

**EDUCATIONAL REFORMS FOR  
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN EGYPT:  
AN APPRAISAL OF ISSUES IN DEBATE SINCE 1990**

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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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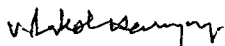
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### DECLARATION

I declare that the Dissertation entitled “**Educational Reforms for Human Development In Egypt: An Appraisal of Issues in Debate Since 1990**” submitted by me for the award of degree of **Master of Philosophy (MPhil)** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

  
**Lakshmi Narayanan**

### CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this Dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



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**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION**

## Chapter I

# INTRODUCTION

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In the emerging Knowledge economy education has become important factor besides being the source of social development. With information and communication revolution, the capacity to manipulate, store and transmit large quantities of information cheaply has become the predominant factor in the value addition processes. Since the economic growth is now heavily generated by innovative processes, a World Bank Report<sup>1</sup> on environmentally sustainable development for instance, stresses the central role of human resources. The Bank argues that investment in human resources can be the best means of equation between the development of human capital and educational attainment. Its findings imply that a country's future prosperity depends substantially on the quality of *education*. The current development paradigm is also stresses the centrality of the Human Development (HD) and knowledge acquisition.

The link between knowledge acquisition and human development is by definition an organic one. Egyptian scholar Fergany (2001) noted that, knowledge acquisition is one of three fundamental human entitlements to which people have an inalienable right by virtue of their belonging to the human race. Hence there can be no human development without acquisition of knowledge. This is a dynamic and infinite objective. Thus in the emerging context of knowledge economy, Human Development has acquired centrality in the development debate. The credit goes to the Human Development Reports (HDRs) that these issues have come to the public domain. It is evident that these HDRs are influencing policies and development strategies besides enlarging the nature of concept

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, *Monitoring environmental process: A report on work in progress (March 1995 draft)*, Environment Department, Washington DC, 1995, pp.52-53.

of development beyond the narrow confine of economics. The Human Development in this context can be defined as (UNDP 2001),

The expansion of, the choices people have to lead lives that they value. Fundamental to enlarging these choices is building human capabilities-the range of things that people can do or be in life. The most basic capabilities for human development are to lead long and healthy lives, to be *knowledgeable*, to have access to the resource needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community (Emphasis added).

Among the concerns raised by these Human Development Reports, education appears to be quite pronounced. Recently three such reports namely, the Arab Human Development Reports (AHDRs) have come on West Asia. Here too the reports underline the need for educational reform to bridge the knowledge deficit, which the region is facing acutely. The need for reforms including in the field of education has triggered interesting debate in the region.

### **Human Development and Economic Growth:**

Recent development literature<sup>2</sup> has contested Human Development as the ultimate goal of the development process, with economic growth, described as an imperfect proxy for more general welfare, or as a means toward enhanced Human Development. The basic difference between the economic growth and the human development schools in this context, as in the words of Mahbub ul Haq is that, “the first focuses exclusively on the expansion of only one choice-income-while the second embraces the enlargement of all human choices-whether economic, social, cultural or political<sup>3</sup>”. Amartya Sen also endorses the same as the Human Development, as a rival to GNP, has been quite

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<sup>2</sup> Ranis, Gustav, *Human Development And Economic Growth*, Center Discussion Paper No.887, Economic Growth Center, Yale University, May, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Mahbub ul Haq in “The Human Development Paradigm” in Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko and A.K. Shiva Kumar (Ed), *Readings in Human Development: Concepts, Measures and Policies for a Development Paradigm*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003.

remarkable, “serving as a more *humane measure of development than purely income-based* or commodity based measure like the GNP could possibly be (emphasis added).”<sup>4</sup> As the human capital is generally regarded as an important input into Economic Growth, to provide the resources to achieve Human Development, the cumulative inter temporal interaction between the two has been generally neglected. Neither Economic Growth nor Human Development can be analyzed in isolation or each other if one wants to understand how an economy has got to its current state and where it is going. Economic Growth for Boozer “is an important contributor to Human Development improvements, and the near absence of countries in the Economic Growth-lopsided state suggests that Human Development improvements are *essential* for achieving Economic Growth”<sup>5</sup> (emphasis original).

While human development has long been viewed both as an input and an outcome of the development process, the feedback and dual causality between Human Development and Economic Growth has not been fully or empirically taken into account. Once this dual causality is taken into account, it is obvious that any analysis of the determinants of Economic Growth or Human Development alone is incomplete. The economic growth based on human well-being, and human developments through economic growth are essential, reciprocal and mutually reinforcing necessities for national reconstruction. But without rapid increases in the productivity and utilization of

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<sup>4</sup> Amartya Sen, “Foreword” Remarks in Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko and A.K. Shiva Kumar (Ed), *Readings in Human Development: Concepts, Measures and Policies for a Development Paradigm*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Boozer, Michael and et al, *Paths to Success: The Relationship between Human Development and Economic Growth*, Center Discussion Paper No.874, Economic Growth Center, Yale University, December 2003.



its human resource, the potential for sustainable overall growth is severely limited<sup>6</sup>. Assuming that sound economic principles such as market efficiency and financial stability will remain among the most important goals in future, the limited human and material capacities of the majority of the population would still restrict their effective economic participation. Thus Human Development is likely to be not just an end product of growth, but an input as well and a key ingredient in the development process. To quote Mark Malloch Brown<sup>7</sup>, “articulating development as a widening choice, an expansion of freedom and a fulfilment of human rights gives it (the Human Development) a distinct edge over the more narrow perception of development as economic expansion alone.” Thus the economic growth is essential for human development, but to fully exploit the opportunities for improved well being that growth offers, it needs to be properly managed. Some countries have been extremely successful in managing their economic growth to improve the human condition, other less (see Gustav Ranis 2004). The present work will attempt to analyse the Egyptian experience as case study.

Human Development is much more than the development of human resources. It is an approach, “to the comprehensive and integrated development of human beings and societal institutions aimed at achieving the higher goals of human existence: freedom, justice and human dignity”<sup>8</sup>. Human Development in this sense is not merely “human

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<sup>6</sup> Eckert, Jerry B., *Refining the Concept of Human Development: Lessons from South Africa*, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, June 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, Mark Malloch, “The Preface” in Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko and A.K. Shiva Kumar (Ed), *Readings in Human Development: Concepts, Measures and Policies for a Development Paradigm*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Regional Bureau for Arab States; *Arab Human Development Report 2003: Building a Knowledge Society*, UNDP, USA, 2003, p.17.

resources development”<sup>9</sup> but, rather, a genuinely humane approach to comprehensive and integrated development which is likely to be not just an end product of growth<sup>10</sup>, and “it puts people back at centre stage, after decades in which a maze of technical concepts had obscured this fundamental vision<sup>11</sup>”. There are several implications in adopting this development approach and framework. According to Fukuda-Parr and Shiva Kumar (2003),

In the Human Development approach the policy significance and income expansion in any society is clarified. Higher incomes do help many people realize valuable ends and fulfil many aspirations. Income expansion matters, especially to the poor: it enable them to gain access to many goods and services, and, potentially, to an improved quality of life. But higher incomes alone may not always guarantee that which people cherish and value.

Therefore, the focus of policy cannot be based merely on the generation of more and more income. How additional income is used, and the degree to which it improves the quality of people’s lives, it must be given equal weight.

The concept of Human Development, according to UNDP (2001), encompasses three dimensions. First, building human capabilities such as improving health and developing knowledge and skills; Second, utilization of human capabilities for production of goods and services of effective participation in cultural, social and political activities, and enjoyment; and Third, the level of human welfare attained, defined in conformity with the rich concept outlined above. To support this Fergany (2002) for instance reported that, ‘respect for human rights and effective participation of the people in a social and political activities are also fundamental ingredients of the institutional

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<sup>9</sup> Fergany, Nader, *Higher Education in Arab Countries: Human Development And Labour Market Requirements*, Retrieved from [www.almishkat.org](http://www.almishkat.org), January 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. n. 5

<sup>11</sup> Streeten, Paul, *Human Development: Means and Ends*, The American Economic Review, Vol. 84, No. 2, Papers and Proceedings of the Hundred and Sixth Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association, May, 1994, pp. 232-237.

context of human development". Since the ultimate goal of human development is to expand the range of human choice, development is no longer seen as just enlarging production and exports. Among the more important choices are leading a long and healthy life, *being educated*, and enjoying a decent standard of living by being able to choose from an array of fulfilling and remunerative job alternatives. Additional choices include self-determination, self-reliance, political freedom and security, participation in decision making and a sense of purpose in life and work. According to Human Development Report 1990,

Human Development brings together the production and distribution of commodities and the expansion and use of capabilities. It also focuses on choices-on what people should have, be and do to be able to ensure their livelihood. Human development is, moreover, concerned not only with basic needs satisfaction but also with human development as a participatory and dynamic process. It applies equally to less developed and highly developed countries.

Thus the human development process (Jerry B Eckert 1995) implies, "development of people, i.e., investing in people's individual and collective capabilities, development for people, i.e. providing more opportunities for production and employment and greater satisfaction of economic, social and political needs for all; and development by people, i.e. people should be able to participate fully and decisively in the creation of better life-chances for themselves (emphasis original)."<sup>12</sup> Human Development, the humanization of development goals in capsule summary, strategize through the hierarchy Jerry adds that,

it remove physiological constraints, minimize constraints from the living environment, to expand human skills and capacities, and to deepen the range of options from which individuals can choose, purposive actions to rebalance access and power relations in society and the economy, to strengthen and diversify the roles of communities in which individuals act individually and together, and safety nets for those who cannot fully participate on their own.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, n. 6

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

As per the available literature there are number of academicians who have worked exhaustively on the subject. To document few will help the theoretical understanding.

The Human Development approach to quote Fukuda-Parr and Shiva Kumar (2003),

generates, a new set of evaluative questions to assess the impact of development policies. Are people truly enjoying an expansion in their capabilities-the capability to lead a healthy and creative life, to be well nourished, to be secure, to be well informed and educated? Has there been a significant improvement in the quality of people's lives? Do they have more of what they cherish? How free are they? How equal?

Whereas the critics like T.N. Srinivasan (1994) none of the Human Development Reports address in depth the political economy and sociology of the constraints that have so far prevented most of the developing world from replicating experiences of the few countries where successful human development has occurred. Srinivasan further adds,

Whether the Human Development Index is an *internationally comparable* "measure of people's ability to live a healthy life, to communicate and participate in the life of the community and to have sufficient resources to obtain a decent living" is arguable.

In sum, Human Development Index is for Srinivasan, conceptually weak and empirically unsound, involving serious problems of noncomparability over time and space, measurement errors, and biases. Meaningful inferences about the process of development and performance as well as policy implications could hardly be drawn from variations in Human Development Index. The scholars like Anita Rampal<sup>14</sup> raises some evaluative questions like,

What kind of human resources exists in the country? How far have its people been *educated* and in what manner? What are the inventories of their different *knowledge bases*, their traditional skills? In what way are their knowledge systems and skills being affected by the present market trends? How does educational development differ demographically, between regions, between communities, castes, and gender? What are the social and cultural attributes of the different people who inhabit the country? What are their expectations, their dreams, and their aspirations? How do societies live and breathe, and perhaps

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<sup>14</sup> Rampal, Anita (2000), *Education for Human Development in South Asia*; Economic and Political Weekly, July 22, pp. 2523-2531.

die? After 10 years of sustained efforts that have produced the Human Development Report; how many plans reflect any of these concerns? How many countries have even begun to articulate their intentions in human terms, not abstract aggregates? (Emphasis added).

These wide-ranging views are providing clear perspectives about the paradigms of Human Development for analyzing the issues of West Asian region in general and Egypt in particular.

### **Education Reform: Introductory Implications**

Since the education operates as a sub-system of the social system, the use of educational research depends on wider political, cultural and social factors. More countries report (International Bureau of Education 1995) that,

Educational research has a greater impact on micro-level educational activities, such as the development of curricula, teaching and learning materials, methods of evaluation and examinations, effective in-service teacher training techniques etc.<sup>15</sup>

To define educational reforms in this context, *it is the systematic efforts to bring about large-scale changes in education* and it consisted of efforts to adopt national educational systems to the needs of the population. Raymond F Lyons (1977), defined it (especially) in the context of social change as, any reform of significant proportions was *interrelated* with the political, economic and social environment of the educational system (emphasis added).<sup>16</sup> And to quote Rich (1979),

Generally we think of the purpose of reform as to amend the defective, vicious, corrupt, or deprived. It also aims to remove an abuse, a wrong, or errors, and effect changes for the better, the process of reforming, while sharing common meaning with correcting, emending, and remedying by rectifying something

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15 International Bureau of Education (IBE) and National Institute for Educational Research of Japan (NIER) (1995), *Final Report of the International Meeting on Educational Reform And Educational Research: New Challenges in Linking Research, Information and Decision-Making*, NIER, Tokyo, Japan, 4-14, September.

16 Lyons, Raymond F (1977). *Administrative Support for Educational Reform*, International Institute for Educational Planning, Final Report of an IIEP/ROEA Seminar held at Bangkok, 21-25 February.

wrong, also implies changes in an attempt to eliminate imperfections or effect a new form of character, as in an institution.<sup>17</sup> In recent years, the main emphasis of reform has been put on the equalization of educational opportunity and the modernization of education in order to make it more relevant to the social and economic needs of society. But for Benjamin Levin (2001), educational reforms are the programmes of educational change that are government directed and initiated based on an overtly political analysis.<sup>18</sup>

Notwithstanding different priorities, the present day world regard educational reform activities as an essential supporting and driving force of human development. Many countries examine the role of educational research (see Benjamin Levin 2001, John M Rich, 1979) at two levels. The *micro level* is degree to which educational research exerts influence on in-school and out-of school activities, such as curriculum and textbook development, teaching/learning processes, values and attitudes of students, organization of school activities and learning experiences. The *macro-level* is the degree to which educational research influences national policies, policy options and perspectives, and the policy system involved in planning educational activities. The issues of educational reform can also be understood within the broader generic perspective of the pedagogical reality. As educational reform is generally driven by political, social and economic concerns, the educational research tends to be motivated by the quest to gain new knowledge and understanding regarding educational phenomena.

Reforms that are consistent with other important changes in society are much more likely to have lasting impacts than those that arise and are sustained only within the

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17 Rich, John M (1979), *The Concept and Rationale of Educational Reform*, Peabody Journal of Education, Vol. 57, No. 1, Issues and Trends in American Education, Oct., 31-38.

18 Levin, Benjamin (2001), *Reforming Education: From origins to outcomes*; Routledge Falmer; London.

education system. The economic deregulation and restructuring have fostered greater social uncertainty and in general a more atomistic approach to life. Under these conditions, it is not surprising to find at least some evidence of increasing social, ethnic and economic segregation in schools, wherever education policies may have been in place. Education in itself has only modest effects on economic and social outcomes for a society and that changes in earnings, employment or other life outcomes are driven much more by macro-economic events and policies than by what happens in schools.

Every educational reform, whether fully or only partially implemented, has brought about changes in the educational structure. The cumulative effects of these changes can be seen in the present administration, marked characteristic of which is a diversified array of institutional structures; at the central level, curriculum development centres, in some countries research and development centres, equipment centres, educational facilities centres, instructional material production centres, educational planning divisions, non-formal education programmes, some kind of coordinating district or provincial education offices, the field offices of special programmes such as non-formal education and adult education, geographical localization of teacher-training institutions and now in some countries a marked trend towards creating at intermediate level also specialized centres as extensions of national curriculum development centres or R & D centres. The key parts of many educational reform packages for Benjamin Levin (2001) are as, one of the strongest trends in education reform across national boundaries has been the move to shift authority to the level of the local school, the second strategic element involves more testing of students on a standard curriculum or set of learning objectives, with results being made public and a third reform proposal is the influences of

parents over schools by giving them the right to choose the schools their children attend. B Levin (2001) had pronounced some propositions to the policy-makers and educators to consider in improving the education reform as,

The goals for reform, at least in the short term, should be modest. Promises of great things in a short time are almost always going to lead to disappointment, the design of reforms needs to take account of changing social context, goals should focus on those things that have a real chance to make a difference in outcomes for students, to have any chance of lasting impact, reforms need to have careful and extensive processes to support effective use, reforms should be seen as an opportunity for learning and the research and evidence should play an important role in the reform process.<sup>19</sup>

In the words of John M Rich (1979), “to justify a reform proposal, cogent reasons must be advanced for accepting it” and the “decision making in educational reform can be improved by greater attention to the concept of reform and the rationale for reform arguments.” Thus educational reform is not the exclusive responsibility of any one interest group, but involves many different actors such as policy-makers, teachers, teacher-trainers, parents, community members, administrators, politicians, trade unions, employers and the media. Therefore, the output of educational research needs to be presented in a form that enables easy consumption by these various interest groups, with both non-academic as well as academic forms of presentation being important. So the educational research should basically be a vehicle to produce systematic and analytical knowledge and information designed to aid the understanding of educational phenomena and the planning and practices of educational changes essential for educational reform.

### **Issues in West Asia**

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



The human capabilities in West Asia are weak and poorly utilized and illiteracy still saps Arab human capabilities, a sizeable proportion of Arab children are still deprived of basic education, and the poor quality of Arab education militates to bar younger Arabs from effective participation in the knowledge society by denying them the necessary symbolic-analytic and innovative faculties. As a result, the level of human welfare attained in the region is low particularly with respect to human right and the non-material aspects of welfare. This is evidenced<sup>20</sup> by the deprivation of many Arabs to basic educational and health facilities and services. As the capabilities are not effectively utilized, it is evidenced by high, open and disguised unemployment rates and the weakness of popular participation in social and political activities. To quote the Arab Human Development Report 2002 in this context,

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Although Arab countries have made significant strides in more than one area of human development in the last three decades...the predominant characteristic of the current Arab reality seems to be the existence of deeply rooted shortcomings in the Arab institutional structure (which) are obstacle to building human development. In order to build human development, the Arab countries need to embark on rebuilding their societies on the basis of full respect for human rights and freedoms as the cornerstone of good governance leading to human development, facilitating the rising Arab women by availing all opportunities, and especially those enabling the building of human capabilities, to girls and women on the basis of equality with their male brothers, and the consolidation of knowledge acquisition and its effective utilization in building human capabilities. Knowledge has also to be efficiently used in all aspects of societal activities, striving towards the maximization of human welfare in the region<sup>21</sup>.

The whole reform of the Arab institutional context in the service of human development, for Fergany (2002) requires, “in addition to *reforming the governance regime at the national and pan-Arab levels on a solid foundation of freedoms, the strengthening of Arab cooperation, maximizing benefits from globalization and avoiding its perils*

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<sup>20</sup> Fergany, Nader; *The Institutional Context of Human Development in the Arab World*; Almishkat Center for Research; Egypt; July, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> The Regional Bureau for Arab States, *The Arab Human Development Report 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generation*, UNDP, USA, 2002.

(emphasis original)<sup>22</sup>. The situation of human development in Arab countries is a cause for grave concern. A number of factors combine to cause the deterioration of human well being in Arab countries. Lack of human capital, especially on the quality dimension<sup>23</sup> is one of the main reasons. In an atmosphere of economic stagnation, unemployment assumes dimensions, which are detrimental to human development since it essentially strikes youth-most of them are educated in many Arab countries.

The picture is all the more bleak where the prevalence of high levels of unemployment in societies characterized by low living standards to start with and weak social security networks in a context of widening poverty and worsening maldistribution of income and wealth. Plainly, such an explosive mix of foretell dire societal consequences and the Arab countries have clearly lagged behind even the developing countries in human capital formation as measured by average years of education. Ironically the Arab world has been the significant contributor to the knowledge stock in the past.

For historical and cultural reasons the Arab people everywhere have almost a mythical faith<sup>24</sup> in education. Education has been associated with status and mobility; and higher education represents opportunities for higher status, power and affluence. With rising unemployment among higher educated graduates and policies of admission responding to popular pressures rather than to manpower planning, the actual situation no

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<sup>22</sup> Fergany, Nader, *Social Innovation For Human Development: An Arab Region Perspective*, Almishkat Center For Research, Egypt, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. n.9

<sup>24</sup> Kazem, Mohamed I., *Higher Education and Development in the Arab States*, International Journal of Educational Development, Vol.12, No.2, pp.113-122, 1992.

longer confirms these established beliefs. The *Amman Educational Declaration*<sup>25</sup> for instance warns the Arab world to recognize the necessity of joint action, and the value of an Arab regional grouping as requisites for economic, social, educational and technological progress, referring to studies and lessons gained by other blocks. In addition, the Arab Organisation for Education, Culture and Science, ALESCO's document, "*Towards a Future Vision of the Education of the Arab Nation*" (November 1999) also warns in that, "A new Arab educational system will be of no use if we content ourselves with ad-hoc reform here and there, or with just patching up aspects of the system." The whole educational structure including content and methods should be restructured. Such overall renewal should start by creating an organic and cohesive link between education and the new social, economic and cultural structures that needed to build a new society. Fergany for instance also complained the same. To quote him,

The region is uniquely characterized, among other things, by the highest (open) unemployment rate among the regions of the world. At 15%, the unemployment rate of the region is about three times as large as the world average.

For the causes of low labour productivity, he further adds,

However, go far beyond characteristics of labour markets to the inefficiency of *education and training systems* and dysfunctional societal incentives systems" (Emphasis added).<sup>26</sup>

In the context of Egypt which is, "one of the oldest societies in the world and is also one of the largest and most densely populated of the Arab countries, with about 65 million people,"<sup>27</sup> it has been the source of knowledge in West Asia to be looked upon by the region for direction - everything from mass media to religious interpretation. Its geo-

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<sup>25</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning, *Egypt Human Development Report 1998/98*, Egypt, 1999.

<sup>26</sup> Fergany, Nader; *Aspects of Labor Migration And Unemployment In the Arab Region*, Retrieved from [www.almishkat.org](http://www.almishkat.org), February 2001.

<sup>27</sup> El-Saharty, Sameh and et al, *Egypt and the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities*, HNP Discussion Paper, World Bank, February 2005.

strategic location provides it the bridge between the Europe and the Orient as well as between the West Asia and the North Africa. As other nations in the region emerge from their colonial experience and to attempts to indigenise their educational systems, they may look towards Egypt as it has the largest educational network in the region with a huge number of educational initiatives by massive foreign presence in the Reform issues.

According to the available information,<sup>28</sup> Egypt ranks fourth in the world on the list of countries implementing privatization programs. So the present work will attempt to look into the effects of the Economic Reform for Structural Adjustment Programme (ERSAP) on education and its reform initiatives towards the aspirations of Human Development. And it is the only country in the region, which is regularly publishing its national Human Development Reports since 1994 onwards. The present work by focusing on the reform issues will dig out the underlying facts and its relevance in terms of educational quality and productivity. It is for these reasons that the study has taken Egypt as the reference for appraisal of the debate on education reforms in the region. The interaction between the education and the other Human Development indicators are the important tasks to be focussed. By focussing education as a research variable, the present work intends to argue the importance of education and its reform efforts for achieving the broader aspirations of the Human Development in Egypt. To test the following Hypotheses (i) *The development crisis in Egypt is acutely reflected in the underdevelopment of the human resources of the country;* (ii) *The underdevelopment of the human resources in Egypt is due to the low quality of the educational system* and (iii)

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<sup>28</sup> Ferguson, Rebecca Marlow (Ed), *World Education Encyclopedia Survey of Educational Systems Worldwide*, Vol.1, Gale Group, USA, 2002.

*The educational reforms are intended to develop human skills to participate in global Knowledge Society* the study will have the following objectives.

To study the debates and issues in the educational reform initiatives of Egypt since 1990; To analyze the role of Education Reform in the Human Development of Egypt and To examine the adequacy of educational reform in meeting the issue of Egyptian Knowledge Deficits in the context of globalization.

The rationale for 1990 as the base year for the study is because of multiple reasons. The President of Egypt has designated the 1990s as the “*Decade for the Eradication of Illiteracy and Adult Education*” as well as the “*Decade for the Protection and Care of Children*”. This led to the creation of the *General Authority of Literacy and Adult Education* (GALAE). In the subsequent years, that is, in 1992 the President established the *National Project for Education* in recognition of the fact that it could be the source of improving social stability and national defence. The Egyptian government in the 1990 had moved perceptibly its economy towards the market by the *Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programme* (ERSAP). This programme had its immense effect on the education sector “as economies become more complex, consumption becomes more varied and competition increases, knowledge and information are *more critical* to the production and realization process.”<sup>29</sup> The trends in the WANA region at that time and the publication of Egypt Human Development Reports since 1994 had also thrown more light on the educational reform issues. The interface of education and the conception of Human Development are of an importance from policy perspective, as it will provide an ample scope for the understanding of the developmental issues of the present and the future. The present work in this context will try to examine the impact of the Educational Reforms and its implications for the national human development initiatives.

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<sup>29</sup> Carnoy, Martin, “Structural Adjustment and the Changing Face of Education”, *International Labour Review*, 1995, vol.134, No.6, pp.653-673.

Even from the perspective of the Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs), *education* is the critical sector in developing the enabling skills required by the information economy. In the absence of education geared to build the skills, the large human resources of Egypt will fail to join the economic processes and could as well become the victim of marginalisation processes. Egypt has vast resource of manpower what is needed to make it compatible to engage with the high skill economy of the time. A study of Egypt could be the exposure of the problem at regional level as well. In relating the issue of educational reform and human development, the study will look into the socio cultural contexts, which are impeding the reform processes and the explanation offered by the civil society. It may be pointed out here that according to Arab Competitive Report 2002-2003,

The results of reform efforts have been less dramatic than hoped, and more taxing on the capacities of education professionals than anticipated. It is one thing to redefine standards, curriculum, and rehabilitation facilities and install computers and computer networks in schools, but it can be quite another matter to change what people do and how they do it. Experience and research tell us that changing people's behaviour takes time, sustained effort, and lots of support. Change is never easy, and education systems can be quite resistant to it, but the costs to countries in the region of not changing, soon and fast, could be very high. Lastly, it is ironic and profound that a lack of the very knowledge and skills that we are seeking to produces the output of education systems in the region is very likely a critical factor limiting the success of current efforts to organize education to better prepare graduates to compete in the knowledge economy.<sup>30</sup>

While doing appraisal of the issues in debate the study will assess the impact of high tech, high cost education, its privatization and the accessibility to diverse social strata.

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<sup>30</sup> UNDP; *Arab World Competitiveness Report 2002-2003*;

**CHAPTER II**  
**THE NEXUS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**  
**AND EDUCATION IN EGYPT**

## Chapter II

### THE NEXUS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION IN EGYPT

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Having argued that knowledge is a cornerstone of Human Development, in this Chapter attempt is made to analyse the policies and methods deployed by Egypt in transforming the knowledge resource into *knowledge capital* that contributes to human development. This is initiated by keeping education as the focal point to understand the broader conception of Human Development in Egypt. So among all other Human Development parameters, the present work intends to focus on the role of knowledge by analysing the system of education and its reform issues in Egypt.

The HDI indicator of a faltering human development status in Egypt raises the question of, “whether it is the income level or the inadequate provision of social services are constraining human development in Egypt.”<sup>1</sup> If countries are ranked according to life expectancy alone, Egypt would have been ranked in the 104th position instead of the 119th. As shown in Egypt Human Development Report 1998/99 it is the illiteracy rate that pulls down the average value of the HDI and lowers Egypt’s rank. Many developing countries for example with similar or even lower levels of per capita income enjoy higher literacy rates than Egypt. The Egypt Human Development Report 1998/99<sup>2</sup> figure indicates that if the literacy rate would increase to the levels achieved in China or Jordan, Egypt’s HDI would significantly increase, reflecting an improvement in human development.

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (1999), *Egypt Human Development Report 1998/99*, Egypt, (p. 10).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 1, p. 13.



**Table 2.1**  
**Human Development Index**

Life expectancy at birth (years)	2001	70.1
Adult literacy rate 15+ (%)	2001	69.4
Combined 1st, 2nd & 3rd-level gross enrolment ratio%	2001/2002	72.1
Real GDP per Capita (ppp \$)	2001/2002	3793.0
Life expectancy index	2002	0.752
Education index	2001	0.703
GDP index	2002	0.607
Human development index	2002	0.687

*Source: UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (2004), Egypt Human Development Report 2004: Choosing Decentralization for Good Governance, Egypt. (p. 173)*

Though Egypt has one of the largest education systems in the World, as classified by the World Bank, “with 15.5 million students (over 90 percent enrolled in public schools), 807,000 teachers, and 37,000 schools,”<sup>3</sup> it is one of nine countries with the highest illiteracy rates in the World. As Egypt is facing an overriding challenge of eradicating illiteracy some progress has been achieved in this respect. In 1992, the Egypt Human Development Report (1998/99) reports almost half of the adult Egyptians were literate. By 1999 the literacy rate had risen to 56 percent. But breaking the data into regions as shown by Egypt Human Development Reports reveals the extent to which the differences were reduced between the urban and rural areas and between regions. Despite the fact that the urban-rural gap had narrowed, rural Upper Egypt has made slower progress in literacy achievement. The gap is wide between the bottom (worst performing governorate) and the top (best performing governorate). The Egypt’s Second Country Report (2004) also for instance indicates that, “Adult illiteracy and illiteracy among youth in the age group of 15-24 will be difficult to eliminate by 2015. The significant

<sup>3</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (2004), *Egypt Human Development Report 2004: Choosing Decentralization for Good Governance, Egypt. (p. 69)*

regional differences in the levels of enrolment in basic education are likely to substantially hamper efforts to achieve universal enrolment by 2015.”<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the poor quality of pre-university and university education and the related inadequate acquisition of the appropriate skills threaten the potential for scientific and technological progress and innovation and the development of the qualified labour force necessary to drive and sustain high economic growth. And over the last decade, the recent Egypt Human Development Report (2005)<sup>5</sup> reports that, “Egypt has accomplished a 17% rise in its Human Development Index (HDI), where this Index increased from 0.589 in 1994 to 0.689 in 2004”. This has pulled Egypt up from the low to the medium category of human development. Even the other EHDR (2003) also reports the same as, “Human development during the period 1994-2002, the governorate level of analysis shows that there are some significant development disparities in the country.”<sup>6</sup>

The persistent and increasing gaps between Lower and Upper Egypt with regard to the aspects of human deprivation, especially the number of illiterates and poor, remain a challenge (see the Table below). Since the comparison of human development indicators in Upper Egypt to Lower Egypt reveals uneven progress, it remains to be seen if improvement on the national level has trickled down to close the regional gaps.

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<sup>4</sup> The Ministry of Planning and UNDP (2004), *Millennium Development Goals, Second Country Report*, Arab Republic of Egypt.

<sup>5</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (2005), *Egypt Human Development Report 2005: Choosing our Future: Towards a New Social Contract*, Egypt.

<sup>6</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (2003), *Egypt Human Development Report 2003: Local Participatory Development*, Egypt, (p. 28).

**Table 2.2  
Regional Gaps in Selected Indicators**

	Lower Egypt		Upper Egypt		Gap	
	1992	2004	1992	2004	1992	2004
Illiterates (in Thousands)	7503	6940	6931	7748	-572	808
Poor (in Thousands)	3709	3957	5738	9030	2029	5073
Unemployed (in Thousands)	947	1061	496	697	-451	-364
Infant mortality (in Ratio)	30.1	15.8	44.1	25.8	14.0	10.0
Maternal Mortality (in Ratio)	132.0	65.7	217.0	73.4	85.0	7.7
Underweight Children (in Ratio)	7.7	4.8	11.4	10.2	3.7	5.4

*Source: Egypt Human Development Report, various issues.*

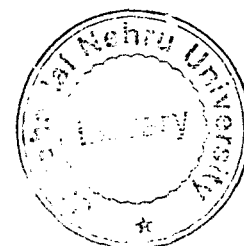
Based on the available literature<sup>7</sup> it is clear that there are a number of important development gaps which need to be addressed. The highest concentrations of administrative units in the lower category of human development are located in Upper Egypt. The EHDR (2003) in this context reports, "Beni Suef, Assiout, Minya and Sohag each have 10 or more city/markaz/hai in this category. On the other hand, Cairo, Alexandria, Suez, and Port Said have no hai which can be classified as having low development." This not only implies a north-south divide but also signals a general urban-rural split. If the gaps in social indicators are taken into account, there are some locations with low human development conditions because of a decline in social services (namely education and health). For example, to quote again the EHDR (2003),

the Human Development Index and GDP per capita are lowest in the city of Dar Al Salam; primary and preparatory pupil teacher rates are lowest in the markaz and city of Al Badrasheen; physicians and nurses per 10,000 people are lowest in both markaz and city of Al Fath; and the unemployment rate is lowest in the city of Sadafa.<sup>8</sup>

So it is certain that policies and assistance need to focus on closing these major gaps and addressing development disparities in Egypt. The characteristic of the markaz, hai or city provides clues to the type of development interventions that are required. For example

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., n.6, p.49.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.,



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those with the highest human development have low to medium population levels (less than 350,000). Not surprisingly these highly ranked areas generally have low levels of unemployment. The bottom ranked (below 0.640), have varied population levels but in many cases the population is higher than average. There are exceptions, such as hai Al Ganaien which has the lowest unemployment rate (2.4%) and low population numbers (67500) but still ranks only at 119 according to the local HDI. Although the general trend indicates a strong correlation between *high human development and low unemployment*, there are no other conclusive patterns that emerge or suggest a rule of thumb. This is mainly due to data quality that needs to be improved.

However, the available information does strongly suggest that low levels of education enrolment, the low levels of literacy among women and low employment opportunities indeed provide a poor basis for development options for local communities. Do these conditions also deter citizenship and participation? Though the evidence is inconclusive, the low level of political participation would suggest that poverty is an obstacle to people having a proper voice in the decisions which affect their lives. In the final analysis, the government needs to take action to reduce the gap between the very poor in the south and the urban citizens who live in the metropolitan north. They will need to include policies which address the structural causes of poverty and which offer improved access to participatory mechanisms.

## **Education and Human Development:**

There is firm evidence<sup>9</sup> that education promotes economic growth and puts other developmental goals within reach. Education also strengthens individual abilities to meet direct economic needs by increasing productivity and potential to achieve higher levels of living. By improving people's confidence and their ability to create and innovate, it multiplies their opportunities for personal economic and social achievement. For these contributions, education is to be sought as an end in itself, one that is at the core of *human development*. The educated, for instance the Egypt Human Development Report (1998/99) reports,

are always apt to make reasonable choices within a well-designed human development strategy. Moreover, they are the most likely to translate the human development policies into effective and sustainable actions, creating upward achievements in all areas of human life. Well-educated people are more productive, healthier, more creative, and ultimately richer in all dimensions of the word. Indeed, education stands at the top of those factors determining the human development level. As such, education is both an input and an output of the human development process. As input, education is indispensable for progress in all spheres of human development. As output, education is the axiom for building-up human capabilities, a focal interest of human development, given its primary role in enabling people to fully participate in socioeconomic and political development.<sup>10</sup>

Since the HDI measures the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, *knowledge and educational attainment*, and a decent standard of living, countries are ranked in the global HDRs on the basis of HDI values. A challenge for every country is to proceed towards the highest level of achievement on each of the human development components. Hence, from a policy

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<sup>9</sup> Eckert, Jerry B (1995), *Refining the Concept of Human Development: Lessons from South Africa*, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, June.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, n.1, p.13.

perspective both the value of the HDI and its component and the relative position of a country on the human development ladder can advance our understanding of development achievements as well as challenges ahead. Ever since Egypt began producing its national Human Development Reports from 1994 onwards,

it has become clear to all those concerned with the well being of the Egyptian people that Egypt's ranking is unsatisfactory and indicative of an *equivocal human development status*. Successive Reports suggest that this result contradicts Egypt's economic performance and could reflect on the government's commitment to social considerations of development (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup>

Various human development indicators can be helpful to examine inequalities between poor and rich, between genders, and between rural and urban areas. Disaggregation of these indicators not only reflects disparities between groups (by gender, region and urban or rural areas) but also reveals who are the most deprived and the extent to which they have shared the benefits of progress. In urban Egypt, for example, the EHDR (1998/99) documents,

combined enrolment ratio is around 60 percent for the poor and 80 percent for the rich. Thus, the low human development level of the "poor" is not only because they are below the poverty line, but also because they have lower *literacy rates* (emphasis added).<sup>12</sup>

There are two indicators used to calculate the education index. They are the *basic and secondary enrolment ratio* and *population adult literacy ratio (15+)*. Though there are some significant progresses in these indicators one can notice the contradictory data pictures even in the government reports. The inconsistency in data is the biggest problem for the analysis parts of the present work.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., n.1, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.,

Nonetheless, Egypt has achieved considerable progress in raising school enrollment rates and improving many of the health status indicators, one HDI component that still needs to be brought down at a much faster pace is the *illiteracy rate*, which has been the second reason, after population growth, for Egypt is lagging behind in human development on the international level. In the words of EHDR (2003),

it suffices to mention that the rank of Egypt could jump up the human development ladder by 25- 30 places when the illiteracy component of the HDI (about two-thirds of the education index) is excluded. This explains why tackling illiteracy has been a high priority of successive cabinets in Egypt over the last three decades.<sup>13</sup>

In a nutshell the EHDR (2003) came to the conclusion that,

the relatively high illiteracy rate (more than 30% of the population above age 15 in 2002) is the main reason for Egypt's relatively low HDI value and low ranking in the global Human Development Report. In spite of efforts spent over the past two decades to eradicate illiteracy, the results have been very modest.<sup>14</sup> It is obvious that Egypt still has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world and the gap between Egypt and the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) group of countries, which mostly precede Egypt in the rank of the HDI, is persistently rising (see EHDRs). In the observation of EHDR (2003) again,

Illiteracy remains at around 50% in many of Upper Egypt's governorates, although the national average in 2001 was 34.4%. There does appear to be a correlation between illiteracy and poverty and subsequently with high population growth. The data implies that increasing literacy in Egypt will contribute to reducing population growth rates.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., n.6, p.26.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., n.6

**Table 2.3**  
**LITERACY RATE**  
**(Comparison Between 1980 and 1995)**

	Males	Female	Both
Adult illiteracy rate (%), 1999	33.9	57.2	45.4
Pre-Primary in 1980	3.0	3.0	3.0
Pre-Primary in 1995	8.0	8.0	8.0
Primary in 1980	84.0	61.0	73.0
Primary in 1995	107.0	93.0	100.0
Secondary in 1980	61.0	39.0	50.0
Secondary in 1995	80.0	68.0	74.0
Tertiary in 1980	21.4	10.6	16.1
Tertiary in 1995	22.1	13.7	18.1

Source: Human Development Reports of various years.

However, Egypt also needs to scrutinize the overall quality of its education system. Good education needs good teachers, revised curriculum and pedagogical methods, and reasonable class densities. The rapidly growing population means these factors are constantly under pressure in governmental schools. To document the statistics,

85.8 % of basic and secondary education is in government schools, and government-run universities account for 67% of higher education. The private sector provides 7% of basic education, and about 22% of secondary and 20% of higher education. Schools under the control of Al Azhar provide 8.2% of basic and secondary education and 13% of higher education. There is a very large difference between the highest and lowest values of the education index, with the highest being 0.811 in Port Said and the lowest is 0.536 in Fayoum. The literacy component of the human development index has improved considerably in all governorates during the period 1990 to 2001, but is still only 47.7% in Fayoum, and the Upper Egypt governorates generally have low rates, of around 56.4%. The student/ teacher rate averages 20:1 for basic and secondary stages of education in most governorates, but class density rises to more than 40 students per class for both stages in most of the governorates.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., n.6, p. 4



There does appear to be a correlation between illiteracy and poverty and subsequently with high population growth. The data implies that increasing literacy in Egypt will contribute to reducing population growth rates. The rapidly growing population means these factors are constantly under pressure in governmental schools. Statistically speaking, to quote EHDR (2003) again,

85.8 % of basic and secondary education is in government schools, and government-run universities account for 67% of higher education. The private sector provides 7% of basic education, and about 22% of secondary and 20% of higher education. Schools under the control of Al Azhar provide 8.2% of basic and secondary education and 13% of higher education. There is a very large difference between the highest and lowest values of the education index, with the highest being 0.811 in Port Said and the lowest is 0.536 in Fayoum. The literacy component of the human development index has improved considerably in all governorates during the period 1990 to 2001, but is still only 47.7% in Fayoum, and the Upper Egypt governorates generally have low rates, of around 56.4%. The student/ teacher rate averages 20:1 for basic and secondary stages of education in most governorates, but class density rises to more than 40 students per class for both stages in most of the governorates.<sup>16</sup>

Hence the present and future perspectives of human development in Egypt depend largely on how far it will succeed in implementing a future oriented reform in its education system. Moreover, such a reform is indispensable for maximizing Egypt's potential to benefit from the ongoing globalization process, while avoiding, or at least minimizing, the negative impacts of this process on the country's human development. But the reform and development of education are necessarily linked with the needs, ambitions, pressures and challenges to be faced by Egypt in the future and in the light of the continuous and ever accelerating forces of change in this century. Indeed, the core objective of effective education is to promote those capabilities that are the driving force of progress, and equally, to benefit from the development of various resources of the society in a

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.,

continuous and complementary way. Thus one can conclude as in the words of EHDR, “one of the reasons for this medium level of HDI in Egypt is basically due to a low average per capita GDP, and a *low education index* (emphasis added).”<sup>17</sup>

### **The Indicators:**

As discussed above the EHDR (1998/99 in particular) found that it is the illiteracy rate that pulls down the average value of the HDI and lowers Egypt’s rank. Many developing countries with similar or even lower levels of per capita income enjoy higher literacy rates than Egypt. If the literacy rate would increase to the levels achieved in China or Jordan, the EHDR (1998/99) indicates that Egypt’s HDI would significantly increase, reflecting an improvement in human development. Hence this section attempts to look into various indicators of the education in Egypt.

Between 1976 and 1996 the EHDR 1997/98 shows adult literacy rates in Egypt increased by nearly 42 percent -from 39.2 percent to 55.4 percent. Literacy increased at a higher rate in 1986-96 than in 1976-86 (1.3 vs. 2.2 percent respectively). What accounts for the slow progress in literacy is the only slight improvement in school enrolment. Between 1980 and 1996, gross enrolment at all levels rose from 51 to 70 percent. To quote, “It appears that enrolment ratios at the basic education level are not only lower than the universal enrolment target, but also progressing at a slow pace.”<sup>18</sup> Recent sources (EHDR 2003) show that the enrolment rates are approximately 90% in all governorates for primary and preparatory education but drop for secondary. Also,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., n.6

<sup>18</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (1997), *Egypt Human Development Report, 1997/98*, Egypt. (p. 15)

differences emerge among the governorates at preparatory and secondary levels. The lowest enrolments are in Upper Egypt with 86.8% enrolments for preparatory level education and 65% for the secondary stage. Number of students for each teacher is one of the indicators of education quality. In primary and preparatory stages the rate averages one teacher for about 20 students, but the classroom density rises to more than 40 students per class for both stages in most of the governorates. The literacy rate (15+) has improved considerably in all the governorates during the period 1960-2001, yet this rate is still low in Upper Egypt (56.4%) and particularly in Fayoum (47.7%), Minya (49.3%), and Sohag (49.5%). The recent Human Development Report of Egypt provides governorates' educational indicators. Regarding the statuses of Urban Governorates it reports that,

- Literacy (15+) was highest in the hai of El Nuzha, Misr El Gideeda and Shark Medinet Nasr, all in the Cairo governorate, with percentages of 96.2%, 95.2%, and 92.9% respectively. The governorate of Port Said also has two high-ranking hai—Port Fu'ad with 93.8%, and Shark Port Said with 93.7%.
- All other hai recorded between 70% and 92%, with the exception of Mensha'at Nasser in the Cairo governorate (48.9%), Al Ganayen in Suez governorate (64.2%), and Al Dawahi in Port Said governorate (68.3%).
- The pupil-teacher ratio is used as one of the indicators of the quality of education.
- Class density is another indicator of the quality of education. For primary and preparatory education we find that it is high in all hai of the urban governorates, sometimes over 50 pupils per class.
- The enrolment rate for Al-AZHAR schools is ranging from 2-3.5% in these governorates.

The Report by the projection of different tables shows that the average number of pupils per teacher in primary and preparatory education does not exceed 20 in most of the hai of the urban governorates (except Alexandria), and that it gets lower in the hai of the governorates of Port Said and Suez (ranging from 12.8 to 16.4). And the detail of Non-Urban Governorates as follows.

- Literacy differs very substantially within each governorate e.g. in the city of Sohag literacy is 86.7% whereas in the city and markaz of Dar El Salam in the same governorate literacy stands at 29.5%.
- Enrolment rates in basic and secondary education are high in the capital cities of each governorate. In some cases the enrolment rate exceeds 100%, an anomaly that can be explained by pupils moving from one area to another and being registered in both.
- The enrolment rate for secondary education, however, is substantially lower than for primary and preparatory education, generally around 50% but sometimes as low as 35.1% as in the case of Hai Shark Sohag (Sohag governorate).
- The pupil-teacher ratio in state schools is generally very high. Sometimes Nonurban governorates have elementary classes of about 60 pupils per teacher like in markaz and city of Badrasheen in the Giza governorate, but classes of 40-50 are more usual. This level of class density is the result of an insufficient number of school buildings for the number of eligible pupils. In areas that are well serviced with Aznari and private schools the state schools tend to have a better pupil-teacher ratio.
- Private schools operate in relatively affluent areas where parents tend to have a high awareness of the value of education and the means to pay for private schooling. On the contrary, we find school basic and secondary enrolment rates are very low in the areas where the standard of living is low, such as in the Hai of Mensha'at Nasser in the Cairo governorate with a rate of 2.8%, Al Manakh in Port Said governorate with a rate of 0.1%, and Al Arbaeen in Suez governorate with a rate of 0.2%. Similarly very low rates apply throughout the non-urban governorates, even nil in some marakez.
- As to Al Azhar schools (basic and secondary) enrolment rate in the nonurban governorates, we find it ranges between 4.0% and 17.0%, with considerable variations within each governorate, which is explainable by the fact that a large number of Al-Azhar schools are built by local private funding.
- As to school buildings that are unsuitable, inadequate or unfit, the highest rates are markaz and cities in the southern governorates, a matter that directs the attention toward exerting additional efforts to provide more suitable and adequate school buildings and consequently higher educational quality in that region. It should be noted that the rates quoted include not only unusable buildings but also those that are unsuitable or in need of substantial refurbishment and maintenance.<sup>19</sup>

In the expenditure sides of the education tend to be biased in favor of the rich. EHDR (1997/98) shows that the poor's share in public expenditure on education matches their percentage shares in total population. The rich, on the other side, benefit from a larger

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., n.6, p. 45-46.

share of public education expenditure. Other aspects like the rate of reading and writing in the adult population (15+) on the national level has increased from 25.8% in 1960 to 65.6% in 2001. The class density at the country level is still high in both primary and preparatory levels, “reaching 41.1 and 43.9 students per class respectively. Part of the reason for these Classes’ density is that 23.8% of school buildings are unfit for use. About 6.7% of the government’s 2000/01 budget was allocated to education and much of it is spent on building renovation, as has been the case every year since the 1992 earthquake.”<sup>20</sup>

**Table 2.4**  
**Profile of Human Development**

Life expectancy at birth (years)	2002	70.1	
Population with access to :	Health services % Urban	2001	100.0
Rural	2001	99.0	
Piped water % Total	2001	91.3	
Rural	2001	82.1	
Sanitation % Total	2001	93.6	
Rural	2001	78.2	
Daily calorie supply per capita	2001	3905.0	
Literacy rate 15+ %	2002	69.4	
Combined basic and secondary enrolment ratio %	2001/2002	90.1	
Daily newspaper circulation (per 1000 people)	2002	53.9	
Households with television (%) TV sets per 1000 family	2000	89.4	

Source: UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (2004), *Egypt Human Development Report 2004: Choosing Decentralization for Good Governance*, Egypt. (p. 173)

As discussed earlier, the two indicators used to calculate the education index are basic and secondary enrollment ratios and adult literacy ratio (15+). The basic and secondary combined enrollment ratio was, the EHDR (2003) reports, as low as 42 percent in 1960. This was a difficult legacy to deal with. The government exerted efforts and resources in raising awareness and establishing large numbers of schools over the last decade; the ratio was 86 percent in 2002 according to HDR 2004. The rate of reading and writing for

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., n.6, p. 35.

the adult population (15+) has increased from 47 percent in 1990 to 69.4 percent in 2001 – a substantial improvement that is attributed to successful educational policies adopted by the government and efforts and resources devoted to reduction of adult illiteracy. From a gender perspective, enrolment in basic and secondary schools was 83 percent in 2001, and adult literacy (15+) for females was 54.2 percent.

### **Labour Force and Unemployment:**

When shared widely, education is the best equalizing societal force. Employment in this context is the vehicle through which education is translated into equitable distribution of growth. When the link between education and employment is broken, significant resources are wasted and the returns to education diminish. According to the recent sources (EHDR 2003),

the labor force (15+) in Egypt has reached 28.7% of total population and unemployment is 9%. These that are in paid employment 15.4% are women, and women constitute 19.8% of the unemployed (15+). On the national level, services take the largest share of labor (46%), then agriculture (30.6%) and industrial activity (23.4%), which has the smallest share. These percentages vary considerably between rural and urban governorates. Another significant variation is that the unemployment rate is greater in villages than in urban areas. Furthermore, the highest unemployment rate—22.4%—is amongst secondary school graduates. Also of concern is relatively low percentage of professionals and technicians (21.2%) of the labor force, as these categories of workers are particularly important for Egypt to be able to adapt to globalization and to new technologies.<sup>21</sup>

In another context the Report further adds that, “The percentage of the labor force from the population is high in the urban governorates (31.3%), especially in Port Said (35.2%). This percentage is decreasing in Upper Egypt (26.1%), Qena has the lowest one (22.8%)

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., n.6, p. 37.

because the labor force emigrate outside these governorates to find best job opportunities.”<sup>22</sup>

It is also noticeable that governorates vary in terms of the distribution of labour on the activities of *agriculture, industry and services*. It depends on the nature of each governorate as well as the prevailing activity. Therefore, in the urban governorates, the service activity has the highest share of labour, and then the industrial activity comes in the second place and finally the agricultural activity with the lowest share of labour. In Upper Egypt, the agricultural activity is the major recipient of the labour force. Thus, the agricultural labour force may sometimes reach 58% and 51.7% from the total labour force in Minya and Assiout respectively. Moreover, in the urban governorates, the percentage of the employees in the government and the public sector is greater than in Lower and Upper Egypt. It may be attributed to the concentration of the governmental activities and most of the projects in the urban governorates. In the same time the Egypt Human Development Report further documents that,

the women labor is increased in the urban governorates (including Giza) in comparison with Lower and Upper Egypt. The reasons are the same plus the prevailing rigid traditions especially in the rural areas that are widespread in Upper and Lower Egypt. Furthermore, the highest levels of unemployment prevail in Aswan, Gharbia, Kafr el Sheikh, and Luxor governorates (14.9%, 12.9%, 12.7%, 11.7%) respectively. The maximum level of youth unemployment (15-29 years old) also exists in these previous governorates (31.2%, 28.7%, 26.7%, 28%) respectively. It is notable that the unemployment rate is high in urban areas comparatively to rural areas, as well as among secondary school graduates in all governorates, especially in Kafr El Sheikh (35.3%), Assiout (29.8%), and Sohag (29.2%) while this rate is decreased in urban governorates to reach about 14.2%.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., n.6, p. 39.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., n.6, p. 39.

This phenomenon may be attributed to bad allocation of investments among the different governorates as well as the disability of the economy in generating job opportunities. In addition, the governorates vary in terms of population size, labour force size, and characteristics.

**Table 2.5  
Unemployment**

Unemployment rate %	Total	10.2
	Female	23.9
	Urban	11.0
	Rural	9.5
Unemployment rate by education 15+: %	Below Secondary	1
	Secondary	20.4
	University	14.4
Future labor force replacement ratio %		190.0

*Source: UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (2004), Egypt Human Development Report 2004: Choosing Decentralization for Good Governance, Egypt. (p. 178)*

The women's participation in the labour force is relatively low and does not exceed 25% anywhere in the country. In some markaz in the southern governorates (e.g. in markaz and cities of Dar El Salam and Girga in the Governorate of Sohag), the percentage of women engaged in the labour force is extremely low and does not exceed 1.8%. This is due to the low female educational level in these governorates in addition to customs and traditions that hinder girls' education and their participation in the labour market. In turn, this encourages those seeking work to join the informal sector under unsuitable conditions and wages.

#### **Implications of Poverty:**

Education is an important factor that reduces poverty, as it is highly correlated with occupation and income levels. It also an indicator of the extent to which households is able to satisfy their basic needs. Poverty indices with respect to the education status of the



head of households in urban and rural areas respectively show that poverty measures are correlated inversely with education levels. As expected, the highest poverty indices are for households with an illiterate head. Although the illiterate categories have the largest percentages of the poor among their households, the EHDR (1996) reports, “the poverty measures in urban areas are about 1.3 times those in rural areas, in categories with low levels of education, indicating that education, in urban areas plays a major important role in obtaining an adequate income and hence avoiding poverty.”<sup>24</sup> So one can say the illiterate category is the only category whose percentage contribution to national poverty exceeds its share in the total number of households. Poverty from a human development perspective focuses on a denial of choices and opportunities for living a decent life.

**Table 2.6**  
**Profile of Human Deprivation**

		In Thousands	
Population without access to :	Health services	2001	6847.5
	Piped water	2001	4109.1
	Sanitation	2001	56,474
Children dying before age five		2002	135.7
Malnourished children under five		2002	1770.9
Children not in basic or secondary school		2001/2002	13260.9
Illiterates (15+)		2002	2075.6
Unemployed people (15+)	Total	2002	1060.2
	Female	2002	11053.7
Poor persons:	Total	2002	3833.6

*Source: UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (2004), Egypt Human Development Report 2004: Choosing Decentralization for Good Governance, Egypt. (p. 173)*

Therefore, the human-or capability-poverty does not just consider income, but rather the indicators of the most basic dimensions of deprivation: a short and unhealthy life, and

<sup>24</sup> The Institute of National Planning and UNDP, *Egypt Human Development Report 1996*, Arab Republic of Egypt, 1996.

lack of basic education and a lack of access to public and private services and resources.

It is appropriate to refer the words of EHDR (1998/99) here,

The Egypt HDR 1996 has estimated the measurements for both income and capability poverty. These estimates suggested that capability poverty is generally higher than income poverty in Egypt. While 23 percent of the total population lives below the national poverty line, more than one-third falls in the category of human deprivation. Thus, while 15 million Egyptians are income poor, more than 23 million are capability poor.<sup>25</sup>

The EHDR (1998/99) furthermore found that population in rural Upper Egypt is the largest deprived group. Obviously great efforts are needed to provide wide and improved education, health, and public work programs to the rural areas, especially in Upper Egypt. To conclude though progress in social and human development is a priority for the Egyptian Government, “the country still lacks a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.”<sup>26</sup>

Table 2.7

<b>Standard Of Living</b>	
Percentage of Urban Population (1996)	44
Percentage of population without access to safe water in 1990-98	13
Percentage of population without access to health services in 1990-93	1
Percentage of population without access to sanitation in 1990-98	12
No. of telephones mainline (per 1000 people) 1999	75
No. of PCs (per 1000 people) 1999	12
No. of websites (per 10,000 people) 2000	1
Total No. of internet users (in 1000)	7
Annual Growth Rate (%) of Labour Force in 1980-97	2.6
Labour force participation rate n economic activity (%)	Males 51.4 Female 22.1 Both 37.0
Unemployment rate(%) in 1996	8.7

Source: Human Development Reports of various years.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., n.1 p.11.

<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2002), Second Country Cooperation Framework (2002-2006) for Egypt, Egypt (p. 2)

### **Gender Issues:**

For the broader aspirations of Human Development in Egypt, the gender issues are crucial aspects to be discussed. Regarding the situation of women in Egypt, the observation of the United Nations Common Country Assessment Team is worthy to be recalled. "The Egyptian citizenship can only be conferred through males. This means that the children of Egyptian women are considered foreigners even if they have been born and raised in Egypt. Such children are denied free education and health care. They must also apply for residence and work permits."<sup>27</sup>

### *Education:*

Education is one of the most valuable means of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. According to available sources, "about half of all Egyptian women are illiterate, and illiteracy is more prevalent in rural areas and among the poor. Despite a reduction in the enrolment gap between girls and boys, many girls in remote and under-served areas are deprived of basic education. Moreover, gender disparity is apparent at all levels of the educational system."<sup>28</sup>

The situation is very mixed when it comes to education for females, and there are drastic variations in levels among governorate markaz and hai. Thus to quote the EHDR (2003),

in Cairo governorate, we find a high rate of 95.0% in the Nuzha hai, and as low as 39.5% in hai Mensha'at Nasser. On the whole, however, female literacy is generally higher in the big towns and capitals of governorates and is generally lowest in the southern governorates where it falls to 34.6% in Beni Suef, 33.8%

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations Common Country Assessment Team (2001), *EGYPT: Common Country Assessment*, Cairo, Egypt, December (p. 12-13).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, n.27, p.10.

in Fayoum, Minya, Assiut, Sohag, Qena, are, respectively, 32.7%, 37.1%, 31.9% and 32.0%, all of which are very low rates.<sup>29</sup>

On the positive side, the rates of female enrolment are generally high in all educational stages throughout all the hai of all governorates, often exceeding the rate of male enrolment for similar age groups. (The only exceptions are the hai of Mouski, El Zawya El Hamra, El Sharabeya, El Basateen and Dar El Salam in the Cairo governorate). In some cases the enrolments are higher than female school-age residents, indicating that females use transport to go to schools in hai that have 'desirable' educational facilities. The female enrolment in secondary education is generally lower than male enrolments (in contrast to the higher rate of female enrolments in the junior levels of education). For example the EHDR (2003) observes, "in the city of Minya the rate of female basic education is 63.2% and in secondary education it falls to 44.5%."<sup>30</sup> This is partly due to cultural factors: in southern governorates traditions and customs do not encourage female education, and give preference to the education of the males. Other factors accounting for these low rates of female education in southern governorates are early age of marriage among females and less available single sex schools as a result of the 'one classroom schools' since many parents do not want their girls to attend mixed classes. Another factor is poverty in that children drop out of school early to assist with earning the family income, and females are usually the first to be withdrawn, to give male siblings a chance to stay at school for as long as possible. In brief to quote the EHDR 2003 again, "The total level of literacy (15+) is 65.6% but this declines to 54.2% when female literacy is calculated. It is noticed that although female enrolment rates are generally high for basic

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., n. 6, p. 48-49.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.,

education, they are low for secondary education and above.”<sup>31</sup> It is appropriate to quote the UN Team’s observation on Egyptian women,

Women are still subjected to constraining traditions and customs whereby they are deprived of educational rights because preference is almost always given to males. In many cases, they are also deprived of being productive members of society because social pressure may force them to marry at an early age and to bear as many children as rapidly as is necessary to satisfy recognized social values and expectations. Girls and women do not enjoy the same recreational benefits as their male counterparts, particularly in rural areas and crowded urban settings.<sup>32</sup>

*Employment:*

Women’s participation in the labour force is still low in most of the marakez, hai, and cities, as it does not exceed 25% (Females 15+) and in some areas the rate gets very much lower than that, particularly in the most of the markaz of the southern governorates e.g. in the Sohag governorate’s markaz and cities of Dar El Salam and Girga, it is 1.6% and 1.9%, respectively; and in the markaz and city of Mallawi in Minya governorate the rate is 1.8%. Rural women the UN Country Assessment Team observes, “are under-served in terms of access to education, health care, social security, training, and agricultural credits and loans. They often endure inadequate living conditions in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport, and communications. Rural women are among the poorest of Egypt’s people.”<sup>33</sup> But the situation is reversed in the advanced communities of the urban governorates, in which the rate of women in the labour force gets considerably higher, such as the hai of El Nuzha and Misr El Gideeda in Cairo

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<sup>31</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (2003), *Egypt Human Development Report 2003: Local Participatory Development*, Egypt (p. 2).

<sup>32</sup> United Nations Common Country Assessment Team (2001), *EGYPT: Common Country Assessment*, Cairo, Egypt, December (p. 10).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, n.33, p. 11.

governorate and Port Fuad in Port Said governorate, with rates amounting to 31.7%, 29.5%, and 33.2%, respectively.

The recent EHDR (2003) calculates that the rate of females working in management and supervision as a proportion of all working females in most of the hai, markaz, and cities does not exceed 20%. This rate falls as low as 3% in some markaz, such as in the markaz and city of Ihnasia in Beni Suef governorate and the markaz and city of Al Idwah in Minya governorate, amounting to 3.1% and 3.4% respectively. There are notable differences in this rate among the markaz of any given governorate, but such differences are rather limited among the hai of the urban governorates.

Many women work in the informal sector in which records and statistics are neither accurately nor consistently kept. Also, women work in family endeavours (with or without pay) or in agricultural and farm activities. Because of this, their participation rate in the labour force is not accounted for accurately in the formal statistical records, as these records are mostly for work in the governmental and organized sectors. In a nutshell one can conclude, "the relatively high unemployment rate among females is also influenced by their low educational and training levels, higher rates of illiteracy and cultural factors."<sup>34</sup> <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., n. 6, p. 48-49.

**Table 2.8**

<b>HEALTH</b>	
Annual Growth Rate (%) of Population	1.82
Sex Ratio (%)	103
Total Fertility Rate (%)	3.40
Life Expectancy (Years)	66.3
Life Expectancy (years) 1950-55	Male 41.2 Female 43.6
Life Expectancy (years) 1990-95	Male 62.4 Female 64.8
People not expected to survive to age 40(%) , 1998	9.9
Infant Mortality Rate (per Thousand) in 2000	Males 55.0 Females 54.5 Urban 43.1 Rural 61.8 Total 43.5
Dependence Ratio (%) (based on second scenario)	In 2000 0.73 In 2010 0.53 In 2020 0.46
Under-five mortality rate (per thousand) in 2000	Males 68.8 Females 69.7 Urban 52.8 Rural 79.2 Total 54.3
Infants with low birth weight (%)	10.0
Maternal Mortality Rate 1990-98	170
Percentage of pregnant women with anemia	24
Percentage of 1-year old children fully immunized in 1997-99	TB 99 Measles 97
Public Expenditure as % of total expenditure on health	27.0
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Infants with low birth weight (%)	10.0
Maternal Mortality Rate 1990-98	170
Percentage of pregnant women with anemia	24
Percentage of 1-year old children fully immunized in 1997-99	TB 99 Measles 97
Public Expenditure as % of total expenditure on health	27.0

Source: Human Development Reports of various years.

**CHAPTER III**  
**EGYPTIAN EDUCATION SECTOR:**  
**ISSUES IN DEBATE**



### Chapter III

## EGYPTIAN EDUCATION SECTOR: ISSUES IN DEBATE

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Having examined the nexus of Human Development and education in Egypt in the preceding Chapter, in the following pages attempt is made to present and evaluate the issues in debate in the Egyptian education sector. Education in Egypt plays a significant role in the human development and has three main objectives. They are, according to the World Education Encyclopaedia (2002), has political, social and economic objectives, namely: education for strengthening democracy and comprehensive development is a continuous process, within the framework of Arab culture. The current educational philosophy in Egypt is the product of three cultural heritages: British, Secular (westernized) Egyptian, and Islamic (traditional) Egyptian. Mohammad Ali<sup>1</sup>, regarded as the father of modern Egypt its education system, introduced secular, modern, western educational philosophy complete with sciences.

The present public education system in Egypt<sup>2</sup> consists of three stages: the basic education stage for 4 to 14 year olds (kindergarten for two years followed by primary school for five years and preparatory school for three years); the secondary school stage for three years, generally for ages 14 to 17; and the tertiary (university) stage. Education is compulsory for 8 years between the ages 6 and 14. Basic schooling is, Cynthia B Lloyd<sup>3</sup> documents, divided into two phases: Primary (grades 1-5) and Preparatory (grades

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1 Ferguson, Rebecca Marlow (Ed.) (2002), *World Education Encyclopedia: A Survey of Educational Systems Worldwide*, Volume 1, Gale group, USA.

2 Ibid. n.1.

3 Lloyd, Cynthia B and et al (2003), *The Impact of Educational Quality on School Exit in Egypt*, *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 47, No.4.

6-8). However in 1984, both phases of basic schooling were made compulsory; early only primary education had been compulsory. As all levels of education are tuition-free in the entire government schools and institutions, the preschool institutions, whether state run or privately operated, are under the Ministry of Education, educationally, technically and administratively. As the Ministry selects, distributes textbooks and forbids the use of any additional textbooks. The students attend three types<sup>4</sup> of schools-publicly-funded-managed schools, privately-funded and privately managed schools, and publicly-funded but privately managed schools called Al-Azhar, offering religious instruction as part of the curriculum. Al-Azhar's share is largest at the primary level and progressively declines at higher levels. To describe about the stages in length, the various Egypt Human Development Reports provides the picture in detail.

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<sup>4</sup> World Bank, *Arab Republic of Egypt Education Sector Review: Progress and Priorities for the Future*, Volume 1, Human Development Group, Report No. 24905-EGT.

**Table No. 3.1**  
**Stages of Education**

Stage	No. of Years	Age group	Remarks
Pre Primary	2	4-5	It is targeted to include this stage in basic compulsory education.
Primary	6	6-12	Sixth primary has been restored to the stage and has become effective with the class joining 1 <sup>st</sup> primary in 1999.
Preparatory	3	12-15	It is predominantly general education. There is small percentage of vocational preparatory schools and less of sports preparatory schools.
General Secondary (3 years & Vocational Secondary (3 & 5 years)	3 or 5	15-18 or 15-20	Within the general secondary education, there are physical education secondary schools and vocational education is divided into a 3 type industrial education. 3 year industrial, vocational industrial, 5 year industrial agricultural education. Finally, there are 2 types of commercial education: 3 and 5 years. It is the ambition to consider this stage part of compulsory basic education for all.
Upper Intermediate Institutes	2	18-20	
University or Higher Institutes	4 or 5	18-22 or 18-23	Education in medical colleges is for 7 years including internship (1 year compulsory field training).

Source: Ministry of Education (2003), *The National Plan for Education for All (2002/2003-2015/2016)*, Arab Republic of Egypt, Cairo, February.

*Basic Education* Since 1981, the primary and preparatory education stages were combined to constitute one level of mandatory basic education. This was done in line with the government policy to encourage parents to keep their children in education as long as possible.

*Primary Education* Primary education covered six years until the promulgation of Law 139/1981, which stipulated that basic education covered both primary and preparatory education over a total period of nine years. This law was amended by Law 233/1988, which reduced the period of basic education to eight years. The reduction was applied to

the primary stage while the preparatory stage continued to be three years. Law 123/1999 restored the implementation starting from the school year 2000/2001.

*Preparatory Education* Although primary and preparatory education became structurally combined to become the first level on the educational ladder, to date, they constituted to be organizationally and institutionally distinct.

*Secondary Education* Pre-University education in Egypt includes two types of secondary education, general and technical. While general secondary education qualifies students to enter university, technical secondary education mainly prepares students to join the labour market.

*Al-Azhar Pre-University Education* Al-Azhar pre-university education consists of two major types of institutes: (I) Al-Azhar general institutes which encompass the primary, preparatory and secondary levels; (ii) Al-Azhar special institutes which encompass the Institute of Islamic Missions, Institutes for Readings, and Instructors' Institutes.

*Higher Education* Higher education in Egypt consists of university education and non-university education. University education includes public universities (within which Al-Azhar University has a specific status), foreign universities, and private universities. Non-University higher education includes public and private technical institutes under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), in addition to specialized higher education in some academies, faculties, and institutes affiliated to

other ministries (for example, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Transportation and Communication).

Since the beginning of modern education in Egypt in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the educational policy has been characterized by two parallel features. The first is the adoption of a planning approach, the second that education acts as a strong link to the requirements of social development, regardless of its suitability, validity or level of efficiency. Thus, the modern education system in Egypt fulfilled urgent needs imposed by the vision of Mohamed Ali<sup>5</sup>, the Ruler of Egypt as of 1806, believed that Egypt's most urgent national project was to form a strong national army. This required high quality human power in specific fields; thus, his concern began by focusing on higher levels of education, rather than middle and primary levels-known as the policy of the inverted pyramid. This narrow utilitarian theory of education still meant that it was used as an indicator of *human development* at that time. Major turning points have characterized Egypt's educational policy, beginning with Article no. 19 of the Egyptian Constitution issued in 1923 which stipulated that education is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 to 12. During the same year, another law was issued stipulating that compulsory education is free, and then in the year 1944 primary education was declared free. Later in 1951 the law no. 142 was issued declaring secondary education free as well. This peaked in 1952 when the 23<sup>rd</sup> July revolution declared all educational stages, including university education free. Until this point, compulsory education was for six years. In 1981, the law no. 139 was issued, stipulating the responsibility of the Egyptian state to provide education to all Egyptian children aged 6 years, for nine academic years. From that time

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Education (2003), *The National Plan for Education for All (2002/2003-2015/2016)*, Arab Republic of Egypt, Cairo, February.

on, the Ministry of Education sought to increase the rate of enrollment of school children within this age group gradually, in order to reach full absorption. The result was a large *quantitative growth* in the educational system.

During the 1990s, President Hosny Mubarak declared that education is Egypt's national project till the end of the last century. Within this framework, two major declarations were made. The first was that the 1990s is *the national decade for eliminating illiteracy*, and the second was that the 90's is *the national decade of the child*. Moreover, during the Dakar International Conference in April 2000, President Mubarak pointed to the need for diligent efforts to achieve a new vision, namely "education for excellence and excellence for all". The principle of 'Education For All'<sup>6</sup> was consolidated in the 1990s at the International level, as a result of the steadily growing recognition that education is a human right, part and parcel of *human development* (emphasis added). Moreover it is a requirement for the protection of marginalized groups and an investment, with significant revenue, for both individual and society. The Report, *Mubarak and Education: A Futuristic View*<sup>7</sup> was issued in July 1992, marking the first achievements in the field of education in the academic years 1991/92 and 1992/93. Such paper provided the guidelines for a comprehensive programme of education in Egypt in view of what President Mubarak pointed out in his address before the People's Assembly and Shura Council on November 15, 1992. Since then relentless efforts have been made, intensive and profound discussions have taken place in which education and pedagogy experts and university professors took part. The outcome was a preliminary report under

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. n.5.,

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Education (1993), *Mubarak's National Project: Educational Achievements in Two Year*, Arab Republic of Egypt, October.

the title *A View Towards the Future* comprising the broad lines for a comprehensive programme of education in Egypt and covering all aspects of the educational process- restoring and building schools, developing the curricula, employing technology and modern methods in education, restoring recreational activities and fostering talents. In a nutshell, to quote Ferguson,

the succession of post-revolution leaders: Nasser (*Arab Socialism*), Sadat (*Open Door*) and Mubarak (*Grand Revival*), each established new national social and economic development goals, thereby requiring shifts in the direction of the educational system (emphasis added).<sup>8</sup>

As the change and restructuring of the government affects research priorities and its agenda there are many agents and interest groups, which influence the establishment of educational priorities, including both the private and public sectors. Obviously, this fact limits the impact of educational research on educational reform activities, as educational research is not the sole influence on educational reform. Given the basic attributes that officially characterize educational policy in Egypt<sup>9</sup>, the processes of educational decision-making have features, which are pertinent to the overall national objectives, public opinion and *human resource development* (emphasis added). Therefore, decision-making in the realm of educational reform in Egypt also is affected by more than one factor. Four interlinked dimensions influence decision-making: *political, technical, international* and *academic*. The present day educational reforms in Egypt illustrate the guidelines for a comprehensive reform programme of education in Egypt. They cover all aspects of the educational process: restoring and building new schools, developing the curricula, employing technology and modern methods in education, promoting

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. n.1.

<sup>9</sup> International Bureau of Education (IBE) and National Institute for Educational Research of Japan (NIER) (1995), *Final Report of the International Meeting on Educational Reform And Educational Research: New Challenges in Linking Research, Information and Decision-Making*, NIER, Tokyo, Japan, 4-14, September.

recreational activities and fostering talents. The new educational policy in Egypt reported to have attempts to: remove the educational burden from the family, promote the principle of equal educational opportunity, link education and national security, and identifies education as an investment. As the country's education system has commenced confronting various sectors' rising demands to provide the requisite skills for the new economy, the modern skills like the computer technology, management and financial skills will be needed to increase productivity. This, in turn will necessitate learning numerical, problem solving, and complex literacy skills starting at the basic education level and moving up. Since the mid-1990s, the Government acutely recognized that the quality of the Egyptian education system needed improvement in order to become more flexible, diversified, and relevant to the emerging social and economic needs of the country. With October earthquake in 1992, school facilities became national problem and its development became an urgent popular request. The reaction of individuals, businessmen and authorities was an example of giving support and bearing the responsibility. Developing education is no longer the responsibility of a minister or the ministry of education or educationists. It has become a *national mission* in which all authorities' legitimate channels and individuals have to take part.

Since 1996 the Government has developed a comprehensive strategy of educational development covering all levels of education. The development of long-term vision that emphasized *equity, quality and relevance, management and efficiency* was initiated in 1996, and evolved in a highly participatory manner in stages over the course of several years. Education in Egypt received an unprecedented impetus during the last decade of the past century. Education became the cornerstone of the development



process<sup>10</sup>, its axis and the base that sustains national security in Egypt. The main reforms and innovations at the beginning of the Century are standing in the following features. The Legal and Legislative Framework of Education, Organizing, Structuring and Managing the Education and the Policies related to curriculum, educational content and teaching methods (NCERD 2004).

The long crisis of Egyptian education, the information and technology revolution in the world and the ambitions of the Egyptian people to occupy a leading and pioneering position in the world on the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century put pressure on the educational policy to move fast and effectively cope with the information revolution. The educational change is meant to take into account the output of the psychological and pedagogical disciplines and the bases of science and scientific method. For a long time, education has been dealt as a service issue. But education at present, the Ministry of Education reports,

is a fundamental for Egyptian *national security* in the political, economic and even military fields. Education is closely related to national security as national security in its simplest definition is “the potentials, facilities, systems and procedures that provide protection for the citizen before any predictable dangers, threatening his stability, welfare independent decisions and land integrity.

It further adds the main features of the mechanism of education development and the key relevant achievements as,

the ruling out redundancy, introduction of new information, development of primary education, interest in sciences of the future, interest in religious education, interest in History, combating extremism, development of educational aids and utilization of education technology and improving the role of Parents’ Meetings.<sup>11</sup>

**Sectoral Issues Debate:**

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10 National Center for Educational Research ad Development (2004), *Development of Education in Arab Republic of Egypt 2000-2004*, Arab Republic of Egypt, Cairo.

11 Ibid. n.7

As the system of education in Egypt has raised many debates in the academia, this section tries to capture the sectoral picture of Egypt by documenting the issues which are in the current debate. The Arab education in general and Egypt in particular falls far short of the human development needs. It is a fact that the recent Arab Human Development Report (2003) reports the mere quantitative expansion even at the cost of quality, high rates of illiteracy, especially among women, persist. Children continue to be denied their basic right to elementary education. Higher education is characterised by decreasing enrolment rates compared to developed countries, and public expenditure on education has declined since 1985. Documenting the issues in Egypt provides large number of challenges in the educational system. For instance, Ahmad Galal lists out the shortcomings of the system as,

the system has not provided graduates with the necessary skills to realize the potential private and social benefits of education. The most apparent shortcoming of the system is its inability to produce the appropriate mix and quality to meet demand. Big spending on education is often associated with small returns.<sup>12</sup>

Galal further adds the list by complaining the systematic bias in favour of higher education at the expense of basic education, and boys at the expense of girls, “false entitlement” of free education, with the surge in the cost of private tutoring and other incidents, persistent mismatch between the supply and demand for graduates.

Though Egypt made substantial progress with the respect to access to education, there is not so much progress on improving the *quality* of education. The unsatisfactory achievement of the Egyptian education system, the Egypt Human Development Report (1998/99) admits, “in spite of the remarkable resources allocated to it during the 1990s-

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<sup>12</sup> Galal, Ahmad (2002), *The Paradox of Education and Unemployment in Egypt*, The Egyptian Center for Economic Studies, March.

cannot be attributed only to its poor performance during this decade. Various socioeconomic factors have negatively impacted upon this system for several years before the 1990s. Shortage of financial resources, as well as their misallocation within the education sector itself, was among the most important of these factors.”<sup>13</sup>

The education system, according to other available literature (Fergany, 1999, Galal, 2002,) is not providing markets with the quantity and quality of educated individuals that are mostly in demand. Available data shows that (Galal 2002), with respect to efficiency, the percentage of dropouts in primary and preparatory schools in the early 1990s was relatively high, exceeding 13 percent. This may reflect the low returns of education especially among the poor. Almost half of the new entrants to the market carry an intermediate level of education, the very same group with the highest level of unemployment. It is also the group whose future demand is expected to be the lowest. This partial evidence suggests a mismatch between the pattern of educational outcomes and market demand.

**Table No. 3.2**

**Evolution of Enrollment in Education and Unemployment in Egypt, 1986 and 1996.**

	Gross Enrollment Rates			Unemployment Rates		
	1986	1996	% Change	1986	1996	% Change
<b>Primary</b>	87.6	100.5	14.7	10.9	4.5	-58.7
<b>Secondary</b>	63.7	74.9	17.6	20.2	13.9	-31.0
<b>Higher</b>	18.3	22.6	23.5	10.6	5.1	-51.8

Source: Ahmed Galal, (2002)

In basic education the World Bank (2004) documents some crucial issues as challenges.

They are as follows.

Limited institutional and managerial capabilities within the MOE, as typified by its bureaucracy, weak administrative skills and lack of coordination among administrative units; Low educational effectiveness resulting from low teacher

<sup>13</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning, *Egypt Human Development Report 1998/99*, Egypt, 1999.

quality and morale, limited and often inadequate instructional materials, and incomplete implementation of curricula changes; Inequitable access to education, particularly for girls and poor children; Inadequate and inequitable resource mobilization efforts and Inadequate policy and regulatory framework to encourage private sector contributions to the financing and provision of basic education.<sup>14</sup>

The ruling party sources (NDP Document 2002) also voiced in the same tone by listing out a number of challenges that exist as,

The need to further link education to societal needs and the appearance of parallel informal systems of education (out of school education), and the epidemic spread of private lessons.

Low level of proficiency in languages (including Arabic) and also in mathematics and sciences and little focus on student activities.

The unprecedented expansion in the number of schools has introduced a challenge in management and difficulty in evaluating their performance.

Lack of confidence in teacher qualifications, deterioration of their social status and limitation of their ability to monitor student performance and the withdrawal of the enlightening role of the school and the attempts to maintain rigid patterns of thinking.

The pressures caused by the current examination system which emphasizes memorizing and doesn't test higher level skills and its negative effect on students and the Egyptian family.

Multiplicity of the forces opposing change and development, which hinders efforts of education reform and limits the responsibility for reform to the Ministry of Education alone.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Quest for Quality**

All the debates in the Egyptian education sector unanimously complain the issue of quality. Even the available government sources like the Egypt Human Development Report also do the same. Sectoral expansion at the cost of quality is the reality. To quote Ahmad Galal (2002) again,

The current approach to education focuses too much on quantity and too little on quality. It views education as an input/output table or a production function,

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<sup>14</sup> Human Development Sector (2004), *Implementation completion report (ida-24760) On a Credit In the amount of us\$55.5 million To the Arab republic of Egypt For a Basic education improvement project*, Report no: 29269, The World Bank, Middle East and North Africa Region, June 8.

<sup>15</sup> National Democratic Party (2002), *Education Reform (NDP Document)*, Egypt, September.

rather than a process of maximization of private and social returns across the entire population. In short, incentives, broadly defined, are lacking.<sup>16</sup> The erosion of quality in the education system in Egypt, cannot, however, be fully blamed on lack of incentives on the supply side. There are additional reasons too. The increase in the size of school-age children must have played a role. Also, the rapid expansion in education means the inclusion of children from poorer families with less preschool skills. Another contributing factor is the size and allocation of public funds, which tend to favour higher education at the expense of basic education. Fergany (1999) for instance reports,

Many factors interact to shape the failure of human capability. Most fundamental is the inadequacy of the human capital stock, especially on the quality dimension. In spite of quantitative expansion in education, illiteracy is still high and human capital accumulation (measure in mean years of schooling) is lower than in East Asia for example.<sup>17</sup>

In a nutshell, the poor are deprived of education at higher than average rates hence reducing their chances for good employment. The employment content of recent investment and output growth in Egypt are minimal in comparison to the challenge of job creation in the country. More importantly, it is almost certain that if the employment parameters of the 1990s growth pattern continue, the country is heading for an unemployment catastrophe. To quote Fergany (1998) again,

In view of the record of sectoral job creation and destruction, *the hopes pinned on the large private sector for large scale job creation seems unduly exaggerated.* But even the more reliable generator of employment: non-establishments private sector is generally characterized by low productivity and humble earnings and hence cannot be relied upon to help boost productivity and reduce poverty (emphasis original).<sup>18</sup>

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16 Ibid. n.12.

17 Fergany, Nader (1999), *An Assessment of the Unemployment situation in Egypt*, Almishkat Research Notes, Retrieved from [www.almishkat.org](http://www.almishkat.org), December.

18 Fergany, Nader (1998), *Dynamics of Employment Creation and Destruction Egypt, 1990-1995*, Almishkat Research Notes, Retrieved from [www.almishkat.org](http://www.almishkat.org), January.

As per Fergany analysis women lost almost a million job opportunities in the in-establishments private sector but gained a little more than 200 thousand in government. The countryside gained a little more than 400 thousand jobs in government but lost nearly half million in the in-establishments private sector. Private sector has only 100 thousand jobs. Clearly, the marginalization of women and rural areas in the labour market was reinforced during 1990-95; as a result, increasing feminization, and ruralization, of unemployment has been a hallmark of employment dynamics in the 1990s. The recent data provided by Ahmed Galal (2002) also validates the argument (see the table below).

**Table No. 3.3**  
**Labour Demand and Unemployment By Educational Status**

Sector	Labour Force 1998 %	Unemployment 1998 %	Estimated Labour Demand 2001-05 %
Illiterate	33	8	
Read & Write	9	4	
Below Intermediate	16	8	66
Intermediate	24	55	4
Above Intermediate	6	11	13
University & Higher Edu.	12	14	17
Total	100	100	100

Source: Ahmed Galal, (2002)

#### **The Islamic Educational System:**

West Asia region is often complained of following a curriculum with religious orientation (see AHDR 2003). The *Islamization of the pedagogy* is a reality even in Egypt. Religious education is to be a principal subject in general education. The Islamic heritage is an educational system<sup>19</sup>, parallel to public education that is basically a system of transmitting culture. From its founding in 972 until the modern period in the nineteenth century, Al-

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. n.1.

Azhar University mosque played a central role in shaping the country's religious, educational and cultural life. At the bottom of the Islamic Educational System were kuttabs (mosque or Quranic schools), the madrasas (religious schools) and the Sufi (mystical orders). Resting on memorization and recitation, the traditional methods for learning the Quoran, this educational system does not stress experimentation, problem-solving analysis, or learning-by-doing. Education is conceived as a process that involves the complete person, including rational, spiritual and social dimensions. To quote the World Education Encyclopaedia (2002) again, "religious education is a principal subject in general education."<sup>20</sup> As religion is a requisite component of the national curriculum at the primary, preparatory, and secondary levels and is regulated by the Ministry of Education, it is clearly evident as per the recent finding (Bradley J Cook 2001) that, "religious education is perceived as an important, if not vital, component in the state-sponsored education of children in the lower levels of education."<sup>21</sup> This finding is significant because state schools are not the only source for religious instruction; mosques and schools sponsored by Al-Azhar offer religious curricula as well<sup>22</sup>. To validate the argument further, even the World Education Encyclopaedia also quotes the same as,

Though the Egyptian government recognizes the tension between Islam and western-generated sciences and attempt to develop educational goals facilitating both, throughout past 40 years, the strong autocratic government, rooted in Islamic tradition of the protective father, sometimes conflicted with the democratization efforts in schools.<sup>23</sup>

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20 Ibid.

21 Cook, Bradley J (2001), *Islam and Egyptian Higher Education: Student Attitudes*, Comparative Education Review, Vol. 45, No. 3, Aug., 379-411.

22 Founded in A.D.970, Al-Azhar has the distinction of being the oldest university in the World and the international centre of Islamic learning.

23 Ibid. n.1.

## Centralization

Regarding the issue of centralization, the available literature (Galal 2002, EHDR 1998/99, NDP 2002) complains in a same tone. For instance, the recent Egypt Human Development Report (1998/99)<sup>24</sup> reports that the Egyptian education system is still characterized by a high degree of centralization while participation is deliberately limited to technocratic consultations and is devoid of a real mechanism for inclusion of the grass roots level. Others like Ahmad Galal (2002) complain it as,

it creates a distance between those responsible for delivering the education services and those who benefit from education the most. Both the teachers and managers of schools only have incentives to respond to superiors at the Centre instead of to parents and students. It also makes monitoring more difficult because information is costly to collect and process.<sup>25</sup>

Even the present day ruling party document (NDP 2002) is reporting in a same tone by quoting the challenges as,

The possibility of pressures at the level of municipalities to please the community, attempts to achieve personal gains on the account of the educational process, or nepotism; The inefficiency of municipal authorities and human resources and their dependence for a long time on central authority; The possibility of organized minorities controlling passive majorities in governorates.<sup>26</sup>

Thus the education system at all levels, the UN Common Country Assessment Team on Egypt observes, "is highly centralized. Fragmented units and departments within the central ministry duplicate and sometimes undermine each other's work."<sup>27</sup> These pictures

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24 Ibid. n.13

25 Ibid. n.12.

26 Ibid. n.15

27 United Nations Common Country Assessment Team (2001), *EGYPT: Common Country Assessment*, Cairo, Egypt, December.



clearly show the need for a decentralized approach in Egyptian system of education, which is about,

shifts in the location of those who govern, about transfers of authority from those in one location or level vis-avis education organizations, to those in another level. Four possible locations of authority are considered: the central government, *provincial, state or regional governing bodies*, municipal, country or district governments and schools (emphasis added).<sup>28</sup>

The reasons for decentralization are numerous as in some cases it is a question of increasing efficiency in management and governance. The state bureaucracy appears slow and it has been unable to tackle issues of teacher deployment, teacher payment, purchases and distribution of equipment and material or maintenance of buildings, decentralization appears to be the solution: it can allow a faster identification of problems and the search for more appropriate responses. Strictly speaking, it is often defined in terms of four degrees of transfer of authority: *deconcentration, delegation, devolution, and privatization*.<sup>29</sup> But contrary to the world reality where the educational theories are moving towards *community participation* and *Parent Teacher Associations* in the school functioning, the parents in Egypt do not have a voice or an exit possibility. They are not engaged in the management of schools, selection of teachers, and frequently have no choice but to enrol their children in the only available school in the neighbourhood.

### **Teachers' Conditions**

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<sup>28</sup> McGinn.N and T.Welsh (1999), *Decentralization of education: why, when, what and how?*, International Institute of Educational Planning, UNESCO, Paris.

<sup>29</sup> Roundinelli, D.A., Nelson, J.R., Cheema, G.S. (1984), *Decentralization in developing countries: a review of recent experience*. Washington, DC. World Bank, Staff Working Paper No. 581.

The often quoted quotation, “without teachers there is no school” is to be remembered in the context of Egypt. The inadequate staff strength with allied problems like the poor infrastructural facilities is posing a serious threat. The absence of teachers for searching greener pastures elsewhere for their living as a result of the limited monthly pay and incentives has damaged the education system. Besides, teachers suffered from a low social attitude<sup>30</sup> due to the social, historical and economic conditions through which this job is seen. Teaching has become a frontier-less job in the sense that anyone could be a teacher, qualified or not. The current approach, Galal complains,

Fails to motivate the actors involved to deliver good quality education. It leaves teachers with limited motivation to teach in the classroom because their salaries are low and follow a rigid civil service code. Their career development is not contingent on the results of their students. At the same time, they find it rewarding to teach outside the classroom.

And he further adds that,

the limited incentives on the part of bureaucrats to efficiently monitor, regulate and improve the education process are well known. Like teachers, their salaries are low, their performance is difficult to assess, and their career is not linked to measurable achievements. While tending to be process rather than outcome oriented, excessive centralization gives them enormous power over the expansion and oversight of schools.<sup>31</sup>

To focus into other burning issues like the gender gap, the country is still characterized by a high rate of illiteracy, effectively eliminating 50 percent of the population from higher education opportunities, Fergany<sup>32</sup> summarize the evidence on determinants of the *gender gap* in enrolment in basic education as, preference for boys in enrolment in basic

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30 Ibid. n.7

31 Ibid. n.12.

32 Nader Fergany (2000), *Towards High-Quality Basic Education For Girls in Egypt*, Cairo: Al-Mishkat, Retrieve from [www.almishkat.org](http://www.almishkat.org)

education is stronger in poor households and communities, especially on the latter level.

The recent UNESCO reporting also validating this argument (see the Table below)

**Table No. 3.4**  
**Gender gap in literacy (1990-2000)**

Literacy Rates for Men & Women over 15 years of Age						Gender gap in literacy		
1990		1995		2000		1990	1995	2000
Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	W/M	W/M	W/M
33.6	60.3	38.5	63.5	43.7	66.6	0.56	0.61	0.66

UNESCO figures [www.unesco.org/uis/ev](http://www.unesco.org/uis/ev) Statistical Tables

Regarding the financing education successive Egyptian Human Development Reports demonstrates the *intra-sectoral imbalances* in the allocation of public expenditure to different types and levels of education. Even Egypt's constitutional<sup>33</sup> guarantee of free education at all levels has become a false promise, especially for the poor. The education available to them has been of such a poor quality that is of little real economic advantage. The emergence of private tutoring as a necessary supplement to public education for passing grades compounded by rising user charges and the cost of basic school supplies also means that education is not, for all practical purposes free in Egypt (see the Table below).

**Table No. 3.5**  
**Percentage of Students Taking Private Lessons by Educational Level and Socio-economic Group, 1997/98**

Educational Level	Socio-economic group		
	Poor	Middle	Rich
Basic	45.8	61.4	64.6
Secondary	66.1	88.6	83.6
High Institutes	53.5	67.7	85.7
University	7.8	11.7	16.2
Total	51.3	63.2	60.5

Source: UNDP, Egypt Human Development Report 1997/98.

33 Ibid. n.13

There are other general problems like the low-income levels of a significant proportion of the population and the relatively high costs incurred by families, directly and/or indirectly, for the education of their children. These costs represent an obstacle to universal access to education especially for the poor and for females, who are often deprived of educational opportunities. As the relatively low absorption capacity of the education system is a major constraint to universal enrolment, the modest quality of, and the lack of an attractive environment in most educational facilities or instruction material impact negatively on the internal and external efficiency of the education system and encourage high drop out rates. A neglect of individual differences, people's preferences, and different environments in designing the curricula makes education less attractive to many students and less remunerative in terms of knowledge, employment and earning capacity.

In brief the present education system is leading to heavy dependence in all stages, on dictation and memorization. Authoritarian management and poor teaching methods, as well as inflexible evaluation and examination techniques coupled with rigid mechanisms of admission to succeeding levels of education are the most important factors explaining the heavy dependence on rote learning. To arrive at definitive conclusions is very difficult while evaluating the multidimensional factors influencing education in a complex society like Egypt. Education in Egypt, not unlike elsewhere, has a deeply imbedded political dimension with intense disagreement among its various constituencies as to the best way to manoeuvre. While there appears to be general dissatisfaction with the current state of education, a positive resolution to Egypt's self proclaimed

“educational crisis”<sup>34</sup> will likely continue to be frustrated by competing orientations, differing interpretations of identity, and perhaps irreconcilable social choices. The findings of the Bradley J Cook research study (2001) also suggest that the national education system as it presently stands in Egypt may have some potentially destabilizing effects on national development and cultural identity. To quote it,

Some of the more conservative respondents not only felt that religion was an important subject of study at all levels of education but felt that the state was actually failing to provide adequate religious preparation for children. As a result, many drew link between the current state of social decay and economic dependency of Egypt and the lack of spirituality in the educational system.<sup>35</sup>

Creating an educational system based on Islamic principles along with the modernizing needs of contemporary society has been the subject of several World Conferences. These conferences have aimed at removing the dichotomy of religious and secular education from the current educational systems of Islamic countries<sup>36</sup>. Those calling for *Islamization of education* consider it one of the keys to the revitalization of Islam. But the views like Gregory Starrett also echoes in the debates by reiterating,

Contrary to the expectation of educational theorists who encouraged schooling as a remedy to ‘traditional’ mentalities, the growth of secular education in Egypt has encouraged rather than discouraged attachment to Islamic culture and the rise of the Islamic Trend.<sup>37</sup>

The ruling party document reiterates, (NDP 2002), the issue of illiteracy in Egypt “is no more an educational issue and it is a societal issue relevant to all economic, political and

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34 President Hosni Mubarak in a speech to the People’s Assembly, November 11, 1991 in “Mubarak’s National Project: Educational Achievements in four years”, Arab Republic of Egypt (1995), Cairo, Al-ashraf.

35 Ibid. n.21

36 Syed Muhammad Al-Naquib Al-Attas (1970), *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, Jeddah: Hodder & Stoughton.

37 Gregory Starrett, “Our Children and Our Youth: Religious Education and Political Authority in Mubarak’s Egypt” (PhD. diss., Stanford University, 19910, P.10.

sociological aspects and it is the most dangerous societal disease in Egypt.”<sup>38</sup> So its danger affects both the individual and the society and its most dangerous aspect is that it blocks societal advancement and hinders individuals from performing their roles and carrying out their responsibilities. But in spite of the efforts made to reform education for the last years, the primary stage is still unable to accommodate the large number of children at the school age. So a full-employment development policy should have the objective of universalizing high quality basic education while *ensuring* that the poor are not excluded on account of poverty. In some cases this means going beyond *truly* free education. For the poorest of the poor, “some form of affirmative action in the form of scholarships that provide for the direct and opportunity cost of education will be necessary.”<sup>39</sup> So the quality of education, including relevance to context-specific life skills and labour market requirements, should be continuously improved at all stages. This is a demanding societal endeavour that extends beyond the confines of the education sector.

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38 Ibid. n.15

39 Ibid. n.17

**CHAPTER IV**  
**REFORM INITIATIVES IN EGYPTIAN**  
**EDUCATION**

## Chapter IV

### REFORM INITIATIVES IN EGYPTIAN EDUCATION

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Education in Egypt as discussed in the preceding chapters is confronting multidimensional problems. Since 1990 a number of systematic efforts to bring about large-scale changes in education have been initiated. The World Bank, for instance sponsored *Education Enhancement Programmes* at all the three stages, i.e. Basic, Secondary and Higher education. Other initiated programmes include the *Early Childhood Education Programme*, *National Action Plan on Illiteracy* and the *Mobark-khol initiative*. While the reform processes in Egypt education stems from a thorough analysis of the nature of local, regional and world changes, increasing impacts of *globalization* and Information Technology revolution too are being felt. The ruling propound a new paradigm of *pillars for reform* as,

There are three major pillars for reforms are as, the broadening the base of *community participation*, achieving total *quality in education* and completing the *knowledge infrastructure*. In addition, it offers its vision of reform in five major areas as, “*technical education, Al-Azhar education, early childhood education, education dropouts, the tension caused by public examinations*.”<sup>1</sup> As the Egypt education system is the largest in the West Asia and North Africa region and among the largest systems in the World, the World Bank (2002) praises Egypt as, “few countries in the developing world can match the commitment to reform” It further adds, “besides, the Government’s commitment to reform is matched by an equally strong commitment to education on the part of private households which are estimated to spend

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<sup>1</sup> National Democratic Party (2002), *Education Reform (NDP Document)*, Egypt, September.



approximately three percent of GDP on admission fees, textbooks, supplies, and private tutoring lessons.”<sup>2</sup>

During the 1980s, Egypt experienced macroeconomic imbalance, heavy external debt, distortion in the allocation of labour force, over-staffing of government and public enterprises, unequal education and employment opportunities, and a high unemployment rate, particularly among secondary and post-secondary graduates (Nagwa Megahed). A combination of factors generated such a dramatic situation, including the economic crisis of the 1980s, the limitation of private economic activities, the labour force strategy (which guarantees a government job to any university graduate), and the educational policy that aimed to increase the proportion of technical secondary schools versus general schools in order to restrict the university enrollment.

Since the deterioration of the economy in the 1980s made it difficult to sustain a full employment policy or equal educational opportunities, the failure of the economy to stimulate private investment and employment outside the informal sector compounded the problem. Events in the Persian Gulf also weakened the safety valve of external migration. Thus, as the 1980s progressed, “labour force growth out-paced the creation of employment opportunities and open unemployment rose.”<sup>3</sup> So a comprehensive economic reform allowing the private sector to achieve rapid growth was viewed to be essential for both economic development and job creation. Accordingly, reform of the educational system was required and should have paralleled the economic reform in order to provide a labour force with skills that matched the new labour market requirements.

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<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2002), *Arab Republic of Egypt Education Sector Review: Progress and Priorities for the Future*, Volume 1, Human Development Group, Report No. 24905-EGT, October.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank (2000), *Egypt: Country assistance evaluation: World Bank Document*, Washington DC.

However in the next decade also Egypt experienced macroeconomic imbalance, heavy external debt, distortion in the allocation of labour, and over-staffing of government and public enterprises. By mid-1991, the EHDR (2000/01) observes,

The Government of Egypt had adopted a comprehensive stabilization and structural adjustment program, which gained the support of the IMF and the World Bank. Fiscal, monetary and foreign exchange policies were revised and rationalized, and macroeconomic balances restored. These measures included the control of inflation, restoration of fiscal balance and of the current account balance, the stabilization of the exchange rate after a marked devaluation in 1991 and the liberalization of the trade regime. The former import-substituting strategy has been discarded in favor of an export promotion drive. Opening up to foreign trade is increasingly being attempted. Successive reductions in tariff rates and the elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade have been implemented. Generous fiscal incentives for private domestic and foreign investments have been created. In spite of this successful overall stabilization, little has been achieved in the area of structural adjustment, such as bureaucratic and institutional reform, legislative simplification and modernization, consistent productivity growth and privatization. However, the infrastructure has been mostly expanded and upgraded, population growth has slowed down since the beginning of the nineties and attempts made to reduce overcrowding in the old valley and in major urban centers. Large investment projects in regional development are being implemented and industrial pollution combated. Nevertheless, the continuous concern of the GOE to maintain fiscal balance, and at the same time to ensure provision of social services to an ever-increasing population, in particular universal enrollment in basic education and increased access to health services, has resulted in a marked deterioration in the quality of such services.<sup>4</sup>

Though the educated youngsters are the trophies of Egypt's policy commitments and social development investments of the 1990s, they also pose a real challenge. Some estimates, the UN Common Country Assessment Team suggest that,

as many as 600,000 new jobs must be created every year to keep the economy and Egypt on a stable course of economic growth. Unfortunately, the quality of preparation for new employment opportunities is not keeping pace with the needs of a changing marketplace. Diplomas no longer ensure employment. And

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<sup>4</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning, *Egypt Human Development Report 2000/01*, Egypt, 2001, p. 25-26.

not all children are in school. Behind the positive national averages and trends of the past decade lie the disparities in educational opportunity and health status.<sup>5</sup> In this context the country has undergone numerous amounts of reform initiatives both from the international donors' agencies and by the government itself. As the per the World Education Encyclopaedia (2002)<sup>6</sup> Egypt ranks fourth in the world on the list of countries implementing privatization programmes at present, extensive foreign influences are apparent through Egyptian education. Examples include, quoting the World Education Encyclopaedia (2002),

UNESCO and Fulbright support of overseas teacher training, World Bank engagement in distance education and educational reform as part of loan programs and technical and scientific education aid using expertise, facilities and equipment from Americans, French, Germans, Italians, and Japanese. UNICEF aids in development in educational materials. Teachers are sent overseas to the United States, the United Kingdom, and France for training. The Egyptian-Swiss Fund for Development works to primary education. Pan Arabic conferences set the aims and goals of education in Egypt and other nations.<sup>7</sup>

With regard to the reform initiatives and plans in Egypt, the World Bank recommends a lengthy list as follows.

Political support and societal mobilization to execute the modernization programmes; Seriousness in administration to ensure discipline within the school and university; Increasing state allocated annual funds to modernize the schools; Continuing free education for everyone while mobilizing the local communities to provide additional funding for the educational institutions to implement reform and modernization; Accepting decentralization in school management both academically and financially; Societal contributions to building new schools and universities through participating in the building expenses; Collaboration of the society with the State to meet the threat of private tutoring, while providing assistance to students within the school; Acceptance of the role of accreditation and quality assurance agencies whether for pre-

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations Common Country Assessment Team (2001), *EGYPT: Common Country Assessment*, Cairo, Egypt, December, (p. 14).

<sup>6</sup> Ferguson, Rebecca Marlow (Ed.) (2002), *World Education Encyclopedia: A Survey of Educational Systems Worldwide*, Volume 1, Gale group, USA.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. n.6

university or university education and what this entails of applying internationally competitive criteria to assessing the performance of education institutions, teacher and faculty members; Experimental application of decentralized management where there is a larger space of autonomy and where there is a board of trustees formed of the local society for each school and for each geographical area; Societal acceptance of the idea of integrated educational systems: general education, technical and religious whether government or private and allowing movement of students between them. Also, subjecting all these schools to the same criteria of accreditation and quality assurance; The responsible role of national, independent and party media to sponsor educational reform plans and to mobilize the society to support these plans, while maintaining objective discussions of the positive and negative sides of the reform process; Integrating with the Arab and the Islamic educational institutions through the Arab Universities Federation, the Islamic universities federation and particularly in the areas of system and criteria of accreditation and quality assurance.<sup>8</sup>

Added to this the Egypt Human Development Report (1999) also proposed a list of priorities for reform. According to this,

Building on the experiences of education reform in both developed and developing countries, and on the situational analysis for Egypt, the priorities for reform involve four principal instruments, namely: (i) improving efficiency of public spending; (ii) expanding private provision; (iii) diversification of financing sources; and (iv) redefining the role of government, the institutional set-up and regulatory framework for education reform.<sup>9</sup>

#### **THE INITIATIVES: The Basic Education Framework**

The Basic Education Framework marks the beginning of a new phase in Egyptian education. The focus has shifted from simply increasing access, which by and large had been accomplished in the mid 1990s to improving equity and quality as measured through student performance. The Framework recognizes that the reform process is evolutionary and that it will require guidance and feedback through periodic assessments of the implementation of reforms. Serious attempts to review and improve primary and

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. n.2

<sup>9</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning, *Egypt Human Development Report 1998/98*, Egypt, 1999.

preparatory curricula took place shortly after the national conferences of 1993 and 1994. Types of curriculum reforms sought includes updating content within existing subjects, and introducing new teaching topics (computer science, technology and new concepts dealing with democracy, human rights, environment, and tolerance). Similar efforts to improve teacher training programs and to reform current examinations and the assessment system have also taken place during the last decade. However the Egypt Human Development Report observes that the results remain below expectation. So in 1996 the Government initiated the *Basic Education Enhancement Program* to extend full coverage to vulnerable groups, especially girls, and to raise the quality of instruction. In this context the World Bank (2004) reports the project objective as follows,

The primary objective of the project was to assist the government in achieving universal enrollment in basic education by improving and accelerating the implementation facet of its strategy to: (i) strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to effect seamless and cogent systemic management; (ii) improve instructional quality; (iii) provide universal access to basic education, focusing on females and poor children; (iv) reduce illiteracy among children; and; (v) mobilize community support and resources for the education sector.<sup>10</sup>

Concerning the components in the Project Objectives the Report adds,

(i) improve access and equity through a well-designed school construction and maintenance program that could be used as a model by the MOE; (ii) ameliorate the quality of teaching and consolidate advances in curricula design by reinforcing the in-service teacher training system; (iii) strengthen MOE's institutional capacity in policy analysis, management and education planning through training of MOE staff and further development and efficient use of an educational management information system (EMIS); and (iv) assist in defining policy options and alternatives in addressing two priority education issues through studies to complement ongoing Bank-sponsored public sector investment and human resources development studies.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Human Development Sector (2004), Implementation completion report (ida-24760) On a Credit In the amount of us\$55.5 million To the Arab republic of Egypt For a Basic education improvement project, Report no: 29269, The World Bank, Middle East and North Africa Region, June 8, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Though there are some voluntary submission of shortcomings by the World Bank (2004) like the design of original project followed a “traditional brick and mortar approach at inception in 1993”<sup>12</sup> more or less the Project seems to have been achieved satisfactorily.

### *The Reform of Secondary Education*

The basic education reform program was followed in 1998 by the government’s *Secondary Education Reform Program*, supported by the World Bank<sup>13</sup>. Its objective is to improve the *school-to-work nexus* through improving access to general secondary education, reviewing technical education, and aligning curricula with the skills needs of employers and higher education. The program also supports local accountability for quality through parent councils and boards of trustees. In addition to these reforms, the government has committed itself to the increase of coverage for kindergarten for 4 to 5 year olds from 12 percent to 65 percent of the age group.

Until recently, bilateral development agencies (e.g., USAID) and multilateral organizations (e.g., UNESCO, the World Bank) have focused their attention mostly on primary education, vocational education and higher education. However, a number of factors, most notably considerable progress toward providing universal primary education and a global economy that demands higher level knowledge and skills (than is usually acquired in primary schooling) from an increasing number of workers, have contributed to an interest in enhancing access to and improving the quality of secondary education.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. n.2

There are two political and economic facts of the 1980s further explain the purpose of this educational policy. On the one hand, the expansion of the university was greatly stimulated by the abolition of fees; when combined with an “employment guarantee,” a very strong demand for higher education was thus created. University enrolments exploded during the period between 1977 and 1984, with enrolments expanding at about 5.4% per year; the number of students was five times larger than the designed capacity of the universities’ facilities. On the other hand, the decline of oil revenues in the 1980s and the levelling off of foreign exchange, which led to increased borrowing and external debt made it difficult for the government to sustain a full employment policy (Nagwa Megahed).<sup>14</sup>

The beginning of the 1990s witnessed serious problems that were promoted by secondary education reform’s interaction with concrete socioeconomic circumstances of the 1980s. The need of economic and educational reform had grown urgent. In this context some questions arose. How can an educational reform balance the enrollment rates between general and technical secondary schools in order to provide equal post-secondary education opportunities and decrease the high unemployment rate among graduates from technical secondary schools?

The Government of Egypt faced these questions in the mid-1990s, and in response, carried a comprehensive secondary education reform that included both technical and general secondary schools. Since 1996, there have been international as well as national cooperation with the Ministry of Education in order to develop the required comprehensive reform. Such reform is known as Secondary Education Reform

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<sup>14</sup> Megahed, Nagwa, The Reform of Secondary Education in Egypt during the 1990s, Retrieved from <http://www.ginie.org/cstudies/egypt/cs-egypt.htm>

Program. There are three secondary education reform projects that have supported the economic and employment strategies: the *Industrial and Agricultural Vocational Secondary Experimental School*, established in 1990; the *Mubarak-Kohl Project* for Promoting the Technical Education and Vocational Training, established in 1995; and the *Secondary Education Reform Program* (SERP), established in 1999.

The Industrial and Agricultural Vocational Secondary Experimental Schools were set up by Ministerial Decree 205 of 24 June 1990. The experimental schools offer a three-year program and accept holders of the Basic Education Certificate. The objective is to prepare students in diverse industrial and agricultural areas to participate in the various aspects of work and production. The purpose of this project is relevant to the government's policy of increasing the agriculture's employment share through encouraging students' enrollment in the agriculture program in secondary schools.

**Table 4.1**  
**Development of the Dual Vocational Education and Training System in Egypt**

Number of	Sep 1995	Jan 2000
Schools	2	25
Apprentices (Male and Female)	220	4,500
Teachers and administrators involved directly in the project	36	650
Participating companies	65	450
Building and construction companies	-	175
Cities where the project is implemented	1	20
Teachers attended training courses in Germany	14	280
Instructors attended training courses in Germany	-	80
Teachers attended upgrading courses in Egypt (more than once)	14	900
Instructors attended upgrading courses in Egypt (more than once)	20	500
German short term experts	8	75
German long term experts	4	8

*Source:* Sayed. A. and Diehl. M. (2000). Egyptian-German technical cooperation promotion of Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVT) system: Mubarak-Kohl initiative: A program on the TEVT-reform of Ministry of Education and Economy. Cairo, Egypt; MOE, Arab Republic of Egypt. (2000a). Mubarak-Kohl initiative for promoting the Technical Education and Vocational Training in Egypt. Cairo, Egypt.



The idea of the Mubarak–Kohl Project includes adopting the dual system of German technical education in Egypt. It is widely known that the high standard of the German dual system and the high qualifications of its workers are an important contributor to Germany's economic success. President Hosny Mubarak and former Chancellor Hellmut Kohl established Egyptian-German cooperation in 1991 to implement a dual vocational educational system in Egypt, benefiting from the German experience. In 1992, the Ministry of Education in Bonn agreed to assist Egypt technically in developing its technical education and vocational training by introducing the German dual system in Egypt's technical industrial secondary schools' three-year program. The objective of implementing the dual vocational education and training system in Egypt was to ensure cooperation between public and private sectors in order to improve student performance in technical industrial secondary schools. The Project in general is considered by the policy makers and private sector leaders as one of the most successful social projects in Egypt. Implementing the dual system in two other specializations, i.e. construction and service-related trades are the future plan of the project.

### ***The Reform Efforts in Higher Education***

In 1997 the Minister of Higher Education convened a *National Commission on Higher Education Reform*, and this led to a National Conference in 2000. The outcome of the Conference was a long-term reform program to occur over a period of seventeen years. It was proposed for three main reasons. The first reason was to raise the level of efficiency by granting universities more autonomy and by rationalizing government funding. The second objective was to raise quality through faculty and staff training as well as through

the introduction of a competitive fund, and, thirdly, the Conference addressed the quality and relevance of midlevel technical education and determined that reformed curriculum, strengthened management, and consolidated small institutions would raise its standing.

At the Higher education level, the Minister of Higher Education formed an ad hoc *National Commission on Higher Education Reform* in 1997. The 20 member Commission consisted of prominent Egyptians from all fields from industrialists and parliamentarians to members of the academic community. The Government formed 6 sub-committees involving expert groups, held a series of public hearings over the course of a year, and participated in an international symposium with world-class experts on higher education. The work of the Commission led a National Conference on Higher Education in February 2000. The Conference Declaration, which was endorsed by President Mubarak, outlined a program of reform over a seventeen-year period and was incorporated into the long-term vision. The aims of the reform program are lengthy. First, to improve efficiency by the World Bank (2002) recommends, granting universities more, especially budgetary, autonomy; rationalizing funding by introducing a funding formula, and creating a quality assurance council as precursor to a national accreditation system. Secondly, to raise the quality and relevance of university education through in-service training to faculty and staff; development of an inter-university library system, and improvement in teaching and learning through creation of a competitive fund. Third, to improve the quality and relevance of midlevel technical education through the consolidation of small institutions; curriculum reform, and strengthened management.<sup>15</sup>

The Endeavour to attain these goals will be supported by the new World Bank-funded Higher Education Enhancement Project (HEEP). Beginning in the late 1990s, the

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. n.2

Government initiated a stake holder's dialogue that culminated in agreements for a long-term (2002-2019) systemic reform of higher education to improve governance and efficiency, raise quality and relevance, and diversify provision through use of low-cost, distance learning. Recent initiative of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) offers the promise of significant changes in higher education financing Egypt. The creation of a *Higher Education Enhancement Fund* (HEEF) introduces the concept of competition for resources based on peer review using technical criteria, and there is the promise of greater institutional autonomy in the management of financial resources and a more rational procedure for determining individual institution budgets.

**Growth in the number of pupils in the last decade**

Stage	The academic year 1991/1992	The academic year 2000/2001
Pre-School	232051	383616
Primary	6541725	7142127
One Class	21732	55826
Preparatory	3593365	4427944
Special Education	14428	30770
General Secondary	572026	1087503
Industrial Secondary	521670	894967
Agricultural Secondary	132787	203433
Commercial Secondary	455727	953060
Teachers' Colleges	25335	-

Source: Ministry of Education, *The National Plan for Education for All (2002/2003-2015/2016)*, Arab Republic of Egypt, Cairo, February 2003.

#### ***School Management and Accountability:***

The long-term reform strategy emphasizes improving management structures and practices at the national, governorate, district, and school levels through "reviewing and evaluating existing management policies, practices, decrees/laws, and decision making processes at all levels, preparing a proposal for changes in management structures, and developing training programs for senior managements, administrators, and teachers."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Megahed, Nagwa, *The Rejoice of Secondary Education in Egypt during the 1990s*, Retrieved from

The proposed improvement of management structures, in this context, doesn't include changes in the centralized management policy and decision-making practices, while the decentralized implementation of such policy at the local and school levels will be promoted through increasing the authorization of school management to have more responsibilities for physical resources, financial management, and instructional materials, and also through supporting the communitys' and private sectors' involvement in the school management.

The World Bank Report<sup>17</sup> also recommends the same for strengthening the management, as the involvement of local communities and school staff in the education process, to provide information to schools on teaching practices and student learning outcomes and to train managers at all levels to use the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) for decision making and decentralize decision-making authority to school managers.

Since educational reform is a gradual and not a one shot process, it is important to prepare the floor for reformers and those who benefit from reform. This, however, should not impede the rate of change at the level of the central management, educational districts and schools and the development of their method and the modification of their responsibilities. Education reform in Egypt should not be isolated from what is happening in the world (see National Democratic Party, 2002).

Reform has to carry a futuristic vision and to reflect higher and university education, whether in the systems of study or the development and connection of curricula to the local and international communities. Other issues like the budgeting reforms for instance

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<http://www.ginie.org/cstudies/egypt/cs-egypt.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. n.2

are also necessary in order to give individual institutions the autonomy to allocate resources and the respective responsibility of autonomy especially at the higher education level. The quality of instruction needs to be improved and will more than likely require higher levels of spending per student. The supply of higher education will also need to be increased in the future, to ensure that the growing number of secondary school graduates have the opportunity for further education. The principal policy question is how to improve the quality and access will be financed. The role of the private sector both in finance and supply will undoubtedly need to be strengthened substantially.

So if Egypt is to succeed in raising the quality of instruction while improving equity, it needs to use its education budget more efficiently and to reallocate spending from excess administrators and teachers to other non-personnel resources. Thus the reform program is affordable in the long run if the above said recommendations on quality, equity, and efficiency are carried out in tandem. Regarding the dimensions of reform there are four important proportions like, the political, economic, cultural and the social dimensions, which are all, supported either by endogenous or exogenous factors or both. Since education is the single important factor which is influencing as well as being influenced by these reforms, in the time period of the present study, that is from 1990, there are an number of programmes both under the Governmental as well as non-governmental and external aided initiatives have flooded the country. Though the initiatives in the education sector are the prime concern of the present work, the focus is more towards the Human Development aspects of Egypt in line with the given initiatives in the period. Although some progress like the stakeholder participation in education reform, especially at the grassroots level, is now said to have been made, the government

has to realize how vital it is to encourage the new generation to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including the scientific developments of the future and their daily applications such as the increasing use of computers.

The reform of the Arab knowledge model has to move in step with the reform of Arab social values. The restoration socio-economic structure free flows of knowledge within society require a democratic value system and the elimination of corruption. Modern Arab society according to Arab Human Development Report (2003) has not given sufficient attention to women's empowerment. Rationality, scientific methods and open-mindedness cannot proceed without the renovation of political, social and economic values and their wide diffusion as creative principles. Current reform projects and Egypt Human Development Report (2004) complains "are mostly joint ventures between public, private, and international agencies. Policies for these reform initiatives are formulated by these agencies then presented to the public as a fait accompli which does not allow for input from the broader constituency. Most projects focused on reforming the administrative and organizational arrangements of schools at the expense of reforming outdated curriculum or the training of teachers in current teaching techniques. However, these reform projects are ad hoc and incremental, with little evidence on their impact". To conclude, the aid to the region Arab Human Development Report (2003) reports,

has concentrated on reforming and developing basic education, particularly increasing the rate of enrolment at schools and the teaching of girls in rural areas. Only a very small part of regional and international resources has been allocated to scientific and technological development, and most of that has gone towards projects concerned with the preservation of the environment. Another essential point about implementation of reforms is that the educational systems are suffering from performance gap between policy formulation and implementation. So

through interchange with high level officials to derive important insights into priority needs in further research and training on the relationship between educational planning and administration in the context of educational reform is the crucial area to be concerned about.

### **Future Implications**

Education reform is most effective when it involves reforms at all levels, as changes at one level affect other levels. In Egypt, the Government worked with donors to develop programs that are aligned with the vision. According to the World Bank Report (2002), Egypt has laid out a vision of the education system it wants to have in the future and has begun a process of reform that will take time to fully implement. A number of policies could be adopted to expedite the process of change and attain that vision more quickly. The World Bank Report (2002) drawing on the analysis of Egyptian data and international experience with educational reform recommends some policies which are as follows,

*To improve quality*, we should replace the existing examination system with rigorous, continuous, cumulative and comprehensive evaluations, create a Learning-Innovations Fund managed by the school council, develop teacher capacity in new curriculum, teaching practices, and technology use, continue to improve new technology in the classroom and to establish a competitive fund to foster change in higher education. *To increase efficiency*, the recommendations like the rationalization of higher education funding and introduce quality assurance mechanisms, rationalize enrolments in public higher education institutions and encourage private provisions and open universities and to redeploy and retrain excess teachers and administrators. Lastly *to improve equity*, the recommendations like the expansion of the Early Childhood Education programs in disadvantaged areas. to target subsidies on the poor to reduce the private costs of schooling, to initiate parent education programs to improve child development in the home and to replace end of primary school leaving examination with continuous assessment were charted out by the Bank.

To quote the ruling party document (NDP 2002) which is advocating the need for community participation in the reform efforts as the *guiding principles* for reform is also worthy to consider for the implications of the future. According to which,

- a) Higher education is a human right and the state has to provide it to every individual who academically qualifies.
- b) The importance of integrating local specifications, national interests and global inputs while developing the educational systems.
- c) Respecting the Constitutional provision for free education while identifying sources of funding for higher education.
- d) Qualitative reform of higher education through reviewing curricula periodically and relating them to world scientific and technological advances and keeping-up with the international and local changes. This necessitates continuous emphasis on human resource training in relation to the required education reform.
- e) Continuous review of the organizational and job structures, educational programmes and curricula, systems and mechanisms, scientific research and management of education in a way that ensures development, applying professional institutional assessment.
- f) Full supervision by the State over education and the follow-up of institutional performance especially with private institutions to ensure that they do not turn into commercial projects. Supervision of the State over education is a component of State supremacy.
- g) Expanding opportunities for continuing education and allowing for tailored programs that meet the needs of the student and those of the labour market.
- h) Coordination between school education and higher education and reforming colleges of education to produce schoolteachers capable of leading the required change.
- i) Enhancing the quality of education at the higher institutes and integrating them to the higher education as they cover an important sector of education, namely the vocational and technical sector.
- j) Emphasizing the coordination among institutions of higher education, allowing opportunities for developing interdisciplinary networks and movements of students among these educational institutions while applying a national system for academic requirements and qualifications.
- k) Coordinating between and integrating institutions of higher education and the service and production sector.<sup>18</sup>

Thus the ongoing reform initiatives in Egypt in general are giving a mixed picture. For instance the Committee on International Relations of the United States<sup>19</sup> observed,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. n.1



the Egyptian economy has often under-performed its peers, despite important natural advantages and massive assistance from the United States (*Egypt is the second largest aid recipient from the US*) and other donors. Despite that massive assistance, or perhaps because of it, Egypt's economy and political system have largely resisted reform (emphasis added).

This is in contrast with the World Bank's (2002) appraisal, which observes that,

Taken together, few countries in the developing world can match the commitment to reform one finds in Egypt and its, "effort to reform all levels of education is motivated, in part, by a changing global context that places high priority on a flexible, skilled, and creative labour force."<sup>20</sup>

In the country documents though all the literature are praising the government efforts, one can subtly drawn out between the lines, the problematic issues. For instance, the recent Egypt Human Development Report (2004) observes,

The current reform projects are mostly joint ventures between public, private, and international agencies. Policies for these reform initiatives are formulated by these agencies then presented to the public as a *fait accompli*, which does not allow for input from the broader constituency. Most projects focused on reforming the administrative and organisational arrangements of schools at the expense of reforming outdated curriculum or the training of teachers in current teaching techniques. However, these reform projects are ad hoc and incremental, with little evidence on their impact (emphasis added).<sup>21</sup>

Apart from these, there are some apprehensions like the income distribution is highly skewed and state education system is not in good shape, it is held that reforms might further enhance the gap between rich and poor and thus jeopardizing the very purpose of social stability (see Megahed Nagwa). Although the reform issues are providing a mixed picture, based on the available literature one can understand the massive expansion of the system even at the cost of educational quality (see the table below).

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<sup>19</sup> U.S. Government Printing Office (2004), *U.S. Economic Assistance to Egypt: Does it Advance Reform?*, Hearing Report of the Committee on International Relations, June 17.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. n.2

<sup>21</sup> UNDP and The Institute of National Planning (2004), *Egypt Human Development Report 2004: Choosing Decentralization for Good Governance*, Egypt.

### Growth in the number of pupils in the last decade

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*Source:* Ministry of Education, The National Plan for Education for All (2002/2003-2015/2016), Arab Republic of Egypt, Cairo, February 2003.

By reforming education, giving priority to research that targets the needs of the poor and by more rigorously following up on global conferences; Egypt's future will be bright. However the lessons like, "advance financing is vital to the efficient start-up of a project; Project funding for key project implementing agencies is beneficial to the project's sustainability and future operation; Use of Government agencies outside the MOE to monitor specific project inputs is beneficial; A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system should be an integral part of the project (World Bank 2004 p. 15)" be taken care of. Egypt as pointed out by Canin, "faces many challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in order to provide a better life for all of its citizens by balancing economic growth with social development needs and preserving its place as a leader among the family of nations."<sup>22</sup> Therefore how Egypt develops its human resources will be the key to this end.

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<sup>22</sup> Canin, J Edmund (1999), "Getting Back to Basics" in UNDP and the Institute of National Planning, *Egypt Human Development Report 1998/99*, Egypt, (p.26).

**CHAPTER V**  
**CONCLUSION**

## CONCLUSIONS

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Education is a key factor in today's knowledge-intensive world, it stimulates a critical outlook and creative skills to accelerate the pace of development. Education and development are mutually reinforcing. Having surveyed the impacts of education on human development in the case of Egypt, the important points are outlined here. Although the contribution of education to human development is widely recognised, very rarely the linkages between educational reforms and human development have been analysed. The present work in this context is an attempt to examine whether at all the educational reforms have any role in human development in Egypt. The qualitative analysis concludes that even though the educational reforms play a significant role in human development, the emerging problems to the aspirations of human development in general and to the educational system in particular raises some serious doubts. Since the present study is an effort to understand the issues which are in the current debate in a qualitative way, the (quantitative) data inconsistencies between the different sources (both national and international) are misleading. So the quantitative data have to be improved.

As discussed in the earlier Chapters, the human capabilities in West Asia are weak and poorly utilized and illiteracy still saps Arab human capabilities. As the capabilities are not effectively utilized, it is evident the level of human welfare attained in the region is low particularly with respect to human development. Egypt in this context, the persistent and increasing gaps between Lower and Upper Egypt with regard to the aspects of human deprivation, especially the number of illiterates and poor, remain a

challenge. Since the comparison of human development indicators in Upper Egypt to Lower Egypt reveals uneven progress, it remains to be seen if improvement on the national level has trickled down to close the regional gaps. Hence the present and future perspectives of human development in Egypt depend largely on how far it will succeed in implementing a future oriented reform in its education system.

Even though Egypt has achieved considerable progress in raising school enrollment rates and improving many of the health status indicators, one HDI component that still needs to be brought down at a much faster pace is the *illiteracy rate*, which has been the second reason, after population growth, for Egypt is lagging behind in human development on the international level.

The picture is all the more bleak where the prevalence of high levels of unemployment in societies characterized by low living standards to start with and weak social security networks in a context of widening poverty and worsening maldistribution of income and wealth. The available information does strongly suggest that low levels of education enrolment, the low levels of literacy among women and low employment opportunities indeed provide a poor basis for development options for local communities.

So the long crisis of Egyptian education, the information and technology revolution in the world and the ambitions of the Egyptian people to occupy a leading and pioneering position in the world on the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century put pressure on the educational policy to move fast and effectively cope with the information revolution. This Chapter in this background tries to document various recommendations based on the available sources.

From the perspective of building and utilizing human capabilities, it is evident that institutions providing public services, particularly in education and health care, should function well. Applying the principles of rational public administration, the AHDR (2004) recommends,

The most important reforms for guaranteeing freedom need to be implemented in the *educational* institutions. A mix of measures relating to administration, curricula, pedagogy and student evaluation methods is required to open the door to freedom, as an ultimate value in itself, and as a means to knowledge acquisition leading to the attainment of human dignity. These reforms should work together to create a mentality of freedom and respect for human rights, and implant the values and tools of good governance in the minds of learners.<sup>1</sup>

If people are the focus of development efforts, then these efforts, the AHDR (2002) directs, “should be geared to enhancing the range of choices in all areas of human endeavour for every human being.”<sup>2</sup> Ever since the strong human capabilities are critical to the achievement of progress in the Arab world, to create such capabilities, the Report in some other section propounds three necessary objectives as follows.

Full (100 per cent) enrolment in basic education and an extension of mandatory schooling to at least 10 years, with simultaneous efforts to expand post-basic education;

Creation of an institutional system for adult education that continues for life and that is flexible enough to allow for constant improvement. Its purposes would be to eliminate illiteracy and institutionalize the principle of lifetime education for graduates of the education system;

Quality enhancement of all phases of education to pave the way for renewal, excellence and creativity and incorporate modern knowledge and technology into Arab societies. The creation of quality education should be given the priority it deserves if the Arab world is to achieve its full potential. This will mean both allocating increased resources to education and using resources more efficiently.<sup>3</sup>

To stress the importance of human capital, the AHDR (2003) directs the region as,

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<sup>1</sup> The Regional Bureau for Arab States (2004), *The Arab Human Development Report 2004: Towards Freedom in the Arab World*, UNDP, USA (p. 172).

<sup>2</sup> The Regional Bureau for Arab States (2002), *The Arab Human Development Report 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generation*, UNDP, USA (p. 15).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. n.2, p. 56.

All periodic statistical operations (censuses and specialised surveys) should include elements for measuring human capital (i. e., educational attainment and experience). Efforts to quantify human capital should be complemented by good measures of its quality. This is attainable either by expanding the participation of Arab countries in international studies of the quality of *educational* attainment or – even better – by conducting Arab comparative studies on the quality of human capital (emphasis added).<sup>4</sup>

To define the philosophy underlying a new education structure, the AHDR (2002)

provided some principles as,

The individual should be central to the learning process. Without implying indifference to the community or absence of cooperative behaviour, the dignity of the individual should be respected;

Modern knowledge is power. The critical faculties of Arab youth should be encouraged as both a guide and an approach to better societal structures;

Without denigrating higher values and established creeds, intellectual and cultural heritage should not be immune to criticism and change in the face of scientific evidence. Dialogue should be valued as an indispensable process, one that is as likely to end in agreement as in creative disagreement;

Creative human effort lies at the heart of progress. Arab education systems should be restructured to give precedence to creativity and the dignity of productive work;

The spirit of challenge should be stimulated in the Arab people, who should shape their future through creative responses to their natural and human surroundings;

Equal educational opportunities should be made available to all children. Disadvantaged groups should be able to participate in the various levels of the education process in a manner commensurate with their abilities rather than the financial and social means of their parents. At the earliest stages of this process, a degree of affirmative action would be required through fellowships, tuition loans, health care and proper nutrition;

Education should aim at promoting, in a cohesive and harmonious manner, students' physical, emotional and societal well-being as well as their acquisition of knowledge;

Education should help children and youth to understand themselves and their own culture, past and present, creatively and in the context of a world where cultures can flourish only through openness and dialogue;

The objectives of the education process should be derived from the global vision of twenty-first-century education. Education should integrate the Arab people into the age in which they live, an age governed by the exactness of science--its causality, rigour and method;

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<sup>4</sup> The Regional Bureau for Arab States (2003), *The Arab Human Development Report 2003: Building and Knowledge Society*, UNDP, USA (p. 87).

Education should help the young to cope with a future of uncertainty, acquire flexibility in the face of uncertainty and contribute to shaping the future.<sup>5</sup> Coming to the context of Egypt, the admission of EHDR has to be recalled. In the context of decentralisation it says,

the education sector, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is considered by law to be decentralized in terms of budgets, but in reality government financing of public education is highly centralized: school fees are collected but not retained by the schools: they are directly transferred to the MOE, which also sets the salary scale for all teachers and school administrative staff.<sup>6</sup>

So in the country context this admission of blemish has to be rectified by the alternative policy decisions like the educational decentralisation. To popularize ICT as a tool for knowledge acquisition at the regional level, the AHDR (2003) advocates a strong pan-Arab information policy could be founded on the following strategic principles:

Adopting a supra-sectoral approach, i.e., policies that respond to the growing integration of the information, media and telecommunications sectors;

Adopting a cultural approach to the information industry while recognising the computerization of the Arabic language is a basic springboard for Arab ICT development and applications;

Emphasising Arab information integration, especially the principle of sharing resources and data;

Giving priority to the utilisation of ICT in the fields of education, training, and public health and building an infrastructure for the Arab cultural industry. Developing concrete regional action plans for ICT development, with visible, high-level government, donor and private sector support.<sup>7</sup>

In the background of Egypt, the EHDR (2000/01) observed that,

Increasing the number of people with high skills in IT is seen as a prerequisite for Egypt to build, manage and effectively use the information infrastructure of the twenty-first century. This will be achieved through schools, universities, communities, and the workplace, using the appropriate means for each.<sup>8</sup>

The observations of the UN Country Assessment Team also sound the same in the context of Egypt. To quote, “despite an abundance of university and higher institute

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. n.2, p. 56.

<sup>6</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (2004), *Egypt Human Development Report 2004: Choosing Decentralization for Good Governance*, Egypt (p. 2).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. n.4, p. 171-172.

<sup>8</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (2001), *Egypt Human Development Report 2000/01*, Egypt (p. 86)



graduates, Egypt lacks the skilled IT engineers and other business-oriented professionals it will need if Egypt is to compete strongly in international and regional markets.”<sup>9</sup> Regarding the reform in education, there is (AHDR 2002) some precious observations. To quote,

Education reform should, the Report recommends, “include discovering, fostering and monitoring talent by, for example, introducing into schools special programmes for children who display a talent. This would broaden the base for talent stimulation and enhancement and allow all children to develop the talent they potentially possess. Under this model, talented children could also advance through the various grades and curricula at an accelerated pace.”<sup>10</sup>

The reform of the Arab knowledge model, the AHDR (2003) adds,

has to move in lockstep with the reform of Arab social values. The restoration socio-economic structure *free flows of knowledge within society require a democratic value system and the elimination of corruption. Modern Arab society has not given sufficient attention to women's empowerment* of rationality, scientific methods and open-mindedness cannot proceed without the renovation of political, social and economic values and their wide diffusion as creative principles. The new core values that will drive the Arab renaissance are freedom, justice, respect for human dignity and basic human rights, integrity, the pursuit of public welfare, accountability, pluralism and the ethics of dialogue and political alternation.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore the education reform, in brief, as in the words of the AHDR (2002) “should be a main and permanent item on the agenda of Arab summit meetings.”<sup>12</sup> While recommending the issues of Knowledge the subsequent AHDR (2003) reports that,

Knowledge dissemination is about more than the mere transfer of information and data, although such transfer, through multiple channels, should be an integral part of the process. The real challenge is how to turn this information into a strong reserve of knowledge that will impact the production of new knowledge and transform it into knowledge capital that contributes to human development.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. n.7, p. 66-67.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. n.2, p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. n.4, p. 143-144.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. n.2, p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. n.4, p. 51.

The enormous gains in knowledge the Report further adds that, “accrue from a vital local R&D establishment should not be held hostage to social indifference.”<sup>14</sup> So the intelligentsia should, the AHDR (2003) directs,

campaign for institutional rule, the absence of which will impede the rise of the knowledge society. Intellectuals and academics have a clear stake in seeing due independence established in the respective spheres of knowledge and politics, which would lead to knowledge becoming at last a free entity.<sup>15</sup>

### *The Teachers & Educational Administration*

For improving the systemic efficiency, the AHDR (2002) recommends that,

an innovative education administration capable of leading the process of renewal, is indispensable. This calls for decentralized administration, the empowerment of local management, greater educational freedom for management and continual updating of management’s knowledge of new trends in education. Administrators should apply education methods that enhance the spirit of solidarity and teamwork, consolidate the concepts of democracy and citizenship, strengthen the link between education and the workplace, encourage constant and continuous education and serve local communities.<sup>16</sup>

The Report, regarding the teachers adds that, “they should play a multifaceted role, e.g., as guide, source of learning and knowledge, coordinator of the learning processes, evaluator of the outcomes of learning, and judge of the individual learners aptitudes and preferences” and “they should be prepared for profound changes in the structure, methods and goals of education. They should become familiar with self-learning, be willing to perform in tandem with other teachers and cooperate with parents and the local community. Teachers should be adept at using the new methods of evaluating students and providing education guidance. They should also be mindful of the link between basic education and the needs of society and the workplace.”<sup>17</sup> This calls for a new type of teacher. Therefore, a radical change is needed in the methods of preparing and training teachers.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.n.4 p. 73.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. n.4, p. 151-152.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. n.2, p. 59.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. n.2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. n.2, p. 58- 59.

The governments in response should introduce a grade-based professional career structure for teachers, with each grade having a clearly defined level of responsibility, independence and set of incentives. These will, the Report pinned the hopes,

encourage excellence in teaching. A system for awarding professional teaching licences could be of considerable help, but only if it is combined with a set of verifiable criteria. The government, teachers colleges and the teachers association should jointly decide upon these criteria. A system of periodic re-licensing could also be put into effect, with teachers undergoing refresher training as needed.<sup>19</sup>

The observed recommendations of the AHDR (2002) on the women's education are a worthy reminder to be discussed here. To quote in length,

It should be noted that Arab countries have scored important successes in girl's education although the share of girls in enrolment is still relatively low, especially in higher education. The main reason for the low GEM values of Arab countries is the limited participation of women in political organizations.<sup>20</sup>

It should also be noted that, the Report adds, "the illiteracy among males in Arab countries is not expected to disappear before the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, and for women, not until 2040."<sup>21</sup> The pronounced recommendations to match the labour market requirements are precious piece to be remembered. To quote the AHDR (2003),

A versatile and flexible system consistent with rapid and ceaseless change in the market for knowledge and jobs should be established in higher education. Such a system should turn out graduates who are capable of continuous self-teaching and of taking their full part in societal progress. Versatility and flexibility are two characteristics that will enable the higher education system to respond to fast changing local and global needs.<sup>22</sup>

To expand the system of higher education in the region, the Report further adds that,

Two important considerations should govern the expansion of higher education: first, it is necessary to end discrimination against weaker social groups, especially young women. Next, account must be taken of the failures of uncalculated expansion in existing institutions, which have led to a tremendous

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. n.2, p. 28.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. n.2 p. 51-52.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. n.4, p. 168.

drop in quality. Higher education institutions, old and new, should enjoy high quality, diversity, and flexibility, and should focus on the fields and institutional forms required for scientific and technological progress. (169)<sup>23</sup>

And regarding the maintenance of quality in the educational institutions, it directed that,

Quality should be improved in present institutions and no new institutions, public or private, should be created unless they can provide better standards of quality. Independent accreditation organisations should be enlisted to help ensure the quality of higher education programmes.<sup>24</sup>

In the same tone the Report further observed,

The continued responsibility of the state should be affirmed and recast such that higher education is liberated from the domination of both government and the unregulated profit motive. The profit motive should be regulated to ensure that the public interest is served, and the creation of non-governmental, non-profit educational organizations ought to be encouraged vigorously.<sup>25</sup>

The tone of recommendations of the earlier report (AHDR 2002) resembles the same. It says,

a full-employment development policy should, include the goal of providing universal, high-quality, development-relevant, basic education and ensuring that no beneficiary is excluded on account of poverty. In some cases, this means going beyond providing free education. For the poorest of the poor, some form of affirmative action in the shape of scholarships that provide for the direct and opportunity costs of education will be necessary. As with basic schooling, children from poor backgrounds should not be excluded from higher levels of education by lack of material means. In addition, redressing the gender gap in education and training must be a core element of the policy agenda.<sup>26</sup>

In the context of Egypt in particular, the EHDR (1998/99) observed that,

High unemployment among university graduates highlights the mismatch between excess supply from tertiary education and the demands of the economy. Studies also indicate that the low quality of public primary schooling characterized by high repetitions and drop out rates means that, the great majority of those now in the labor force who relied on the public schooling system, have neither acquired the learning nor the skills that today's economy requires. This issue needs urgent attention considering that there are approximately 500,000-600,000 new entrants into the labor force each year, many of whom are recent graduates or first time job seekers. Accommodating such an enormous demand for jobs is a huge challenge for any society. This

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. n.4, p. 169.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.n.4, p. 169.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. n.4, p. 168.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. n.2. p. 100.

problem is further compounded and complicated by the fact that new graduates tend not to possess the skills that today's global economy requires.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, with literacy standards falling in the regional as well as Egyptian educational system, those graduating from that system should also be eligible for remedial coaching. Such an important project is a natural and proper sphere for joint Arab cooperation with an aim to transform the educational system into a powerful instrument of social change and development. The short-term economic compulsion in this background should not lead to the introduction of long-term policies that adversely affect the quality, equity, and efficiency aspects relating to education. So the development of education should serve the goals of social equity and economic growth. Equity by gender, socio-economic groups, and reduction in regional disparities in education development should be the major objectives of educational planning.

The pronounced goals of *universalisation of education* in this framework must ensure not merely universal enrolment, but also universal retention and provision of high quality education for all. Lastly the issue of *Islamization of pedagogy* both in the context of West Asia and Egypt should be checked. As religion has no place in performance-based activity, it is a personal thing and should remain that way.

The documented issues and recommendations in this work will, consequently pave the way for pragmatic thinking for the policy planners and makers to eliminate the existing anomalies in the educational system to actively participate in the emerging Knowledge Society. In brief, to arrive at definitive conclusions is very difficult while evaluating the multidimensional factors influencing education in a complex society like Egypt. Education in Egypt, not unlike elsewhere, has a deeply imbedded political dimension.

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<sup>27</sup> UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (1999), *Egypt Human Development Report 1998/99*, Egypt (p. 25).

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**World Education Forum**

Dakar, Senegal  
26-28 April 2000

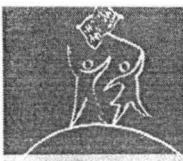


# The Dakar Framework for Action

Education for All:  
Meeting our Collective Commitments

Adopted by the World Education Forum  
Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000

Including six regional  
frameworks for action



Education for All in the Arab States:  
Renewing the Commitment  
The Arab Framework for Action  
to Ensure Basic Learning Needs in the Arab  
States in the Years 2000-2010

Adopted by the Regional Conference on Education for All  
for the Arab States  
Cairo, Egypt, 24-27 January 2000

## Preamble

**Based on** the assessment of the efforts and achievements made in the Arab States as regards basic education, Education for All, since the Jomtien Conference (1990) until the end of the decade (the year 2000), in preparation for the International Forum on EFA (Dakar, April 2000);

**According to:**

- the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Declaration on Education for All, the Arab Document on Children, the Arab Plan for Childhood Care, Protection and Development, and other Arab and international documents on education, and
- the strategies adopted by the Arab Ministers of Education during their meetings;

**Aware of** world challenges and changes and their consequences on the development of the Arab Region, and in order to benefit from their positive achievements while avoiding their negative consequences;

**Conscious of** the importance of education as a key for human development which constitutes a generator of global sustainable development;

**In order to** achieve education for all, both quantitatively and qualitatively, an education of high quality that is aimed at enabling all to achieve excellence and to develop, strengthen and promote their capacities to the fullest extent;

**Reaffirming** the role of education in providing equal educational opportunities for boys and girls, both urban and rural, and in keeping with the spirit of the century represented by the scientific, computer and technological revolutions that reaffirm the concept of self-learning which constitutes the basis for lifelong learning, in order to allow individuals to have access to data and to criticize, select, classify, treat and use this data in the different areas of social, economic and cultural life;

**Considering** the fact that education is a social issue, and that all Arab and international forces, institutions and organizations as well as government and non-governmental associations, unions and organizations, should join efforts to meet the Education for All needs and goals;

**Inspired by** the cultural and spiritual values of the Arab nation which reaffirm that education is an essential dimension of our cultural identity today and in the future;

We, the participants in the Arab Regional Conference on Education for All – EFA 2000 Assessment, held in Cairo from 24 to 27 January 2000, recommend that Arab States adopt the document

entitled *Education for All in the Arab States: Renewing the Commitment* as the Arab Framework for Action to Ensure Basic Learning Needs in the Arab States in the Years 2000-2010.

## Introduction

1. The Arab Framework for Action to Ensure Basic Learning Needs in the Arab States in the Years 2000-2010 is based upon the following:

- (1) The World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, respectively adopted and agreed on by the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990);
- (2) The Mid-decade Review of the International Consultative Forum on EFA (Amman, 1996) and the various international and Arab activities related to the Declaration and Framework for Action undertaken in the 1990s as regards the substance of the two aforementioned documents;
- (3) The documents about childhood and Education for All adopted by the Ministers of Education in the Arab States;
- (4) EFA 2000 Assessment made by the Arab States in preparation for The Arab Regional Conference on Education for All (Cairo, 24-27 January 2000);
- (5) The Preliminary Draft Framework for Action elaborated by the International Consultative Forum on EFA and proposed to discussion in preparation of the World Education Forum (Dakar, April 2000); and
- (6) The discussions of the Arab Regional Conference on Education for All – EFA Year 2000 Assessment held in Cairo (24-27 January 2000).

2. The objectives of this Framework are twofold:

- (1) To form a reference and guide for all stakeholders concerned with education in the Arab Region and committed to achieving the goals of Education for All, in their strategies, plans and programmes;
- (2) To convey the concerns of the Arab States while discussing the EFA issues at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, April 2000).

## I. Background

Learning is the key to human sustainable development and is the foundation for enlightened existence and the sustenance of all livelihoods

3. Learning, this treasure within, is the product of open and diversified access to knowledge and experience. Thus, the concept of learning throughout life emerges as one of the keys to life in the

twenty-first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinction between school and lifelong education. It is designed to meet the challenges posed by a rapidly changing world.

4. Four pillars were proposed as the foundation of education by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, i.e.: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together, learning to live with others*. The capacity to learn is at the heart of human development. It is the foundation for enlightened existence and the sustenance of all livelihoods.
5. Education aims not only at providing equal opportunities for individuals to learn, but also at achieving a *learning society* based on the acquisition, renewal and use of knowledge. This involves increasing the scope and opportunities for access to knowledge for all individuals. Education should enable everyone to gather information and to select, arrange, manage and use it. Learning is the key to sustainable human development.

Enhancing learning is improving the quality of life

6. The provision of equal opportunities for learning is a mandatory social service that must be provided to all individuals, as one of their basic rights and a condition for improving the quality of life. Health care is another important social service. It encompasses fighting diseases, providing nutrition and pure water, and ensuring an unpolluted environment.
7. Among these mandatory social services other than education is health care, which encompasses the eradication of diseases, the provision of nutrition, safe water and a non-polluted environment. The expansion of education has led to greater health awareness. Education for women leads not only to enhanced child health care but also to the enhancement of the general care of children, including their education. Enhancement of the educational level of the mother is no doubt the most crucial factor underlying participation in education and improving the quality of life.
8. Moreover, the expansion of education leads to a more enhanced environmental awareness, a greater knowledge of basic rights and duties, and a generally increased sense of citizenship and enlightened involvement in civic life. It is generally believed today all over the world that education is the most important means to fight poverty.

Meeting basic learning needs is an international priority

9. The World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990) affirmed the necessity to provide basic learning needs by stating that: 'Every person — child, youth and adult —

shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.'

10. Furthermore, the Jomtien Conference agreed on a framework, derived from the World Declaration on Education for All, to be taken as a guide for action at the national, regional and international levels.

Re-affirmation of the Jomtien message at the international level

11. During the ten years after the Jomtien Conference, the international community, with the participation of the Arab States, has witnessed a series of conferences, all of which re-affirmed the message of the Jomtien Declaration and linked education to development, quality of life, human rights, democracy, social integration and justice. These conferences called for a special emphasis on the education of girls and women, and the struggle against poverty, unemployment and social exclusion (the World Summit for Children, 1990; the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992; the World Conference on Human Rights, 1993; the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994; the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, 1994; the World Summit for Social Development, 1995; the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995; the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, 1997; etc).

12. The Mid-Decade Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (Amman, 1996) was held to assess what has been achieved in the five years that followed the Jomtien Conference. The meeting discussed various new challenges and the continuing challenges that still have to be addressed. The Amman Affirmation recommended 'stressing the forms of learning and critical thinking that enable individuals to understand changing environments, create new knowledge and shape their own destinies'. It further noted that the continuing challenges to the goals of EFA include mainly the education of women and girls, the training, status and motivation of teachers, the role of the family and the local community in education, and the broad partnership to achieve EFA goals.

Re-affirmation of the Jomtien message at the Arab level

13. At the Arab level, the Cairo Declaration (1994) emphasized the role of education in achieving sustainable development. The Conference expressed its determination 'to frame educational programmes that would bring the region into a position of world prominence in the next century'. The Conference concluded that two major areas stand out as pressing priorities requiring concerted action: the problem of illiteracy and the quality of education.

14. Furthermore, the Arab Declaration on Adult Education (Cairo, 1997) re-affirmed the contents of Jomtien Declaration (1990) and Amman Affirmation (1996), and renewed its commitment towards The Arab Strategy for Education, the Strategy to Eradicate Illiteracy in the Arab States and the recommendations of the Arab conferences on education, particularly the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and Those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States (MINEDARAB V) held in Cairo, 1994. The Arab Declaration on Adult Education called for the necessity to consider illiteracy eradication as a top priority for the development of the Arab States. It also confirmed its endeavour to ensure new opportunities and educational programmes for the continuous education of adults.

## II. Achievements and problems

15. The efforts exerted at the international, regional and Arab levels have culminated in various policies, laws, measures, programmes and activities at the level of each Arab State. This in turn has led to an improvement in the quality of life and to providing learning opportunities and improving education quality.

16. Yet, all that has been achieved by the end of the twentieth century remains below the expectations. Poverty is still widespread and, where it exists, educational opportunities decrease and so does the quality of health care. In addition, there is a spread of other problems, like unemployment, violence, conflicts and the continuous threat to family ties and social integration. Poverty generates poverty, as illiteracy generates illiteracy conducive to social decline. In some countries, the suffering is greater than in others; in rural areas more than in urban ones; in geographically remote areas, and among marginalized minorities and nomads more than among others.

17. Although various studies have highlighted the importance of educating females as a positive investment factor, girls and women have not sufficiently benefited from the allocated resources. Where girls do complete a primary education, there is often a large gender gap in the transition rate to secondary school. The gap between males and females becomes wider when literacy is considered. When combined with other factors related to the quality of life (especially in rural areas and shanty towns) such as poverty, disability, violence against females, malnutrition, rapid social changes, unemployment and risks of acquiring diseases such as AIDS, it appears that the females are more systematically disadvantaged than their male counterparts, on the basis of discrimination by gender.

### Early childhood education still does not receive the required attention

18. Most of the Arab States have a pre-primary system of education for children aged 3-5 years. In some States, this takes on a traditional form, such as the *Kuttabs*, supported by government as in Morocco and Mauritania. The gross enrolment ratio (GER), however, varies between 0.7 per cent and 99 per cent – the educational indicator showing the widest discrepancy between Arab States. But all states reported improvement between 1990 and 1999. In the latter, the ratio is less than 13 per cent in ten states, between 13 and 50 per cent in six states, and more than 70 per cent in only two states (Lebanon 71 per cent and Kuwait 99 per cent). This shows that Arab States, rich and poor countries alike, do not devote the required attention to ECCD. It seems that, for the Arab States, education at this stage is primarily a family matter.

19. On the other hand, the percentage of children who attend the first grade of primary education after pursuing certain pre-primary schooling (for one year or more) is higher than GER in pre-primary. This indicates, first, that pre-primary schooling is short term in most states, and second, that the tendency towards schooling at the pre-primary level is increasing. In most Arab States, ECCD still generally constitutes an important challenge, since it affects school life at the primary level.

### Increase in primary education enrolment

20. The most important achievements in the Arab States in the previous decade relate to enrolment in primary education. Most of the Arab States either maintained or improved their enrolment ratio in the first grade (6-7 years old). The countries which still show low GER at this level (82 per cent and below in late 1990s) are Djibouti, the Sudan, Mauritania and Yemen. Where enrolment ratios are high, the gender gap is smaller (1 to 4 percentage points), and where they are low it increases (10 percentage points). Yet, when looking at the net enrolment ratio (NER) at the first grade the picture is different: nine countries show a NER of 82 per cent and below.

21. In terms of GER in primary education, the Arab States have demonstrated significant progress. Only in three countries is GER equal to 68 per cent and below, versus thirteen countries where it is 90 per cent and above (and where gender parity index is 0.9 and above). Two countries have shown a very high rate of progress between the early and late 1990s: the Sudan and Mauritania.

22. Besides this progress, the discrepancies between rural and urban areas are still high, and female participation in primary education is always less than that of males (the parity index is equal to 1.0 and above in one country). In addition, the problem of enrolment appears more striking when looking at the NER.



In spite of a real improvement in the 1990s, there are still six countries which have a NER of less than 80 per cent, and where the gap between boys and girls widens in this regard: the parity index is equal to or less than 0.9 in six countries.

#### Illiteracy yet prevails

23. The number of illiterates in the Arab States is estimated today at 68 million (of which 63 per cent are women). Despite the expanded efforts, one fourth of these is found in one country: Egypt (17 million), and 70 per cent in five countries: Egypt, the Sudan, Algeria, Morocco and Yemen. In most of these countries illiteracy is accompanied by population size, high population growth rates, poverty and concentration of population in rural areas.
24. It is clear that the feature of illiteracy in the Arab States is different from that of the expansion of primary education, for illiteracy is the negative product of education that had not been completely expanded in the past. The strongest element in the spread of illiteracy in the Arab States and its strongest explanatory factor is the gender gap. The Gender Parity Index in these countries is 0.69. This indicates that illiteracy in the Arab Region is caused not only by poverty, but also by attitudes against education of girls and by the absence of effective policies to change these attitudes.
25. The presence of 68 million illiterates in the Arab Region and the existence of illiteracy in all Arab States, though in widely varying rates, not only represent a great challenge to these states in terms of development, social justice and the quality of life, but also serves as a serious indictment to the education systems themselves. These marks are reflected in the failure of schools to draw children and to retain them enough to prevent them from returning to illiteracy as well as in the low level of learning achievement.

#### Quality education is still a privilege for a few

26. After Jomtien, learning achievement was adopted as a key indicator of the quality of education. Nine Arab States participated (between 1993 and 1999) in the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) project conducted by UNESCO and UNICEF. The results show that competencies acquired by pupils in primary education (4th grade) are far below the standard proposed in Jomtien: only 12 per cent, 10 per cent and 25 per cent showed high skills (80 per cent of the competencies or more) in Arabic, mathematics and life skills, respectively. In Arabic language, only Tunisia and Morocco achieved the benchmark rate suggested at Jomtien (80 per cent of pupils). None of the participating states achieved the suggested level in mastering mathematics competencies. Only Tunisia and Jordan reached the suggested level of achievement in life-skills tests. In average, the

achievement of girls was better than that of boys. Achievement among pupils in urban schools was higher than in rural schools.

27. According to the results of the Monitoring Learning Achievement project, primary education in the Arab States appears to be of poor quality and not providing for the basic learning needs to the pupils. This means that, in the past, these states focused more on providing school places than on enhancing the quality of education. Therefore, improving the quality of education constitutes a main challenge to the Arab States.
28. Among the components of learning acquisition, basic skills for a better life are to be taken into consideration. Many Arab States include, in their educational goals and objectives, elements related to these skills, such as vocational training, health, environment and citizenship education. Mass media are also mentioned as a means for the transmission of values and knowledge in relation to these skills. However, in general, these essential aspects of learning have not received sufficient attention and the information about the acquisition of basic skills related to the quality of life is still very scarce.

#### Teachers' qualifications need improvement

29. Data from Arab States show that the teachers fulfilling the minimum required national qualifications vary widely between 21 per cent and 100 per cent (late 1990s). In addition, the required entry qualifications vary from completing secondary school to completing four or five years at a higher education institution. They also differ in terms of pedagogical requirements from nil to a full programme approaching international standards. This is a large discrepancy. The concept of teaching licence is still not common in educational circles and professionalization of teaching remains a rhetorical discourse. However, the pupil/teacher ratio is low in general. It ranges between 11 and 25 in fourteen states, as opposed to 26 and 30 in three states and 31 and above in two. Furthermore, more efforts should be exerted in order to resolve many problems facing the status of teachers, mainly concerning their work conditions and their social position, in order to attract young and qualified people.

#### Improvements in internal efficiency

30. Available data on internal efficiency show slight decline in repetition rates, improvement in the number of pupils staying at school until the 5th grade and better performance of girls as compared to boys. However, the primary level of the education systems in the Arab States still shows weaknesses in internal efficiency: persistence of drop-out and repetition (which increase the higher one goes up the educational ladder), and the long time needed to complete primary education.

### Expenditure on education

**31.** Achievements and problems of education in the Arab States depend largely, among other factors, on expenditure. Arab States exerted a substantial effort that led to a greater expenditure on education in the last decade. But, in view of what has been mentioned about enrolment ratios and quality of education, the expenditure on primary education seems to be suffering from different problems: inadequacy, in some countries, between financial resources and educational requirements; wastage or lack of rationalization of spending; weakness in capital expenditure (investment); high cost of educating remote and widespread population; and weakness in budgeting techniques. Such problems raise questions about the potential role of non-governmental organizations, diversification of financial sources, mobilization of resources, accountability, and the means to build the national capacity for planning, budgeting and assessment.

### Poor management of education systems

**32.** If the increase of financial resources may be a pressing need for poor countries, the major problem in most of Arab States is how to make a good use of available resources, human as well as financial. Surveys on learning achievement showed the absence of developed systems of monitoring. Reports on expenditure show problems in terms of planning and budgeting. Education management information systems (EMIS) are lacking in general. Problems of centralization versus decentralization are still debated. Thus, the issue of efficient educational management constitutes a serious challenge in the Arab States in order to meet the goals of EFA.

## III. Challenges and opportunities

**33.** Time is passing and, in the Arab Region, millions of individuals remain deprived of education and millions are getting education of poor quality, while most of the rest are not appropriately prepared for the technological era and the international competition in the new millenium. We are faced with the challenge of achieving what has not been achieved since Jomtien and with the new challenges after 2000.

**34.** There is a general consensus on EFA goals, and that education for all is pivotal in addressing increasing poverty, sustaining socio-economic progress, and honouring the human rights of every individual. Lacking are the necessary resources. And despite the political will, and although education stands high on rhetorical agendas of governments, commitments made at Jomtien by Arab States remain highly visible but significantly unmet.

**35.** It is more starkly evident that failure to quicken the pace of progress towards Jomtien goals will have grave consequences for peace, stability and prosperity. The stage is now set for a stronger, more action-oriented approach of country initiatives for basic education, with important international commitment and support, reset within the circumstances and imperatives of the new millenium.

### The challenges of the twenty-first century – outlook for 2010

**36.** Globalization imposes a labour market that surpasses the boundaries of countries and a tough competition according to the acquired qualifications. These qualifications are primarily the product of learning.

**37.** Globalization furthermore dictates the increasing use of technology, which is the most efficient means for production and communication. But the ability to make use of technology and what that entails in terms of skills and knowledge is also a product of learning. So what can the Arab educational authorities and organizations do to prevent marginalization and to positively participate in the globalization process?

**38.** Technology also induces in people a deep transformation in how to learn, how to use what they have learned, and how to evaluate the importance and relevance of what they have learned. We live in a period where economical progress is essentially based on knowledge. Thus, learning becomes more than ever a decisive factor in prosperity.

**39.** This also means that the cost of learning will increase. This is as true for households as it is for countries. Poor countries, unable to enter more technology-intensive-based markets, run the risk of excessive marginalization in trade and investment. In developed and developing countries alike, poverty and inequality at the household levels are increasingly associated with educational attainment. And the gap is widening between those who have access to information and the capacity to use technology of communication (e-mail, e-commerce and e-learning) and those who don't or can't.

**40.** The Arab States furthermore face the problem of the usage of foreign language as the technological medium. Mastering a foreign language is not generalized, nor is the Arabization of technology.

**41.** The unpredictable changes surrounding our lives give daily new meaning to the imperatives of the Jomtien commitments. That is because, as skills requirements for adequate, livelihood sustaining employment rise, basic education becomes ever more essential for work, or for school success and transition to secondary and higher levels of education.

42. Demographic growth poses another challenge to the education systems. While the annual average growth rate is estimated for the years 2000-2010 at 1.2 per cent for the world and 1.5 per cent for the developing countries, it is 2.5 per cent for the Arab States. In 2010, the estimated population of the age group 5-18 years old is 110 million. If the enrolment ratio in general education will be around 80 per cent for this age group, Arab States have to ensure educational opportunities to 88 million students, i.e. to provide resources for an additional 29 million students (present figure: 59 million students). This demographic increase places severe pressures on the education systems in terms of expenditure, management, qualified human resources, etc. At the same time, the population growth entails competing demands for resources to ensure other basic needs such as nutrition, housing, health services, etc. Some education systems in the Arab States have suffered from high indebtedness and the consequences of applying structural adjustment and economic reform policies.

43. Furthermore, in the past decade a number of Arab States suffered from persistent troubles and conflicts (Algeria and the Sudan), embargoes (Iraq, Lybian Arab Jamahiriya and the Sudan), occupation and wars (Lebanon, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic and the Sudan). The education systems in these countries suffered deeply from these troubles which hindered their capacities and delayed the achievement of their objectives according to the Jomtien Declaration. The return to peace and normal life through the elimination of all forms of occupation, embargoes, conflicts and tensions appears to be a *sine qua non* precondition to ensure education for all in troubled areas. In parallel, education has a role to play in contributing to create a peaceful environment in the region.

#### Building on available opportunities and progress made

44. Facing these challenges does not initiate from a void. It has to be recognized that there are opportunities available that were not there a decade ago. An unequivocal global consensus has been forged around the critical role of education for sustainable human development. There is an even stronger reaffirmation of the importance of human rights. Since the Copenhagen Summit (1995), there is renewed concern for the rights of the socially excluded, marginalized, and impoverished, and mounting recognition of the benefits for societies of educating females.

45. Donors are answering the calls from countries to strengthen ownership of competencies and the development of national capacities. The educational deterioration that many developing countries experienced in the 1990s has been stemmed. And it is noticeable that civil society has become more likely to assume its responsibilities.

46. New and creative ways are now available also for reaching out to learners with disabilities or learning difficulties, as a means of ensuring that their capacities for learning are given the utmost chance to flourish.

47. Modern information and communication technologies offer in general enormous potential for educational outreach, enhancing access, self-paced learning and meticulous assessment of learning outcomes.

48. At the national level, new synergies are beginning to develop around more comprehensive governance systems and the participation of a wider set of actors, such as NGOs representing civil society in educational planning and implementation.

49. At the global level, original core sponsorship of education for all (by UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and UNDP) has extended through the International Consultative Forum to engage another United Nations agency (UNFPA) and representation from a wide set of public, private and non-governmental constituencies.

#### The year 2000: renewing the commitment to the Jomtien Declaration

50. Ten years after the Jomtien Declaration, the definition of basic education and the commitments surrounding it still stand as a persistent challenge to the Arab States. This Declaration focused, for the first time, on the basic learning needs of neglected minorities and on learning achievement rather than on mere school enrolment.

51. The ten articles of the Jomtien Declaration shed light, illuminating the road ahead: (1) meeting basic learning needs; (2) shaping the vision; (3) universalizing access and promoting equity; (4) focusing on learning acquisition; (5) broadening the means and scope of basic education; (6) enhancing the environment for learning; (7) strengthening partnerships; (8) developing a supporting policy context; (9) mobilizing resources; and (10) strengthening international solidarity.

52. The Jomtien Declaration remains even more vibrant and relevant today. The commitment should be renewed. And the follow-up efforts already exerted by the states must be continued and enriched by the experiences and the information gained during the past decade. We have a shared responsibility to ensure that failure is prevented.

#### The Arab Framework for Action: a guide for all the partners to achieve EFA

53. Taking into account the above-mentioned background, the achievements and the problems in the Arab States and the



challenges – those imposed by what was unmet in the 1990s and those imposed by the developments of the twenty-first century – the Arab States are called upon to adopt this Framework for Action and to act in conformity with it.

**54.** The purpose of the Arab Framework for Action is to act as a reference and a guide for all stakeholders concerned with education in the Arab States and committed to achieving education for all, in their plans and programmes, each within its adopted goals, missions, and target groups, with the view of strengthening partnerships at the global, regional and local levels, in the single aim of meeting basic learning needs of all by 2010.

**55.** The main stakeholders to this Framework are:

- (1) The governments of the Arab States which hold responsibility for immediate action towards achieving the goals of education for all, and for leading and co-ordinating actions aimed at achieving these goals;
- (2) All stakeholders from civil society at the national level, i.e. universities and other educational institutions, NGOs, the private sector, etc., which should take a proactive role in contributing significantly to the achievement of the goals of education for all;
- (3) Arab and other regional organizations in the Arab States Region responsible for providing support and for promoting bilateral and multilateral co-operation at the Arab regional level; and
- (4) International agencies and organizations responsible for providing support and promoting bilateral and multilateral co-operation at the international level.

## IV. Principles for action

**56.** The following five principles are proposed as guidelines for all actions aiming at ensuring the provision of basic learning needs in the Arab States.

**57.** The principle of **comprehensiveness**, which includes the following:

- Viewing education for all through the expanded vision confirmed in Jomtien;
- Considering learning as one of the key components of the quality of life, and an essential factor in improving this quality;
- The acknowledgment at all levels and sectors of society that learning is the cornerstone to sustainable human development;
- Dealing with learners in a holistic manner, in order to understand their surrounding environment and to meet their needs and develop their personalities in an integrated and harmonious manner.

**58.** The principle of **equity**, which consists of the following:

- Considering access to educational opportunities as an absolute right to be provided by society to all citizens of all ages without discrimination;
- Considering social and geographical inequality of educational opportunities as a factor leading to the creation of a gap in society that is hard to close;
- Integrating in the educational plans and processes the various excluded groups, such as the impoverished, rural populations, the marginalized, the displaced, refugees, nomads, immigrants, street and working children, and others in difficult circumstances;
- Addressing the needs of special groups and racial, religious, and cultural minorities when generalizing programmes and curricula;
- Considering gender discrimination in basic education as incompatible with social equity and with development needs, and as a breach in human rights;
- Considering the inclusion of learners with special needs, especially those with disabilities and learning difficulties, in educational programmes, as a right and an essential means for their self-actualization and social integration;
- Providing the gifted and talented with special care and an appropriate teaching/learning environment so as to develop their talents and capacities in order to contribute in the development process and to meet the challenges of the future.

**59.** The principle of a **learner-friendly environment**, which includes the following:

- Providing a healthy and secure environment to learners;
- Providing quality education relevant to learners' needs and to the requirements of the changing society;
- Providing an educational environment based on mutual rights and responsibilities, and non-discrimination between genders;
- Fostering the attitudes that enhance the values of respect, tolerance, and understanding of others;
- Promoting independent thinking and expression among learners;
- Providing committed teachers keen to discover the learners' potentials and to work for their development;
- Making this environment available and affordable to all.

**60.** The principle of **commitment**, which includes the following:

- High-level re-commitment at all levels of government and leadership in civil society, regional and international organizations and other partners, to renewed efforts towards meeting the basic learning needs of all, children, youth, and adults, in line with national and international goals and targets;
- Commitment by all relevant bodies to a renewed campaign for resource mobilization at all levels, global and local, to provide more innovative and equitable formulas to resolve

the problem of human and financial resources of countries in the greatest need.

**61.** The principle of **keeping pace with technological advancements**, which includes the following:

- Considering the rapid transformations in technology of communication as a supporting factor for the provision of education, starting from basic education. Among other things, technology helps in classifying learning objectives and determining the expected performance from learners, subdividing subject matters and facilitating their presentation, individualizing learning, assessing learning and analysing learner's performance, and conducting examinations, and using distant education to get access to populations in geographically remote areas;
- Considering the use of technology, which includes, in addition to hardware and software, the use of Arabic and of foreign languages, as indispensable to help education meet the challenges of the new century.

## V. Objectives and orientations for implementation

**62.** The Jomtien Framework for Action invited all Member States to develop their special goals and objectives in their efforts to meet the basic learning needs of children, youth and adults.

**63.** The EFA mid-decade review meeting (Amman, 1996) emphasized five major areas of concern: improving learning achievement, mobilizing resources, developing partnerships, building national capacities and meeting the basic learning needs for all in the twenty-first century.

**64.** With the end of the decade, it is necessary to acknowledge the difficulties facing education systems which have prevented the Jomtien goals from being achieved. Among these difficulties have been shortage of financial and human resources or their misallocation and waste, poor mobilization, the difficulties related to the management of a complex system such as education and the complexity of its relationship with other systems, the mismatch between the size of the pressure to meet the goals and the size of the exerted efforts, etc.

**65.** The successes achieved should also be recognized and the commitment among the four major groups of partners that hold responsibility for achieving the goal in the future, i.e. governments, civil society, regional agencies and organizations, and international agencies and organizations renewed, and all have to set clear goals and objectives.

### Seven objectives

**66.** Therefore, building on the Jomtien Declaration and the present needs of the Arab States, the new objectives and targets for achieving the ultimate goal of **education for all in the Arab States** could be re-defined for the coming years (2000-2010) as follows (these objectives allow for periodical assessment of the progress achieved):

- (1) **Expanded and improved early childhood care and development**, which includes, besides providing health care, nutrition and other basic social services to young children, providing them opportunities for learning and development at educational institutions with a view to fully developing their capacities including their physical, cognitive, creative and psycho-social abilities.
- (2) **Extending basic education and its provision to achieve high quality education leading to excellence for all children, with special emphasis on those with special needs.** This requires ensuring compulsory basic education, supporting needy families in enrolling their children in schools, categorically prohibiting child employment, and providing for the inclusion in schools of all children, including those with special needs.
- (3) **Extended opportunities for basic education and training programmes to acquire life and vocational skills for all youth and adults.** This includes enhancing the existing non-formal learning structures, developing new ones and providing diversified forms of technical and vocational training and lifelong learning for both males and females.
- (4) **Universalizing literacy among adolescents, and decreasing illiteracy rates among adults** by setting realistic yet still ambitious targets, which would lead to significant progress.
- (5) **Ensuring mastery of basic learning skills and excellence for all through the empowerment of all learners to attain outstanding achievement levels that make full use of their potential, starting with the mastery of basic skills, vocational and life skills, and attaining excellence in creativity and inventiveness.** This will require improving the quality of education in all its aspects, including teachers' qualifications and conditions of employment, curricula, teaching and assessment methods, and the learning environment.
- (6) **Full equality and effective participation in basic education for girls and women, and the elimination of gender biases and disparities in all schools and education systems.**
- (7) **Improving educational governance and management**, which entails improving decision-making processes, accountability systems, building capacities, and extending and strengthening partnerships in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Each state sets its own targets for each of these objectives in such a manner as to allow the assessment of the progress made, reviewing these targets periodically and modifying them according to new developments.

Five orientations for implementation:

67. Five orientations for implementation constitute the approaches to be adopted at the national level towards reaching the determined objectives.

**Orientation 1: Promote partnerships**, which includes the following mechanisms:

- Organizing the support provided by regional and international organizations, and by bilateral and multilateral co-operation in a concerted manner and orienting it according to national priorities;
- Greater participation of civil society in designing, implementing and monitoring basic education programmes, and allowing for the participation of the private sector, NGOs, local communities and religious foundations, in the achievement of EFA goals;
- Better co-operation, exchange of information, transparency, accountability and trust amongst all partners in the process of universalizing basic education.

**Orientation 2: Integrate programmes and projects**, through:

- Implementing integrated health, social and educational policies. Health problems can prevent children from attending school and from learning. Ensuring that children are healthy and able to learn is especially relevant to efforts to increase enrolment and learning achievement, i.e. it encourages the poorest and most disadvantaged children to attend school and to devote the needed efforts for success;
- Incorporating all programmes for the education of children, youth and adults into an integrated national vision and linking the educational plans to the economic and social development plans within the framework of sustainable development efforts and strategies. Also, employment policies based on training, education, and the eradication of illiteracy increase the value of learning in society, with its subsequent rewards;
- Ensuring synergies between the different programmes of education, considering that adult education affects the education of children and that expanding secondary education creates incentives to expanding enrolment in primary education;
- Using all available media and technological channels in coordination with the efforts exerted in education.

**Orientation 3: Promote knowledge-based decision-making and information for all.** This includes:

- Assessing curricular objectives, contents, teaching methods, forms of evaluation and activities, and examining the needs,

aspirations and achievements of each learner through scientific research, in order to take objective decisions thereon.

- Providing society with a clear picture of educational reality, after collection, analysis and dissemination of relevant data, in order to ensure societal accountability.

**Orientation 4: Mobilize all possible resources** through the enhancement of national investments in education, effective use of available human and material resources, and the mobilization of support from all concerned parties (the public sector, the private sector, the local communities, non-governmental organizations, bilateral and multilateral co-operation agencies and regional and international organizations) towards education for all.

**Orientation 5: Enhance management and monitoring efficiency**, which encompasses the following:

- Setting clear targets to be achieved at the national (and local) level, that reflect what had been agreed upon internationally and nationally, and any other commitments. These objectives should emphasize, along with quantitative aspects, the qualitative aspects, such as the levels of expected achievement in terms of knowledge and skills to be acquired, the quality of educational material and environment. These objectives must identify the categories that should receive priority;
- Designing and implementing schemes for the monitoring and assessment of curricula, and for the adjustment of processes;
- Developing the management systems, enhancing the qualifications of human resources, and building national capacities;
- Institutionalizing assessment and follow up;
- Rationalizing expenditure.

Each state is invited to develop a self-monitoring system of its commitment to each orientation proposed in this Framework for Action and of its implementation of these orientations, as well as the difficulties related to them.

## VI. Priorities

Two priorities for all Arab States:

68. In view of the achievements of the Arab States collectively in the expansion of basic education (Objective 2), the problem occupying the first priority in the Arab Region as a whole is that of the quality of education. Therefore, and in accordance with the Cairo Declaration as well, **improving the quality of education is to be considered as the first priority in the Arab Framework for Action for meeting the goals of education for all at both quantitative and qualitative levels.** This means that Arab countries must aim at ensuring mastery of basic learning skills and excellence for all. In spite of all

efforts made to universalize basic education, the provision of a high-quality education remains a goal imposed by the sustainable development requirements, a positive attitude towards globalization, and the challenges of the world market competition and free trade. This priority encompasses all educational processes and skills, including the achievement by all learners of nationally defined and objectively measured levels of learning in literacy, numeracy and life skills, including technology skills, that entail open-mindedness, development of thinking, the desire for knowledge and the desire to seek knowledge from all sources. Within this priority, the emphasis goes to improving the teachers' status, including their qualifications and work conditions. The slogan for the coming years in the Arab States should be: teachers' empowerment, professionalization and training to reach the highest possible levels in scientific, professional and cultural specialization.

69. In view of the limited human and financial resources available, it is of utmost importance in the Arab States to mobilize efforts and capabilities. That will require good governance and good management, both to assist in the achievement of the quality of education and other goals, and to ensure the implementation of the determined principles adopted in the Framework for Action. Therefore, **improving educational governance and management (Objective 7) can be considered as the second priority** in the Arab Region as a whole. This includes the development of education decision-support systems and building national capacities at central, regional, and local levels, to ensure the use of knowledge in decision-making at all these levels and in all educational endeavours, from policies to planning and management of operational activities, and from mobilization of resources to monitoring and assessment of results. Within this priority the emphasis would be in the coming years on **capacity-building**.

#### **Eradication of illiteracy: a top priority for national, regional and international mobilization**

70. The Arab States, singly and jointly, are concerned with all objectives of the Arab Framework for Action. But, considering the massive and important problems facing them, whether in catching up with previous commitments or in meeting the demands of the coming century, the greatest problem for the Arab States is, in general, that of **illiteracy**. There are two reasons for this: the first relates to the number of illiterates in these countries (around 68 million, or 38.5 per cent of the population 15 years of age or older) and with the wide gender gap in literacy (Parity Index = 0.69). The second relates to the multiplier effect of literacy. Illiteracy among adults, especially women, lowers children's school enrolment and the educational achievement (quality of education) of those in school, and exacerbates failure and early school drop-out rates (effectiveness of education). Illiteracy is also associated with early marriage, high fertility and high infant mortality rates.

Illiteracy reinforces gender discrimination in society, while literacy helps improve the overall quality of life.

71. Therefore, and in accordance with the Cairo Declaration (1994), **the eradication of illiteracy is today (in the year 2000) a high priority in the Arab States for national, regional and international mobilization of resources to achieve EFA goals (Objective 4)**. For, as stated in the Cairo Declaration: 'It is impossible to imagine the development and resurgence of the Arab world without putting an end to the problem of illiteracy in all the Arab countries.' Within this priority, the emphasis goes first to the **education of girls and women**.

#### **Two other priorities for Arab co-operation and national development**

72. In view of the relative neglect of early childhood education in the Arab States and the potential of such education for the enhancement of learning achievement and improving internal efficiency in primary school, **early childhood care and development** deserves much more attention in the coming ten years, particularly in regional co-operation activities and among those states where illiteracy does not constitute a heavy burden. Efforts should be devoted both to the expansion and diversification of ECCD delivery services, and to the innovation and improvement of educational curricula, bearing in mind that early childhood care and development is not confined to pre-schooling but includes care given by the whole family from birth onwards.

73. In parallel to the above-mentioned priorities, efforts should be made to diversify delivery systems of educational services to youth and adults, in order to broaden educational opportunities. The enormous potential of new information and communication technologies should be exploited at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. In terms of educational methods, priority should be given to the **development of a multimedia environment to be used both for formal and non-formal education**, encouraging the investment in cultural industries related to teaching/learning activities.

#### **Each Arab State has its own national priorities**

74. The aforementioned sets of priorities apply to the Arab States as a whole, but it is difficult to apply to them individually. In fact, some states are close to overcoming the problem of illiteracy and the gender gap related to it. These include Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait and Lebanon, followed by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic. For other countries, illiteracy remains the number one challenge, and these include Egypt, the Sudan, Morocco, Mauritania and Yemen, followed by Tunisia, Algeria, Djibouti, Iraq and Oman. This discrepancy

in positions changes the scale of priorities from one group to another. The same should be said about early childhood education, where Kuwait and Lebanon are approaching full enrolment.

75. In all cases, each country is called upon to define its priorities and their sequence of importance according to the problems facing it and to review these priorities in a periodical manner according to what has been achieved. This is a necessary step to define the plan of action in each country and, in that light, to define the extent of Arab regional and international co-operation.

## VII. Arab regional and international co-operation

### Increasing the efficiency of Arab co-operation

76. The Arab Region is composed of twenty-one states, most of which share a common language and a common culture. Furthermore, and more important, they are bonded by a sense of belonging to one nation, in that what besets one state affects the others, and by a sense of combined strength of will for the general progress of the Arab nation. A condition for that progress is the achievement of the goals of education for all, both quantitatively and qualitatively.
77. Arab States are also brought together by Arab regional organizations concerned with the issues of co-ordination and co-operation among the different states. In the year 2000, the Arab States will renew their commitments for co-operation and their faith in its returns for all. The disparity in development levels is an additional incentive for the establishment of that co-operation. Achieving the education for all goals will be the product of their individual and collective efforts.
78. This co-operation will take place mainly through two channels:
- Bilateral and multi-lateral relations, where the exchange of information and experiences takes place, where assistance is provided, agreements are concluded, and the flow of human resources and investments is encouraged;
  - Networks, and regional and sub-regional organizations (ALECSO, ISESCO, ABEGS, AGFUND) which develop joint programmes and projects in co-operation with international organizations, and provide technical information and expertise.
79. In view of the experience of the past decade where the achievements of the Arab States, collectively and individually, did not meet the requirements, the Arab States are invited to do the following:

- (1) Assess the previous co-operation experiences through the two above-mentioned channels, to enhance co-operation in the coming years and extend the benefits derived from co-operation on everyone, including the establishment of specialized regional centres, joint programmes and projects, as well as common lists of learning competencies expected from learners.
- (2) Renew the mobilization of bilateral and multilateral co-operation. This requires that each country lists its priorities for co-operation, in terms of partners, as well as in terms of types of co-operation, capabilities to assist and the areas where assistance is needed. More developed countries are called upon to provide assistance for less developed countries.
- (3) Strengthen Arab organizations, specialized regional centres, and Arab networks and programmes. This will involve enhancing the capacities of these agencies and helping them direct their activities towards more assistance for needier countries.
- (4) Consider efforts to address shortcomings in the achievement of the set objectives of basic education in any state of the Region as a joint Arab responsibility.

### Increasing the benefit of Arab-international co-operation

80. In their approach to co-operation with international institutions and organizations, especially those located in the Arab region, the Arab States should refer to the Jomtien Declaration concerning international co-operation:
- (1) **'Meeting basic learning needs constitutes a common and universal human responsibility. It requires international solidarity and equitable and fair economic relations in order to redress existing economic disparities. All nations have valuable knowledge and experiences to share in designing effective educational policies and programmes.'**
  - (2) **'Substantial and long-term increases in resources for basic education will be needed. The world community, including governmental agencies and institutions, has an urgent responsibility to alleviate the constraints that prevent some countries from achieving the goals of education for all.'**
81. Arab States should also refer to the Jomtien Framework for Action on action priorities at the international level. These include:
- 1) **'Enhancing national capacities' for designing and managing programmes and services for basic education;**
  - 2) **'Providing sustained long-term support for national and regional actions', which includes providing 'increased international funding . . . to help the less developed countries implement their own autonomous plans for action in line with the expanded vision of basic Education for All';**
  - 3) **'Providing technical assistance on policy issues.'**

**82.** Therefore, taking into consideration the experience of the past decade, Arab States call upon the international community to do the following:

- Renew the international commitment to provide financial assistance to the less developed Arab States that are unable, with their own resources and with those provided by Arab co-operation, to fulfil the requirements for achieving the education for all goals within the coming ten years;
- Renew the commitment of international agencies and organizations, especially those sponsoring the Arab Regional Conference on Education for All (Cairo), and those participating in the World Education Forum (Dakar), to provide sustained and long-term assistance for national and Arab regional activities, especially those linked to developing national capacities and to designing and implementing priority strategies, plans, programmes and projects for education.

**83.** For their part, Arab States will renew their commitment for positive interaction with international agencies and organizations, under the banner of the Jomtien Declaration, especially in the area of knowledge development and database construction. They will undertake periodical assessment studies on education in these states, in line with the goals and orientations adopted in this Arab Framework for Action.

## VIII. Designing national autonomous plans for action

**84.** The EFA 2000 Assessment allowed each Arab State to recognize its decade's achievements and what it was unable to achieve. It helped each state to understand what prevented it from achieving the EFA goals. These countries are invited to perform such an assessment in a periodic manner.

**85.** The Arab Framework provides a guide for each country to work towards achieving its own targets based upon the principles, objectives, strategies, priorities and forms of Arab and international co-operation set out in this document.

**86.** Each Arab State is now called upon to determine a time frame for future action, identifying specific targets to be achieved by the year 2010. These targets should be phased so that at the end of each phase a new assessment could be made of what has and what has not been achieved.

**87.** In this respect, each Arab State is invited to define, according to its own circumstances and possibilities, the upper and lower limits that it shall strive to attain with regard to each individual EFA objective contained in this Framework for Action. It is also called upon to enshrine its commitments in official and public texts.

**88.** Defining objectives and targets to achieve requires more than political will and intentions. It also requires educational and scientific research reflecting the actual educational situation and examining possible action alternatives, including governance and management methods, centralization versus decentralization, public versus private sector, role of the civil society, sources of local, national, regional and international funding, forms and direction for co-operation, etc. At this stage, national stakeholders should initiate and maintain the necessary communication with other states and organizations, and survey the local human and financial resources so that planning for maximal mobilization of resources and capacities can be undertaken in a realistic manner. Based on all this, the minimum and maximum thresholds for achievement can be defined for each of the seven objectives mentioned in this Framework for Action.

**89.** Therefore, the Arab States are called upon to meet again in 2002 in a regional Arab Ministerial Conference, the subject of which would be education for all in the Arab States – targets for 2010. At this meeting, the Arab States, and the Arab and international organizations, could deliberate on the orientation of the national plans within the context of Arab and international support and co-operation.

**90.** The regional organizations and the international community are called upon to assist all Arab States to develop their autonomous plans for achieving the goals of education for all, in preparation of the Ministerial Conference proposed for 2002. □

