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EDUCATION EVOLUTION IN MODERN EGYPT

Historically, Egypt has been granted a special position at the center of the world, located in northeastern Africa. The country connects the East with the West, which gave it an important role in the spread of science, literature and all branches of knowledge to Africa, the Middle East and the entire Islamic world. During the last decades, Egypt had a problem of the growing population with dominating younger generations, which increased the pressure on the education system in the country and resulted in higher literacy rates among younger people.

Since 2011, the Egyptian Constitution has been changed and amended several times. The last change took place in 2014, extending compulsory education from 9 to 12 years, which put more emphasis on education. The Egyptian government has prioritized education reform in XXI century. In 2014, Egypt was ranked 115 in the Human Development Index (HDI), and 9th in the Middle East and Northern Africa's HDI countries. Egypt planned to boost access to children's learning and development, as well as the incorporation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at all stages of schooling, particularly at the tertiary level, with the assistance of the World Bank and other multilateral institutions.

Egypt's public education system is divided into three levels: first there is kindergarten for 2 years, followed by primary school (International Standard Classification of Education – ISCED Level 1) for 6 years, and then preparatory school (ISCED Level 2) for 3 years. The secondary school (ISCED Level 3) for 3 years, and then the tertiary level is followed after that. Between the ages of 4 and 14, education is made mandatory for 9 academic years [1].

In addition, the country has an Islamic religious teaching system called «Al-Azhar» that runs parallel to the public system and is independent of the Ministry of Education. The number of students in these schools followed the same trend as the general governmental schooling system, with over 932 thousand students at the elementary level. Al-Azhar is a destination to thousands of international Muslim students, due to its high reputation in religious education. Moreover, the total number of educational institutions before tertiary education amounted to 67,529, including both the general and Al-Azhar schooling systems. Nevertheless, the country still needs to provide additional school places adequate to the growing population. Furthermore, all levels of education are provided free of charge in all government-run schools.

Egypt's National Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education Reform (2007/08 – 2011/12) was launched. Egypt's dedication from that plan was to ensure a high quality education. The main components of the plan included teachers, teaching methods, syllabus and learning assessment, textbooks and study guides, management and governance, and a performance improvement strategy. Promotional exams are being taken by all levels, with the exception of grades 6 and 9 in elementary school and grade 12 in secondary school, which use standardized regional or national exams. The National Center of Curricula Development (NCCD), the National Center for Education Research (NCER), and the National Center for Examinations and Educational Evaluation (NCEEE) all help the Ministry of Education to make decisions about the education system. Each of these centers focuses on a different aspect of education policy development in collaboration with other state-level committees.

For basic and secondary education levels, there is also a formal teacher qualification track in place. To enter the teaching profession, teachers must complete (4) years of university pre-service courses. The Professional Academy for Teachers (PAT) offers several programs that focus on teacher professional development in order to improve all teaching standards. The start of the year 2007, the Ministries of Education, Finance, and Local Development began

discussions about experimenting with education decentralization. Design work was completed in 2008 and three pilot governorates were allocated. During late 2009, the pilot had few issues, and the expected outcomes were on track, including energizing local community cooperation, allowing schools to spend more effectively and survey their own needs, and increasing the seriousness of school-based planning by providing a means to fund such plans, among other things. The experiment was later on gradually implemented in all the country governorates and significantly reflected on the schools-level education quality [4].

Talking about the tertiary education, Egypt's higher education system is extensive. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) is in charge of regulating the tertiary education system. Approximately 30% of Egyptians in the relevant age group attend university. The Ministry of Higher Education oversees tertiary education. There are several universities that cater to students in a variety of fields. There are (33) public universities, (51) public non-university institutions, (23) private universities, and (89) private higher education institutions in Egypt educational system according to the official statistics announced by the Ministry of Higher Education for the year 2021/2022. There are (47) two-years middle technical institutes (MTIs) and (4) four–to-five-years higher technical institutes among the (51) non-university institutions [3].

During the 90s, the percentage of people enrolled in tertiary education was 18%. The percentage increased in 2012 to 21% and again to 30% in 2017. Egyptian tertiary education is led by a centralized system with institutions that have little control over curriculum decisions, program development and staff and professorship deployment. Working to improve system governance and effectiveness is a pressing challenge, as the higher education system has reached large numbers of people.

On 1997, the first MOHE Minister was appointed, and he quickly established a committee for higher education reform, which drew a diverse range of stakeholders, including industrialists and legislators. In February 2000,

the President and Prime Minister endorsed a Declaration for Action (DA) resulting from the National Conference on Higher Education Reform (NCHER). In the Declaration, 25 specific reform initiatives were identified. A number of multilateral and bilateral organizations, such as the World Bank, support the Declaration's proposals and have committed to assisting with particular factors of the structural reforms. The country strategy has resulted in a significant advance for the Egyptian Universities in the world ranking. The number of Egyptian universities in the table of Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings has been increased from just (3) universities in 2015, to (8) in 2016, up to (9) in 2017, and a sharp rise to (20) Egyptian Universities have been named in the 2020 list. More than 1,200 of the world's best higher education institutions, are included in the (THE) 2020 index, ranked on teaching, research, citation index, income from industry and international outlook. The Egyptian universities which made the list included Cairo University, Alexandria University, Fayoum University, Sohag University, and Tanta University, ranking between 801 and 1000. Followed by the American University in Cairo (AUC), Benha University, Beni Suef University, Kafr al-Sheikh University, Mansoura University, and Suez Canal University [2].

According to the Egyptian Human Development Report 2021, published by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development on September 14, 2021, the performance of both pre-university and university education in Egypt has improved over the past 10 years as a result of the implementation of the National Strategic Plan, which began in 2007 of the year. The most obvious results can be summarized in: higher enrolment rates for children in various stages for education, eliminating the gender gap in education, decreasing the dropout rates, improving educational curricula, improving the rural-urban gap, diversifying sources of knowledge, modernizing the technical education system, increasing number of universities, providing international-standard education, establishing non-profit and technology universities and finally modernizing teaching and assessment methods [2].

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