

The Islamic University of Gaza (IUG)

The First Scientific Conference of the Faculty of
Commerce

“The Development of Human Capabilities”

A Speech By:
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My professors and sons,

I send to you, oh brave stalwart nation, I send to everyone of you my sincere love, pride and appreciation, and I pay tribute to all the children of the nation, wherever they are. I also thank the organizers of the conference, specifically mentioning the President, deans and professors of the Islamic University of Gaza.

My speech will focus on the theme of the development of human capabilities. I am not speaking here as a political analyst, but I present my own convictions based on the reality in which we live.

Arabs in general and the Palestinian people in particular, face a new challenge concerning civilization, but I am sure that we are able to confront it and achieve victory over it. This will happen if we utilize, in sincerity and determination, every possible factor to face this challenge, and use creative thinking. The most prominent factor and the main aspect here is the human and his/her abilities to build the future.

You might agree with me that the person of the present and the future is the knowledge-maker who can dedicate his/her mental and intellectual capabilities to attain livelihood and achieve a decent standard of living for him/herself and his/her family and to be a useful part of the society and his/her homeland.

It is significant that such a conference is held in conditions of the existing anxiety in the region. This is a good time to announce and to stress our rights to education, qualification and vocational training, leading to progress in all fields and creativity, no matter how difficult the situation might be. We must believe that crises and their risks should fade in one way or another, due to our insistence on our right to assert and restore our niche and our presence in the knowledge society that is under development at all levels in the world.

Although I believe in a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of our full recovery of our rights, I would not recommend waiting for peace so that we achieve prosperity. Prosperity is realized as a result of the production of the total members of the community under any political situation. The expectation of prosperity coming as a result of peace is an illusion which I hope we will not fall into.

For this, we have to be always ready to deal with the rapid successive changes taking place in the modern world. These changes affect everyone on the globe, especially the element of "knowledge", which is considered the main factor in the quest for continuous human development.

Higher education, production and services:

The subject that I will talk about is the new rules upon which human capacity building and vocational qualification should be based. I will address this through analysis of the relationship between higher education on the one hand, and the production and service sectors on the other. This relationship is taking a new dimension by the entry of many variables in the structure of the economy and even social structure itself. It is, therefore, natural that higher education is one of the sectors that are directly affected by these sensitive changes, especially since the entry of new knowledge factors forced society to change its outlook about the role of knowledge and even identifying its nature.

Also, any social change cannot be complete in isolation from dealing seriously with the knowledge elements which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, which humanity didn't witness before. These are represented by amazing developments in several areas such as: IT, telecommunications, liberalization, globalization, and last but not least, the internet. These developments changed the world irrevocably, and we do not need much effort to realize that the world in which we live today is radically different from the world before the information revolution and globalization.

I have asked in a large number of forums, and through a lot of symposiums, lectures, meetings and in many of my literary works, for the need to move quickly to address the relevant fast developments.

Palestine the knowledge society (E-Palestine):

I summarize this by saying: we either move "to be" or we do not move "not to be,". Therefore, I am now a bit complacent, because many of the institutions, whether public or private, are interested in this subject. Palestine was classified in the forefront of countries that have sought to deal with the developments of information and communication technology.

I was very pleased to meet in Amman, with Dr. Sabri Sidem, Minister of Communications and Information Technology. I felt his interest and attention to strengthening the capacity of the community and governmental sectors to deal with the modern techniques, as well as a desire to move towards e-government. I am honored that me and my company are a partner and a contributor to any program or plan that will help and promote this trend. We have agreed on a promising program to prepare trainers, who will train their colleagues, and also agreed that our company will contribute in the drafting of the Palestinian electronic legislations, particularly those associated with e-government. The opportunity is available for achieving the desired changes in the broadest range and in a way which ensures the graduation of qualified cadres of researchers and interested professionals who are proficient in the performance of their work and who will lead us to the world of technical contemporary developments.

The best place to start with the change is the educational institutions which must adapt to every new development, to become an integral part of the

modern world, which is characterized by intersection and interdependence. This means that they have to follow specific strategies to achieve the desired goal.

Qualification, training and continuing education

The qualification and certificate of "ACPA":

As the Chairman of the Arab Society of Certified Accountants (ASCA) and the largest Arab professional organization, I have ventured with utmost seriousness to deal with new changes, especially on the subject of qualification. ASCA is considered the distinguished supplier which provides the market and the Arab business community with the professional accountancy competencies of advanced qualification that keep up with the professional developments in the profession in recent years worldwide. The society, since its establishment in 1984, is working to qualify an Arab generation internationally and professionally, which helps them to practice accountancy within and outside their countries.

The society was distinguished from other professional societies by the accreditation it got from the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)- University of Cambridge, for the qualification and certificate of Arab Certified Public Accountant (ACPA), after a review of its curriculum, academic references and the management of its examination. The (ACPA) certificate is offered and signed by the CIE – University of Cambridge and ASCA.

The society also provided its own scientific references to its curriculum, which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development "UNCTAD." Consequently, the society was classified among the seven professional accounting bodies worldwide.

Due to the society's mission that aims at the establishment of accounting and auditing standards, professional conduct and capacity building through internationally recognized education, examinations and qualification, its future vision is concentrated in its qualification to be at the top of the list of international accounting qualifications that are internationally recognized, and that the efficiency of the holder of this qualification must be from the accounting professional competencies that develop the accounting profession.

Abu-Ghazaleh Cambridge IT Skills Center (AGCAITC):

We also had another achievement and agreement with the University of Cambridge; AGCAITC was founded in 2002 by collaboration between the CIE - University of Cambridge, AKMS, and Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co. International "TAGI". That was fulfilled through a unique agreement to offer Cambridge IT skills certification in Arabic.

Founding this center is considered a primary step to contribute towards building an Arab knowledge community, and a step that seeks to narrow

the digital divide in various Arab countries. This is done through training in a series of major computer programs concerning the business community, state institutions, academics, students, housewives and all sectors of society.

The center offers a certificate that covers computer operating system programs, the use of the internet, e-mail, electronic spreadsheets (Microsoft Office Excel), Word processor (Microsoft Office Word), databases and presentations (Microsoft PowerPoint). These are the most sophisticated and essential programs of all uses and applications of computers. The certificate covers this in addition to explaining the virtues and benefits of both computers and software applications.

The goal of this certificate is to qualify whoever sits for the IT exam in either the Arabic or English language in all Arab states. Each person who passes this exam successfully is granted Cambridge IT Skills Certificate which is the first qualification of its kind to be issued in the Arab region.

Due to the importance of this certificate, it has received attention and support from several institutions, and professional and governmental bodies in the Arab States. The support varies from accreditation, to official validation of the certificate, to the exemption standard of training programs.

In relation to this support and interest, the training and qualification program to obtain Cambridge IT Skills Certificate has been launched in each of: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

Training programs:

We all agree that training and continuing education are essential tools for building human capacities and coping with developments the profession is witnessing in all economic, educational and productivity sectors. Because Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization (TAGOrg) provides a variety of professional services in the Arab world in sectors of: finance, business, management, intellectual property, law, translation, IT and telecommunication, I have worked to establish a professional body that is concerned with training, development and continuing education. This is done by depending on experts from the organization's cadres, each one in his/her specialty, in all Arab countries. We have programs and plans to implement a package of specialized courses while we succeeded in holding hundreds of them throughout the Arab capitals.

Universities ... The first goal of the change:

It would seem evident that the role of higher education institutions will remain unchanged, given that higher education aims primarily at strengthening the role of knowledge focusing on the tools of scientific research and graduate researchers cadres. Reality however, is in fact different from this typical assumption; the new variables force universities to become an integral part of the world with the greatest possible overlapping. In other words, the goal of higher education will shift largely

because of the new factors that constitute the social structure. These factors lead to the creation of new conditions resulting from the phenomenon of globalization and active interaction between communities. These variables form elements of social pressure that lead to change the structure of higher education itself.

It is true that the universities will provide students with resources of knowledge, but they will do so through the transfer of technology from the university campus to the production sectors in the community. In other words, the new component which will have a decisive role in modernizing universities is the globalization of standards, which means the free exchange of knowledge between communities. Consequently, this leads to link higher education institutions with different sectors of society on the one hand, and with market forces on the other hand. What is important is that all this can be done only through a new framework: qualified personnel for research, providing resources for research, the full freedom of movement and exchange of information.

Let me explain this by applying it to the reality we live in at this moment. The traditional picture of time and place barriers has been transformed; the telecommunications revolution brought changes that were unimaginable in the relation of society with time and place.

We can hear about any event that is now happening anywhere in the world after a few moments, and that's if we don't actually witness it as it unfolds. The idea of "data recovery", which takes on several forms for the students of university, changed beyond scenario, as it is no longer confined to the studying of "important book" or getting the "main article" in a certain section. These have become things of the past.

In practical terms, there is nothing that the student needs which can't be obtained through modern telecommunications. This new situation will change the traditional image of higher education and the means that are used to obtain the knowledge.

Of course, the impact of the information revolution was tremendous, which is not surprising, and I have said it is not a coincidence that the globalization of information is accompanied by the globalization of trade. This surely leads to changing the traditional relationship between the aspects of the economic process itself. In the past, the target of communities was to achieve the economic development, expand the social welfare throughout the exchange of goods or production of goods through cheap labor, and to improve competition between contemporary economics. It became, therefore, impossible to achieve economic development only through the industries run by the wheel of knowledge. The direct result of this is that the universities are demanding the communities to invest directly in the expansion of the knowledge base and human resources.

We have come a long way since our concern was the search for cheap raw materials and low-cost labor. Here comes the role of institutions of higher education in a way that leaves no room for giving and taking. These institutions can play a vital role to develop talent, knowledge and imagination, which should be the fruit of higher education and at the same time the productive base of the modern economy.

The preservation of the cultural identity:

The first thing one notes in the technical and knowledge shifts, is the melting of boundaries between states. The natural result that follows this is the melting of cultures. This is a negative phenomenon in every sense of the word; the melting of cultures is quite different from them being integrated and melted in one crucible. Global integration can be achieved only through the support of the cultural identity of each nation, and the highlighting of its achievements, which had contributed already in the building of humanity and bringing it to where it is now. The new framework, which we should seek, is the creation of a way of interaction between our interests and the requirements of globalization.

Making the future... and human capacities:

In conclusion, I say that today we face challenges other than the ugly occupation, which will inevitably end. These challenges are represented by the way we deal with information and communication technology which aim at establishing a knowledge-based society. The choices here are limited between making and building this society according to this concept or withdrawing and erratically diverging our efforts.

Making the future and the road to the future wealth lies in the youth of the present and future, and rebuilding the nation's institutions based on knowledgeable scientific foundations that require promising human capacities derived from college graduates. Universities are the makers of men, we are proud of their role and of the efforts of their administrators.

I thank you, and may peace be upon you and God's mercy and His blessings.