extent that the Arabs have become "the heroes of illiteracy in the world", and this was coincided with the exacerbation of unemployment and poverty. Then, Dr. Zahi concluded by giving an overview of the Arab Academy's initiative which consists of four Arab networks and the DVV International, and which led to the establishment of the Arab House of Adult Education and Development (AHAED). He said that the AHAED (that was launched during this year's Educational Training) is a development for the Academy that hopes to have a great impact on the Arab Civil Societies in regard to raising awareness on the issue of Education.

After Dr. Zahi's speech, the attendees watched a video about the Lebanese white revolution, "its causes and objectives", and the role of women in this revolution. This was followed with a presentation about the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, their locations and the numbers of the Palestinian refugees.

Day Two: Wednesday, 11 Dec., 2019

The program of the second day started with a meditation session during which the participants heard a brief presentation about the life of the artist Sayed Darwish, his impact on the development of Arab music, and his patriotic role in Egypt against the British occupation and the 1919 revolution. The attendees also enjoyed listening to two songs, one by Sayed Darwish and another by Fairuz.

After this meditation session, Dr. Zahi Azar introduced the five-day program of the educational training to the participants, and also apologized on behalf of Mr. Refaat Al-Sabah who couldn't attend the training but promised to be present through Skype.

In the first session of the day, Dr. Zahi spoke about the theme of "Policies and Education: Prospective Outlook to the Challenges".

Dr. Ashour Ahmad Omari enriched the attendees with a lecture entitled, "Adult Education and Pedagogical Policies in the Arab World: Understanding the Present, Looking to the Future". Dr. Omari said that the human being is the purpose and the mean of every development, and that education and learning are the integral part of the development of the Arab societies, and that this development depends on the power that human beings possess. He talked about adult education and illiteracy, and continued by explaining some principles and foundations of pedagogy and learning, and sustainable development and its fourth goal. Finally, Dr. Omari shed the light on the reality of adult education in the Arab world, referring to some mechanisms to confront illiteracy, and foundations to make adult education more dynamic and effective.

Dr. Zahi Azar led a workshop session that focused on: trends and policies, the imposed pedagogical trend in our societies, and the imposed centralized pedagogical approach within the country itself. Then, the participants were divided into three groups to discuss about the impact and interaction between the educators and the policies, the adult education work in the midst of basic problems such as the present political pressure, and practical recommendations for further interactions, identifying problems and effective approaches.

After the lunch, Dr. Ashour Ahmad Omari continued with his presentation mentioned above and specified the work efforts, challenges and suggestions to develop adult education in the Arab world.

Mr. Refaat Al-Sabah presented a topic via Skype, during which he talked about the efforts that are being made to improve the education in the Arab countries through reconsidering the constitution of the Global Partnership for Education as well as the funding issues. He affirmed that the international community made decisions to fund and improve education in the Arab countries, especially in Palestine, without politicizing it. He also shared his concern about the issue of shifting the funds from being grants to become finances in a form of loans, which will have disastrous outcomes on the education sector. Mr. Refaat also stressed that the funding should be only for public schools, and gave the example of the public schools in South America that proved to be better than the private schools. Finally, Mr. Refaat mentioned that the Arab Academy is seeking to develop the capabilities of the active cadres in adult education, with almost a zero budget from the countries' governments. This puts us in danger as a civil society, therefore, countries and the international community should rethink about their budgets to support lifelong learning. At the end of this session, Mr. Al-Sabah responded to the questions of the attendees that revolved around unifying the efforts between the civil society and the official bodies.

The speaker of the last session of the day was Mr. Nazareth Nazarian who talked about the meaning of "Adult Education and Pedagogy". Mr. Nazareth clarified the difference between the concept of adult education and the concept of literacy, and said that adult education means lifelong learning. He emphasized the fact that the characteristics of adult education are unclear at the regional level. Then, he talked about the financing of adult education and how the multiplicity of the resources is a big issue and obstacle as well as the lack of sufficient information. Mr. Nazareth also raised the issue of marginalization of adult education by the decision makers and donors. Finally, and before Dr. Zahi Azar's statement on the presentation, Mr. Nazareth gave the example of adult education in Germany as a pattern to follow it.

Day Three: Thursday, 12 Dec., 2019

The third day has started with a meditation session led by Ghada Qassem and Muntaha Shaalan who recited the story called "Zarif Al-toul"

which is considered to be a popular symbol circulated by folk tales and which depicts an anti-occupation character.

In the first session of the day, Mr, Jawad Al-Gousous presented a topic entitled: “Training Policies: Perspectives and Contradictions”. Mr. Jawad talked about the concept of human development, then he explained the concept and purpose of trainings. The discussion of the session revolved around the following question: Does training broaden and deepen the awareness of the trained ones, or the opposite happens? Mr. Jawad made it clear that the purpose of the trainings is not to make out of the trainees distinct and unique leaders so that they contradict the social needs, but trainings should empower the trainees with the skills, creativity, awareness, and critical and analytical thinking to meet those social needs. Then, Mr. Jawad illustrated these concepts with real examples.

After a break, the attendees were divided into three working groups where they discussed how they see the contradictions of trainings in the reality of adult education in terms of curricula, following-up, and the interaction among everyone who is involved. They also tackled the issue of how and why the absence of the local and national participation in training initiatives make them unable to satisfy the needs of the society. The participants also made some recommendations to empower the curricula and the process of training within the civil society structures and the relevant governmental bodies.

After the working groups, some of the participants shared their experiences regarding training policies and adult education. Ms. Malika from Morocco shared her experience about the training skills and the outcomes of the training on education and values. Ms. Khuzama from Jordan talked about assessing the impact of training on female trainees. Mr. Ibrahim from Egypt shared about his experience with literacy classes and adult education, and the returns of adult education in modifying behaviors. Mr. Muhammad from Sudan in his turn talked about the project of developing rural women for education.

The second lecture of the day was done by Dr. Ekbal Elsmalouty, under the title of “Contemporary International Trends in Education”. Dr. Ekbal mentioned some of the stations and conferences that follow contemporary trends (For example: A conference on evaluating teaching and learning in Belgium; DVV Adult Education Conference). She said that it is very ironic that most of the countries spend only 1% of the education budget for adult education, and that the conferences mentioned above have several theses which indicate that the fourth goal of the sustainable development goals, namely the goal of education, is an extremely dangerous goal. Dr. Ekbal affirmed the importance of being aware that poverty is not a cause to illiteracy, but illiteracy is a cause for poverty. She emphasized that education that focuses on and develops the skills should be provided to people with multiple channels. Therefore, a holistic and multi-track systems approach to education is needed, which is a lifelong learning process and is based on human rights. Finally, Dr. Ekbal mentioned that there are lots of challenges in the Arab world when it comes to building the skills, but the civil society can play a positive role in the issue of education through reconsidering the distribution of the budget that set adult education a priority.

Day Four: Friday, 13 Dec., 2019

The fourth day of the educational training meeting was a trip day. The participants visited the Cedar Mountains area that is one of the most touristic places in Lebanon. They enjoyed the journey up to the mountains, passing through green valleys and plains, and the beautiful houses. The participants were mesmerized by the beauty of the nature amongst the cedar trees, and expressed their owe towards the creator God. After taking a memorable group picture in the cedar mountains, the participants had the time for shopping souvenirs and gifts which express the beauty of Lebanon. It was significant to see that some of them bought young cedar trees to take them to their countries.

After this amazing trip to the cedars, the participant headed to the museum of Gibran Khalil Gibran, the great Arab poet, genius philosopher, and innovative thinker. The participants were amazed by exploring Gibran’s house with all the holdings that express his creative journey of paintings, drawings, and writings that formed the conscious of

the Arab world and pioneered the romantic school of Arabic poetry and literature.

The participants enjoyed another trip to Byblos where they felt home as the area resembles many regions in other Arab countries. It was also fun for them to see all the old markets that are full of hand-crafted products and friendly environment.

After visiting Byblos, the participants went to Harisa to visit the famous statue of the Virgin Mary “the Lady of Lebanon”.

In the evening, the group had their dinner in a restaurant called “Al Mazar” which is located in a beautiful area. Besides the delicious Lebanese food, the participants enjoyed a great social time together, accompanied with songs of the famous Lebanese singer “Fairuz”.

The participants returned to the hotel and expressed their gratitude to all the organizers of this meeting, but especially to Ms. Elsy Wakil, who perfectly coordinated the trip day.

Day Five: Saturday, 14 Dec., 2019

The fifth day started with a meditation led by the Sudanese participants. The meditation session included a presentation about the Sudanese revolution, explanation of the meaning of the word “Kandaka”, a “Kandaka” poem, as well as a Sudanese traditional song and dance. This session involved a great interaction and admiration for the Sudanese heritage. The last part of the meditation session was led by the Lebanese in group, and it undertook a presentation of the biography the great poet Gibran Khalil Gibran.

The first lecture of the day was presented by Dr. Zahi Azar. The lecture was under the title: “Beyond Pedagogical Training: Non-Academic Outcomes”. Dr. Zahi clarified how some terms lose their meaning when translated from English to Arabic, such as the term “Adult Education” which lacks the notion of pedagogy in it. He also emphasized that the pedagogical programs for adult education and education in general are considered to be insufficient regarding the non-academic outcomes.

Dr. Adeb Naameh presented a lecture entitled: “Arab Civil Society: Reality and Horizons”. Dr. Adeb defined the term “Civil Society” and

introduced its characteristics and its role in the education sector, as well as the concept of partnerships and political involvements via civil organizations and institutions and their impact on performance. He also presented the contention points to distinguish between civil society organizations and others. Dr. Adeeb also presented new forms of civil work and its historical stages, and focused on the approach between civil society and education, besides presenting some of the problems of education in the Arab world. This topic triggered very constructive discussion and interaction, during which the participants came up with recommendations, the most prominent of which revolved around the importance of tightening coordination between civil society organizations, the necessity for organizations to distance themselves from political configuration and influences, and strengthening the coordinating role and building confidence between the governmental bodies and civil society organizations.

After the participants had their lunch, a session entitled “Adult Education in International Organizations” was presented by Ms. Ricarda Motschilniga who also gave a presentation about the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). Ms. Ricarda stated that the mission of the ICAE is to basically speak up about adult education based on the reports published from different countries in the world. The ICAE has also a work connection and partnership with UNESCO for lifelong education, as well as a consultative status of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and is a member of the International Alliance for Adult Education. Then, Ms. Ricarda talked about the World conference which is held every twelve years. She stated that it is now being discussed to involve representatives from the civil societies in the conference besides the government delegations.

In the same context, Mr. Nazareth mentioned that DVV once managed to support some civil society to participate in one of these conferences and talked about the fourth report presented about adult education and lifelong learning.

Mr. Al-Alfy also shared his experience of attending the presentation of the third report on Adult Education in 2017, and explained how the report produced by UNESCO consultants about education in Egypt was not portraying the reality of the situation in Egypt.

Ms. Ricarda explained the usual process of how the reports in UNESCO are written and collected, and emphasized on the importance of preparing reports by the civil societies parallel to the reports of UNESCO.

Dr. Ashour in his turn expressed his concern over politicizing the UNESCO reports in regard to adult education and development in Iraq and therefore, dealing with issues other than what is real in the country.

Finally, Ms. Ricarda asked the participants to what extent they consider adult education and development important, and also to what extent they are aware of the purposes of sustainable development and their application in their countries.

After a break, the participants were divided into working groups to:

- describe the relationship between the civil society and education in general, and its relationship to adult education in particular.
- state a fundamental issue in the relationship between contemporary Arab civil society and the commitment to adult education and literacy.
- suggest some practical recommendations towards the adoption of an active educational renaissance in adult education and literacy issues.

The fifth day concluded with the launching ceremony of the “Arab House for adult Education and Development” (AHAED) in the presence of many specialists and prominent educators. The ceremony included words from the organizers as well as some contributions by the participants in the meeting who came from Sudan, Morocco, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon. At the end of the ceremony there was the cutting of AHAED’s cake, and then the attendees gathered around the dinner table.

Day Six: Sunday, 15 Dec., 2019

The sixth day started with a meditation session led by the Egyptian participants who presented about two positive role models from the Egyptian society who became known worldwide and had positive impact in the Egyptian community, especially in the field of health and education. These models are Dr. Magdi Yacoub who is a legend in medicine, and the legendary football player, Mohamed Salah.

The first session of the day dealt with the topic “Project Funding: Pressures and Challenges”.

The introduction of the topic was done by Dr. Zahi Azar, during which he talked about the challenges that the civil societies face in the matter of funding. He clearly stated that the main challenge is that Associations are not good at budgeting projects and often get stuck in implementation. Another challenge that Dr. Zahi talked about is that it is rare to find funders and supporters who have really genuine vision, pursuit, and solidarity with the third countries of the world.

This introduction was followed by Four statements about the funding models.

The first statement was presented by Dr. Ekbal Elsmalouty, during which she affirmed that civil work in Egypt has three forms: charitable, developmental, and national. She also stated that funding is represented in three forms: self-funding, external funding, and government funding (the NGO Support Fund). Dr. Ekbal mentioned that one of the types of self-funding is through the Zakat funds, and highlighted the fact that a Fatwa was recently issued by the Mufti of the Republic which states that it is permissible to allocate Zakat funds for development work, especially in the field of education and health.

The second statement came from Ms. Lucy Hashimi, during which she defined the meaning of funding, and emphasized that it's a financial source for providing part of the needed money for a plan. She mentioned the two types of funds: funds with a soft interest loan and payment, and funds as grants. Ms. Hashimi focused on Palestine in this regard and said that at the beginning there was no clear vision of funding in Palestine. But recently, with the establishment of the Planning Ministry the funding is directed towards the social needs, and the civil society, though very little, can benefit from part of this fund.

The third statement came from Mr. Ibrahim who specified several problems that the civil society faces in the process of funding. Mr. Ibrahim mentioned the most important of these problems. He said that many civil societies do not have a clear vision of development project and are incapable to develop that clear vision. Also, many civil societies don't

have the capabilities or skills to write proposals for funding projects, besides the absence of qualified cadres that can write and translate proposals to fund projects. Mr. Ibrahim also mentioned that many funding agencies tend to finance only large groups, which impacts negatively the emerging and small associations and institutions. Finally, he emphasized on the need of the institutions and organizations to have effective partnership with the private sector, and encourage them to fulfill their role towards social responsibilities.

Mr. Nazareth made the last statement on the topic shedding the light on the fact that civil society work in general is not sustainable. He illustrated his point by presenting about the experience of civil society institutions in Germany that don't have sufficient funds and most of these institutions carry out their activities with very simple funding, but in a creative way. Mr. Nazareth also suggested some recommendations for the Arab House of Adult Education and Development (AHAED), and expressed the willingness of the DVV to cooperate with AHAED.

The first session of the Arab Academy for Adult Education and Development ended with the comment of Dr. Zahi on all the four statements mentioned above.

The Closing Session:

The training workshop that was under the theme of "Educational Training Strategies in "Adult Education"" which included eight sessions, several working groups, and the launching of the Arab House of Adult Education and Development "AHAED" was concluded to be an enriching experience. This enrichment was expressed through all its activities in terms of the interactions, exchange of the distinguished experiences in the field of adult education, and the space for exchange of opinions. Not only this, but it was also evident through the evaluations of the participants, that are presented in the following section.

Ms. Khuzama from Jordan expressed that during the morning meditation sessions the sense of belonging to one's nation was evident as well as the belonging to the great Arab nation, and that these sessions were opportunities to get acquainted with the customs and traditions of our people. She also said that she wished that they have had summaries of

the papers before their presentation during the training workshops for more profound inputs during the discussions.

Mr. Mohammad Hammad who is the head of the Adult Education in Sudan and a member in the Arab Network expressed that the launch of the Arab House "AHAED" represents a positive point in the ideology of educational innovation within the framework of the Arab House. He considered the absence of the Lebanese government to be a weakness and said that their participation is desired even if it's only at the opening and closing of the workshop. Dr. Mohammad also advised to create a group via WhatsApp through which pedagogical topics for adult education are presented for discussion, as well as to design an educational portfolio that embraces the innovations and the ideas of the Academy through a joint Arab work to benefit from the experts who have been trained by the five academies.

Ms. Souad from Egypt said that training workshop increased her motivation to continue working in the field of adult education after the frustrating reality that she experiences on the ground. She stated that through this training she her knowledge was updated and her insights and concepts were widened regarding the field of adult education.

Dr. Ashour Omari who is the head of the Adult Education body in Egypt stated that this was the most time that he has benefited from being amongst distinguished experts, and praised the good coordination in which Ms. Elsy Wakil played a crucial role. Dr. Ashour assured that the content of the program was rich artistically, intellectually, and emotionally. He was also grateful for the high degree of efficiency and distinction of the speakers, and the group of the attendees.

Dr. Jawad from Jordan evaluated the Academy as the one with the most focus and singing. He stated that this academy was a great opportunity to know each other in person.

Dr. Ekbal Elsmalouty who is the head of the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education in Egypt said that this academy was distinguished by its diversity and differences of age, approaches, and experiences. She also affirmed that everyone in this meeting has taught her something.

Ms. Hiba from Jordan stated that she has benefited a lot from the training, and that she got to know more about the concept of developmental thought despite of her young age.

Mr. Nazareth from the DVV expressed his gratitude to the organizers and speakers. He described the program as clear and the trainers and trainees as impactful. Mr. Nazareth stated that the cultural part of the program was significant because adult education serves the culture and thought.

Malika from Morocco stated that the meeting brought together the useful, the interesting, and the beautiful; useful in terms of: the quality of the presentations, and the deep discussions within the working groups. Interesting in terms of the organization of the meeting during which no one felt any lapses. And beautiful in terms of the beauty of Lebanon, and the beauty of the hearts of the participants.

Ms. Oula from the DVV thanked the Palestinians for their participation despite the difficult situation, and said that she always follows-up the news of the Academy but this meeting was an opportunity for her to learn a lot.

Mr. Mosaad who is a member of the Adult Education Authority in Egypt and the Arab Network said that the launching of the Arab House for Adult Learning and Development "AHAED" is a real starting point for educational renewal in the Arab world, especially in adult education. He said that the variety of the content of the program, speakers and attendees greatly contributed in creating a space for expanding and enriching visions, and for integration and networking in the field of Adult Education.

Ms. Elsy, the coordinator of the Arab House for Adult Education and Development (AHAED) from Lebanon affirmed that the participants are the basis for the success of the meeting. She also thanked the translators and those who wrote the reports.

Dr. Zahi Azar said that every training meeting carries with it the concern about its outcome. It is the humane aspect that colors the knowledge and science, and wished that the attendees felt this because the human aspect is the basis and priority of adult education. Dr. Zahi also

told that the Arab world now has two newborns, the fifth meeting of the Arab Academy and the launch of the AHAED. He urged the attendees to keep these meetings active at the level of the Arab countries in order to achieve development. Finally, Dr. Zahi thanked the four networks, the DVV and every person who contributed to the success of this meeting.

Recommendations:

- Inviting representatives from the Lebanese government at the opening and conclusion of the upcoming training workshops.
- Sending in advance the summaries of the papers that will be presented in the next training workshops to the trainees.
- Designing an educational portfolio that embraces the innovations and the ideas issued by the Academy and the Arab House for Adult Education and Development (AHAED).
- Publishing a booklet that narrates the activities of the training workshops, and sending them to the participants.
- Planning an annual award event by the Arab House of Adult Education and Development for the best contributor in the field of adult education.
- Making use of the technological means (Website, WhatsApp, Facebook) that connect all the participants of the five Academies, and involve them in enriching discussions about adult education and development.
- Forming the participants group for the Academy's new meeting from the participants of the past training workshop (50%) and from new trainees (50%), thus benefiting from the skills of the experts who were trained by the five academies, and also ensuring the involvement of new skills and experiences that add value to the upcoming meeting.
- Expanding the duration of the training workshop to one week.