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The American University in Cairo

Graduate School of Education

PARENTAL FACTOS AFFECTING SCHOOLS DROP-OUTS IN EGYPT

A Thesis Submitted to

The Graduate School of Education

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in Comparative and International Education

By

Margaret Varoujan

under the supervision of

Dr. Ted Purinton

GSE Assistant Professor and Associate MA Chair

May 2013

The American University in Cairo

School of Education (GSE)

Parental factors affecting schools drop-outs in Egypt

A Thesis Submitted by

Margaret Varoujan

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The degree of Master of Arts
in Comparative and International Education

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To my friend and husband Haigo
And my most beloved ones Aline and Chris

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Chapter One

Introduction

Education for All (EFA) is a universal movement led by UNESCO; its primary goal is to provide free and compulsory primary education for all children and to promote learning and life skills for young people and adults by the year 2015. This movement was first launched in March 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand with a target to make primary education accessible to all children in the world and to gradually reduce illiteracy rates. In April 2000 in Dakar, Senegal the World Education Forum adopted the framework for action as a follow-up to the World Declaration on EFA. Participants of 181 countries with around 1,100 individuals reaffirmed their commitment towards achieving EFA by the year 2015. An action framework with an ambitious agenda on gender equity, opportunities and outcomes was presented. Dakar goal five focused on achieving gender equality and eliminating disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, ensuring girls' equal and full access to basic education of good quality.

Later on, in September of the same year, leaders of 189 countries met together and adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the eighth Millennium Development Goals (MDG) with an aim to reduce extreme poverty by 2015. Goals two and three are directly related to educational advancement. Goal two is to "Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling" and Goal three aims to "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015" (UNESCO, 2009).

Both goals aim at achieving global primary education and promoting gender equality and woman empowerment.

The question is, how is the world performing against the MDG goals and the Dakar benchmarks? In 2008 the EFA Global Monitoring Report developed projections for 134 countries with 64% out of school children in primary stage. The results showed that 29 million will still be out of school in 2015 in these countries. This projection does not cover countries like Congo or Sudan because of data limitations. Governments must work hard to meet the challenge of getting and keeping all children in school and giving them all the needed support to complete the cycle. The 2012 EFA Report called to ensure that youth are prepared for the labor market and highlighted the need for investing in their skills not only in the poor countries, but in rich countries as well which constitutes a global challenge.

<http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?article4132>

As for gender equality, according to the MDG and EFA reports, the records are mixed. At the primary level, two thirds of the countries have achieved gender parity. However, regions such as Oceania, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Asia are lagging behind. More than half of the countries in these regions have yet to achieve gender parity at the primary level. At the secondary level, the gaps are wider. Only 37% of countries with data, mostly in North America and Europe, have achieved gender parity. The disparity is marked by girls falling behind in 58 countries, mostly from less developed regions, including sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia (UNESCO, 2009).

It is recognized that the world progress is slower than required if the MDGs and Dakar targets are to be achieved by 2015. In this regard, the world needs to learn lessons

from past practices. Researchers and practitioners all need to reflect on the questions: Why is the world making insufficient progress in education for all regardless of the increasing commitment and investment? How can we move forward to achieve the targets?

Research proved that benefits of education to society and people are enhanced when quality of education is high. In other words, better learning outcomes are very much related to earnings in the labor market; quality differences indicate variances in productivity. Research also mentioned that good schooling improves national economy; thus, eliminating poverty. It is evident that reliability, leadership, honesty, willingness, determination, and ability to work in hierarchies, are all characteristics of society rewards. These skills are partially formed during school years.

In comparison, undisciplined school drop-outs who lack persistency and reliability earn much less than those who continue post-secondary studies. Schools are more successful when they encourage good characteristics. Also, schools which encourage creativity and non-cognitive skills train students to transform societies rather than accept status quo. Results of good schooling benefit societies. Quality education causes societies to improve personal efficacy, become richer in income and productivity. Societies, in this respect, become less vulnerable to disease. To sum up, the quality of education makes a clear difference in achieving Millennium Development Goals (UNESCO, 2005).

In schools, every learner has the right to get minimum instructional time with access to materials, and to be taught by teachers with mastery in pedagogy and content. Organization of resources can create benefits of good health standards, time frames, teachers' competency standards, school facilities, and improved textbooks.

The world, governments and societies, should be embarrassed by its failure to educate so many of its children. To achieve the Millennium Development Goal of Education for All it is necessary to improve the accessibility of quality schools to meet expectations of the vast majority of parents and children. Effective education requires a combination of school, work and play.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the remarkable rise in school enrollment in elementary education in Egypt over the past years and the high value parents put on educating their children (Fergany, 2000), enrollment rates are still not high. Egypt Demographic and Health Survey EDHS in 2000 reports that 84% of children are attending school and 16% are out of school. Girls are the most deprived in accessing education. Egypt drop-out rates are higher than other regional countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (World Bank, 1996).

Dropping-out of school and the existence of child labor are consequences of poverty. School attainment is linked to the debate on the causes of child labor. Let us assume that parents face the choice of either putting their child in school or work. Some of the literature on child labor, e.g. Basu (1999), assumes that parents feel so badly about having their children work that they only let them do so when they have no other alternative. Households bear additional costs for school tuition, books and school uniforms, private lessons and transportation which constrains the limited household budget. This results in the parents' decision not to send children to school in order to minimize cost. For example, 38% of Egyptian mothers believe that parents should send the son to the university if they could only afford educating one child compared to 7% who believe that a daughter should be sent too (EDHS 2000).

Another reason for drop-out could be because being in school is an unpleasant experience for some students. We could expect that this is influenced by parents' attitudes which are correlated with their level of education. It is also possible that the students fail school because of low ability to continue academically. Parental education has been found to be a major factor behind the school attainment of the child. A higher parental education is

connected largely with higher schooling for children. School attainment in developing countries has educational policy variables, including distance to school and school fees which have a smaller impact on schooling than household variables like parental level of education and family income. Schooling and child labor cannot be combined and the fact that parents must choose between sending their children to school or work is, in many cases, not accurate. It is very possible that we have the "middle group" who can afford to refrain their children from working but still cannot afford the costs of schooling. Some parents combine a certain degree of child labor and schooling. Some temporary work on the farm or in the household is not difficult to combine with amount of schooling. Therefore, there are many variations to child labor that depend on the definition of child labor. The evidence is mixed, some studies found negative effects, others did not.

Work has a direct effect on schooling for girls in Egypt. Girls work seems to be more detrimental to schooling. Child labor has indicated that age and gender of the child are the main determinants of education completion. The amount of work is minimal for very young children. However, work increases earlier for girls than for boys. Schooling increases during the first years, but then declines as children drop-out a few years later. The delay in enrollment is also more prevalent among girls than boys. Younger parents are likely unable to pay school fees, so the need arises for the children's labor. It is empirical that the level of education of parents affects the child labor decision (Grootaer and Kanbur, 1995).

It is known that the father's education affects the boys and the mother's education affects the girls. A household with educated parents is more likely to keep children in school, and less likely to have children work. Parental level of education has a powerful positive effect on children's schooling and child labor decision (Grootaert and Kanbur, 1995). Work

and schooling decisions are related to the education of the parents. There is a strong intergenerational transfer of human capital from parents to children in the sense that more educated parents are more likely to keep their children in school and less likely to have child workers. However, in some cases, the schooling of the children is hindered by the presence of very young children in the household; thus, requiring childcare.

In addition, the effect of the father being an employer or employed is very important because it raises the probability that the child does not go to school if the household depends on the child's labor to substitute for the father. Child work could have implications for schooling; it could affect attendance as well as performance and advancement.

Mandatory basic education in Egypt was limited to the primary stage but has been extended to the preparatory stage. However, this law is not strictly enforced. Age and gender of the child are important determinants of work and education. Rates of work are low for very young children. Schooling increases at first as children enroll, but then it declines as some children start to drop-out after a few years.

Low returns to education impose a further challenge to the household decision on schooling (Fergany 2000), households not seeing their children through university education, to invest in basic education. This socio-cultural bias affects girls more than boys. If a family chooses who goes to school, usually the boy is favored.

According to EFA Global Monitoring Report of 2009, the journey towards Education for All starts before primary school; adequate nutrition, good health and an emotionally secure home during a child's first years in life are essential for success. However, millions of children lack these advantages and are locked-in for many years in deprivation. This is

definitely hampering progress towards achieving the EFA targets set in Dakar. When children start their primary school experience with their bodies damaged by malnutrition and ill health, access alone is not a secure foundation for EFA. Governments need to strengthen the link between child-health, education especially in countries for the most disadvantaged.

The aim of this study is to shed light on the parental factors that affect children's education in Egypt in terms of access and completion of the basic education level. Two questions are posed here: (1) What are the main reasons behind children never enrolling in school?; and, (2) What are the reasons for dropping-out before completion? The study will focus on:

- (1) Barriers to schooling of children/youth;
- (2) Impact of household and school community on education;
- (3) Gender disparities.

Background

Egypt has the largest overall education system in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and it has grown rapidly since the early 1990s. The government is responsible for offering free education at all levels. The public education system in Egypt consists of three levels: the basic education stage for 4–14 years old: kindergarten for two years followed by primary school for six years and preparatory school for three years. Then, the secondary school stage is for three years, for ages 15 to 17, followed by the tertiary level. Education is made compulsory for 9 academic years between the ages of 6 and 14. Moreover, all levels of education are free in any government-run schools.

In 1991, 91% of Egyptian children were enrolled in schools. Enrollment figures dropped to 84% when adjusted to reflect drop-outs and students repeating grades. In 1996, the official total enrollment in schools was 88% of school-age population (boys 94%, girls 82%). In 1998-1999, 17 million students were enrolled. With persistent rural-urban inequalities in 1992 rural enrollments did not exceed 50%. Fewer female than male students were enrolled. Many girls dropped-out before completion of their basic education either to work or to get married (<http://education.stateuniversity.com>).

Egypt launched its National Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education Reform (2007/08 – 2011/12). The Strategic Plan mirrors Egypt's commitment to a comprehensive and collective approach towards ensuring an education of quality for all and developing a knowledge society. Its key elements are: (1) access and participation; (2) teachers preparation; (3) pedagogy; (4) curriculum and learning assessment; (5) textbooks and learning materials; (6) management and governance; and (7) a quality improvement strategy.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for making decisions about the education system with the support of three other centers: the National Center of Curricula Development, the National Center for Education Research, and the National Center for Examinations and Educational Evaluation. Each center has its own focus in formulating education policies with other state level committees.

The great majority of students in Egypt at the primary level are in public schools; meanwhile, girls' enrollment rates consistently lag behind those of boys especially in Upper Egypt. Cultural values stand between girls and their education. Girls' right to education address some of societal inequalities, which result in having millions of girls without quality education, and a life of missed opportunities. No doubt, improving educational opportunities for girls will enable them to develop different skills to make decisions and influence community in many different areas. Denying girls' the right to get educated is articulated by those in charge: that is fear of the power; girls will have through education. In some societies, girls' education is seen as a fear of change, fear to lose cultural identity, and a fear of moving towards the unknown or the unwanted.

To overcome the obstacles to girls' education in poor, rural and culturally conservative areas Education Enhancement Program (EEP), one of the education programs financed by the World Bank, developed (with the Egyptian authorities) some strategies to increase girls' enrollment in primary education. The focus on addressing quality issues in the EEP has been crucial to improving the school environment, thereby attracting girls to school and reducing drop-out rates. The key elements were that basic education provides girls and women with an understanding of basic health, nutrition and family planning, giving choices and the power to decide over their own lives and bodies. Women's education leads directly to

better reproductive health, improved family health, economic growth, for the family and for society, as well as lower rates of child mortality and malnutrition. It is also a key in the fight against the spread of HIV & AIDS (<http://web.worldbank.org>).

Denying girls' right to education has led the UN to stress on approaches to meet the education Millennium Development Goals. The three UN flagships for girls' education—namely Education for All (or EFA, headed by UNESCO), the Fast-Track Initiative (or FTI, under the auspices of the World Bank), and the United Nations 'Girls' Education Initiative (or UNGEI, coordinated by UNICEF)—work together along with development agencies, and non-governmental and community-based organizations. The girls' education Initiative in Egypt is a testimony of what the country has achieved in improving access for girls to quality schooling, thus making progress in eliminating gender disparities in education (Sultana, 2008).

Educating girls who will one day become mothers raising future generations is a major issue. Economic growth and eliminating poverty are the main reasons why girls' education is a smart investment for developing countries. Exclusion of women from access to schooling and the labor force translates into a less educated work force, lost productivity, and consequently diminished progress of economic development. Evidence across countries suggests that better gender equality is more likely to have higher economic growth. More educated women also tend to be healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn more income, have fewer children, and provide better health care and education to their children, all of which improve the well-being of the household and lift out of poverty (<http://web.worldbank.org>).

In addition to gender inequality, the educational system in Egypt faces many other challenges such as: (1) curricula and teaching methods which emphasize memorizing and rote learning rather than critical thinking; (2) pedagogical practices that do not take into account the different learning needs and styles of pupils; (3) assessment strategies which are summative in nature, rather than supportive; (4) centralized administrative structures; (5) lack of sufficiently trained teaching staff and principals.

People view the education system very differently. Each person has a different aim for the education. Some people see education as a way of training people to work in economy, for some other education is a way of bringing about social change. For others, it is a way of getting greater social equality and justice. Obviously, education can be used for different purposes. Different people can have different aims and try to achieve different results.

What do we learn at school? If asked this question the answer would probably be English, history, math, and so on. We might also think of sport or music. But, if we think more deeply there are other things that we learn at school. We learn about authority figures like headmasters and teachers. We remember how these people expect to be treated. We learn about rules, and what is the result of breaking them. We learn about work discipline too. We learn that we have to sit and work when we would rather be doing something different! We learn that people are not equal in society. Those who do better at school are able to get better jobs. We should work on our own and that sharing work is called 'cheating'. We also learn a lot from our friends. We learn a lot of other things that are not written in curriculum these are called the "hidden curriculum". Some people believe that

hidden curriculum is more important than the formal one. Paulo Freire (1987) has argued that teaching methods are very important. In most schools, the teacher usually stands up front, while students sit passively at their desks. The students' role is to memorize and listen. The students are not active they simply receive the knowledge. Paulo Freire and others have called this system the "banking system of education". Teachers "deposit" knowledge into the "empty" minds of their students. Knowledge is treated like an object instead of something which people have created. Most students are not given the opportunity to think or to discover new things. They do not know how to think and develop critical awareness. Freire also calls this kind of education "education for domestication". He argues that if we want social change we need to develop new forms of education. These cannot be achieved without collective learning or dialogue on the part of teachers and students. They would both be participants in the learning process (Freire, 1987).

Parents need to be aware of these facts, they need encouragement and empowerment to send their children to school and not allow them to drop-out. A family plays an important role in determining their children's educational future. Parental involvement in following-up on school work and having teacher-parent communication is of vital importance, as well as the parents' employment status and their level of education. Students who have a sibling dropped-out of school will more likely do the same one day. Boring classes, needing to seek employment and falling too far behind to catch up, or helping a family member are some of the many reasons behind dropping-out of school.

Research has shown that education is "one of the most effective development investments countries and their donor partners can make" (Basic Education Coalition, 2004).

“Adequate investments in education facilitate the achievement of most other development goals and increase the probability that progress will be sustained” (USAID 2005). Each year, countries that improve literacy rates have seen increases in "gross domestic product (GDP) of 8-16 percent” (Basic Education Coalition, 2004). Education builds the human capital that is needed for economic growth (USAID, 2005). In addition, it produces significant improvements in nutrition, life expectancy, and health. Countries with an educated citizenry are more likely to be politically stable and democratic.

The dawn of the 1990s found Egypt facing serious problems in education: low literacy rates and an exploding population! Educational quality had seriously declined! Unemployment rates are increasing significantly. The curriculum is not relevant to the students. Teachers lack training, they tend to encourage rote memorization rather than critical thinking. In school, exams are poorly designed. Teacher shortages, especially in rural schools, have resulted from low pay and migration of teachers to better jobs in other countries. Almost half of the students do not complete basic schooling. Attendance is poor and laws requiring primary school attendance are not enforced. Significant regional differences exist, ninety percent of the urban children attend school; however, that percentage is often far less than fifty percent for rural children. Drop-out rates are high.

Egypt recognizes the weaknesses and problems in its educational system and is trying to address them, but there is a vast difference between idealized plans and implementation. A system which is short on resources, surrounded by bureaucracy, and lacking in expertise ends up moving very slowly.

Getting children into school is crucial; ensuring that they stay in school, learn, and achieve, requires more work. We need to help to move closer to making education not just an ideal, but a reality for millions of individuals throughout the world. Providing the needed support to feel motivated, engaged in their schooling starts at home.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Gender Disparity

There are many barriers that hinder children from getting proper education in Egypt. Gender inequality in education is extreme. Girls are less likely to access school, to remain in school or to achieve in education. In spite of the fact that everybody has the right to education, which has been recognized since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 and the right to free and compulsory primary education; still many of these same instruments encourage, but do not guarantee, post-primary education. The right of girls to an education is one of the most critical of all rights – because education plays an important role in enabling girls and women to secure other rights.

Cultural and traditional values stand between girls and their education. The achievement of girls' right to education can address some of society's deeply rooted inequalities, which condemn millions of girls to life without quality education – and, therefore, to a life of missed opportunities.

Analysis conducted in seven governorates in Egypt indicated clearly that poverty was the main reason for families' failure to send their daughters to school. Most families were not able to pay the direct costs of schooling. In addition, girls performed valuable household chores and were often able to earn more income for the family than boys were. Concerns about safety and security were an issue in some areas, and practices of early marriage

constituted an additional factor that restricted education for girls, which was seen as a potential threat to male and parental authority (Zaalouk, 2005).

Asaad, Levison and Zibani (2010) explain how girls' work affects the regularity of school attendance, performance and advancement. The definition of work for girls included unpaid domestic work done in the girls' own homes. As children become adolescents they take on more adult roles and responsibilities which are reflected in their activities. Girls who are not currently enrolled have either never been to school or have attended for some period or then dropped-out. The results indicated that many girls who work would have been in school had they not been expected to work fourteen or more hours per week. The research suggested that access to better infrastructural services and adequate energy sources are interventions to reduce girls' domestic work. Girls with absent mothers were particularly vulnerable to not being in school, while girls with both parents absent are highly vulnerable. Once girls are enrolled, it is then easier to keep track of them via monitoring school attendance and performance.

A USAID article (2008) focused on access and parity in education and closing the enrollment gap between girls and boys. The paper presented a framework called "The Gender Equality Framework" that has been designed to address the inequality in education. It has four dimensions namely: equality of access, equality of educational outcomes, equality in the learning process, and equality of external results. The paper develops recommendations which: (1) ensures that gender concerns are addressed and identified at the highest level of public policy and politics and in activities focusing on global issues; (2) analyzes how educational policies and programs impact boys and girls differently; (3) integrates gender

awareness into teacher training; (4) identifies and reports on indicators such as girls' and boys' net and gross enrollment, gender parity in enrollment, equality in educational outcomes, and girls' and boys' completion rates; and (5) develops practical tools to support programming staff in designing, implementing, reporting on, and evaluating programs that address equitable access and quality from a gender perspective. The report concludes that getting children into school is crucial; ensuring that they stay in school, learn, and achieve requires more work.

Public Education System

While discussing the public education system in Egypt, Kandil (2011) argues that the large number of drop-outs, high illiteracy rate, and increasing number of private schooling and tutoring are the results of lack of civic engagement and resources and the centralized bureaucratic government. Kandil explains how the excessive government control over all decisions related to the education process including the control over education curricula and examinations have produced low achieving students. Educational reforms and policies were examined and the author concluded that legislative changes are required to allow for the participation of the media and civil society organizations.

Herrera (2003) argues that public sector schools in Egypt are in a degraded position due to insufficient resources, policy neglect, and cultural and environmental factors. Motivated by the possibilities of combining school upgrade with gender sensitive participatory development, an NGO initiative at an Egyptian public sector girls' school was undertaken. The focus was to identify sources of school neglect and work towards overcoming them by providing experiments in self-reliance and skills training. After two

years of this initiative some physical improvements were implemented and school premises were made safer. Many students and teachers commented that the changes in the physical school facility improved their attitude toward their school and made them feel proud to be associated with it. Female teachers provided their male colleagues with new ways of thinking about their work environment. The professional community as a whole was enriched and gender inequity was diminished. However, Herrera concluded that the initiative could not support the entire school community and resolve conflicts that arose from shared facility use. School improvement, despite all its potential advantages, was not a substitute for the fundamental need for increased school facilities.

High School Drop-outs

Jordan and Kostandini (2012) report that in the US students who do not finish high school are more likely to be unemployed, to end-up in prison and to die at a younger age (Olson, 2006). Yet, many choose to leave school before they graduate. Dropping-out of high school may result in increased social costs, increased expenditures for health care, food and housing. Several studies have found the major reasons for dropping-out are related to individual and family characteristics, industry structure (McGranahan, 2004) and ability of getting a job (McCaul, 1988). Studies on high school graduation rates using available data have produced conflicting results even on the graduation rate itself. Heckman and La Fontaine (2010) developed a methodology that reconciles the very different estimates of high school drop-out rates. However, they reported drop-out rates with no distinction between rural and urban areas. The purpose of their study is threefold: (1) to explore rural-urban differences in high school and investigate causes of dropping-out; (2) to explore if structural

differences ever exist within rural areas; (3) to examine if differences in graduation rates have changed since the 1980s.

Research on high school drop-outs has found a number of factors that influence one's decision to drop-out of high school. Test scores and poor grades, proved to be not the only determinants of drop-outs (McCaul, 1988; Rumberger, 1983). Studies showed that students' low self-esteem, school quality (McNeal, 1997) and work availability (McCaul, 1988; Rumberger & Lamb, 2003) influence the decision to drop-out. In Rumberger's recent book "Dropping Out" (2011), he classified the predictors of dropping-out as student educational performance, attitudes, behavior and background. Ekstein and Wolpin (1999), found that youths who drop-out of high school have lower motivation and expectations after graduation, and consequently they put a higher value on leisure. Montmarquette, Viennot-Briot, and Dagenais (2007), indicated that parent education and attending a private school reinforce the decision to favor schooling over labor. Their study also pointed out that the legal age to access the labor market, low unemployment rates and high minimum wages tremendously influence the decision to drop-out. In a recent survey (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006) of sixteen to twenty five year olds who dropped-out of high school, nearly half of them mentioned the main reason was that classes were not interesting.

Rural/Urban Drop-outs

Studies have looked at rural-urban differences in US. For example, Pallas (1987) found that urban students drop-out more frequently than rural students. Pallas also noted that rural educators claim that a rural education is different as it is in less crowded and congested areas with fewer problems that lead students to drop-out. McCaul (1988) suggested that rural dropouts report not getting along with the teacher or getting a job as causes for dropping-out

and so gave low ratings to school discipline and effectiveness. Using the 2004 American Community Survey, Strange (2011) said that the rural drop-out rate (11%) is lower than in cities (13%). Strange (2011) also noted that, the average graduation rate in rural areas is calculated at 75%, which is higher than in cities (65%). Studies have also shown that, drop-out rates are different in rural areas due to industry structure. In addition, the ethnicity of rural drop-outs was more likely to be white or American Indian, while urban drop-outs were Hispanic or black.

A study led by Jordan and Kostandini (2012) represents an attempt to explore the differences in graduation rates between urban and rural America. For many years literature has looked at the issues from a perspective of determining how rural and urban areas are different. Once family attributes are accounted for, differences in urban and rural areas are narrow. Research found that family characteristics are the main determinants of high school completion, even in the 2000s.

The question of whether rural schools are inferior to urban schools in terms of achievement and graduation has produced conflicting results. Roscigno and Crowley (2001) found that students living in rural areas exhibit higher levels of dropping-out of high school and lower levels of educational achievement than do those in the urban areas. Gibbs (2003) noted that while rural Americans' educational attainment levels continue to improve; many see that rural education still lags behind urban levels because of the racial and regional differences.

It is unclear whether children living in rural areas face similar socio-economic characteristics compared to their urban counterparts. (Strange, 2011) showed that rural children are more poor than those living in cities and towns. He noted that 37% of students

live in poverty. Therefore, it is important to investigate the determinants of high school drop-outs on urban and rural areas separately. Potential differences in the mechanisms that lead to dropping-out across areas have not been researched in a framework with up to date data. In sum, lack of attention regarding how drop-out rates are measured may be responsible for conflicting findings on the question of whether rural high school students are significantly different than urban students.

O Ensor (2010) presents an overview of the potential that education has to empower displaced people in urban Egypt, help them maximize their life options and build a more secure future. Guidelines of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCRs emphasized the promotion of self-reliance among refugees, with education and vocational training and initiatives designed to support essential life skills. Some of the educational problems for the urban poor were introduced such as school fees, uniforms, books, unsafe transportation. Conclusions and recommendations were supporting church-run schools that accept refugee students and grant them full accreditation, helping students to enroll in private schools if public ones are not accessible, disaggregating data on education affecting urban refugees by age and gender as women, men, children and elderly are likely to have different needs and seek different solutions.

Household Barriers

Assaad, Levison & Zibani (2001) found that children raised in households that do not include both biological parents are less likely to graduate. In addition to the number of children in the family and the hardships the household have gone through have a negative impact on graduation. On the other hand, higher family incomes increase the likelihood that one graduates. Students with peers, who take drugs or skip classes, are less likely to

graduate, and in contrast, the graduating percentage increases if they have more peers who want to attend and graduate from college. Students in areas with higher incomes are more likely to graduate, while areas with higher employment in manufacturing have a negative impact on graduation.

Also, all other family arrangements (one biological parent and another non-parent or a single parent) show negative results with graduation. Low income has a negative impact on graduation, in contrast with higher income which is associated with a higher likelihood of graduation. Having more peers in gangs increase the likelihood of dropping-out. Overall, the main determinants of graduation are race, assets, gender, presence of biological parents at home, characteristics of the high school peers, in addition to the level of income and industrial structure (Assaad et al. 2001).

The cultural aspects inherited by students included attitudes that would help them navigate the education system is a part of the reason that there were noticeable differences in education levels between disadvantaged and advantaged youth. The majority of economically disadvantaged students left school between 13 and 16 years of age. Some of the reasons stemmed from disruptive family lives and drug use. A common attitude among disadvantaged youth who face educational barriers is to overcome social and cultural obstacles in order to succeed in a school environment. Formal education becomes a barrier instead of a tool to help young people become secure socially and as economically adults. Young people transitioning to adulthood need their parents' and communities' spiritual and cultural support. Family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, actively have an impact on youth for their decisions, actions and perceptions. They are considered the primary social and economic support networks. However, some family members

experienced their own serious barriers such as abuse, addiction, gambling and debt that make it difficult to provide consistent support to their youth (Brann-Barrett, 2010).

Jordan and Kostandini suggest two areas of future research. First; more examination of how families have a direct affect on high school completion; particularly the effect of having two biological parents as opposed to all other family arrangements. They also suggest that research is needed to show the effectiveness of drop-out prevention policies that impose the high penalties to different familial arrangements, poverty, race, and peer surroundings.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Qualitative research aims at building a narrative description and an understanding of the cultural and social factors that are behind it. The design is flexible it changes as the researcher explores the phenomena. The researcher did not assume a hypothesis at the beginning of her research instead, general research questions were posed. During the data collection period more questions emerged and data collection was extended which allowed for a more accurate description of the phenomena. The researcher in this study is an observer who gradually takes the role of a caregiver.

An action framework is conducted as a holistic approach to problem solving, rather than a single method for collecting and analyzing data. Action research is “learning by doing” - identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful efforts are, and if not satisfied, try again.

This type of research aims at gaining a broad understanding of events and organizations. It generates data about human beings in social settings. It does not introduce treatments or differences; rather it helps the meaning or information to emerge from the participants. It is flexible as it could be adjusted according to the setting of the data collection. This research is a true representation of how the participants interacted with their surroundings and influenced it with their behavior.

Observation is used to serve the purpose of the research that relates to the literature with systematic good planning. The problem was identified and then a deeper understanding of the phenomenon was maintained through readings and literature review. A strategy was chosen to record the observations through written notes and tape recordings. The research adopted a passive role at the beginning not seeking data aggressively until later. She tried to answer questions frankly, truthfully and respected confidentiality. The researcher spoke the “language” and understood the participants’ “world”.

Data collected the different reasons for dropping-out of schools and how individuals face life challenges without having a proper education. Transformation happens when they regret this mistake and try to make up for what was lost. I used observations and analysis in relation to indicators from interviews, observational notes, case studies and literature. The qualitative data collection method gave an insight for interpretation and understanding.

Samples were selected from a similar socio-economic background. Participants resided in villages of similar attributes in resources, mobility and traditions. Levels of education ranged from illiterate to medium. Participants were chosen based on their willingness to volunteer and anonymity was respected.

This study was mainly based on human interactions and trying to form a relationship of trust, which made it very challenging unlike quantitative designs where direct interactions with people were avoided. In addition to the sensitivity of the topic itself, it was difficult to conduct this type of research because of the restrictions in the traditional Egyptian culture where most of the people tend to be conservative. Its success relied greatly on establishing

good relations to overcome the study limitations of a short time span. Data was gathered during the months of March and April 2013.

Focus groups were used with a main discussion topic. The facilitator's job was to keep the group focused. Discussions were carefully planned to create a non-threatening environment, in which people talked freely, expressed their opinions, responded to other members, and to questions addressed by the leader. Focus groups were expressive, free discussions and expressions of feeling were allowed which yielded a lot of information in a very short time. It got closer to what people thought and felt. There were meetings with maximum of 12 participants that exchanged ideas, perspectives, opinions and knowledge. The two focus groups were conducted in Sayyeda Zeinab and in the American University in Cairo.

The American University in Cairo (AUC) is an independent, nonprofit, liberal arts university located in the 5th compound of new Cairo, Egypt. It provides American liberal arts education to students from Egypt and all around the world and contributes towards Egypt's intellectual life. Sayyeda Zeinab is a district with deep historical roots; it was the place where Egypt's first Ministry of Education, national library and teachers' college were built, around 1870. Today, Sayeda Zeinab is deteriorating due to traffic congestion, overpopulation, poor services and facilities.

In this study, informal conversations and guided interviews were conducted. Informal interviewing was used with case studies, where the questions asked were inspired by the given context. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the participant's world, his past experiences, his beliefs and desires. Guided interviews were used with participants using a

checklist of questions. Interviews were conducted with four male participants. In-depth informal conversational interviews were conducted with relevant case studies.

An intensive analysis of an individual person was used, stressing developmental factors in relation to context using collection of data. From the focus group discussions and initial interviews, a number of participants were selected for case studies to richly describe, and evaluate their experiences. Changes in these participants' lives were investigated through in-depth personal interviews.

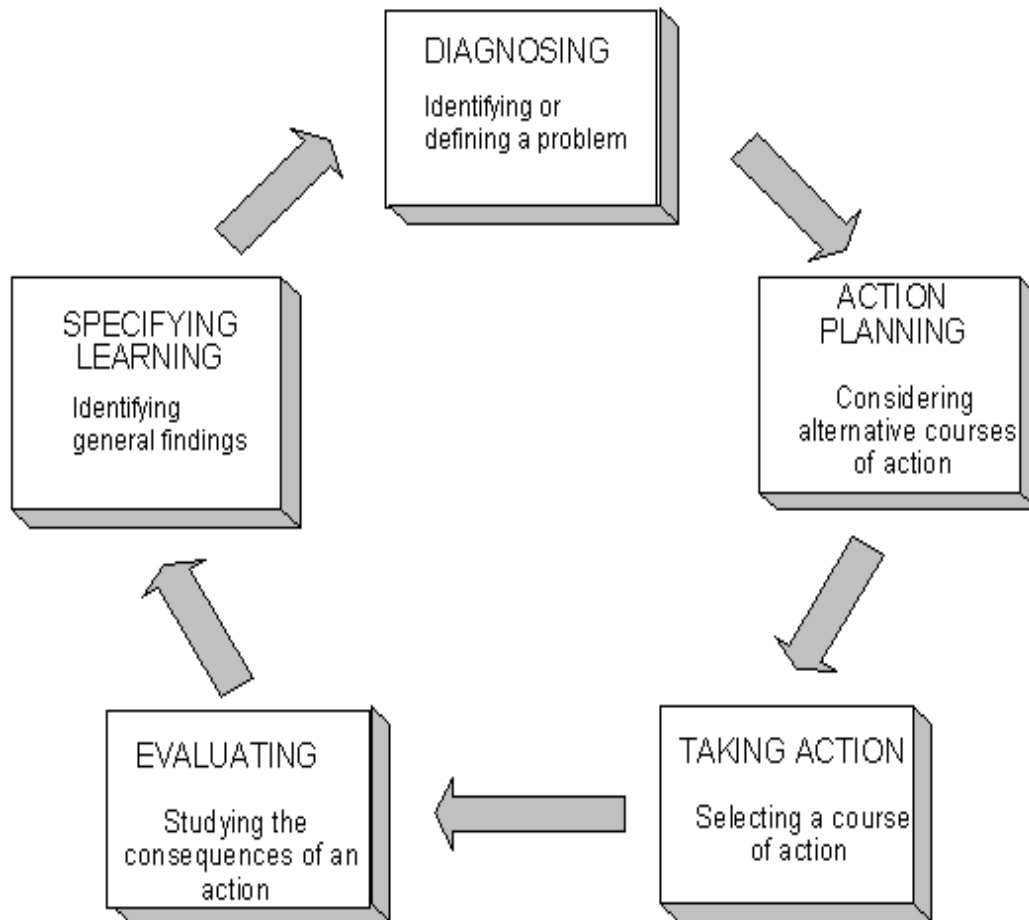
The researcher observed and reflected on people's social context, how people work, behave and communicate, then recorded and took notes. Two classrooms were observed to better understand the program and evaluate how successful and engaged students were. The intention was to meet with parents and youth who did not complete their education, in an attempt to explore reasons, understand how they view education and identify difficulties they have faced in getting a proper education or in educating their children. In addition, learning more about how and why they were getting educated now.

Analytical questions were asked through open-ended unstructured interviews. The topics of discussions were:

- Parents' awareness to the importance of education
- Barriers of education
- The public education in Egypt
- Favoritism and gender discrimination within family members
- Child rearing and decision making with family
- Poverty

- Child's labor and its effect on schooling
- Private lessons
- Teachers role in public schools

Action research graph:



Before any visits, all literature data were studied and analyzed. The researcher conducted several meetings with the AUC Student Union Manager of Li Misr Project to gather initial information of the program, its target group and aims. The researcher took permission from the Student Union Manager to attend on both sights where the program was

taking place; in Sayyeda Zeinab and AUC. The researcher discussed and noted the participants' views about education and the difficulties they had faced in their lives. She managed to establish a plan for fieldwork and visits to both sites. Initial visits were for the building of rapport to get familiarized with the place and create a relationship with the program participants and the environment.

Data was collected during several visits to both sites, eliminating illiteracy classes in AUC took place on Mondays and Wednesdays and in Sayyeda Zeinab on Tuesdays and Saturdays. A classroom was designated for this purpose in HUSS building in AUC for 1 ½ hours; and in a small room with desks and a board in a building that belongs to Abou El Azayem Mosque in Sayyeda Zeinab.

Data collections tools were used: Focus group discussions and interviews with DDC workers and office boys. Direct observations of sites were conducted, in depth-interviews of three participants in the program and one outsider. Samples were purposefully picked with participants of the same cultural and social backgrounds. Participants come from poor villages with very limited resources, traditions and difficult life situations.

To measure empowerment and transformation a comparison between participants and a non-participant in the program took place to capture the impact of intervention. Analytical questions were asked through open-ended unstructured interviews and group discussions. Some of the questions were as follows:

How important do you think education is? Why are you getting educated now?

What is the reason you were not educated?

Did you leave school because your parents decided so?

Do you have children or grandchildren in schools?

Do you have children who dropped-out from school? And why have they dropped-out?

Do you think education is free in Egypt?

Do your children complain and suffer from the same problems you have had in school when you were young?

How do you see education in Egypt? Why?

What is your role as a parent to effect change in education?

Have you tried to express your frustration to school administration?

Do you find this eliminating illiteracy program sufficient?

Do you equally care to educate your daughter as your son? Why?

How do you see public schools in Egypt? How do you evaluate the teachers in those schools?

What is your dream in education?

What do you expect the society should do for you?

Participants were male workers in the Desert Development Center and office boys in AUC. Case studies were picked from the focus groups discussions, to further study their transformation. Participants in Sayyeda Zeinab were from both sexes. They were the poor uneducated inhabitants of the neighborhood. Researcher acted as the moderator during discussions. The objective was to exchange participants perspectives, and opinions, get to know their views, bridge the gap and build a sense of trust. Informal and guided interviews were used in this study. The purpose was to explore more deeply into the participants life and changes in perspective that took place.

Chapter Four

Findings and Analysis

‘Li-Misr’ Project

A project which is conducted by members of the Student Union in the American University in Cairo (AUC), is an initiative called “Li Misr” meaning “for Egypt”. Its aim is to eliminate illiteracy in Egypt by implementing a model that educates people and provides them with micro-finance projects to help them earn their living after getting a literacy certificate. They meet twice a week in both the new campus and in Sayyeda Zeinab. After taking permission from the Student Union General Manager, the organizer of these sessions, the researcher managed to visit both sights. Her initial intention was to have a general idea of how illiterates approach education, how eager are they to learn? Do they really value education or is it only to have a certificate to earn a living?

Lecture Observation in AUC

The researcher first encounter was in a lecture room in AUC on March 13th, a Wednesday afternoon. She entered the classroom and sat at the very end watching and observing the lecturing process without a single interruption. There were ten male students - Desert Development workers- wearing their green uniforms. The teachers were two undergraduate female students. The lesson was about how to write numbers from one to nine. This was such an exceptional experience, I did see how eager those workers were to learn, they tried very hard to imitate the teacher’s writings in their copybooks and repeated

after her. I noticed how they felt proud when the teacher praised their work. They were very attentive to the teacher and worked hard to improve their handwriting, at the same time they helped and guided one another. At this point I started to take some pictures and then left.

Focus Group in Sayyeda Zeinab

On March 19th afternoon in a lecture room in one of the buildings that belongs to Abou El Azayem Mosque in Sayyeda Zeinab, the researcher met a new group of individuals, this time men and women with some of their children, 6 men and 3 women. They were middle-aged parents, an old lady, and a young gentleman from poor socio-economic backgrounds. The lesson was about letters and word formations that included those letters. Students were all carrying their books and copybooks and following the young teacher's instructions attentively. The class was engaged, full of enthusiasm and eagerness to learn.

When the session came to an end, the researcher was permitted by the teacher to have some time with the students for a short discussion. She started by introducing herself and the reason why she was there. After 15 minutes of chatting she understood how those parents value education and realize its importance for variety of reasons namely; to have better jobs, read the Quran, or simply to be able to "read the word" as one of them have put it.

Educational Background of Participants. Participants were enrolled in different public schools outside Cairo but unfortunately dropped-out during the elementary stage. Except for the old lady, who didn't attend school at all, as her parents wanted her to work and serve them at home and in raising the kids. She wished she had been educated, however, now that she is 58 years old she joined these sessions to know the Arabic alphabet, learn the

language and read the Quran. The two other ladies dropped-out in the elementary stage; they hated school because their teachers in public schools used to treat them badly and sometimes hit them. They had decided to drop-out mentally before dropping-out physically. However, now after getting married and having children they are attending these sessions to help their children in their studies. Only the young gentleman expressed the reason of being there was to get a certificate to be able to find a decent job.

These parents have their children enrolled in either public or private schools. They pay a lot of money for private lessons, books and transportation. Education for the poor is not regarded as free; however, they are ready to pay every penny for the sake of having their children get a good education and a better future. In spite of the fact that they regard education in Egypt as being corrupt and expensive and teachers are not well prepared to fulfill their roles as educational leaders, they all agreed on the importance of education for their children. In public schools, teachers do not work with conscience; students in both public and private schools have to take private lessons with their teachers in order not to fail in their subjects. In addition, a public school's day is comprised of one or two classes only and the rest of the day students are left free, to quarrel, run here and there or sometimes they are asked to clean the playground. The principal and administration do not care; the principal is only there part of the time, he is not involved and chaos dominates all around the school premises. Parents do not have a say! When parents complain or show dissatisfaction about their children's educational status, teachers always put the blame on students.

Participants believe that if the students have a proper education for 6/7 classes a day, there will be a whole big difference in their educational attainment and they will improve

significantly. Some of them said that the reason behind this chaos is that the teachers take very low salaries; therefore, they are trying to make a better living from private lessons, on the parents' expenses.

After this conversation, I realized that students have dropped-out of school because of the bad educational system they have faced, and others haven't enrolled to take care of their households. However, in spite of the many reasons that hindered their education, they have all gathered with the one intention of learning and achieving a decent certificate.

Focus Group in AUC

Meeting with AUC workers on 27th of March in a classroom in the HUSS Building, all were men working in Desert Development Centre (DDC), 12 individuals from different age groups, originally from the El-Menya governorate. Some of them have attended school but dropped-out in the primary stage. Others didn't attend school because their poor families couldn't afford the expenses. Now, they feel how badly they need to read, write and achieve basic education; which may help them reach higher levels in their career. One participant said he had to leave school after the preparatory level, to work in the field with his father. Another individual said that his grandmother did not send him to school because she saw students bullying each other and was scared to find her grandchild injured or broken one day! Others said that their parents were illiterate and poor and could not afford or think of sending them to school. However, participants believed in the importance of education for themselves and their children. They hated the idea of being unable to read and look ignorant in front of others. Illiteracy constitutes a hindrance in their jobs, lives and environment. Some of their views about education in public schools are that their children cannot have

proper education without having private lessons. So they end-up paying a lot of money to seek teachers' help. One parent said that he is ready to sell his clothes to have his children educated and not to see them in the same situation where he is now. Even if his children reject education, he will force them to continue, and not let them make the same mistake.

For them education in rural areas is very weak; teachers are from the village inhabitants, who tend not to respect students to the extent that they smoke in classrooms. No monitoring takes place from the school administration. Success is only guaranteed by private tutoring. Teachers are not doing their work properly; schools are under developed. The only way to solve these problems is by having a regular monitoring system over schools in El Menia and in other rural neglected villages, to better the schooling system and elevate it. One of the parents asked the researcher of her opinion in having his child work during weekends to elevate a bit the household budget. The researcher advised him to do so but not on the expense of the child's studies, meaning that he can work but not during school time and to be given sufficient time to sleep and do his home works.

Concerning their views about girls' education, they see it as important as the boys; they have the same rights to attend school and get educated. One of the participants expressed that his daughter will only finish her studies until preparatory stage because sending her to secondary school outside the village is not safe.

Interview "Hamada"

On the same day the researcher interviewed a young gentleman Hamada (19 years old), from El-Menya, who is working in DDC. He studied until 1st secondary and dropped-

out because of family and financial problems. His parents were separated, and his mother was forced by his uncle to get remarried. After some time his step-father started to treat them badly and used to hit his mother. During this time, Hamada was not given any kind of support to complete his education, and so gradually he started to lose interest and fail in many subjects. Hamada could not stand the idea of seeing his mother humiliated by her husband. He asked his mother to get separated from her husband and that he will take care of her needs. At this point, Hamada had to choose between taking care of his family or completing his education, either to work or to study. Being the elder brother, Hamada decided to quit school and work to help his family financially. Hamada knows how to read but writes with difficulty. Teachers were good in his school but they favored some students over others. If he would think of resuming his studies he will do that only to be exempted partially from serving in the army. Hamada was not one of the participants of Mahw El Ommeya (eliminating illiteracy) classes.

At the end of this interview, the researcher found herself encouraging Hamada to think again of resuming education. She advised him to work and study. He is capable of doing both, as he is still young and energetic and he needs to think better about his career and future life. The researcher tried to empower him to resume his studies and not to neglect his education. Hamada said that he cannot do both, that he is trying to find a better job, as he is working on part-time basis in the current job in AUC. Hamada promised that he will think about what the researcher has said. The researcher asked Hamada to meet again the following week. She truly wanted to help him not to waste his life and direct him to a better way to complete his education and have a better life. When the researcher asked about Hamada the following week she was told that he left the University for another job.

Interview “Mohamed”

Mohamed has dropped school from 2nd preparatory because he was advised by his peers to learn a new trade, work and earn money. His parents did not object to this decision. Mohamed dropped-out at the age of 14 years when he realized that education would not benefit him more after this stage, and that taking the diploma would not give him more than what he has achieved. On the contrary, learning a new trade should be more rewarding. He still remembers how they used to wake-up teachers during class time to complete the lesson! How they sat three students on one bench in an over-crowded classroom, and could not follow or hear the teacher properly. On the other hand, seeing his cousins work and gain good money without having to endure all the pain of education. He was convinced that those who continue to learn until the diploma or the secondary stage will miss the opportunity of learning a trade and earning a living. After years, he decided to join the Mahw El Ommeya sessions only to have a certificate, to prove that he is literate. His ultimate wish is to have a chance to continue his education and take a prestigious diploma from AUC! He said that there is no point in getting an education from public schools. Good education can only be found in good universities and institutions. He regrets not having a proper certificate, and that he should have resumed his studies for a better career and future life and not to have wasted three years by serving in the army. Though he knows how to read and write that does not mean anything without a proper certification. Mohamed still does not see any difference between his colleagues who have taken the diploma and himself, as they are all working in the same field, and they are not more privileged. So what's the need of it? He is regarding the certificate offered by the school in his village as being just a piece of paper, which is important only to have this title of "having a certificate" and no more. He added that Egypt

is not being fair to him. His ultimate dream is to get married and have the tools to work and live a respectable life.

Talking about his village and its education system he mentioned that they only have two schools, one for Primary level and the other for Preparatory level. His village is called “Abou Aziz” Markaz Abou El Ma3aty, in El Menia. Average gross population is 30,000 individuals. They do not have a Secondary school. Youth who wish to continue their education after finishing the Preparatory level should travel every day to the Markaz to attend the Secondary school. This represents a problem especially for girls, because they have to ride a truck that takes around 30 girls, and be late at home because of the long distance. In addition, classrooms are full of students not less than 80 students per class. This is not the kind of education he dreams to have!

Interview “Essam”

Essam (35 years old) is another individual the researcher has met. He is from Kafr El Sheikh. Studied Agricultural Diploma, is married with three children. He is a graduate of public school and used to take private lessons to succeed. His children are attending public schools. He can hardly live and pay for the kids’ education. When asked if he will one day think of dropping-out one of his children from school to work, he said he will never do that and ruin their lives. He wishes he can get more money to put them in a private school.

Interview “Nady”

A handsome man, 58 years old, with white hair and complexion, originally from Assiout. Nady did not attend school at all. His father was in the army and being the elder

brother of seven brothers and sisters, he was destined to work to help his family financially. In addition, schools were far away from home, no proper transportation was provided and his parents' believed that there is no need for him to get educated. Nady worked at a very early age in a bakery for 17 years, until he joined the military service. Then he worked in AUC as an office boy and served in this position for 32 years. All his 6 siblings and three children are university graduates. Being illiterate puts him in a very difficult situation; he remembered how difficult it was to issue a birth certificate as he did not have one and then an identity card. All those workers he has trained throughout his years of service have already passed him in title and salary, because they are educated. He felt idle without having a proper certificate.

Eliminating illiteracy lessons offered by AUC students helped him a little, his experience with such classes that they do not sustain for long. In addition, there are different levels of students in the same class; some do not have any background others do, which is not convenient to everyone. Nady is so faithful to his work, he has served the University for many years, during which he met many celebrities. He admits he cannot fight at this stage as he is very old, and will be placed on pension as of next year.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

There are many factors that lead to school drop-outs and parents need to be aware of them. Some students with risk factors like skipping school, having significant discipline problems, failing classes or being involved in illegal acts are more liable to drop-out. Others with emotional and behavioral disorders or with learning disabilities are at risk to drop-out. Some may drop-out because they have problems with teachers, dislike school, or receive low grades. Others leave school because of employment, financial needs, pregnancy, or family care taking responsibilities.

Most of the students who decided to drop-out have not considered the consequences of what could happen to them afterwards. They are not finished maturing either emotionally or physically. They face the challenge to independent living and adulthood without having adult guidance. Here comes the importance of family involvement to help youth in school completion and success. Success is measured by the amount of family involvement towards portraying the student's educational career. Research showed that most students who drop-out come from families who did not complete their education. However, there are some exceptions. Many youth work hard to be better than their parents, who are unskilled poor workers.

Parents tend to drop-out their children from school especially after the elementary stage for many different reasons. All those young individuals the researcher have seen and interviewed cherish education and know how it is important for their children's future.

Though they have dropped-out at a certain age still they have regretted it and are now seeking to have proper education. Back then, what if their parents did not allow them to drop-out and encouraged them to resume their studies. Wouldn't they have had a better future now? The researcher realized that parents do not have enough awareness to direct their children. Those children, who are now parents learned from the lessons of the past and are trying hard to make it up to themselves and to their children.

Public schools especially in rural areas face big challenges, there is lack of teacher development, educational leadership, proper and fair system, discipline and commitment among staff members, mobility and hygiene. Especially girls in remote areas face difficulty to complete their education because the road is not safe to schools outside their villages.

Some participants the researcher has met do not see the true value of education. Their ultimate goal is to know how to read and write. They are not learning for life, they are learning to hold a certificate. There is no connection whatsoever between the kind of education delivered in schools and real life needs and the working conditions.

Perhaps the most striking part in this research is that participants after completing elementary or preparatory schools they still do not know how to read and write properly. They find in Mahw Al Omeya lessons which are very basic education, things to learn, like writing or reading a simple word. How come after completing public basic education students still lack this knowledge? What kind of education was delivered to them in the first place?

What if a person after some years of dropping-out from school decided to resume studies for any reason, what are the outlets or proper channels that help those people and

provide them with proper education and certification? How can the university or any other institution help in this respect. How can we encourage those people learn and develop new skills, what kind of programs and community services should be provided to elevate their educational and financial standards?

As an educational leader AUC should think of marginalized individuals working under its premises and who want to resume their education. AUC should think of ways to help and reach out these individuals. I think this should be the University's role and duty as educational provider to encourage and empower people to learn and create the chances and appropriate channels to do so.

Child labor in Egypt proved to be a widespread phenomenon, worthy of receiving the attention of the policy makers who should think of formulating new adequate policies to deal with it. Statistics showed that the highest percentage of child/youth employment was in industrial sectors. Several social and economic factors contribute to the family's decision to send children to work. Specific factors are related to the phenomenon of child labor: Schools' capacities to absorb children in compulsory age, the problem of school drop-outs, and improving the education system related to child/youth labor.

All studies showed that the need of the families to raise their income and failure in the basic compulsory education are the two main reasons that force children to drop-out school. Despite of having a law forbidding a child under 12 years of age to get employed, children below that age are working and their numbers are increasing every day. Attempts to devise special systems for dropouts and children who never attended school were not very successful and were cancelled after a few years of trying them. The root causes which result

in children to drop out is their difficult circumstances which force families to decide that would drop-out of compulsory education. We need to think of ways to help the low income families, become productive families.

Education must be made more popular and more democratic in spirit, in order to secure reform. Schools must become centers of social life and programs should be adapted to the everyday interests of the people. Since education means the building up of character, the development of practical skills and healthy body growth, it must be considered as one of the difficult arts. Therefore, teachers must be very carefully selected and trained. A teacher must be more than an instructor, or a person who communicates knowledge. His best work is done as a leader and guide, rather than as an instructor. A teacher should possess the ability to handle students and to win their respect and loyalty and to teach them the right use of leisure, understand the nature of the child at different stages and during adolescence. Teaching requires men who can relate easily and sympathetically to the level of their students. They must be organized, energetic in play, good spirited and wide awake in the classroom to be able to capture the eyes of children and win their respect at their most impressionable age (the primary age). The primary schools need, above all, teachers who can give themselves heart and soul to their work (Jackson, 1937).

Education must be related to the lives and the needs of the common people, and is no longer felt as something imposed from above. It should help the worker in his field and everyday life. Subjects would have to be treated to meet the situation presenting itself all around us. There is no reason why the schools should not develop into centers of social life. The tendency to think that education means down "tools" and take up "pens" shows that a

truly educated man can never be a laboring man or a worker. We shall have to get this idea out of people's head. Education means enlightenment, and an enlightened society should accord to the right to all its members. Not merely to exist but to live well and contribute to the social good.

The solution to the problem is complicated, and social change could not happen within a short time. It has to take time and be gradual. Moreover, for people to accept the change, they need to believe in its benefits. Policy makers need to think about practical solutions for dealing with the problem of school drop-outs by:

- Integrating theory and practice and establishing a link between education and productive work,
- Reviewing the curriculum to adjust it to the student's potentials at their different stages of growth,
- To have all primary school teachers especially those working in rural areas, university graduates,
- School evaluation should mirror the truth, to ensure seriousness,
- Giving special attention to children with learning disabilities to continue education,
- Achieve a balance between what is actually needed in the labor market and the output of education,
- Improving the general school conditions and the quality of school life
- Making the balance between education and the level of income by linking education to productive work which is greatly demanded.

The development of general policies affecting the problems of school drop-outs and child labor cannot be resolved without dealing with the economic dimension of the problem, which is to increase the income of the low income families to afford the education of their children. Policy makers should give priority to this issue, so that eventually an increase in wages of both public and private sector employees takes place, as well as increase in pensions. With this change and improvement, low income families could better meet their children's educational requirements without having to resort to getting their children out of school, to increase the families' income through labor.

Women assigned to public service can help preventing drop-outs by following up certain numbers of families, whose children have not enrolled in the school system or are willing to get their children out of school. This follow up would seek to provide them with basic literacy.

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APPENDIX

Interview questions and answers with focus groups

How important do you think education is? Why are you getting educated now?

Education is very important, it teaches us how to read and write, to have certificate and get work, to read the holy books and to help our children in their studies.

What is the reason that you were not educated?

The main reason is the teacher, who treated us badly, and used to hit us all the time. Eventually, we hated to attend school and get educated and dropped it out at the primary stage.

Did anyone leave school because his/her parents decided so?

An old lady answered positively and said: the reason was to help my parents and siblings in the household duties and now after all these years I am trying to get educated to be able to read the Quran and be intellectual.

Do you have children or grandchildren in schools?

Yes all of us.

Do you have children who dropped-out from school?

No, none of us

Do you think education is free in Egypt?

Education is very expensive because of the too many private lessons that we have to give to our children in addition to the books that we buy for them. We want to help our children with every possible way to get the best education we can offer them.

Do your children complain and suffer from the same problems you have had in school when you were young?

Yes they do suffer a lot from maltreatment which results in incapability of getting engaged with the learning process, and the teacher always places the blame on students instead of helping them.

How do you see education in Egypt? Why?

Education is very bad in Egypt, because the teachers do not perform their work with conscience. They are taking very little salary in both governmental and private schools, hence they don't want to exert much effort with the children. That is why we pay a lot for private lessons. In schools instead of having eight lessons a day the children only have the first two or three lessons and then the rest of the day they are free! During school day, children are left with no direct supervision, they quarrel, hit each other and on the other side you see teachers engaged in conversations!! Students sometimes are asked to collect the school garbage during their free lesson!

What is your role as parent in this respect? Have you expressed your frustration to school administration?

The school always puts the blame on students, they never listen to us. Students are not attentive, they are not behaving well, and the teacher is always right. If the school provides good education for 7 or 8 classes a day, the student will definitely learn, there is no question about this. Teachers behave like this intentionally to give private lessons, because their salaries are very low. We have to endure everything to get our children educated. What else we could do? We do not have another choice.