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Reforming Educational Governance and Management in Egypt: National and International Actors and Dynamics[1]

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Abstract
This historical case study examines the rhetoric, action, and outcomes of educational policy reforms in Egypt during the first quarter-century of the presidency of Mohamed Hosni Mubarak. The findings are based on an extensive review of Egyptian government, international organization, and project documents as well as interviews with key stakeholders. The study focused on proposed and implemented changes in the organization and distribution of various governance and management functions across school/community, district/*idarra*, governorate/*muddiriya*, and national/central levels of the education system. During the period under review Egypt experienced movement though uneven toward increased decentralization, with calls for deconcentration of responsibility in 1981, Ministry of Education actions that restricted local decision-making authority in the 1990s, and some concerted efforts toward delegation and devolution of authority as well as responsibility after 2001. In terms of community participation, during this period there were calls for and actions toward implementing broader and deeper forms and degrees of involvement by parents, civil society, and businesses. We draw on the following concepts to analyze a develop an account of these developments: institutional framework, financial resources, system leaders' capacity and political will, civil society's leaders' capacity and political will, global dynamics, and the role of international organizations.
Keywords: education system reform; decentralization; community participation; Egypt; international organizations.

Reformando el gobierno y la administración Educativa en Egipto. Dinámicas y actores Nacionales e Internacionales.

Resumen: Este trabajo es un "estudio de casos histórico" que examina la retórica, acciones, y los resultados de las reformas de políticas educativas en Egipto durante el primer cuarto de siglo de la Presidencia de Mohamed Hosni Mubarak. Las conclusiones se basan en una extensa revisión de documentos de proyectos del gobierno egipcio e organizaciones internacionales, así como entrevistas con actores relevantes. El estudio se centró en las propuestas y los cambios implementados en la organización y distribución de funciones de gobierno y de gestión a través de la escuela/ comunidad, distrito (o idarra), en la gobernación (o muddiriya), y los niveles centrales nacionales del sistema educativo. Durante el período analizado, Egipto experimentó movimientos de avance y retroceso, hacia una mayor descentralización, tales como los pedidos de desconcentración de la responsabilidad en 1981, acciones del Ministerio de Educación que restringían la autoridad y toma de decisiones locales en la década de 1990, y algunos esfuerzos concertados para la delegación y descentralización de la autoridad como así como otras responsabilidades después de 2001. En términos de participación comunitaria, durante este período se hicieron llamamientos a favor y acciones para la implementación de formas más amplias y con mayores grados de implicación de padres, la sociedad civil y las empresas. Nos basamos en los siguientes conceptos para analizar y desarrollar una narrativa de estos cambios: el marco institucional, recursos financieros, capacidad y voluntad política de los líderes del sistema, capacidad y voluntad política de los líderes de la sociedad civil, dinámica mundial, y el papel de las organizaciones internacionales.
Palabras-clave: sistema de reforma educativa; descentralización; participación comunitaria; Egipto; organizaciones internacionales.

Reforma Educacional de governança e administração no Egito. Dinâmica e atores nacionais e internacionais.

Resumo: Este documento é um "estudo de caso histórico" que examina a retórica, as ações e os resultados das reformas de política educacional no Egito durante os primeiros vinte e cinco anos da Presidência da Mohamed Hosni Mubarak. As conclusões são baseadas em uma extensa revisão de documentos de projetos do governo Egípcio e organizações internacionais e entrevistas com atores relevantes. O estudo centrou-se nas propostas e mudanças implementadas na organização e distribuição das funções de governo e de gestão em diferentes níveis como escola / comunidade, município (ou *idarra*) e na instância federal/central do sistema educacional (ou *muddiriya*). Durante o período em análise, o Egito experimentou avanços e retrocessos em direção a uma maior descentralização e desconcentração das responsabilidades em 1981; ações do Ministério da Educação restringindo a autoridade de tomada de decisão dos atores locais na década de 1990; alguns esforços para a delegação e descentralização de autoridade, bem como outras responsabilidades após 2001. Em termos de participação comunitária, durante este período, se fizerem chamados e ações para a implementação de formas mais amplas e com maior envolvimento dos pais, da sociedade civil e das empresas. Contamos com os seguintes conceitos para analisar e desenvolver uma narrativa dessas mudanças: o quadro institucional, recursos financeiros, capacidade e vontade política dos líderes do sistema, capacidade e vontade política dos líderes da sociedade civil, a dinâmica global e o papel dos organizações internacionais.
Palavras-chave: reforma do sistema educacional; descentralização; participação da comunidade; Egito; organizações internacionais.

Introduction

In this article we present a case study of reforming educational governance and management in Egypt from 1981 to 2007. The purpose of the case study is to document the rhetoric and efforts to reform educational governance and management, indicate the extent of progress in such reforms over time, and identify national- and international-level factors and dynamics that facilitated or inhibited the reforms. The case study was developed by reviewing national government, international organization, and reform project documents as well as published research and commentary.[2] In addition, we conducted interviews with key informants between January and June 2008, focusing on their perceptions of progress in promoting decentralization and community participation as well as conditions that enabled or constrained such reforms in Egypt during different time periods.[3]

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[2] Quotations of material from Arabic language documents were translated by Nagwa Megahed. All interviews reported here were conducted, tape-recorded, and transcribed in English.

[3] Interviewees included people who during the 1981–2007 period served as the Minister of Education (Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din), an Advisor to the Minister of Education or a Head of a National Center (Hassan El Bilawi, Nadia Gamal El Din, and Mustafa El Samie), and USAID/Egypt mission staff members (Hala El Serafy, Sally Patton, Jerry Wood, and Mona Zikri). One USAID staff member also worked for part of this time in the World Bank office in Egypt. In addition, several ERP staff members provided valuable insights, although they are not quoted as interviewees in this paper: Doc Coster, Lynn Mortensen, Osama Salem, David Sloper, and John Yanulis. We express our sincere appreciation to all of these individuals for their time and their thoughtful and candid responses to our questions.

One lens we employ in this case study is informed by the (national) technical, political, and institutional dimensions that the AED EQUIP2 framework (Schuh Moore, 2007) describes as shaping the institutionalization and sustainability of education reforms. The *technical dimensions* of reform are the interventions or activities that are targeted for change. The *political dimensions* of reform involve *political will*, *leadership*, and *civil society's role*. The *institutional dimensions* of reform include *institutional framework* or the legal statutes and charters that guide the rules of the game, *institutional capacity* or the knowledge and skills of staff within organizations, and *financial/resource capacity* or the level of funds available from various sources. Our case study focuses on the technical dimensions of educational governance and management (i.e., decentralization and community participation) and highlights the political dimensions of political leaders' will or desire to pursue or impede change. With respect to the institutional dimensions, we give attention to the institutional framework (laws and decrees) as well as institutional capacity (the knowledge and skills of community members as well as Ministry of Education [MOE] personnel), while emphasizing the facilitating or hindering role of financial resources.

In addition, this case study of Egypt includes an international level of analysis, which is critical for understanding educational reform (see Daun, 2002; Ginsburg, 1991). As Berman (1992) explains:

> Nation-states in the late twentieth century are part of an interdependent world system… [For instance,] a network of international and national aid agencies linked to and located in the industrialized [or richer] nations… [seek] to help… [less industrialized or poorer] nations reconceptualize, expand, and reform their educational systems.… This is not meant to suggest that national educational systems lack… autonomy over their goals and activities, or that they are manipulated unwittingly by donor agencies… [but] that the presence of donor agencies introduces into national educational planning and implementation a complex interplay of forces over which local policymakers and administrative personnel cannot always exercise control and which frequently limit local options. (pp. 58–59)

It is important to emphasize that "globalization… involves real [international organization] actors—economic and political—with real (and sometimes conflicting) interests" (Robertson, Bonal, & Dale, 2002, p. 472), and that in addition to multilateral and bilateral intergovernmental organizations (e.g., World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development [USAID]) global actors include multinational corporations and international nongovernmental organizations. As Suarez (2007) demonstrates, for example, intergovernmental organizations and international nongovernmental organizations serve as "receptor sites for transnational ideas… [and as] carriers of modern reform.… [They] promote and diffuse new ideas in education" (p. 7; see also McNeely, 1995; Terano & Ginsburg, 2008). Nevertheless, these international organization actors are not autonomous but are constrained and enabled by as well as contribute to global economic, political/military, and ideological dynamics (Ginsburg, Cooper, Raghu, & Zegarra, 1990).

Key Concepts in Governance and Management Reform

Before presenting the Egyptian case, we briefly discuss the concepts and general rationale for reforming educational governance and management, focusing on (de)centralization and community participation.

Decentralization

Centralization and decentralization represent "one of the great resonant themes of contemporary politics" (Polsby, 1979, p. 1) and more specifically, decentralizing education systems "is one of the issues most frequently raised by country representatives and other stakeholders at various national and international events,… [having] become a virtual mantra of development" (United Nations Education Science and Culture Organization [UNESCO], 2006, p. 1). Like many themes and mantras, (de)centralization covers a range of meanings, including a distinction between functional and territorial (de)centralization. As Bray (1999) states: "*Functional* centralization/decentralization refers to a shift in the distribution of powers between various authorities that operate in parallel [i.e., at the same territorial level].… *Territorial* centralization/decentralization… refers to a redistribution of control among the different geographic tiers of government, such as nation, states/provinces, districts, and schools… [and] includes three major subcategories: *Deconcentration* is the process through which a central authority establishes field units or branch offices, staffing them with its own officers… *Delegation* implies a stronger degree of decision making power at the lower level, [though] power… still basically rest with the central authority, which has chosen to 'lend' them to the local one… *Devolution*… [in which] powers [and likely resources] are formally held at sub-national levels, the officers of which do not need to seek higher-level approval for their actions" (pp. 208–209; emphasis added—see also Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983; Lauglo, 1995; McGinn, 1992; Winkler, 1989).

In addition to promoting different forms of decentralization, advocates have posited different rationales for decentralizing educational governance or management.[4] One rationale links decentralization to the discourse of "democracy" and the inherent value in sharing power (Kamat, 2002; Weiler, 1989). A second rationale appropriates the language of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, especially given cross-community diversity (Bray, 1999; Carnoy, 1999; Weiler, 1989). A third rationale, though sometimes left implicit, is to reduce the central government's and increase local groups' financial responsibility for schooling provision (Bray, 1999; Carnoy, 1999). In addition, Weiler (1989) also highlights two other rationales: "*conflict management* [that is,]… allowing the state to isolate and localize sources of conflict" and "*compensatory legitimation*, [that is,]… central state elites seek to reduce questions of their legitimacy to govern through decentralization rhetoric and, perhaps, action" (pp. 17, 19; emphasis added).

Community Participation

Although the decentralization and community participation discourses are often linked, it is important to treat them separately at least for conceptual purposes. This is because different centralized systems can involve higher or lower levels of community participation, and any of the above-discussed forms of decentralization can engender different extents of community participation. Proponents of parental and broader community participation in education (including nongovernmental organization [NGO] representatives and business owners) posit that such "democratic" involvement will make schooling more responsive and relevant to the needs of citizens

[4] It is important to note that at least some of the rationales—e.g., efficiency—may be used to promote either centralization ("that operations can be directed more efficiently by a small group of central planners without cumbersome duplication of functions in parallel or subnational bodies") or decentralization ("that specialist parallel bodies are better able to focus on the needs of clients and that territorially decentralized subnational units are closer to the clients and are better able to cater for local diversity") (Bray, 1999, p. 210).

and clients[5] and increase moral/political and, especially important, financial support for schools (e.g., see Bray 2001; Fantini, 1968; Lopate Flaxman, Dynum, & Gordon, 1970; Prior, 2005). As Schubert and Israel (2000) conclude, "[p]arents and community members need to be involved at many different levels of the education process—as transmitters of democratic values in their homes and communities, as resource providers to local schools, as participants in school management, and as knowledgeable advocates for education reform" (p. 7).

However, besides democracy and financial or moral support rationales for promoting community participation, there may be a compensatory legitimation rationale (as noted for decentralization—see above). For instance, based on his analysis of official support for parental participation in education in England and Wales, France, and the German Federal Republic in the 1970s, Beattie (1978) concludes that endorsements for parental or community participation may reflect an "underlying crisis in democratic institutions" that creates a "need experienced in different ways by Western democracies to legitimize the status quo by defining certain areas within which 'democratic participation' can occur" (p. 42). Finally, as in the case for opponents of decentralization, those who do not advocate increasing community participation raise concerns about the limited knowledge or skill, experience, and commitment to broader interests among parents, civil society associations, and businesses (see DeJong, Jawad, Mortagy, & Shepard, 2005).

Case Study of Reforming Educational Governance and Management

Egypt is one of the nine most populous countries in the world and is of "strategic importance" geopolitically, occupying a "central [role] in determining the stability of the Middle East and southern Mediterranean area" (Sayed, 2005, p. 67). Egypt's putatively modern and secular system of education dates back to the early 19th century, when it was established by Mohahmed Ali Pasha, an Albanian general sent by the Ottoman Empire to defeat of Napoleon's army and end France's brief occupation of Egypt (1798–1801).

The Egyptian educational system is one of the largest in the world, with approximately 40,000 schools, 800,000 teachers, and 15.5 million students (MOE, 2006a; UNESCO, 2006). Its total public expenditure for education in the 2006–2007 budget was approximately LE 27.4 billion, comparable to the 5% average for Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries and higher than the 4% average of lower middle income and Middle East and North Africa region countries (MOE 2006a). Additionally, according to MOE (2006a), Egypt has made significant progress in providing universal access to primary education (NER of 95.4% in 2005), reaching gender parity (0.96 in 2005), and improving primary completion rates (94.6% in 2005).

We organize our case study of reforming educational governance and management into four time periods: 1981–1990, 1990–1996, 1996–2002, and 2002–2007.[6] During each period we will seek to illuminate technical, political, and institutional dimensions at the national level, the role of international intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as economic, political/military, and cultural dynamics at the global level.

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[5] Of course, not all forms of involvement are equally likely to translate citizen needs and wants into educational policy and practice. For instance, Arnstein (1970) distinguishes eight different levels of participation in terms of the degree of influence that participants may have.

[6] Though somewhat arbitrary, these time periods help us to highlight the somewhat different contexts, dynamics, and initiatives that have been witnessed during the presidency of Mohamed Hosni Mubarak (1981-present).

Initial Mubarak Years, 1981–1990

Mohamed Hosni Mubarak became the President of Egypt following the assassination of Anwar Sadat on 6 October 1981 by a member of a radical Islamist group.[7] Mubarak continued his predecessor's policies of imports, infrastructure development, and military expenditures. The Mubarak government also focused on reforming the management and governance of the educational system. In 1981, the legislature passed Law 139, which includes as one of its goals "deepening the roots of democracy" (Cochran, 1986 p. 78) and states that "governorates are "responsible for implementing and monitoring the Ministry strategies;" "managing schools… in context of the National Education Plan and relevant allocated resources; and "capitalizing on community input through the authorization of an education account that would support the education process" (quoted in UNESCO, 2006, p. 12).[8] While promoting a degree of decentralization to the governorate level, the Law assigned the central MOE responsibility and authority for "undertaking planning, follow-up, evaluation, development and provision of educational materials,… determining standards and qualifications for teachers,… developing curricula,… deciding budgets for [governorate-level] educational directorates, determining salaries and incentives for teachers and administrators, [and] deciding on training needs and programs" (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, p. 13). Note that this cautious, partial move toward decentralizing (i.e., limited deconcentration) of educational decision making occurred in the context of publications of the World Bank during the early 1980s that "advocated a decrease in the amount of government involvement in the educational process, an increase in the private sector's role, and greater application of market principles to the organization of Third World educational systems" (Berman, 1992, p. 69).

However, the Mubarak government operated on the assumption that it could not make "significant progress [in implementing its educational reform plan] without substantial foreign investment" (Cochran, 1986 p. 78). In this regard, the Government of Egypt negotiated with USAID/Egypt to receive a Basic Education Grant, beginning in 1981, "to expand and improve the efficiency of Egypt's primary education program… [through] three aspects: planning assistance to the MOE, purchase of instructional materials, and classroom construction" (USAID/Egypt, 1981, p. 1; see also Creative Associates, 1984, p. 1). Note, however, that this grant program was mainly to be implemented in relation to central institutional partners. In fact, "USAID/W[ashington]… asked whether project finances funneled through the National Investment Bank in Cairo is consistent with the Mission's support for decentralization.… [And the USAID Mission in Egypt explained that the central] MOE has veto power [over] all decisions as regards school locations, size and types…,

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[7] Ironically, Sadat was assassinated by a member of one of the Islamist groups (*al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya*) which Sadat help to spawn from the Muslim Brotherhood in an effort to weaken Nasserist and other Leftist groups in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*) was founded by a school teacher, Hasan al-Banna, in 1928 during Egypt's period of "semi-independence" from Britain (Cochran, 1986; Erlich, 1989). The Brotherhood grew into a militant mass movement focused primarily on ridding Egypt of British colonialism (Ibrahim, 1987; Voll 1994), but also had the goal "to purify Islam and build a political order firmly on the precepts of the Koran" (Williamson, 1987, p. 110).

[8] Additional legal support for moving some responsibilities for education to the governorate level is provided by the 1979 Local Administration Law No. 43, which states that: "the Governor is responsible for administering all activities related to the public sector within his governorate" and also "specif[ies] the responsibilities for local construction and furnishing of schools, and their administration" (UNESCO, 2006, pp. 12–13).

[although] contracting and contractor payments lie in the governorates with the Local Councils, Education Zones and Housing Departments" (USAID/Egypt, 1981, p. 41).

For instance, after USAID/Egypt and Egypt government officials initially attended to school construction and purchasing furnishings and instructional materials, a "decision was made to set up a three-year, host-country, time-and-effort contract through the [central] Ministry of Education for the provision of technical assistance in support of the Basic Education Program; and in the spring of 1983, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) was awarded the contract to "provide a pool of qua1ified Egyptian education experts" (Creative Associates, 1984, p. 36). According to the *Project Paper* (USAID/Egypt 1981), "the objective of project-financed technical assistance is to [help] MOE decision-makers establish an empirical basis for setting policy or choosing among alternate programs in areas of concern to [central] MOE administrators… [for example,] curriculum development, teacher preparation, educational planning, and cost analysis" (p. 2).

Although the Second Amendment of the Basic Education Project signed by the Ministry of Education and USAID/Egypt in 1986 refers to establishing model schools for enhancing teacher training activities but also involving increased parental participation (USAID/Egypt, 1986, it is not clear that this decentralized, lighthouse reform strategy was pursued. USAID/Egypt, though, definitely supported initiatives in the central MOE, including establishing in the late-1980s and early-1990s the Center for Curriculum and Instructional Materials Development, the Educational Planning and Information Division, and the National Center for Educational Evaluation and Examinations (Creative Associates, 1991, pp. ix, 19, 29). The context for these initiatives was Egypt's "new and comprehensive reform that was initiated during a new five-year plan (1987–1988/1991–1992) [a]fter a series of high-level consultations, conferences, and external technical assistance" (Sorour, 1989, quoted in Jarrar & Massialas, 1992, p. 156).[9] In reflecting on one of the priorities of the reform, "democratization of education," Ahmed Fathy Sorour (1997), the Minister of Education from 1986 to 1990, signals that during this period there was a commitment, albeit cautious and somewhat limited, to decentralization (without community participation): "Democracy… must be ensured… through decentralization in its broad and healthy practices (decentralization does not mean simply moving authority from the Ministry to the local education board). More freedom and opportunity for appropriate decision making ought to be given to schools, principals, teachers, [and] students' associations. This responsibility should be associated with accountability" (p. 643).

Undoubtedly, one of several factors contributing to the Egyptian government's cautionary approach to decentralization and community participation during this period was its continuing conflict and competition with some radical Islamist groups. For example, some of the groups which developed out of *al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya* (literally, the Islamic Groups), which Sadat helped to create out of the Muslim Brotherhood to confront Leftists groups in universities and unions, were viewed to be responsible for a wave of attacks in the 1980s and 1990s directed especially at Egyptian government officials (Ibrahim, 1987; Tschirgi, 1999). Moreover, some of the Islamist groups pursued nonviolent strategies which competed with the governing party—building a political base by providing local social services to meet the needs of citizens that were not always met by government institutions.

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[9] Sorour's (1997) description of the participants in local conferences indicates that they did not involve civil society representatives, but "senior officials and teachers representing all levels and all types of education in the governorate" (p. 639); similarly, national conference attendees included "the Egyptian President,… leaders of political parties, former ministers of education, teachers' syndicates, the Supreme council of Universities, and senior officials of the Ministry of education and teacher-training colleges" (p. 640).

Another indication of the Egyptian government's limited commitment to decentralization is that "Law No. 233/1988, which amended Basic Education Act 139/1981,… stipulates that… promotion from one cycle to the other [i.e., primary to preparatory and preparatory to secondary] should be regulated through an examination at the governorate level" (Jarrar & Massialas, 1992, p. 156). This modest move toward decentralization, however, was not complemented by a companion move to decentralize authority for the *Thanawyia Amma*—the high-stakes, secondary school-leaving exam which as of late 2009 remained under central government control (interview, Jerry Wood, January 9, 2008). According to a 1996 Ministry of Education publication,

> To reconsider the status of the *Thanawyia Amma* or to suggest amending it implied going through a systematic legal and political process which would ensure implementation of any proposed changes.… Thus [for] Law No. 139 (1981)… to be amended… [t]he proposed amendments… [would have to be] presented to the State Council,… the Service Committee of the Shura Council, the Education Committee of the People's Assembly, the Teacher's Syndicate, the Education Committee of the National Democratic Party… [Only then would] the… Service Committee and the Cabinet consider the amendments…and [possibly] forward them to the People's Assembly to formally amend the Education Law… [which, finally, would have to be] ratified by the President." (MOE, 1996, p. 80).

Reforming Educational Governance and Management, 1990–1996

International and domestic developments during 1990 and 1991 shaped efforts reform education in Egypt. These include Egypt's foreign debt increasing dramatically during the 1980s, being at a historically high level in 1990 before the Gulf War (Amin, 1995, pp. 13–17; see also Jackson, 1982); Egypt's playing a key role in securing Arab country support for the U.S.-led war on Iraq; Egypt accepting the "bitter pill" (interview, Jerry Wood, January 9, 2008), a structural adjustment program (with conditionalities) in conjunction with loan support from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other sources;[10] Egypt witnessing a major public debate regarding the appropriateness of USAID/Egypt's role in supporting the development of the Center for Curriculum and Instructional Materials Development (CCIMD);[11] and the Egyptian state continuing to experience conflict (sometimes violent and lethal) with and competition from certain radical Islamist groups.[12]

Another important event contextualizing Egypt's educational reform initiatives in the 1990s was the World Conference on Education for All, which took place in Jomtien, Thailand, in March

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[10] At least in part because of the role it played during the Gulf War, rallying support of Arab countries in the U.S.-led war against Iraq, Egypt received debt forgiveness from Gulf countries, the U.S., and international agencies (Amin, 1995). However, particularly the latter funding was conditioned upon implementing an "Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program", which greatly reduced Egypt's flexibility to fund social programs, including education (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, p. 46).

[11] Sayed (2006) reports that the "main allegations have been that the CCIMD is a tool used by USAID to mislead Egyptian children on the Palestinian issue and influence their religious position on specific questions relevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict.… The CCIMD is referred to by many influential writers as the invisible hand of the USAID that aims at muddying Egyptian national identity in the minds of new generations" (p. 109).

[12] "Militant fundamentalists began their campaign against the Egyptian tourist industry in 1992… In that same year,… [they] organized a militant sedition in Imbaba [a poor slum area in Cairo,] proclaiming it the '*Imbaba Republic*!'… The sedition was soon terminated by a forceful intervention of state security forces composed of ten thousand police officers" (Sayed, 2006, p. 31).

1990. This gathering was sponsored by UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and the World Bank, and attendees included representatives from most countries, including Egypt. The Declaration adopted by those attending the conference called for an "expanded vision" and a "renewed commitment" to meeting the "basic learning needs" of all (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990, p. 3). In relation to issues of management and governance, Article 7 of the Declaration highlights "strengthening partnerships:"

> National, regional, and local educational authorities… cannot be expected to supply every human, financial or organizational requirement… New and revitalized partnerships… will be necessary:… between education and other government departments…; between government and nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, local communities, religious groups, and families.… Genuine partnerships contribute to the planning, implementing, managing and evaluating of basic education programmes. (p. 13)

We also note the publication of two significant World Bank research-based reports in the early 1990s that promoted decentralization and community participation. Like other Work Bank research, these reports likely had wide readership among and considerable influence on national and international educational policy makers, including those in Egypt (e.g., see Berman, 1992, p. 60). The first report subtitled *Improving the Quality of Education in Developing Countries* concluded that "high outcome programs were found to have four features in common: (i) strengthening of the administrative capacity at the school and district level; (ii) development of effective policy, planning and supporting institutions at the central level; (iii) special attention to innovation management; and (iv) establishment of effective mechanisms for feedback" (Verspoor, 1989, p. 7). The editors of the second report titled *Effective Schools in Developing Countries* conclude that "[c]ommunity involvement is central to effective schools [because] the community may increase the school's resources by providing in-kind contributions and by participating in school activities.… [Also,] schools are more effective when they choreograph their own activities (within a framework of a larger effective schools program) instead of being expected merely to follow a formula or script sent down from higher levels" (Lockheed and Levin, 1991, pp. 11–12).

In this context, in his November 1991 address to a joint session of Egypt's legislatures, President Hosni Mubarak proclaimed, "We must admit that the [existence of a] crisis in education,… [which] continues to suffer from a predominant focus on quantity rather than quality" (Mubarak, 1991).[13] And the booklet *Mubarak and Education* produced by the Ministry of Education under the newly appointed Minister, Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din,[14] and for which Mubarak's address serves as an introduction, clarifies the meaning of the crisis in education, linking

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[13] Mubarak's statement in 1991 parallels one published 5 years earlier by the World Bank: "Twenty years ago the issue of *quality* in education was regarded as delicate and politically sensitive" and, partly because of this, "previously most educational loans from the World Bank were directed at expanding educational systems by building more schools, hiring more teachers, and providing access for more students" (Heyneman, 1986, p. 3). And in the same World Bank publication, Beeby (1986), who in 1966 published an influential volume, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*, offers a similar assessment: "Although the questions of access predominated in the 1960s, the emphasis shifted to *quality issues* in the 1970s" (p. 37).

[14] "Baha Eddin, a pediatrician and former secretary general of the Nasser-era ideological watchdog group the Youth Organization (*Munazamat as-Shabab*), became Minister in 1991… [a few months after Minister Ahmed] Fathy Sorour was abruptly transferred to the position of Speaker of the People's Assembly, replacing Rifaat al-Mahjoub, who was slain in Cairo by members of a militant Islamic group" (Herrera, 2006b, p. 28).

it to national security:[15] "Egypt, during the past thirty years or so has… [confronted military,] social and economic challenges… These struggles took place at the expense of the service sector.… The only solution for this problem is to redefine education from a service-sector activity to [an investment[16] needed to address] a crisis that fundamentally threatens the national security of Egypt" (MOE, 1992, p. 26).[17] In this document national security was defined as "the abilities, systems and procedures which guarantee the protection of a country from any predicted or unpredicted dangers that might threaten its… stability, standard of living, independence and decision-making autonomy" (MOE, 1992, p. 24), includes three dimensions: military, economic, and political. So, education is characterized as "enabling our soldiers [in the 1973 War with Israel] to master the skills necessary for using high technology weaponry" (p. 37); helping to achieve for Egypt "an appropriate place [economically]… on the global map" (p. 37); and contributing to "democracy and internal peace" by enabling students "to think and analyze, thus protect[ing] them from brain washing attempts, and from the claims of terrorists and extremist fanatics" (Bahaa El Dinn, 1997a, pp. 91–92).

Although "concepts of participation, ownership, and the empowerment of local communities and civil society associations,… materialized into development assistance and soft loan policies by the beginning of the 1990s [and]… decentralization became a major condition for achieving success in the development programs" (Sayed, 2006, pp. 123–124), the 1992 *Mubarak and Education* volume does not address issues of (de)centralized governance and management of education, except for one brief statement related to school construction: "[L]ocal authorities must continue to play the main role in school maintenance and rehabilitation. [The central government's General Authority for Education Buildings] should serve the local authorities in this respect by providing blueprints, designs and engineering expertise for all required operations" (MOE, 1992, p. 45).[18] This limited attention to decentralization and community participation occurs despite Jarrar and Massialas' (1992) assessment during this period that the Egyptian education "system is plagued with obsolete administrative and management procedures. Centralization is still a fact in spite of attempts at decentralization.… Duplication of effort is common, and communication between and among the different levels, sectors, and departments is weak" (p. 165). Furthermore, Sayed (2006) argues that during this period "the state encourage[d] participation only on the ceremonial level,… a form of 'confined participation' that invites stakeholders to confer over the issues without granting

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[15] In point of fact, "basic education in Egypt has been referred to as a matter of 'national security' in [almost] every… presidential speech, ministerial press release, and official governmental statement addressing the topic since the beginning of the 1990s" (Sayed, 2006, p. 27), including the third five-year plan (1992/93–1996/97) (MOE, 1991, p. 5; quoted in Zaalouk, 2004, p. 177); a Mubarak speech in 1993 (Mubarak, 1993; quoted in MOE, 1996, p. 8); the 1999 volume of *Mubarak and Education* (MOE, 1999, p. 8; quoted in Sayed, 2005, p. 69); and a Mubark speech in 2007 (Mubarak, 2007).

[16] As the Ministry of Education document explains a few years later, its discourse of "education as an investment and not a social expenditure" helped to prioritize education expenditures in a context in which public spending on social programs were "subject to fiscal cuts dictated by the structural adjustment programs devised by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank" (MOE, 1997, quoted in Sayed, 2006, p. 56).

[17] As Sayed (1995) observes, "to declare an issue a part of national security is to place it at the top of the political agenda, that is, beyond the ordinary rules of the political game,… and to allocate high capital and human resources to it" (p. 69).

[18] See the similar statement above by USAID/Egypt (1981) regarding about the roles of local and national governments in relation to school construction.

them an effective voice, and solicits the social and material participation and contribution, provided their contribution supports the status quo" (p. 150).[19]

Whether representing an example of real or "ceremonial/confined" participation, Sayed (2006) reports that some members of "civil society associations and interest groups concerned with the education process,… were invited to attend the [national] MOE conferences… [on] primary and preparatory education reforms in 1993 and 1994," respectively (p. 136). Below is a detailed outline of the process leading up to and following the conferences—a process described as one "that opened up the dialogue to various stakeholders" (Sidhom & Al-Fustat, 2004, p. 14) and as "a nation-wide consultation:"

> Mobilizing support for reforming Egypt's primary and preparatory education… [involved] a preliminary study by the National Center for Educational Research and Development… The results of the research were initially shared a workshop of Ministry of Education officials, members from the Teacher's Syndicate, and parents of students. Conclusions from the workshop were subsequently presented to a larger audience at the [1993] *National Conference for Developing Primary Education* and the [1994] *National Conference for Developing Preparatory Education*.… Resolutions from the national conferences were then presented to the Supreme Council for Pre-University Education… In addition, different committees within the Ministry reconsidered the recommendations and evaluated them in context of their experience and expertise. A comprehensive synthesis of all these deliberations was presented to a special committee, which included public figures, experts from various fields and disciplines.… The resolutions were then presented for a second time to the Pre-University Education [Council] and then to the Minister of Education, who issued executive decisions… in light of the Council's recommendations. While this was taking place, the media was covering the various deliberations and decisions and providing the public with… information regarding the potential changes. (Zaalouk, 2004, pp. 179–180)

Regardless of how valid such participation was, it constituted a centralized form of involvement. According to a former Director of USAID/Egypt's Education & Workforce Development division (1995–2001): "It didn't really make its way down.… [because] the people who came to the conference either didn't have the where-with-all or the interest in going back to make those changes" (interview, Sally Patton, June 18, 2008).

It was in this context that in 1992, UNICEF began a "Community Schools" project "in four hamlets in the southern governorate of Assiyut in Egypt. … The contract signed [with the MOE] stipulated that the UNICEF education section would design, develop, and coordinate a community school model in deprived hamlets of rural upper Egypt, while the MOE… would ensure that the initiative was sustainable, able to expand, and be adopted by the wider educational system" (Zaalouk,

[19] In its 1992 publication *Strategy for Educational Systems Development*, USAID/Washington (1992) states that "education decision-making [should] be decentralized, and involve not only governments but also civil society representation (e.g., the business community, NGOs, unions and religious organizations, community associations and research networks, parents, professionals, students). Decentralizing education decision-making, intervention monitoring, and evaluation process is critical for educational reform… [to meet] the needs and conditions of the communities they serve" (p. 14).

2004, p. xi).[20] Community participation was one of the foci for this project. According to interviewees, the Community Schools project "was a great model for… engaging the community to the maximum extent in the education of the children" (interview, Hala El Serafy , February 18, 2008) and gave "Egypt a… model to engage the local community to provide… what is needed… [and to encourage] people… [to] become much more involved in the education for their children" (interview, Hassan El Bilawi, February 15, 2008). According to one of its leaders, the Community Schools pilot project was in line with the Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All (Interagency Commission, 1990), because schooling "requires a wide range of partnerships, [including]… communities, parents and families, governmental and non-governmental organizations, other institutions, and the private sector" (Zaalouk, 2004, p. 18). For instance, the project's "Education Committees… play[ed] an important role in the management of schools and mobilizing local human and financial resources as well as locating school sites, identifying potential facilitators, screening pupils, assisting in solving school-related problems. … [The] 10–15 community members include[ed] parents, formal and/or informal leaders and project supporters" (Sidhom & Al-Fastat, 2004, p. 24). Perhaps inspired by the level of community involvement and other promises of the Community Schools project and by international discourses, such as those represented in the Declaration of the World Conference on Education For All (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990), Egypt's Ministry of Education in 1993 initiated a One Classroom School Project "to provide a multigrade, student-centered educational experience for girls throughout the country… start[ing] with 313 schools in l993/1994 and… expand[ing to] 2791 schools in 2002/2003" (Sidhom and Al-Fastat, 2004, p. 30).[21]

While a commitment to "democracy" and an interest in obtaining community resources encouraged the Egyptian Ministry of Education to at least experiment with increased community participation and with decentralizing some responsibility (if not authority), there were other factors that limited the degree of decentralization and community participation. One often-mentioned factor was the perception that local actors did not have sufficient competence. For instance, a former Minister of Education (1991–2004) explained:

> It is very easy to say that we are going to decentralize, but we have to see what are the historical experiences in this region, what has succeeded and what has failed.… [I]f we look at Egypt, by transferring power to governors, who is going to have this power and the members of the parliament in that governorate.… And if you are delegating power to an inefficient partner, the quality will go down.… You have to train [them], you have to empower [them], you have to give [them] the credentials to do that… And this has to take time and this has to be part of a general reform of… other aspects as well. (interview, Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din, February 16, 2008)

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[20] The project eventually operated in three governorates (Qena and Sohag as well as Assiyut), involving increasing numbers of schools and students and, therefore, parents and community members during its different phases: a pilot phase (1992–1994) involved 39 schools and 1037 students, a development phase (1995–1996) involved 111 schools and 2859 students, and an expansion phase (1997–1999) involved 202 schools and 4659 students (Zaalouk, 2004, pp. 91–95).

[21] Zaalouk (2004) acknowledges that the "model in Egypt was established during the period following the *[1990] Jomtien Education for All* (EFA) world conference" (p. 31) and Sidhom and Al-Fustat (2004) note, similarly, in their evaluation report that "Egypt's commitment to Education Reform also took into consideration its international commitments such as those made at the *l990 Jomtien* Declaration**"** (pp. 13–14).

However, another factor—national security concerns, especially in relation to the (sometimes violent) struggle by radical Islamist groups against the state—certainly constrained central government officials' enthusiasm (i.e., political will) for promoting increased decentralization and local community participation.[22] As an American who served in USAID/Egypt in the 1990s put it, "decentralization in many of the policies couldn't happen without touching that issue" of the radical Islamist groups (interview, Sally Patton, June 18, 2008). And according to Sayed (2006), "the [Egyptian] state approached democratization with prudence, maintaining that the Egyptian population is not yet ready to take on board a comprehensive democracy, particularly since national security and political stability are 'endangered' by… terrorist movements and external conspiracies" (p. 79). In the words of an Egyptian staff member at USAID/Egypt: "[T]here was always this orientation to never empower the community and never empower parents… And he [the Minister of Education] would say, 'How can I make sure that the board of trustees doesn't get hijacked by the [radical Islamists]?'… He was always saying that 'I am the one who fought terrorism. I am the one who fought the [violent and non-violent radical Islamist]. I stuck my neck out'" (interview, Mona Zirki, February 17, 2008). And Sayed (2006) argues that "contain[ing] and block[ing] the penetration of [radical] Islamists… in the… educational system… [was] achieved by fastening the central grip of the MOE on the educational system and exercising more control on horizontal and vertical levels" (p. 83). Moreover, the Minister of Education during this period, who an Egyptian colleague called "a fighter and very active,"[23] recounted:

> The first [issue that I confronted as Minister] was that… [nonviolent radical Islamists]… had taken the lead in most of the schools in Egypt and were setting the agenda of the educational curriculum. They banned whatever they thought was against their religious ideas. And they propagated books and topics which are outside the official curriculum.… Therefore, I took very open and drastic measures to curtail their activities. I began transferring those teachers, involved in political activities directed to this [nonviolent radical Islamist] movement, outside of schools… I cut their contact with students.… The silent majority applauded me very highly, because they were afraid to confront these people. (interview, Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din, February 16, 2008)

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[22] Sayed (2006) explains that national security concerns historically have led to limited civil society participation: "Many of the conditions for the operation of active civil society groups, associations, and organizations were missing from the Egyptian political scene of the past decade. Even though civil society associations in Egypt have a history that goes back to the late nineteenth century, years of totalitarian rule and institutional (legislative and administrative) impediments have eroded a civic culture that began to flourish within Egyptian society during the first half of the twentieth century. Ever since the 1952 revolution and the republican decrees abolishing political parties and civil society associations through the 1950s and 1960s, Egyptians have been passive actors in the nation's political life and their lives (education, career selection, economic activities, and social mobility) have been controlled by a paternalistic and authoritarian state whose head of state has often described himself as the father of the nation" (pp. 127–128).

[23] Interview with Hassan El Bilawi, First Undersecretary (2000–2005) and Special Advisor (2006-present) in the Ministry of Education, February 10 & 15, 2008. During this interview El Bilawi explained: "The Muslim Brotherhood [in the 1990s]… concentrated on education because education for them is about preparing for the future, and that's fine. And… the Minister of Education represented the state. And the state at that time was not for the Muslim Brotherhood, it was secular to some extent" (February 10).

Sayed (2006) discusses the Ministry's removal of "schoolteachers advocating religious fundamentalism from their teaching jobs and transferred them to administrative jobs" (p. 35), while Herrera (2006b) reports that the Minister viewed "schools and universities [as] slipping dangerously out of the state's control and into the hands of [radical] Islamists…, thereby posing a threat to the country's national security" (p. 29). Thus, the Egyptian government undertook "a series of sweeps and purges… target[ing] religious and political materials, and educators who attempted to influence children towards greater religiosity through tactics of coercion and fear" (Herrera, 2006b, p. 32).

Another example of central government intervention in local school-communities' autonomy, which related to activity by radical Islamists groups, involved "Ministerial Order 113 of 1994, on the Unification of School Uniforms, which forbids girls in primary school from covering their hair and requires that girls in the preparatory stage, who wear a head scarf, provide written permission from a guardian, thereby giving parents, rather than [local] school authorities, the right to decide what their daughters should wear… The Order [also] prohibits the *niqab*, the full face veil, at all educational levels" (Herrera, 2006b, p. 42).[24] This government action was motivated by the fact that "schoolgirls—often as early as first grade—were increasingly required, by [radical Islamist] teachers and school administrators, to wear an Islamic uniform (*al-zjyy al-Islami*), which included a head covering of some sort" (Herrera, 2006b, p. 42).[25] Although the Ministry of Education explained that the Ministerial Order was developed because it had received "scores of complaints from around the country to the effect that Islamic uniforms were being imposed on girls,… [many] ordinary Egyptians… [expressed] their feelings of injustice and helplessness in the face of a heavy-handed state that intruded into their private lives" (Herrera, 2006b, p. 42).[26]

At the same time there were concerns about limiting the agenda of radical Islamist groups, the Ministry of Education and the Egyptian government more generally faced a growing fiscal crisis, which encouraged efforts to mobilize fiscal and material resources from local communities. As noted by the Ministry of Education in 1996 (MOE, 1996):

> Reconsideration of investment and its linkage to human resource development has also implied assessment of *funding sources*. While the government has reconsidered this priority,… [there is a need] to expand the role of parents and communities on the school level in addition to inviting business, NGOs, parents, other government ministries, different political parties, etc. to forums. (pp. 24–25; emphasis added)

Because of the increasing need to attract local resources in support of education and other social services, there was "an attempt to open up the public education system and allow greater participation.… provid[ing] some new spaces for partnerships. [For instance,] *Ministerial Decree No. 5 of 1993* [regarding Parent Teacher Councils] allows parents to monitor educational

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[24] However, although "the uniform legislation triggered… a spate of lawsuits,… in a 1996 appeal that reached the Supreme Constitutional Court—Egypt's highest court—Ministerial Order 113 of 1994 was ruled *constitutional*" (Herrera, 2006b, p. 43).

[25] According to Herrera (2006b), "[f]rom a legal perspective, educators were not violating government policy because the regulations guiding school uniforms—Ministerial Order #70 of 1962 and #139 of 1981—did not explicitly forbid Islamic uniforms" (p. 42).

[26] "In a campaign to gain public support for his highly controversial uniform policy, Baha Eddin… rallied the support of strategic religious figures, including the Grand Mufti and Shaykh of al-Azhar, Muhammad Sayed Tantawi, who issued a *fatwa* (religious ruling) stating that the *niqab* is not a requirement of Islam" (Herrera, 2006a, p. 43).

quality, to make donations of money or equipment to schools, and to manage aspects of the educational process to ensure 'a democratic climate inside schools'" (National Center for Education Research and Development [NCERD], 2001, p. 20; quoted in Herrera, 2006a, p. 155).[27] Furthermore, one of the major goals of a major reform initiative funded by the European Union and the World Bank beginning in 1996, the Education Enhancement Program, was "to significantly increase students' achievement of basic skills and help improve their critical thinking skills… [in part] through… building the capacity of the main implementing agencies at the central and governorate levels… [in] sector planning, decision making and management" (World Bank, 1996a, p. 2; see also World Bank, 1996b). Moreover, the Education Enhancement Program's activities were based on the assumption that "there was a need for developing a community sense of ownership of the school, and a conviction of the need for education, and for parents to send their children to learn. [Thus, the project]… organiz[ed] intensive awareness and community mobilization campaigns… rel[ying] on local women groups,…clergymen—imams in mosques and priests in churches, [as well as]… established networks with community development associations (CDAs)… [and] NGOs" (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, pp. 63–64).

Interviewees expressed somewhat different views of the extent of decentralization and community participation that was achieved through the Education Enhancement Program (EEP). For instance, in terms of decentralization, a key Egyptian administrator of the World Bank loan-based programs stated that "I was working according the decentralization… which means that each governorate… came up with its own plan. They decided what they have to do and manage everything by themselves. We were only working as an umbrella in Cairo" (interview, Nadia Gamal El Din, May 4, 2008). In contrast, an Egyptian Ministry of Education official noted that "it was a centralized approach… [in part] because [the Minister] at that time… was for the nation… and he was very strong in controlling and managing what was going on" (interview, Hassan El Bilawi, February 15, 2008). With respect to community participation, the Egyptian administrator overseeing EEP's implementation until 2004 explained:

> Part of our whole work was community participation. And… we let the people set up meetings to ask the community to come and help, to given money and land. We… got many pieces of land, and with this land we built schools.… Yes, when we invite them, they came [to parent and teacher councils].… And I remember that [an NGO]… conference was in August, and… they came. We were trying to count how many NGOs and we collected about 2000 in our ten governorates, a huge number. (interview, Nadia Gamal El Din, May 4, 2008)

In contrast, an Egyptian who served on the staff at USAID and then the World Bank in Cairo suggested that there was "not so much" community participation in EEP because "unfortunately the World Bank projects are more focused on what the Government would like to see… more on training than technical assistance. What happened in EEP, there was an add-on component to involve community to try toward decreasing the number of drop-outs. But the way it happened was very ad hoc" (interview, Mona Zikri, February 17, 2008). And the Egyptian administrator overseeing EEP's implementation starting in 2004 observed that "we tried to encourage some villages by giving them some [things] for their children, through the EEP

[27] Sayed (2006) paints a similar picture of the 1990s, except that he suggests that "[p]arents' councils… [went] into decline by the end of the 1990s… partly because of the low level of interest from the side of MOE bureaucrats and school administrators and partly because some parents' abused of their power" (p. 135).

project. It was good for two years, but the third year there was no money. So, people stopped their activities" (interview, Mustafa Abdel Samie , February 8, 2008).

Educational Governance and Management, 1996–2002

According to Sullivan and Abed-Kotob (1999), until the end of the 1990s the Mubarak government retained the "political structure… [of] an authoritarian, dominant party system supported by a military and security establishment" (p. 121), justified by the perceived threat to the government of the violent and nonviolent radical Islamist groups. For instance, in 1996 the Egyptian government rejected a call for a cease-fire from some leaders of the *Jama'at al-Islamiyya* and continued its intensive security approach (Tschirgi, 1999). And then, in November, 1997, members of the *Jama'at al-Islamiyya* groups killed 58 foreign tourists and some Egyptians in the city of Luxor—an attack that had a significant, negative impact on tourism, a major component of the Egyptian economy. While this tragic event served as a catalyst for the Government of Egypt and the violent radical Islamists to agree to end the violence, members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other radical Islamist groups continued to mobilize politically and to provide community-based social services, thus constituting a challenge to the Mubarak government and the ruling National Democratic Party.

Even before it negotiated a truce with the violent radical Islamist groups, the Egyptian government initiated other strategies for dealing with the security threat and political challenges:

> The security situation in the first half of the 1990s risked disturbing both the national and geopolitical balance in the Middle East. Thus, it is no coincidence that during the *second half* of the 1990s all bilateral donors (USAID, Canadian International Development Agency, Danish International Development Agency, and others) and international development agencies working in coordination with the Egyptian state have directed their development programs [generally] to Upper Egypt… [as well as] the under-serviced urban slums.… [The aim was to provide] basic education in the remote and long-forgotten areas that are deemed to be fountainheads of potential [radical Islamist groups]. The purpose has been to confront and challenge the [radical Islamists'] grip on peoples' minds and souls. (Sayed, 2005, p. 75; emphasis added)[28]

Coupled with such efforts to improve services and, thus, being seen as concerned about the life of the poor living in rural and urban areas, during the 1990s, the Ministry of Education devoted time and energy to promoting decentralization and involving civil society (Sayed, 2006, p. 132). There efforts were designed in part to win the "minds and souls" of the populace by promoting "democratic" principles:

> Education Reform and *Democratic Values*:… Successful change will not be confined to a Minister or a Ministry, but will be a consequence of a national effort which has mobilized all sectors of society, followed all the legal channels, included individual feedback at various junctures and reflected the wishes and hopes of the general public. (Bahaa El Dinn, 1997, pp. 99–101; emphasis added)

[28] As Sayed (2006) explains, however, such initiatives required a delicate balancing act: "[I]n pursuing these objectives, the state ha[d] to appear more profoundly religious and pious than the fundamentalists in order not to lose its credibility as defender of Egyptian national values and culture. Moreover, the state has been keen to downplay the significance of the involvement and propensities of [international] donors and development assistance agencies in order to counter persistent voices advancing conspiracy theories" (p. 83).

Of course, it was a little "safer" to involve educators and local communities in "democratic" processes by the mid-1990s, given that many educators suspected of having ties to radical Islamist groups had been removed from the schools.

As noted above, multilateral and bilateral develop agencies also promoted an agenda of winning the "minds and souls" of the population by addressing their service needs and involving them in defining how such needs would be met. As Sayed (2005) argues, "another important strategic motive for providing development assistance to Egypt is the American and Western European desire to contain the [radical] Islami[st]… movements, perceived as a major strategic threat to the interests of the West in the area" (p. 68). For instance, although in the mid-1990s "the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was on the verge of closing down its education division in Egypt" (Zaalouk, 2004, p. 170) and in other countries in the region,[29] it eventually developed plans for a *Strategic objective agreement… for girls' education* (USAID/Egypt, 1996). The goals of this grant, informed by the strategies of the above-described Community Schools project supported by UNICF and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), were to "raise community awareness and support for girls' education through (1) the involvement of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community development associations (CDAs)… and (2) a countrywide initiative to galvanize religious, business and media leaders in support of girls' education" (USAID/Egypt, 1996, p. 10). However, this grant program was not implemented.[30]

During 1998 and into 1999, while continuing to discuss programmatic arrangements to obtain needed funds from USAID—eventually leading to the design of the New School Program (see below), the Egyptian government engaged in negotiations with the European Union and the World Bank for a major loan-based project, the Secondary Education Enhancement Project. According to the Project Appraisal Document (World Bank, 1999b), one of the major issues facing the Egyptian education system is "inefficiencies in service delivery: The education system is highly centralized, with agencies providing overlapping functions" (p. 4). Given this situation, two components of the project involved: "strengthening institutional capacity,… [i.e.,] improving local school management…, while working to develop long term strategies for management reform at the central level," and "increasing community and private sector involvement through support for increased local management responsibilities and support for parent council activities and public/private sector partnerships… [The latter component was stressed] because although] parent councils have existed since the 1960s, a recent [1999] decree has widened their scope of

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[29] Interview with Sally Patton, Director of USAID/Egypt Education & Workforce Development division (1995–2001), 18 June 2008.

[30] A former USAID/Egypt staff member recounted the objections by the Minister of Education to this program: "The major concern was, the Minister said 'you are working with the informal system; I don't care about it.… My priority is building schools… within the formal system'" (interview, Mona Zikri, February 17, 2008). This story was echoed by two USAID/Egypt staff members: "the Minister… wanted schools to be built" (Hala El Serafy) and the Minister "didn't like that USAID… pulled out of a very significant building program… and [was] looking to get out of education all over the [ANE] region… So, [he]… said 'finished. I want everything stopped. And until you show me how we're going to build schools, I don't want anything more to go on'" (Sally Patton). Moreover, during his interview the Minister of Education during the time of this initiative confirmed that "I thought the building of small schools in rural areas was most effective. And I told the Americans that it is a pity that you have stopped financing that type of projects. This has been… very instrumental in raising the educational standards in rural areas" (interview, Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din, February 16, 2008).

responsibility to include monitoring quality at the school level" (p. 32).[31] This World Bank project in Egypt was in line with the World Bank's vision as articulated in its global Education Sector Strategy (World Bank, 1999a), which "promote[d] decentralizing management and accountability" (p. x) and highlighted the need for collaboration:

> The job is too large for any one institution or agency alone, and too important for a single perspective to hold sway. Governments, NGOs and local stakeholders, with the support of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, will have to work closely together in a prolonged effort to ensure each country's objectives for education are met… Many others have important roles to play too, including students, parents, families, communities, teachers groups, foundations and private firms. Local partners, in particular, have the knowledge and the understanding of values, culture and traditions that are an essential feature of sustainable development. (World Bank, 1999a, p. viii)

Nevertheless, an Egyptian staff member at USAID indicated that "I don't think it [SEEP] supported decentralization at all" (interview, Hala El Sarafy, February 18, 2008).

Despite remaining cautious about decentralization and civil society participation, in 1999, the Egyptian government "established an NGO Department in the MOE; issued Ministerial Decree number 30/2000 authorizing NGOs to work in community education" (Sidhom and Al-Fastat, 2004, p. 43; see also El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, p. 16); and enacted a new NGO Law, which promoted NGO involvement in education and other sectors, but stipulated that "civil society associations and organizations are not allowed to engage in any political activism… that advances the interests of a political party or to participate in election campaigns using NGO officers or funds" (Sayed, 2006, p. 137).[32] The 1999 law was challenged in the courts and was eventually declared to be unconstitutional. Thus, in 2002 the Egyptian government passed a revised Law (No. 84), which erased "[m]any administrative obstacles against the civil society institutions… and the same time [granted them] many advantages" (National Democratic Party[NDP], 2007, p. 5). According to Sayed (2006), the 2002 Law gave "NGOs the freedom to raise funds and receive donations locally… Moreover, instead of forbidding NGOs from receiving funds directly from foreign development assistance agencies,… [the 2002] law allows them to receive such funds after obtaining the Ministry's approval. However, Article 55 of the 2002 law forbids NGOs from joining a network without the approval of the Ministry of Social Affairs" (Sayed, 2006, p. 137).

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[31] This "Ministerial Decree… Number 464 of 1998 (regarding Parents' and Teachers' Councils) allow[ed] parents to monitor educational quality, to make donations of money or equipment to schools, and to manage aspects of the educational process to ensure 'a democratic climate inside schools'" (NCERD, 2001, p. 20; quoted in Herrera, 2006a, p. 155).

[32] Kandil (2000) comments that during the 1990s, Egyptian and international organizations and agencies urged "the state… to change the 1964 law that… governed civil society matters and which gave the state full control, including even the right to dissolve a particular civil society association whenever it felt it appropriate to do so" (quoted in Sayed, 2006, p. 132). As Sayed (2006) summarizes: "local civil society associations [were] under the dominion of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which has to approve all their activities and budgets, and they have to coordinate with Ministry of Education and other local state agencies[, involving] a mass of bureaucratic hierarchy and red tape that constrains their potential participation as active pressure groups influencing the agenda-setting process" (p. 134). Relevant also is the fact that in 2000 (as well as 2003 and 2004) the Egyptian government organized "national NGO Conferences focusing on Community Participation" (UNESCO, 2006, p. 15).

Interestingly, the Minister of Education during this time expressed his support for the involvement education of some, but not all, NGOs:

> There were many NGOs which were involved in education, and I was very happy to be cooperating with them… [Referring to the NGO unit within the Ministry of Education:] Yes, and for the first time they could come to the Ministry, and I could see someone helping them… [Based on my readings] that the progress of the West had depended on nongovernmental agencies,… I have to collaborate and to activate the nongovernmental organizations… [This also relates to the issue of violent and nonviolent radical Islamists, in that] instead of having people working to destroy Egypt, we have people helping me to build Egypt. (interview, Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din, February 16, 2008)

Beyond interactions with donor agencies operating in the country, Egypt's policy reforms and project initiatives during this period "took into consideration its international commitments,… [including] the Arab States Forum for Education Ministers, which in January 2000 adopted the *Arab Framework for Action to Ensure Basic Learning Needs in the Arab States in the years 2000–2010*" (Sidhom & Al-Fustat, 2004, pp. 13–14).[33] In part, this Framework states: "[T]he major problem in most of Arab States is how to make a good use of available resources, human as well as financial.… Reports on expenditure show problems in terms of planning and budgeting.… Problems of centralization versus decentralization are still debated" (Arab Countries Declaration, 2000, p. 48). It also identifies as one of seven objectives, "improving educational governance and management, which entails improving decision-making processes, accountability systems, building capacities, and extending and strengthening partnerships in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation" (p. 51).

The Arab States Forum was one of the regional meetings organized in preparation for the March 2000 "Education for All" Conference in Dakar, Senegal (UNESCO, 2000). Between the Forum and the Conference, on February 15, 200, President Mubarak declared that in Egypt the first decade of the new century would be the "Second Decade for the Protection of the Egyptian Child." At the Dakar conference the Egyptian government and others participants declared that "[r]eform of educational management is urgently needed — to move from highly centralized, standardized and command-driven forms of management to more decentralized and participatory decision-making, implementation and monitoring at lower levels of accountability… [Moreover,] civil society… [has] a crucial role to play in identifying barriers to EFA goals, and developing policies and strategies to remove them" (UNESCO 2000, p. 18). In addition, participating countries pledged to "define administrative structures that consider the individual school as the basic unit, with managerial autonomy, progressively generating mechanisms for citizen participation and establishing levels of responsibility for each actor in the management process, in the control of results and in accountability" (UNESCO, 2000, p. 41).

According to the United Nations Development Programme and the Egypt-based Institute of National Planning (UNDP and INP, 2000), in its *Human Development Report for Egypt*, achieving this goal would require major changes. The report expresses that a key "condition [of an efficient education system] is democracy in managing the education system. *Decentralization* and *participation* are the *two pillars of such democracy*. Decentralization provides better opportunities to

[33] Another important international commitment ratified by Egypt was the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which identified "eight Millennium Development Goals," including "providing universal primary education… by the target date of 2015" (United Nations, 2000).

identify the real educational needs and preferences of local communities, maintain education facilities, and monitor the education process. Participation creates a commitment to the success of the education process, especially when it includes all the partners of this process. Moreover, participation provides greater opportunity to identify, mobilize, and use education resources (effective as well as potential) more efficiently" (p. 52; emphasis added). However, the report concludes that currently in Egypt the "education system is highly centralized… which impedes initiatives, and also works against the efficient use of resources" (p. 5); "participation is deliberately limited" (p. 52); and "democracy is interpreted in a technocratic way that is translated into a large number of consultative and technical councils, the members of which are mainly experts who are appointed by the MOE… This… limits popular participation, reduces the effectiveness of representative bodies (like parents' councils and student unions), weakens local administration, and strengthens the central administration of the education system" (p. 57).

This UNDP and INP analysis does not seem to accord much significance to the on-going activities of the UNICEF and CIDA-supported Community Schools project, the MOE's One Classroom School Project, and the European Union and World Bank loan-funded Education Enhancement Project and Secondary Education Enhancement Project (see discussion above). And, apparently, the authors of this report did not factor in to their assessment two USAID-funded initiatives, the New Schools Program and the Alexandria Reform Pilot Project, which were being planned at this time.

One of the goals of the New Schools Program (NSP), funded by USAID/Egypt and implemented in selected communities in Bani-Suef, Fayoum, and Minia by a consortium led by CARE (originally 2000–2004, then extended to 2008), was to "increase community participation in girls' education." NSP included "an intensive community development model via numerous village meetings leading to the formation of a Community Education Team[, which] leads the community through the difficult and lengthy process of obtaining land, forming task forces and supervising construction.… With the new school nearing completion, Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs) are elected in large, enthusiastic community gatherings" (Aguirre International, 2003, p. ix; see also Ministry of International Cooperation [MIC], 2006, p. 8).[34] As explained by an American administrator in USAID/Egypt during this period, NSP was developed as a program taking into consideration the Minister of Education's concerns about the ill-fated Girls Education grant program (see above discussion): Through CARE's implementation of NSP, we "could do the building and then turn the schools over to the Ministry. The Minister liked this.… When we began working in communities, in very difficult and conservative areas,… that generated interest… And the people, most of whom didn't really want to have anything to do with the government, then began to see that the one of the largest institutions that represented the government in town was listening to them; [this] was a big step" (interview, Sally Patton, June 18, 2008).

The Alexandria Reform Pilot Project (2001–2004) was designed "to give encouragement, support and a mechanism to community members to become more involved in the management of the pilot schools [and] to transfer more responsibility and authority for school management to the school administrators" (USAID/Egypt, 2002, p. 2). Reported accomplishments include "the development of a new charter for the Boards of Trustees, ["upgrading" the Parent Teacher Council mechanism, and, thus,]… firmly establish[ing] the principle that the community has a substantial role to play in monitoring the management of their schools and raising additional funds for their

[34] The Ministry of International Cooperation evaluation report (MIC, 2006) adds, less optimistically: "However, the sustainability and rate of participation is questionable. The board of trustees (the new electoral system) might constitute a set back for the community participation" (p. 8).

schools" (USAID/Egypt, 2002, p. 3); having the national Minister of Education in 2001 "authorize the Governorate [of Alexandria] to 'undertake any action necessary to implement the pilot project' [and authorize] schools… to undertake independent decisions and actions to improve the school and student learning… [and] generate revenue and raise funds" (Tietjens, McLaughlin, El Said, & Amin, 2005, p. iv; see also El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, p. 62);[35] and enabling "school administrators… [to] embrace and master many of the new responsibilities.… [and] every school [to] develop a school vision, mission and school improvement plan" (Tietjens, McLaughlin, El Said, & Amin, 2005, p. v).

It is important to discuss the dynamics leading up to what one key MOE official termed "the historical moment in Egypt about decentralization," since it illuminates the roles played by local and national Egyptian actors as well as USAID/Egypt staff (interview, Hassan El Bilawi, February 15, 2008). The Minister of Education at this time described the experience as follows:

> It was always in the back of my mind that we have to implement decentralization, but through a national evolution, not drastic or precipitous actions. [We can't] just throw away the responsibilities from my shoulders and put it on them; this is not a responsible act. Therefore, we were in [Williamsburg], something with USAID [Gore-Mubarak initiative], and at that time Abdel Salama was governor of Alexandria. He's a good friend of mine, and I respect him, and he is a very able man.[36] He has very good relations with the business community in Alexandria, and the business community in Alexandria is a very well-developed community.… They are involved in social activities… Therefore, [when I returned from the Williamsburg meeting,] I told him, 'Now I can delegate power to you. You can monitor the process, you have a well developed business community, you have USAID which is going to give you $20 million to upgrade some schools.'… I felt secure when I delegated power in that project; I was not just putting it off of my shoulders. (interview, Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din, February 16, 2008)

An Egyptian who as a USAID/Egypt staff member played a key role in planning and implementing this project recounts the story similarly, but gives more attention to the initiative of Alexandrians:

> [Certain Alexandrian businessmen] weren't very happy with the schools, and they thought that so much money was being spent on education, and if they were given this money, they would be able to do better education for the children.… And they started negotiating with the Ministry of Education. They needed USAID's help, so they approached AID to provide some support… But then, in 1999 or 2000,… there was an important meeting in Williamsburg… [at which the

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[35] Tietjens et al. (2005) elaborate that "although a law (#43) permitting decentralization of authority to local government had been passed in 1979, it has never been operational in Alexandria (or elsewhere) as it applied to education.… [The 2001 MOE decree clarified that Alexandria could even take actions] that directly contravened standard MOE policies and procedures. This was the first time such a delegation had occurred" (p. iv).

[36] Another MOE official also emphasized the importance of the competence and character of local actors in decisions about moving ahead with decentralization: "This is based on the character of the governor. One governor… can do it, and the other one is very bureaucratic and he cannot even take a decision for himself" (interview, Mustafa Abdel Samie, February 8, 2008).

> Minister] agreed on doing one small pilot.[37]… I then became involved after they came back… We started working with the Alex community, the business people and the governor, on what exactly they wanted to do… [We] weren't sure whether the Minister would allow this experiment to happen. So,… in early 2001… the partners signed a memorandum of intent… [and a consultant-developed] concept paper was completed in June, 2001.… We had a special Governor at that time [in Alexandria] because he was very much… involved in education reform, in making this pilot successful. He went out of his way to do things. (interview, Hala El Sarafy, February 18, 2008)[38]

Another Egyptian staff member of USAID clarified how the strategy in Alexandria represented only a limited form of decentralization, the Minister delegating to the Governor, while also describing USAID/Egypt's active role:

> In 1999 we were talking about… focusing on decentralization but just on the governorates… The full concept of working on schools expanded with sort of decentralization and community participation.… [I]n Williamsburg,… the proposal to the Minister was 'Why don't you allow for one governor to try a pilot?'… He agreed… but he didn't really have any buy-in, because he knew that the laws, the regulations, the finance were all central.… The whole idea of decentralization was deconcentration… They wanted the Governor to become a decision-maker without having to go back to the Minister… The idea of delegation to the Governor was proposed and he agreed.… USAID went to the Governor… coming out of the agreement reached at Williamsburg… and said 'we have funding, we want to help you, we want to show a good model of a governorate.… We were running the project directly from USAID… because… [there was] no contractor… And they started to look for a mechanism to oversee that. So somebody came up with the idea, why don't we pull out a few people from the *muddiriya* [governorate or state] and the *idarras* [districts] and call it the Education Reform Committee… But there was no devolution of finance or of authority at the school level. (interview, Mona Zikri, February 17, 2008)

As the Alexandria Reform Pilot Project was being initiated, during 2001–2002, a number of other organizations published reports assessing or recommending changes in Egypt's system of educational governance and management, including the following. First, the Egyptian government's National Center for Education Research and Development (NCERD, 2001) observed that Egyptian education policy is based on "specifying the educational policy within a democratic framework," "diversifying resources of education finance and offering sufficient opportunities for the private sector and non-governmental organizations to participate in financing education," and "benefiting from the current universal experiences within a framework of international co-operation to reform and develop education" (pp. 6–7). Second, the World Bank (2002) claimed that to improve

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[37] An American USAID/Egypt administrator explained that "the Gore-Mubarak Initiative… got the Minister involved at a high, visible level, where we could actually put a little pressure on him. Before that time, any time we talked about reform, it had to be incremental… and on the margin" (interview, Sally Patton, June 18, 2008).

[38] Concerning the 2002 ministerial decree delegating authority, she said that "the Governor… said 'This is like the Minister of Education signed a blank check to us.'"

management in education, Egypt needed to "devolve decision-making to the school, with participation of key stakeholders… Some reforms aimed at decentralizing management and involving local stakeholders have been initiated, but substantial work remains to be done.… The current, rather rigid central planning process… [discourages] creativity and innovation" (pp. 47–48). Third, though not focused specifically on Egypt, the *Arab Human Development Report* stimulated considerable debate among educators and other stakeholders in Egypt (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004). The report presented "a radical vision of education reform" (UNDP, 2002, p. 51), including going "beyond government action to strong partnerships between states, the private sector, and civil society" (p. 57) and moving toward "decentralized administration [and] the empowerment of local management" (p. 59). Fourth, in its assessment to inform USAID/Egypt's project planning, Aguirre International (2002) stated that in Egypt the "[a]dministration and supervision of MOE schools is hierarchical.… The budget is administered centrally… At present very few decisions are made at the school level. The school receives no budget other than a small allotment for maintenance and a portion of the children's school fees" (p. 13).[39] And the report adds that

> [m]any of the constraints to improving education in Egypt must be solved at the local level with genuine participation of all stakeholders… [including] non-governmental organizations (NGOs), communities, and parents… While encouraging progress has been made in mobilizing communities to become more involved in education, the challenge remains on how to dispel perceptions that greater parental and community involvement only means increasing financial demands on communities.… [Thus,] more work is required to ensure [parent teacher councils and boards of trustees] are fully involved in school policy, governance and management" (Aguirre International, 2002, Section IV, pp. 6–7).

Also, in September 2002 Egypt's governing National Democratic Party (NDP) issued a major statement, "Education Reform Policy." One of the three pillars on which this policy was developed is "broadening the base of community participation," which "covers two basic goals: a) a direction towards decentralization [of education management] and b) an effective role for the civil society and the private sector in education" (NDP, 2002, p. 9):

> *Decentralization* will allow the responsible ministries the opportunity and time for strategic planning, supervision, and inspection of service providers rather than the indulgence in solving daily problems. Ministries will have the opportunity to lay out evaluation standards on the basis of management or the final outcome of the educational process, and to allocate budgets on the basis of new criteria in which competition among governorates is an effective factor. The objective of the gradual direction towards decentralization is better management and higher efficiency… This direction also… [reflects] the philosophy that the school is the main cell of the educational process and… will enable a larger base of *participation… of* municipal leadership…[and] the *local community*… (NDP, 2002, p. 11; emphasis added)

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[39] At about the same time, USAID/Washington staff were working on an issue paper, "Strengthening Basic Education through Institutional Reform" (USAID, 2002), which highlighted areas of reform "with the potential to improve educational performance," including "institutional reforms that place greater control over schools in the hands of local communities and parents" (p. 4). The paper states that, like other international donors, USAID has "embraced decentralization to the school level as a major component of their strategies in educational development," (p. 7) in part to reduce petty and other forms of "corruption."

Furthermore, The National Democratic Party (2002) policy statement emphasizes that the "private sector is invited to… invest in establishing new schools,… while the civil society, families and individuals [are invited] to participate more effectively in, governorate councils and district and school boards" (pp. 17–18); "the direction towards decentralization should be within the framework of the general policy of the State, [involve] gradual implementation and experimentation prior to generalization,… [and include] proper selection of those participating in management and supervision" (pp. 13–14); and "the central Ministry should keep the responsibility of maintaining the national fabric, emphasizing national identity, ensuring social peace and national security" (p. 13).

Coincident with the National Democratic Party developing this policy statement, the MOE was crafting the *National Plan for Education for All (2002/2003–2015/2016).* The plan, which was distributed in February 2003, "was prepared… in accordance with the model proposed by UNESCO Regional Office in Asia and the Pacific" (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, pp. 23–24). The principles identified by the Decentralization and Community Participation subcommittee contributing to the Plan reiterate points stressed in the NDP policy statement: "the need for expanding decentralization through delegating;" "distributing responsibilities gradually between the central level, the governorate and local administration level and school level;" building institutional capacities at the local level to guarantee that the transfer or delegation of authority will be to a more efficient party;" "the MOE is the national entity responsible for reforming and developing education;" and the MOE's role includes "protecting national identity, social peace, national security, implementing the constitution and the law without pressures from the local communities" (MOE, 2003a; quoted in El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, pp. 14–15).

Reforming Educational Governance and Management, 2002–2007

In his speech to the closing session of the 2002 National Democratic Party Conference, at which the NDP "Education Reform Policy" statement was presented and adopted, President Mubarak stated, "With regard to education at the school…, we have… emphasized… a new framework that would allow greater participation by the private sector in this vital field. This entails drawing up and implementing clear national standards to measure educational quality" (Mubarak, 2002; printed in MOE, 2003b, p. 2). In its efforts to decentralize authority administratively and to increase parents' and community members' participation in educational decision-making, but at the same time preserve "national security" as well as conform with nationally agreed upon notions of education quality, the Egyptian government (MOE) constituted in October 2002 "the Higher Committee for Setting the National Standards of Education in Egypt" (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, p. 22).[40] This committee developed "standards and performance indicators in the following five [areas]: the effective school, the educator, educational management excellence, community participation, the curriculum and learning outcomes" (MOE, 2003b, p. 4). A major objective of the standards for "educational management excellence" is to "[c]onsolidate the concepts of transparency, accountability, competition and decentralization in the educational institutions to deepen the feeling of belonging among its members" (MOE, 2003b, p. 92), listing indicators of performance for "high," "middle," and "implementation level" leaders. And the area of "community participation" includes the following standards: "encourage participation of parents in educational decision-making, and their effective involvement in drawing up a future vision for the school and in

[40] According to the Ministry of Education, a "number of international organizations contributed to the support of this project, including UNICEF, which sponsored three intensive retreats, as well as [USAID's Project] IELP-II, which allowed for meetings with international experts" (MOE, 2003a, p. 8).

the implementation of various programs;" "obtain material assistance for educational institutions and schools from the local community, companies, and business community;" and "provide the mechanisms to organize voluntary work for parents and citizens to support the educational and social activities in the school" (MOE, 2003b, pp. 132–133).

In 2003 a Ministerial Decree (No. 262, 4 November), based on the 2001 protocol focusing only on the Governorate of Alexandria, augmented the legal basis for decentralization in education, adding six other governorates to the picture. According to UNESCO (2006), the decree "delegate[d] authority to the school level by determining the responsibilities of school management and educational administration in [all] governorates" (p. 14) and established "three new units within schools—responsible for total quality, productive activities, and training and evaluation,… indicat[ing] that schools would be expected to play a greater role in self assessment, determination of training needs, deciding on productive activities, and self improvement needs… Moreover, the administrative system in the governorates has been reinforced by appointing an undersecretary in charge of education in each governorate" (pp. 15–16).

According to the then-Minister of Education, this decree was based in part on his perceptions of the characteristics of the governors: "And when I met other governors, I said: 'Whenever I have a governor in whom I have confidence that he would do a good job, and who has very good contacts with the community, who has been collaborating successfully with the business community in other projects, I'm going to make the same [delegation of authority]. When I left, I had six [other] governorates to which I [delegated authority to the governors].… It [decentralization] has to be developed without any risk of decreasing quality" (interview, Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din, February 16, 2008). An Egyptian staff member of USAID suggests that the Minister's decision was also shaped by the Alexandria pilot project experience and the plans for implementing a new USAID/Egypt initiative, the Educational Reform Program (ERP, see discussion below): "The Minister of Education,… although at the beginning he was very skeptical,… later on he started to be very supportive of… this pilot.… And he encouraged other governorates, other governors, to follow the Alex model. And that's when the ERP came on board at USAID and we did the design, and seven governorates [including Alexandria]… wanted to participate in educational reform and became part of the project.… [The Minister] was very supportive of the idea of decentralization and empowering people to make their own decisions, but he wasn't believing [in this for] the levels below the governorate (interview, Hala El Serafy, February 18, 2008).

Nevertheless, in its annual *Egypt Human Development Report*, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Institute of National Planning (2003) argued that, in terms of "centralization and decentralization practiced by the state,… [i]t is worth remembering that the system applied in Egypt is one of local administration and not local governance.… The first relates to a decentralized system of execution, while the second is linked to the state political system based on the nation's constitution, whereby autonomy and rights are distributed between the state and the units that compose it, and which possess judiciary, legislative, and executive authority as determined in the constitution" (p. 87). Similar concerns about the state of educational governance and management were expressed in USAID/Egypt's request for applications for what became the Education Reform Program (ERP). These documents made the following statements:"The education system in Egypt is highly centralized. Schools management lacks decision-making authority and adequate resources. Most important personnel and financial decisions are made by the Ministries of Local Administration and [of] Finance and not necessarily reflecting the Ministry of Education needs;" and "Community involvement in education is minimal and parents are often reluctant to participate in their children's schools. Communities are not mobilized to provide funding and other resources to schools. Only a few schools have active Parent Teacher Councils

(PTCs) or other organizations, which permit and encourage parents to participate in their children's education" (USAID/Egypt, 2003a, p. 4; USAID/Egypt, 2003b, pp. 7–8).

ERP initiated its technical assistance and training activities at the end of June 2004, operated by two Educational Quality Improvement Project consortia (EQUIP1 and EQUIP2, led by the American Institutes for Research and the Academy for Educational Development, respectively). Initially planned to run until 2009, ERP was designed to achieve the following intermediate results, working initially mainly in seven focal governorates, with a particular focus on a subset of school communities in one or two *idarras* (or districts) in each governorate: "the business community, civil society, and community leaders provide leadership, funding, and programs to support education;" "parents actively engage in their children's education;" and "policymaking authority is decentralized and funding diversified" (USAID/Egypt, 2003a, pp. 17–18). The EQUIP1 consortium (AIR et al., 2004a) listed among its proposed activities the supporting community development associations to "establish and manage community education trust funds and mobilize community and business resources to add to these funds in order to address some of the education needs;" "rais[ing] awareness of *muddiriya* [governorate] and *idarra* officials for the importance of parental and community involvement;" and "work[ing] closely with private sector organizations in supporting the implementation of… school improvement plans" (pp. 12–15). And the EQUIP2 consortium (AED et al., 2004a) identified the following among its key tasks: "develop[ing] an effective GEAC [Governor's Education Advisory Committee] in each governorate;" "conduct[ing] management and technical training at all levels to implement a decentralized system;" "establish[ing] management systems in identified priority functional areas (finance, training, personnel, curriculum);" and "help[ing] institute an [private sector-resourced] Education Reform Fund… to be used for… reform interventions" (pp. 12–14).

As USAID/Egypt and the two EQUIP consortia were initiating ERP, President Mubarak rearranged his cabinet, appointing Ahmed Gamal Eddin Moussa to replace Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din as Minister of Education. In the view of El Baradei and El Baradei (2004), "[e]ver since the change in cabinet in July 2004,… the President and Prime Minister have shown remarkable interest in education reform" (p. 28). For instance, in his September 23, 2004, speech at the National Democratic Party annual conference, the Prime Minister listed among "the main future trends for the reform of education in Egypt … moving strongly towards decentralization… On the 31 October, the Minister of Education announced that quality [and] decentralization [are among]… his main concerns and priorities. On the 22 November 2004, the President held a meeting to discuss the reform plan for pre-university education,… [focusing on] seven main pillars for reform… [including]: emphasizing decentralization and community participation" (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, pp. 28–29).[41] Moreover, in September 2004, the Ministry of Education issued its report on "Reforming Pre-University Education Programs" (MOE, 2004), which focused on five main pillars, including "decentralization and enhancing community participation" (p. 6). This report "lists the successful experiences of Alexandria [USAID], the Community Schools [UNICEF and CIDA], the One-Class School [MOE], and the girl-friendly schools [USAID: NSP]" initiatives; notes the "resistance from leaders in central positions to delegate and transfer authorities and responsibilities to lower levels;" and outlines plans for expanding the "Alexandria experience to other

[41] More generally, at this "annual congress in 2004, the NDP highlighted the importance of decentralization and defined guidelines for such a trend in terms of education, health and economy… This attention has been crowned through the presidential platform wherein the decentralization has been considered as a key pillar for democracy activation… and a base for a partnership between the government and the concerned parties in the civil society" (NDP, 2007, p. 7).

governorates…: Cairo, El-Minia, Fayoum, Beni-Suef, Qena, Aswan, Dakahlia, Sharqia, Luxor and then other governorates" (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, p. 25).[42]

One MOE official and two Egyptian staff members of USAID/Egypt commented in interviews on Ahmed Gamal Eddin Moussa's emphasis on decentralization. According to the MOE official, with "the new Minister, Ahmed Gamal Eddin, his agenda was about activating decentralization.… Decentralization was on the agenda before 2004, but he [Gamal Eddin] moved it to education. And the first action for him was to give a Powerpoint presentation at the Alexandria meeting about decentralization… And the idea of board of trustees now became [stronger], because [it] had been applied and implemented in the Alexandria pilot… and has been generalized in the six [other ERP focal] governorates. But Gamal Eddin, he generalized it… nationwide… [However,] unfortunately,… [it was] not related to school-based reform" (interview, Hassan El Bilawi, February 15, 2008). One of the USAID/Egypt staff members reported that the focus on *idarra* and the school level "started maybe during Dr. Ahmed Gamal Eddin's time. AID also played a very important role… by organiz[ing] a… very crucial visit to the [US at the end of March 2005,] when [the Minister] saw how it functioned, the education system in the United States… He met with people at all levels… about how schools can make their own decisions, how the community is involved, how decentralization can work. And by the time he came back, he was very supportive of… the importance of school leadership [and]… engaging communities and establishing boards of trustees in all schools in Egypt, and decentralizing" (interview, Hala El Sarafy, February 18, 2008). The other USAID/Egypt staff member explained that Gamal Eddin "from the beginning was very strong on decentralization. He even made symbolic gestures that he wouldn't sign anything that could be signed by someone lower in the system.… [Just before he left office] he came up with the idea that the whole Ministry required an organizational restructuring, and he had a design—funded by the European Union –… for a decentralized restructuring of the Ministry… [and to] devolve decision-making" (interview, Mona Zikri, February 17, 2008).

In this context various international organizations offered their assessments of and encouragements for Egypt's publicized commitments to decentralization and community participation. First, in October 2004, UNDP and the Institute for National Planning issued its *Egypt Human Development Report EHDR 2004* (UNDP and INP, 2004), "Choosing Decentralization for Good Governance." The report recommends "utilizing and implementing some forms of administrative, fiscal and political decentralization in the education sector as a tool towards increasing efficiency and improving quality of educational services delivery" (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004, p. 24).

Second, in December 2004 "Needs Assessment of the Education Sector in Egypt" was released (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004). The report underwritten by the German Development Cooperation Agencies and produced by Egyptian researchers identified the following among Egypt's strengths: "greater emphasis on… community participation;… establishing National Standards for Education; decentralization efforts in the form of a new school-based approach" (p. 32). Weaknesses included a tendency for "recommendations regarding reforming education… [to be] made without real interaction or participation by the real stakeholders, represented in parents, students and teachers" and "some [dysfunctional] organizational culture norms developed through ages of a non-democratic environment: such as 'showing obedience to an official so long as he is in office' and taking excessive precautions against corruption, which leads to lengthened bureaucratic procedures, and slow decision making" (p. 39).

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[42] Along with Alexandria, the first six governorates listed were included as focal governorates of the Education Reform Program, launched at the end of June 2004.

Third, in April 2005 USAID/Washington (2005) published its report on a global *Education Strategy: Improving Lives through Learning*, asserting that "USAID includes education… as part of its strategic efforts to promote economic prosperity and security" (p. 1) and outlining several goals, including arguments that USAID should "counter problems with financial corruption and teacher absenteeism [by] fostering decentralized school governance" and promote "active participation by parents and community members in the governance of schools" (pp. 8–10).

Fourth, in October 2005 UNDP and the Institute of National Planning (UNDP and INP, 2005) published its *Egypt Human Development Report 2005*, which stresses that "the… universal welfare regime in Egypt is fiscally unsustainable without private sector participation in… the provision of public services,… decentralization of authority and fiscal responsibility, and incentives for increased political and social participation" (p. vii). Arguing that a "culture of quality" as well as "decentralization and democratization" are "preconditions for quality education" (p. 63), UNDP and INP (2005) defined more generally "a vision for Egypt" to include "a new 'social contract' whereby, in a paradigm shift, the state reduces its central control and promotes further political, social and economic participation from civil society" (p. 4).

Fifth, in November 2005 the World Bank (2005) issued an update to its 1999 Education Sector Strategy. Among other things, the document focuses on "governance and decentralization of education management" (p. 36). It referred to its *2004 World Development Report* (World Bank, 2004) in arguing that the "decentralization of school management can create opportunities to improve incentives and accountability… Gains to education can come from clarifying central and local roles for all sectors. This will include issues related to school… management (for example, in teacher hiring) and improving financing to encourage transparency, predictability, equitable resource allocation, and efficient resource use.… [Moreover,] empowering local communities to control money targeted to help them can contribute importantly to improving education services, by affecting such inputs as teachers, learning materials, and curricula.… Parents and communities also need… to be empowered to voice their views on school improvement" (World Bank, 2005, pp. 41–42).

In line with such calls for greater civil society participation, in 2005 the Ministry of Education issued "*Ministerial Decree No. 258*… [replacing] *Decree No.5/1993* and expanding and deepening the roles and responsibilities of [Boards of Trustees (BOTs)] and the Parents' and Educators' Councils. For example, in contrast to the strictly advisory role accorded to BOTs in Decree No. 5/1993, the new law gives these bodies a wide executive mandate in all aspects of educational process and school management" (Sheta, 2007, p. 3). However, the 2005 decree may have gone too far in opening up avenues for participation or it contained some ambiguities that needed to be clarified, since another Ministerial Decree (No. 334) was issued in 2006: "This decree spelled out again the roles and responsibilities of the boards and school principals, outlined their financial and administrative powers and ways for enhancing community participation at the school level, and allowed for the formulation of coordination committees at the governorates and districts levels" (MOE, 2007, Chapter 4, p. 1). As a key MOE official reported: "Some administrative problems came out related to who signs the check at the level of the school… the director of the school or someone outside [BOT community leader]… When the outsider signed, there was no accountability for the people within the system itself.… There were [also] some questions about who would be elected and who would be appointed.… Now, [some] teacher are [by definition] in the new BOT… having a formula for a good partnership" (interview, Hassan El Bilawi, February 15, 2008).

During the 2004–2007 period, projects funded by USAID/Egypt and by the European Union, the World Bank, and other donor agencies offered technical assistance and training related to

MOE commitments to reforming governance and management. This included raising awareness about the National Standards, developing tools and procedures for conducting standards-based assessments of schools, and building capacity of MOE personnel and community members at various levels of the system to assume anticipated or newly defined roles. For instance, in the context of Law 82 of June 2006, establishing the "National Authority/Agency for Educational Quality Assurance and Accreditation," the School Team Excellence Awards Program was initiated "in all primary schools in all governorates of Egypt… through coordination with the Ministry of Education and USAID" (Soliman & Aziz, 2006, p. 5). The tools developed by the staff and used by local school-community groups to compete for awards and to prepare for the expected process of accreditation focused on two areas of the National Standards: "effective school" and "community participation." The project and the manual it developed were informed by "a school-based reform approach, the most salient aspects of which are: 1) the school as the unit for improvement and transformation…; 2) the school as a unit for analysis and evaluation…; 3) the decentralization of school management…; and 4) community participation in school reform and improvement" (Soliman & Aziz, 2006, pp. 1–2).

In 2006, not long after Yousry Saber Husien El Gamal replaced Ahmed Gamal Eddin Moussa as Minister of Education, with technical assistance from USAID/Egypt and other international agencies the MOE began a strategic planning process involving dozens of people, including MOE staff, university professors, and civil society representatives. The first full draft of the National Education Strategic Plan was distributed (in English) in January 2007, and a somewhat revised version was accepted by the Cabinet in October 2007. Pillars of the MOE approach to school-based reform included the following: strengthening societal participation, decentralization, strengthening school budget and financial management, and strengthening good governance (MOE, 2006b). The overall goal of the Plan's Chapter 4, "Institutionalization of Decentralization," is to "[s]upport the institutional capacity of the educational system to achieve systems efficiency and effectiveness through institutionalizing decentralization at all system levels" (MOE, 2007, Ch. 4, p. 4). Chapter 4 focuses on three components: organizational and structural development, administrative decentralization, and financial management improvement (MOE, 2007, Ch. 4., pp. 4–5).[43] Moreover, the Strategic Plan identifies four dimensions in the MOE's vision for moving toward decentralization.

The first dimension is "g*iving more powers to schools financially and administratively in decision-making and expanding community participation*: schools will be empowered to develop their own development plan, implement monitoring and self-evaluation processes as tools to further improvement, develop a school budget, manage materials and educational resources, manage human resources including punishment and reward, identify professional development needs, evaluate staff performance, coordinate technical supervision with the *idarras*, identify teaching approaches, manage school financial resources, and organize and manage social, educational, cultural and sports activities. Schools will also be empowered to increase partnership with the civil society, support the

[43] The Introduction to Chapter 4 of the *Strategic Plan* document (MOE, 2007) defines decentralization as "*the devolution of authorities* from the central decision-making level to the service-provision level, by giving more decision-making powers to the school and idarra levels, while leaving the executive tasks of monitoring, planning, and curriculum development to the muddiriyat and the central Ministry. Decentralisation is a mean for promoting education quality, not a goal in itself. It is consistent with the State's vision for the service sector, which calls for central authorities' role to be limited to overall policy-making, determining standards, measuring performance, monitoring and organizing the service, and ensuring equity and quality are achieved at all levels" (Ch. 4., p. 1).

efforts of boards of trustees and parents towards the improvement of education, and benefit from the available resources at the local level" (MOE, 2007, Ch. 4, p. 2).

The second dimension focuses on "*devolving the administrative powers to the idarra level*: This will be achieved by increasing the roles and responsibilities of the *idarra* as far as developing the *idarra* and giving support to schools in light of schools' development planning, which include technical supervision, monitoring and evaluation, financial management of schools' appropriations, supporting partnerships with the civil society, managing training plans developed at the *idarra* level, assessing needs of schools regarding books, monitoring and managing the distribution of books and other educational materials, coordinating technology modernization process at schools and its maintenance in light of school plans and performance reports, coordinate different activities in which groups of schools participate, monitor the implementation of civil works, coordinate the maintenance of education buildings, and coordinate and implement financial and administrative works related to school equipment" (MOE, 2007, Ch. 4, p. 2).

The third dimension is "*developing the role of governorates (muddiryias)*: The role of the *muddiriyas* will be concentrated on organizational, analytical and monitoring tasks, namely, performing comprehensive situation analysis of districts' [i.e., *idarras*] performance in light of standards determined by the MOE, providing technical support to the districts, developing the educational plans at the governorate level, coordinating the decentralization of the curriculum, managing the printing and distribution of books, and maintenance of the educational buildings with the districts. The governorates become responsible for developing an annual state of the education report in the governorate which registers and analyzes the variables and learning outcomes in light of districts' reports. All other field work will be at the district level" (MOE, 2007, Ch. 4, p. 3)

And the fourth dimension concerns "*developing the role of the [central] MOE as a developer and monitor of policy and standards*: The role of the MOE will be concentrated on developing policies, legislation and standards in light of the reports coming out of governorates, which will include monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation, developing curriculum, setting-up a system to develop human resources and managing it in a way that ensures decentralization and transparency, and providing a moral professional incentive for teachers to improve the level of education service. Accordingly, it is very important to reconsider the current structure of the central Ministry and make it focused on six specific tasks: (1) policies and strategic planning, (2) monitoring and evaluation (quality management), (3) curriculum and education technology, (4) information and technology development, (5) developing human resources, and (6) financial and administrative affairs" (MOE, 2007, Ch. 4, p. 3).

Moreover, in order to achieve "the national education goals, objectives and targets,… [t]he *National Strategic Education Plan* was to be translated into decentralized governorate-level education plans [and] *muddiriyas*, *idarras* and schools will be empowered to implement the governorate-level education plans" (MOE, 2007, Part IV, Ch. 2, p. 1).[44] Even while the Strategic

[44] The Strategic Plan document (MOE, 2007) provides further details regarding a relatively top-down method of implementation: "A National Education Plan and Implementation Committee (NEPIC) will be established… [as will] a Partnership Committee (PC)"…, [which will be] attached directly to the Minister of Education, in order to achieve coordination among partners of development, government and MoE towards the achievement of the plan.… [Moreover,] the Policy and Strategic Planning Unit (PSPU) is a unit which falls under the NEPIC… and includes three working groups: the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG), the Implementation Support Working Group (ISWG) and finally, the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group (IMEWG).… [Finally,] each governorate will be supported to establish similar organizational structures to those at the National level… [and the] Governorate Educational Planning and

Plan was being refined, the MOE (with ERP staff assistance) organized on March 17–18, 2007, an "International Conference on Decentralization in Education," featuring presentations by individuals with government advisory and planning experience in the area of decentralization from Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Mexico, and South Africa. Attended by 230 people, including governors and MOE undersecretaries, the conference focused on the MOE's commitment to decentralization as well as the challenges and benefits of decentralization in education. In his opening address, the Minister of Education reiterated his commitment to decentralization: "The challenges we face are represented in the huge system of Egyptian education and its expansion, which make it difficult to manage this system centrally. Therefore, we should move towards the decentralization of education.… Decentralization of education is not an end but rather a means to improve the education quality process" (El-Gamal, 2007, p. 2). He also explained that he "envisioned… changes at all levels of the education system, including: (i) increasing the authority of the school and extending community participation in decision-making; (ii) moving authority for administration and coordination to *idarra* level…; (iii) developing the role of *muddiriyas* as an organizers and analysts…; and (iv) develop the role of the [central] Ministry as a supervisor and policies/standards maker" (ERP, 2007a, p. 13).

March 2007 also witnessed an ERP-organized visit to Egypt by the EQUIP2 "Education Reform Support Team" (EQUIP2, 2007), during which they initiated discussions with Minister of Finance and other key officials about decentralization and formula funding in education. In these discussions Ministry of Finance officials indicated conditional agreement with the idea of conducting a pilot of financial decentralization within Education. This agreement was subject to receiving assurance of the necessary local management, accountability and audit capacity and conducting the pilots in Cairo to facilitate oversight being exercised by Ministry of Finance officials.

Subsequently, technical experts and advisers from the Ministry of Finance and MOE met to outline a plan for the way forward, which represented the first step toward establishing an Inter-Ministerial Committee (ERP, 2007a). And in June 2007 the Minister of Finance issued a decree appointing the committee, composed of "senior level officials or technical officers, who report to their respective ministers, from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of State for Administrative Development, and the Central Agency for Organization and Administration" (ERP, 2007b, p. 16). Then on July 3, 2007, the first meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee took place, followed by four other meetings between July and September 2007 (ERP, 2007c, p. 13).

By mid-July 2007, it was reported that "organizational and administrative decentralization were being implemented in at least one pilot *idarra* in each of six ERP governorates," that "in Cairo three *idarras* were selected to pilot financial decentralization as well," and that a workshop was organized for key personnel to be involved in the planned financial decentralization pilots in Cairo (ERP, 2007b, pp. 16, 21). Moreover, ERP staff—collaborating with two international consultants—organized two national workshops on decentralized education funding during July-September 2007. The first was a five-day workshop focusing on policy issues for a small team of high-level specialists from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, and other concerned ministries, plus personnel from the recently initiated decentralization projects in the six focal governorates (ERP, 2007c). Based on the discussions during this workshop a paper, "Financing School-Based and *Idarra*-Based Management: Policy Options and Suggestions" was produced and later distributed to participants

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Implementation Committee (GEPIC)… will maintain and adhere to strong coordination with the NEPIC" (MOE, 2007, Part IV, Ch. 2, pp. 3–6).

(see Healy & Crouch, 2007).[45] The second workshop, focused on strengthening linkages between policy change and operations and management, in relation to implementation of decentralized education financing, was attended by the 7 governorate undersecretaries of Finance, these governorates' undersecretaries of Education, the MOE director of Finance and Administration, and the directors of the pilot decentralization *idarras* in Cairo (ERP, 2007c). An Executive Roundtable Policy Dialogue meeting in July 2007 also featured the two international consultants and focused on "policy issues in the National Strategic Plan that relate to decentralization and education financing, with particular attention to the relevance of international models and strategic approaches for the situations in various governorates and *idarras* in Egypt" (ERP, 2007c, pp. 14–15).

Another relevant ERP-organized activity occurred in August 2007, when senior officials, policymakers, and advisers from the MOE—as well as from the Ministry of State for Administrative Development and Ministry of Local Development—accompanied the Minister of Education and the Governor of Minia on a one-week study tour to Indonesia. "Participants gained direct access to comparable ranking officials in Indonesia and learned about the process and outcomes of [Indonesia's] seven years of decentralization effort (begun at the district level in 2001), particularly in education. Participants were also exposed to the policy framework, principles, strategies, and lessons learned regarding decentralization in specific ministries and in local government generally" (ERP, 2007c, p. 15). During the study tour participants met with "Mae Chu Chang, [who] presented an overview of the [World] Bank's activities in education in Indonesia in relation to decentralization. She referred to the initial 1999 legislation and the 2004 revised laws and to lessons learned by the World Bank and other donors.… The delegation [also] met with HE H. Aburizal Bakri, Minister of the *Coordinating Ministry for People's Welfare,* [who]… explained that there are a) six national ministries not subject to decentralization: Defence, Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Justice, and Religious Affairs [as well as] b) three coordinating ministries in the areas of: 1) politics, law and national security; 2) economics; and 3) people's welfare" (ERP, 2007d, p. 4).

Not long after the study tour, in early September 2007, ERP staff assisted the Ministry of Education in organizing the Governors' Annual Meeting and Leadership Conference on Pre-University Education, held in Alexandria. The theme of this conference attended by 200 participants from all governorates in Egypt was "Decentralization in Education Reform." Presentations and discussions focused on the current status of the MOE National Strategic Plan, and lessons learned from the seven ERP-supported governorates in the process of planning and implementation for school-based reform, and insights gained from the Indonesian study tour (ERP, 2007c, p. 16–18).

In the context of what seemed like dramatic moves toward institutionalizing decentralization and community participation (i.e., pilot projects, discussions by high-level officials from different ministries, major public forums), the National Democratic Party held its annual conference in November 2007. At this conference the leadership presented a policy paper that examines issues of management and governance, focusing on education and other sectors. In this paper the NDP (2007) affirmed its view that "civil society institutions are the closest partner to the public and… the most capable entity to reflect the needs of the citizen. Therefore, supporting civil society institutions and erasing any obstacles that might face them is a dire need to achieve the aspired developmental goals and deepen the transformation process towards real democracy" (p. 4). The document argues further that there is a "need to improve the relationship between the local and central levels

[45] In part this paper states that the "education sector appears to be leading the way with the number of decentralization programs underway that are aimed to bring about widespread school-based reform. Fundamental to the success of the Ministry of Education's efforts is the concomitant decentralization of education finance" (Healy & Crouch, 2007, p. 1).

[because] the actual role of local units in Egypt is restricted to a limited number of tasks in such a way that leads to poor participation of the local communities in the social responsibility. The relationship between the local and central levels is highly centralized, where policies and development plans are developed at the central levels for all sectors" (p. 15). And the policy paper also stresses that "the success of decentralization depends on the positive participation of citizens in identifying and monitoring the implementation of the priorities, maintaining and increasing the gains of the local community. This requires citizens to have a high degree of political awareness in selecting their representatives" (p. 18).[46]

Earlier the paper alludes to a recent achievement, "the constitutional amendments ratified in 2007 as a pivotal shift in the march of democracy since they reiterated the citizenship rights, provided more balance between the executive and legislative authorities, opened the door for stronger role of parties, increased woman representation in the parliament, developed local administration units, and improved the electoral process" (NDP, 2007, p. 1).[47] Moreover, NDP's 2007 policy paper discusses a recent amendment to the Constitution that addressed issues related to terrorism. As can be seen in the excerpts below, the amendment was developed to allow the repeal of the "emergency law" of [1980 as amended in 1992] while still maintaining adequate mechanisms to maintain national security and avert terrorism:

> Terrorism has become one of the serious dangers threatening the citizen from leading a safe life,… destabilizing the state and undermining development efforts.… The state [in 1980, following the assassination of President Anwar Sadat,] sought the Emergency Law as one of the basic tools to combat terrorism, yet the vision of the President [Mubarak] to go back to the normal legal status and abolish all extraordinary means necessitated the issuance of Anti-Terrorism Law to serve as a legislative alternative for the Emergency Law.… The government and the [National Democratic] Party have adopted a draft anti-terrorism legislation [in 2007] to combat terrorism and ensure the protection and safety of its citizens. They pledged that this legislation would not be a repetition of the provisions of the emergency law… [and only] will deal with specific terrorist crimes as defined by international standards. (NDP, 2007, p. 10)

Conclusion

One must consider how national level (technical, political, and institutional dimension) factors as well as global (organizational, economic, political/military, and ideological) dynamics help make sense of Egypt's experience with respect to reforming educational governance and management. As described in the chronology above, the technical dimension suggests that one

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[46] NDP's (2007) reference to citizens having "a high degree of political awareness in selecting their representatives" was made approximately one year after candidates presumed to be affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood won approximately 25% of the seats in the People's Assembly.

[47] According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (2006), "the Mubarak government has been adopting a gradual approach to political reform, while keeping a tight grip on power. Since 1981, emergency laws have been invoked, which empower law enforcement agencies to detain suspects without proof of charges or trial indefinitely. The latest parliamentary elections were conducted under legal supervision and resulted in opposition figures winning 20% of total seats, an unprecedented presence. Since then, a policy of tightening control has been adopted" (p. 9).

consider the reform rhetoric and action concerned with decentralization and community participation. During the period under review Egypt experienced movement, though uneven, toward increased decentralization, with calls for deconcentration of responsibility in 1981, MOE actions that restricted local decision-making authority in the 1990s, and some concerted efforts toward delegation and (even) devolution of authority as well as responsibility after 2001. In terms of community participation, during this period there calls for and actions toward implementing broader and deeper forms and degrees of involvement by parents, civil society, and businesses. There was less activity targeting community participation in the 1980s, contradictory actions (mobilizing and demobilizing) during the 1990s, and a greater push (with some pull back) for community involvement during the 2000s.

We now turn to a discussion of these technical developments in terms of the national institutional and political dimensions (institutional framework and capacity, financial resource capacity and political will, civil society's role and political will) as well as global dynamics and the role of international organizations. In this discussion we will illustrate many of the points by quoting from the key informants we interviewed.

Institutional Framework and Capacity

With respect to decentralization, the 1981 Education Law enacted at the beginning of Mubarak's administration echoed earlier definitions (e.g., the 1883 provincial councils statute,[48] the 1939 zones decree,[49] and the 1960 Local Administrative Law;[50] see Ibrahim & Hozayn, 2006) of the division of responsibilities between the central MOE and the governorates, while also clarifying the overarching authority of the center. Project activities during the 1980s and 1990s contributed to organizational and personnel capacity development, especially at the central and, in a few governorates, at the local (*muddiriya*, *idarra*, and school levels). However, during these decades no

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[48] According to Ibrahim and Hozayn (2006), "the first decentralization of education in Egypt occurred during the British occupation, when the Provincial Councils (PC) were established by an 1883 occupation law; however, this law was not activated until 1909, when PC's were granted full recognition via Law 22, which allowed them to administer and finance provincial schools. According to Russell (2001), PC's were established because they were 'the easiest way to build the lower tier of schools without great expenditure…In keeping with [the desire of the rulers] to expand basic literacy but to maintain control, PC's were created to supervise all forms of vernacular education. Thus, local elites would oversee the dispersion of funds to these schools' (p. 52)" (pp. 11–12).

[49] Ibrahim and Hozayn (2006) report that "the second attempt at decentralization of education in Egypt took place in May 1939, when a ministerial decree divided Egypt into six educational zones and granted technical, administrative, and financial responsibilities to local authorities… Each zone was under the direction of a "controller" or "director" appointed by the Ministry. The zone controllers had limited powers to disburse the budget, but were in charge of all professional and administrative matters pertaining to all public schools" (p. 15).

[50] Ibrahim and Hozayn (2006) state that "the third decentralization of education was, initially, part of a larger scheme related to the development of rural areas of Egypt.… The legal framework underpinning the Local Councils, established between 1960 and 1979, is essentially the same one which underpins the present education system [in 2006]. This framework covers two major areas: local administration laws and education laws.… In 1960 the Local Administrative Law was issued with the aim of distributing authority for planning, implementation, and evaluation of education between the center and the local, so that a healthy administrative decentralization could be achieved, in order that central bodies would have more time to focus on setting general policies and regulations. As far as education was concerned, the law gave local units (*markiz*, villages, cities) responsibility for establishing, equipping, and running different kinds of schools" (p. 19–20).

significant decrees or laws were issued that promoted decentralization, while, particularly during the 1990s, MOE actions (purging personnel and materials and specifying a dress code) may be seen as reinforcing a centralized system.

The 2001 and 2003 ministerial decrees granted Alexandria's governor and then six other governors authority over educational reform in their governorates, reflecting an increased momentum toward decentralization. This momentum was also signaled in the National Democratic Party's 2002 "Education Reform Policy" statement, the educational management section of the 2003 "National Education Standards," the 2004 MOE report on "Reforming Pre-University Education Programs, and the institutionalization of decentralization program of the 2007 national "Strategic Plan for Education." Paralleling and mutually reinforcing the words in these documents, a variety of capacity development, organizational restructuring, planning, and piloting activities took place—perhaps the most important being the 2007 focus of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on administrative and financial decentralization pilots. One should still note that during this period there were also moves to strengthen central government authority and responsibility. While the 2003 National Standards had a section identifying indicators for managers at various levels of the system, overall they provided a mechanism for centrally defining what administrators, teachers, students, and the community should do. In addition, while the 2006 law establishing the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation defines a role for school-level and other personnel to participate in the process, it is a centrally defined framework and process designed to shape how schools operate.

These points were echoed in the interviews we conducted. For example, an MOE official, in discussing issues of financial decentralization, observed that "the regulations of expenditures… the documentation [requirements], and a lack of trust… make it difficult for the implementers of the change" (interview, Mustafa Abdel Samie, February 18, 2008). The existing policy constraints on decentralization were also mentioned by two Egyptians who have worked for USAID: "It will take a long time to change all the rules and regulations… so that Ministry and the governorates and the *idarras* and everybody can take appropriate actions, to hire the right people, to reward good performance" (interview, Hala El Serafy , February 18, 2008); and although "there is a drift toward decentralization, there actually is so much centralization in finance… If we look behind every law and every policy, it is centralized" (interview, Mona Zikri, February 18, 2008).

Interviewees called attention to issues of institutional and individual capacity (knowledge, skill, and attitudes) as well as institutional and policy framework. For instance, a long-serving Minister of Education (1991–2004) focused on central ministry personnel: "I have to presume that there were some people who were not ready [to give up their authority]. But [progress can be made] by convincing these people, by raising their awareness, by proving to them that… they are not… delegating authority to nothing" (interview, Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din, February 16, 2008). And three other ministry officials and an Egyptian staff member of USAID/Egypt shared their views on the limitations on decentralization posed by central and local personnel's capacity. One stated that "I think there are many challenges [to decentralization]. The culture should also be subjected to change… People at the local level are afraid to make individual [versus]… collective action… how to be involved, to participate in the school… how to support their own future… At the higher levels people don't want to decentralize… and even governors view decentralization as mainly about giving them more power… I see this as form of re-centralization" (interview, Hassan El Bilawi, February 15, 2008). A second commented that "even if the Minister of Education announced that there is no more centralization, the… managers of schools, the principals… are afraid to use their [power]… They still like to ask the central ministry about everything [to get approval]… Now the governors should take a role and do their assignment, be responsible for decentralization. But also

they usually ask the Minister… to know what they should do" (interview, Mustafa Abdel Samie, February 8, 2008). The third expressed that "what is happening is we're a culture that is very much prone to 'right and wrong' and you can't do that with decentralization. You have to support people to help them understand their role… [in] a friendly context, supportive context… to let them make mistakes along the way.… None of those… are in the place where people will delegate authority. If you look behind any decisions, you will still find the Pharoh" (interview, Mona Zikri, February 17, 2008). And the fourth confided, "to be frank with you, Egypt all during its history has been a centralized country… So, we used to worship our Pharoh and we treated him like god. So today when the President says something, we obey" (interview, Nadia Gamal El Din, May 4, 2008).

In terms of community participation, the 1980s witnessed no significant laws or decrees being issued. However, in 1993 and 1998 Ministerial Decrees enabled local school community parent-teacher councils (PTCs) to raise funds and participate in aspects of school governance, including monitoring educational quality. A 1999 Law established an NGO Department in the MOE, enabling NGO involvement in education, though restricting "political" activity. After the 1999 Law was ruled unconstitutional, a 2002 Law concerning NGOs was passed, allowing NGOs to receive funds from Egyptian and non-Egyptian sources. After reform projects helped activate boards of trustees (BOTs), Ministerial Decrees in 2005 and 2006 sought to specify membership, responsibilities, and authority of the BOTs and PTCs.

Parental and community involvement increased during this period, particularly at the school level in relation to project-supported activities, but also at the *idarra*, *muddiriya*, and national levels. According to an Egyptian staff member of USAID and the World Bank, "As for community [participation], we knew that there was the Community Schools [project] coming on board [in 1992]… However, there wasn't much community involvement.… The first time I started hearing about community schools was in 1998, 1999… [W]ith the community we are talking about… changes of attitude and changes in culture; we're not talking about changes in the law. So, I think that there has been a lot of mobilization on the part of all projects… and a new relationship has been forged between communities and schools… where projects are operating.… [However,] when we started [CIDA-funded STEP2 project] in 2005, we did not find [a strong] relationship between the schools and communities [where] we began to work" (interview, Mona Zikri, February 17, 2008).

Financial Resource Capacity and Political Will

The financial resource aspect of the institutional dimension is generally viewed as positively related to leaders' political will to implement reform—i.e., greater resources enhance and reflect greater political will to undertake reforms.[51] Two interviewees (one who worked in the MOE and the other in USAID/Egypt) express their agreement with this point. One said, "I'm optimistic [about future prospects for decentralization], but we need two things:… a large budget… [and] the commitment/consciousness of the people in the field and the public… [i.e.,] the political will" (interview, Mustafa Abdel Samie , February 8, 2008). The other noted, "You can't just decentralize without support… and without building a culture of accountability. You need well-designed policy decisions, you need finance. But I don't think any of these are in place" (interview, Mona Zikri, February 17, 2008). Furthermore, another Egyptian staff member of USAID/Egypt suggests that since 2000 there has been a high degree of political will:

[51] Note that here we discuss political will in relation to two other factors, financial resource capacity and civil society's role. Moreover, we are subsuming the leadership factor under political will.

> I guess what's happening now has never happened before. This is first time that not only the Minister of Education or one governor or two are thinking of [reform] ideas… It's the whole… country.… I can tell you why I'm very optimistic. One thing, the [National Democratic Party (NDP)] and even other parties are in line with this new policy of decentralization. (interview, Hala El Serafy, February 18, 2008)

In the case of Egypt, however, a negative relationship between resources and reform efforts was also an important part of the picture. That is, the political will of central authorities to promote decentralization and community participation was in part influenced by limitations of resources. Indeed, this appears to be the case in earlier years when the central authority pursued reform initiatives (e.g., the 1883 provincial councils statute, the 1939 zones decree, and the 1960 Local Administrative Law; see Ibrahim & Hozayn, 2006). From the beginning of his presidency, in 1981, Mubarak inherited financial challenges, which escalated by the early 1990s. The Egyptian government's financial resource capacity, moreover, was enhanced, but with significant restrictions on public expenditure, when it negotiated a structural adjustment program to obtain a loan from the World Bank. These fiscal challenges, exacerbated by quantitative expansion of the education system, encouraged the Mubarak government to experiment with laws and pilot project toward decentralizing responsibilities (if not authority) and increasing community participation during this period. Relevant here are comments made by an Egyptian who has worked for USAID/Egypt and the World Bank:

> One other thing [I want to say] about decentralization… [and] community participation. It seems to me like the government is [moving]… responsibilities… out to the communities, civil society.… [and] the focus is only on a payment.… The government is poor, so you pay.… It's okay to have the civil society be a partner to the government, but the public sector has a role, it cannot disappear… And the civil society says, 'Am I supposed to be paying for all of this?…What is in it for me?' And at the same time the government is making the policies, and the civil society has no role in that. (interview, Mona Zikri, February 17, 2008)

Limitations in financial resources, however, seem to be a relatively constant feature of the Egyptian scene, and thus cannot help us to understand the significant increase in efforts toward decentralization and community participation that occurred in the early years of the 21st century. To understand this, more recent spike in political will and government activity we need to consider an aspect of the political dimension, civil society's role.

Civil Society's Role and Political Will

Similar to the case of financial resources, one might assume a positive relationship between the degree of mobilization of civil society and the political will of central authorities to promote reform. And, indeed, such a relationship between civil society's will (and capacity) and reform was noted by the long-serving Minister of Education (1991–2004):

> I… perceived… problems in education in Egypt.… I think that we [those in the Ministry] have done a good job.… But… it is easy to make a decision, it is easy to put a correct structure [in place],… but the most difficult is to change attitudes.… To succeed in decentralization, you have to have power in local people. You have to train them and you have to raise them to standards in which

> you are confident that you are delegating power to at least as efficient as you are. (interview, Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din, February 16, 2008)

However, in the case of Egypt the more salient relationship is a negative one. That is, despite clear financial needs, central authorities hesitated to foster decentralization and community participation in education because the most organized and active segment of civil society were groups identified as radical Islamists, with whom the government was engaged in (sometimes violent) conflict and competition for the "minds and souls" of the citizenry. Recall that Mubarak became president following Sadat's assassination and encountered an increasingly violent struggle with certain radical Islamists (at least until 1997) but he also faced a growing political challenge by individual members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other nonviolent radical Islamist groups who provided social services to local communities and served as candidates or voted for them in elections for the People's Assembly, for example. Thus, while some limited moves toward decentralization and community participation in the 1990s were framed in terms "democratization" and improving quality, central authorities referenced "national security" in explaining their ambivalence to implementation of such reforms as well as their direct actions to limit local initiative (e.g., purging of educators and curricular materials, or enacting the school uniform law). As one MOE official expressed it: "I think that the growing up of the Muslim Brotherhood [and other radical Islamist groups],… presented a danger, because having decentralization with such people… they can use democracy, but… they abuse it… as happened in Iran,… in Algeria… also Hamas [in Palestine]. So, election is not democracy… [which] means freedom and supporting the individual to say what he wants" (interview, Hassan El Bilawi, February 15, 2008).

The non-aggression pact negotiated between the Egyptian government and certain violent radical Islamist groups after the attack on tourists in Luxor in 1997 seems to be one of the major explanations for the take-off in reform efforts fostering educational governance and management reform (i.e., decentralization and community participation). Also, it is important to note that the Egyptian government had "purged" from the schools thousands of educators suspected of having ties to—and seeking to carrying out the agenda of—radical Islamist groups, and thus the school-communities might be perceived as less threatening to the government and ruling party. At the same time, however, the struggle for political control in Egypt continued, with Muslim Brotherhood and other radical Islamist group supporters achieving a sizeable minority in the People's Assembly in 2006. However, after the 1997 settlement, the ruling National Democratic Party and the Egyptian government apparently perceived themselves to be in a more viable position to promote reforms. Therefore, while not ignoring "security" issues, the government pursued strategies to enhance its legitimacy within communities—providing more and better educational services and encouraging active participation of at least certain individuals and groups.[52] The following excerpt from an interview with a Ministry of Education official signals this change in the political environment:

> *MG*: Is the issue of [radical] Islamist… groups still a big issue in Egypt?
>
> *Interviewee:* No, no, no, no, no.
>
> *MG*: When did that change?
>
> *Interviewee*: Well, it goes through many channels… 1) the security system;… 2) raising consciousness of people through the churches, mosques, and so on;

[52] On the compensatory legitimation function of decentralization and community participation reforms, see Weiler (1989).

> and 3) using schools as centers of raising consciousness… to elaborate new ideas, elaborate critical thinking of students and parents…
>
> *MG:* And do you think this new atmosphere makes it easier to give more authority to the schools and to decentralize?
>
> *Interviewee*: Yes, yes, yes*,* in addition to the Ministry's efforts to train managers… especially in the interpersonal skills, not just managerial skills… (interview, Mustafa Abdel Samie, February 8, 2008)

Importantly, the idea of providing "relevant" and "needed" educational and other social services to communities as part of a strategy to weaken the perceived threat of Muslim Brotherhood and radical Islamist groups, whose base was built through provision of such services, also resonated with multilateral and bilateral development agencies.

Global Dynamics and International Organizations

The above discussion, framed around national institutional and political dimensions, portrays Egypt in relative isolation from the international and global developments. However, as an example, we need to factor in Egypt's relations with Israel (linked to the Israeli-Palestinian struggle). Mubarak's presidential period began approximately two years after the Camp David peace accord between Israel and Egypt. As with previous wars with Israel (e.g., 1948, 1954, and 1967), the 1973 war took a toll of human life but also negatively impacted Egypt's economic situation, including funds available to increase access to and quality of education. The peace accord opened opportunities for international development agency support, but it also added fuel to the conflict between the Egyptian government and radical Islamist groups. Similarly, Egypt's key political role in support of the U.S.-led war on Iraq in 1991 enabled Egypt to receive debt forgiveness and financial aid from international organizations as well as to a heightening of conflict between the Egyptian government and radical Islamist groups.

Because of educational, political, and economic developments within Egypt, but also because of global developments during this period, Egypt has been a major recipient of foreign assistance. This involves the role played by international (multilateral and bilateral) agencies as well as international NGOs, both in circulating ideas and building capacity (through funding, technical assistance, and training). We should mention, among others, the role played by UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNDP assessments, conferences, and projects; World Bank reports and loan-funded projects; the European Union's funded projects; and USAID studies and funded projects. The 1990, intergovernmental agency-organized World Conference on Education for All (EFA) and, perhaps more so, the Dakar EFA Conference in 2000 served as catalysts of ideas and actions for educational reform, including undertaking reforms in governance and management (i.e., decentralization and community participation) to improve educational quality. And UNICEF's and CIDA's Community Schools project (1992–2004) functioned as a lighthouse signaling how educators and community members in local communities could effectively take on responsibilities for establishing and managing educational institutions. And UNDP (in collaboration with the Institute for National Planning in Egypt) offered annual (2000-present) critiques of and encouragements for the Egyptian government's efforts to increase decentralization and community participation. The (basic) Education Enhancement (1996–2004) and the Secondary Education Enhancement (1999–2004) projects, funded through World Bank loans, are also notable.

However, we must be careful not to represent the relationship between these organizations and Egypt in a simplistic, one-way imposition model. For instance, an MOE official criticized such impositions: "We called for a donor basket… but they [the donors] refused it… The Ministry of

International Cooperation asked to use [extra money from an existing loan project] for technical education, but the World Bank said 'No,… you have to spend it on [general] secondary education'" (interview, Mustafa Abdel Samie, February 8, 2008). And, similarly, another MOE official stated that sometimes an international organization-funded "expert decides to apply [in Egypt] an idea…—something like decentralization –… [without] looking at the reality of the time or the reality of the society itself" (interview, Nadia Gamal El Din, May 4, 2008). However, other MOE officials referred to a more supportive role of international organizations, for example, as providing "windows to be engaged with international trends" (interview, Hassan El Bilawi, February 15, 2008) or as "backing [of actions taken by the MOE] by the international community;… they were willing to help me, but without any pressure" (interview, Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din, February 16, 2008). There were also references to occasions when Egyptian officials were proactive in trying to shape the agendas of international organizations, even while being influenced by their policies. A former USAID/Egypt staff member commented that "Minister of Education Ahmed Fathy Sorour attended the Jomtiem, Thailand World Conference on Education for All, and he spoke about the progress that was being made in Egypt. Coming back from the conference, the Minister had a head of steam" (interview, Jerry Wood, January 9, 2008). And a former Minister of Education explained that "the World Bank at that time was even putting ceilings on the spending in education. And this was the reason… that I [as the Egyptian Government representative] put a resolution, in front of the summit meeting [of non-aligned nations], that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund should not put a ceiling on education. And this was adopted by the summit" (interview, Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din, February 16, 2008).

As a bilateral aid organization, USAID played a prominent role in relation to the Egyptian government's reform agenda. During the 1980s USAID/Egypt mainly worked with the central government, seeking to reorganize and strengthen the MOE, while also providing funding for school construction, which involved some local actors. In the 1990s USAID/Egypt mainly funded projects focused on teacher training, again working primarily with central authorities though focused on building capacity of school-level personnel. During this period, the one planned USAID/Egypt initiative that would operate at the sub-national level—and primarily outside the management and governance formal education sectors—was rejected by the Minister in 1996. Within a few years, however, the same Minister agreed to similar, sub-nationally organized projects (though mainly focused on formal education)—the New School Program (2000–2008), the Alexandria Pilot Project (2002–2004), and the Education Reform Program (2004–2009). Each project both reflected and also contributed to the growing political will and capacity of actors at various levels of the education system and in the community toward implementing decentralization and community participation.[53] This could also be characterized as a mutually reinforcing relationship between provision of resources by international organizations and the political will of government officials, with international funding at times being dependent on demonstrated political will and political will at times being enhanced through internationally funded initiatives.

Interviewees had somewhat differing perspectives on the nature of the influence of bilateral organizations like USAID on Egyptian educational policy and practice. According to one former USAID/Egypt staff member, the extent of decentralization evident in Egypt in the education sector prior to 2000 was "zero.… Everything had to come from the central Ministry.… When we [USAID] started talking with the governors, we started being able to get things done. When we talked with the district officers, we knew that we had governors' backing" (interview, Sally Patton, June 18, 2008).

[53] One can observe how the global level developments connect to the national level factors of political will and institutional capacity.

However, another former USAID/Egypt staff member indicated that "the whole agenda of decentralization… was in the 1980s… related to local government. And the Presidential Decree [allocating authority to governors]… I don't know what the driver was, but it was way before we [USAID staff members] were talking about decentralization of education" (interview, Mona Zikri, February 17, 2008).

Particularly in the case of USAID projects, one has to consider the role played in educational reform in Egypt by international NGOs (e.g., Academy for Educational Development, Aguirre International, American Institutes for Research, CARE, Creative Associates, Education Development Center, Research Triangle Institute). Some of these NGOs have operated in Egypt since the early 1980s, being contracted by USAID/Egypt to conduct studies/assessment, provide technical assistance, organize in-country and overseas training activities. The various Egyptian and, in smaller numbers, non-Egyptian staff and consultants hired by these organizations have certainly helped to develop the knowledge and skill of MOE personnel and community members. Importantly, at least for the Egyptians, many continued to contribute after their employment on a particular project, either by working on another project, by forming/joining a local NGO that worked with the government, or by becoming (perhaps again) an MOE staff member.

This latter point is a good reminder that although we have documented the role played by international actors and other developments within the world system, it should be clear that international encouragement and pressures toward decentralization and community participation have only recently yielded what appear to be significant movements in this direction. Earlier "interventions" in this regard in Egypt may have been less effective because they were less concerted and sometimes contradictory, or it may be that time was required for the contributions to accumulate. However, it is also clear that national as well as local actors, and their relationships (collaborative and conflict-laden), are an important part of the above-told story of reforming governance and management in Egypt.

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