

LEADING ARTICLE

Challenges Facing Postgraduate Studies in Iraqi Universities

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There is hardly any doubt about the fact that the reality of postgraduate studies in Iraq is suffering from many serious problems, which may represent a warning sign of serious harmful scientific consequences in the future [1]. The reality that must be understood by all is that the future of any country's development depends on the success or failure of this sector of the higher education (i.e, scientific research), because it provides the specialized and academic capacities necessary to build the country, and the achievements of researches and scientific innovations that are employed in the process of technological development in various fields [2,3]. For that reason, any complacency in the reform and development of this sector will greatly damage the march of development and construction in any country, and Iraq is not an exception.

Some people may think that the task of reforming the postgraduate sector in Iraq is an easy task, but it is in fact very difficult. The reason is the accumulation and consolidation of some negative phenomena and their rooting, so it became difficult to get rid of them. However, this will not deter from making efforts that may contribute to reducing the damage, on condition that to be effective, tangible and real, and start from the top of the administrative ladder down to the rules, i.e. we should start with the ministry and then the university cadre, up to the laws and procedures adopted in this sector, because there is no need for reform that does not start from the top, which is the place where orders are issued and decisions and instructions are made. Top's reform certainly facilitates the reform of the bottom, and saves effort and time.

The major challenges facing postgraduate studies in Iraqi universities are:

1. Corruption, which is a phenomenon that has been existing in the postgraduate sector in Iraq, but its scope has widened and became deeper in the last three decades, especially after USA occupation of Iraq. This is addressed by the international reports where the chip in the detection of this problem and give important details about it [4]. Despite that, corruption was not limited to this sector, but it has infiltrated most of the facilities of the state, so that the damage in the field of scientific research will certainly be much greater than that in any other sector. Because of the great decline it causes in the ethics of the academic staff, the repercussions on the strict academic traditions, the consequent deterioration in the scientific level of postgraduate studies and specialized competencies, and the decline in the level of scientific research and futility in the

country, which certainly affects the performance of development institutions and the reconstruction and service. The manifestations of this corruption are:

- Cronyism and nepotism; where the information and circulars indicate the emergence of secret customary conditions that determine the nature of admissions and application in postgraduate studies, as acceptance is not in accordance with the official scientific standards that are legally established, and consistent with the scientific requirement, but according to the criteria of customary non-declared, such as sectarian affiliation and nationalism and partisan and regional sectarians. For example, a university refrains from accepting students of another university, and so for.
- Special channels of application; this phenomenon is one residue of the former regime, which focused on helping or accepting the so-called friends (who have more than one courageous line) and the sons of prisoners, martyrs, partisans, etc., regardless of the circumstances, which has created other criteria for acceptance. That phenomenon have not only been exceeded, but have continued at the same pace to the present time, and expanded further, replacing the martyrs of previous wars by martyrs and political opposition parties, political uprisings and political prisoners, etc., which deprived many of the owners of scientific capabilities and professional and technical skills from the opportunity to develop their abilities and competencies that went to others less than their capacity and efficiency, which in turn deprived the country of great potential that could be invested in serving the march of development of the country .
- The political dominance over the scientific in the field of postgraduate studies was the prominent feature during the past period, and so far, making graduate studies and scientific missions captive to this dangerous trend, and thus, the loss was greater than to be described, in addition, we are witnessing the deportation in more than a range of areas of social reality in the country.

2. The low scientific level and the decline of the probity of research in postgraduate studies is almost a prominent feature in the field of graduate studies. There are many reasons, including: the general political and security situation, weakness or lack of supervision and follow-up, lack of planning and management, and lack of reliance on valid laws, because most laws which have been adopted so far and are no longer compatible with our current situation. Not to mention the dominance of improvisation and randomness in the management of this important sector. Ranging from the multiplicity of sources of decision, and contradiction and conflicting decisions with each other, because of the introduction of administrations which have no experience in this area, and has no prospective look.

It is probably the product of political quotas and the distribution of positions among the various parties that led to a continuous decline in the level of postgraduate studies to the extent that led to the reduction of the level of these studies and the decline in reputation, or arrival at the international level.

3. Routine infertility, as the standards and procedures for acceptance of applicants to graduate studies are not based on scientific basis, and do not achieve the desired goal that students are to obtain a high level of scientific and efficiency, to determine the studies in a certain age and limited to a certain rate to serve the goal pursued by the philosophy of graduate studies, as we may find

people of the older age and lower rate, but they are more able to achieve a good level, which intersects with the human right to learning provided by various laws. The right is to open the doors of graduate studies for all those who wish to undergo a rigorous examination of their scientific level, and their ability to continue the study, and it is required that these tests to be frequent and to include more than the aspect required by the study so as to get out of them only the most scientific and perseverance.

4. Weakness of the level of teaching competencies, as we find that many of the colleges are racing to open the largest number of departments of postgraduate studies, despite the lack of conditions to ensure the success of this matter, such as the existence of specialists, and enough spaces. Most of these colleges are self-motivated, materialistic rather than objective, with the aim of raising the degree or name of universities and colleges, and trying to imitate other faculties with a name and reputation, which is reflected in the value of the certificates granted. For example, for master degree at least a doctorate degree with a teachers title should cover the course, as well as for a doctoral study that must be conducted under the supervision of a cadre of at least the degree of professor or assistant professor.

5. Lack of educational tools necessary for such postgraduate studies, especially scientific disciplines, such as laboratories and workshops specialized and developed, as the current studies are limited to providing theoretical information without focusing on the field aspects required by these studies, where we find the division of these studies to one course for a master's and two courses study for a doctoral study with a research or a final work that is not often satisfied with the required fundamentals. In this aspect, the phenomenon of "walking" is common, which means the acceptance of the research regardless of scientific eligibility, or the extent of conformity with the required conditions, and its usefulness, and the selection of scientific supervisors on the statements and the formation of discussion committees are in favor of the principle of mutual benefit for the purpose of material gain. But the phenomenon of research and ready-made papers prevailed, after the absence or shrinking of the role of the academic supervisor and the weakness or disappearance of the role of scientific evaluation, so that we hear about the degrees of "excellent" and "very good" for the levels of less modest is said to be modest.

6. There is no correlation between the number of students admitted and the absorptive capacity of faculties in all aspects, such as the halls and laboratories, and the preparation of the specialized staff to cover the acceptable number for teaching and supervision. There are a large number of students supervised by one professor, in some cases, and this is not logical, in addition to the lack of acceptance of many of the professors with their teaching duties in the form required and is limited to the distribution of briefs or observations of simple things to students without delving into the subject. Higher education rapid expansion may lead to decline in quality [5].

7. Many students complained about the neglect of their professors, and I was surprised that some of them did not see the professor only once or twice during the research period, as well as the burden of preparing the research requirements on the student and taking the order of the preparation of laboratory materials, and purchase of reserves and was alone to deal with his needs without assistance of the Department of Scientific Affairs. And even the amounts allocated for the purchase of research materials are not disposed to him, as well as the printing of

the thesis and the wages of the examining committee, he spends on them, and this contradicts the principle of free education provided by the Constitution.

8. For scholarships and scientific missions, outside the country, it is even worse, so that half of this important educational outlet is currently disabled and does not play its role properly. Regardless of the impact of quotas and loyalty that controls the tendency of supervising staff to follow up such outlet, we can say that there is a serious paralysis in performance or management by this scientific channel, whether this paralysis on voluntary or other reasons, and certainly there is an impact of both types of reasons, so that the fact is that Iraq does not benefit from this vital scientific port, as the choices of scholarships are far from scientific conditions, atmosphere policy and the spread of wrong behaviors. This sensitive matter is fraught with serious scientific consequences not only for the failure of the objectives of the scientific missions, but also for the initiatives of donor countries for these missions, which may reduce the limits of their initiatives after they know they are not properly managed.

Of course, this is not all, but there is much to be addressed to diagnose the challenges facing this vital sector, but we must put the most important before the important, and must present the basic or apparent to be the starting point for a radical reform extending across the sector. So that we can see real and fruitful results in the end, and there is no need for any reform more than balanced smooth and transparent reading of the reality of this sector to be aware of what to do.

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