

Education in egypt



Egypt Education System

The extension of the free mandatory education law in 1981 was one of the reasons to combine the Preparatory Stage, both Primary and Preparatory phases (Ages 6 through 14) together under the label Basic Education, as education beyond this stage depends on the student's ability. Egypt operates two corresponding education systems: the secular system and the religious, or Al-Azhar system.

The secular system consists of basic education which covers the first 8 years of schooling. The second level divides students between three-year general academic secondary schools and three or five-year vocational schools, as there are three different types of secondary education which are general, technical, and vocational. These types of education are provided in three-year and five-year programs, and include schools in three different fields: industrial, commercial and agricultural. The third level is universities.

The Al-Azhar system, which maintains separate facilities for male and female from primary to university level, enrolls 4 percent of the country's total students, and is responsible for conveying the mission of Islam and revealing its contribution to humanity's welfare and progress. In this system, primary school extends over the first 6 years, and preparatory school for the next three years. Students who successfully complete 4 years of secondary school can enroll at Al-Azhar University. Al-Azhar University, which is considered to be the bastion of Islamic knowledge in Egypt, was founded in AD 970.

There are two kinds of government schools in Egypt which are Arabic Schools and Experimental Language Schools. Arabic Schools provide the governmental national curriculum in the Arabic Language; however, experimental Language Schools teach most of the government curriculum in English, and add French as a second foreign language.

Moreover, there are three kinds of private schools. As Government schools, private schools also has different types such as ordinary schools, language schools, and religious schools. First, Ordinary schools have the same way of education of the government schools with more concentration on the students want and services provided to them. Second, language schools have the same educational materials as the government with the exception that all those materials are taught in different languages; this is beside the high fees those schools requires.

The third type of private education is religious that are established or controlled by Muslim Brotherhood. Their educational curriculum is totally unlike the government and Azhar schools. Private schools on Egypt are considered the best education because of high and various facilities offered by those schools. This educational system is supervises by the ministry of education

However, the Azhar education system is supervised by the Supreme Council of the Al-Azhar Institution and considered to be independent from the Ministry of Education, but is eventually under supervision by the Egyptian Prime Minister. The Azhar schools are named " Institutes" and also share the

same phases as the normal educational system which both include primary, preparatory, and secondary education.

The Azhar schools in all phases teach non-religious subjects, to a certain degree; however, the majority of the curriculum consists of religious subjects. All the students are Muslims, and males and females are separated in all phases. The Azhar schools are spread all over the country, but excessively in rural areas. The graduates of the Azhar secondary schools are eligible to continue their studies only at the Al-Azhar University. In the early 2000s, the Azhar schools accounted for less than 4% of the total enrollment.

There are both private and public universities of higher education in Egypt. The difference between them is that Public higher education is free in Egypt, and Egyptian students only pay registration fees, but Private education is much more expensive and is considered to be for the elite, as graduates of such schools generally do very well on their final secondary school examinations, which ensures them access to what are considered as elite faculties.

Currently 98 percent of graduates from secondary schools enter higher education. The higher education sector in Egypt is comprised of universities and institutions of technical and professional training. The system is made up of 12 public universities, 51 public non-university institutions, and 4 private (for profit) universities.

In May 2000, there were 18 pending applications to open additional private for profit higher education institutions. Of the 51 non-university institutions,

47 are two-year middle technical institutes (MTI), and 4 are four or five-year higher technical institutes (World Bank, 2000: 1).

The major public universities are Cairo University (100, 000 students), Alexandria University, Ain Shams University, and the 1, 000-year-old Al-Azhar University. While the American University in Cairo, the German University in Cairo and the Université Française d'Égypte is of the leading private universities in Egypt.

Entry into the secular university system is based on the results of the Secondary Educational phase. According to the article " Egypt," " only students attending general academic secondary schools were eligible to matriculate; however since 1970 universities have been enrolling some students from vocational schools. The Placement Bureau of the Ministry of Higher Education controls admission, and there is a *numerous clauses* imposed by the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU) on admission at institutional and state levels".

Al-Azhar University system, unlike other systems, requires certain certificates like a Secondary School Certificate from the Al-Azhar education system and a Certificate of Koran Recitation from a Koran Recitation Institute or hold an Al-Azhar diploma.

Non-university education is offered by industrial, commercial, and technical institutes which provide 2-year courses leading to diplomas in accountancy, secretarial work, insurance, computer or health sciences and electronics. Technical education schools provide 5-year courses leading to advanced

technical education diplomas in commercial, industrial, and agricultural fields.

Although the American University in Cairo (AUC) has existed since 1919 as a private university, Egypt only legalized Egyptian private universities in 1992 when the People's Assembly passed a Law # 101 allowing the establishment of private universities. The most essential consideration is that the Minister for Education must approve the appointment of private university, as presidents, and non-Egyptians cannot occupy leading positions in private universities without the ministry's approval.

The second vital aspect is that the Supreme Council of Universities indirectly supervises private universities and is responsible for monitoring standards to ensure that graduation certificates from state and private universities represent an equal education level compared with the governmental certificates. " In May 2002, the private universities' committee was replaced with the *private universities' council*. The council has the same powers as the Supreme Council of Universities, which regulates public universities."

Many People assume that private higher education institutions in Egypt are institutions that "sell" degrees to those who can afford the university expenses. Critics of private higher education in Egypt also argue that private higher education is at odds with the principles of the *1952 Revolution*, which called for equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens.

Egypt is considered the country that has the largest higher education systems in the third world as it contains about 1.670 million students. Egypt relies in its education on two-year technical institutes to continue providing

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access to all secondary school graduates while protecting the already overfunded universities. Technical institutes enroll 40 percent of all secondary school graduates.

This lack of financial, human, and material resources results in poor quality education in most universities and is considered by many people as non-academic institution. The number of higher education students per 100,000 inhabitants is 1,900 in Egypt compared to 1,132 in Morocco; 1,236 in Algeria; and 1,253 in Tunisia. Studies on the social class and educational backgrounds of state university students have revealed inequalities of access to what are considered as high status/elite faculties.

To improve the educational system in Egypt governance and control of higher education should be obtained by the Ministry of Higher Education, the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU), and the Central Administration of Al-Azhar Institutes.

The Ministry of Higher Education has a legal authority over higher education by supervising and controlling the education, planning, policy making, and quality control on primary and preparatory schools and training for basic education for teachers.

The Supreme Council of Universities formulates is the one responsible for policy making and deciding or controlling the number of students to be admitted to each faculty in each university.

Moreover, supervision and administration of the Al-Azhar higher education system is the responsibility of the *Central Administration of Al-Azhar*

Institutes, which is a department of the Supreme Council of Al-Azhar that is responsible for the development of the general policy and planning to enable the spread of Islamic culture and Arabic language.

In official discourse, education in Egypt is “free” from basic to higher education. While officially the state is responsible for financing higher education in Egypt, the state’s share of higher education finance for universities was reduced to 85 percent in 1994-1995, leaving the universities to generate the remaining 15 percent through various revenue diversification strategies.

Sanyal (1998: 16), and the World Bank (2000: 40-41) identify the following revenue diversification strategies adopted by Egyptian universities:

(a) Charging nominal tuition fees for alternative academic programs that are perceived to be of high quality and introducing other relevant fees. For example, state universities have introduced foreign language programs for which they charge tuition. Some public universities charge £E1, 000 as tuition for a degree program in Commerce which uses English as a medium of instruction. The number of applicants in some degree programs in public universities exceeds available spaces, a phenomenon which gives room for universities to charge tuition. While the tuition charged in this case is still only about 33 percent of the actual cost of the program, this arrangement sets a precedent towards cost recovery in public institutions (World Bank, 2002: 40).

Also, in recent years, a new system of admission to the faculties of Law, Commerce, and Arts allows a less qualified student to obtain a place on

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paying an admission fee of £E 360 (Sanyal, op cit). The impact of this practice on the quality has been negative as manifested by a high number of repeating students in universities.

Egyptian students pay between £E30-£E150 per year as a token tuition fee in government funded universities. In addition, they also pay necessary equipment, books, transportation, and residence fees. The practice of charging token tuition fees in Egyptian public universities goes as far back as 1924 when the Egyptian University (now Cairo University) started charging £E30 per year for all faculties with the exception of the pharmacology department that charged £E20 per year. This university also imposed a non-refundable examination fee of £E1. 16 Tuition fee in private universities range from

£E15, 000-25, 000. The American University in Cairo-the oldest private university in Egypt, charges a tuition fee of US\$ 2, 813 for 6 credits and US\$ 469 for each additional credit.

(b) Income generation by specialized university centers from:

- (1) Cooperation with industry;
- (2) Patent rights;
- (3) Provision of continuing education to industrial employees;
- (4) Access to laboratory and scientific equipment;
- (5) Manufacturing intermediate industrial products;

In addition, In 1998, the *International Finance Corporation (IFC)* conducted an extensive feasibility study on *the market for student loans in post-secondary education in Egypt*. This study recommended *against* launching a student loan program due to the following reasons: (a) limited market size; (b) underdeveloped debt/credit market; (c) cultural attitude uncomfortable with personal debt and loans; and (d) lack of a consumer credit agency (World Bank, 2000 op cit: 41).

As a result of the above recommendations, the Egyptian Government by 2000 was planning to establish *a £E100 million-loan program* for needy university students. Under this proposed loan scheme, students who can *prove* that they are in need of financial assistance for education-related expenses will be eligible to receive up to *£E1000 per year* in government loans. The loans are to be interest free and repayment will be spread out over a period of 40 years after graduation.

Problems and challenges in Egyptian higher education system are analyzed in the World Bank's *Higher Education Enhancement Project*, which is a part of a comprehensive reform strategy for higher education in Egypt. The higher education reform agenda was influenced by the National Conference on Higher Education, held in February 2000, and aims to address Egypt's need to upgrade educational quality in the university sector.

Egyptian higher education sector faces a number of challenges including: (i) antiquated system-wide governance and management; (ii) low quality and relevance at the university level; (iii) low quality and relevance at the middle

technical level; and (iv) limited fiscal sustainability of publicly financed enrollments (World Bank, 2000: 1).

The problem of financially weak enrollments is related to the dramatic increase in enrollments in university education. *For example, enrollments increased by 42 percent between 1997/98 and 1998/99 leading to an 8 percent decline in per-student spending that exacerbated disparities in resource allocation between faculties (World Bank, 2002: 41).*

While the overall expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP has grown from 3.9 percent in 1991 to 5.9 percent in 1998 with higher education receiving a 28 percent share of total expenditure in 1998, the dramatic growth of the higher education student population in Egypt creates a serious problem in financing higher education. Given the high population growth in higher education, to simply maintain the share of 18-22 age group at its present 20 percent level (this is an official policy) would require on average an additional 60,000 new enrollments in higher education for the next ten years (World

Bank, 2000: 2). The government has no financial ability to do this.