



Periodical Profile

The right to education in Egypt

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The right to education is in itself a founding right for the rest of human rights, and an indispensable mean for the realization of other human rights. Education, as a founding right, is the principal instrument by which young and old men and women, economically and socially marginalized, can lift themselves out of poverty and have the opportunity to participate fully in the various social, political, cultural and economic activities of their societies.

Therefore, human rights, including the right to education, have been the focus of the international community and its approaches, establishing and calling upon the countries of the world to integrate them into their constitutions, legislation, plans and development programs. The responses of States have been great and many efforts have been made to disseminate education as a right to its citizens, although they have varied in terms of the concept, scope, application and achievements of this right.

First: The right to education in Egypt: A view on the past and the present

With the construction of modern Egypt in the era of Muhammad Ali, and the beginning of the nineteenth century, education was free and a governmental education, and the state was sponsoring all the costs of education and care for students. This period witnessed a large expansion in education in all stages and types, and it was accessible to all the people of Egypt.



The Egyptian enlightenment movement came to fruition during the 1930s and 1940s, when Egypt celebrated many political, economic and social trends that oriented the public struggle against occupation, monarchy and social injustice. Liberal, Marxist, socialist, Fascist and Islamic ideas merged, and led a struggle against the backwardness that Egypt was suffering from. Democracy and social justice were the goal and aim sought by various parties, intellectuals and political leaders, hence rose the debate on free education in Egypt amongst elites. Taha Hussein issued his book "The Future of Culture in Egypt" in 1938 to emphasize the need for the State to secure the costs of education as a necessity of national security or as he stated it a (National Defense).

He said: "It is necessary to spread public education to the maximum extent, must protect schools and institutes from terrible crowd that corrupts education. And added that government expenditure on education was no less essential than spending on national defense. Education and national security are one and the same.

After the Revolution of July 1952, socialism was declared as a working ideology, the principle of equality of opportunity was declared, and the differences between classes were abolished. This period was marked by universal constitutional protection of the right to education and other economic and social rights. The Egyptian constitution of 1956, article 49 "guarantees the right to education to every citizen and makes education compulsory through high school, educational institutions or their equivalent. The State is particularly concerned with the physical, mental and moral development of youth." Article 50 also imposes responsibility for education on the State. Article 51 of the Constitution stipulates that: "primary education shall be compulsory and free of charge in all State schools".

The Constitution of 1971 went in the same direction. Article 18 states: "Education is a right guaranteed by the State. It is compulsory at the primary level. The State shall extend the obligation to other stages. It shall supervise all education stages, shall ensure the independence of universities and scientific research centers and achieve linkage between them and the needs of society. Article 20 also affirmed that: "education



in all State institutions is free in its various stages, i.e., from primary to university level”.

In the Constitution of 2014, Article 19 stipulates that:

" Every citizen has the right to education with the aim of building the Egyptian character, maintaining national identity, planting the roots of scientific thinking, developing talents, promoting innovation and establishing civilizational and spiritual values and the concepts of citizenship, tolerance and non- discrimination. The state commits to uphold its aims in education curricula and methods, and to provide education in accordance with global quality criteria. Education is obligatory until the end of the secondary stage or its equivalent. The state grants free education in different stages in state educational institutions as per the law.

The state commits to allocating a percentage of government spending that is no less than 4% of the GDP for education. It will gradually increase this until it reaches global rates. The state oversees education to ensure that all public and private schools and institutes abide by its educational policies.

This article is distinguished from other articles of the previous constitutions with a number of things that represent new commitments to the Egyptian state in the recognition of the rights of Egyptian citizens to education, as the following:

- Observance of quality education criteria.
- Extending the obligation until the end of the secondary stage.
- The allocation of 4% of the gross national product for education.

In addition to this constitutional provision, there is another obligation to provide the right to education for all, issued by the Egyptian state and crystallized in the objective of the strategic vision for education within the framework of sustainable development strategy 2030, which states:

"The strategic vision for education till 2030 aims at a high quality education and training system available to all, without discrimination within an efficient, just, sustainable and flexible institutional framework. Providing the necessary skills to students and trainees to think creatively, and empower them technically and technological-



ly. Contributing to the development of a proud, creative, responsible, and competitive citizen who accepts diversity and differences, and is proud of his country's history .

"Sustainable Development of Egypt Vision 2030"

The Egyptian education system is one of the largest education systems in the MENA region. Egypt has made progress in providing educational opportunities to guarantee the right to education. The enrollment rates in various pre-university education levels have risen to get close to global levels. Pre-university education includes 20 million students in the following stages:

- (A) Non-compulsory kindergartens for two years,
- (B) Compulsory basic education: grades I to IX;
- (C) Compulsory secondary education: grades XII-XII.

The pre-university education system includes about 57,000 schools, of which 49,000 are Arabic public schools, 7,000 are private schools, 750 are experimental language schools, and 250 are international schools.

Second: The Right to Education in Egypt: A Look at the Future:

The vision of educational reform as a social movement aimed at providing the right to education for all requires meeting a number of conditions, the most important of which are the following:

Building a society of justice and equity through the adoption of life-long learning as a right and philosophy governing the educational work in Egypt. Thus contributing to expanding the opportunities for continuing education and learning for all, the formation of human capital and the accumulation of social capital through the achievement of integration of formal education with non-formal learning, creating spaces for complementarity and cooperation between them, building a system of recognition, certification and accreditation of non-formal learning outcomes that individuals, especially young people, acquire, making life-long learning a reality and embodies and estimates the competencies



acquired by individuals, which improve their self-esteem, raise their level of well-being, push them to continue learning, and increase their chances in the labor market.

Amend and enact legislation that guarantees the activation of the principle of the right to education, as guaranteed by the Egyptian Constitution, legislation and laws, the establishment and guarantee of continuity of those who have stopped learning for one reason or another and wish to continue their education; and provide legal coverage to ensure recognition of the certificates and experience gained from non-formal learning programs and work sites.

One of the conditions for the success of educational reform programs, as a social movement, is the need to rearrange the social agenda. Social policies applied by the state have implications on the educational system. If these policies reflect the bias of the state to a particular category or categories, then educational reform programs will necessarily reflect this bias and will be excluded. Thus, the success of educational reform programs depends on rearranging the social agenda for the benefit of the vulnerable and the marginalized in social life, protecting them from the dangers of the free market and its excesses and creating a new collective will that serves as the social capital that represents the nation's strength and vibrant heart.

The construction of collective will and the formation of social capital depend on the existence of a national education system that provides quality education for all Egyptians without discrimination and diversifies opportunities for lifelong learning. This is in accordance with Article (19) of the Egyptian Constitution issued in 2014.

A stable educational policy should be developed to qualify the Egyptian society to live in the knowledge society and interact with the scientific revolution through the following:

Considering the development of education as the national project of Egypt for the next 20 years, so that education will become a locomotive leading the development movement in Egypt through the production of the knowledge required by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It will meet the requirements of the knowledge economy and be able to prepare a



new generation with a critical, creative mentality, to compete in the global labor market.

Re-establishing the structure of pre-university education, to remedy the distortions caused by multiple types of education, organize these types of education and activate the supervision of the ministry within the framework of national, developed, efficient educational system that rehabilitates schools and public universities as the official state institutions that provide quality education to all members of society without distinction or discrimination, and represent the model in its educational practices, curricula, teachers and graduates.

Developing technical education as a basis for building skilled workforce that can contribute to making economic progress in Egypt, rather than being a kind of education for the poor. It is regrettable that students of technical education represent more than two-thirds of secondary school students and don't receive any kind of cultural or professional preparation that qualifies them to adapt to society or contribute to the labor market. They don't receive any kind of official, public or media attention. The rise of a number of Asian tigers, including India, is a result of the interest in technical education, its orientation towards information and communication technology, and attention to the quality of its graduates.

Renewal of the structures of university education and its programs and disciplines to be part of the movement of development in higher education prevailing in the world now, able to compete globally and regionally and contribute to the community to provide the manpower necessary to achieve comprehensive development.

Developing the research function of the university, to provide the necessary material and human resources with the expansion of the establishment of research and technological universities and linking them to the production sectors and the economy, so that they can compete globally in producing knowledge and contributing to the advancement of science, human thought, artistic creativity and technological innovation.



Conclusion:

Good quality education which is able to emancipate man from the stagnant thought is an integral part from human rights.

The educational system in Egypt has suffered from several challenges over the past decades: the provision of educational services, which have suffered from structural and functional imbalances due to lack of the necessary funding, and a decline in the cost of education. The low quality of pre-university education, the high classroom density, along with the aggravation of the population increase, the weak link between education and the requirements of the labor market and the lack of an integrated mechanism to link education with knowledge and innovation to keep up with developments in the fields of technology, communication and information and digital knowledge as well as the need to transform into cognitive learning and innovation. This is in addition to teachers status, the lack of curricula that could build capacity to promote personality, identity and sense of belonging, and other problems that led to the low classification of Egypt in the international rankings in terms of the quality of education. The Egyptian state faced these challenges and such decline in education caused by social and economic changes by launching the Egyptian Knowledge Bank in 2016, which is the largest digital library in the world. It includes the knowledge content of the largest publishing houses in different disciplines. Egypt also developed a new strategy for education in order to provide children with quality education to build up a learning society, to improve the quality of education in line with international regulations, to provide quality pre-university and university education and training to all, within an institutional, efficient, equitable, sustainable and flexible system.