



POLICY BRIEF # 2

Education is a Lead Sector for Social Reform

Education is a public good whose purpose is to provide the necessary competencies and skills for the modern era that we live in. Under best-case conditions, it is an agent of change, allowing individuals to reach their full human potential. The Egypt Human Development Report 2005 argues that, in Egypt, a paradigm shift is urgently needed today to achieve and implement a revised 'vision' of education that is able to contribute to real transformations in society for true democratic citizenship to be put in place. This will entail a new understanding of the processes of education and the rights of the child, social recognition of the value of the teaching profession, an upgrading of teaching capacity, a reallocation of existing assets and an expansion of resources through community participation and multiple partnerships with government, civil society and the general public.

The Egypt Human Development Report 2005 focuses on education in the primary and secondary cycles, as the building blocks of educational achievement. It gives special relevance to those large groups in society that are marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged because the principles of *equity* and non-discrimination in basic education help address the multi-dimensional nature of poverty. To date, in terms of quantity, 86% of the poor in Egypt have just basic education or less, while only 1.1% have a university education. But improved access must not be at the expense of the *quality* of education, whereby attitudes, behaviors and skills are taught that will help *all* learners — whether disadvantaged or not — to shape their own future and that of their societies. In Upper Egypt, 50% of public preparatory schools have pass rates on end of stage exams below the national average, compared to 27% in Lower Egypt. While Egypt has made major strides in access to primary education with an enrolment rate reaching a level above 90%, *equity* in and *quality* of education still remain major challenges.

I. Achieving Quality Primary and Secondary Education

1. Dimensions of Quality Education for All

By *quality* is meant that it is *what* and *how* the child learns that brings about results. Rote learning of material that is divorced from its practical application in life is the shortest lived and least effective method of learning because it reinforces a passive reproduction of material. Quality education is one that is child centered, fostering *child friendly schools* that allow children freedom of expression and participation in their own learning. Within this shift of perspective, the outcomes of learning are not just proficiency in subject matter, but the child's capacity to self learn, focusing not only on the learning of reading, writing and arithmetic but on important life skills. Child friendly schools also help foster community participation and school effectiveness, since they are accountable not only to the child, but to parents and the wider community.

Quality education is a *right* for all individuals — to enable them to reach their full human potential — and includes the means of reaching better employability and production. It is a sure strategy for the creation of a knowledge-based society, social justice and good governance. Learning that centers on the child's active interaction with learning, under child friendly intellectual and physical conditions promotes dynamic human development and is the educational equivalent of democracy, by forming:

- student who has developed intellectual curiosity and a drive for knowledge, scientific thinking and learning;
- student who has developed creative thinking, critical thinking, evaluation and analytical skills for use in everyday life;
- student who can make decisions, who can plan and is goal oriented;
- student who has leadership skills, and who can cooperate with others and work in teams;



- student who has been exposed to the rights based values of justice, inclusion, equality, and participation.

Quality in education, and equity in its access are critical in bringing about the societal and structural transformation for the achievement of poverty eradication and the MDG goals. They provide the necessary competencies and skills for the era we live in and the aptitudes that will create agents of transformation and change. However, measures need to be undertaken to create the amenable teaching environment and educational management styles and governance that will ensure management excellence.

2. Providing the Appropriate Context for Quality Education

A culture of rights: Cultural institutions need to propagate a culture of rights where people will develop the social responsibility for the application of rights in all walks of life — both in the private and public domains; and where parents and students have a profound sense of entitlement which leads them to demand and protect their rights and respect the rights of others. Fighting social deprivation is enhanced through advocacy and ideology both of which become the responsibility of a responsive media and other learning institutions including colleges and universities. A sense of social responsibility is essential whereby citizens will come to realize that it is every person's duty to support the eradication of poverty and everyone's right not to be poor.

Decentralization: As discussed in EHDR 2004, decentralization is a necessary condition for bringing about quality learning to the largest number of people. It is, however, not a sufficient condition *unless* an empowerment framework is adopted to empower schools, communities, teachers and children.

The real application of decentralization is the adoption of a school based reform approach:

- It is at the school level that decision making and financial autonomy should lie;
- It is at the school level that information should be gathered and analyzed;
- It is at the school level that professional development and research should take place.

Cost savings from decentralization: it is necessary to review the classroom unit cost while

not forsaking standards for safety. It is quite feasible that with decentralized budgets and contracting systems allowing for more community participation those costs of school buildings will decline. Moreover school buildings should have multi-purpose usages including ECD parenting training and adult literacy and computer classes if the level of expenditure on school buildings is to be efficient and justified.

Standards and measures: A culture of quality needs to be created through the development of standards and methods of measurement. These mechanisms will allow for proper evaluation and accountability. Standards have, in fact, been created in Egypt that span all the domains of learning including learning outcomes, school effectiveness, community participation, teacher performance, and management excellence. The indicators for measuring the standards of quality have also been developed. This is indeed a significant step in ensuring quality and accountability. But more has to be done to extend awareness of the value of quality, measurement and accountability. This can be done through media support, and better structures to implement standards and capacity building, so as to allow the public to support the implementation of standards.

3. Creating the Quality Framework

Those organizational structures that are already in place need to be streamlined to respond efficiently to new educational priorities. New structures are also needed for quality assurance. These would include:

- **A national strategic planning unit.** Quality education requires strategic planning with situation analyses and risk factors using SWOT techniques. When assessing existing budget lines, not only should the analyses evaluate investments in the key components of quality, but also target for equity. A government strategy for funding should have enough data and analyses to allow it to make rational and informed choices between the various geographic areas as correlated with poverty indices and socio-economic levels of families, as well as between basic and tertiary education. This unit should be sustainable for periodic assessment and evaluation.



- **A national accreditation system** which will base itself on standards to ensure that schools and educational institutions are following quality guidelines and are ultimately accountable for that.
- **A national center for instructional and materials development** that enjoys an independent budget to support child-centered activity based learning in accordance to new standards developed on a national level.
- **School based units for the professional development of educators and for quality control**, to ensure decentralization has taken place and to secure prompt quality control, capacity building and problem solving at the school level.
- **School boards and education committees** that will ensure the accountability of the school and transparency of the system. The boards will also reflect the willingness of communities to meet the demands of their children in the schools, leading in some instances to cost sharing.

4. Validating the Teaching Profession

Educators must be motivated to learn how to assume the new role of facilitator and role model, and to create the classroom environment that enables the children in their care to achieve excellence. A teacher-training program to meet these essential qualities and skills would depend on a review of Ministry of Education goals for education and their effective communication to the teaching profession. It would depend on designing a strategic plan of training or retraining. It would also require the creation of financial and professional incentives for teachers to learn new skills.

Currently, training needs are assessed annually by the Ministry of Education's Central Department for In-Service Training, but there is no program for performance enhancement. There is an estimated shortage of 1,600 thousand teaching staff at schools in central, governorate and district levels. The shortage of teachers and multiple shifts in some schools also leave no spare time for training. Benefits of training are not clear and the current promotion system forces skilled teachers out of classrooms to administrative positions as a requirement for

promotion and salary increase, thus wasting available professional capacities.

At the school level, there are no financial allocations for school based training units, which are an indispensable component to raising quality. Those units that are in place must be activated by allocating the necessary budgets and empowering local staff to manage the units. At present, teaching staff rarely participates or communicates in assessing their own needs on the ground.

The Ministry of Education, as the main provider of in-service teacher training, does not have the capacity to cater for all training needs. Recruitment of sufficient qualified training staff is an essential ingredient for the success of capacity building but, at present, target groups all receive the same training irrespective of the wide variation of their qualifications (only 46% of employed teachers are graduates of Faculties of Education). In-service training provided by universities consists mostly of on-shelf courses that do not touch on the specific practical needs of schoolteachers and principals.

It is difficult to motivate trainers and trainees at all levels without linking outcomes with incentives. Average earnings for teachers in public schools have been a strong disincentive to enter the profession, and have led to the widespread phenomenon of 'private' lessons to augment incomes. Starting salaries are at subsistence levels and the proposed introduction of a 'cadre' for the salaries of close to 1 million teachers is estimated to cost LE 1 billion.

Policy Recommendations

An entire package of measures is needed in order to restore the status of the profession, once considered highly respectable, and indeed more of a vocation:

- Increasing average earnings and incentives for teachers in public schools;
- Reform of the current promotion system to reward skilled teachers to remain as teachers;
- A recruitment campaign with appropriate incentives for clear teaching categories;
- A strategic plan for training as well as for performance enhancement;
- Building on target group (teaching and non-teaching staff) assessment of their own needs on the ground;

- Hands-on training and upgrading of university courses for teachers away from on-shelf courses;
- Clear standards and guidelines for local school level training;
- Financial allocations for the essential school based training units;
- Robust reduction of redundant administrative positions inside and outside schools;
- Cost sharing mechanisms with the Ministry of Education for training;
- Addressing the specific training needs of principals as leaders and administrators;
- Media campaigns to raise the perceived status of the profession.

5. Building the Appropriate Learning Environment

Boys and girls spend a significant proportion of their day at school. The school environment is the next most vital environment to home. Its physical condition impacts significantly on a pupil's capacity to learn. In parallel with raising a teacher's professional profile and building capacity, it is equally important to raise the standards of the physical environment in which teachers and students interact. A package of measures is proposed to overcome the shortfalls in the various facets of the learning environment.

Policy Recommendations

School buildings: Given the fact that classroom density often reaches more than 70 per class it becomes very necessary to continue to invest in school buildings to secure a minimum level of per child classroom space if quality education is to be a reality. For example in Assiut alone one of the highly populated and deprived governorates 51% of the classrooms harbor more than 50 students, and in Fayoum the percentage goes all the way to 61.4%.

Learning space: Although population trends in Egypt clearly indicate a decrease in the rate of growth thus alleviating the pressure for enrolment, the need for more learning space is still prominent. Currently 40% of schools in Egypt have a class density far exceeding the average of 40 children per classroom. A quality classroom should allocate 1.5 square meters per child, with school provisions for a library, a science laboratory, and outdoor sport or recreational facilities.

School based improvement: (furniture and maintenance). Enabling furniture to support activity-based learning includes, at a minimum, comfortable desks and chairs, functional blackboards

and notice boards, and adequate lighting, in a clean and cheerful environment that also provides sanitary bathroom facilities and an infirmary.

Provision of learning materials: Other than basic textbooks, materials include learning guides for students and for teacher facilitation, activity materials, project kits, fact sheets and cards. Well-supplied school libraries and science labs are also important sources of learning.

Integration of technology: Learning through technology labs in schools requires refurbishing the technological infrastructure, linkages between schools for shared use of material, use of and upgrading existing central government technological and teaching-through-media delivery.

Reform of learner assessment: Diversified and multi-faceted forms of student assessments at school level whereby the child will be assessed on academic knowledge, personality, attitudes and life skills. Centrally-set tests and exams will not be the sole source of assessment.

6. Implementing Universal Standards

Standards can be raised from an improved training and accreditation system for the teaching profession that will produce an educational leadership at the higher, middle and lower range levels of practice. Private sector participation at all levels will ensure that subjects taught are compatible with market conditions and employment opportunities. A new generation of textbooks and learning guides can assist in the change in the role of the teacher, but equally crucial is innovation in the training of trainers for teachers, in the administrative structure of the school and in its relationship with the community, through:

- A national institution for professional development of educators (Professional Academy for Teachers, PAT). This structure would work to enhance teachers' professional development by developing criteria and standards for best performing teachers and best training and learning programs. It would accredit the programs for pre-service training and the providers of services and select and license teachers. It would set up an assessment system that would lead to promotion by merit and that would also track the impact of professional development programs.
- School boards and education committees that will ensure the accountability of the school and transparency of the system. The boards will also reflect the willingness of



communities to meet the demands of their children in the schools, leading in some instances to cost sharing.

- *School based units for the professional development of educators and for quality control*, to ensure decentralization has taken place and to secure prompt quality control, capacity building and problem solving at the school level.
- *School based research units* to help enrich educational theory and practice and to enhance quality at the school level.

II. Implementation and Finance

1. Focusing on Necessary Program Areas

Some education programs can immediately impact on the enhancement of quality and will need a shift of funding or additional financial support government, donors, the private sector and local communities. These include:

A. Early Childhood Development: This is an area which has proved its relevance for school readiness and its powerful impact on student achievement in later years. There have in addition been studies to indicate that such programmes directly contribute to social mobility and breaking the cycle of poverty. Egypt aims at reaching 60% of pre-school aged children through early childhood development programs. An estimated cost of \$103 million is needed to reach just 30% of Egypt's pre-school aged children between 2005-2010. This is currently being jointly funded by the Government of Egypt, the Government of Canada, the World Food Program and the World Bank. The private and community based sectors should be given the incentives to shoulder the balance.

Preschool education is therefore an area where joint resources will have to be targeted to the poorest and most deprived areas. The unit cost per child for the primary cycle for the years 2003/2004 was at a low of LE 929 in 2005 compared to countries like Jordan at US\$ 700 and Tunisia at US\$ 1000. Early childhood development, as yet, is an even poorer cousin. Interventions should not be totally shouldered by the Ministry of Education but call for a multi-faceted strategy that should also involve parenting education — some of which needs to be done by NGOs and a great deal of which can be fulfilled by the media — which has the potential of playing a leadership role in that domain with a

great deal of cost effectiveness. There are interesting examples from Turkey and Tunisia to show it is doable. In Egypt the example of the Sesame Street television program targeted at pre-schoolers is a model worth expanding.

B. Girls' Education: Girls' education programs are a significant contribution to poverty reduction, and most studies have clearly testified to the important ripple effect of educating girls. National averages cover up acute disparities on the sub-national and regional levels where the gender gap in some instances reaches the unacceptable figure of 15% and above. This area of intervention has also proved great effectiveness in attracting partnerships from the communities themselves, the private sector, donors and other non- educational sectors. Much of the integrated programmes for the Girls' Education Initiative are shouldered by sectors other than MOE. In fact the ministry of planning has allocated some LE157 million whilst the EU is proposing 8.2 million euros and several private sector companies are also funding the building of one classroom schools. Meanwhile school meals are being funded by World Food Programme and the Ministry of Agriculture.

2. The Budgetary Implications

Investments in education need to increase and change directions of allocations. Five mechanisms are proposed for reform. These are:

Introducing more balance in resource allocation: The largest discrepancy is found between primary and secondary education, which together receive only two thirds of the public education budget but which constitute 80% of total enrolment, while tertiary education, which constitutes only 6% of total enrolment benefits from one third of the public education budget

Table 1 indicates the high degree of imbalance that persists in government outlays to the various bodies for educational practice. This impacts directly on their relative effectiveness and on their capacity to raise standards. Further, there is an imbalance in budget allocations between central and local educational bodies (at governorate, district and local school levels).

Table 1. Allocations for Specialized Education Agencies 2004-2005 (LE mil)

| GAEB | SFRF | PDF | NCEEE | NCER | GAL | RCAE |
|---------|------|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1,223.2 | 4.0 | 75.0 | 7.8 | 5.9 | 183.2 | 4.1 |

Note:

GAEB= General Authority for Educational Buildings §

SFRF = Services Fees Revenues Fund

PDF = Projects Development Fund

NCEEE= National Center for Examinations and Education

Source: Data from MOE

NCER= National Center for Education Research

GAL= General Authority for Literacy

RCAE= Regional Center for Adult Education

Allocations for salaries: There are close to 1.5 million staff of teachers and administrators currently employed by the Ministry of Education. The skewed proportion of teachers to administrators is largely due to the promotion system whereby good teachers are promoted out of teaching. Salaries for both constitute the largest proportion of current expenditures. Salaries for the central ministry amount to LE 695 million in comparison with LE 721.8 for the governorates and LE 166.9 as special incentives.

Out of the amounts allocated for salaries within the current state of presentation at the MOE it is very difficult to disaggregate all the details for each of the salary and incentive items. For example amounts spent on supervision, quality control and follow up is not at all clear. Inspector/supervisor salaries are also included in the group of educational specialists. The level of incentives is the only item that is singled out meanwhile salary levels are given in bulk. From previous observations one does know that inspectors and supervisors are entitled to a subsistence allowance of six pounds per day (the equivalent of US\$ 1dollar for field visits and are also entitled to reimbursement for transport. The amounts seem quite inadequate for proper and frequent quality control.

Allocations for curriculum development:

This is an area that has had no or minimal resource allocations. Whereas an estimate of LE 152 million is the amount needed for a solid and sustainable curriculum reform to take place. Moreover the little that has been accomplished in reform for the curriculum was done through the development of standards in Egypt — which was done at no cost for the visioning exercise but requires much more to put the vision into practice.

Allocations for monitoring, assessment and educational research:

Investment in assessment and research is very weak. It is indeed one of the areas that will require some serious allo-

cations. According to recent Ministry of Education figures the amount allocated for research for 2004/5 is LE 570 thousand.

Regional distribution of government resources:

An analysis of the budget distribution across governorates reveals that with the exception of the frontier governorates, Luxor City and the New Valley, the allocations to Upper Egypt namely Fayoum, Beni Sueif, Minia, Assiut and Sohag are relatively low. Such low allocations must urgently be corrected in favor of some of the most deprived areas with reference to literacy and enrolment rates and with special reference to girls and females. The proportion of poor children aged 6-15 years not enrolled in education is three times that of the non-poor (World Bank, 2002). It is clear that the poor receive a disproportionately lower share of total education expenditure. Equity is not likely to be enhanced if the neediest regions are under funded. In fact it is particularly those areas that would require larger allocations than average.

Another major imbalance is that the amounts allocated for the central administration with regards to capital investments far exceeds direct investment allocations for the governorates. In 2004/2005, the allocations for the central administration was in the order of LE 549 million compared to LE 45 million to the governorates. This reflects the very high level of centralization and also the heavy bias towards administrative posts as opposed to teaching posts.

3. A Best Case Scenario

Increasing the level of expenditure and reallocating existing budget lines:

Increasing the level of investment need not all be from existing GDP but may be generated from the following possibilities:

- Create school adoption systems by the private sector;
- Increased donor funding;



- Creating community type subsidized schools with greater community involvement and school financial autonomy. Communities are not to shoulder running costs but seed money costs and capital expenditure. Over time it appears that communities prefer one time investments to recurrent costs. Allowing communities to participate in school building will decrease costs and possibly improve designs especially in those areas where communities can afford such investments;
- Facilitate the creation of cooperative education;

- Creating income generating and production possibilities in schools.

However, and in line with its constitutional principle of equal opportunity, Egypt should preserve the system of free education for the duration of the pre-university cycles. Universalization of education for a period of 10-15 years of continuous learning is important if the country is to move onto a knowledge based society and attain the necessary transformation.