

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF EGYPT: CONTEXTS, FRAMES AND STRUCTURES

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Abstract

The research describes contemporary educational system existing in the Arab Republic of Egypt against a background of its history, economical, social and demographical situation, and its legislative foundations. Egypt's educational traditions come from colonial times and Islamic sources. The contemporary Egyptian educational system consists of three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary education. It is compatible with the European system of education and although it still needs some improvement, it is constantly developing. Apart from governmental educational institutions, there is a private sector of schooling as well. Besides state and non-state schools, there are other forms of supplementary education, e.g. adult or non-formal education directed at children remaining beyond any official schooling system etc. The data is also presented in the form of graphs included herewith.

Key words: Egypt, educational system, schools.

Introduction

Egypt – Arab Republic of Egypt (جمهورية مصر العربية) – is situated in the north-east of Africa and the Asian Sinai Peninsula, bordering on the Mediterranean and Red Seas, the Gaza Strip, Palestine, Sudan and Libya. Most of the territory is covered by deserts and only less than 4% of the area is an arable land. The fertile Nile valley and delta led to the early colonization of the area and creation of one of the world's oldest and greatest civilizations. In the 7th century Arabs absorbed Egypt and introduced Islam there in the subsequent years and in the 16th century it became part of the Ottoman Empire.

Since the 18th century, the influence of European powers, mainly of France and Britain, had developed in Egypt with time. It became officially the British Protectorate at one point and then a kingdom dependent on the British. Egypt acquired a full sovereignty after the Revolution of 1952 and political changes followed. The country turned into a republic with an elected president and a bicameral parliamentary system. In the recent decades it was ruled autocratically by President Hosni Mubarak. His resignation after the uprising in January 2011 marks a watershed for Egypt and opens up new prospects for its future and hopes for important reforms. The general elections (the People's Assembly) which took place at the turn of the year 2011 was won by "Freedom and Justice" party associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and "Al-Nour" party associated with the Salafi Movement. An election for the Advisory Council and President will be held in 2012 (Stepniewska-Holzer & Holzer, 2006; Central Intelligent Agency [CIA], 2012; Carter Center, 2012, pp. 5-15).

Political importance of Egypt in the region of the Middle East and Arabic countries is significant, regarding relations with Israel, its position in multilateral negotiations or the role in international Arabic organizations. The post-Mubarak policy will deal with the claims of the recovery of money defrauded by the old regime, reforming political life, solving the economic problems, financial drop and re-forming its policy toward Israel and the Gaza Strip. It is necessary to say that Egyptian cinematography, media, literature and other aspects of culture have a wide influence in the whole Arabic world (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS a], 2009). It is worth mentioning that football is considered a national sport and, moreover, the national football team has won the Africa Cup of Nations many times which is unprecedented and it is a pride of the Egyptians.

Methodological Remarks

This is a qualitative study describing the current status of the Egyptian education existing in 2011 before the changes (in the educational area, too) related to the Egyptian Popular Revolution. Since then the Constitution has been suspended; the legislative and executive bodies are still in the process of being elected, and the authority is held by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. To prepare this research, the authors have explored various sources, Egyptian including, and databases available in English, internationally accessible.

The Education System of Egypt

The Social Context of Education

Egypt is one of the biggest (more than 1 million sq km) and the most populous African and Arabic countries (82 million inhabitants and their number will grow in the coming years – the population growth rate reaches 2%). Modern Standard Arabic is an official language of the state; however most of citizens speak the Egyptian dialect for everyday use. Educated Egyptians usually speak foreign languages such as English or French. The legal system of Egypt is based on the Napoleonic civil law and elements of Sharia – the Islamic law. The country consists of 27 governorates. More than 40% of the citizens live in urban areas, most of them, in Cairo and Alexandria. Islam is a dominant religion (~90%) in Egypt, however around 10% of the populace is Christian, mostly Coptic (CIA, 2012; Population Reference Bureau [PRB], 2011, p. 6). It is worth adding that general devotion to Islam has increased considerably in the recent decades. Al-Azhar University and Mosque, the religious, educational and scientific institutions, the most high-ranking and influential in the Islamic World, are located in Cairo.

Egyptian economy depends mainly on services, agriculture, media, petroleum export, and tourism. The popular uprising in 2011, the overthrow of the Mubarak regime and the unrest in the country affected severely the country's socio-economical situation, caused inflation and a decline in foreign investments. Apart from the year 2011, the economic growth of the country in the recent years was quite high (GDP 5-7%). However, living conditions for the average Egyptian remained poor and more than 20% of the society lives below the poverty line and, what's more, the poverty rate is increasing. The range of poverty is related to some extent to the high rate of unemployment, especially among young people – about ¼ of the population between the age of 15 and 24 is without work (for comparison: over 12% of the general unemployment rate) (Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics [CAPMAS], 2008; African Economic Outlook [AEO], 2011; International Food Policy Research Institute [IFPRI], 2012).

Illiteracy, in despite of continuous efforts of the state and multilateral international institutions, is still at a relatively high level; about 29% of the society (2006) is illiterate (to the double disadvantage of women) (CAPMAS, 2008; World Bank [WB a], 2011). For comparison: in 1970 about 70% of the Egyptian society was not literate (Cieslak, 1975, p. 54) so it can be said that the State has achieved significant results in its combating of illiteracy until now. Access to

the sources of common knowledge and information has improved much in the recent years; for example ¼ of the population has an access to the Internet (CAPMAS, 2008; CIA, 2012) and the network of libraries are broadening (Piotrowska, 2008; UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS d], 2009).

Egyptian society is quite young; the median age is about 24, which makes the educational questions very urgent and so crucial for development of this country. According to the estimations (2011) of international institutions (United Nations – Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN – ESA], 2011; CIA, 2012; WB a, 2011) and Egyptian Censuses (CAPMAS, 2008), the population of Egyptian children at the ages 0-14 is calculated (2011) at 27 millions, which is approximately 1/3 of the whole Egyptian population (UN – ESA, 2011). It puts about 17 millions of children at the age of compulsory education (6-15). The language of instruction at all education levels is Arabic. However, there are the language schools run by governmental and private education sectors offering an instruction of the governmental curriculum mostly in English, German, French or other languages. Besides, foreign languages are taught at schools as part of a school curriculum (Kassab, 1997, p. 23).

The Financing of Education

According to the Egyptian Constitution, the basic education is compulsory. Schools run by the State are free of charge at all levels of education (art. 20). In the years 1999-2008, 16-20% of the total government expenditures were allocated each year to education (CAPMAS, 2008). National education expenditures are about 3.8% of GDP (2008 – in other years: 5-6, 7%; which is even more than Egypt's military expenses) (CAPMAS, 2008; CIA, 2012). Although these outlays are relatively considerable, they are still not sufficient to satisfy educational needs of the society. That is why the donations of citizens and local foundations are a noteworthy source of supplementary funds for development of schools network (Hagy, 1994, pp. 84-100; Azoz & Amer, 2009, pp. 137-141; Tolba, 2008, p. 110; Abd-Elsamad, 2007, pp. 112-118; National Center for Educational Research and Development, 1993, pp. 143-148).

Egyptian reforms and enhancements of the schooling system are also supported financially by a range of international agencies, including the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, Ford Foundation and USAID (United States Agency for International Development) (World Bank [WB b], 2011; Higher Education Enhancement Project [HEEP a], n.d.; Ibrahim K. K., n.d., pp. 148-156; Azoz & Amer, 2009, pp. 137-141; Suilam, 1999, pp. 148-150). Apart from the subsidies of governmental and non-governmental institutions, there is a large number of private institutions which provide their schools with their own sources of funds or/and fees from the parents.

It should be added that there are projects for broadening compulsory education for other stages (The Constitution, 1971, art. 18; World Bank [WB c], 2006, p. 3; Egyptian Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 13), expanding enrollment for all children and disseminating the network of schools nationwide as well. Some of these plans have already been introduced and their effects are highly evaluated by international community (El-Din, 1999; idem, 2012; Hamed & Mohamed, 2003, pp. 299-301, 317-326).

Educational Policy and Administration

The Egyptian Constitution of 1971 with amendments declares that literacy is a national responsibility (art. 21) and is recognized as a basic right of each citizen and is guaranteed by the State (art. 18). Therefore educational strategy of the Egyptian State is pursued by the following principles: “education is a national security issue and [is considered] as an investment; [assuring] equality of educational opportunities; democracy in policy-making; and ensuring that education does not place a financial and psychological burden on families” (WB c, 2006, p. 1). Hence formulating educational policy, the organization, administration and supervision of education is in

the first place an obligation of the Egyptian State. The educational authority and liability is shared by various bodies of central and local degrees. The figure below shows how the responsibility for the Egyptian education is shared by the selected institutions:

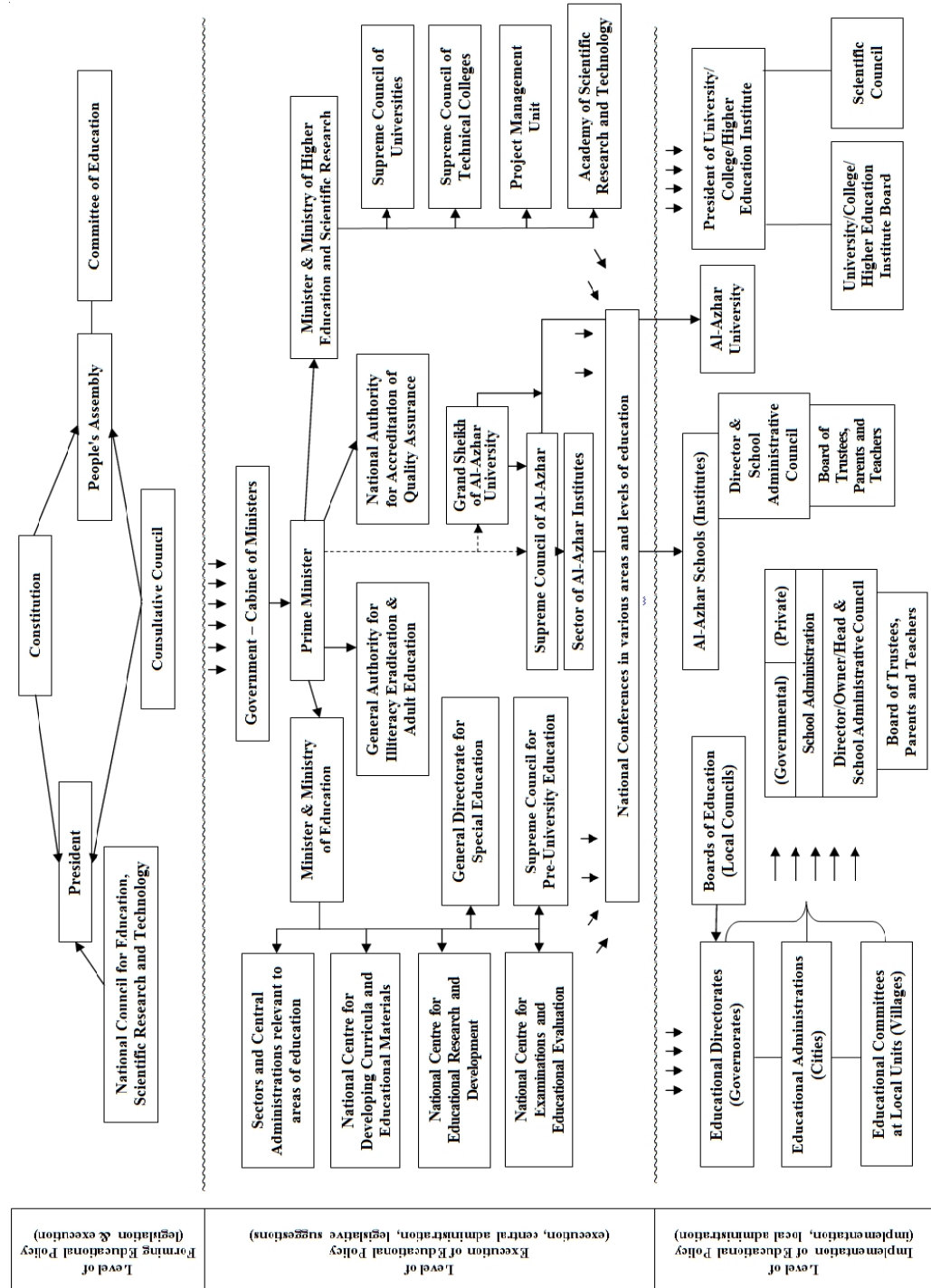


Figure 1: Sharing responsibilities in Egyptian education among chosen bodies

Source: own processing based on data of (Higher Education Enhancement Project [HEEP b], n.d.; Supreme Council of Universities [SCU], 2012; WB c, 2006, pp. 5-6; Egyptian Ministry of Education, 2008, passim; Academy of Scientific Research and Technology [ASRT], n.d.; Ministry of Higher Education [MHE], 2012; Egyptian Government Services [EGOV], 2011); Salem, 2006, pp. 57-61;

National Authority for Accreditation of Quality Assurance [NAQAAE a], 2006; Al-Azhar, 2010; Al-Azhar University, 2012; Constitution, 2007, art. 12, 18-21; Abd-Elkreem, 2006, pp. 96-99; Tolba, 2008, pp. 105-110, 115; Nasr, 2001, pp. 125-154; Mina, 2003, pp. 121-128.

Most of the legislative entitlements lie with the President and the People's Assembly (with its specialized Committee of Education); though these both institutions are subordinated to constitutional directives. Besides, Ministries can submit proposals of draft-laws. Main execution and general administration of education is a responsibility of the related agencies: the Minister and Ministry of Education are responsible for nearly the whole system of education, except for the higher education which is under the supervision of the Minister and Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (currently, it is named the Ministry of Higher Education). Ministerial offices have their numerous specialized agendas (some of them are shown in the Figure 1) which deal with the determined area of education and help the ministers to administrate and perform their duties.

Implementation of educational policy and local administration is a duty of the appropriate managing bodies of governorates, cities and villages. Apart from this, all schools have their specific structure to deal with their tasks (private schools are represented before educational administration by their owner or head). Likewise, each university, college and other higher education institute is governed by their own deputies. What's more, their representatives form corresponding Councils which are the platforms of collaboration within the academic society and with the Minister of Higher Education. It should be added that educational services at all levels are provided by both public and private schooling institutions. The latter can be religious (run by Muslims or Christians) or private schools. Private education is also at all levels under the supervision of the governmental agendas.

The Azharite system establishes an independent network of schools. It is subordinate to the Al-Azhar University, under the supervision of the Supreme Council of Al-Azhar (headed by Grand Sheikh) which cooperates directly with the Prime Minister. The Supreme Council of Al-Azhar has a specialized department dealing with its pre-university schools called the Sector of Al-Azhar Institutes. All Al-Azhar Faculties are subordinate to the central agendas.

The structure of legislative, executive and administrative system of education observes the principle of centralization and decentralization but still most of the prerogatives in this regard are still highly centralized. However, at each level, there are advisory bodies or centers which cooperate with the relevant minister and consult the execution and implementation of the educational policy suited to the scope of specific tasks, for example, examinations, evaluation, curricula, quality assurance and accreditation, supporting scientific research, international educational cooperation, reforms of higher education etc. What's more, important topics and projects are further consulted during national conferences dedicated to selected problems and a particular area or level of education.

Formal Education

As mentioned before, compulsory education lasts 9 years (age group 6-15) and covers 2-cycle basic education: 6-year primary stage (ISCED 1) and 3-year preparatory stage which can offer a general or vocational program (ISCED 2). The pre-primary level comprises nurseries and kindergartens (ISCED 0). However, only the latter are considered as a direct preparatory for school education. Kindergartens are pre-primary classes, with a teacher and a formal curriculum for children aged 4-6 years. Nurseries are tailored for younger children (aged 2-4). Nurseries and kindergartens are under the supervision of several ministries, including the Ministry of Education.

Secondary education – ISCED 3 (general, middle-level technical and vocational) lasts 3 or 5 years (high-level technical education). Students of general secondary education can choose a profile

of their schooling, for example scientific or humanistic. Secondary schools leavers can join post-secondary but non-tertiary educational institutions. Education at the Middle Technical Institutes (ISCED 4) lasts for 2 years and at the Higher Technical Institutes (ISCED 6/5B) 4-5 years. The students leaving Higher Institutes are awarded diplomas of advanced technical education.

Secondary school leavers holding appropriate certificates or diplomas with the highest score are allowed to apply to universities. University studies at the first-stage higher education (ISCED 6/5A) last 4-6 years while at the next stage (ISCED 7/5B) they take 2-5 years more. It could be disputable if longer BA programs (lasting more than 5 years) can be classified as the level of ISCED 7 or still ISCED 6 (according to the new classification). After receiving an MA degree a graduate can apply for a doctorate (ISCED 8/6) after at least 2-year studies. The Egyptian educational system does not include a short-cycle tertiary education (ISCED 5 – according to the new classification).

The private sector plays an important role in Egyptian education enhancing the schooling offer. Non-governmental schools may be distinguished from the public ones by their individualized teaching programmes or by a wider range of curriculum choice. Private schools are run at all educational levels and are conducted by religious or secular societies or individual owners, Egyptian or foreign. International schools can offer a curriculum of another country (i.e. British, American) but they need to be certified by the Ministry to facilitate their graduates to enroll in Egyptian governmental universities (Abd-Allah, 2006, p. 116; Kassab, 1997, pp. 24-25; Tolba, 2008; Abd-Elsamad, 2007, pp. 85-96).

It should be added that Azharite schools play a special role in Egyptian education parallel to the public educational system, using the same curriculum but with more attention to Islamic studies. However, the continuation of their studies is restricted to some extent. Although the graduates can continue academic studies at Al-Azhar or any other private educational institution, it is possible only at a limited number of governmental colleges and institutes.

Graduates of each level of private education receive equal certificates and qualifications as graduates of governmental institutions. However, even a private educational sector is supervised by governmental agendas to ensure that it complements the State's educational policy. Private education institutions are subject to the same regulations as governmental ones in terms of educational arrangements and certification (curricula, teacher qualifications, enrolment, grades, textbooks, diplomas etc.). The Ministry of Education encourages private schools to adjust governmental requirements by licensing. Authorized schools have the right to issue school certificates that are recognized by other schools and universities to enable their graduates to continue their education in governmental or private educational institutions.

On the other hand, the General Directorate for Special Education (see the Figure 1) – offers educational services at different levels to students with special needs and also runs trainings and certificating for their teachers. There are special classes or schools tailored to the needs of the blind and partially-sighted (“Al-Nour Schools”), the deaf and auditory impaired (“Al-Amal Schools”), and with other disabilities: the mentally retarded and the rheumatic heart diseased. There are inclusive classes in public schools in bigger cities that integrate children with light and moderate disabilities into the educational community and the Egyptian society, as well. Schools also provide an adequate psychological and social help for their pupils with special needs. The number of teachers of special education and facilitators has been growing constantly each year providing schools with appropriate specialists. Apart from ministerial courses, teachers can enroll in a number of universities and some other institutions that offer specialization in this area of education. Although the network of classes and schools for students with special needs has been developing in the last decades appreciably, there is still a considerable societal exigency in this field (WB c, 2006, pp. 16-17; Egyptian Ministry of Education, 2008, pp. 22, 35-37, 95-103, 129-134; Pachocinski, 2000, p. 92; Hamed & Mohamed, 2003, pp. 346-347).

Attention is paid to talented children, as well. In Ain Shams there has been established

an experimental school for gifted boys. Classes are limited to 24 students; the school is equipped with multimedia equipment, laboratories and a library. The school staff is recruited according to special criteria and requirements. High-skilled teachers are awarded with adequate remuneration. The main aim of the school is to prepare scientific elite for the development of the Egyptian science (WB c, 2006, p. 17).

Hence, current Egyptian education can be seen as a continual and integral system consisting of a number of levels comprising public (governmental) and private sectors:

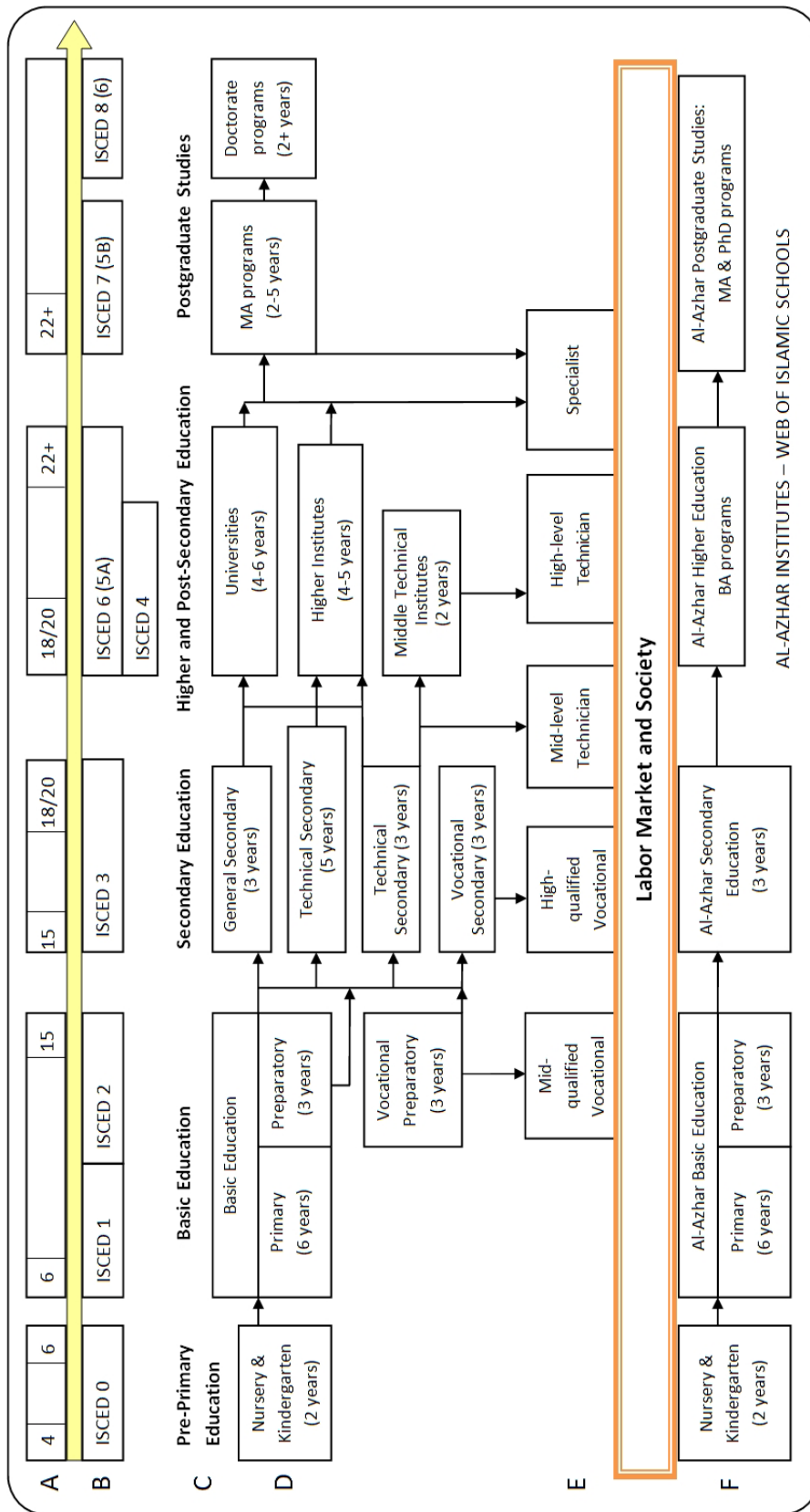


Figure 2: The Overall Structure of Formal Education in Egypt (including ISCED classification*)

A – the age of students' entering & leaving the particular type of the school

B – the ISCED level code

C – the level of education

D – types of schools and their standard duration

E – the level of graduates' qualification

F – Al-Azhar schooling system

Source: Own processing based on WB c, 2006; National Center for Educational Research and Development, 2004, p. 17; El-Koussy, 1991, p. 1642; National Authority for Accreditation of Quality Assurance [NAQAAE b], 2009; UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS b], 2007; UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS c], 2011; UIS d, 2009;

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency [EACEA], 2012; Salem, 2006, pp. 57-61; Abd-Elkreem, 2006, pp. 88-93; Ibrahim K. K., n.d., pp. 120-133; Ibrahim K. I., 2008, pp. 84-85; Rashid, 2006, p. 48; Suilam, 1999, pp. 19, 58-59; Abd-Elsamad, 2007, pp. 81-85.

*According to the adopted in 2011 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (UIS c) and, in brackets, still used in official documents the 1997 ISCED version (UIS b).

The figure above shows also the flexibility and integrity of the Egyptian educational system and the presumable minimal age of the student who enters and leaves a particular type of the school. What's more, the principle of the compatibility of all educational paths is observed according to international covenants expressed i.e. by UNESCO documents (UIS c, 2011). It is worth noticing as well that the Egyptian educational system is compatible with those of Europe and can be easily described by the ISCED classification (UIS b, 2007; Al-Behuashi, 2000).

Non-Formal Education

Adult education has got a long history in contemporary Egypt (Cieslak, 1975). It was basically directed at an increasing literacy among the Egyptian society and eradication of illiteracy. A specialized agenda – the General Authority for Illiteracy Eradication and Adult Education cooperating with the Ministry of Education (see the Figure 1) – is in charge of dealing with these issues and the education of adults. There are a lot of forms of adult education: literacy classes affiliated to the Ministry of Education or other ministerial divisions, special vocational training courses including literacy programmes, advanced adult educational programmes, e-learning, the Open University correspondence courses, non-university higher education and others (WB c, 2006, p. 14, pp. 20-21; Egyptian Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 49, 61, 67).

Moreover, there are special programmes run to provide education for children who are deprived of usual educational services, i.e. one-class schools (mixed and for girls), schools *friendly for girls* (for pupils aged 8-14), community schools in poor urban and rural areas, schools for street children, *small schools*, development centers, training and teaching centers for working children, evening classes etc. These proposals are directed at the children who are outside the formal structures of educational system. Such institutions offer basic teaching of reading, writing, arithmetic, and practical instruction in the area, for example, of health, nutrition, agriculture and environment. The Ministry of Education's projects of re-inclusion of children, who are beyond any kind of formal schooling, have brought until now tangible results (Egyptian Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 53-84, 129-134; Kassab, 1997, p. 24; Al-Behuashi, 2007, pp. 93-187, 203-213; Wisniewski, 2008, pp. 58-62).

Apart from the non-formal types of education mentioned above, there are traditional Islamic classes known as "kuttab". They have provided the local society, besides religious instruction and memorizing fragments of Quran, basic reading and writing skills, what have played a supplementary role for education even in contemporary times. However, nowadays their numbers are decreased noticeably, and most of them focus only on religious education (Ali, 1985, pp. 147-149; Azoz R. O., n.d., pp. 69-71).

The Egyptian Education in Numbers

Although indicators of enrollment into schools and literacy each year are growing up, there is still a group of children who have never been to school. Their number is estimated at about 10% (2006) of the whole population of the Egyptian citizens in the compulsory education age to the disadvantage of rural areas (more than 11%). To prevent such situation the State increases the number of schools in the whole country (each year the total network of school buildings goes up by 1, 5%) with more concern for rural regions (nearly by 2%). However the size of classes is

still not satisfactory: an average class of basic education numbers about 30-45 pupils, but in some areas (Alexandria, Giza – primary classes) the number reaches even more than 50 students in one class (2006-2007 data: CAPMAS, 2008; Abd-Allah, 2006, p. 125).

The pre-primary education total network (including governmental schools, private schools and Islamic institutes) consists of 49,640 educational institutions hosting 18,482,872 students (data updated in 2010 in the website: NAQAAE b, 2009). More detailed features are shown below:

Table 1. Numbers of Classes and Schools of Different Stages (2009/2010).

Stages	Total	Classes				Total	Schools and Departments			
		A	B	C	D		A	B	C	D
Pre-Primary	24237	10119	14118	7039	17198	8212	4524	3688	1533	6679
Primary	242676	134967	107709	24543	218133	16951	10381	6570	1622	15329
The One Class Schools	3269	2750	519	0	3269	3269	2750	519	0	3269
Girls Friendly Schools	876	787	89	0	876	876	787	89	0	876
Community Schools	397	301	96	0	397	397	301	96	0	397
Preparatory	110760	59411	51349	8084	102676	9854	5716	4138	1228	8626
General Secondary	27750	7706	20044	2823	24927	2414	780	1634	642	1772
Industrial Secondary	21567	3811	17756	84	21483	871	174	697	10	861
Agricultural Secondary	4213	886	3327	0	4213	176	52	124	0	176
Commercial Secondary	14388	3951	10437	2220	12168	754	248	506	202	552
Special Needs Schools	4278	593	3685	103	4175	857	154	703	18	839
Total	454,411	225,282	229,129	44,896	409,515	44,631	25,867	18,764	5,255	39,376

A – rural B – urban C – private D – governmental

Source: Own processing based on Egyptian Ministry of Education, 2011.

The table above illustrates a variety of educational offers at different stages and amount of classes and schools with distinction between rural and urban areas and between governmental and private sectors. It also highlights the trends in the development of school network. Pre-primary and special education institutions are mostly in urban area, of which the latter are insufficiently developed especially in rural areas. Most of non-formal education institutions are also to be found in rural regions and reflect the same tendency. On the other hand, a majority of basic education schools exist just in the rural areas. However, the next (secondary) stage is available mostly in urban districts, which can hinder to some extent the country youth's access to education. The offer of secondary education is relatively diversified. Although general secondary schools are the majority at this level of education (a proportion between general and technical/vocational education is 4:3), the quantity of technical/vocational classes at this level definitely predominates over general ones. It has to be added that there is a large choice among industrial and commercial schooling (Salem, 2006).

The above data also demonstrates a supplementary role of the private education sector in the whole schooling system. The preferences of the owners of private secondary schools (related indubitably to foreseen profits from delivering such services) are very well visible: they offer education mainly in the general and commercial area. The private sector is not interested in the providing schooling for children in difficult conditions or in the field of agriculture.

The table below shows the participation of young Egyptian citizens (with the distinction of both genders) in educational process and their educational choices. It should be added that about 400 thousand children at the compulsory education age are outside any form of education mentioned in Figure 4 (Egyptian Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 57). The data placed beneath clearly points that a gender disparity and differences between the rural and urban areas still exist. Although statistically young women are slightly less numerous than men (CAPMAS, 2008) but in educational statistics they are considerably less represented. It can be also noted that there are nearly twice as fewer female students with special needs enrolled than male. This is why women tend to make use of non-formal education to a much greater extent than men. The inequality of educational chances of the country youth is quite visible as well. Rural adolescents are educated mostly in technical and vocational schools, which reduces their chances for education at higher levels:

Table 2. Numbers of Students at Different Educational Stages and Schools (2009/2010).

Stages	Total	Females	Males	Rural	Urban	Private	Governmental
Pre-Primary	727835	346617	381218	284939	442896	198139	529696
Primary	9334322	4508380	4825942	5083716	4250606	783809	8550513
One Class Schools	70204	64454	5750	58795	11409	0	70204
Girls Friendly Schools	22619	19444	3175	20497	2122	0	22619
Community Schools	10689	6854	3835	8014	2675	0	10689
Preparatory	4041072	1991163	2049909	2159752	1881320	236681	3804391
General Secondary	862147	459410	402737	239103	623044	69896	792251
Industrial Secondary	667075	242065	425010	121630	545445	2232	664843
Agricultural Secondary	125464	23942	101522	26856	98608	0	125464
Commercial Secondary	468254	294788	173466	130640	337614	78798	389456
Technical Education	1260793	560795	699998	279126	981667	81030	1179763
All Secondary Education	2122940	1020205	1102735	518229	1604711	150926	1972014
Special Needs Education	37888	13956	23932	4263	33625	563	37325
Total	16,367,569	7,971,073	8,396,496	8,138,205	8,229,364	1,370,118	14,997,451

Source: Own processing based on Egyptian Ministry of Education, 2011.

Going to the next stages, it should be said that the higher education system comprises currently 623 academic institutions (34 universities, 589 faculties and institutes – governmental and private) with a total of approximately 4 million students (updated in 2010 in the website: NAQAAE b, 2009). For comparison, it is worth saying that in 1952 there were only Al-Azhar University and 4 others: 3 governmental and 1 private (the American University). Hence, the development is really remarkable. It is worth adding that Al-Azhar University is considered to be one of the largest educational institutions in Egypt and in the whole Arabic world taking into consideration the number of its faculties (77) and students (420,000 – among them: 20,000 foreign students). The 77 faculties are distributed among five branches and are located in 16 governorates (NAQAAE b, 2009; Al-Azhar University, 2012; Wujek, 1980, p. 61-72).

It should be added that commercial and educational studies are the most popular fields of studies, which is related to the economical growth and the will of the State to expand schooling network all over the country (Ketsch, 2001, pp. 244-259; Basiouny, 2003). Arts, humanities and law are the other main area of studying. Medical, pharmaceutical and, particularly, dentistry studies offer are relatively scarce what is correlated with the slow development of the network of health services (WB c, 2006, p. 14). A gender disparity at the level of higher education is not very significant (ratio of female enrollment to male: nearly 85%, 2007/2008; (Egyptian Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 122).

Conclusions

In general terms, Egyptian achievements made in the area of education are indeed remarkable. Using their own possibilities and investing their own capitals with some financial and organizational support from international funds and institutions, the Egyptians have built very integral and flexible educational structures. All stages and all types of schools observe the principle of compatibility of the system: graduates of each school are able to continue their education at higher level and at various types of institutions according to the skills and needs of every student. What should be underlined, the educational offer is constantly broadening and developing. In the last decades, it is the noteworthy increase of pre-school institutions and the network of schools for children with special needs and programs of integrating disabled and non-disabled children into one class and one school (“inclusive classes”).

Apart formal forms of education, there is a broad range of non-formal educational institutions that provide basic schooling for children in difficult conditions – working or neglected ones – who are not embraced by compulsory education. To provide equal educational opportunities, the Egyptians created alternative (to standard schools types) didactic establishments that bridge gender disparities and differences between the rural and urban area, for example one-class, community or *friendly for girls*’ schools. What is more, there are programmes for re-integrating their students into the formal school system. A special educational offer is prepared for adults who can acquire basic literacy skills or enhance their vocational capabilities, broaden their knowledge or just develop their aptitudes and education.

Furthermore, the country has made significant development in extension of overall schools network. Although there is still illiteracy in the country, each year more and more children are entering primary school. The main aim of the educational policy is to educate the whole population and to broaden compulsory age. In the evaluation of international institutions, Egypt has achieved an immense success and progress in expanding the schools enrollment of children, which makes better prospects for embracing the most of the population of Egyptian children with education and ensuring them the continuity of schooling.

It should be noted that the structures of legislation, execution, administration, implementation, and adoption of educational policy are organizationally very well developed. Moreover, there are expanded advisory bodies and specialized institutions at each level that provide various educational auxiliary services, so important for existing an educational system, like institutions for ensuring a high quality of education, curricula and the whole educational process. Although the structures of the local administration and implementation are slightly less developed, the responsibility for educational matters becomes to be shared with the local governmental administration, topical societies, scientific boards, and schools participants. So it can be concluded that the reforms of educational structures are going in the direction of fulfilling more and more of the principles of educational democracy, decentralization and community participation.

Due to the growth of the number of children at the compulsory age, the new Egyptian president and government will face a need of building new schools, increasing school enrollment, ensuring continuity of education and continuing the eradication of illiteracy among the society.

Likewise, embracing children in the difficult social and economical conditions with school education remains a serious challenge for the new rulers of the Egyptian State. Apart from the educational tasks, the new government and new president will face many other problems related to economy, finances and social demands.

However, the perturbations aside, it can be said, that the Egyptian society is provided yet with different educational services suitable to the various social and economical conditions, abilities and competences of the prospective students. And even if they still need development, improvements and reforming, they are the answer, to some extent, to the social and educational needs of the society. Moreover, the educational system is adjusted to the international standards of educational system organization and matches the requirements of compatibility of educational paths, democratization, and social solidarity.

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