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Laila El Baradei

American University in Cairo, lbaradei@aucegypt.edu

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Public Policy Teaching, Study, and Research in Egypt: Challenges and Opportunities[1]

Laila El Baradei[2]

Abstract

Public Policy as an independent field of study is a relatively new endeavor in Egypt. While it has gained momentum in recent years, more updated literature is needed to document where public policy research, teaching, and study happen; what is offered, how it is studied, and why. Relying on desk research, examining relevant websites for public policy academic institutions, research centers, and think tanks, and surveying thirty-two experts in the field, this article purports to answer these questions. Findings indicate that public policy is studied in different types of academic institutions, but not necessarily as stand–alone programs or even courses, and that policy research is produced by academia and by research centers and think tanks. The policy topics covered are mostly traditional, with some trendy topics interspersed. Researchers mostly rely on mixed methods, and most policy models and theories taught and researched are derived from the Western world. Several factors influence the research agenda of think tanks and research centers, including the relationship with the government and the availability of external funding. Some of the policy research produced, but not all, was perceived as being effectively communicated to the

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[2] Laila El Baradei, Ph.D. is a Professor of Public Administration and Chair of the Public Policy and Administration Department, School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. She is also the director of the Public Policy HUB, a project started in 2017 that aims at building capacity in public policy research and effective policy communication and advocacy. El Baradei can be contacted at lbaradei@aucegypt.edu

government. Research that focuses on policy monitoring and evaluation was reported as occasionally produced by a number of government entities. Furthermore, as much as there were identified challenges to the field of public policy study and research, including lack of access to information, a restrictive political environment, a chasm between policymakers and policy researchers, and impediments to effective monitoring and evaluation, a lot of opportunities were said to abound, including job opportunities related to the field, and a relatively nascent interest in public policy research by government and policymakers. Recommendations for further promotion of the public policy discipline in Egypt included: Offering more public policy academic programs, training, and capacity-building workshops; creating more awareness about the discipline; fostering stronger relations between the public policy research supply side and policymakers; and having an overall more democratic and accountable government.

Keywords: *Egypt, Public Policy, Public Policy Research, Think Tanks, Research Centers*

Background
When scholars talk about the development of the field of public policy on a global level, there is usually mention of the work of Harold Laswell in the mid twentieth century and his call for the establishment of an independent public policy science (Birkland, 2011; Fan, 2013; Smith & Larimer, 2017). Laswell takes credit for establishing the foundations of the public policy discipline, and its inclusion in academic and professional settings. Many other scholars carried the torch forward. Full-fledged public policy academic programs, at all levels, and similarly public policy executive programs flourish worldwide.

However, this has generally not been the case in the developing world, including Egypt. Public Policy studies in Egypt is a relatively new discipline. Certainly, public policies may have been discussed and researched under various other disciplinary umbrellas, such as in economics, management, political science, sociology, and public administration, but its recognition as an independent field remains very new. Academic courses in public policy studies started to be offered in the late 1990s, whether at public universities, such as Cairo University, or at the American University in Cairo, within the public administration and the political science programs. However, the first independent master's program in public policy was established at the American University in Cairo in 2009. More documentation is needed about the situation of public policy pedagogy, studies, and research in Egypt. The present research paper attempts to do this by focusing on the situation in Egypt and how public policy is taught, studied, and researched in the country.

Research Problem, Purpose and Question
To fill the gap in the literature, we attempt to explore the what, where, how, and why questions related to the field of public policy study and research in Egypt, pertaining specifically to academic settings, training centers, research centers, and think tanks. To this end, the main research question is: Where, what, how, and why does public policy teaching, study and research take place in Egypt? And what can be done to further promote the field?

Literature Review
This section provides a brief review of how scholars worldwide and in Egypt have reflected on the quality of teaching, studying, and researching public policy. On checking attempts at evaluating the quality of public policy research, we found that besides identifying the most significant and influential research published in the field, there were lots of other narrower efforts at evaluating public policy research, either produced in a specific geographical area, or in a contained policy domain. Similarly, on evaluating how public policy was taught, several scholars tried to provide recommendations for how to make the teaching more effective.

In trying to set boundaries for what qualifies as published public policy literature, a study by Fan (2013) offers a refined methodology to identify the most important literature shaping the discipline. In the quest for 'Canonic Texts in Public Policy Studies', the methodology did not just look for the most cited publications, but checked those that had mentioned 'public policy' as a keyword, that were used in syllabi teaching policy courses in reputable public policy schools, and finally those publications that were recommended by a surveyed sample of experts in the field. The result was a list of thirty-three books and articles that were perceived to have had a great influence on shaping the field. Among the scholars mentioned were world renowned figures, like Woodrow Wilson, Amartya Sen, and Charles Lindblom. Evidently, all of the names listed were from the Western hemisphere. Even Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate, who is originally from India, was reported to have worked all his life in the U.K. and in the U.S.

Other studies focused on the evaluation of public policy research, and how it served specific communities, or designated policy domains. Skogstad (2023) examined the impact of peer reviewed public policy literature over a ten-year period from 2011-2021, on the public policy making processes and results in Canada. Whittingham (2023), explored the quality of policy research produced in Colombia over a ten-year period as well, from 2008-2018, with the assumption that the higher the quality of the policy research produced, the greater the contribution to a smooth democratic environment.

In Taiwan, Hung et al. (2012) attempted an evaluation of public policy research by analyzing the contents of five policy journals, again over the span of ten years, and called for instilling more rigor in the research methodologies used.

On a more micro level, some studies have tried to determine the impact of policy studies on specific policies. Schwartz (2023), for example, tried to analyze how policy studies contributed to a better understanding of gun control policies in the U.S. Others have focused on evaluating the impact of think tanks on influencing specific policies. Nicander (2015), for example, concentrated on trying to evaluate the role of U.S. think tanks on security policy, while Shaw et al. (2013) explored the impact of think tanks in influencing health policies. Thus, evaluation of the quality of policy research took many forms and shapes. While checking how scholars tried to assess the quality of public policy teaching, it became evident that even in the developed world, there is still much room for improvement. Evans et al. (2019) were concerned with the policy education 'becoming irrelevant' and thus, through a discourse with public policy academics and professionals, came up with a suggested set of principles for further development of the education process, where they advocated for improving relations between academics and practitioners, using competencies as the basis for teaching public policy to students, getting the students to understand that they have to be life-long learners, and continuously updating teaching methods to suit the changing demands.

Other scholars focused on how to improve specific aspects of public policy teaching. Wagner (2018) emphasized the importance of using 'Root Cause Analysis', which is a structured methodology to analyze causes and effects of problems, by students attempting to analyze policy problems. Mudida and Rubaii (2018) advocated for the use of the case study method when teaching public policy, especially in a developing country, and recommended a number of criteria to be in place for the case studies used, such as comparability with the context of the developing country, tackling relevant policy problems, showing alternative possible solutions to the problem, and inspiring optimism that the case can be solved. Meanwhile, Grummel (2003) and Ku et al. (2016) both examined the merits of complementing traditional teaching methods with computer simulation models, in order to be able to teach students how to deal with 'wicked' public policy problems, and to replicate the real-life complexity of decision making inherent in the policy process, while Manwaring et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of establishing strong links with industry early on to properly prepare policy students for the job market.

As for the teaching, study, and research of public policy in Egypt, despite an abundance of public policy research publications, only a few publications emanating from, and

about, Egypt were found to have reflected upon public policy as a discipline. Some were specifically focused on Egypt (Bremer & El Baradei, 2008; Gomaa, 2004), and others discussed Egypt as being part of the Middle East, or Global South (Bhuiyan & Farazmand, 2019; El-Taliawi et al., 2021). The general consensus reached by the scholars who reflected on the field of public policy studies and research over the years was that it was a promising field, but that it is facing a number of challenges. Some of the challenges identified by Bremer and El Baradei (2008) related to the weak quantitative competencies in the graduates of the four operating graduate academic programs checked at the time, and that no program in Egypt had yet attained international accreditation. Both of these challenges have since been overcome. Similarly, in a study by Ismail (2004) within Gomaa's edited volume, the challenge identified was related to the lack of tackling of innovative public policy research issues in the surveyed theses and dissertations at Cairo University over the time period reviewed, from 1990 to 2002. Again, this may no longer be true. Thus, many of the reflections by these earlier studies need further validation and updating.

Research Methodology
Benefiting from the literature reviewed, the study adopts a three-pronged methodology to try to answer the exploratory research questions. This included desk research, a website analysis, and a purposive experts' survey. To identify the main academic higher education institutions where public policy is taught, and the main research centers and think tanks producing policy research in Egypt, this study relies on desk research coupled with an examination of different academic and research center websites. This analysis is followed by an online survey directed towards a purposive sample of 32 public policy experts in Egypt. The experts targeted included university professors teaching public policy and/or public administration, public policy researchers, government officials, and policy makers in Egypt. The approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the American University in Cairo was obtained prior to the dissemination of the survey questions. The purpose of the survey was to solicit opinions of the targeted respondents concerning the public policy research and teaching in Egypt, the challenges faced, and how to overcome them. The survey remained open from August to November 2022, at which time no new insights were being submitted.

Figure (1) demonstrates the breakdown of the sample respondents. More than half the respondents were university professors teaching public policy (53%). A large number (41%) identified themselves as public policy experts and/or researchers (41%), and a small number (6%) identified themselves as public policy makers.

Figure (1): Composition of Study Sample
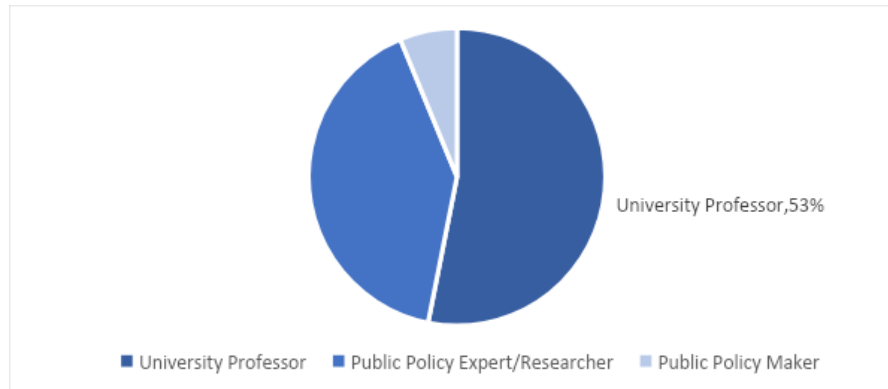
Survey results were analyzed in an effort to answer the following four questions:

- <u>WHERE</u> public policy is researched and studied; specifically, the public policy academic and training programs in Egypt and the research centers and think tanks
- <u>WHAT</u> topics are studied and researched
- <u>HOW</u> public policies are studied; specifically, the monitoring and evaluation of public policies in Egypt and public policy study methodologies and content in the region.
- <u>WHY</u> public policy is studied; including the main challenges faced and suggestions for promoting the field of Public Policy in Egypt

Where Public Policy is Researched and Studied

This section examines the different public policy academic and training programs, and institutions available, plus the different types of think tanks and research centers producing policy research. A compiled list of the main academic institutions, research centers, and think tanks working in Egypt, where public policy studies take place, and research is produced, is annexed to this study (Check Annexes 1 & 2).

Public Policy Academic & Training Programs in Egypt:

When the respondents of the online survey were asked to list examples of academic institutions that teach public policy, three different types of institutions were identified: public, nonprofit and private universities. There were references made to universities where there were clearly identified public policy programs; universities where public policy was taught as a course, or as courses within the public administration program; and other universities where public policy was taught as a sub-topic within a single course. The respondents also listed a wide array of training

entities; whether centers situated within universities, stand-alone or affiliated to departments or schools, or outside of academia. The public policy training centers were either public, private or nonprofit. Some of them were solely concentrated on public policy training, others were offering public policy training within different other programs.

Public Policy Academic Programs and Courses:
The American University in Cairo's School of Global Affairs and Public Policy was the only academic entity in Egypt identified as offering an independent full-fledged master degree program in public policy (MPP). There were three other higher education institutions offering a public administration master's degree (MPA). These were Cairo University through its Faculty of Economics and Political Science (FEPS), the Sadat Academy for Administrative Sciences, and the Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Studies.

Some public universities, like Alexandria University, where there is a school of Economics and Political Science, offer public policy courses. Similarly, at Assiut University in Upper Egypt, some courses are offered that are related to public policy. In Higher Education Institutions where public policy is taught as a sub-topic, several private sector universities were mentioned that include public policy within either political science, and/or business courses. These included New Giza University, the British University in Egypt (BUE), and Future University. At New Giza University in the School of Economics and Politics, the theme of public policy is studied within the context of political theory courses. At BUE, in its Faculty of Business Administration, Economics, and Political Science (BAEPS), public policy courses are offered in the Political Science Department. At Future University there is an undergraduate minor in public policy and administration.

Meanwhile, a new category of universities established by the government and referred to as *Ahleya* universities, like El Galala University near El-Ein El Sokhna, and El Alamein University in the North Coast, offer some courses related to public policy. The *Ahleya* universities are established by the government, are affiliated to public universities, but have more discretion in charging tuition fees, and in compensating faculty.

Public Policy Training:
Training in public policy takes place in a wide array of institutes, including public and nonprofit universities, government ministries, government affiliated think tanks, private consulting firms, and nonprofit organizations. Examples of where public policy training occurs in public universities include the Public Administration Research and

Consultation Center (PARC) within the Faculty of Economics and Political Science (FEPS), Cairo University. This is one of many research centers situated within (FEPS) that are considered by law 'units of a special nature' and therefore have more flexibility than the regular government entities in raising funds and implementing research and training projects. As for public policy training occurring within nonprofit universities, there is the Public Policy Hub project, situated with the School of Global Affairs and public Policy (GAPP), AUC. This is a project that started in 2017 and is focused on providing public policy training to young graduate students, and alumni from within AUC, and/or from outside AUC.

As for government entities that offer public policy training in Egypt, there is the Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC), a think tank affiliated to the cabinet of ministers. In 2020 IDSC, following the model of the AUC Public Policy Hub, started a specialized competition in public policy research amongst youth and therefore provides occasional training in public policy. Additionally, the Institute of National Planning, affiliated to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) occasionally offers courses in public policy. Similarly, the newly established National Training Academy (NTA), which is taking a leading role in training government employees and preparing them for the move to the new Administrative Capital, offers public policy training. Examples of nonprofit organizations offering public policy training and mentioned by the respondents include the Cairo Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences, (CILAS), which defines itself as a liberal arts–focused space, but yet engages in providing public policy training.

Figure (2): Word Cloud for Where Public Policy Academic & Training Programs are Offered:

It is clear that there is diversity in public policy academic programs and course providers, and in the training offered through various types of institutions, public, private, and nonprofit.

Public Policy Research Centers and Think Tanks in Egypt:
When respondents were asked to give examples of research centers and think tanks active in Egypt, a wide array of research centers and think tanks were mentioned. Some were directly affiliated to the government, some were situated within universities, others were dominantly profit motivated, while some were operating as nonprofits. (Check Annex (2) for website links to some of the prominent Egypt based policy research centers and think tanks.) Some of these think tanks and research centers were earlier identified as public policy training providers, so it is common to have research centers offering both public policy training and producing policy research.

Government Affiliated Think Tanks:
In a previous section, the Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) was mentioned as an example of a government affiliated think tank. The Institute of National Planning and the National Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development, both affiliated to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development were listed, plus the National Center for Social and Criminological Research and Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS), the latter situated within the public Al-Ahram Media institution.

University Based Research Centers:
An abundance of research centers that are university affiliated were listed. This included centers at public universities, like Cairo University and its Faculty of Economics and Political Science, such as the Public Administration Research and Consultation Center (PARC), the Center for Political Studies, and the Center for Economic and Financial Research and Studies (CEFRS). At the American University in Cairo, a number of centers and public policy projects were mentioned, including: the John Gerhart Center for Philanthropy Civic Engagement and Responsible Business at the School of Business, the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) at the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP), and the non-school affiliated centers, such as the Social Research Center (SRC), and similarly the Center for Applied Research on the Environment and Sustainability (CARES). Two ongoing projects producing public policy research were also mentioned: The Public Policy HUB project (PPH) at the School of GAPP, and the Alternative Policy Solutions project (APS) at the School of Humanities and Social Studies (HUSS). A respondent also mentioned Badr

University Center for Global Affairs at Badr University in Cairo (BUC), a relatively newly established private university.

Nonprofit and Private Research Centers and Think Tanks:
As for the category of research centers and think tanks that are either recognized as nonprofit, or private profit seeking, based on the legal umbrella under which they were established, respondents listed many names, including: the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, The Egyptian Center for Public Policy Studies (ECPPS), The Economic Research Forum (ERF), the Egyptian Center for Economic Studies (ECES), Ibn Khaldoun Center, Baseera Center, N-Gage Consulting, South-South Consultants, CEDARE, El Zanaty Consulting Firm, and the Cairo Center for Development Benchmarking (CDB). Among the last category of research centers, there are those that are continuously taking firm stances on contentious public policy issues, and getting into trouble with the government, such as the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, and the Ibn Khaldoun Center. Others are focused on profit, and a third nonprofit category.

Figure (3): Word Cloud Showing Respondents' Mention of Egyptian Research Centers and Think Tanks:

What Topics are Researched and Studied

This section explores examples of public policy research produced and mentioned by the survey respondents. Respondents were asked to share their reflections about the extent to which the materials taught and the research produced in Egypt were in sync with the global public policy theoretical models and frameworks, to what extent it reflected the GOE priorities, and whether it received sufficient exposure and attention from policymakers.

Typology of Researched & Published Public Policy Studies:
Examples of recent categories of public policy research, either in process or published, mentioned by respondents, and arranged in alphabetical order, included the following[3]:

- <u>Economic and Fiscal Policies</u>: The exchange rate of the Egyptian pound, the currency devaluation, inflation, investments in new roads, inflated prices of real estate, income distribution policies, public debt management, debt management issues;
- <u>Education Policies</u>: Higher Education Strategic Plan, improving the quality of educational services; education funding, technical education;
- <u>Employment Policies</u>: Promoting family friendly jobs in the context of COVID-19, employability and the labor market in Egypt, role of women in economic development, labor market conditions;
- <u>Gender and Equity Policies</u>: Gender balance, empowerment for women, health disparities, urban development and housing justice, resource allocation policies;
- <u>Global Policies</u>: Impact of Russia-Ukraine war, impact of climate change, g reen economy and achieving the SDGs, regional security issues, sustainable development within the scope of COP27, climate justice, the global energy and food crisis;
- <u>Health Policies</u>: Improving the quality of health services; evaluation of COVID-19 impact on MSMEs in governorates in Upper Egypt, health care equity, food safety policies, health quality;
- <u>Public Service Reform Policies</u>: Administrative transformation, governance, digitalization and e-government policies, state ownership policy, local development;
- <u>Social Policies</u>: Impact of social protection programs and conditional cash transfers in alleviating poverty; *Takafol and Karama* and *Haya Kareema* as examples of a social protection program;
- <u>Sustainability and Environmental Policies</u>: Climate change, sustainable development policy, irrigation policy, analysis of environmental policies; green transportation, green economy, water scarcity, localization of sustainable development goals;
- <u>Trade Policies</u>: Trade facilitation and firms exports;

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[3] The categorization was developed by the authors knowing that there might be some expected overlap and that any one policy can fit under a number of categories

- ▪ <u>Youth Policies</u>: Analysis of youth policies; youth and entrepreneurship;
- ▪ <u>Other</u>: Urban infrastructure and planning policies, pricing policy in the maritime sector, and development governance, local policy.

As seen from the long list of categories of public policies studied, there are traditional issues, like health, education, economic, and trade policies. There are also some relatively new policy issues: like digitalization, Sustainable Development Goals, green economy, and women empowerment issues. Most policy issues are locally focused, however, some are globally focused, such as: regional security issues and climate change, the latter showing lately more prominently on the public policy research agenda in parallel with Egypt's hosting of the major environmental conference COP27 in November 2022.

Link to Global Public Policy Theoretical Models:
With respect to the link between public policy as taught and researched in Egypt, with global theoretical models, versus with local developmental frameworks, the main feedback received from the respondents was that the global theoretical models were dominant, and that the researchers try to test to what extent these theories apply or do not apply in Egypt. Academics in particular try to link what they teach to the global context by using case studies.

> *A lot of programs rely on mainstream policy definitions that are based on U.S. or euro-centric theories...The problem in public policy studies I believe is that there is a lack of knowledge production... Theoretical work is done elsewhere and just proved/disproved/evidence gathered locally (#26, University Professor).*

The quotation above explains how policy models and theories taught and researched in Egypt are imported mostly from the U.S. and Europe. There is very little in terms of what we may consider as home-grown policy models. Additionally, some 'caution' is exercised by some when discussing local issues. "It is a mixture of both [global and local development models] with some caution in handling of domestic topics" (#23, Public Policy Expert).

Link to Government of Egypt Priorities:
As to whether the research centers and think tanks in Egypt reflect the same public policy issues considered as priorities by the government, there were mixed opinions. Those in agreement stated that: "Most initiatives originate from discussions with ministries and other government institutions" (Respondent #3). "[This happens only when the research center] is working in close proximity with the policy maker" (Respondent #5) and he gave an example of the Public Policy HUB at AUC where the

government is the party that identifies the policy research issue for the researchers to work on.

Others perceived the relationship to change depending on the need: Respondent #11 explained that: "Some research centers reflect some of the government priorities, but they also focus on other dimensions, which I think is healthy as research institutions need to push the government to take other priorities into consideration." Respondent #18 agreed with #11 that: "It is sometimes crucial to also research other areas and issues that might be overlooked by the government." Respondent #6 explained that sometimes research centers try to demonstrate new issues for government consideration, like women rights.

A third group perceived a disconnect between the government and think tanks and described it as follows: "Government institutions are for the most part insular and relationships with research centers are marked by a lack of engagement" Respondent #21. Respondent #8 clarified that: "The majority of the research centers would have a relatively different research agenda based on the grants received, or the orientation of the founders and managing boards." Respondent #13 shared the opinion that: "Research centers are rarely independent...Some are driven by the interests of their shareholders and some reflect foreign agendas. Others are captured by politicians". So, while some research centers may cooperate with the government and try to fit within its declared priorities, by offering their research to support actual policy making in government circles, others opt to differ, occasionally with the intention of drawing attention to alternative policy issues. External funding, and shareholders' interests, may be two of the main factors influencing the research agendas of think tanks.

Degree of Exposure of Public Policy Research Produced:
As for whether there are examples of public policy research outcomes that get exposure among policy makers, there were generally favorable and positive examples and remarks made by the survey respondents. One respondent (#8) confirmed that: "most outcomes of the official think tanks and institutions are communicated to policymakers." Others, such as respondent #9, mentioned as positive examples the outputs of FEPS research centers, the research outputs of INP and the IDSC journal and policy papers. Respondent #3 gave an example of the Public Policy Hub policy research and advocacy videos, and the IDSC event for presentation of the policy research prepared through a students' competition. "There is a notable interest by the policymakers in policy research. At the Public Policy Hub, we reach out to governmental institutions, and many policymakers show a great interest in cooperating with us to support them with policy research" (Respondent #3, Public

Policy Expert/Researcher). Respondent #14 mentioned that: "Some studies are done based on the request of partner government institutions to better understand the impact of their policies, such as in the field of social protection schemes and programs." Feedback from Respondent #30 identified as a policymaker, showed that parliament engages in policy research and that: "the latest studies are on childcare, economy, pay gap…restrictions on women's access to the labor market. Unfortunately, I can't share them now as they have not been approved for publishing." Another policymaker (#6) stated that: "The research I conducted on food waste turned out to be a bill introduced to the parliament to combat food waste."

Thus, occasionally the policy research work performed by the different types of think tanks and research centers, whether government affiliated, university based, or parliament based, is perceived as worthwhile as it reaches an audience and serves a purpose.

How Public Policies are Researched and Studied
This section looks specifically into what methodologies are commonly used in studying public policies in Egypt and what sort of monitoring and evaluation occurs for the pursued policies.

Public Policy Studies Methodologies and Content in Egypt:
In Egypt, when respondents were asked to identify what methodologies were most commonly used in their policy research, there were mixed responses. The majority mentioned 'mixed methods', some mentioned quantitative, and some mentioned qualitative. Further elaborations on the choice of methodology was evident from the detailed comments made. Sometimes quantitative methodologies are used to impress sponsors. Respondent #11 pointed out that: "quantitative public policy evaluation is more appreciated by policymakers." Numbers may be perceived as a sign of more rigorous research by policymakers and therefore it affects the choice of methodology. Respondent #14 explained that the choice of mixed methodologies is usually an attempt to overcome shortages in data. When the quantitative analysis does not yield satisfactory results, there may be an attempt to complement it with qualitative analysis.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies in the Egypt:
Public Policy monitoring and evaluation is a core component of public policy research and studies, so it was important to get to know how and where it occurs and by whom. When we inquired about where public policy monitoring and evaluation occurs, and by whom, respondents listed a number of governmental organizations, donor agencies, think tanks and academic institutions. Amongst the organizations mentioned were the

Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, and the IDSC government affiliated think tank.

Some positive perspectives shared by the respondents, included the following: Respondent #6 pointed out that there is a department for evaluating public policies at IDSC and similarly at the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development and that: "think tanks and students of public policy usually conduct studies to evaluate public policy on a voluntary basis." Along this positive note, Respondent #19 pointed out that: "There have been some great efforts by the government to strengthen the M&E of public policies, such as through *Haya Karima* (Decent Life National Initiative)." Respondent #28 referred to the Ministry of Planning Initiative to launch its own Impact Lab in cooperation with the Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), based at the American University in Cairo, focusing on using randomized control trials in assessing policy impacts. Respondent #7 pointed out that there is an interest in M&E of public policies in academia and in specific designated sections in each ministry.

The above respondents cited positive examples related to public policy M&E where there is an increased interest, engagement by various sectors and some new pilot initiatives by the government, including one involving the use of randomized control trials in cooperation with academia. In a later section I will present some different opinions related to the challenging aspects of M&E.

Why? The Challenges and Opportunities for Public Policy Study and Research
As much as the study and research of public policies is always fraught with challenges, in parallel, it may also be charged with strength and opportunities. This section presents the many challenges to the field of public policy in Egypt as perceived by the respondents, their reflections on the reasons behind these challenges, and also their reflections on what opportunities abound.

Challenges facing the Field of Public Policy Studies in Egypt:
Respondents spoke at length about a number of challenges that cover data availability and data access, the restrictive political environment, and the limited public policy competencies, funding, monitoring and evaluation challenges, perception of the field, and available job opportunities.

Data Quality, Availability, and Access Issues:
Access to data was the top mentioned problem, followed by a concern about the quality of the available data, and how it is neither updated, nor reliable, and that sometimes it is even perceived as 'contaminated'. Some of the remarks made by the respondents in that regard included: "Lack of availability of reliable data" (#6, a policymaker); "data

contamination and data not updated" (#11, Public Policy Expert); "access to data is a big challenge" (#23, Public Policy Expert); "Availability and access to information, numbers and statistics are very hard" (Respondent #4, policy expert and researcher). The second problem related to data was related to its collection: "Data collection" (#3, public policy expert), and how difficult it is to conduct field work: "Difficulty of conducting field work" (#4).

The Restrictive Political Environment:
The second main challenge facing the study and research of public policies in Egypt was related to the restrictive political environment. This was described and alluded to in many different ways. A number of respondents commented on the limited space for policy debates, while others commented on the lack of transparency, how policy making is like a black box, and how there are security concerns. The respondents described the restrictive environment in more than one way: "No space for practicing sound policymaking and engaging in policy debates", "top down policymaking", (#26, University Professor); "Lack of public and expert debate on the current mainstream economic paradigm" (#31, policy expert); "Reluctance in speaking up" (#7); "The overall ecosystem that does not support academic research" (#30, University Professor); "[the field of public policy is] "scattered between various disciplines and has a political economy dimension" (#32); "Public security concerns" (#27, University Professor); and "Lack of transparency" (#25 Public Policy Expert). The restrictive political environment is definitely a perceived hindrance to the thriving of the public policy discipline.

Chasm between Policymakers and Policy Research Providers:
The third challenge noted by the respondents had to do with the existing perceived chasm between policymakers and policy research providers. Different aspects of this chasm were alluded to: "The lack of institutional relationships between public policy research entities and relevant government agencies" (#18, University Professor); "The research conducted is not linked to national priorities or needs" (#19, University Professor); "The education programs are not linked to development needs" (#19, University Professor); "The mismatch between the results of public policy researcher and what policy makers can actually apply (#9, University Professor); "Policy making in Egypt is an elite black box and it is difficult to break into or make it inclusive", "Difficulty to engage policymakers in your research" (#25 Public Policy Researcher). "There are no public debates in parliament...there are no regular meetings with the policy makers and the policy researchers; no policy that was adopted by government had passed by the steps of the public policy cycle, the government has never published or referred to any research in the domain of the economic and social policies while adopting or dismissing any policy" (Respondent #31, policy expert).

It seems that the reasons for the perceived chasm between policymakers and research providers went both ways. On one hand, the policy research produced was perceived as being unrelated to development needs, or national priorities. And on the other hand, the policymaking environment was perceived as not sufficiently welcoming to the policy researchers and their research outputs.

Limited Public Policy Expertise:
The fourth type of challenge facing public policy making in Egypt was related to the perceived limited public policy expertise. This was described from various perspectives. Some talked about a shortage in the number of qualified researchers. And others mentioned the limited number of specialized public policy programs, and how the subject of public policy is usually dealt with as a sub-field in academia. "Limited availability of educational programs in public policy and AUC is not an affordable option for everyone," said respondent #32, University Professor. "Most faculties in Egypt offer [public policy] as a sub-field of public administration," (#28, University Professor).

Some respondents emphasized the limited demand by students and the limited supply of training opportunities. "Not many students are interested in the field" and "public policy analysis is still not appreciated" (#31, University Professor). "[Not] enough training opportunities [in public policy]" (#28, University Professor). A few referred to the content of the public policy research, how there is a lack of clarity about what constitutes public policy, how it is based on imported theories, not linked to the local context and how the functioning public policy centers are not connected with the government. Some of the respondents commenting on the content of policy research talked about a lack of a "basic understanding of public policy cycle and process," (#13); and that there is "importing foreign understandings of what is policy making," said (#11).

Funding Issues:
A couple of respondents mentioned how the lack of adequate funding is an obstacle facing public policy research and evaluation. Both respondents #22 and #24 mentioned clearly "The lack of funds" as an obstacle, while respondent #9 was more specific, mentioning that "The [lack of] availability of funds for holding quantitative evaluations" is more of a problem.

Public Policy Studies and Research not Perceived as a Priority:
Many respondents remarked that the field of public policy is not perceived as a priority and they mentioned a number of possible explanations, including: that it is a new field of study, that the outcomes or the research are not always used, that its impact on the

practice of policy making is difficult to discern, that not all students understand what it is all about and what jobs may open for them as a result.

Some of the respondents' comments in that regard included: "Outcomes of public policy research are rarely used," (Respondent #5); "Public policy is a relatively nascent area of academic study in Egypt. It is difficult to determine the degree to which public policy research influences official government policy formulation," (Respondent #18, University Professor); "Public policy and research are moderately important," (Respondent #30, an Egyptian policymaker); "Not a priority but of interest to a small group," said Respondent #4; "Students are keen and interested to study public policy but not clear where to go with this specialty and how they can contribute to the policy debate," (Respondent #3); "Only if the job requires it, or they feel they will get promoted if they did," said Respondent #4, Policy Expert/Researcher; and that "Public policy studies are sometimes not understandable by students," (Respondent #19). For all those reasons, respondents thought that it is a challenge that the field of public policy is not perceived as a priority field of study or research.

Challenges Related to Monitoring and Evaluation:
Public Policy monitoring and evaluation (M&E), as practiced in Egypt, was perceived by many to be a challenging endeavor. Many problems were identified as related to the practice of policy M&E, including: lack of effectiveness of governmental M&E units, the strong involvement of international donor agencies, the high level of centralization, the government censorship of evaluation reports, the weak evaluation competencies, lack of access to data, parliament not being serious about holding government accountable, and the whole field not perceived as a priority.

Remarks made regarding the different challenges facing M&E in Egypt, included: "very centralized and done by government entities...researchers play this role but not directly, just through research which remains in government drawers" (Respondent #11); "M&E takes place by international organizations operating in Egypt, either project based or program based" (Respondent #8). "Government or think tanks [rely] almost only on donors' demand and usually there is no acting upon the process" (Respondent #31, policy expert). "Some evaluations for country programs may not get published ...not permitted by government, development partners or International Financial Institutions (IFIs)" (#13). "Not all who claim themselves as M&E experts are truly equipped for it...no training, capacity, no practice" (Respondent #13). "I don't think [the government M&E units] are effective enough otherwise it would have been reflected in the quality of the policies implemented" (Respondent #28); "there was limited access to governmental data which makes it hard to evaluate objectively" (#32); "that the monitoring process is undefined and still weak" (#31), "this is a serious problem in Egypt as there is no system for monitoring, evaluation, or accountability

for the results of most public policies or strategic public projects" (Respondent #20); "the role of the press/media in evaluation of public policy is generally weak" (Respondent #22); and that "parliament is not holding the government accountable" (Respondent #5). The enabling environment for M&E of public policies needs to be restructured.

Opportunities & Suggestions for further Development of the Field of Public Policy Studies and Research in Egypt:
The following section presents the different suggestions for the promotion of the public policy studies and research in Egypt. Several issues were covered, including: offering more academic and executive public policy programs and training, followed by linking policy researchers with government and policy makers, improving the ecosystem, creating more awareness about public policy studies, enhancing public policy M&E and overall good governance.

More Public Policy Academic Programs, Trainings, and Think Tanks:
Positive suggestions for promoting the field started with the goal of having more public policy programs, training, think tanks, and making sure the programs offered are up-to-date. Respondents clearly stipulated that there is a need for: Offering more up to date programs and courses in the field (#14); more training opportunities (#7); More public policy schools in universities (#18), and more think tanks (#32). Overall there is a perceived need for increasing the supply of academic policy programs, policy training, and policy research centers and think tanks.

More Links between Policy Researchers and Policymakers:
Next the idea of establishing a stronger link between researchers and policymakers was expressed in various ways, once through better communication and dialogue, more cooperation, more links between academics and policy makers, and more sharing of produced research. Respondents called for: "Building a stronger link between researchers and policymakers" (#3, #5);"Better communication of research results to policymakers" (#4); "University and research watch dogs [need to] evaluate government policies to [have] constructive dialogue," having more "public policy debates, town hall dialogues and secondment of researchers into government agencies," more efforts by researchers to share knowledge with policymakers and advocate their research results to the concerned community (#12); "Breed a generation that understands public policy studies and research...very well equipped with research tools...to offer timely and valuable advice to decision makers" (#13);"More cooperation with the public sector and governmental institutions" (#3, Policy Expert); "Turning theory into action" (#3); "The policy research not commissioned by government should find ways to deliver its results to policymakers" (#8); "Establish a strong research

center that presents quality research with policy recommendations, aligning the topics with national priorities, ensuring a participatory approach and engaging different stakeholders in the process...and establishing connections with government entities that would benefit from the public policy research"; "Developing multiple research centers that are well connected to relevant government bodies" (Respondent #30); "Connecting the dots between academia and policy makers" (#8).

The respondents were quite vocal and thought of various ways of establishing better links between policymakers and the public policy research providers. This interest in making sure that the policy research produced is benefited from is not unique to Egypt. In the literature reviewed earlier we saw glimpses of how scholars exert efforts to assess the extent the policy research influences policy making in various sectors (Shaw et al., 2013; Nicander, 2015).

Places students of public policy may go to work in:
Thinking in a positive manner about the field of public policy in Egypt, respondents mentioned that it creates job opportunities, and they mentioned a long list of potential career destinations for public policy graduates and experts, including: governmental institutions, international development organizations, local and international NGOs, think tanks, media sector, academia, private sector, parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was mentioned in specific. They can also choose to pursue a master or PhD degree, work as trainers at national training centers, research centers, international and regional organizations, civil society organizations, or in corporate social responsibility (CSR) units in private sector organizations. Respondent #27 explained that some students go into public policy "to get promoted and expand their knowledge." Respondent #9 pointed out how there is an increased interest in public policy and many young people "want to go to the [Ministry of International Cooperation] MOIC and/or the Ministry of Planning because they have 'infamous' ministers." Thus, the respondents perceive that there are a lot of job opportunities awaiting graduates of public policy programs.

Availing the Necessary Prerequisites for Good Quality Policy Research:
Next, respondents listed all the different prerequisites for good quality policy research and suggested working on availing each of those prerequisites, whether through making more funding available, or seeking international accreditation from NASPAA, or making sure policy researchers have access to good, reliable data.

Some of the voices heard in that regard called for: "More funds...[to] be allocated to the study and research of public policy" (#29, University Professor); "More partnerships with accreditation bodies like NASPAA are needed" (#6); "The policy networks need to

be expanded and become more inclusive of alternative policy researchers and groups" (#11); "using more inclusive and grassroots approaches to studying and making policies" (#4). Respondent #3, a policy maker, mentioned the need for "reliable data", while respondent #30, a policymaker, called for: "using primary data...instead of relying on secondary sources." The understanding being that when these conditions are met, there will be a better working environment for public policy researchers.

More Implementation of Good Governance Principles:
Respondent #21 summed the situation up by saying that promoting public policy studies and research in Egypt will take place: "Only when the government is kept accountable for the performance of its public policies. Weak accountability weakens the government's need for [policy] research." Respondent #31, a policy expert, pointed out that the way forward is through: "Giving voice to all stakeholders in social protection issues and [having] local parliaments bring policy makers' eyes to the needs of the population." Respondent #38 called for: "better laws for information declaration" (#38). Overall, a more democratic context that enables citizens to hold government accountable was perceived as a prerequisite for a thriving public policy discipline.

An Advocacy and Promotion Campaign for Public Policy Studies:
Respondents also suggested the implementation of an awareness campaign about the field of public policy and its importance, targeting potential students and also policymakers. The idea was expressed by various respondents as follows: "More publicity for [public policy] programs in relation to the job market" (#1, University Professor); "A strategic advocacy and communication campaign on the importance of the field [targeting] policymakers and decision makers" (#14); "Hearing out policy analysts ...this will get students more interested in the field" (#4).

Not everyone is clear about what public policies encompass and why it is important to have specialized academic programs, research centers, and think tanks supporting and guiding the policy making process. Thus, there is a need for an awareness campaign.

Enhancing M&E and Impact Assessment Nationwide:
Finally, it was suggested that there is a need for a more effective policy M&E system. The idea was expressed differently by respondents as such: "Put in place real M&E systems" (#13); "The creation of a Regulatory Impact Assessment Unit in Cabinet or Parliament," said Respondent #2, Public policy expert/researcher; and respondent #27 suggested creating a specialized Policy M&E unit in government agencies, organizing special conferences and "a workshop to discuss why people are not interested in this field as a profession."

The M&E can be in the form of a new agency in cabinet or parliament responsible for impact assessment, in addition to organizing conferences and workshops to spread greater awareness about the importance and value of policy M&E.

Conclusion

As evident from the international literature reviewed, there is always room for improving the quality of public policy teaching, study, and research. This paper tried to figure out how the discipline of public policy, as taught, studied and researched in Egypt, can be improved upon by trying to answer the where, what, how, and why questions related thereto.

Where: There are a number of public, private, nonprofit—and everything in between—academic institutions in Egypt offering programs, and courses in public policy, or at least discussing public policy as a sub-topic within an offered course. Additionally, there are a number of research centers and think tanks that produce public policy research. Their affiliations differ and their relationship with the government varies as well.

What: Policy research covers traditional issues, like social, health, and employment policies, and also covers newer issues, such as digitization of government, gender equity, and sustainable development policies. Some topics, like climate change policies, became trendy lately with Egypt organizing COP27 in 2022. Most of the theoretical basis for the public policy research is linked to the Western models with attempts at application to the national context through case studies. The issues focused upon in public policy research sometimes are in tandem with the national government priorities, and sometimes diverted. Moreover, a good part of the research produced is perceived as reaching policymakers.

How: The methodologies used in doing public policy research is perceived as mostly relying on Mixed Methods. Although quantitative methods may be more appreciated by policymakers, and look better, yet to compensate for data shortages, mixed methods are the way out. There are some efforts at policy M&E in ministries and think tanks, including an innovative pilot project at the Ministry of Planning to use randomized control trials in evaluation.

Why: Experts surveyed identified many challenges related to the teaching, studying, and research of public policy. On top of the list were data access and data reliability, the restrictive political environment, and the chasm between policymakers and the policy research providers.

If we want to further promote the discipline of public policy in Egypt, we should focus on capitalizing on what needs to be done to advance it further, and heeding the recommendations presented by the relevant stakeholders, who are teaching, researching, and making public policies in Egypt.

There is a lot going on in Egypt related to public policy teaching, studies and research. Despite the many challenges entrenched in the field, there are a great deal of opportunities that can be capitalized upon to strengthen public policy as a discipline, and as a field of research, starting with the enabling environment, to investing in new academic programs, empowering think tanks and research centers, and ensuring a better link between the public policy research providers and the policymakers. The world is heading towards evidence informed policy, and so should we. Suggested Ideas for Future Research include a meta-analysis of all public policy research produced by Egyptian faculty and researchers over the past decade and an analysis of issues focused on, methodologies used, publication venues and citations would be beneficial.

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Annex: Table: (1): Examples of Public Policy Academic Programs in Egypt:

Institution Name	Public/Private/NPO	Level	Type of Public Policy Study	Examples of Courses Offered	Link to Website
The American University in Cairo – School of Global Affairs and Public Policy – Public Policy and Administration Department	NPO	Graduate & Undergraduate	–Master of Public Policy –Courses in Master of Public Administration –Courses in Undergraduate Minor in Global and Public Affairs - Master Theses	–Essentials of Public Policy & Administration –Public Policy Theory & Practice	https://www.aucegypt.edu/home
Cairo University, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Public Administration Department	Public	Graduate and Undergraduate	–Courses in Master of Public Administration –Courses in Ph.D. in Public Administration –Minor in Public Administration –Master and Ph.D. theses	–Introduction to Public Policy Analysis – Public Policy Analysis and Evaluation – Comparative Public Policies	https://cu.edu.eg/Home
Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Studies	Private (Affiliated to the Arab League)	Graduate	–Courses in Master of Public Administration		https://aast.edu/en/
Sadat Academy for Management Sciences	Public	Graduate and Undergraduate	–Courses in Master of Public Administration - Master and Ph.D. theses	–Introduction to Public Policies and Programs – Impact Evaluation of Public Policies	http://www.sams.edu.eg/
Alexandria University	Public	Graduate and Undergraduate	–Courses in the Faculty of Economics Studies and Political Science for the undergraduate students	–Public and Local Administration –Public Policy Analysis	http://esps.alexu.edu.eg/index.php/ar/2015-08-13-08-28-22/2016-09-11-04-21-42/2016-09-11-05-07-18

Mansoura University	Public	Graduate and Undergraduate	–One course in the Faculty of Commerce	–Public Administration	https://comfac.mans.edu.eg/sectors-ar/education-and-student-affairs-sector/ar-courses
The British University in Egypt	Private	Graduate and Undergraduate	–Courses in the Faculty of Business Administration, Economics and Political Science of undergraduates	–Public Policy and administration - within the Department of Political Science –Intermediate Microeconomics & Policy - within the Department of Economics –Monetary and Fiscal Theory and Policy - within the Department of Economics –Public Administration - within the Department of Business Administration	https://www.bue.edu.eg/faculties-departments/baeps
Suez Canal University	Public	Graduate and Undergraduate	–Courses in the Faculty of Commerce –Master in Political Science with a concentration in public policy		http://foc.scuegypt.edu.eg/

Table (2): Examples of Think Tanks and Research Centers in Egypt:

Name of Thinktank/Research Center	Date of Establishment	Type	Web Links
Alternative Policy Solutions (APS), School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUSS), AUC	2017	University Donor Funded Project	https://aps.aucegypt.edu/en
Center for Political Studies, FEPS,	1960	University Research Center	http://www.feps.edu.eg/en

Cairo University			n/centers/cprsid/index.ph p
Center for Development Benchmarking (CDB)	2015	Private	http://www.cdbenchmark. com/
Center for Economic and Financial Research and Studies (CEFRS), FEPS, Cairo University	1984	University Research Center	http://www.feps.edu.eg/en n/centers/cefrs/index.php
El Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS)	1968	Research institute	https://acpss.ahram.org.eg /
Egypt Center for Economic Studies (ECES)	1992	Nonprofit Organization	https://www.eces.org.eg/D efault
Ibn Khaldoun Center for Development Studies	1988	Non-governmental institute	http://www.eicds.com/
The Information & Decision Support Center (IDSC)	1985	Government think tank affiliated to the Cabinet of Ministers	https://www.idsc.gov.eg/
Public Administration Research and Consultation Center (PARC), FEPS, Cairo University		University Research Center	http://www.feps.edu.eg/en n/centers/parc/index.php
The Economic Research Forum (ERF)	1993	Regional network	https://erf.org.eg/
The Public Policy HUB (PPH), School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP), AUC	2017	University Donor Funded Project	https://gapp.aucegypt.edu/ public-policy-hub
The Social Research Center (SRC), AUC	1953	University Research Center	https://www.aucegypt.edu /research/src