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# Assessment of Egypt's New Education Reform System

**Amgad Hamdi**



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TURKEY- ISTANBUL

Bahçelievler, Yenibosna Mh 29 Ekim Cad. No: 7 A2 Blok 3. Plaza D: 64  
Tel/Fax: +90 212 227 2262 E-Mail: [info@eis-eg.org](mailto:info@eis-eg.org)

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No partial experience of reforming the education system will succeed even if depends on in-depth studies since the whole thing does not go unilaterally but remains subject to the general structure that governs development of the educational system; and since it does not address the real obstacles that hinder education development in Egypt.

This paper is an attempt to assess the reform attempt launched by the current Minister of Education, Tarek Shawki, through examining its overall inclusiveness and strategic structure according to the challenges facing education development and indicators through which the regime policies can be monitored and evaluated, regardless of the momentum raised around the school tablet experience as a new way to improve the general secondary education system.

Objective assessment of this experience also requires consideration of all elements of the educational process, conducting a review of the priorities that the educational policies should seek to regulate, and including the challenges that public policies should address and eliminate.

Assessment of the current experience should not be restricted only to the new secondary school system, despite its significance, but the overall vision of evaluation requires a general perception of the regime's policies and mechanisms towards major challenges that hinder development of the educational system in Egypt.

*Following are some indicators through which the regime policies can be monitored and evaluated:*

### 1 -Social justice

The social justice index has declined significantly under the current regime, especially after the government launched the experience of 'Japanese schools', which reached 40 schools nationwide at the beginning of the scholastic year 2019-2020. The great problem of the social justice index lies in depriving a large segment of the people from enrolling in these schools, especially those belonging to the middle class who are keen to provide a good education for their children, especially that the fees for the coming scholastic year will be LE 10,800, in addition to the expenses of the uniform and transportation.

The regime has also allowed the military institution to establish its own private schools although they are also state-owned schools (which is difficult to define legally as state-owned private schools), such as the Badr International School, that is owned by the Third Field Army, with [fees](#) ranging from LE 20,000 to LE 32,000 (in 2016).

## 2- Qualification of teachers and addressing their problems

The teacher is considered the essence and basis of the educational process. Therefore, preparation and qualification of the teacher to enable him to carry out his duties, within the framework of development of the educational system, has two main pillars: first, provision of a proper salary; second, continuous training and sustainable education.

In this context, Minister of Education Tarek Shawki has asserted that the issue of increasing teachers' salaries is not within his competence, but it is the responsibility of the [House of Representatives](#) (parliament) and the Ministry of Finance. Shawki also stressed that the State is not capable of bearing the costs of raising the salaries of teachers and other education ministry personnel, 1,800,000, costing the government LE 53 billion annually.

In principle and based on prioritization, the training of teachers will never be fruitful while the teacher receives LE 1200 per month as salary. However, in terms of procedures, the Professional Academy for Teachers (PAT) was launched in 2008 but its role is routinely limited to the training of teachers to be able to obtain higher occupational grades, but as for the sustainable education and access to post-graduate studies, the Ministry of Education does not support this approach and does not have any incentive programs for this path.

In this regard, Khalaf al-Zanati, the head of Teachers' Association, says: "Training of teachers, as I said more than once, is illusionary and unreal. During my frequent visits to teachers in Cairo and other governorates, I used to ask teachers about training, and the answers were shocking; as they stressed that the matter is mere formality. Teachers go either to PAT or to any other place of training just to complete requirements of their [promotion](#) degrees."



### 3- School over-crowdedness

Tarek Shawky pointed out that the crisis of classroom over-crowdedness is suffered by 44% of the total public (government) schools all over the country, and that solving that problem requires pumping LE 60 billion, which takes up to ten years. He also pointed out that he is not against allowing businessmen to take over management of some [government schools](#).

Shawki also told the parliament's budget committee that the education ministry needs an additional LE 11 billion next year, otherwise the development projects will stop, as the ministry is suffering from a lack of resources, and therefore it is difficult to spend on all axes, including the development process and the elimination of [over-crowdedness](#).

School over-crowdedness is expected to increase due to the inability to balance new school construction with the annual population growth rate which is estimated at LE 2.5 million children per year.

### 4- Private tuition from criminalization to legalization

There is a contradiction and a gap between policies and statements regarding the phenomenon of private tuition. While the current regime holds private tuition responsible for the corruption of the educational system in Egypt, however, the government has decided to issue legislation to legalize private tuition through licensed private tuition centers, and at the same time criminalize the practice of these activities outside this framework. In the event of adoption of such draft law by the House of Representatives, the role played by the Ministry of Education will be affected significantly, as it will be limited to organization of examinations, ratification of their results, and allowing students to move up to higher educational stages.

However, the Ministry of Education also asserts that it will adopt policies that would eliminate the phenomenon of private tuition, and that it is preparing a draft law that will be submitted to the parliament to criminalize private tuition, as it adds an economic burden on Egyptian families, estimated at LE 30 billion [annually](#).

## 5- Private and international schools in Egypt

Egypt has witnessed a significant growth in the number of foreign (international) schools. According to the statement of the Ministry of Education, there were 768 international schools in 2017, in addition to 7,777 [private schools](#).

The proliferation of international schools in Egypt, especially that offers the American curriculums, raises many questions about the future of the Arabic language and the national identity amid the dual culture. Also, the spread of language schools, which requires a very high financial cost, reduces the chances of public (government) education to compete, which devotes the manifestations of dependency and erosion of the national identity.

## 6- Technical and vocational education

The new development program adopted by the ministry of education did not include the axis of technical and vocational education, where development was limited to kindergartens and the new general secondary education system. Also, the school tablet project was limited to the general secondary school students only without mentioning the students of technical and vocational schools, where there are 5 sectors to study technical and vocational education (agricultural, industrial, commercial, nursing, and hotel management).

From the above presentation of education policies adopted by the post-3 July regime, as the main entrance to assessment of the new secondary school system, we find that the negative phenomena of the education system in Egypt are spreading, especially that the regime seems to be encouraging them instead of addressing them. The government has decided to legalize the private tuition phenomenon and include it in the official education system. It also reversed the simple social justice entitlement obtained by teachers in 2012. Furthermore, the educational policies continued to open the doors for private and foreign schools, amid deterioration of the conditions of public (government) schools, with increased likeliness of privatizing them, escalation of the over-crowdedness problem, and the ministry's weak control over schools. In fact, all these challenges that the regime has failed to address are the basis for reforming the educational system.

## Conclusion

The real development of the education system in Egypt seems to have been missing on the agenda of the Egyptian regime over the past four decades. However, there were very limited attempts for development of education, albeit mere wishes and aspirations, that have not been transformed into real programs or projects.

The future of education in Egypt is not linked to educational policy-making or the role of the Ministry of Education, or even to the upgrading of the current educational system or the privatization of education, but in the final analysis remains dependent on the nature of the ruling political system, its desire to preserve the state's identity and language, and adoption of a national project for independence and liberation of dependency.

The education reform measures adopted by the Egyptian regime have not gone beyond mere formal reform attempts. Although Article 19 of the Egyptian Constitution states that education is a right for every citizen and that the state guarantees free education in its various stages, the dropouts from education has increased, the private tuition has prevailed, and the ability of the poor to continue their education has declined due to the rising costs of education borne by parents.