

Education within Egypt's Reform Plans

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The belief that comprehensive reform cannot be achieved without significant focus being directed educational reform was the driving force for the Egyptian government to divert its attention to major education developmental and reform plans.

The recent spread of private education concepts in Egypt has been due to the unsatisfactory performance of the public educational system. Originating from the evident importance of public education development and reform, an education developmental strategy was introduced in 2014 targeting comprehensive reform that covers all educational levels (i.e. child education, basic education, mid level and higher education, as well as technical education), curricula, institutions and education tools, as well as applied learning methods. The strategy is set to be implemented during the period from 2014 to 2030 and equally focuses on students, advancement of teaching methods, as well as teachers and their corresponding work circumstances.

The strategy encompasses an initial comprehensive substitution of 30 per cent of educational curricula followed by gradual improvement of the remaining 70 per cent over a three year plan. Interactive learning methods, supported by technology based curricula, are anticipated to be implemented in all public schools and education institutions across the country. The cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the UAE in the project known as "The One Million Students Project" has set, together with other various education and vocational training projects, the first milestones in the roadmap of education development.

Further, establishment of new schools and education institutions, as well as renovating existing ones to increase the capacity of the same, are a major part of the strategy.

On another hand, technical education, given its significance, is also a part of the development plan. The government aims to well-equip and prepare around 50,000 to 60,000 graduates from technical education institutions to have the necessary skills and expertise to serve the demanding Gulf market.

The Egypt – Japan Education Partnership

As a major step forward in the education reform plan, an education partnership between Egypt and Japan was created with the aim to combat terrorism and extremism and to enhance peace, stability, development, and prosperity of the Egyptian nation. The Egyptian Japanese Education Partnership (the "EJEP"), announced during the official visit of Egypt's President, Al-Sisi, to Japan during February 2016, was realised on the basis of the interest and commitment of both governments as well as their endeavours to empower Egyptian youth. The EJEP focuses on diverse aspects of education in implementing the measures laid out by the partnership. The EJEP captures not only the development of child, basic and higher education but also scientific research, technology and innovation.

The EJEP focuses on, amongst other things:

- Increasing the number of students, trainees, researchers, teachers and government officials to be dispatched to Japan to reach at least 2,500 Egyptians.
- Introducing then generalising the implementation of the Japanese "Tokubetsu Katsudo

(Tokkatsu)” method of learning together with other Japanese concepts in all schools in Egypt. This method is said to be one of the essential education curriculum components that enhance interactive balanced learning among children that achieves whole-child education. The method is planned to be initially applied to ten schools and then generalised to all schools across Egypt.

- Providing training and development opportunities to teachers, trainers, and instructors, considering their significant contribution to the education process.
- Cooperating in providing practical and effective technical education based on Japanese methods, which have proven effective, applied in collaboration with Japanese companies.

Shortly after the adoption of the EJEP, a Presidential Decree was issued in May 2016, under No. 207 of 2016, nominating Egypt’s representatives in the steering committee established by Egypt and Japan to supervise and facilitate the implementation of the EJEP and provide the necessary advisory assistance to the Egyptian government.

In respect of higher education, on the basis of the bilateral agreement signed between Egypt and Japan in 2009, a Presidential Decree was issued approving the establishment of a university under the name “Egypt – Japan University for Science and Technology (E-JUST)” by virtue of which the Egyptian government has allocated a land near Alexandria of an approximate area of 840,000 square meters. The E JUST is bring established to be an active example for the implementation of Japanese higher education advanced learning methods in relation to engineering and science and technology related fields.

Conclusion

The government’s strategy, together with the EJEP initiate, is seen as a significant milestone that improves the quality of public education in Egypt to be comparably competitive with the private education. During recent years, investment in private education has significantly increased as driven by the rising demand and growing aspiration of the population keen to invest in higher quality education for their children. The latter was the driving force for several foreign investments being directed to private education institutions, the recent of which is the undisclosed investment of Abraj Capital in CIRA and Tiba group of education institutions.

Although the aforementioned initiatives are believed to build a solid reform basis for public education in Egypt, more effective implementation measures are still expected. This arises from the fact that laws and regulations related to monitoring of education quality are primitive standards that have not undergone sufficient revisions commensurate with the reform plans. Introduction of new enforcement mechanisms in said laws, in relation to advancement of educational institutions and supervision on same, is a necessity.