

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN EGYPT

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Abstract

This research will try to consider and answer these questions in terms of education. Egypt has made great efforts to reform the education system in order to develop human capitals in the industrialized era. However, it has been agreed among scholars that the education has not made a great contribution to the economic development in general and to the industrialization in specific. This paper assumes that education is the basis of political, economic and social development. The main hypothesis of the paper, however, is that various factors mainly such as education reform from above and existing dual system, religious vs. secular, have been obstacles in the development of education and consequently its contribution to the economic, political, and social progress. In order to find evidence of this hypothesis, the paper will rely on a historical analysis. Examining various written materials related to Egypt's education, this paper will be divided into two main two sections: the first section will explore, in general, the role of education in development; the second section will be devoted to analyzing the history and problems of education in Egypt, and will suggest how normative role of education can be applied to the Egyptian case of development.

Keywords: Relationship between Education and Development, Egypt, Political Development, Economic Development, Social Development

1 INTRODUCTION

Many problems in Egypt's current economic situation have been pointed out by Egyptian scholars as well as foreign analysts. However, is the general situation of Egypt really pessimistic? Geographically, Egypt has vast territory and the longest river in the world which has provided her with large agricultural areas. If agricultural policies are well planned and implemented, the products of the given land can sufficiently provide foods that have been imported from foreign countries like the United States. In industrial areas, Egypt is one of the Third World countries which began industrialization early, introducing foreign capitals and government supports. In addition, there has certainly been a great deal of money flowing into the country since Sadat's peace initiative. Egypt has been the second largest recipient, following Israel, of American aid and assistance, which exceeds more than two billion dollars a year. Oil was discovered in such respectable quantities that Egypt became an oil producer and satisfied the country's own needs as well as being able to export four billion dollars' worth of during the high time, although that amount has recently diminished as the price of oil has fallen. The Suez Canal, remittances from Egyptian laborers working abroad, and tourism have procured further billions dollars (Gouzon, 2007, pp. 3-4).

Then, questions can be raised: Why has Egypt not been able to develop its own society?; What obstacles have been laid down on the road to Egypt's development? In response to these questions, many scholars and the average public refer to authoritarian rule and the inefficiency of the government as well as external factors, such as colonial experience, the four wars and the long confrontation with Israel. They argue that the

underdevelopment has been well accepted and understood through the examination of Egyptian political and economic history (Oweiss, 1990, pp. 21-22). Nevertheless, if one examines more deeply the reasons for underdevelopment, a second set of questions can be raised: Why have authoritarian rule and government corruption been allowed to continue until today?; Why can Egypt not produce her own cars although she started a car industry four decades ago?; Why has the confrontation between the government and the Islamic movements been continued in one of the most open and liberal societies among the Islamic countries?

This essay will try to consider and answer these questions in terms of education. Egypt has made great efforts to reform the education system in order to develop human capitals in the industrialized era. However, it has been agreed among scholars that the education has not made a great contribution to the economic development in general and to the industrialization in specific. This paper assumes that education is the basis of political, economic and social development. The main hypothesis of the paper, however, is that various factors mainly such as education reform from above and existing dual system, religious vs. secular, have been obstacles in the development of education and consequently its contribution to the economic, political, and social progress. In order to find evidence of this hypothesis, the paper will rely on a historical analysis. Examining various written materials related to Egypt's education, this paper will be divided into two main two sections: the first section will explore, in general, the role of education in development; the second section will be devoted to analyzing the history and problems of education in Egypt, and will suggest how normative role of education can be applied to the Egyptian case of development.

2 THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN DEVELOPMENT

Many international organizations like the United Nations Development Programme and scholars assert that education is indispensable to successful development. In this great hypothesis, the two broad concepts of education and development should be defined. It seems that the role of education has been often emphasized in terms of economic development by most international organizations related to development as well as by many scholars. Accordingly, the main purpose of education is to develop human resources by training and through the utilization of human potentials (Hallak, 2017, pp. 2-3). They also argue that education has been recognized as a cornerstone of economic and social development (Sayed 2006, 11-12). Education comes to be universally recognized as a major determinant of individual and social progress toward the goal of modernization and as an essential component of development (Macdonald, 2016, 59). In this regard, education in this essay can be defined in universal and broad senses as a process of acquiring values and knowledge through schooling or more general forms of education.

Development is also defined as a process by which human beings create a necessary environment and conditions of safety, satisfaction, and freedom (Richards and Waterbury, 2016, p. 21). In order to demonstrate the relationship between education and development, development will be divided into three areas: political, economic, and social. Development depends not only on economic growth but also on political and social consensus about basic principles and the establishment of a political decision making process and social order.

The second main concern in education and development is how we interpret the relations between the two. According to the progressive view of history of modernizationists, education seems to have been accepted as a basic foundation on which human societies are able to march through the various phases of development. Dankwar Rustow regarded high literacy rates, among other indicators of modernization, as an important element in social and political mobilization (Starrett, 2008, p. 145). Although this modernizationist paradigm has been criticized for its 'West-centricism' and the unidirectional interpretation of history, it cannot be denied that its functional analysis of development has contributed to understanding relations between education and development. A significant amount of literature on this subject has concentrated on the 'role', 'importance', or 'necessity' of education in the process of development (Zohny, 2008, pp.16-17).

2.1 Education in Political Development

Since the establishment of nation states in developed countries and the independence of developing countries, all nation states have tried to build their own identities in order to maintain the states. Especially in developing areas, they have striven to form political structures which imitated those of Western countries and transformed them to fit their own political environment. In this process, education has performed a homogenizing function of people's or, at least, elite consciousness. In whatever political system and ideologies, the extent of solidarity that is produced by education is likely to be a measuring standard of political stability. Clearly articulating the thesis that education is very important in contributing to national consensus, Hefner argues that value consensus or ideological agreement on basic issues between

members of a Muslim society is regarded as a vital support of the stability of Umma (Hefner and Muhammad, 2007, pp. 120-22).

In an extreme example, the Libyan political situation demonstrates a good case of stability being achieved through education. During the past four decades from 1970s until now, the ruling regime has maintained considerable political stability although it has failed in economic and social areas. By indoctrination of 'Green Revolution' derived from the mixture of socialism and idolization of the leader, Muammar Qadhafi, the Libyan political system has endured without any serious political crisis. Another important aspect in the role of education toward political development is the expansion of the opportunities for participation in politics. In order to offer the evidence of the above thesis, Mahmud A. Faksh's article on "education and national integration" enumerates the previous studies done by other scholars as follows:

-According to L.W. Milbrath, among the various demographic variables usually investigated in social science research education has been found to have the greatest effect on political behavior. Obviously, the educated person is a different kind of political actor than the person who has little or no education at all.

-According to Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's five-nations study, there is a positive relationship between education and political participation that hold true in all of the five nations. Because formal schooling is very strongly related to political attitudes. Almond and Verba believe that education provides the short route toward the creation of a modern political culture.

-In studying the effects of the spread of education in Nigeria, David Abernathy reached the conclusion that education has the dual effect of raising personal ambitions and furthering awareness of politics.

-Karl Deutsch observes that social mobilization brings with it an expansion of the politically relevant strata of the population (Faksh, 2015, p. 50).

Participation can be divided into direct and indirect participation. Direct participation includes work in government or representative organizations, party or union activities, and voting. Education may provide people with higher efficiency and politically moral values in political activities, and offer a reasonable selecting ability in voting. Indirect participation refers to the creation of a good environment for clean politics on which comprehensive or exorbitant corruption or authoritarian rule cannot be accepted because of the public opinion and people's consciousness of politics. It is generally accepted that military coups occur more frequently among less educated societies (Zoepf, 2005, p. 39).

2.2 Education in Economic Development

Education may contribute to economic development in two ways. First, it may provide skilled labor in industrial areas and may increase the productivity of workers. In most economic success case of Newly Industrialized Countries, there is strong evidence toward the importance of education in industrialization and development. It can be said that the basis of considerable economic success in South Korea and Taiwan was due to a highly trained and productive labor force with low wages and that the labor force of the two countries was a precondition for the high rates of investment and capacity expansion that made the export expansion possible (Woo, 2011, pp. 1031-32).

On the other hand, the skill requirement of jobs in industrial society constantly increases because of technological change. The proportion of jobs requiring low skill decreases and the proportion requiring high skill increases. Furthermore, the gap of skill and technology between developed countries and developing countries increases as a result of the general economic gap and educational investment. In both domestic and international areas, education should be regarded as a means of narrowing the gap among individuals as well as among countries (UNDP, 2016, pp. 1-2).

Second, education and socialization of the public play a significant role in understanding and applying economic principles in a society. On the macro-economic level, the understanding of economics not only makes government decision makings in economic policies easier and publicly supported, but also may provide checks and balances against government's economic policies for the privileged minority that have often happened in many Third World countries. For example, if people in a country understand the liberal view of economics and world trade, they may not recklessly object the government's decision of reducing the agricultural subsidies and opening its market to foreign products (Fandy, 2007, pp. 78-79).

On the micro-economic level, the understanding of economics may help individuals to budget their present and future lives. It also may make people apply their economic lives to the nations macroeconomics (Galal, 2015, pp. 167-69). For example, the Japanese prefer their own products to imported ones even if the latter is better than the former in quality and price. Although this trend has been criticized as a distorted and

chauvinistic understanding of economics, it is still upheld.

2.3 Education in Social Development

It is very difficult to evaluate the role of education in social development. Education, especially formal and west-oriented, has sometimes brought about social chaos between traditional and modern social values or introduced values in most of Third World countries that have tried to make vast and comprehensive social and cultural changes (Cochran, pp. 94-98). This has resulted in social conflicts between the two groups particularly in Islamic countries: modernists and conservatives. Nevertheless, considering the social and economic difficulties and sufferings in a large number of Third World countries, it cannot be denied that education should be expanded to solve the major social problems in population, health, and women's status.

Population growth is one of the most important issues which Third World countries have faced in the process of development. Rapid growth of population has made the standard of living in many countries deteriorate and has resulted in narrowing the opportunities of education, especially for low-income families (Goujon, 2007, pp. 3-8). Health has often been neglected during the beginning of the developmental process because of its great financial burden on governments and the issue has not gained priority among other issues. For this reason, personal concern about the health problem becomes more important in developing countries.

As for the problems of population and health, a World Bank report concludes that increased education of parents, especially mothers, has a development impact on child health and reduced fertility at all levels of economic development. It argues that women's education is closely related to child health, as measured either by nutritional status or child mortality and that reduced fertility depends heavily on women's education. The report places an importance on the education of women as it points out that women's enrollment in primary and secondary education is lower than that of men by at least ten percentage points in 66 of 108 countries and the gap is much wider in the low-income countries. If women receive low levels of education, it hinders economic development and reinforces social inequality in that women represent an enormous potential source of human capital (Haddad, 2010, pp. 4-5).

3 EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN EGYPT

This section will be devoted to explore the education and development on the basis the above-described generalization of the relationship. It may be very interesting to analyse the irony of history: Egypt was one of the centres of human civilizations and contributed to human history, but presently Egypt has tried to follow other nation's models of development. On the basis of reviewing the history of Egypt's education, this paper will try to extract problems of the education system or environment, and to analyse the relationship between the problems and underdevelopment of Egypt. During the course of the analysis, comparisons with South Korean cases may be often introduced because Korea and Egypt had similar historical backgrounds in development, but represent, to some extent, different results. The two countries started their national development programs in 1950s after the colonial period and they had similar external factors like Egypt's several wars with Israel and Korea's long confrontation with North Korea. Then, why do the two countries have considerably different results in their development?

3.1 Brief History of Egypt's Education

Due to the lack of sources on informal education, the analysis of Egypt's history of education is obliged to depend upon the examination of formal education. In the historical points of view, Egypt's education can be divided into four stages. The first period extends from the pharaoh times until the early nineteenth century. The evolution of the educational system in Egypt dates back to the pharaonic period, when special schools were established to educate royal family and other members of the court.

After the beginning of Islam around 640, education for the majority of students in Egypt was conducted through religious schools, where the emphasis was on the memorization of the Quran, and the study of sayings and traditions associated with the Prophet Muhammad. Education for girls, limited to those classes of society able to hire private tutors, was uncommon (Hartmann, 2007, p. 110). Military education was under the supervision of, and confined to, the Mamluk households. Higher education in religious studies was available at al-Azhar University, founded during the Fatimid dynasty, which had become a major institute for the training of religious scholars and personnel from throughout the Islamic world.

The second period of education in Egypt is characterized by the beginning of modern secular education. It can be traced to the early nineteenth century. The invasion of the country by the French in 1798 triggered demands for reform and modernization of education and society among intellectuals of the days. In addition to this external shock by the French, Muhammad Ali's policies resulted in a new trend of Egyptian education.

Muhammad Ali wanted independence from the Ottoman empire. To achieve his goal, he needed a modern, well-trained army with educated officer corps. With the purpose of creating skilled professionals for his army and state bureaucracy, as well as technical and professional schools. He invited instructors and trainers from France and sent the first of a series of student missions abroad to be trained (Herrera, 2003, pp. 189-90) His successors, Said and Ismail pursued the same direction of Muhammad Ali, and during their reigns, many Europeans came and introduced European school system which offered a high-quality secular education to Egyptian pupils.

The third stage of Egypt's education began from the British occupation and ended with the revolution by the Free Officers. This period witnessed the two different trends of education in Egypt. First, the attitude of the British toward education in Egypt during their period of control of the country between 1882 and 1922 has been criticized for neglecting all but elementary education, which they did work to improve and expand. The British wanted to rule Egypt without allowing it to develop (Macdonald, 2016, p. 63). The educational system suffered from lack of funds. Access to higher education became more limited and higher education became a privilege for the elite. Especially Lord Cromer consistently opposed the establishment of a national university during his term in office between 1883 and 1907.

The second trend was the emergence of a nationalistic movement for education to protest the British education policies (Macdonald, 2016, pp. 65-66). A subscription campaign for an Egyptian national university was started in 1906 and enjoyed the active support of the Royal Family. In 1925 Cairo University was established and before the Revolution other universities were founded in Alexandria and Ayn Shams. Though the educational system from 1922 to 1952 was improving and expanding, it was still far from adequate in its ability to provide mass education.

The final stage ranges from the 1952 revolution until today. The revolution, which abolished the monarchy, brought with it a new philosophy of education (Macdonald, 2016, p. 71). The new theme was democratization of education, providing equal educational opportunities based on aptitude and ability to all Egyptians. Educational reforms were introduced, and open access to higher education became available. There was an expansion in school facilities for all children between six and twelve, with post-primary schools offering vocational training in agriculture, commerce and domestic studies. Entrance to the four-years preparatory schools is by examination, and successful graduates of the preparatory schools are admitted to a three-year secondary school. At the end of this secondary education, students take the Thanawiyya Amma exam, which determines whether they will gain a place at one of the national universities. The following two regimes have continued this frame of education without dramatic changes (Holmes, 2008, pp. 177-78).

3.2 Characteristics of Egypt's Education

3.2.1 Education Initiatives from Above

As shown in the history of education, Egypt's education system has been designed and expanded mainly by decision makers to satisfy the necessity of the government administrations and policies. Although the nationalist promotion of education appeared by the end of the British rule, almost other educational policies were initiated by the government. Ahmed Galal asserts that Muhammad Ali extended public education in order to meet the administrative needs of state monopolies and Ismail's regime also continued to expand public education to strengthen the bureaucracy. Galal also says that a middle class of bureaucratic was created to supervise the state monopolies in agriculture and industry (Galal, 2015, pp. 25-27). Nasser's regime also played a major role in building the modern system of Egypt's education and gradually attempted to bring education within an overall plan for the country's development. Furthermore, the Free Officers nationalized all the educational institutions and succeeded in obtaining the direct control over Egypt's education.

In most developing area, a strong government involvement in education may be justified in that education is the basis of development. However, the involvement or control over education has sometimes had another purpose in newly established government. It means that the governments have sometimes used public education as a mean of legitimizing their policies and regimes. According to Ayubi, compulsory schooling in socialist principles during Nasser's regime were introduced with textbooks stressing the "correctness of government policies" and giving the "official version of Egyptian history" (2011, 137-141). This kind of education may be efficient in homogenizing people's opinion and in forging, to a degree, solidarity in a society. However, in the long run, it may bring about more serious social and political conflicts.

The case of S. Korea is similar in experience to Egypt in that the modern education was introduced during the Japanese colonial period, encouraged by the American military authorities after the Korean war in 1950s,

and accelerated by the military revolution of 1961. The Korean government has strongly involved itself in education policies and financial support since the revolution. Although the government is the owner of several public schools and it also used education in the indoctrination of national policies, it did not, however, nationalize other private schools which outnumber the public schools. The government has normally played the supporters' role in the education of Korea. This role contributed to the growth of sound political consciousness among people, especially university students, which became the major social power in the process of democratization.

3.2.2 Quantitative Over-Expansion

Particularly after the 1952 revolution, educational opportunities were greatly increased. Inevitably, the quality of teaching was often low, and there has recently been criticism that expansion was too hasty (El Sebai, 2006, pp. 76-77) Illiteracy has not fallen nearly as fast as was hoped. One of the problems is that in the countryside the children are kept away from school by their parents to work in the fields. Nevertheless, Egypt has been turning out a large number of teachers, engineers, doctors, pharmacists and administrators. Many of them left to work abroad in other Arab countries of the West, where they could find more and better paid opportunities. They formed a brain drain although the money they sent back to Egypt helped the balance of payments (Sayed, 2005, pp. 72-73)

The problem of over-expansion seems to be related with economic development. There has been a wide gap between the supply of human capital by education and the demand from other economic sectors. This phenomenon has brought not only about the brain drain in Egyptian society but also about stagnation of education due to the lack of increasing demand for education. However, it should be noted here that the term 'over-expansion' could be misunderstood if one considers the fact that the literacy rate of Egypt is still less than 75% in comparison with that of Korea, 98.5% as of 2006 (UNDP, 2016, pp. 47-48).

3.2.3 Elite-Mass Gap

This elite-mass gap phenomenon should be understood not only in terms of the education system itself but also the social structure of Egypt. In other words, education in developing countries has produced a considerable inequality in access to education partly because of the unbalanced educational system and the traditional social stratification. Inequality between geographical regions, urban and rural districts or occupational strata seems to be an almost inevitable concomitant of early stages of growth.

In Egypt's case, it can be said that education has been a means to maintain the position of ruling class and to reinforce the control of the government. Although the ideology of the Revolution had contributed to the expansion of access to education to the public for a massive task of political socialization in pursuit of the goal of an egalitarian society, the real results of the educational reforms was to fill the gap of expanded government bureaucracy owned by the public sector.

Through her survey study on education girls' schooling, Herrerera argues in the conclusion that the general objective of Egypt's education, which is to ensure of opportunity, is undermined by inequalities based on traditional differentiating variables such as age, hierarchy, and gender. She also emphasizes the inequality by saying that the ideal of equal opportunity is undermined by class, especially in terms of 'financial resources,' and that greater resources enhance the chance of success (2006, pp. 50-51).

3.2.4 Dual System: Religious vs. Secular

In developing areas where each state has introduced modern secular education, especially Western-oriented, and started modernization on the basis of education, the most conspicuous aspect is the conflicts between traditional and introduced culture. In almost all Islamic countries, this phenomenon has been one of the most serious problems in modernizing the countries in that Islam has been the basic standard of all social values and the religion of the majority. Analysing the consequences of the introduction and spread of modern education in Egypt, Tahir Abbas states:

It would seem that the most important social change brought about by this contract [the French invasion] was the development of modern secular education, introduced during Muhammad Ali's rule, which was vastly different from the already existing religious system of education. The result of this innovation was the creation of an educational system rivalling the traditional religious one but not supplanting it. This division into two system of education - the traditional religious and the modern secular - was inevitable as a new way of life was being introduced. The new way of life demanded a special system of education to serve it and perpetuate it; the old way of life continued to maintain its own. Each system served a different clientele and performed a different function. The religious schools continued to provide a rudimentary education for the

masses in the form of the three Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic), while the modern government schools provided a secular, European-style education for the existing and aspiring elite (Abbas, 2008, p. 244).

This phenomenon seems to be very serious nowadays. Islamic fundamentalism has become one of the most serious problem in Egypt. Although several elements can be mentioned as important reasons of Islamic movement, the fundamental factor is centred on the failure of homogenizing the society and creating a common social value (Asik, 2008, pp. 29-30) The outstanding aspect of the dual system in Egyptian society is represented by the style of clothes, especially veil of women. If one talks with Egyptians, he sometimes feels considerable difference between people wearing the Islamic clothes and the others. In other words, one group of the dual society may use a different measuring stick in interpreting a same social phenomenon (Fox, 2003, p. 67).

3.2.5 Lack of Private Investment in Education

Although Nasser's regime opened the door for opportunities to education and number of students considerably expanded, one can find many children workers and non-schooled children in Egypt. This phenomenon can be witnessed in most developing areas. What makes the parents let their children work or allow them to idle? The question may be answered in two explanations. First, the education system in Egypt, as mentioned before, largely originated from the top, through government policies. The participation of people in education was not fully motivated from their own consciousness of necessity towards education or from strong aspiration. Second, the desperation of people contributed to the lack of desire for education. Besides, education has been used in order to maintain the existing social and political status by elite groups and to rise the social ladder by the lower class. However, the structure of Egyptian society does not seem to have given free or vast opportunities to the lower class who want to raise their social positions through competitive education (Hartmann, 2007, pp. 110-11).

In Egypt, an official figure from UNESCO states that approximately 4.8 percent of GNP is allocated to education in 2005, while a source from the Ministry of Education claims that nearly 14 percent of the entire GNP is actually spent on education by combining both state expenditure and private expenditure, both in the form of private lessons and tuition for private school (Hartmann, 2007, p. 92).

4 CONCLUSION

Can the gross domestic product per capita or balance of payments represent economic development? Who can draw a clear border line between democratic and authoritarian governments? Are population, health, and education able to point out levels of social development accurately? There are a large number of these indicators or measuring sticks used by different national or international organizations. Most of them are devised by Westerners in order to measure their own situation or other countries. However, it seems that these measurements cannot exactly explain each country's situation. This is because the imported indicators do not contain the explanation of unique historical experience of a country such as the colonial experience or geopolitical complexities. For this reason, study of a country's development should be accompanied with a historically understanding of the country.

In this regard, to suggest a set of appropriate developmental policies for a chosen country is not an easy task. What should be sought first in Egypt among the political, social, and economic development? Can all the areas take the same priority at the same time? It is an accepted agreement that the process of development takes a long time and that all areas should be deeply studied by social scientists in order for development aims to provide efficient and time-sparing policies for the developing countries.

The relationship between education and development is so complex and intermingled that one cannot easily analyse it without dealing with numerous factors contributing to the relationship. Through the examination of Egypt's education system, it is shown that several structural problems of Egyptian society have become obstacles on the way of development. And it is also demonstrated that development of education has been deeply related with political, economic, and social situation. Nasser's socialism, economic difficulties, and the vertical and horizontal dual system of society have significant effects on the development of education.

Among the numerous problems in the development of education, there has been the government's deep involvement. The government's over-involvement has brought about an enormous financial burden on the government itself. As Hartmann pointed out, the size of private education has not been significant as compared with government education. His data from Ministry of Education in 2005/06 shows that number of schools between private and government has big difference: the number of private schools as percentage of total is 3 percent in primary education, 13.8 percent in preparatory education, and 27.2 percent in general secondary education (Hartmann, 2007, p. 116). Furthermore, the government's control over education has

resulted in inefficiency of education in general as shown in other public sectors in Egypt.

Like this, Egyptian education system revealed a set of problems and challenges facing it. This situation will be even worse in the future if the current trends continue. Education as shown in the cases of Korea and Taiwan has the great importance of human capital towards political, economic and social development. Educated public should be the basis of checks and balances against prevalent government's corruption and inefficiency and they should also be the power of economic growth and social integration.

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