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## Behind Deterioration of Egypt's Education System

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The policies adopted by the Egyptian regime have contributed to the declining performance and outputs of the Egyptian educational system, which led to the low ranking of Egypt on the international indices in this regard.

The main causes that have led to deterioration of the educational process in Egypt include: the limited role of the Minister, the poor allocations for education, the low salaries of teachers, the students' dropout from education, the over-crowdedness of classrooms, and the government's tolerance of the phenomenon of private tuition:

### 1- The limited role of the Minister

The successive education ministers – starting from Mostafa Kamal Helmy, who took over as minister of education in April 1974 and remained in office until 1986, through Ahmed Fat'hi Sorour, Hussein Kamel Bahaa al-Din, and subsequent ministers, up to the current minister, Tarek Shawki, who took over as minister of education in 2017 – have failed to perform the role assigned to them as politicians and policy makers of education policy. On the contrary, they have often adopted neutral positions towards the problems facing the educational process, especially the issue of teachers' low salaries. For example, 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 State's administrative apparatus and the [House of Representatives](#) (parliament).

Former Minister of Education Ahmed Gamal al-Din said in an interview with the Al-Dostour Al-Asli online newspaper in April 2010: "The Minister of Education does not make decisions by himself, as he implements policies set by the political authority that determines what he should do. However, a minister must also have a clear vision for the development of the educational process in light of the policy set by the authority that has chosen him. A minister's powers are limited, not absolute as some people imagine; therefore, he cannot be held responsible for everything that happens in the society due to his [decisions](#)."

One of the most important manifestations of the limited powers of ministers of education in the face of state policies is that Dr. Ahmed Fathi Sorour removed the sixth year of primary stage in 1988 for considerations related to cut of expenses, not for the [development of education](#).

Also, one of the surprising things about the performance of ministers in Egypt in general is the lack of precise data on the size of population. A report on the health insurance project, published by [EIS](#) in September 2018, revealed that former Minister of Health Ahmed Emad was not aware of the actual number of residents of Port Said (where the project was due to be launched) that will be benefit from the project. In his comment (May 2019) on the phenomenon of classroom over-crowdedness and the ministry's inability to overcome it, the education minister referred the failure of his ministry to the annual increase in Egypt's population, stating that it reached 700,000, while the annual increase in population is estimated at more than [2.5 million](#).

## 2- Deterioration of the financial situation of teachers

It is no coincidence that the teacher is at the bottom of the wage structure in Egypt. The salaries of the Ministry of Education and local government departments are generally the lowest in Egypt compared to all other government departments, including other service ministries, such as health, housing, and agriculture. The actual salaries of teachers range from LE 1500 for the newly appointed teacher to 3500 pounds for the senior teacher who is close to sixty, the pension age, to receive no more than LE 1500 that does not bring him any living security in his old age, especially in the absence of receiving end of service benefits such as other sovereign or economic institutions.

There are almost 1,800.000 teachers in Egypt, in addition to the administrative staff and contractual teachers, according to a report issued by the [Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics](#) for 2018.

It should be noted that the salaries and incentives of teachers are calculated in accordance with the basic pay of 2014, and that one of the most important demands of teachers is to cancel that decision and calculate incentives according to the basic pay of 2019. Commenting on this, Dr. Mohamed Omar, deputy minister of education, in February said that the ministry supports teachers' demands, but achievement of that demand for all civil servants would cost the State [treasury](#) LE 160 billion. Hala Al-Said, Minister of State for Planning, confirmed in April 2018 that the total number of civil servants

reached 5.4 million, one third of whom are teachers, i.e. [1.8 million](#), which means that rise in teachers' salaries that have been frozen since 2014, will cost the State about LE 53 billion annually.

### 3- The phenomenon of cheating in exams

One of the most negative phenomena that badly affected the Egyptian educational system is the phenomenon of cheating in exams, which represents the highest degree of imbalance in the structure of educational policy-making, in addition to the social imbalance that provides protection for this phenomenon which affects the reputation of the Egyptian education and eliminates the principle of equal opportunities and academic assessment of students. The phenomenon of cheating in school exams is a deviant behavior that disturbs the whole educational process and destroys one of its basic pillars, i.e. assessment, which weakens the effectiveness of the educational system as a whole and hinders it from achieving its goals. However, the State has not taken any deterrent measures to put an end to that [phenomenon](#).

What is most significant in this analysis is the political dimension of the phenomenon of cheating, through which the regime aims to highlight the ignorance of society and accuse people of corruption, and thus face any societal demands by claiming that the people resists any reform or change and work to thwart the policies implemented by the state, and that graduates are not qualified as they succeed in exams through cheating; and thus, they constitute a burden on State and the labor market and that their demands are illegal.

### 4- Students' dropout from education

The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) has announced that the number of dropouts from education in Egypt has reached 1.122 million students between the ages of 6 to 20 years according to the [2017 report](#). There are many reasons behind this phenomenon, including:

- Poverty, which also led to the spread of child labor,
- Uncertainty of the future and prevalence of unemployment among young university graduates,
- The high cost of education after the decline in the free education system,
- The spread of the phenomenon of private tuition,

- The lack of clarity of purpose and feasibility of education, especially after it (education) had turned from a state project to a burden on the government that it seeks to get rid of.

### 5- The crisis of overcrowded classrooms

Minister of Education Tarek Shawky has announced that 44% of schools in Egypt suffer from overcrowdedness and that the solution of the problem requires LE 60 billion and will take ten years in the case of the availability of these [funds](#). He also pointed out in a telephone participation with one of the TV programs that the problem of over-crowdedness requires building 260 new [classrooms](#).

Commenting on this problem, Dr. Azza Fat'hi, professor of sociology at Ain Shams University, said that the over-crowdedness of classrooms has a bad effect on understanding, awareness, good learning, activities and interaction with teachers inside the classroom, which makes teachers nervous and unable to control the students because of their [over-crowdedness](#).

### 6- The phenomenon of private tuition

The phenomenon of private tuition is a negative societal response resulting from the state's abandonment of its commitment to preserve and develop the educational system. The poor attendance of students at government schools, over-crowdedness, absence, cheating and lack of real assessment, as well as lack of control over teacher performance prompted parents to seek acquisition of a proper educational service for their children through private tuition, which led to several problems, including:

- Adding extra financial loads to parents: In a study prepared by Dr. Abdel Khalek Farouk entitled, "How much do Egyptians spend on education?", he stressed that the average spending of Egyptians on private tuition in 2005 amounted to [LE 9.3 billion](#).

- Inequality of opportunity: The private tuition contributes to creation of a state of imbalance and lack of equal opportunities between students who can afford private tuition and poor students who cannot afford these expenses, which is one of the most important reasons for the dropout from education in Egypt.

- Imposition of a teaching methodology based on indoctrination: Private tuition is a tool for storing information in the minds of students, away from the concept of learning, acquiring skills, research,

guidance, and awareness of links and relationships between phenomena and objects, where the educational process only relies on memorization and retrieval of information to achieve the highest marks in exams.

However, instead of facing the problem, the State practically welcomed the phenomenon of private tuition and allowed it to grow and develop at the expense of the official educational system, taking no deterrent measures to counter the phenomenon.

