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GLOBALIZATION IMPACT ON EDUCATION IN EGYPT

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## **Abstract**

The Education affair in Egypt is a Janus-faced case considered both as 'local' and 'global'. There are local factors specific to this country - the Islamization of the Egyptian society's moeurs - as well as elements of global and international nature, that insert the Egyptian education case in the larger analytical framework of Globalization.

After highlighting how Egypt got involved in the global system by the application of new economic and neoliberal policies, the paper will focus on the dilemma of the Education affair, on islamized attitudes of the educational staff and on new educational policies aimed at contrasting with the rise of Islamization of all public education system. By this, two opposing forces are being in action in Egypt today: on the one hand, a 'local' inner force which pushes a part of society toward a radicalization of religious references and on the other hand, a 'global' international force which supports the Egyptian government to enforce laws, projects, programmes enabling to guarantee an apparent and precarious balance in the country.

## **Keywords**

Egypt; Education; Globalization; Religion; Islamization





## **Introduction\***

The Education affair in Egypt, a regional case in itself can be considered both as 'local' and 'global'. Indeed there are certain local factors specific to this country - as the Islamization of the Egyptian society's *mœurs* - as well as elements of global and international character, that insert the Egyptian education case in the larger analytical framework of Globalization.

Diverse sociological and political theories seem to assert that the 'local' and the 'global' are narrowly connected: Robertson (1997) coined the concept of '*Glocalization*' emphasizing the integration and sometimes the difficult 'balances of power' existing between the local and the global, whereas Ritzer (2008) on his part, later on, derived the word '*Grobalization*' focusing on the imperialistic ambitions of some nations, corporations, and organizations, to impose themselves on various geographic areas.

It seemed to me important to give a detailed introduction on Globalization, from its origins as a phenomenon and concept, until its known consequences on the contemporary world, for the understanding of the setting up of new educational logics and religious attitudes round the world. Understanding this event on its global extent will indeed highlight certain important facts of local range, possibly produced by the impact of the new global order on developing countries such as Egypt - the economic liberalization by the means of structural adjustment programmes (Kienle 2001; Harik and Sullivan 1992; Handoussa 1991), the *mcdonaldization* of society (Ritzer 2008), the *Islamization* of knowledge (Boroujerdi 2004; Shayegan 1997) as well as Education (Frag 1994; Cook 1999; Herrera 1999) or the radicalization of religious contents by the politicization of the Islam (Esposito and Burgat 2002; Roy 2002; Kepel 1991).

By this, we are able to assert that the Globalization phenomenon has an impact on numerous spheres in human life, spheres that would otherwise be impossible to deal with accurately, and indeed I intend here to focus on how certain economic, political and social phenomena cited above, have been produced in the local Egyptian framework, and which kind of relationship -if any - there exists between them and the new Egyptian educational policies.

Lastly I will try to shed a light on a presupposing interaction between two forces -Globalization and Islamization - working on education system in Egypt.

## **Attempt at defining Globalization**

Strong networks of interdependence concerning aspects of human society - political, economic, ideological or even ecological - are crossing our contemporary world.

Defined by Amin (1997) as 'an integrated system', the international system undergoes continuous developments that flow into changes of different nature; a phenomenon commonly referred to as Globalization.

It's considered a very long, uneven, and complicated process which has encouraged developing and spreading many theories in different field discussions in order to understand its origin, its nature and its impact on the actual world. The amount of ink spilled on this issue show the extent of the phenomenon which has aroused the interest of authors of different fields' research and backgrounds.

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Debates and discussions on this topic are conducted to create new theories which attempt to explain with different words the metaphor used by Fredric Jameson to clarify Globalization: the proverbial elephant, which is described by its blind observers in so many diverse ways. Yet one can posit the existence of the elephant even if there is no single persuasive or dominant theory to explain it (Jameson and Miyoshi 1998).

Concerning the origins of Globalization, a great deal of different stances and theories having been developed, I will limit myself to mention some important referential authors to introduce a subject abundantly discussed.

Several scholars (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2008) inspired by Karl Marx defined him as a prophet of 'the universal interdependence of nations' - what we call Globalization today - and asserted that his prophecy was announced in *The Communist Manifesto* - published in 1848 and co-written with Friedrich Engels - where the authors stress [...] *the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe* (Marx and Engels 1988: 58). Their conclusion is that Globalization is the expansion of the capitalist system around the globe, because the world is becoming unified via thickening networks of communication and economic exchange.

Nevertheless, other scholars like Immanuel Wallerstein - author of the three volume's *The Modern World-System* (1974) - question this historical claim. According to Wallerstein, what Marx affirmed to have happened in the mid-nineteenth century, was in fact a phase in a centuries-old process, the capitalist world-system being originated in the sixteenth century. Indeed at that time Europe started to move towards the establishment of a capitalist world economy, in order to ensure continued economic growth by the establishment of new trade connections with Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Moreover, one of today's leading Globalization theorists, Roland Robertson, has examined some of the key issues on this theory, starting with the understanding of the origin of the term itself.

The processes and actions to which the concept of Globalization now refers, have been proceeding, with some interruptions, for many centuries, but the main focus of the discussion of Globalization has been made on relatively recent times. As that discussion is closely linked to the nature of modernity and the use of its noun has developed quite recently, Globalization refers to recent developments as well as.

During the second half of the 1980s its use increased enormously, so much so that it is virtually impossible to trace the patterns of its contemporary diffusion across a large number of areas of contemporary life in different parts of the world. By now though the term is often used very loosely and it has become part of a 'global consciousness', with a remarkable proliferation of terms centred upon the root 'global'.

The latter was used academically for the first time by Marshall McLuhan in his book *Explorations in Communication* (1960), where it was associated to the idea of 'the global village'. At the same time when the notion of the global village was becoming influential, there occurred the 'expressive revolution' of the 1960s which had an important effect in many parts of the world, in its sharpening of the sense of what was supposedly common to all. This sense of global interdependence has rapidly become recognized in numerous and various domains and *fora*: world wars, the rise of the *Third World* definition, the proliferation of international, transnational and supranational institutions, first steps of the global economy and the like (Robertson 1992: 8-9).

To analyse the relationship between concepts essential to the understanding of the complex Globalization process - concepts as modernity and/or post-modernity, modernization, nationalism and the so forth - a strong, effective, and very influential challenge to narrowly conceived modernization theory, arose in the early 1970s.

For example, the historically detailed world-systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) grew out of his own dissatisfaction with narrowly conceived modernization theory, which considered societies only comparatively, with Western societies as the major reference points, as opposed to seeing them as parts of a systematic pattern of relations among societies.

Of course, I'll limit my analysis just on some observations coming from scholars who have devoted their studies to the Globalization concept, my purpose being to prove how and in what way the Globalization origins and its definition have spurred up interest in the academic world.

Regarding the nature of the Globalization, it is principally considered as a 'world of flows' of people tightly interdependent each other as objects in motion. The concept of interdependence which today tangles people, societies, and countries of every corner of the planet - in spite of them and without them knowing - is well summarized by David Held (2001) by these words: [...] *In our world, it is not only the violent exception that links people together across borders; the very nature of everyday problems and processes joins people in multiple ways. From the movement of ideas and cultural artefacts to the fundamental issues raised by genetic engineering, from the conditions of financial stability to environmental degradation, the fate and fortunes of each of us are thoroughly intertwined.*

Beginning from the violent event of September 2001, his reflexion stresses the importance of circulation and the nature of its *objects* in motion: ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques, in brief all the material and nonmaterial goods from one another part of the world - as defined by Arjun Appadurai (2005).

It's the Globalization phenomenon that enables this circulation movement because it denotes the stretching and deepening of social relations and institutions across space and time such that, on one hand day-to-day activities are increasingly influenced by events happening on the other side of the globe and, on the other, the practices and decisions of local groups or communities can have significant global reverberations (Held 1995: 20).

This is a world of flows: a world of structures, organizations, and other stable social forms, the stability of which is sometimes only apparent, as it is the case of the nation-state that is today frequently characterized by floating populations, transnational politics within national borders, mobile configurations of technology and expertise. This 'world of things in motion' though, somewhat understates the point, because the various flows of objects, persons, images, and discourses are not coeval, convergent, isomorphic, or spatially consistent. They are relations of disjuncture where these kinds of things have different speeds, axes, points of origin and termination, and varied relationships to institution structures in different regions, nations, or societies (Appadurai 2005: 4-5).

Labelled as 'action at distance' (Giddens 1990), Globalization stretches political, economic and social relations, intensifies levels of interaction and interconnectedness within and between states and societies, going beyond the borders of nation-states through technological, organizational, administrative, legal and the like activities which have been characterised by transnational concept.

By this, classical definition of nation-states risks to be questioned by the Globalization as the latter tends to encourage new forms, centres and systems of power distribution. Depending on that, the meaning and nature of power, authority and accountability as well as its concept has to be re-examined and separated from the exclusive traditional association with states and national borders.

This process gave birth to a vast array of international institutions and organizations that have been established, in principle, to manage whole areas of transnational activity and collective policy problems. The growth in the number of these new forms of political association reflects the rapid expansion of transnational links, the growing interpenetration of foreign and domestic policy, and the corresponding desire by most states for some form of international governance and regulation to deal with collective policy problems.

The development of international regimes and organizations has led to important changes in the decision-making structure of world politics. New forms of multilateral and multinational politics

have been established and with them distinctive styles of collective decision-making involving local governments. Among the spectrum of international agencies and institutions are organizations like the World Bank, the IMF, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the UN itself. (Held 1995: 108).

Besides that, another worldwide order constituted by institutions of different nature has developed, which bears witness to what it called *grassroots globalization* or *globalization from below* (Appadurai 2005: 16). The most easily recognizable of these institutions are the international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are often concerned with mobilizing highly specific local, national, and regional groups on matters of equity, access, justice, and redistribution. These organizations have complex relations with the State, with the official public sphere, with international civil society initiatives and with local communities. Sometimes they are uncomfortably complicit with the policies of the nation-state and sometimes they are violently opposed to these policies. Sometimes they have grown wealthy and powerful enough to constitute major political forces in their own right and sometimes they are weak in everything except their transparency and local legitimacy (Appadurai 2005: 17).

In sum, it is a clear understanding that Globalization is not a one-dimensional phenomenon. Indeed, there is being an expansion of *global economic markets*, which has increased exit options for capital of all kinds; where producers benefit from greater choice over their raw materials, production techniques and human talent, and consumers from better goods at better prices, as Globalization increasing efficiency and thus prosperity; there is being a growing of aspirations for *new international policies* concerning international law and justice which accentuates the interest on the human activity and shares the idea of 'the rule of the people'; there is being an increasing of *interchange of cultures* and *passage of people* from one another part of the globe, through the circulation of mass-media and technological instruments which enables people and cultures being narrowly linked and extending the knowledge of each other. In this way, Globalization increases the basic freedom of individuals in a world where travel and migration have long been impeded by the tyranny of place (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2008: 15).

Regarding the impacts and consequences of this phenomenon on our actual societies, - despite the fact that a great deal of human life fields is touched even influenced by it - I will only mention some of them, and will allude more accurately to the global impacts on educational and religious fields later on.

The growth of international trade has probably received the greatest attention in literature concerned with Globalization because of its direct relevance to employment, wages, and the rising number of free trade agreements around the world. This being said, it seems obvious that the economic liberalization and the international integration are seen as a hallmark of Globalization, which have deliberately and uniformly been promoted by governments, corporations, and international organizations alike. This new global economy is considered the direct path toward neo-liberal policies - privatization, free trade and capital-account liberalization - that each country chooses to undertake in order to enable its local economic system to keep up with the modern times and therefore to take advantage of their global trade development.

Nevertheless, besides the international economic changes, Globalization has provoked also important resonances on other fields such as education and religion, which are worth mentioning because of their essential connection with realities of now-a-days societies.

## **Global Education Concept**

Concerning the Education Affair, Globalization gives it so much attention that it might influence or even change trajectories of national educational policies.

Each education system level for which actions laid down by precise logics are fore-planned, is concerned. In primary as well as in secondary education, it is provided for the application of measures that precisely determine the quality of schools and give a content greatly in agreement with the economic and cultural policies of Globalization. In higher education, privatization is becoming dominant, as the principle of diversity prevails mostly through the increasing and growing diversity of institutions, rather than through the differentiation in the content of similarly labelled programs or diplomas.

The local policy-makers, who are responsible mainly to setting up new educational reforms, opt for privatization, which encourages private actors to open private and fees schools, and the decentralization policies, which consist to devolve central institutional responsibilities upon local authorities.

In this way, they decide to implement on the Education affair some of the neoliberal principles that, generally put on for economic or political issues - as privatization and liberalization - have a strong positivistic component. The latter, determined by the predominant logic of instrumental rationality and conceptual knowledge, contrasts to a constructivist conception of scientific knowledge for which knowledge cannot be separate from meaning and value, and it cannot possible imagine a social science - as Education - devoid of its social interest and its moral enterprise (Torres 2009: 35-38).

The privatization of education is seen as an efficient alternative to public schools considered essentially deficient because they operate under state controls. This thought comes from common ideas that competition is necessary to increase educational standards, improve efficiency, and reduce costs. So the market solution to educational problems must necessarily pass through privatization. It is expected that the emergence of multiple schools under the influence of the marketplace will increase parental choice and thus cause high quality to emerge over shoddy schooling.

Concerning decentralization, originally, it was characterized as means to improve the efficiency of public administration and to devolve some decision-making power to lower levels of government organization, generally moving from the capital to regions. Yet, with the influence of neo-liberalism in the last decade, decentralization has acquired a new objective: the diminution of state funding of public education and, concomitantly, the participation of parents and communities in the funding of schools (Stromquist 2002: 58).

At this stage, it should be important mentioning how the policies cited above have been applied in developing countries, like Egypt.

The uncontested adoption and application of the neoliberal policies on the educational field have been strongly supported by international lending and development institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and some agencies of the United Nations including UNESCO. The globally structured agenda they proposed - stressing above all on privatization and decentralization - brought to a wave of educational reforms impacting developing and developed countries alike, which Martin Carnoy (2001: 107) has classified in three types:

1. 'Competition-Based Reforms' responding to the evolution of the demand for better-qualified labour in the national and international labour markets;
2. 'Reforms Based on Financial Imperatives' encouraging restrictions of budgets in the private and public sectors. This is usually advocated by the IMF and the World Bank as a pre-condition to educational lending to the countries.

3. 'Equity oriented reforms' considering the political role of education as a source of mobility and social equality.

All these types of reforms are based essentially on financial imperatives that are primarily guaranteed by the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs).

I will continue to deal with this subject in the following paragraph dealing with Egyptian political and educational contexts.

### **Novel 'Religiousness'**

Regarding the religious field, observations go back to Modernity and particularly the Enlightenment period in which the myth to abolish religion from social and political spheres plunged its roots. It consisted in a radical transformation in the core of which there was a process of marginalization or pushing out religion from society defined later on as secularization (Gay 1973).

The Globalization phenomenon, although it is considered a product of modernization, it didn't uphold the modernization theory according to which all societies would invariably secularize as they modernized, urbanized and industrialized. In this process the Third World, as a case in point, or 'developing' countries - particularly countries emerging from colonial status in Africa and Asia - would follow the earlier path apparently taken by the 'developed' countries of North America and Europe, where religion had lost a great deal of public significance (Haynes 1999: 6).

But, instead of reducing religious references in social and political life, Globalization has even accelerated creation of a new 'religiousness' and has increased the awareness that religion itself was not, could not, and will not be abolished (Mendieta 2001: 46).

Indeed, being the main harbinger of a new global order, Globalization and its consequential impacts undergoes essential 'religious' changes which involve mainly its perception and use from political and social actors.

This factor derives from what many scholars seem to believe to be the processes of modernization - urbanization, industrialization, and the impact of swift technological development - coupled with declining faith in many secular ideologies of change and states' failing ability to push ahead with developmental goals - have left many people with feelings of loss rather than achievement and have stimulated in many people the search for a feeling of identity, necessary to give life meaning and purpose during a period of historically unprecedented and diverse changes (Haynes 1999: 6-7).

The new phenomenon of 'un-secularization of the world' (Huntington 1998) includes today the entire world, developed as well as developing countries, the North as well as the South. This is because religion can be examined as one of the types of *transnational* ideas in world politics, in the sense that many people can hold a similar concept but does not necessarily means they are confined to a single country. Transnational actors represent ideas that increasingly shape the values and norms of the international system and that urge a transnational course of action on their adherents (Thomas 1999: 28-29).

Besides the transnational concept, it should be alike important to recognize that of *déterritorialisation* (Bastian Champion and Rousselet 2001), which consists in exportation of religions outside their commonly territories of birth.

This phenomenon finds its origins in XVI century when exportation of Christianity from its 'core' to 'periphery' started. Religious flows obliged religions - 'imported' as well as 'foster' - to submit certain changes in their contents (Altglas 2001) or their main characters (Motta 2001).

The *transnationalization* and *déterritorialisation* of religion gave birth to global forms of religion as global Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism or globalized Islam, and created more and more religious diaspora communities around the world.

Moreover, the so called 'contemporary communications revolution' (Rudolph and Piscatori 1997) encouraged by inter-personal and inter-group communications, has contributed to the production of new global 'religions' and to the development of transnational religious communities. Indeed, Globalization by dissolving the social and economic barriers between states, is transforming diverse religious-identity people into a more unified world and it is making easier for them to come together across the globe.

Nevertheless, acting upon societies, communities, people imbued with disparate needs, desires and institutional resources, it can provoke such different political, social or cultural reactions, according to the country where they take place.

As national cultures and identities are deeply rooted in ethno histories, the growth of global communications can also generate an *awareness of difference*, which can enhance understanding and knowledge of the global world as well as can lead to an accentuation of what is different, a stronger awareness of 'the other'.

As Held (1995) suggests, there is no common global way of thinking and no 'universal history' in and through which people can unite but a manifold set of political systems through which any new global awareness must struggle for survival. The new networks of communication and information technology, thus, both stimulate new forms of cultural identity and rekindle and intensify old forms that, in certain cases, could flow into radicalized and extremised affirmations of their contents, what they usually define as religious revival and activism which gave birth to different forms of *Islamism* as well as of Islamization, in the case of certain of Muslim countries. I'll carry on this thought later on when developing the prospective of the Egyptian educational context.

## **Egypt in a New Economic Order**

Being a movement of a worldwide scale, Globalization is ever imposing its rules and practices on each society no exception made for societies of some MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries such as Egypt.

By a general overview, Egypt is becoming part of the global world - the so called 'McWorld' (Barber 1995) - and, as some experts stated at the symposium *Egypt and Globalization*, [...] *is on its way to becoming part of the global community* (Urschel 2000).

Indeed, Egypt is strongly involved in this global phenomenon, which has modified different aspects of this country, the political and economic statements of its government, or the social and common life of its people.

Concerning policy and economy, these sectors started to change their shape since Anwar al Sadat's regime (1970-1981) who, turning away from State-socialism and the nonaligned orientation of his predecessor Gamal Nasser (1956-1970), through the Open Door policy (*Infitah*), ushered the way for liberalizing reforms. Indeed, since that period, Egypt has been called to apply for new reforms for a political liberalization such as defined by the neo-liberal principles, namely accountability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, privatization, open and democratic elections, decentralization, rule of law, human rights and so forth.

Thanks to Sadat's signing the Camp David Egyptian - Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979, Egypt received more than \$60 billion in U.S. foreign aid, the largest recipient of U.S. development and military aid after Israel and Iraq (Herrera 2008: 359).

In this way, he paved the way to aid policy from the US, from multilateral and bilateral organizations representing countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and finance organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which have since exerted considerable influence on Egypt's path of political, economic and particularly educational development by the means of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).

Promoted by the IMF and the World Bank, these programmes are the reflection of social and political relations in which capitalist developed countries dominate and decide in their favour in order to stabilize economies of developing countries, as Egypt, and improve their performance. In the lending process, the IMF as well as the World Bank are the main actors: the IMF negotiated the SAP agreements; the World Bank, following the IMF's approval of a country's new economic plan, enabled the country to obtain new loans (Stromquist 2002: 29).

To access to the SAPs the IMF imposes some *conditionalities* which are typically adjusted to suit the political needs of the largest debtors, even if various economists and social scientists have spoken about the 'Washington Consensus' as one of the forces that imposes the logic of structural adjustment in the world (Torres 2009: 30).

Certain of such imposing *conditionalities* could be briefly regrouped in uniform solutions proposed by the SAPs as: liberalization of the economy, reduction of government budgets, privatization of state enterprises and services such as education and health, free exchange rates, elimination of subsidies for agriculture and export orientations to production: all of them coinciding with neoliberal principles.

For decades, multilateral lending institutions - as the IMF and the World Bank - have flooded the developing countries with hundreds of billions of dollars in aid aiming at developing new profitable and efficient national policies in different fields - as economy, social services as education and health, industry, agriculture and so forth.

Yet, the general framework of the Third World's countries receiving advice, loans and grants to their governments, remains negative. Instead of growth, these countries have experienced social disintegration, economic stagnation, debt crises, and, in some regions, declines in agricultural production and incomes (Bandow and Vasquez 1994: 1). Moreover, the constant debt repayment has generated a flow of capital from the South to the North, something unforeseen at the time of the creation of the IMF and the World Bank.

Concerning the Education affair, the SAPs had strong consequences on the educational systems of developing countries which brought to a constant reduction of the educational budgets, with the concomitant decreasing of the teachers' salaries, a lack of attention to illiteracy, a promotion of decentralization of the public school system and the privatization of schools and universities (Stromquist 2002: 30-31).

These kinds of programmes have multiplied in Egypt since the 1970s-1980s. Under the pressure of the economic crisis of the mid-1980s and the policies of economic liberalization, Egypt, in co-operation with IMF and World Bank, designed a comprehensive programme of economic reform, which put a stress on the demand management in order to regain equilibrium in the national accounts (Kienle 2001: 146).

The position of the Government of Egypt (GOE) concerning these reforms was spelled out in a number of documents, for example the May 1986 programme presented to the IMF, the Five-Year-Plan from 1987/88 to 1991/92 as approved by the People's Assembly in July 1987, and the Ministry of Finance announcement in the same year regarding a planned reduction in the budget deficit (Handoussa 1991: 10).

The series of economic laws concerning this period (a comprehensive list found in Rutherford 2008:198-99) carried out by GOE in response to IMF and World Bank pressure, shows how the state had started to reduce - lose even - its control on key features of the economic production and of the



Egyptian economy in general, in behalf of a privatization policy suggested mostly by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs).

Knowing the nature of this type of commitment is useful if we are to grasp the importance of the political and economic relationships - and pressures - existing between a recipient country and its creditor, a commitment that could lead up to a sort of compromise or gratification, as in the case of aids given by the IMF supporting the Egypt's reform, which [...] *will be suspended if the delegation [of the IMF] is not satisfied with the pace or degree of achievement in implementing the reform* (Azza 1991: 4).

### **Education in Egypt: a National Affair toward an Unofficial Islamization**

Education occupies a distinguished status in Egypt as far as the Human Rights are concerned, and as such, is guaranteed by the Egyptian constitution issued in 1971 in different articles which declare: *Education is a basic right for all Egyptian citizens. The Egyptian state is responsible for the education of its citizens and supervises it, so as to guarantee equity. Basic education (primary and preparatory education) is compulsory. The state supervises all branches of education and guarantees the independence of universities and scientific research centres, with a view to linking all this with the requirements of society and production* (Article 18); *Education in the state educational institutions is free of charge in its various stages* (Article 20); *Combating illiteracy is a national duty for which all the people's energies should be mobilized* (Article 21).

The constitutional guarantee towards education in Egypt is issued from a historical and traditional attention on the part of the State on the educational affair, issued from the Muhammad Ali period (19<sup>th</sup> century) on to today with President Hosni Mubarak.

Indeed, since his election as president in 1981, Mubarak expressed his intentions to intervene in the educational sector, to reform and develop it toward modernization and improvement.

To start with, the Egyptian government proclaimed the 1990s the 'Education decade' as a direct response to Egypt's commitment to 'Education for All' programme launched at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien - Thailand - in March 1990, where WB, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP convened key decision-makers from all the world - including ministers of education, multilateral and bilateral donors, and international and local NGOs. The conclusions of this international meeting are lightened in the *World Declaration on Education for All* and *A Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*.

Following, during his several and long mandate periods - from 1981 to present - in different official declarations and speeches, he recognized the achievement of the educational reform as one of the three national priorities -with the economic improvement and the strengthening of democracy- and he declared to lay out a comprehensive plan for the promotion of education to support its radical reform, which complied with the increasing demands and responded to the general feeling that the Egyptian education was below the required standard.

Indeed, on occasion of the opening of the parliamentary session in 1991, he observed: Education in Egypt continues to suffer from a predominant focus on quantity at the expense of quality in an attempt to provide an educational opportunity for all children. The present education system doesn't help face the challenges of the new era [...]. In spite of the fact that the Education exhausts the resources of the national budget and individual families, the end-product remains poor and inadequate (Ministry of Education 1992). On that occasion, he emphasized priority necessity to consider education as the axis and basis of the Egyptian national security on par with military protection. This meant that the commitment for education improvement is no longer the responsibility of the Minister of Education but it is rather an issue of national mission, where official authorities and the civil society alike have to

take part, because it reflects the public opinion, desires, and ambitions. All this displays the democratic basis of the new educational system (Ministry of Education 1995: 31-33).

Considering education as a national security affair was a pivotal concept of the previous Minister of Education's policy, Husayn Kamal Baha Eddin (1991-2004).

When he became minister in 1991, Egypt experienced a 'civil war' between state security forces and militant Islamist groups, many of whom were based in Upper Egypt, the southern region of the country - even if the extremism phenomenon is not limited to specific geographic regions but is a nationwide phenomenon.

The involvement of high school and university-age in militant organizations, and growing reports that schools were being used as grounds for militant groups, prompted the Minister to characterize schools as 'hatcheries of terrorism'. For this reason, he conceives [...] *the first aspect of a new educational policy is that education is an issue of national security [where] the use of the term 'national security' [referred] for a long time to military power [...]. This term changed in the period after World War I and before the end of the Cold War because specialists, politicians and high-ranking military officers realized that national security [refers to] more than mere military power* (quoted in Herrera 2006: 28-29).

Indeed, in recent decades, public schools in Egypt have witnessed an unofficial Islamization of schooling, which should be understood partly as a political movement but also as a long-standing dilemma in Egyptian education of how to simultaneously raise children in the proper Islamic way, while educating them in principles of secular nationalism and preparing them for employment in global markets (Herrera and Torres 2006).

The unofficial Islamization of education in government schools, which is expressed by different ways, finds its best expression in an 'Islamic disposition' from teachers. This consists of transmitting to students, regardless of their religious affiliation, Muslim as well as Christian religion, a sense of belonging to a Muslim society with a culture and history embedded in Islam. Islamic messages and symbols are formally incorporated into the daily life of schools through rituals, religious passages in textbooks of whatever discipline, religious signs and posters displayed throughout schools (Herrera 2006: 27).

In sum, at school, Islam is to be found everywhere: with no respect to disciplinary boundaries and students' religion, Islamic references circulate easily in curriculum of Islamic subject - taught and considered as a basic subject, like science or English - as well as of language, history or any other topic.

When Husayn Kamal Baha Eddin, the previous Minister of Education, tried to secularize the curriculum by reviewing the religious content of general education textbooks, he stirred an outcry from some sectors of the religious and educational establishments, concerned that the connection between the Arabic language and its classical roots was being breached. This forced Ahmad Fathy Surur, then minister of education, to convene hastily a 'High Islamic Commission' to consult on the inclusion of Islamic materials in reading texts at all levels (Starrett 1998: 88).

It has also happened that, when government schools don't reach to guarantee a modern educational model, mixed enough to Islamic principles and values demanded by Muslim believer families for their children, they are left for private Islamic schools.

This kind of schools, regarded as a type of Islamist activism, have increased and grown all over the country during the last decades. They differ from non-Islamic or government schools - where religion is a required subject of study from the first grade - because the private Islamic schools guarantee generally extra religion courses, collective prayers, separation of sexes, use of Islamic symbols and more emphasis on the students' moral characters. All these religious principles are connected with modern instruments and practices, such as English and technological proficiencies.

Private Islamic schools do not have to be considered as one coordinated monolithic educational movement but rather as a large phenomenon setting in the national framework of Islamic resurgence in the 1970s, along with other Islamic civic institutions such as health clinics, charitable associations and bank cooperatives (Herrera 1999: 151-154).

At this stage, we can question about the political and social reasons pushing on the Egyptian government and society to pretend - each in its own way - a kind of educational model more religious and secular.

To understand this dysfunction between the State and society - a part from the Egyptian society - it is necessary to go back to Sadat's period.

The 'Believer President' - as Sadat portrayed himself - attempted to appropriate religious symbolism - 'religious weapon' - to legitimise his own political purposes that aimed at counterbalancing the Nasserist and socialist trends. By this way, he supported organizationally and financially religious associations and Islamic movements - as some scores of Islamic activists from the Muslim Brotherhood - an Islamic organization founded by Hasan Al-Banna in 1928, and Islamic student organizations at universities - which, imprisoned during the 1950s and 1960s, were released and encouraged to vie for influence with leftist groups. He allowed their publications to circulate, and discreetly gave all sorts of encouragement to what was then called 'the Islamic trend'. He built thousands of new mosques and reinvigorated the government's relationship with *Al-Azhar* University.

In sum, for Sadat, Islam was used as a sort of 'mask' to disguise the rather offensive manifestations of the 'Open Door' economic policy (*infatih*) and the growing corruption that surrounded it (Nazih 1999: 72-73). But it is fair to say that by the late 1970s, Sadat's Islamization efforts had begun to backfire. It became clear to the religious organizations that had gained a new lease on life during his early tenure that Sadat was not ready to push for meaningful Islamic reform, as they understood it, in the sense of more *shari'ah* across multiple sectors of Egyptian society. Furthermore, a number of his foreign policy initiatives had made him progressively unpopular with important segments of Egypt's population - as for example the alignment of Egypt with the West, *infatih* policy and its consequent increasing liberalization of the Egyptian economy, and his signing of a peace agreement with Israel in 1979, at the Camp David Accords. All these factors could have contributed to his assassination in 1981 by associates of the Islamic Jihad, one of a number of militant organizations that had emerged in Egypt over the course of the 1970s (Mandaville 2007: 83).

Concerning the education sector, the Sadat's motto 'Science and Faith', wanted to symbolize the hope that Egypt could benefit from closer incorporation into the international market while at the same time retaining a unique cultural identity. Yet, when that closer integration resulted in a disastrous multiplication of the country's foreign debt, and IMF-negotiated reductions in basic food subsidies led to nationwide food riots in January of 1977, he enhanced religious education considered as one of the solutions to restore political stability and asked that religious knowledge should be a compulsory subject for a student to pass the academic years to remedy the moral crisis due to corruption of Nasserism (Starrett 1998: 73).

Of course, these educational measures could neither solve the main economic and social problems of the Egyptian society, nor prevent violence in the streets. On the contrary, they radicalized the attitudes of some Islamist movements until the Sadat's death.

At this stage, we can understand better the reasons that pressed on the Mubarak's government to declare education an affair of national security in the beginning of 1990s, and to increase its state budget in order to reform its education system.

Indeed, as statistic data published in *Arab Republic of Egypt. Education Sector Review* (World Bank 2002: 25) wants to prove, the quantitative growth of Egypt's education sector since 1990 has been immense and unprecedented. The share of the Government budget revealed furthermore the high priority that the Government placed on Education. Public education expenditures increased by 80

percent in real terms during 1990 to 2000, while other public sector expenditures were reduced due to a sharp fiscal contraction. As a consequence, the Education share of the Government budget increased from under 10% in 1990-1991 to 17% in 1999-2000. In other statistics we find two other kinds of data (Table 1 - 2) being confronted: a percent of GDP and a percent of Government spending. Most of them - except for some unavailable data concerning educational public expenditure within the percentage of Government Spending - prove in details the annual increasing of the public budget devoted to the education sector as a whole (World Bank 2008b: 312-313).

In the decade of 1992-2002, more than twice the numbers of schools were built (a total of 12,350) than in the previous 110 years (Ministry of Education 2002). In 2005, Egypt's 37,000 schools absorbed 15.5 million students and 1.5 million teaching, administrative, and support staff on the Ministry of Education's payroll (UNESCO 2006: 9).

If by a local view the Egyptian public education undergoes pressures of Islamized attitudes from within and outside schools, by an international view it is at the core of application of educational global rules.

Since the 1990s, two umbrella concepts have been frequently used to describe the broad swath of international educational reforms for advancing democratic change: Globalization and neo-liberalism. Globalization, insofar as it relates to educational reforms, connotes the worldwide convergence of principles spread through international policy initiatives, often with the backing of United Nations agencies and as enshrined in its charters and declarations principles, for example, of global citizenship, children's rights, human rights, and global governance. Neoliberal reforms in education are understood as market-driven changes that favour, for example, individual performance, emphasis on standards and testing, decentralization of the funding and governance of school systems, privatization, and a range of alliances between schools and the business sector (Morrow and Torres 2000).

In the 1990s, Egypt, supported mainly by World Bank and IMF, started to realise a strong economic reform programme - led by the *Education Enhancement Project* (EEP) 1996-2006 - that provided for more projects aimed at improving the educational sectors - even if the first project in Education financed by World Bank dated back in 1977, as indicated in Table 3.

Among various projects within the economic reform programme, the most solid - for its funding project cost of 2.350,20 US\$m - and the most important - for its consequent impact on the Egyptian education - was the *Education Enhancement Project* (EEP) 1996-2006.

This project prepared a fifteen-year plan that was to be supported by a series of operations over 10-15 years. In addition, a series of enhancement projects were negotiated that covered specific activities in all sub-sectors, from preschool to higher Education (World Bank 2008a).

In a letter dated June 1996 concerning the EEP - from the former Minister of Education Husayn Kamal Baha Eddin to Kemal Dervis, the vice President of MENA Region World Bank at that time - we can read a kind of *manifesto* of Mubarak's new policies for the Egyptian education, which were previously launched in *Mubarak's National Project* (1995), and from which derived the following different reform plans aimed at its modernization.

The programme includes - among other things - improving a high teaching and learning quality which aims at stressing particularly the pupils' achievement for basic skills using technology in the classroom - starting from the simple aid as the blackboard to the most recent such as computer - and using distant learning in the classroom through designing educational packages for basic skills in collaboration with international experts in the area of distant learning from U.K. (the British open University), the U.S.A. (Pennsylvania) and Holland (the Dutch Open University) (NCERD 2001: 40).

Following the same line, as a kind of political precognition, Mubarak assured that *the coming few years are the years for developing Egypt's culture and Education system* and declared that the major priority of the country was to improve the quality of education through some intervention areas:

- Increasing access to compulsory education, particularly for girls and underprivileged children;
- Improving the quality of education through reducing wastage and ensuring the attainment of basic skills;
- Ameliorating the system efficiency by enhancing resource use, planning and management;
- Allocating the 19% of total public current and investment expenditures and the 50% of Government education expenditure to compulsory education;
- Supporting capacity building at local level to plan and manage implementation of relevant programs activities;
- Reinforcing the Governorate's participation in the implementation process in all programme areas - the EEP concerns particularly poorer governorates of Upper Egypt, area of considerable concentration of Islamist movements.<sup>1</sup>

The five-year plan presented for the EEP implementation embodied an important step toward the achievement of a comprehensive plan of reform that can be a complete and radical response to the Egyptian educational needs. Only by means of promoting the education can Egypt find its path to the new world map and compete in domestic and foreign markets.

Indeed, each political and economic initiative of the Egyptian government - principally supported financially by World Bank and aimed at improving its education system - was directed to reach social and economic indicators that give to the country the possibility of insertion in the global market world. For as Mr. Dervis suggested during the symposium 'Egypt and Globalization' [...] *to compete successfully in the global marketplace, Egypt must improve skill formation and Education* (Urschel 2000).

The Government was fully aware of the need of starting efficient and modern educational reforms to attain the international indicators in social and economic sectors. In order to work in this direction, the intervention areas drawn by a five-plan year for the EEP, reflected some essential and emerging topics concerning new global policies on education: the universal primary Education, stopping the school dropout rates, domestic financial commitment and management policies promoting decentralization process.

This last topic needs an additional comment because - as I mentioned above in paragraph on the global education concept - decentralization policy in each public sector, particularly the one of education - along with privatization - represents one of the pivotal pillars of the Globalization process of neoliberal inspiration.

Concerning the Egyptian education context, different ministerial decrees stated the urgency as well as the importance of adopting a decentralized system in educational management: Decree of Local Governance No. 43 issued in 1979 and then modified according to decrees Nos. 50 in 1981, 26 in 1982, 145 in 1988, and No. 84 in 1996.

In the light of the items and articles included in these ministerial decrees, I will hereby cite some of the administrative tasks that should be regulated by the education policy of local school districts in every governorate:

- Studying the local environment of the governorates to satisfy their educational needs, and suggesting the educational projects that cope with these needs, the annual budget, and educational plans on the governorate level.

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<sup>1</sup> Mubarak speech in 1991 cited in the letter dated June 23, 1996. I am unable to give more bibliographic references about this document because it was provided by one of my interviewees during my last research mission in Egypt 2008-2009.

- Coordinating admission policy in all types of education levels according to specific rules that guarantee achieving equal educational opportunities among all citizens at the governorate level.
- Following up the executive procedures of the educational policy in each governorate in a way that aims at achieving quantity expansion and quality improvement with regard to the educational process.
- Supervising the employees working in the field of education in each governorate, directing them to implement the directions, and evaluating those employees in a way that enable the governorates to raise the standards of performance, increasing productivity, and limiting the resource loss.
- Monitoring the application of the curricula provided by MOE and presenting the necessary recommendations for overcoming problems and the suitable suggestions concerning the modifications required by the local environment (NCERD 2001: 12-13).

Exception being made for the first two, concerning the educational needs and equal opportunities among all citizens which assert the government commitment to assist all population, and respect its religious and social heterogeneity, all these tasks clearly reflect the application of some global and neoliberal principles based on ideas of how to reorganize schools, and improve the professional competence for a successful performance, in order to respond to the evolution of the demand for better-qualified labour in the national and international labour markets. In sum these tasks, when viewed within the context of educational reforms, coincide with what Carnoy (2001: 107) has defined as ‘competition-based reforms’ - mentioned in paragraph on the global education concept - which are characterized principally by decentralization of the educational governance and administration of schools, new educational norms and standards measured through the new standards and accountability movement, introduction of new teaching and learning methods leading to the expectation of better performance at low cost.

Nevertheless, although on the one hand the Egyptian government sponsored decentralization policy in the educational sector devolving upon local authorities to manage and improve it, on the other hand, it could not afford to call into question or even lose any of the control and the authority upon the application of school curriculum the Ministry of Education realizes and spreads in each public school. As it has been proved above in this paper, Islam finds no boundaries in schooling. Some forms of Islamization in public schools are within Islamic disposition or ‘inner attitude’ of teachers, and embedded in the curriculum of the Islamic topic as well as other disciplines. So, monitoring the adoption of the government public - and in certain cases secular - curriculum programme means to enforce cautiously a ‘veiled policy of containment’ to limit as much as possible emerging risks of Islamization in the education field and the whole of the Egyptian society.

### **Which future for the Education in Egypt?**

By a global point of view, new forms of political, social, and religious expressions have been produced by and throughout global communication networks which ‘*make possible a denser, more intense interaction between members of communities who share common cultural characteristics, notably language* [...]’ (quoted in Held 1995: 126). Among these emerging expressions, there are different and novel forms of Islams, Islamisms and Islamizations which, for their complexity and diversity, confuse the common readers, should they try to understand what it is happening in the Muslim countries as well as in the post-September 11 West-world.

Today, Islam seems to be a persistent and powerful discourse and force in Muslim contemporary politics and societies, which have become more Islamized both politically and socially. Islam as a religion a source of identity and a system of values has become more pervasive and its influence cuts across geographic and ethnic boundaries, social class and gender. The comprehensive vision of an Islamic renewal or reawakening can be interpreted as a desire to reassert Islam in the cultural, social

and economic life, which results in the creation from activists and associations, of private educational, financial, cultural and social institutions that are to penetrate -affect even- the public institutions.

This seems to be happening in our actual global world where two worlds are apparently in opposition: a 'Jihad' world - described as a throwback to pre-modern times - against a 'McWorld' world - identified as the natural culmination of a modernization process or Westernization (Barber 1995).

This is the reason why I attempted a definition of the origin, the nature and the impact of the global phenomenon, and tried to highlight possible relations existing between Globalization and a religious revival, by the means of sociological, political and even economic explanations.

Nevertheless - as it has been proved above - this can also occur in a local world - in Egypt for instance - and even in a public school, where the schooling of students and the Egyptian education in general, is in the core of two contrasting yet completing forces: Globalization and Islamization.

Indeed, on the one hand, the Egyptian education system is imbued of global and neoliberal principles of privatization and decentralization policies, educational markets, global governance, individual performance, human rights, children's rights and so forth, which the Egyptian policy-makers apply with the help of financial and logistic aid of World Bank and IMF.

What is interesting here is that these new 'language' is globally spread and easily utilised in official literature containing education reports, plans, programmes and projects not only in Egypt, but throughout all developing countries involved in this type of policy reforms, Middle East, North Africa, and America countries alike, which means the global and neoliberal logics apply the same language, policies, and principles to countries which are different in culture, traditions, religion, geographic areas and historical paths. The homogenization of policies may generate a need of 'heterogenization' along with a consequent awareness of difference, even an accentuation or radicalization of what is different.

On the other hand, the Egyptian education is strongly influenced by Islam - Egypt's official religion. The use of Islamic symbols and references in curriculum, the promotion of Islamic values and behaviour, a conservative gender role definition, the inner Islamic attitudes of teachers, all these are elements common to public as well as private schools. This means that the Islamization phenomenon has deeply penetrated the far reaches of the fortress fostering the Universal principles of equality for all students, where no distinction of schooling or religion is made.

And this happens despite the apparent tight control of the Egyptian state over the school system started in 1990s by the former Minister of Education Husayn Kamal Baha Eddin, who engaged in a strategy of purging Islamist educators, administrators, and materials from public school. We know his policy has not proven to be particularly successful given that Islamists today still and already, exert significant power in the social and cultural life in Egypt.

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**Annexes**

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**Table 1.**  
**Egyptian Public Expenditure in Education as Percent of GDP 1970–2003**

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1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
4,70	5,00	5,30	5,70	5,00	5,60	5,50	5,80	5,90	-

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**Table 2.**  
**Egyptian Public Expenditure in Education as Percent of Government Spending 1980–2003**

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1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
-	-	9,50	20,30	-	-	19,00	-

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SOURCE: World Bank 2008b. *The Road Not Traveled. Education Reform in the MENA*. Washington: World Bank.

**Table 3.**  
**World Bank - Education Lending Project in Egypt**

Projects	Project ID	Approval FY	Closing	Credit AMT US\$m	Project Cost US\$m	Canceled US\$m
Education I	P005003	1977	1981	25,00	54,20	1,67
Education II	P005014	1979	1985	40,00	104,13	3,45
Education III	P005029	1981	1987	40,00	48,96	0,20
Vocational Training	P005041	1983	1993	38,00	45,80	2,60
Vocational Training Electricity Engineering & Technical	P005055	1985	1994	19,00	49,20	1,20
Education	P005140	1990	1998	31,00	38,60	0,80
Basic Education Improvement Project	P005161	1993	2003	56,00	69,40	4,40
Education Enhancement Program	P005169	1997	2006	75,00	2.350,20	0,50
Secondary Education Enhancement Project	P050484	1999	2008	50,00	250,00	
Higher Education Enhancement Program	P056236	2002	2008	50,00	60,00	
Skills Development Project	P049702	2004	2008	6,00	12,50	
Early-Childhood Education Enhancement	P082952	2005	2010	20,00	108,61	
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>450,00</b>	<b>3.191,60</b>	<b>14,82</b>

SOURCE: World Bank 2008a. *Project Performance Assessment Report, Arab Republic of Egypt*. URL: <<http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=64283627&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P005169>>.

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