

## **Cities under Light**

# **The Strategy of Rehabilitating the Educational and Societal Systems in**

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**2017 March / 1**

## **Introduction:**

There is no doubt that there are reasons for the abnormal difficult circumstances through which area has passed. It will also have consequences. The fall of the Sunni governorates under ISIS in the way it happened represented a big shock to the people that resulted in losing complete trust in the government and its facilities. In a historical moment, the government failed to protect whole governorates, leaving them as a prey for those oppressive criminals.

Therefore, it is deemed necessary for us to portray some ideas and depictions that try to help the society to recover, bring back the trust to keep up and overcome this plight with less damages possible, retrieving the trust of people in their government and its facilities as they are the first party responsible for the security, life, and well-being of people.

This paper discusses ideas that were coined to address the current tragic situation in the ISIS-afflicted governorates. However, they can also be considered as a general framework for the rest of the Iraqi governorates. It draws a road map to establish a modern civil state with less cost and time possible. The ideas presented here will be divided into two main sections. The first is a mechanism to develop the education and the higher education, which targets children, adolescents, and the young. As for the second, it is a mechanism to develop the society as a whole including children and all other people of both sexes.

## **First: Education and Higher Education Section**

Due to the nature of the abnormal conditions our area passed through, and also the fact that one-third of the area population are in the school age or below, leaving any type of school study and civil education for more than two years, it is necessary to do some potential procedures to adjust the educational system in the city so that it meets the real needs of the learner and the whole society. In addition, the adjusted system will also have the lion's share in rehabilitating the people.

The philosophy and objectives of education now in Iraq are still following the approach laid by the British during the British invasion. Though the approach has been modified very often, its philosophy remained the same. It was meant to have employees who could manage the local administration in Iraq led by Britain.

That means our curricula do not aim as much at teaching and producing social leaders as it does at rehabilitating employees who can simply run businesses, following the orders of their bosses. Gradually, this faulted approach shrank. The school function changed from being a place where a learner is qualified to be ready for life to a place where the learner's goal is only to get high marks that qualify him or her to enroll in a university. As a result, many other abnormal phenomena appeared such as private lessons or tutoring, collective cheating at exams, and other forms of manipulations. The future of a student became dependent on points of tenths of marks that could change the track of their lives from one direction into another for very trivial reasons. The weak personalities of students our schools have produced made the maximum ambition of our young people is to get a government or public sector job with a salary. This way prevents the young and the society from any chance to be creative and innovative, and also from taking adventure in free businesses. In this way, Iraq lost its prestigious scientific rank and its educational system was excluded from any international classification. The ministry of education could not identify the fault, finding no solutions only trying to keep up this system which is no longer suitable in the first place.

Now this philosophy must be radically reviewed as it kills the initiative and creativity spirit and limits the scope of ambition. A new educational philosophy should be embraced aiming at building the character or personality of the learner. Thus, school should **“change from being a place of indoctrinating some information to students for the sake of marks into to a place where children are qualified to set on their lives.”** In addition, children can be provided with an environment where they can enjoy their childhood. We can follow the Finnish educational system which is ranks the first on top of the world educational systems for years though it is simple. Maybe it is the first because of its simplicity and depth. It focuses on the “learner’s environment” and the real direct contact with it. It also focuses on establishing positive relationships and friendships among learners. This is done through various recreational and educational activities inside and outside the school, reducing the theoretical lessons, increasing the educational activities inside and outside the school making sure that the schools provides the joy and happiness for the learner. In this way, the school will be a place that attracts him or her. If this approach was followed, the educational process would become easy as it is done without any obligation.

Full care should also be given to the schools in the countryside. Schools and learning opportunities should reach to the last farthest child in the governorate. Every child born has a chance equal to his peers’ in education. And if some people believe that our problem starts in the countryside, the solution must definitely start there.

### **Education Modality:**

We suggest that education be compulsory for the first nine years, cancelling the standardized ministerial exams for the sixth year of the primary school. We also suggest that the students’ constancy of attending classes be the first goal of the school, not only to pass and memorize the lessons. Attendance constancy, being in the educational environment, and different forms and levels of education are the end or the goal by themselves. Dropping out of school for any reason will result in intruding an individual who cannot live in harmony and interact with the society. There can also be a central standardized exam at the end of the ninth year.

Throughout the nine years, the academic focus should be on the subjects of Arabic, English, and mathematics, as they are accumulative sciences in nature. The humanities should be the same as those in the official curricula in order to keep the learners connected with all other Iraqis.

Other enriching subjects should also be added including subjects about the cities and villages of every governorate, its history, geography, its job opportunities, its natural resources, etc. if some students stopped their education to this level, there would be no problem as the society will have a balanced individual who has a reasonable amount of education that qualifies him or her to successfully engage in life.

As for the secondary or high schools, students have the option of joining either the literary or scientific major. It is favorable to follow one of the international schools' modality, and obtain its credibility so that the high school degree gains credibility and benefit. It can also be equalized easily inside and outside Iraq. Moreover, it will qualify the student to study at prestigious and robust universities without being shocked about the difference between his or her high school study modality and the academic university study. We emphasize not to connect the secondary school degree with the university admission. It is better for the universities to resort to non-central admission, setting their own admission criteria and conditions as in the advanced universities of the world. We believe that disconnecting the secondary school from the university admission is a very important issue that releases the tension of students, removes the obsession of students to collect as many marks as possible and the fear from exams that render the most beautiful and enriching years of students' lives to a deadly feeling due to the central admission. The central admission usually makes the student end up in places where they are not willing to study, and that do not match with their innate abilities.

## **Who Lays Down the Educational Process Goals?**

It will be necessary in the beginning to establish a higher committee that includes thinkers, politicians, education-specialized university professors, educational staff, health staff, interior security staff, women affairs staff, justice and religious affairs staff, and representatives of educated and scholars of the governorate and media specialists. This committee will be tasked with laying down the general objectives of the educational process in the governorate, answering two questions: **who are we now? And where do we want to go or reach in the future?**

To agree on the answers of these two questions will make it easy for the committee to “design curricula”, prepare and adjust them so that they meet the desired goals. They also discuss the contribution of each ministry and their available capacity and the objectives they want to achieve whether to teach the students or provide the activities for the society through periodical meetings and activities held at the schools directed to the parents or other individuals.

After identifying the objectives, a committee of university professors, education specialists, and some book writers is held. They will be tasked with designing the required curricula or making the decision to adopt the governmental curricula of some subjects. We can adopt the Iraqi curricula of the first four years of the primary school so that they are in common with what other students in Iraq study.

This work should be led by an external specialist who is not from the ministry of education as the people working there adhere to the traditional educational system and will not be able to easily avoid it. We have to think out of the box.

We have to also rehabilitate and train the principals of schools first, excluding the staff members who are not able or fail to interact with the new work mechanism. Other staff will be trained on a regular basis and their capacities will be identified and evaluated. Those who prove to be weak will be replaced.

**Indeed, those who are working on this mission should be rehabilitated throughout the process since there is no further time to waste.**

Moreover, there must be a supervisory entity that evaluates the performance of staff and help them develop. They should also check the adopted programs and see how successful they are, the level of interaction between teachers and learners in different stages, and reviewing them for further development.

If we were able to positively influence the teachers, that means we would enter to every house in the countryside and the city. And if we were able to include the families of students in the school activities “as suggested by this study”, we would then quickly achieve the biggest goal; changing and developing the learner’s environment. In addition, the goal is also to develop educational staff capable of continuing with developing the educational system to meet the interests and needs of the society.

To complete this mission, we need to have physical facilities such as schools, and other educational aids. In addition, we need a new thinking ideology to be adopted by the education and high education employees, staff that is able to deliver new educational methods, curricula and concepts to the learners. Moreover, there is a need for curricula that changes the general goals to detailed curricula and subjects that can be studied.

## **School Building**

This paper suggests that the school building should not be restricted to being a place where only students receive education. Schools should also be the core of the surrounding community life whether in the “countryside or city” in the sense that school buildings could be a place to teach children during the day, and also a place where people can hold many social activities and events that we will need. Thus we suggest that each school have a principal and a “coordinator” to arrange the social activities such as: teachers training courses, parents’ first aid courses, women and family education courses, society and health courses, environment courses, law-enforcement, traffic police, security and police forces lectures, religious activities, guidance and awareness lectures, and recreational ceremonies.

If the school building was the place of all of the mentioned activities, there would be a need to allocate funds to improve and develop the current buildings and build new ones provided that each school has a meeting hall that suits the number of people involved in the activities. There should also be a multi-purpose closed stadium that is not only for school activities, but also a place for all of the society activities mentioned above. These activities are performed within standardized organized timetables distributed to all schools in the governorate with an average of 4 times a month at least.

In this way, the school will not be a place for teaching children but also an inclusive institution whose role is to raise the society members' awareness, connect them together, and provide them with a new stream of education that helps us to rebuild the society capital we have lost in the midst of the catastrophes that our governorate has witnessed.

To get the people of Nineveh involved in these activities will unveil many powerful capable individuals and generate new ideas that are suitable with different environments or suit everyone. Throughout the process, we will re-evaluate the activities, and modify them to be more suitable for the people's and society needs. Some people can be chosen for training or the active participation in preparing the activities and promoting for them. As a result, we will have contributed to moving people from negativity and abstract reception into participation and then active participation in leading the change.

In case there are no school buildings, we can resort to caravans provided that the school has an appropriate place and space containing gardens, children playgrounds, and a stadium. In each school, there could be like the Greek theater; simply concrete steps but used for sitting and other social and educational activities.

Here are a few recommended activities inside the schools:

- Twinning between a school in the countryside and another in the city.
- Exchanging visits once a year at least.



- Competitions among schools including theater, school magazines, public speech, phone videos discussing the situation of each school or village.
- Various Sport competitions and popular arts competitions in each area.
- A competition for manufacturing scientific devices, innovations and display media.

### **Continuous Education:**

Curricula and courses for continuous education should be provided to give the chance to many individuals for education; those who could not continue their education due to the circumstances of the country during the last decade. They should also be encouraged through providing them with various types of education and school buildings that are open for them after their working hours. Such individuals can be taught by contracted or volunteering teachers, continuing with the university evening-classes study through which many students graduated in previous years. In addition, remote or online study should also be encouraged. The governorate is also recommended to provide all the learning opportunities to all stages and ages.

### **Higher Education:**

The continuous regression in the level of higher education in Iraq is a normal thing resulting from the regression in all life aspects in the country. Currently, trying to temporarily fix the higher educational system will not yield anything significant. Neglecting the current scientific staff that we have now “as an unexploited wealth” is like a crime against the society and the staff as well. What helps the higher education to develop fast is to find competitive universities parallel to the public universities. This could be done through contracting with developed and robust universities of the world to establish affiliates or branches of their universities in Mosul. It is very necessary to task one of the advanced universities to conduct a feasibility study to change the city of Mosul into a university city that provides the infrastructure for the robust universities to invest in Mosul. The focus can be made on the modern scientific departments such as Nano engineering, and mechatronics since they represent the future of the city.

In addition, we should focus on the colleges that deal with mechanics and the agricultural techniques so that they provide immediate services to our arable area. This approach is meant to improve the agriculture in our country through benefiting from the modern scientific techniques. Further, the success in attracting such universities will tremendously develop the capacities of the city people and will oblige our local universities to develop and catch up with the advanced universities of the world. It will also help develop the capacities of our local staff, providing it with young people graduating from these universities, making Mosul as a hub for all Iraqi students who represent a considerable number of the Iraqi population. This step should be done along with the provision of all necessary requirements such as housing, printing and publishing houses, and recreational facilities. Only then Mosul could be a logical alternative for all Iraqis who are willing to get their children educated at an appropriate place. This achieves an important role in creating real strong bonds among the young Iraqis who come from different governorates. It also opens new horizons in coexisting among Iraqis from different places.

## **Second: Society Development Section:**

The society capital is the real wealth for any society. It is adaptable and can be changed to money capital. In this way, many nations were able to achieve wellbeing though they did not have any significant natural resources. However, this does not happen by chance or heredity. It is made. There should be a coherent society system that can produce this capital, particularly when many parties tried to dismantle the relations among individuals, destroying the trust between the individual and the government. In addition, people lost the hope for a better future which created a bitter and overwhelming feeling of disappointment and distrust among the society members.

We aim at creating new strong bonds among the society individuals. The bonds that we want to create should alternate the bonds of blood, tribe, and neighborhood whose traditions do not exist anymore, which dismantled the old traditional bonds and did not make alternative ones. We believe that working together in participating and attending different educational lectures, doing mutual activities, or the repeated reciprocal interaction will create such bonds or bolster them. These activities will

gradually introduce local leaders who can interact with the society, understanding its needs and also the legal ways of asking for them.

Attracting people –Men and Women- to schools is an end by itself, particularly when most of them were deprived of any real opportunity for education but we aspire for farther than that. Schools can be exploited in holding courses in health, law, environment, and security and the latter is conducted by the interior security forces. This type of activity creates a bond among the society members, raises everyone’s awareness and strengthens their connectedness. Such activities should not be restricted to lectures and symposia only, but should also include recreational and sport activities (football tournaments, local teams, contests among suburbs, bicycle contests, local poetry evening events, prophet praising contests, local teams for local dance “dabka”, etc.) and other activities suggested by the participants. These activities could succeed in attracting people since Iraqis were deprived for decades of the simplest types of entertainment, which is a human need. **We should not be surprised by the spirit of crime or extremism of a thirty-year-old person who passed through his childhood without enjoying himself with a swing or a bicycle.**

Among the means that the governorate should provide to schools and parents are:

- Multiple FM radio stations; some common classes can be taught on air and can be received by the same classes of students. Also, a TV channel for education should be provided.
- Mobile libraries for children in cars that visit the schools to organize a mobile book fair to encourage everyone to read without which any nation cannot advance.
- Mobile theaters with cinema display sets; many mobile theater teams are formed and given a timetable to visit schools to perform different shows. A transportation car can be converted to a theater. The same car is used for the transportation of decors, costumes, and the band. As a result, the band can move and perform in the farthest place of the governorate.
- The governorate issues an educational magazine for children. The magazines are distributed to all schools or they are made available at the libraries. The topics should be interesting, attractive for the child, and educational at the same time.

- Various educational and scientific museums (medicine, agriculture, engineering, biology, mechanics, etc.) supervised by universities. Visits to museums should be made a routine part of classes in all schools.
- Local media covers different school activities and the governorate should encourage the production of phone movies filmed by amateur photographers to document their activities inside schools or their local environments. This area will attract many people to follow the local media. Any person should see himself or his children or his environment on TV, which increases the fact that people watch the local media. This will also make a better chance for media to convey any message to the society.

## **Conclusion**

This paper introduces bold lines only and suggests feasible mechanisms that can change the society for better as expected. These general concepts need further study by specialists who will divide them into main areas or sections. We cannot produce a precise scientific study unless we have a statistical database about the situation of the governorates in terms of population and economy. Though this information is missing, we can present the concept in an abstract way which will be completed scientifically when statistics will be available.

To make a successful work with this strategy, first there must be a belief that education is the only means to get our society out of this bottleneck. We should also believe that education must include everyone, not only children. In addition, we have to believe that our belief of work and perseverance will help us reach to a better result.

We chose schools to be the basis to rehabilitate the whole society and this is a normal choice. Schools will be able to perform this role if they are provided with the financial and humanitarian potentials. Then immediately we will observe fruitful results looming in the horizon. I estimate the time for such effect between two to four years maximum. This work unifies the society in one clear context putting it on a specific track. If the track was unified, the society will advance fast. Changing the learner's environment, curricula, education goals are enough to yield the expected results if they

are addressed seriously, positively, and with constructive spirit that is not after destructive criticism, despondence, and sarcasm.

We hope that our society will achieve the required development.