

Repercussions of the Continuous Instability for the Quality of Education in the State of Libya: An Investigational Study within the Faculty of Education, University of Benghazi (UoB)

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Abstract Many confirmed negative signs and facts point to the general deterioration of the quality of Libya's entire education system, with serious consequences for the future of the state of Libya. This deterioration is due to countless factors, such as ongoing political and militant conflicts, semi-paralyzed educational administrations, a lack of continuing professional development (CPD), and insufficient awareness within the Ministry of Education (MoE) of the state of the education system. Other contributing factors are the inefficient educational legislations from the parliament and the poor desire of policy makers to empower profound research, teamwork, reform ideas, or any suggested transformational strategies. Furthermore, the Centralized Management System (CMS) has detrimental effects, along with official reports on corruption issues in the MoE. Parallel to these causes, other circumstances impact the quality of the input and output of the Libyan education system (LES), such as the prevailing culture, beliefs, and attitudes on how education should be, whose most significant features are memorization and indoctrination. Such challenges have produced unqualified leadership and a huge number of decision makers who have harmed the LES instead of supporting it. Moreover, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and various suspensions (strikes/wars) of basic, secondary, and even vocational university education, several classes were postponed, canceled, or disrupted, which led to a great loss of knowledge among both teachers and learners. Correspondingly, Elabbar's ([1], p. 121; [2], p. 19) studies have raised the warning indications to the highest level for the government, parliament, and all education authorities in the state of Libya, stating that the whole LES "may collapse very soon" if they do not adopt serious steps and fundamental measures "before it is too late." Thus, this research study attempts to investigate such impacts on the quality of the education process and knowledge management (QEPKM) among students, teaching assistants, lecturers, and administrators at the Faculty of Education, University of Benghazi (UoB), with a special focus on the English Department. To closely classify the scale of impacts on the LES, this study uses four qualitative tools to collect and analyze data gathered from a wide range of participants: official documents, authentic academic reports, and experimental face-to-face interviews. The study recommends adding bridge programs for present and new students at the Faculty of Education, besides returning to the annual system (for at least 8 years) instead of the existing semester system, in addition to endorsing Elabbar's [2] proposed seven years of connected gradual reform phases for the reform strategy of the entire LES; otherwise, if all leading authorities do not seriously act toward reform, the whole education system in Libya will face major failings.

Keywords: *effects of the continuing difficulties on the QEPKM, fieldwork at the English Department, Faculty of Education, UoB, bridge program to compensate for the loss of knowledge among learners, return the Faculty of Education to the annual system and invest in enthusiastic members, implement previously suggested gradual reform plans, ensure that the education authorities act before the collapse of the entire LES*

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1. Opening and Problem Statement

As mentioned above, this research aims to measure the repercussions of the ongoing instability in the input and output of the education quality and process in the state of Libya, with a particular focus on the Faculty of Education, University of Benghazi. This research is the result of a long-term investigation of the entire education system (especially EFL education), including its most faced changes and difficulties and even evaluating the most proposed solutions. Likewise, I conducted several field research studies, which recommended a comprehensive gradual reform strategy while encouraging all stakeholders to pay serious attention to the poor status of the Libyan education system (LES) and its quality. This research, moreover, has the underlying intention to explore the impacts of such instabilities on the Faculty of Education, University of Benghazi.

The Faculty of Education, University of Benghazi, and some of its departments have already adopted many positive and rapid steps aimed at solving many of the educational and logistical obstacles and bottlenecks facing the faculty. Nevertheless, it daily faces several challenges that are directly or indirectly related to the repercussions and reflections of the above-mentioned difficulties and others, such as the implications of the multiple security, economic, and political crises; the poor teaching aids and possibilities; and the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for basic, secondary, and even university education in the city of Benghazi.

Among these implications, many classes in both school and university systems were postponed or canceled, along with some surprising educational changes in the ministry's leadership decrees, plans, and even curricula, such as shifting the academic division system (from specialization to general), in addition to the failure of some school and education zones (counties) in the surveillance of the general certificate exams. This failure has caused many students to receive extremely high marks in high school exams and to pass the university admission conditions either by memorization or by a qualifying percentage without acquiring the real knowledge that qualifies them to join universities. Furthermore, Elabbar ([1], p. 17) showed that the repercussions of the electricity and fuel crises, the high cost of living, the prolonged lack of cash, and other severe living problems that the country and the city of Benghazi in particular have been through still have a great negative impact on the psychological well-being and mood of students and the extent of their scientific and absorptive readiness. Also, the security and political instability in the country and the repercussions of such instabilities have caused many staff members in schools and universities to abandon scientific research and participate in professional development programs, vocational training, academic guidance, and other educational programs that support their carrier. What further deepened the educational crises in the city despite individual efforts and curative reform initiatives, whether from governmental or from private institutions, is the transformation of the educational culture prevailing in schools and even in universities to a direct indoctrination

system for the teachers and a conservative system for the students.

As a result, the values of understanding, constructive interaction, scientific research, and group education have been neglected, and in some cases, it has reached (especially during the years 2013-2022) the point of preventing some faculty members from completing many basic courses in schools or universities. This situation and its negative repercussions have produced a tangible reality that cannot be overlooked in the quality of the educational process facing the entire education system and that of the University of Benghazi and the Faculty of Education in particular.

2. Research Path and Questions

This investigational study seeks to carefully measure the instability's impacts on the quality of the Libyan education system (LES) in general and that of the Faculty of Education, University of Benghazi, in particular. Also, it aims to uncover in detail the difficulties facing students, teaching assistants (TAs), educators, employees, and administrators of the Faculty of Education in several directions as a result of the ongoing difficulties facing the entire education system in the country. The following research questions and associated aspects are addressed:

- 1) What is the extent of the consequences of the ongoing challenges for the quality of education and knowledge production within the Libyan education system in general and the Faculty of Education, University of Benghazi, in particular?
- 2) What are the scientific, human, and logistical foundations and pillars that we can use to build a scheme to support the Faculty of Education in solving its problems? Or, given the specific conditions at the Faculty of Education and its current educational status, societal role, direct relationship with the education sector, and bottlenecks, do we really need to prepare an integrated, atypical system (i.e., unconventional) that effectively deals with the real requirements and bottlenecks of the educational process in the country, as well as addressing the dynamism of the fundamental problems faced by the educational system in the city and the entire state of Libya?
- 3) Are we able from a legal, bureaucratic, and cultural perspective to adopt atypical foundational principles? If we assume that we can, are we then able from the outline of a practical scientific mechanism that contributes to defining a general strategy from which a vision, a mission, and long-term foundational and progress goals emerge? Can such a scheme produce plans and programs that address the needs of the future labor market and, prior to that, pave the way for the adoption of educational topics and plans? Can an interactive methodology (i.e., foundations of the study materials) be formulated that leads to a real push toward the restoration of the educational system prevailing in the faculty, in parallel with the study of legal and bureaucratic obstacles that may face these ideas in their entirety?

3. Brief Review of the Literature

3.1. Quality of Education

MöDI [3] stated that "Quality has become the concern of educational policymakers around the world as the heart of education. Lack of quality means basic educational needs go unsatisfied. This would create inability in learners' lives and compromise their overall experience of living socially, culturally, and economically" (p. 5). UNESCO (2004; cited by Barret, 2006, p. 60) added that, since quality education is attributed to teachers, there are five crucial sections of interventions to teacher quality, relating to teachers as contributors to quality education. These interventions are (1) finding the right recruits, (2) ongoing professional enhancement, (3) initial teacher education, (4) teacher earnings, and (5) teacher deployment and conditions of service. Motala [4] stated that forming a "contextualized understanding of quality means including relevant stakeholders as key stakeholders regularly hold different views and meanings of educational quality" (p. 25). Beeby ([5], p. 55) indeed mentioned that each of us judges the school system in terms of the final goals we set for our children, our community, our country, and ourselves.

McKenzie (2006, p. 33) explained that as a new paradigm to enhance the quality of teaching, they are aware of the implications of applying active learning in the classroom. It is an ever-increasing demand to move beyond rote learning and teacher-directed instruction to more active, student-centered approaches. Harris and Goodall (2008; cited by MöDI, [3]) observed that across the world, there is a growing recognition of the importance of engaging parents, families, and communities in raising the educational aspirations and attainment of young people. In other words, there is a wealth of evidence that shows that parental engagement in schooling positively affects student achievement and attainment. In many countries and across different school systems, the issue of engaging parents in schooling is a shared aspiration and goal. For example, in the UK, "parental engagement has become a government guideline for improving the provision of education for children and young people have been introduced to the idea in the form of a children's plan" (pp. 48-49).

3.2. Existing Education Conditions in Libya

Elabbar [6] pointed out deep-rooted impacts of the administrative bureaucracy, culture, and social interference in education management and administration. He said, "All these problems have obviously produced unqualified leadership in decision makers in both ministries (East and West) and have exacerbated the difficulties of the education system overall, along with the continued absence of lifelong learning programs and catastrophic weaknesses in the declared strategies of training among school and university educators and administrators" (pp. 76-77). The Libyan Organization of Policies & Strategies (LOOPS) (2016, NGO) showed that the Libyan education system has "poor academic achievement, poor private education; an absence of strategies for the educational process in Libya, and weak

curricula taught in the different school stages" (pp. 14-18). Their study research stated that (i) The Libyan curricula are not linked to a well-done educational plan and (ii) a main part of the curricula is imported from Singaporean curricula (demonstrating a totally different culture and style of teaching and learning). Additionally, the research revealed poor performance given the lack of education management experts, as headmasters depend on their natural ability rather than on technical management methods to manage their schools. This causes many challenges, as various school administrations experience problems in dealing with teachers, administrative hierarchies, and the individual responsibilities of school administrations.

Also, Elabbar [2] clearly found that after the declaration of the Government of National Unity (GNU; March 2021), nothing has changed except a reorganization splitting the Ministry of Education into three separate ministries (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, and Ministry of Vocational Education). This was done for political reasons and did nothing to solve the deeply rooted problems that existed. Then, in March 2022, with the GNU still refusing to handle authority, Libya became a country with two governments again (with almost five ministers of education at the same time). As a result, "conflicts have increased across all sectors, especially education, and the probability of collapse is increasing unless a miracle happens" (pp. 9-10). Alhmadi (2007, p. 88) has indicated that the objective of educators in Libya is for students to pass exams with the highest possible scores.

Nigatu ([7], p. 22) showed that qualitative data analysis is the range of processes and procedures whereby we move from the qualitative data that have been gathered to some form of explanation, sense, or interpretation of the situations we are examining. Qualitative data analysis is generally based on an interpretative philosophy, and the idea is to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of the qualitative data. Flick ([8], p. 4) said that qualitative research is useful for exploring "why" rather than "how many.". Also, Davis ([9], p. 429) explained that qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured and is fundamentally interpretive. Pope and Mays [10] described qualitative research as the development of concepts that help us to recognize "social phenomena in natural rather than experimental settings, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of the participants" (pp. 44-45).

4. Data Collection and Analyses

After obtaining the required approvals to qualitatively collect and analyze data for academic purposes only, this research adopted four comprehensive approaches to understanding the anticipated complications confronting the Faculty of Education and the LES due to the effects of the ongoing instabilities in the country. The implemented tools for data collection and analysis are summarized as follows:

1. **In-classroom research** and evaluation actions. This was done through full actual teaching for two pre-service classroom teachers (students) studying in

the sixth (25 Ss) and seventh (27 Ss) semesters at the English Department, Faculty of Education, UoB. The semester consisted of 12 lectures (24 actual hours of teaching and evaluation). Both classes were taught using several approaches of teaching, such as student-centered learning, teacher-centered learning, communicative learning, the grammar translation method, and the traditional method (Libyan way). Also, different types of materials were used to ensure the quality of education as well as to enhance the interaction capabilities and knowledge of education.

- 1.1. The collected data (classroom notes, records, taught materials) from this tool were classified to examine different levels of students' qualities of education and cognitive abilities and to closely measure their content knowledge (CK) and pedagogical knowledge (PK) to serve the research's major purposes and questions, as well as to enable greater use of the other data collection tools.
2. **Semi-structured interviews** for department educators, TAs, students, and faculty offices (Dean's Office, registry, and administration) with a particular focus on the English Department. Also, students who have graduated and inspectors who are in cooperation with the Faculty of Education, UoB, were included. Overall, 77 people participated in the semi-structured interviews.
 - 2.1. The collected data from the semi-structured interviews was characterized to analyze the impacts of the stated difficulties and faced obstacles among the entire LES in general and the Faculty of Education, UoB, in particular. Also, the results of the latest research outcomes about the critical status, quality, and effects of the instabilities facing the entire Libyan education system were taken into account.
3. **Fourteen focus groups** in total, consisting of heads of departments and EFL department staff members, three generations of faculty graduates, educators (MAs and PhDs), TAs, inspectors, and directors of local education authorities in the city of Benghazi.
 - 3.1. The collected data from the focus groups was classified into 10 analytical characteristics in order to deeply explore the quality of education in the Faculty of Education, UoB, to serve the major research measurement path and to confirm the results of the latest studies on the LES, such as Elabbar (2021, 2022), who demonstrated that "the whole education system in the state of Libya is on its way to collapse unless all authorities take serious measures of reform" (p. x).
4. **Analysis of official parliament, ministry, university, and faculty documents.**
 - 4.1. The huge, collected body of data was analyzed through 6 classifications to determine the role of the authorities and administrations in dealing with such enormous complications, and their current/future abilities to adopt any suggested solution or proposal to rescue the LES from its anticipated imminent collapse.

5. Findings

- 1) A real educational deficiency was found in the temporal pool and the knowledge shares acquired by and granted to secondary education students in Benghazi who entered the Faculty of Education in recent years compared to what they should be. This resulted in an almost fundamental weakness in the academic and cognitive abilities of many of them to deal with the education system at the faculty in general and the EFL department in particular, which almost led to academic and administrative confusion in the faculty's handling of this kind of challenges, whether at the level of new students or at the level of students permitted at the faculty.
- 2) The administrative and even logistical repercussions resulting from the faculty's transition from the annual system to the semester system under force majeure conditions that the city of Benghazi passed through (2014-2017) increased the confusion within some academic departments that had to learn what the semester system is in the form of workshops. Work and training and qualification courses for all its employees (i.e., the academic departments) and the other faculty departments were not given.
- 3) There are almost no saved academic documents (except data from the registry office) in the departments that recorded academic progress and the application process, especially from 2012 to 2017. Also, there are nearly no periodic studies and surveys that determine what the educational problem is among the university education's triangle (faculty departmental staff, faculty employees, students) and methods of dealing with this problem. It is not known whether the solution is gradual reform or complete reform. Or perhaps there are other educational solutions available.
- 4) Some departments have suffered and still suffer from a lack of clarity in the cognitive hierarchy of the academic curricula. Some faculty affiliates had previously been taught old information for long periods (sometimes as part of their previous study theses) and presented it to their students in the form of notes (what is known as "chitat"), in many cases even without being restricted to the vocabulary imposed by the department or faculty, in addition to the lack of educational content presented in it. It was also noted that the contents of some courses were repeated in several semesters, not to mention that some faculty members (especially some collaborators) taught courses outside their scientific specialties in the absence of supervision by scientific departments.
- 5) No bridge between the school system and the university system was found that could have enabled both systems to work together to overcome both systems to work together to overcome the problems of poor quality of education in the entire state of Libya. Even though course descriptions exist, there is no joint academic plan among the departments, as each department uses its own personal way to

administrate students academically, especially in classroom management, the planning of lessons, and the mechanism of choosing teaching materials. This issue led to another wide gap in knowledge management in the Faculty of Education and even between teachers within each department. Only the English Department at the Faculty of Education has previously adopted an enhancement strategy to focus on supporting newcomers with core materials of intensive teaching, involving interested TAs to take part in after-class education, and reconsidering the entire provided course syllabus.

- 6) Bureaucratic management and education regulation had a massive impact, which almost paralyzed all desires for change or even for putting reform proposals into practice, as the universities in Libya still follow centralized regulations (501) that have not been improved or further developed since they were first established in 2001.
- 7) The lack of teaching aids, libraries, internet, and a campus atmosphere, as well as the impacts of cultural differences in learning, has led to frustrated students who just come to pass tests and get a certificate instead of obtaining knowledge and processing it.
- 8) Most education authorities do not care about the poor quality of education. They just administrate the start and end of the study, and most announced quality and assurance instructions are not strictly applied. Even when some of the instructions are implemented, there is clear frustration to comply with them within the faculty.
- 9) There is no professional development or managed training for TAs and new educators, and some of them have lost their scholarship opportunities because of the existing instability in the country. As a result, most of them do not even come to the faculty unless they are called for administrative work.
- 10) There is a great desire for change among educators and employees, and even students are ready to accept gradual reform if the authorities facilitate that for them, but they have not done so yet.
- 11) There are highly qualified faculty members in the Faculty of Education who are trying hard to use modern methods of teaching with the highest standards of quality despite all the harsh conditions facing everyone at the faculty, university, and city.
- 12) There are very good personal efforts toward better quality of education from some department directors, and the Dean's Office tries its best to support the quality of education within the faculty, especially after it announced master's studies in the faculty.
- 13) Many faculty members revealed their willingness to facilitate self-initiative, creative ideas toward reform. Some enthusiastic members of staff started an administrative position, which helped a lot of professional ideas to take place.

6. Recommendations and Suggested Strategy

To ensure the significance of a complete gradual reform road map using bottom-up tactics, Elabbar [2] suggested seven years of preparation to change the entire LES and its policy. Also, this study encourages all education authorities in the state of Libya to act before the system collapses. Further, based on all the above, this study recommends that the Faculty of Education adopt a set of measures that serve the short- and long-term goals, and the most important of them can be summarized as follows:

1. Conducting further research and investigations aimed at discussing the idea of returning to the annual system (instead of the current semester system) to compensate for the loss of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge among pre-service teachers and TAs for the past 8 years.
2. Preparing and adopting a strategy in the form of a comprehensive policy from which several unified detailed plans can be derived for departments. These plans should address the weaknesses in the inputs and outputs of the entire educational process for each semester separately, preceded by surveys that investigate the sequence of educational inputs and their administrative support. In addition, logistical measures should pave the way for developing visions for each stage and some of the challenges facing the work of the entire faculty.
3. Supporting the core subjects and methods of teaching the foundational subjects in each department by pushing strictly toward adopting interactive lectures and monitoring their implementation, in parallel with the intensification of their study hours (i.e., the foundational and core subjects) accompanied by giving a greater role for TAs in the "coloring" of these. The inputs are in the form of subsidiary activities that are complementary and useful to the official lectures, which help the TAs to create and plan educational experiences and also help the students to acquire the largest amount of information and knowledge.
4. Empowering dynamic professional preparations for new students and current second-semester students by adopting a unified educational policy among all 8 departments, considering the loss of knowledge and time that those students faced in the previous years because of repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, wars, and other complications. Also, generating an interactive, integrative program based on technology and other cognitive activities, in parallel with supporting academic lectures by TAs and other faculty members whose academic hours must allow for these activities.
5. Preparing a unified program among the departments of the faculty to determine the level of students (not an entrance exam), studying the weaknesses among new applicants, and adopting the faculty's strategy in preparing remedial and integrative programs within the curricular plan of each academic

department. This will contribute to reducing the gap in knowledge loss for new students and will help design bridging curricula between secondary education and university education in the faculty in terms of general subjects and foundation materials for specializations. These curricula will enable students to compensate for the content-knowledge deficits and to move away from the study seats because of the circumstances experienced by the state of Libya.

6. Requiring the heads of scientific departments, as well as the TAs and students of graduation projects, to fill out the performance evaluation forms, which must be carefully studied by specialized committees from the Faculty of Quality Management, whose purpose is to activate research activities in the faculty in which faculty members, TAs, and students reside.
7. Adopting a central policy based on the plan, monitoring its implementation seriously and strictly, and adopting the document system and departmental databases, noting that some departments do not have data for students, do not have any documents related to the knowledge hierarchy for students, and do not have an academic mechanism or plan to manage the tasks, duties, and rights of TAs.
8. Encouraging the role of department coordinators and involving them in the interim plans and urging them to deal with students' data and to prevent confusion in the flow of information and daily announcements by relying more on technology and providing them with tools and equipment.
9. Imposing a central policy requiring academic departments to prepare field studies inside and outside the faculty, whose results and proposals are submitted to the faculty council on a monthly and quarterly basis to adopt a strategy to keep pace with the labor market and solve the educational bottlenecks facing the education sector and faculty graduates within it.
10. Creating interactive and optional study materials that stimulate the educational levels, desires, and individual skills of students, and reviving the idea of an academic advisor for students of graduation projects useful to the labor market and the faculty's needs in terms of research information and its results for each department.
11. Requesting to review the departments' interactive plans (non-theoretical and theoretical) in a written and competitive manner to deal with phase management, stimulate the needs of the labor market, and adopt the best of them as a central work platform for the immediate and future phases.
12. Supporting a clear strategy or policy for the administration of the faculty from the academic point of view aimed at finding a cure for the repercussions and implications mentioned above and other educational obstacles. This policy is based on but not limited to the following:
 - Establishing a vision, a mission, and central and basic objectives for the faculty from the top to the base and vice versa.
 - Implementing interim and long-term programs and plans in parallel to increase the efficiency of cooperative professional relations within the education sector.
 - Improving the efficiency of the entire educational process within the faculty by providing educational and technological support and tools to which everyone contributes and from which everyone can benefit (students, TAs, faculty members, department heads, and employees).
 - Adopting a methodology for the short and long terms to propose, with the active and fruitful participation of TAs in particular, as well as permanent faculty members and employees, programs for the restoration and development of educational policies and outputs after determining their priorities and contents, whether for each semester or for the general outputs in a sequential and gradual manner that stimulates the labor market on the one hand and treats asphyxiation on the other hand.
13. Requiring faculty TAs to participate in collecting and analyzing data, taking samples for laboratories, and introducing their departments and specializations in the form of lectures for new students before their nomination to postgraduate studies, in addition to the duties of the TAs stipulated in the current laws and regulations of the state.
14. Supporting the strategy of accepting the largest possible number of new students after adopting the mentioned policies and proposals to restore momentum to the faculty in serving society in general and the education sector in particular.
15. This study also suggests that the faculty adopt the "atypical" system in qualifying and developing the entire academic process, quality control, and performance evaluation through but not limited to the following:
 - Introducing the faculty's developmental research and workshop system.
 - Supporting the creation of the website and electronic portals.
 - Pushing for the consolidation of the conviction to adopt the mechanisms of interim and future strategic planning in the educational process.
 - Establishing a culture of qualification and sustainable development and spreading a culture of respect for the rights and duties of everyone (students, TAs, faculty, and staff) during the educational process.

7. Conclusion

This research study aimed to investigate closely the impacts of Libya's longtime security and political instabilities on the quality of education and knowledge management in the Faculty of Education, University of Benghazi. Also, the study aimed to measure in depth the latest reports and study outcomes that highlighted the critical status facing the entire Libyan education system.

For example, Elabbar [1,2] demonstrated that if all education authorities do not take fast measures, the entire Libyan education system will be on its way to collapse. This study essentially provided deeper insights into the impacts of such problems on the quality of teaching, learning, and administration and the enthusiasm toward the concept of education in the state of Libya. Finally, this research raises the warning level to the highest level by saying that the Libyan education system and its quality are in a risky status and are in imminent danger of a wide-ranging collapse if all the authorities do not take quick rescue reform actions. Moreover, this research urges all researchers and experts to widen their research efforts to emphasize the significance of solving such a critical status and to inform all education authorities and directors of the anticipated devastation of the entire Libyan education system if they do not act seriously. On the other hand, this study came across numerous positive professional steps and self-initiative actions taken by departments, teachers, and directors who are trying their best, despite all the challenges they face, to increase the quality of education at the University of Benghazi in general and the Faculty of Education in particular. Finally, it is a pleasure to say that despite all problems, consequences, and instabilities, the University of Benghazi is the top-ranked university in the state of Libya and is doing its best to overcome all obstacles.

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