



## **Reflections on Education, Employment & Sustainability**

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A dichotomy emerged about a little over a decade and a half ago polarizing the view of academic disciplines into two polarities: inter (cross, trans) disciplinarity, to aim for, versus autonomous fields of research & teaching, which have come to be labelled “silos”, a term which I consider derogatory and manipulative, deployed to bias valuation and attempts at reform. The notion of “Silos” was turned into a negative characterization deployed to undermine disciplinary ‘boundedness’ and specialization. This became an obstacle against any objective valuation of the strengths of bounded disciplines. Disciplines and the specialized research tracks they engaged in are being blamed, without supporting evidence, for all that went wrong with the contemporary education system (El Guindi 2020).

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Silos is why youth today are unemployed, why there is absence of skills compatible with the job market, why young people are turning their backs on universities, why learning became separate from teaching leading to an overall questioning of the educational process. Academic disciplines became silos, forming forbidding structures that turn academic fields into irrelevant, rigid barriers, unintegrated paths to irrelevant specialization, bridges that cannot be crossed, and walls that cannot be climbed. This exaggerated imagery of separate, unintegrated structures, which became hard to cross and connect, was deployed to account for an exodus from higher learning institutions. This combined with a trend toward ‘entrepreneurship’ of learning which began to grow among ‘jacks of all trades’ in reference to persons who do not specialize in a field but skillfully pick up vocabulary and rhetoric skills and tools which they borrow, and often misapply, from different fields and professions in a way best described by Claude Lévi-Strauss as “bricoleurs” (Levi- Strauss 1985 [1962]).

As a “Seed Idea” to reflect on, it is suggested that Education is best conceptually delinked from Employment, and both—Education and Employment—relinked with the notion of Sustainability as integrated fields for analysis. This way of reconsidering arenas which previously dominated the discussion separately promises to generate new insights. This reconceptualization is grounded in empirical experimentation and study which I have

engaged in and which has been published, using field data in all three arenas from Egypt and the Arabian Gulf, specifically Bahrain and Qatar (El Guindi 1985; El Guindi 1986; El Guindi 2014) as a way to contribute to a better understanding of all three.

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