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Educational Policy and Ensuring Continuity of Education in Times of Crises through Forward-Looking Educational Planning

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Abstract

This research paper discusses the reality of educational policy in its aspect related to educational foresight planning, in order to identify the mechanisms used to confront crises in the event of their occurrence, after the world witnessed the closure and suspension of various life activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Algeria, as a country with its own educational policy, was forced to implement emergency decisions that were not previously planned, which caused a shock in the educational community and imposed an unusual situation. Therefore, this research aims to identify the ways that educational planning can adopt to confront future sudden crises through an analytical and descriptive approach to the concept of proactive educational planning in times of crisis.

Keywords : Educational policy, Educational Foresight Planning, Crisis.

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Introduction

Education is considered the nerve of intellectual life and the only way to build a cultured and civilized society that can lead human civilization towards glory and immortality. The natural death of a person does not necessarily mean his intellectual and scientific death. History proves to us the survival of the names of scientists who have provided humanity with scientific and intellectual achievements that have lived after their deaths for ages and humanity still benefits from them to this day. The credit for this goes to everyone who carried the banner of spreading knowledge and documenting it and transmitting it to generations through different methods, the most important of which is the educational/learning process. It is no secret to anyone that education is a human right that cannot be dispensed with. It is the way to survival and societal advancement. Therefore, it was necessary for it to continue in all circumstances and contexts that may confront society. Because education is the central tool that is relied upon to rebuild society, it was necessary for the makers of successful educational policies to take these crises into account through proactive educational planning, in order to confront them and overcome them. This will allow for a new start and an effective transition towards the safe haven that society seeks. Educational policies should not stand waiting for the crisis to end and then

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seek to develop reform plans. The task of planning is basically to create the future, not to put in place sporadic and unsystematic solutions that may harm education more than they benefit or repair it. From this perspective, this research comes in an attempt to shed light on educational policy in general and then educational planning and the mechanisms adopted by governments in order to develop proactive educational plans to confront crises by defining the concepts of these terms and looking at what has been done to ensure the continuation of education in emergency circumstances in an attempt to answer a main question:

Is Educational Foresight Planning the Best Solution for Dealing with Crises?

This question can be broken down into several sub-questions, such as:

What is the fate of education in times of crisis?

How have educational policies in different countries around the world dealt with crises and disasters, whether natural or man-made?

What measures have been taken to overcome the crises that the educational system has faced?

What are the future plans that have been developed to deal with expected crises in the future?

These questions and others will be the focus of this article, in which we will use analytical and descriptive methods to study educational policies. We will look at the concept of educational policy, as well as the concept of educational planning, crises, and other terms that intersect with the general topic of the research. Our goal is to reach a clear answer that shows us the importance of proactive educational planning for dealing with crises and the need to develop it and make it a priority.

1- Educational Policy:

Before we discuss educational planning specifically, it is important to define educational policy in general.

Educational policy is a branch of a state's public policy that is concerned with setting the general frameworks that govern the bodies responsible for the educational/learning process at all levels within a specific period.

Here are some definitions of educational policy:

Muhsin Mahmoud Ayyash: "Educational policy is the principles, goals, curricula, methods, and means that the state has determined in a national plan or program for the educational system within a specific period of time." (Ayyash, 2001, p. 4)

Ahmad Lashab: "Educational policy making is an administrative and political process through which policies, procedures, and systems are developed that are required for the management and administration of the educational system in order to solve problems or achieve the goals that the state wishes to achieve within a specific period of time and under specific political circumstances." (Lashab, 2014, p. 257)

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Abdul Jawad Bakr: "Educational policy is the principles and general directions that educational authorities set to guide the work of educational bodies at different levels when making decisions." (Bakr, 2003, p. 4)

Another definition: "The set of principles and general rules that the state sets to organize and direct education in it in a way that serves its general goals and national interests." (Bakr, 2003, p. 4)

Saud Hilal: "Educational policy is the process of drawing the basic outlines of the educational system and defining it in a way that achieves the general goals of education and stems from the philosophy of society, its aspirations and hopes that it seeks to achieve. It is also a tool for achieving progress, organizing the path of the educational system, and defining it." (Hilal, 2007, p. 17).

After reviewing these definitions, we can say that educational policy is the set of principles that are drawn up by special bodies affiliated with the state to manage and plan the educational process at all levels in a way that suits the societal orientation and general policy of the state. The aim is to promote education and develop it according to a unified methodology that ensures the preservation of national constants.

Algeria, like other countries in the world, has sought to develop an educational policy that ensures the development of education and keeps pace with the civilizational train, especially after the ignorance that the Algerian people experienced during the colonial period. This is why the path of educational planning in Algeria has its own particularity, given that Algeria suffered from the effects of colonialism for more than a century. After independence, it was necessary to change the policy that France was pursuing in education, as it was a policy aimed at Gallicizing the elite and obscuring the masses who constituted the human mobilization for the struggle against the colonizer. Awareness and education were harmful to the colonial policy, so Algeria after independence mobilized all available means to nationalize and Algerianize education as much as possible through various stages, adopting educational planning to remove the effects of French colonialism and strengthen the Algerian Islamic identity with all its components.

2- Educational Planning:

Planning is the tool that guides officials in implementing policies and achieving their goals. Therefore, planning is generally considered the applied aspect of policy. It is a set of specific measures that are taken to achieve a specific goal. It is characterized by a forward-looking perspective based on available data, as well as preparation to deal with potential problems through the process of predicting them. Planning is not a new invention in the modern era. It is a process that human groups have practiced since ancient times in different forms and patterns according to the realities and circumstances of the time to face disasters and challenges. It has been called by various names such as anticipation, caution, and management (Farouk Shawqi Al-Buhi, 2002, p. 7).

Planning as a predictive, proactive strategy is not new. It appeared in ancient times among the Greeks and Egyptians, for example, through their intellectual contributions. This idea also crystallized in the writings of philosophers, thinkers, and sociologists (Plato, Ibn Khaldun,

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Marx, etc.). The writings of (Rahma, 1983, p. 45) indicate that (Xenophon*) explained how the Spartans planned their education 2500 years ago to achieve their military, social, and economic goals. Also, (Plato*), one of the Greek philosophers, presented in his Republic a type of plan that serves the necessary needs for leadership and political purposes in Athens. China also drew up an educational system in the era of (Han Dina Sitszopiro) to meet its needs.

Educational planning based on scientific methods did not appear until the early twentieth century (1920) with the five-year plans adopted by the Soviet Union. After that, Western countries began to benefit from these comprehensive plans, which they began to employ in the economic, administrative, and educational fields. However, most Arab countries did not adopt the policy of planning and foresight until the sixties of the twentieth century. (Tinbergen, 1967, p. 65).

As for planning in the educational field, despite its modernity, there are historical roots that appeared in the literature of ancient philosophy and history of educational thought. The Greek philosopher described man as "a civil being by nature, meaning that he cannot live except in a network of social relations and organizations."

In this life, man is under examination, and examination requires preparation and planning. This planning and preparation must be good in order to achieve victory, success, and the desired goal. Although this is true of planning in general, educational planning is no less important than general planning. Man acquires experience and knowledge through learning, which is why researchers in various disciplines have been interested in educational planning and have provided different definitions for it. Some of these definitions include:

Educational planning is the continuous and regular process that includes social research methods, principles and methods of education, management sciences, economics and finance. Its aim is for students to obtain sufficient education with clear goals, according to Muhammad Saif al-Din Fahmi (Ramzi Ahmed Abdel-Hay, 2006, p. 36).

Omar al-Toumi al-Shaibani defines it as: The continuous, deliberate and organized scientific effort that aims to achieve specific educational goals within a specific period of time. It relies on appropriate scientific and technical methods, procedures and means to achieve the educational goals set for it. It also aims to predict learning needs and problems in the coming years, to prepare for them and find appropriate solutions for them within the available and expected possibilities. It also aims to control the future of education in a thoughtful way, to create the desired balance in its expansion, and to link this expansion with the goals and requirements of the comprehensive development of society. Finally, it aims to make the best use of the available and expected resources (Ramzi Ahmed Abdel-Hay, 2006, p. 37).

Regardless of the situation, educational planning is a necessity that must be given attention in order to draw the correct path that the educational process should follow in the present and in the future. Therefore, planning can generally be considered the most effective means of ensuring the success of the educational process in light of the changes that may occur in the future.

However, what many officials responsible for educational planning often overlook are the sudden crises that can occur without prior anticipation and for which there are no ways to deal

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with them in educational planning. This is either due to the routine implementation of the drawn plans or because education is considered a secondary matter that can be remedied after problems occur.

In fact, it is foolish to feel safe in a world that is developing at a terrifying and accelerating pace. This development creates major changes that can be exploited to develop education, but these changes can also be crises that may harm the educational process to the point of stopping it, as happened in the Corona crisis. During this crisis, the whole world was forced to close educational institutions and resort to distance learning using modern technologies.

However, countries that did not have the modern means to exploit them in distance learning rushed to find urgent solutions that can be described at best as patchwork solutions to maintain the minimum level of education. The Corona crisis was not the only one that led to the suspension of education. Many countries also suffer from natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, wars, and others, which require changing the natural pattern of education and entering a crisis mode.

The only difference is that the Corona crisis was a global one that affected the whole world at the same time, while other crises are regional crises that may occur in some areas and not affect others. Therefore, there is a need for anticipatory educational planning that finds future solutions for such expected or unexpected circumstances. This planning should be based on scientific and methodological mechanisms that can be used to confront events that require urgent solutions. .

3- The Concept of Crisis:

Linguistically, the word "crisis" is defined as a narrow path between two mountains, also known as a "maze." It can also mean hardship and drought.

In terms of terminology, here are some definitions from specialists:

Ahmed Ahmed Ibrahim defines it as a sudden and unexpected event that makes it difficult to deal with, hence the need to find ways and means to manage it in a way that minimizes its negative effects (Ahmed Ahmed Ibrahim, 2001, p. 27).

Fink defines it as a turning point in organized life towards a state of instability in which a decisive change occurs in the course of work towards the worse or the better, leading to desired or undesired results (Fink, 1986, p. 15).

We can say that a crisis is a state of instability that affects a situation that was previously following a routine pattern. It is an emergency and a surprise that requires unusual action from the officials responsible for the sector affected by the crisis, in order to strive to create balance and return the situation to stability. The results are generally negative at first, but they turn into positive changes if the crisis is managed well.

A crisis can be viewed from different perspectives, including social, economic, or political.

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Economically, a crisis is a disruption in the national or global economic system that leads to the failure to achieve pre-set goals. It requires additional efforts to overcome it (Mohamed Rashad Al-Hamlawi, 1995, p. 29).

If we look at the relationship between this concept and the educational process and how economic crises can affect education, we find that the link is strong and the relationship is almost direct. In general, underdeveloped societies that suffer from economic and multiple crises are still limited in their aspirations to providing basic needs for their citizens. They strive to provide the minimum acceptable level of basic services. Meanwhile, the developed world lives in a state of affluence that has led to a tremendous and accelerating technological development. The idea of learning science for the sake of science is no longer acceptable. Instead, learning science has become a means of using and employing it on a wide scale (Sobhi Hamdan Abu Jalal, 1995, p. 5).

This has widened the gap between the North and the South. Underdeveloped countries have entered a crisis caused by the need to catch up with the civilizational, economic, and technological development in developed countries. They also need to reduce the gap between the two worlds, despite the weak financial capabilities that guarantee this. This negatively affects the development of effective policies that correct the course and restore the balance between the state's financial and economic capabilities and the ability of educational institutions to improve the quality of education and raise it to higher levels.

Socially, a crisis is a disturbance that affects the social structure, whether at the level of customs and traditions or at the level of norms and social classes. This requires a change that restores balance and adopts a new social system. The impact of social crises on the educational process is perhaps more severe than that of economic crises. While the latter affects the material aspect, the former affects the human aspect in its ethical, psychological, and social dimensions.

Even if the necessary resources and sufficient financial means are available to make the educational process a success, the human elements that invest these means are the foundation. If society suffers from social crises such as family breakdown and the spread of harmful pests and ideas among its members, education will decline to lower levels. This requires intervention, awareness, and urgent and long-term plans to address the imbalances that afflict society. The school is the fertile soil from which we create a good society, by building curricula that work to reform the social structure and keep pace with the changes and developments that affect the collective consciousness of a society.

Politically, a crisis is the lack of immediate action to solve problems that affect the political system. This requires making decisions to confront the resulting effects, which sometimes requires government reforms and changes in the management of official institutions (Suhair Adel Attar, 2000, p. 34). This is reflected in the educational policy because it is part of the general policy of the state. Political crises may affect the decisions taken by previous administrations and the continuation of the plans adopted. If political crises continue and stability is absent, stability in the educational process will also be absent.

In general, a crisis can be viewed from the administrative side as a disruption that threatens the main assumptions of the system. Administrative crises can create administrative corruption,

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which allows bureaucracy to spread. This leads to the domination of one direction at the expense of others, and those who are not qualified to control education take control, which causes long-term disasters in the formation of the young generation.

It is worth noting that the term "crisis" may overlap with other terms of the same kind or that share some of its details, such as threats, disasters, problems, and shocks. However, there are still differences. Whatever the case may be, these terms carry a negative connotation and have no positive aspect. For example, a disaster is a destructive event that causes significant losses on all levels, both human and material. Disasters require state intervention and sometimes international cooperation to cover the losses.

A problem is the first nucleus of a crisis if it is not addressed. Therefore, it is a stage that precedes the crisis and is less severe. A shock is a sudden and intense feeling caused by an event. It is one of the symptoms of a crisis or one of its causes and may be a result of it (Mahmoud Rafei, Magda Gabriel, pp. 22-23).

4- Education in Crisis Situations:

The definition of education in emergencies focuses on providing appropriate learning opportunities for all ages in crisis situations. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child defines emergencies affecting education as all situations where the normal conditions of life, care, and education facilities for children are destroyed by natural or man-made disasters within a short period of time. This leads to the disruption of progress or the decision to grant, deny, or impede the right to education (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2008, para 2).

Crises in which education in emergencies is required include: conflicts, violence, forced displacement, disasters, and general emergencies resulting from international and non-international armed conflicts, including military occupation, post-conflict situations, epidemics, and all types of natural disasters (INEE, 2018).

UNESCO, as the leading UN agency in the field of education, plays an active role in promoting quality lifelong education for all, including children, youth, and adults. This is part of its efforts to address emergencies and achieve long-term recovery. UNESCO's work in this area is based on the Education 2030 Agenda, which aims to ensure that education systems are more resilient and responsive to the needs of conflict, social unrest, and natural hazards. It also ensures the continuity of education provision in emergencies and in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Even in difficult emergencies where communities lose everything, education remains a top priority for families. UNESCO strives to strengthen education systems in times of crisis to ensure that life-saving messages reach children and their families, protect children from attacks, abuse, and exploitation, promote peacebuilding, and provide physical and psychological security for children. Investing in education in times of crisis ensures resilience and social cohesion across communities. It is also a cornerstone of sustainable recovery (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO).

5- Educational Foresight Planning for Crises:

In general, foresight planning relies on a clear vision of the future based on the data that the planner has in the present. We do not mean planning based on guessing the future, because humans do not have the ability to know the future. Rather, we mean planning based on predicting the future by studying current data that may lead to specific outcomes in the future through an organized process.

For example, we say that dark gray clouds predict rain. It is natural for a person to go out in such weather wearing a coat and carrying an umbrella to protect himself from getting wet. This is from the point of view of foresight, as this prediction does not mean that the person will necessarily get wet, but not preparing for the matter leads to negative results. This is due to poor planning or not taking precautions, and the person may catch a cold.

Therefore, good preparation for any emergency can save us from many consequences that we may not be able to bear. The same is true for educational foresight planning. If general foresight planning is based on a sharp and expert vision that improves planning and prevents negative effects or reduces their severity, then educational foresight planning requires specialists who pay great importance to the data that the educational system has and build clear plans that can be implemented. These plans include the mechanisms and measures that must be adopted in the event of crises.

We can say that educational foresight planning is at three levels:

- **First level: Pre-crisis planning:** This is based on data that is mostly based on expectations, but it is important because pre-crisis planning gives us a preliminary paper that we can rely on when the crisis occurs to move to the second level. It answers the question of what should be done and what preparations we should be concerned with before entering the crisis. In education, we can give an example of what pedagogical tools we should have to face an expected crisis.

In the Corona crisis, this planning was not prepared, and there was no prior preparation to face the crisis despite its appearance in December 2019, and the closure decision in Algeria was in March 2020. Thus, four months were enough to plan what can be done to face the closure and prepare for it.

- **Second Level: Planning During the Crisis:** At this level, the damage to the educational system and its affiliated institutions is determined through field visits in the case of material losses or reports in other cases. After studying the available data, an emergency plan is drawn up to correct the situation and minimize losses as much as possible. This is in the case that this planning was not preceded by prior planning. If it was preceded by planning in the first level, then the matter at this stage is the urgent application of what was planned, with the situation being adapted to suit reality.

- **Third Level: Planning After the Crisis:**

At this level, the situation is corrected and a comprehensive plan is prepared to overcome the negative effects that have affected the system. The plan should benefit from the mistakes

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that led to the deterioration of the situation and try to save what can be saved and move the educational process towards the better. Planning at this stage is comprehensive, requiring reform while taking into account the effects caused by the crisis. This level has been adopted by most Arab countries, especially after the Corona crisis, as it became clear to them the need to develop comprehensive reform plans for the past and the future to build Arab capacities to face educational emergencies more effectively and establish more effective and sustainable mechanisms than simply responding partially with a limited local reaction logic.

Having a comprehensive, flexible, and effective preventive system remains more important than searching for treatment recipes. These recipes are limited to repairing damage and correcting malfunctions that may recur in emergency conditions. The system must respond to the nature of the geostrategic region and be based on basic principles (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, 2022, p. 6) which are :

- **The Principle of Preserving Survival for Sustainability:**

This principle is emphasized by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It is at the forefront of the document, as Arab countries are going through a difficult historical period in which they are struggling to survive first, and then seek to sustain their development areas. There is nothing more dangerous for a nation than the threat of war, conflict, depletion of resources, and the exacerbation of illiteracy and deprivation from education.

- **The Principle of the Continuity of the Right to Education:**

The right to quality education for all should not be neglected under any circumstances, even if they are emergencies in the form of disasters or crises. Rather, education should represent the real lifeline in the face of threats, and it should remain at the forefront of the efforts made to protect people's lives, provide them with relief, and empower them to continue and progress.

- **The Principle of Government Responsibility:**

Enabling everyone to continue learning is primarily the responsibility of governments. It is one of the most important sources of their legitimacy and one of the most important elements of their accountability. The lack of resources to provide educational opportunities in some cases of major disasters and crises does not exempt governments from this responsibility. Rather, their responsibility remains, even if it requires requesting assistance and coordination with friendly parties and supporting organizations. Regional cooperation between all Arab groups of states and sub-regional cooperation between neighboring countries is one of the most important permanent duties of governments to ensure the right to education for their citizens in emergencies and before they occur.

- **The Principle of Continuous Prevention and Preparedness:**

Planning for education in emergencies and crises is a permanent duty and not a temporary response to the occurrence of an emergency or the occurrence of a disaster. It is one of the

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pillars of strategic planning for education and upbringing in any society, similar to maintaining strategic reserves of energy, goods, and cash balances, and even more important than them.

Regardless of the circumstances, educational foresight planning must be based on legal frameworks that ensure its implementation and monitor the application of its provisions. After the multiple and different crises that Arab countries have generally faced, the Arab League decided in May 2022 through the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) to develop an Arab plan for education in emergencies and crises. The organization formed a team to prepare the plan, headed by Professor Dr. Mohamed Madbouli, and supervised and followed up by Professor Dr. Mohamed Al-Jamni, Director of the Information and Communication Department and Acting Director of the Department of Education at ALECSO. The team also included a committee of experts to review and formulate the plan from different Arab countries. The aim was to draw up the legislative and executive frameworks for the programs and projects included in the **plan (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, 2022, p. 1)**.

In general, the educational policy in Arab countries, and Algeria in particular, through the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and Scientific Research, strives to develop foresight plans, especially after the bitter experience that the world has gone through, which has forced governments to reconsider the educational foresight planning process and the need to give it the importance and position it deserves to ensure the continuity of the educational process in the face of crises and emergencies that may occur at any time.

Conclusion:

At the end of this research, we can conclude with the following important results:

- Educational policy is a branch of public policy. The educational and learning process cannot proceed without a clear policy adopted by the state to ensure the smooth running of the educational process.
- Educational planning is a necessary process for anticipating the future and drawing a smooth path for educational bodies to follow through clear methodological plans.
- Planning is not guesswork, but rather a process based on prediction based on the available data.
- Crises are a state of instability and imbalance in various fields.
- Crises can be viewed from different perspectives: economic, social, political, and administrative. Each of these perspectives has an impact on the other areas. A crisis starts in a specific area and then spreads to affect other aspects. This is because crises have the property of contagion and spread.
- Education is the sensitive nerve in the body of society, and any imbalance directly affects it.

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- International organizations and bodies strive to maintain at least the minimum level of education in emergencies, disasters, and crises, regardless of their size and spread.
- Foresight educational planning is based on three levels that should be focused on, benefiting from previous experiences and building on our expertise to overcome crises and prepare for what the future may hold.
- It is always necessary to set basic principles to guide us in developing foresight educational plans, the most important of which is to ensure the continuity of the educational process in all circumstances. This is the basis for overcoming difficult circumstances and the only way to spread awareness and eliminate or resist the effects of crises.

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