

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Trends in higher education under neoliberalism: Between traditional education and the culture of globalization**

**Younis Abu Al-Haija and Hatim Mahamid\***

Department of Education, Faculty of Management and Organization of Education Systems, The Open University and Sakhnin College, Israel.

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**This article aims to investigate the impact of neoliberalism on the trends of higher education, and on the changes in the approach of universities and colleges between traditional education and education in the service of globalization and neoliberalism. The research method was theoretical and qualitative that demonstrates the progressive impact of modern enlightenment ideas in higher education institutions and their spread in many countries in order to serve the interests of economic and technological competition, and control over the market's capabilities and requirements. Despite the increase in higher education institutions and the emergence of private colleges in different countries, which attract increasing numbers of students, there are several negative aspects in the approach of higher education, including changes in the structure of the academic institution and its scientific, cultural and administrative orientations. This liberal trend also directly affects the quality of education, in addition to the commodification of education. Moreover, contributions of the private sector have increased with the aim of providing a workforce that is professionally trained and capable of managing business, trade and the market, at the expense of the humanities, social sciences, arts and critical thinking. More importantly, the decline in the quality of education and its educational outcomes, in terms of academic efficiency and scientific research in the service of human and societal matters is evident. The goal of education has become centered on graduating generations that are not scientifically or intellectually qualified, far from their social concerns and democratic intellectual liberation.**

**Key words:** Neoliberalism, higher education, private institutions, traditional sciences, economics and globalization, education quality, brain drain.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The role of higher education institutions is evident in consolidating the values of society, spreading knowledge and its gains, and activating community participation. Higher education constitutes a pillar of development, not only in the economic and social fields, but also by preserving and strengthening the basic structures of democracy and justice through the capabilities of its graduates in the field of community participation, by influencing the quality and pattern of life in its

comprehensive sense, as well as directing the cultural behavior of individuals and society (Giroux, 2010: 234). With the emergence of neoliberalism, concepts began to change in the direction of depleting human values, diminishing human feelings in human affairs and squandering their space, and preventing their rise to intellectual liberation (Giroux, 2014; Raaper and Olssen, 2016: 152-153; Abu 'Awwad, 2014: 90). Neoliberalism has adopted an educational system that is limited to

providing technical expertise devoid of the human dimensions of social and philosophical thinking, criticism, creativity, solidarity, and social solidarity (Maisuria and Cole, 2017: 605).

The enlightenment movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and scholars such as Kant, Rousseau, Descartes, Hegel and others called for the crystallization of a set of liberal values that led to a state of implanting belief in the value of learning and the comprehensive role of education in society. Thus, contemporary liberal education contributed to the spread of many enlightening ideas, which gradually left their impact on modern higher education institutions that began to spread in many countries of the world, most likely with the support and influence of colonialism and its ideas to serve its economic interests and competition ('Abd al-Wahid, 2020). In accordance with this thought, the modern research university was designed on the basis of developing rational and critical thought through education, enlightening the larger societal audience, and teaching students to see their lives in it in a specific way, as individuals in a national society and culture (Giroux, 2010: 235).

Some researchers believe that the idea of establishing the university is one of the finest and most humane ideas of humanity. It is considered the noblest purpose, as it is the place of human communication and interaction in its finest form and its highest goals, and it is the place of mental interactions with knowledge, perception and scientific research, and where ideas are supposed to be expressed. Opinions and the free search for truth are expected to bring about change in an ever-evolving and innovative society (Boulton and Lucas, 2008: 3). In this context, the American thinker Henry Giroux claims that the university, by its very nature, should be the place where students learn democracy and develop a deep sense of social justice, acquire skills, and emotional and moral development in order to respect the rights of others. By acquiring these values, students learn how to participate actively in shaping their society on the basis of freedom and democracy (Giroux, 2014).

This study aims to clarify and identify gaps in the literature to underline the contribution to knowledge and significance of the study on the changes that have occurred in the process of higher education and its objectives in light of neoliberalism, its interactions and effect on higher education nowadays. From here, several questions arise that can be posed for research: What are the obstacles and challenges that stand in the way of the universities' orientations and the goals for which they were established? To what extent has neoliberalism influenced universities and higher education institutions? Did it achieve its goals? How can the perceptions that

higher education institutions have reached under the influence of accelerating events in the modern era? Is it possible to imagine the future of higher education in light of neoliberalism or unexpected developments?

## **THE EMERGENCE OF NEOLIBERALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE MODERN UNIVERSITY**

Political theories and social values inherited from the nineteenth century that emerged during the Enlightenment period did not prepare modern states and various societies to face the modern phenomena of rapid change and innovation such as globalization and the market economy. In this context, Henry Giroux and Suzanne Giroux pointed out that these values have become endangered in recent years, as a result of the accelerating trend of neoliberalism towards commercializing university education (Giroux and Giroux, 2012: 26). This has left its impact on the tyranny of material values over academic values, which would affect the freedom and independence of the university, undermine its reputation and position, and reduce confidence in its outputs, consequently weakening the university as a center of criticism and a vital source of civic and democratic education. Therefore, universities have become almost impotent, silent about teaching students how to think for themselves about democratic matters, how to think critically in order to maintain a society dominated by principles of values, freedom and democracy, and to deal with others with equality and parity, on a basis of mutual respect and free and honorable competition.

With the introduction of the global capitalist system and its economic crises during the seventies and eighties of the twentieth century, during the reigns of British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher (1979 to 1990) and US President Ronald Reagan (1981 to 1989), the system tended to adopt new liberal policies. These included reducing state intervention in the economy, privatizing the public sector, and launching a free market (Hill, 2010). The free market theory adopted by the neoconservatives did not stop at the borders of the economy, but rather left its impact on many policies, including education, as one of the most important components of the services sector. The state abandoned its responsibilities towards developing and supporting it, under the pretext of the inability to bear the expenses and burdens of the increasing demand for educational services.

As for higher education and universities, this has been reflected in the form of changes in the organizational structure from a vertical hierarchical structure to a horizontal one. Changes in the economic structure

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: hatim\_mahamid@hotmail.com.

also took place through a decline in government spending on higher education institutions, an increase in the number of students, and changes in organizational boundaries, as universities began to form partnerships with the private sector and civil society (Mustafa, 2014a: 16). The private sector has been given a greater role in the education sector, especially university education, under the pretext of reducing its cost to the state budget, and increasing its effectiveness and efficiency (Sivalingam, 2007).

## NEOLIBERALISM AND ITS APPROACH

The term neoliberalism symbolizes absolute capitalist policies that call for allowing market freedom to the maximum extent possible, and for reducing the public sector to a minimum. Cohen (2007) believes that neoliberalism is an ideological idea based on economic freedom, represented by fully supporting capitalism while limiting state interference with it on the one hand, and working to increase the role of the private sector in economic activities as much as possible, on the other hand.

In the second half of the twentieth century, a new trend appeared in America under the title of neoliberalism, as a result of the reform measures taken by US President Reagan, which led to radical changes in the political, social and economic life of America. 'Abd al-Wahid (2020) claims that a new socio-economic philosophy was established, which fully adopted the values and beliefs of the "market" in terms of reducing government subsidies, privatizing services, reducing public expenditures controlled by the government, and so on. As a result of this policy, Taylor believes that the American government led by Reagan and the British government led by Thatcher began to implement these policies on the public sector, especially education and health care, which transformed these areas into the private sector. Universities became as if they were their own separate system (Taylor, 2017: 112). Thus, since the late seventies, and with the onset of globalization shifts, changes began to appear in the economic structure and trends, and a decline began in the allocation of government expenditures to institutions of higher education. With the increase of the number of students and the organizational changes, universities began developing partnerships with the private sector and civil society, so that they could keep pace with these developments (Ferlie et al., 2008).

In this context, Olssen and Peters' study indicates the fundamental transformations in higher education systems after the rise of neoliberalism. These transformations, carried out by universities and higher education institutions, were necessary to justify their institutional presence. The study also confirmed the structural relationship between globalization, neoliberalism, and

capitalist education, and how these factors contributed to encouraging higher education institutions to move from the traditional approach, reshape academic culture, and transform it from focusing on the intellectual and philosophical aspect to issues of strategic planning, performance indicators, and quality assurance measures (Olssen and Peters, 2005).

With the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, maximization of interest in human capital, the role of knowledge as a basic means of progress and economic prosperity seemed to increase, in addition to the increasing trend towards privatization of education, and the application of market culture and the commercial outlook of university education. As a result, universities began to spread more quickly and in different and varied forms; basically, private universities and colleges, which are often no more than investment projects aimed at profit and prioritizing profit (Daily History, 2018; World Bank Report, 2003: 23-24). Holm-Nielsen expressed this phenomenon in a short but profound phrase, which is that universities are on their way to being closer to the World Trade Organization than to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Holm-Nielsen, 2018: 126).

Neoliberalism has begun to have an impact on educational institutions in general and on higher education in particular, as if its knowledge projects aim to re-shape society to become an economic entity that serves economic institutions and companies, and to qualify individuals for service and work as businessmen and advisors to work in them. Thus, the impact of this approach on higher education is to create a new generation of different social strata to take over the tasks as marketers and entrepreneurs in the economic fields. This change in the university's function and intellectual mission, to freely spread and consolidate science, has made universities lose their natural path and has distanced them from their original goals, namely to serve their students and members so that they are citizens of a country and have freedom of opinion and work. Thus, these institutions have become sites of attraction for students, encouraging them on paths that qualify them to be merely workers and agents in the service of companies and economic associations, whose sole goal is material profit and expansion rather than the values, science and ethics on which ideal societies are built (Raaper and Olssen, 2016: 149).

By examining the impact of neoliberalism on Arab and Islamic countries, researchers unanimously agree that its impact was severe and negative for several main factors, including the absence of democracy, the lack of freedom of free work, and material support to keep pace with modernity and liberalism in light of conservative societies. For example, Samir Shalaldeh studied neoliberalism in the Arab world, its origins, characteristics, and crisis factors as a result of its impact on Arab countries (Shalaldeh, 2008: 32-64). It was noticed that in Arab and

Islamic countries, which fell under Western influence and colonialism since the nineteenth century, the signs of neoliberalism began to enter them in the manner of Western and secular intellectual influence, as well as religious renewal led by prominent scholars (*'ulama*) such as Sheikh Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and his student Sheikh Muhammad Abdo. In Egypt and in other regions of the Middle East, new ideas emerged through intellectuals and poets such as Al-Tahtawi, Ahmad Amin, Qasim Amin, Taha Husein, and many others in the region. So, signs of calling for a transition to liberal acts and thoughts began with the establishment of modern universities in the late era of the Ottoman Empire, such as in Istanbul, Beirut, Cairo and others.

The researchers Gershoni and Jankowski highlighted the intellectual debate that arose in Egypt during the late Ottoman Empire, where three intellectual currents emerged: Islamism, Egyptian patriotism and Arab nationalism that competed for the new Egyptian identity at this stage of liberation (Gershoni and Jankowski, 1986). In this context, the researcher Wahid 'Abd al-Hamid elaborated on liberalism in Egypt, its inception, transformations, crisis and its negative effects on Egyptian society and universities ('Abd al-Hamid, 2014). It is not surprising to see some writers and poets in Egypt expressing their fear of the effects of this modernity and neoliberalism on morals, social and religious values. The poet Ahmad Shawqi, known by his title "Prince of Poets" (*amir al-shu'ara*), who lived through this stage of renewal from the beginning of the intellectual renaissance and its impact in Egypt, said: "*If people are injured in their morals, then leave them dead and wailing*", and "*Nations exist as long as their morals exist, but, if their morals are gone they are gone too*".

It is evident from the above that neoliberalism has become one of the important factors in changes and modernity at the beginning of the twenty-first century, as the world is experiencing, to a large extent, aspects of competition, and the increasing tendency to higher education for requirements of the knowledge economy. It has been noted that universities have moved to the phenomenon of wide mass absorption to cover the urgent needs and requirements of the globalization era and technological knowledge, without taking into account the main objectives of education for science, morals and values. From this standpoint, the researchers Haytham al-Tukhi and Nasreen Abd al-Ghani review the university's role in imparting sciences and knowledge, in addition to establishing the highest values and principles that preserve society's culture, values and its progress and prosperity. On the other hand, the researchers fear that, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the university institution has begun to face a fierce onslaught of neoliberalism and its hegemony by favoring the commercial and profitable character over the cultural and educational one. Therefore, the university is facing challenges that affect its values and its role in conveying

the message for which it was established. It is feared that universities would turn into profit and investment institutions that are concerned with economic gains instead of focusing on the acquisition of scientific, academic values and their quality (al-Tukhi and Abd al-Ghani, 2019).

## NEOLIBERAL TRENDS AND THEIR IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Neoliberalism calls for the removal of state and society authority from educational institutions, as a matter of democratization of education and individual freedom. On the surface, this principle may seem a noble moral principle, but when reviewing the aspects of the neoliberal education crisis, it has pushed educational institutions to fight a fierce competitive market battle, far from social and cultural support and guidance. This was done without taking into account or serving the needs and necessary interests of local communities, but rather accelerated competition to keep pace with the needs of the labor market and its desires for material profits. It can be said that capitalism has employed the principle of independence and privatization as a moral cover for the phenomenon of "commodification" of educational institutions and values. Through this principle, the neoliberal policy succeeded in legitimizing the practices of subordinating educational institutions to the laws of supply and demand in the market, and thus issues of developing social awareness and social justice are no longer the same priority for decision-makers in educational policies.

Many thinkers point to the educational institution's retreat from its social role, limiting its contribution to the development of awareness in general, thus transforming it from a public institution to a private and specific one to increase the wealth of certain and limited individuals. Henry Giroux emphasized the contradiction between the goal of the university in the ideal model as a place for thought, research studies and democratic dialogue, and between the view of liberal thought that the university is merely an institution to achieve profits and qualify the workforce to obey what the market system requires. In other words, neoliberalism wants to employ education to serve capital through vocational training of university students, away from gaining culture, issues of justice and democracy, and human and social relations. Consequently, the neoliberal endeavors aim to liquidate public education and to empty university education of sciences and humanities, especially sciences of philosophy (Giroux, 2014). Thus, capitalist ideology was able to justify what is known as the privatization of the educational institution instead of generalizing it. In other words, the capitalist ideology imposed itself on educational institutions by moving towards serving the global labor market. Consequently, the aims of education

and culture have been restricted to their goals and pretexts, directed at forming human resources capable of working, producing and meeting the needs of the labor market and the technological innovations required by it.

Neoliberalism has directly contributed to the acceptance of capitalist ideology by educational systems, even in countries outside the scope of their originators, and has even given it the moral cover that makes it both an individual and a social demand. The report of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) concluded that there has been great importance of universities and public research organizations in the past few years in situations related to political efforts. It aims to develop, improve and employ the results of scientific research in universities in commercial development to serve the labor market, because of its awareness of the effective role of politics in influencing theoretical scientific research in technological development. This WIPO report integrates several graphs showing and comparing developments and changes in technological advances in several countries, with resources devoted to research and innovation. Thus, governments and the state's public policy sometimes encourage the establishment of scientific institutions and laboratories and give them the financial cover and grants for innovation and scientific research to serve the production of many industrial and technological products (WIPO, 2015: 14, 134).

To confirm these trends, studies and reports of international organizations and companies indicate their findings in higher educational institutions. In June 2020, QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) published its report ranking the world's top educational institutions in terms of research quality, education and reputation of the academic institution. The report confirms the goals of neoliberalism and its policy in America and Britain in employing and privatizing universities to serve economic competition and technological developments. Ben Sauter, the research director, says that recently, other universities in the world have begun to show signs of changes in the direction of this approach, such as countries in Asia, for example (QS, 2020).

On the domestic level in Israel, for example, Ben Sauter adds that with regard to Israeli universities, they are distinguished by more knowledge production, and in order to improve their position among international universities, they must increase the capacity of education and its integration with industry in order to improve employers' recognition (QS, 2020). When examining the conditions of universities and higher institutions in Israel, it is possible to notice that the results of these global reports are consistent with the local research results and clarify many of the phenomena of neoliberalism and its impact in this field. According to the report of the Shoshan Institute (Ben David, 2019), many of those educated in Israel emigrate abroad to work in universities and higher education institutions there, in order to suit their specialization subjects, in addition to better wages. Dan

Ben David comments on this phenomenon, saying: "It is regrettable that the industry in Israel and the government that supports it did not understand that the development of opportunities was more realistic for people in these fields". In the United States, for example, academics from Israel top the list of foreign teaching staff among other foreign lecturers in American universities (Ben, 2019; Mustafa, 2014 a: 157-176).

As the website of the Israeli Foreign Ministry shows, higher education in Israel plays an important role in the economic and social development of the state. Thus, the Technion Institute for Applied Engineering (established in Haifa in 1924, that is, before the establishment of the State of Israel) equips architects and engineers in several fields. Higher education institutions in Israel operate under the supervision of the Council of Higher Education (CHE), headed by the Minister of Education, to find solutions in matters of higher education, grant permits to educational institutions, approve academic degrees, and advise the government on developing and financing higher education and scientific research. This council includes in its membership two persons from the business and industry sectors, in addition to four senior academics in various fields. Higher education institutions are financed by public funds (70%), tuition fees (20%), and the rest (10%) by private sources (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 12/30/2010).

Despite these mixed reports, the exodus of educated people and minds from Israel to Western countries is increasing. To counter the phenomenon of brain drain and departing intellectuals, the CHE in Israel searched for causes and solutions to these troubling developments. The CHE has noted that during the last few years there has been a decrease of between 20 and 25% in the number of students studying in the fields of human sciences in Israeli universities, despite the general increase in the number of students in higher education. The CHE also believes that, in light of technological changes, educational institutions in Israel must make the required compromises and adapt to new developments and changing conditions in order to adjust to the labor market (Volansky, 2012: 21-30). Therefore, the CHE proposes to break down barriers and make changes in the traditional divisions of education departments in universities; namely, to dismantle departments and create multidisciplinary study paths that would provide its graduates with various tools. For example, the council suggested that students in the fields of high technology, exact sciences, economics and business administration be able to combine philosophy, literature, art, history, cultural studies and more in their undergraduate studies (Ben David, 2019). Through the lens of these recommendations, the establishment of the "Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya" (IDC) as a higher education institution in Israel could be meeting these requirements and orientations. This center was established in 1994 as a private institution, as a non-profit

organization, with the aim of working to change the academic agenda in Israel, to include among its specializations multiple topics, such as law, organizational behavior and development, trade and business administration, governance and politics, strategic sciences, computing sciences and communications, economics and financial economics, psychology and other research centers (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Oct. 2020; Zerachovitz, 21 Mar. 2018).

The World Bank Report (2003: 23-24) indicated the growth of the private education sector, and the remarkable increase that occurred in the number of students who enrolled in higher education, in relation to the establishment of many private colleges and universities in many countries such as China, Brazil, Poland, Israel and others. This left an impact on the trends of higher education and the great competition between these growing colleges and universities over the requirements and policies of neoliberalism. Volansky and other researchers highlighted the negative impact left by the branches of foreign universities in Israel (numbered six until the 1990s), which sparked a campaign of demands and work to set limits, controls and licensing of these institutions and their work methods by the CHE in 1998 (Volansky, 2005: 186-223; Buzaglo, 2007: 7). The research clearly shows, with the inclusion of data, numbers and graphs in its review, the increase in the number of academic colleges in Israel and their major role in higher education, which left its impact on the decline of the dominance of universities in the field of higher education. This development in colleges, including private colleges, in terms of numbers and of their academic, professional and educational goals, has increased the number of students at the expense of the quality of higher education in universities, which has resulted in a sharp conflict between colleges and universities in Israel in recent years (Mustafa, 2014a: 171-173; Mustafa, 2014b: Volansky, 2005: 20-31).

Thus, many countries generally began to strengthen technical education and vocational education by increasing the number of institutes and colleges that specialize in these fields and doubling the number of their students, whereas universities are required to adapt their educational system and shift from focusing on higher academic education to basic and vocational education to produce and qualify inexpensive labor force with low and medium qualifications to meet the needs of economic activities. This comes at the expense of developing social and human sciences and specializations that deal with the issues and concerns of society. This is what Mustafa asserts in his research on the Israeli academic institutions: "Universities have begun to understand that the economic and social context in Israel has changed, and that it is in light of the new transformations in the neoliberal economic and academic policies" (Mustafa, 2014b: 25-30). He believes that there has been a

convergence of market laws with a decline in government spending on academic institutions, in addition to the decline of human sciences in Israeli universities, as mentioned previously, between market laws and local national need (Mustafa, 2014a: 91-149).

As for the situation in the Arab countries and others of the third world, it appears more difficult, in terms of working conditions in these countries, as well as in terms of the lack of specializations available to university graduates. In an interview with Dr. Abd al-Salam Noir (Noir, 2009), he enumerates many reasons that drive Arab minds and university graduates to emigrate, including the lack of suitable specializations for those graduates. In addition, the neglect of the state and its institutions by not providing centers equipped for scientific research to help them in scientific and technological activity is another factor for migration, and more importantly, the neglect of the private sector of these graduates and their specializations. Therefore, these reasons invite young professionals to search for a place to work and to absorb them in their fields of specialization in Western countries.

Noir summarizes by making proposals to solve the problem of emigration of educated Arab youths abroad and to urge them to stay in their countries to work on developing and benefiting their societies and countries. Among these proposals are activating the participation of the private sector in financing scientific activities and designing strategies for developing scientific research institutions, encouraging them to serve society in all its sectors while supporting them financially and providing necessary and supportive grants, and most importantly, improving communication between the scientific research sector and industrial establishments. The basic proposals adopted by Dr. Noir are similar and compatible with the Western policies that it first followed in this field, such as activating the relationship between universities and research centers and the private sector, in order to solve the technological issues that suit these graduates, while facilitating communication between them and the industrial facilities to benefit from their work and programs. Noir also sees the importance of the independence of universities and research institutions in Arab countries and their exclusion from government influence, while giving them the freedom to formulate their policies and programs away from political interference and tensions (Noir, 2009).

The same applies to Palestinian society in the areas of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where the Palestinians were able and succeeded in establishing institutions of higher education despite being under the influence of the Israeli occupation for decades. The researcher Ibrahim Abu Lughod of Palestinian origin and American diaspora and academic upbringing, who has settled since 1992 at Birzeit University and worked there, indicates that Palestinian higher education institutions were established in the West Bank and the

Gaza Strip at the beginning of the seventies through mass groups and organizations that arose under the exceptional circumstances of the Israeli occupation. Abu Lughod points out that the aim of establishing these institutions was to develop and support the progress of Palestinian society, refine the society's national identity, and perhaps work to unify its various groups. In addition, Abu Lughod believes that Palestinian institutions of higher education were viewed and accepted as a means of progress and social mobility in Palestinian society (Abu-Lughod, 2000). Moreover, the researcher Taraki says that some of the students of these institutions were able to reach leadership positions in Palestinian society and political organizations. Accordingly, these institutions were a fertile ground for the formation, crystallization and development of national movements in Palestinian society (Taraki, 1999).

However, later on, Palestinian universities and institutions of higher education adopted different approaches from those mentioned above. Consequently, Nidaa' Abu 'Awwad believes that neoliberal policies have extended their influence to many Palestinian institutions of higher education as a result of Western influence and occupation. Therefore, Palestinian higher education institutions have adopted policies that contribute to increasing income on the one hand, and reducing expenditures on the other, and this is what could lead to the transformation of educational services in universities and turn them into commercial goods that lose their academic, cultural and intellectual goals (Abu 'Awwad, 2014: 90).

Giroux believes that the adoption of neoliberalism in education has had a negative impact on universities and their values in general. The concepts of neoliberalism have affected the emergence of a new model of administrative staff at the universities, which adopted a style of corporate management, its structure, values and its approach in terms of the concept of the university as a profitable institution that controls the management of financial issues and other academic policies. Thus, the university appears to be a profit-making organization that expresses the values of neoliberalism (Giroux, 2014). Therefore, according to Rapper and Olssen's conclusions, this has resulted in higher education being subject to market standards in terms of evaluations and teaching staff accountability in light of these standards (Raaper and Olssen, 2016: 150-151).

As the researchers in this field point out, it turns out that following a period in which universities enjoyed their independence and protected the principles of democracy and values, they were required to give up this independence under neoliberalism, which led to the weakening of the authority of semi-independent universities in the face of the requirements of capitalist forces. That is, the academic institution has become required to abandon its academic and societal role in the interest of the market and its values in terms of profit and

financial gains, and not to serve the scientific and cultural values and their gains (Giroux, 2007; Giroux, 2015a: 188-189; Vicars, 2019: 84; Raaper and Olssen, 2016: 152-153).

Nidaa' Abu 'Awwad concludes that neoliberal policies have led to profound negative effects in the education process, as they emptied higher education of its developmental content and its creative and critical cognitive content. The education system and curriculum became saturated with neoliberal ideas that are based on the value of profit, and the values of selfishness, competition and individualism (Abu 'Awwad, 2014: 90). At the same time, universities began to make serious changes in the nature and quality of educational courses, and have abandoned those that offered students a wider opportunity to deepen their human and intellectual knowledge, and to develop their critical capacity for theories and global intellectual trends.

On the topic of higher education in many countries of the world, studies have dealt with indicating that universities were undergoing restructuring and building (McLendon, 2003; Torres and Schugurensky, 2002). These profound changes are not limited only to the methods of managing the funding of universities, but also affect the ruling approach to academic and non-academic activities in them. The reason for that is the global context and the unified discourse of knowledge promoted at the global level. Torres and Schugurensky add that the changes that universities are going through are largely due to a conscious effort by specific interest groups to align universities with global capitalism. For example, many countries have reduced government support for higher education, which pushed universities to increase their dependence on private funding, and even to compete with each other for funding and attracting students to them (Torres and Schugurensky, 2002: 445-447).

On the other hand, al-Tukhi and 'Abd al-Ghani (2019), based on Western research, assert that neoliberal policies are launching a focused campaign in the name of development against the principles of academic freedom, and are dismantling the university's ideals as a fortress of free and independent ideas. Neoliberalism works to reduce funding for universities and diminish their social role. It also works to employ scientific research for the purposes of material profit and not to enrich and impart knowledge or to serve humanity and its higher principles (Giroux, 2015 b; Raaper and Olssen, 2016; Ergül and Coşar, 2017). This has reduced academic freedom and has harmed the academic profession at the university and its endeavors in high scientific research for the sake of science and its goals, in return for conducting research supported and funded for purposes and policies designed for profits and market trade. As a result, many conflicts arose about the goals and objectives of academic work, which in turn harmed the educational atmosphere in institutions of higher education, which adopted the

character of self-employment and commercial companies to serve neoliberalism (Maisuria and Cole, 2017; Bottrell and Manathunga, 2019).

In their research on the future of higher education, Izak and others also point out that neoliberalism has reduced the important and fundamental university values of freedom, academic independence, and its social responsibilities, which led to a departure from the university standards and values for which it was established. The main consequence of this effect is the reduction of the university's social role, independence and academic freedom, with academic job insecurity (Izak et al., 2017). Giroux further describes the university's situation in these circumstances as if its curricula are similar to a fast-food menu, while reducing the value of the curricula that aim to instill and impart human values. Thus, it is possible to control the reduction of the number of faculty members according to the requirements of market conditions, which leads to their transformation into a workforce, while creating conditions for job security loss (Giroux, 2019, 2014).

### **THE IMPACT OF NEOLIBERALISM ON THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND EFFICIENCY OF GRADUATES**

Cheng believes that what distinguishes the professional competence of the academic staff is the quality in higher education, which indicates the extent of growth and development of motivation and excellence in education in professional ways (Cheng, 2017: 2). In other words, we can say that the quality of higher education is closely related to the professionalism and efficiency of the academic staff and its reflection on the academic level of graduates. Therefore, many institutions and organizations have devised criteria to measure the efficiency of universities and the quality of higher education in them, and to classify and rank them globally according to academic levels in the scientific or literary fields. Through these evaluations and ratings, higher institutions learn about their position and the quality of their performance, as well as deficiencies, and work to fix them for the better. In this context, an important question should be raised: Did the neoliberal policies towards higher education contribute to achieving a high degree of academic and professional quality and competence? Or, did neoliberalism lead to the erosion, loss, or dissolution of that quality?

Numerous researchers indicate that the university under the influence of neoliberalism views the term 'quality of higher education' as being related to the neoliberal ideology that sees higher education as contributing to the development of industrial societies and the development of their financial outputs, and that the existing relationship between the student and the academic institution has become defined by economic concepts (Saunders, 2010, 2011; Clayson and Haley,

2005; Titus, 2008; Sharrock, 2000; Lusk and Fearful, 2015; Giroux, 2005; Saunders and Ramirez, 2016). Therefore, it can be said that the term 'quality of higher education' from the perspective of the neoliberal approach is the provision and equipping of students with training and vocational skills that enable them to pursue a future career, and that would contribute to the development and strengthening of the state's financial resources. Consequently, academic and professional quality and competence from the neoliberal university perspective is represented in education that is limited to training in occupations that serve the capitalist approach. This is reflected in the quality of the material output, as well as the educational outcome, and indicates the close relationship between the quality of higher education from a neoliberal university perspective and the economic orientation of higher education institutions, which are viewed as a commodity according to the logic of the market, by transforming them into an economic institution (Cheng, 2017: 6).

In this context, Cheng asserts that this approach reflects a negative view of the concept of quality and ignores the reality and essence of university education as an individual activity, and that the student's commitment to education is no less important than the contribution of both the academic staff and the university (Cheng, 2017: 8). It should also be noted that the impact of the neoliberal trend on institutions of higher education has contributed to its privatization and commodification through the wide spread of universities and private colleges (Torres and Schugurensky, 2002: 445-447; Daily History, 2018). According to the findings of Al-Batmeh (2016), the commodification of education has led to a remarkable increase in the number of students who enrolled in higher education, but at the same time, the spread of universities and private colleges had a negative impact on the quality of education. Therefore, private universities and colleges have come to be seen as merely institutions for obtaining university qualifications that are bought and sold. It would seem that students with low academic levels (that is, weak achievements in pre-university degrees or in entrance and admission exams for higher education), who are not accepted by public universities, are enrolled in them. Rajab (2000) also confirmed that these students join private institutions of higher education, including universities or colleges, after paying the required fees, and not according to the admission requirements for scientific and academic standards, and this in turn affects the efficiency of these institutions' graduates.

Studies confirm that the proliferation of these private institutions of higher education has affected their weak academic levels, because they are too lenient in the process of accepting students for education, due to the absence of strict control over these institutions in terms of their commitment to the required academic standards (Sahab et al., 2015). Moreover, it has been indicated that



this type of profit-seeking universities is classified within "non-elite" universities, in which the terms of enrollment are easy, and the quality of education is low, as they seek to absorb large numbers of students for material income, more than their interest in working and adhering to academic standards (Zaytun, 2013). 'Abd al-Karim also emphasized that accommodating large numbers of students and increasing the overcrowding rate in these institutions affects the quality of education in them, which has a negative impact on education in general ('Abd al-Karim, 2013: 39).

Under neoliberalism, higher education came to be viewed and regulated primarily through an economic lens. Today, universities themselves have become commercial institutions competing to supply knowledge in global markets. This has been affirmed by Paul Ramsden, Chief Executive of Higher Education in Britain; namely, that this competition has contributed to the establishment of university branches for many European or American universities in Asia and elsewhere, such as China, India and others. These institutions have contracted with commercial institutions that recruit students for financial gain, which has led to lower levels of education and its quality in general, as is the case with the quality of educational programs offered to students (Ramsden, 2008).

Education is not seen or promoted by its beneficiaries, that is, students, as customers or users, or even from the point of view of the educational staff as a good thing in itself, nor as a goal to create critical citizens in their communities and societies as a whole, thus losing its original and essential value and quality. Slaughter confirmed that education available to students has become increasingly professional, as it has become a center for training and production, relying on information more than its focus on developing high intellectual skills (Slaughter, 1993, 252). This claim was supported by Kandiko, who claimed that the interest of universities and higher education institutions in the era of neoliberalism focuses on scientific research in order to produce knowledge instead of focusing on developing the competence of their graduates. This leads to erosion in the quality of higher education, and thus to a decline in students' academic standards (Kandiko, 2010: 163).

In addition, some researchers point out that universities in the era of neoliberalism have increased their interaction with both the public and industry towards building a cooperative partnership in order to strengthen and enhance their contribution to societal and economic outcomes and results (Saltmarsh, 2016; Cheng, 2017: 13). This has negatively affected the understanding and awareness of the university and its academic staff of the importance of education, their intellectual commitment to education, and their willingness to motivate students to learn and study academically. Consequently, it also affected their professional competence towards their students, and their own self-fulfillment (Dipardo and

Potter, 2003; Al-Rubaish et al., 2011: 4). Thus, under the influence of neoliberalism, higher education has become directed towards education for the sake of work, without rational thought, dialogue and critical learning, which has had a severe impact on the university's retreat from its social and intellectual role, and its contribution to the development of awareness and general culture and stimulating students' thought. Consequently, students are unable to practice effective participation, or qualified to reformulate their society on the basis of freedom and democracy, and intellectually incapable of serving the public good. Moreover, the student has become a consumer under the neoliberalism of the university, reducing his standing while keeping him in a state of intellectual stagnation and an absence of awareness of what social reality requires. Consequently, the student's level and scientific competence, and his ability to effect social change, remained marginal (Brienza, 2016: 105-107).

In light of these changes in the university's function, it can be said that higher education under the neoliberalism focuses more specifically on the profession, work and the market, and preparing the manpower for it. At the same time, the development of the student's intellectual capacity has not received sufficient and necessary attention, but rather has suffered from neglect, marginalization, frustration, and even suppression. Likewise, it can be observed that this type of neoliberal university has strengthened its economic goals, and at the same time its educational services have turned into a mere commercial commodity. Its academic and cultural goals are absent, which has restricted its ability to realize its liberal and critical potential, with the decline in the quality of education and academic competencies in general. (Saunders, 2010: 66).

## CONCLUSIONS

The effects of neoliberalism were reflected in the relationship between higher education institutions and state politics. Market economics and neoliberal thinking have dominated the political orientations around the world and have left strong impact on the institutional structure and academic trends to serve neoliberalism. Global academic competition pushed for the creation of structural changes in the academic institution and its academic and administrative orientations. Neoliberal policies directly affected the quality of education, in addition to the commodification of education through the proliferation of private higher education institutions for filling the requirements of the market, rather than moral, ethical or liberal aspects. As a result, the quality of education declined, whether in terms of educational outcomes, or in terms of academic competence and scientific research.

Private sectors' contributions have increased in support

of higher education and the pursuit of privatization through investment, aiming of acquiring professionally trained manpower for running businesses, at the expense of subjects of humanities and human culture. The increase in the number of students enrolled in higher education indicates the economic orientation of these institutions to serve the market and profits. This trend has had a double effect in poor or traditional countries: Firstly, the migration of minds and graduates to developed countries in search of money and profit; secondly, the increase in establishing professional and private academic colleges or branches of Western universities in underdeveloped countries. But the troubling question remains: Are there possible solutions to save the conditions of universities and their graduates, and to return them to the natural scientific paths?

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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