

The vision of the late Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in the field of education

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The pathway of giving, dedication and benefaction that the State of Kuwait has led with its prudent leaders and faithful men throughout its history is teaming with love, peace and humanity illuminating the meanings of loyalty, devotion and sacrifice to serve the country. The late Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah rest his soul, was not only a leading example of a Kuwaiti national character but also judicious in politics, sensible in culture, and an articulator of the vision of "new Kuwait" in the economy.

Sheikh Nasser passed away, at the age of 72, after a life full of struggle for goodness and giving the best in the various high positions that he held and the fields in which he worked to serve his country. He left grief and sadness in the hearts of the people of Kuwait, who loved him in all their congregation and affiliations, leaving behind him a legacy of sincerity, loyalty and dedication to serving Kuwait for future generations to learn from. Observers of national Kuwaiti affairs perceived that the late Sheikh Nasser has served his country in numerous positions including political, cultural and economic. That was rather not accidental, since he grew up in the monarch house that polished and refined his personality and earned him many of the values of the constitution from those whom he lived with them. He loved his country and granted it his life, time and effort. He was generous in his offering, honorable in his sacrifices, and renowned for his comprehensive development vision that began from the vision of his father, may Allah rest his soul, to rebuild a "new Kuwait" in all fields.

Of course, Sheikh Nasser, succeeded in becoming the subject of debate of economists in Kuwait and the Gulf region. Not surprising, he was assigned the supervision of the implementation of the mega development projects in Kuwait, such as the Northern Economic Zone, the Silk City, and the Kuwaiti Islands development that was proposed earlier by him within the vision of “Kuwait 2035”, which is supposed to serve as the building bricks of a comprehensive economic and commercial globalization and openness. Great attention was paid to his views when he spoke in a public symposium organized by the Kuwaiti Teachers Association on June 6, 1990, raising alarms on the voices that threaten national unity, stressing at the time significance of solidarity and mutual support in good and bad times as two pillars for the Kuwaiti people to get out of disasters and atrocities. He also warned, in more than one occasion, in his meetings with the media, in diwanias and in community forums, against relying on a single economic resource of income, stressing that oil depletion is inevitable and that Kuwait should achieve income diversification. The late Sheikh Nasser spared no effort to correct the path of the Kuwaiti national development, this was manifested in his historical footprint and good deeds full of dedication and faithfulness in serving Kuwait, in addition to his confident words, insightful views, courageous and firm decisions. which earned him the admiration of the people, and made him a pioneering national figure.

Sheikh Nasser, paid great attention to developing and strengthening education in Kuwait. He aimed to build a promising generation with cultural diversity and solid educational bases. The Kuwait 2035 Vision has launched a new start for achieving excellence and advancement in education development in its various levels, approaches and methods. He devoted most of his attention to all levels of education, including general, higher, vocational, as well as education for people with special needs.

The late Sheikh Nasser realized that the previous strategies and the comprehensive education reform program did not reflect an overall national Kuwaiti vision that accounts for dimensions of future developments. These programs fell short of characterizing the real causes of education weakness, challenges and problems and of intervening directly in its evaluation and reform. On top of the urgent priorities to be addressed in the sector such as: centralization of administration, noticeable inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the education system, poor quality educational outputs, and high operational costs. In addition, he realized at an early stage that achieving a remarkable developmental vision is linked to two main factors, firstly, achieving superior human development through education, training and capacity building, secondly, providing an enabling institutional environment conducive for economic growth.

Based on the previous principles, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision on education was based on Sheikh Sabah, may Allah rest his soul, vision on "Kuwait 2035," which emphasized that, "Kuwait's real wealth originates in its children, a wealth that is not on a par with any other type of wealth, they symbolize the aspiration of the future, build achievements and fulfill ambition of the country on their shoulders". This vision is focused on developing and building educational curricula according to pioneering educational approaches that are consistent with true Islamic teaching and contemporary requirements of the current era. In addition, his vision aims to prepare educators and develop their professional skills in line with the requirements of the twenty-first century, as well as the requirements of intellectual, knowledge, technological and industrial developments.

In the same context, the vision characterizes the current status of Kuwait and the challenges facing it guided by the best international practices in the field of education, given the late Sheikh Nasser's belief that human beings are the real creators of history and not money, and that the wealth of successful nations lies in successful building of a citizen who is able to shoulder his responsibilities towards his country and lead society from one situation to a better one for achieving progress in economic, social and cultural aspects.

The fingerprints of Sheikh Nasser, may Allah have mercy on him, were evident in the sources of the Kuwait vision which was based on the national development plan represented by the Kuwait Vision 2035. The vision acts as a document for "new Kuwait", incorporates urgent needs and comprehensive long-term ambitions and endeavors to achieve prosperous future and sustainable economy. The plan, in its end product, mobilizes all capabilities and directs them towards achieving the greatest developmental potentials in order to establish the new Kuwait. This would help deepen regional and global presence of the State of Kuwait in several vital areas.

Within the framework of a "new Kuwait", Sheikh Nasser's, may Allah have mercy on him, vision in the field of education centers around reforming the education system to better prepare young people to become competent and productive members of the national workforce. One of the issues that the vision focuses on is to diversify the educational tracks, including technical and business education at the secondary school level. There is no doubt that the professional technical educational track is one of the necessities for good education system at the present time as it allows for building a system that serves and promotes the real world

circumstances. Further, it addresses the problems of indoctrination paving the way for education to be associated with building a supreme society, establishing knowledge-based economy and matching Fourth Industrial Revolution requirements.

Sheikh Nasser realized that the rehabilitation of teachers training institutions is an essential pillar for laying the foundations of any development initiative. Normally, developing educational strategies at all levels is drawn from the primary national development plan that represents the road map to bring about more harmony. This path requires consolidating the mission of education in the country so that educational institutions endeavor to produce effective and productive educational and scientific capabilities. Comprehensive development will not be completed without referring to development of students 'attitudes towards scientific specialization, manual skills, business and industrial skills, in accordance with the country's development needs and requirements, as well the recent advancement in the curricula and the means of education. In this respect, it is of high demand to develop understanding and raise capabilities to produce a deep learning culture that allows students to make sound decisions, solve problems, and be creative in the field of improving the quality of life.

One of the important issues in the vision is to build and implement a system of "standardized national tests for measuring capabilities" to be a basic and necessary criterion for admission of Kuwaiti nationals in any government higher education institution in the State of Kuwait, or to obtain a scholarship inside or outside Kuwait through the Ministry of Higher Education. According to the vision, the teacher's license is one of the pillars of raising the teacher's competence. Education

professionalism is achieved through a license, which the teacher obtains through a test that measures his knowledge and skills. Given that the teacher's license helps in selection of the best from the applicants, and the continuation of those with competence in working in educational bodies in the profession. Preparing qualified teachers through the teacher's license system has become an important requirement as stipulated in the terms of the vision.

His vision, may Allah have mercy on him, for the development of education systems was characterized by many distinctive criteria, including comprehensiveness which indicates that education is accessible for all members of society, both males and females and constitutes different age levels from nursery to postgraduate studies. Moreover, the criterion of diversity in educational curricula covers different age groups, consistent Islamic belief and Arab culture, in accordance with the knowledge developments and the rising technological revolution. His vision also gives special importance to people with special needs, and provides them with appropriate support and facilitates various ways to provide education to them.

In a related context, the late Sheikh Nasser, was keen on increasing attention to developing education system in terms of curricula, teacher, student, school and learning. Particularly, curricula must keep pace with scientific and cultural developments. This is because the student must to be in permanent contact with scientific and knowledge advancements and progress. He also sought to restructure the education sector, modernize the regulation, control system and executive rules that govern the development of curricula and the enrolment of teachers in the education domain, organize the educational supervision process, and continuously raise the effectiveness of professional development and training.

In addition, he always stresses the need for education to be consistent with various interests of society, including the development of the national economy by transforming it from relying on a single source of income to a knowledge-based economy depending on high skilled national workers with high competence, creative and productive human capabilities.

The late Sheikh Nasser indicated, on more than one occasion, that the educational system in Kuwait is organized in a form of a central hierarchy that is highly bureaucratic, lacking flexibility, and absence of much needed independent and transparent units. Consequently, there is no clear separation between the institutions of policy and decision making, implementation, evaluation, monitoring and quality control. He pointed out that education in Kuwait has succeeded in achieving education for all, but the sector is still suffering from the presence of fundamental challenges that impede the achievement of learning goals and maximize its impact on the development process. These challenges include low quality educational process, high costs of public education, weak contribution of domestic and private sectors, weak governance of educational sector and weak role of education in achieving development and in providing societal needs.

Sheikh Nasser, may Allah have mercy on him, was keen throughout the public posts he held, especially his membership, and subsequently his presidency of the Supreme Council for Planning to translate the supreme vision of transforming Kuwait into a regional financial and commercial center in accordance with the strategic goals of the long-term development plan for 2035, in which several national objectives and ambitions are stated, the most important of which are:

- Restoring the leading role of the State of Kuwait as a regional financial and commercial center.
- Reviving the pivotal role of the Kuwaiti private sector in driving economic development.
- Reconstructing and renovating of the numerous important roles of the state, its agencies and institutions, in a way that provides a favorable and stimulating business environment for economic development.
- Providing institutional rules and conducive environment to ensure comprehensive and balanced human development aiming at consolidating community values, preserving its identity and building good citizenship.
- Strengthening and consolidating the democratic system based on respect for the constitution and commitment to it to ensure justice, equality, participation and freedoms.

The vision of the late Sheikh Nasser has responded to all the requirements of comprehensive reform, which is based on a set of professionally integrated policies aimed at improving the quality of education sector, strengthening its governance, encouraging investment of the indigenous and private sectors in profitable education sector, and fostering the linkages between public education system and the private training system to ensure that educational outcomes are in line with societal needs and labor market requirements.

To ensure serious and ambitious work to achieve this vision, the late Sheikh Nasser, Allah have mercy on him, proposed a model for structural reform for developing the educational system based on four foundations, each of which has a specific set

of policies consistent with the initiatives, programs and plans aiming at achieving Kuwait's vision and development strategies. The vision restricts the elements of reforming the structure of the educational system in Kuwait into the following four foundations:

The first foundation is improving the quality of education by moving from the system of indoctrination to a system of raising teaching skills and adopting modern education curricula that ensure the formation of superior human capital and provide technical, planning and administrative skills to succeed in achieving Kuwait as a regional center for finance and commerce and also to enhance modern scientific knowledge and establish highly productive Kuwaiti citizen, through developing all pillars of educational, including curricula, human and physical resources.

The second foundation is strengthening the governance of the education sector by improving its management styles and methods, reducing levels of centralization in decision-making, raising levels of independence in school management, enhancing transparency and observing international technical standards in school management, as well as reinforcing roles of evaluation, accreditation and external control, linking incentive system to performance level, introducing modern information systems in system administration, and training administrative staff in the field of education administration, especially in improving the output of Education Economics.

The third foundation is enhancing community partnership in the education sector by encouraging contribution of private, non-governmental sectors, charities in

investing in profitable education sector by facilitating private financing mechanisms and financing through Waqf, endowment, voluntary and joint funding.

The fourth foundation is promoting the linkages between public education system and private training system to ensure the alignment of education outputs with the labor market requirements through rearrangement of training markets in the private sector and directing them towards providing training of high quality and in priority areas by establishing a system of incentives for the private sector investment in this market.

Followers of the late Sheikh Nasser's life, would realizes that he devoted great attention to developing education in Kuwait and promoting it to match leading countries and best practices in this field. He deeply recognized that various efforts to reform education in Kuwait have not been fruitful and did not result in fundamental and comprehensive changes that would bring about the required qualitative advancements. He emphasized that all previous programs and strategies were focusing mainly on reforming some aspects of the educational system, and that they were not comprehensive and did not affect all components of the system. In addition, the national education strategies focused only on formulating a set of general goals and left the process of translating them into practical policies to the Ministry of Education, and the responsibility for implementing these reforms was mostly entrusted to internal technical committees in cooperation with local houses of expertise or with specialized international bodies. It did not have the ability to carry out the required deep and radical reforms, and thus it did not achieve the desired goals.

Within this framework, Sheikh Nasser, may Allah have mercy on him, commissioned the Arab Planning Institute in Kuwait to prepare the consultative study titled "A Model for Structural Reform of the Public Education System in the State of Kuwait" which was prepared under his guidance, supervision and continuous follow-up. The study reflected his ambitious vision for developing the educational process in the State of Kuwait. He supported the study with his innovative and creative ideas to enhance the role of the educational system in supporting comprehensive and sustainable development economically, socially, culturally and environmentally, and to draw the main features of a bright future in line with the vision of "New Kuwait" that our beloved country men and successive Kuwaiti generations are waiting for. The late Sheikh Nasser, has monitored and followed up the results and recommendations of this study with high interest encouraging the responsible official authorities to act in accordance with these recommendations.

What has been reviewed about the late Sheikh Nasser achievements, in this brief and succinct presentation, is very little and represents only extract from a scented life and achievements and did not touch the various development fields in which he worked in, including the field of reforming the path of education in Kuwait.

Certainly, it becomes clear that the late Sheikh Nasser's vision in the field of education is entirely concerned with the advancement of the Kuwaiti society through youth development. This is a very successful approach that ensures integration, incorporation and adequate response to the actual development needs and aspirations of "new Kuwait" vision that have to be professionally translated by all governmental and civil agencies into real world objectives that can

be measured and assessed. This requires observing the vision, reviewing its provisions and applying them in all fields.

Perhaps the most important issue on Sheikh Nasser's vision, may Allah have mercy on him, is the revision of the governance system of the education sector in Kuwait and its implications for developing relevant institutions, and amending their roles in a way that qualifies them to raise their performance and enhance competitiveness in the public education system. The developed countries experience in the field of education shows that one of the essential success factors in education system lies in strengthening the capacity of the concerned institutions in the sector and enabling them to be managed effectively, in a way that qualifies them to start out on correct bases in addressing existing imbalances and weaknesses and raising the performance of the sector as a whole.

In conclusion, we can only state a word of dedication to Sheikh Nasser, may Allah rest his soul, for his contributions to the service of Kuwait, which is still standing as witness to his commitment and devotion to this good country. This word is like a message that we send to our children, grandchildren, current and future generations, to learn about his achievements and his national legacy, which will remain eternally in the memory of our beloved Kuwait.