Literacy and Adult Education in Egypt: Achievements and Challenges

Mohamed M. Ghoneim Sywelem[*]

Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, Suez University, Suez, Egypt
*Corresponding author: ghoneim23@gmail.com

Abstract This paper set out to examine the issue of Literacy and Adult Education in Egypt. The paper discussed the current status of Literacy and Adult Education in Egypt and the policies undertaken by either the Government or Non- government Organizations (NGOs) to provide programs to educate Adult Learners, and face the Illiteracy problem which remains one of the principal issues that limit the development and social transformation in Egypt. The paper followed the descriptive research method, and it concluded with some recommendations to explore alternative ways of improving quality and practice of Literacy and Adult Education programs under the rubric of lifelong learning. It argued that Literacy and Adult Education programs should help adult learners to improve their lives as individuals and as positive members in the community, especially after the Egyptian Revolution which called for "Aish, Horreya, Adala Egtema'eya!" or "Bread, freedom, social justice!".

Cite This Article: Mohamed M. Ghoneim Sywelem, "Literacy and Adult Education in Egypt: Achievements and Challenges." *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 3, no. 7 (2015): 793-799. doi: 10.12691/education-3-7-1.

1. Introduction

Egypt is one of the most populous countries in the world. The Education System in Egypt is one of the largest in the world with around 43,000 schools, 1.6 million personnel (teachers, administrators and other staff), and over 16 million students at different levels of education. Reform efforts have been ongoing and much work has been exerted by the Egyptian government to improve the status of education and its quality in order to reach the Education for All goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 [15].

The right to education is guaranteed by the Egyptian Constitution. The education of Egypt's young people shapes their individual opportunities and the economic direction of the entire country [20]. Even though there is evident and notable progress, there are still many challenges facing the education system in Egypt. These include illiteracy that is still prevalent, in particular among women; an increasing number of school dropouts; a low rate of enrollment at the pre-school level; a high number of unemployed graduates due to lack of linkages between education and the job market [15]; beside poor quality of state-provided schooling which has led to the emergence of private tutoring to fill the educational gaps left by the formal schooling system [21].

According to the UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report of 2010, there are still nearly 759 million Non-literates in the world, 17 million of them living in Egypt [42]. Although the year of 2003 to 2012 has been declared as the United Nations Literacy Decade, there are still nearly a billion adults of the world's population illiterate with at least 600 million of them being women and over 70% of them living in nine large countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan [1,32].

Increasing rate of illiteracy in every country has bad effects on future life of people. Negm [28] argued that Illiterate communities are excluded from benefiting from national development, which would supports sustainable development and help societies raise and progress in economy and politics. And despite the growing number of educated people in the Arab world and the increase of community-based programs in number, subjects and quality, particularly in adult learning, illiteracy remains one of the principal issues that limit the development and social transformation in the region.

2. The Cconceptual Framework

The article follows the descriptive style in order to get a deep understanding of the status of literacy and adult education in Egypt. The paper focused on reviewing the literature related to literacy and adult education, and analyzing relevant national and regional reports.

2.1. Concept of Literacy and Adult Education

There is no officially recognized definition of Literacy and Adult Education. For a long time, it was seen as a means to provide people who did not finish school with education opportunities. For this reason, literacy was the

major component of Adult Education. Over time, the concept of Literacy and Adult Education widened and now also includes other kinds of education, such as training for employment, education on rights, health, etc. [19].

Adult Education can also be defined as any organized and sustained educational activities that take place both within and outside educational institutions, for persons of all ages [47]. It aims at meeting the educational needs of learners not enrolled in formal education, those who have dropped out of school or those who have never had a chance to receive formal schooling, due to a complex and intricate set of social, economic reasons as well as the failure of basic education systems to retain students. These may be adults, youth or children [43].

Most of the Arab Region still deals with Adult Education as a "literacy issue"; while Adult Education has become more diversified recently in terms of levels, goals, content, methodologies, teaching and learning skills, monitoring of progress and evaluation of results [43]. It should not just target literacy but must also promote contemporary thought, critical thinking, adaptation to the changing marketplace, tolerance and acceptance of the other, and integration with the technology of this era [15].

Iskander [16] argued that adult learning in Egypt is still narrowly defined. It is considered equivalent to acquiring literacy skills, or at most may expand to include vocational education.

2.2. The Importance of Adult Literacy for the Egyptian Society

To cope with the new challenges to globalization solidarity, countries need informed and literate populations capable of articulating their views and defending their interests. It is apparent from the foregoing that education is an indispensable vector for social economic and political progress in any society. Prah, K. [13] argued that modern democracies require literate and relatively educated populations. And the democratic potential of modern societies cannot be actualized if the population remains uneducated and consequently uninvolved in the collective communicational life of the society. Kofi Annan, the former United Nations Secretary – General, said on March 13, 2005 "without achieving gender equality for girls in education, the world had no chance of achieving many of the ambitious health, social and development targets it has set for itself" [35]. The commission of the African Union in its "strategic framework for Deadline 2015" has assured that "Since women and girls have been denied the opportunity of acquiring knowledge and skills; they are severely under-represented in the commanding height of the social, political and economic life of a large majority of the countries of Africa" [3].

Improving society requires making democracy work. And making democracy work requires that schools take this goal seriously: to educate and nurture engaged and informed democratic citizens [18]. There is a strong link between learning and democracy. This so because, as acknowledged at the UNESCO Fifth International Conference held in Hamburg in 1997, "substantive democracy and a culture of peace are not given; they need to be constructed". For democracy to be achieved,

education is needed to educate citizens on their rights and responsibilities as democracy also requires people to actively participate at local, national and global levels [45].

It is important to note that the need for Adult and Non-formal Education programs in Egypt becomes greater especially after the 25th January Revolution, as the Egyptian young women and men are now a formidable force for change. They are ready to take up new initiatives as entrepreneurs, acquire additional skills to access better jobs, and engage in community and political decisions and programs.

3. Current Status of Adult Education in Egypt

According to UNESCO report [44] many youths in Egypt who complete schooling do not acquire sufficient reading, writing and numeracy skills which they need to access knowledge on health, education, the environment, and the world of work. More importantly; Egypt suffers from low enrollment rates with almost 20% of young boys and girls never having been to school. Young people end up dropping out of schools at alarming rates and those who drop out, do so at as young as ten years of age [38]. According to the recent and comprehensive 2010 Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE), About one third of those in the poorest households have never been to school and another 24% of them dropped out before finishing basic education [37].

While many indicators reflect Egypt's remarkable progress, there remain challenges. Since poverty and illiteracy are closely linked, studies [4,20] assured that there is a significant correlation between illiteracy and poverty, and the map of illiteracy often coincides with the map of poverty, and that correlation not only holds true between countries, but between regions in the same country as well. El Rafei, M., et al, [11] indicated that the poverty rate in Egypt reaches 25.2% of the population, with 4.8% of the population (4.32 million) living under extreme poverty conditions, the poverty rates of 17% in Lower Egypt and 51.4% in Upper Egypt reveals significant regional disparities. The illiteracy rate is reported to be 24.9% of the population, concentrating among female population and in rural areas.

3.1. Literacy versus Illiteracy in Egypt

Literacy is a word that is usually associated with the positive aspects of human civilization, and of social and economic development. However, the word illiteracy has been, and is still used nowadays to characterize poverty and lack of education in various parts of the world. John Daniel, former UNESCO Assistant Director General for Education, alarmingly warned "the Arab region has some of the world's lowest adult literacy rates, with only (62.2%) of the region's population of 15 and over able to read and write in (2000-2004) well below the world average of (84%) and the developing countries average of (76.4%)" [10].

Although the Arab States regional reports on Education for All and available research materials reveal that the region has made great strides and much progress to curb illiteracy, yet the rapid increase in population has raised

the number of people who cannot read or write in the last decades. Though the percentage of illiterate people out of the total population has steadily decreased from 73% in 1970 to 48.7% in 1990 to 35.6% in the year 2004, the number of illiterates rose from 50 million in 1975 to 61 million in 1990 to 70 million in 2004 [13].

As a result of high rates of illiteracy, Egypt is categorized among a group known as "literacy deprived countries", which also includes Mauritania, Iraq, Yemen, Djibouti, Morocco, and Sudan [13]. All countries, in this group, suffer from a shortage of financial resources and large populations spread over vast geographical areas, and still suffer from a wide discrepancy between urban and rural literacy for both genders because of the limited available resources and the inability of the education facilities to reach out to all the illiterates [43].

According to the report of The National Council for Women (2014) illiteracy still constitutes an obstacle to the advancement of the status of women in the Egyptian Society and the understanding and their rights, roles and reality and the importance of exercising their duties on fuller form, although there is a slight improvement in the low literacy rate among women from 37.3% in 2006 to 32.5% in 2012, but this ratio still high, especially in the countryside [27].

3.2. Illiteracy Distribution in Egypt

Illiteracy distribution inside Egypt is different from one place to another in terms of location and gender, Table 1 shows illiteracy distribution across the country based on place and gender:

Table 1. Illiteracy distribution by Gender and Place (No. in million)

Statement	Rural	Urban	Total
Male	3.9	1.7	5.6
	21%	10%	31%
Female	7.8	3.4	11.2
	42%	27%	69%
Total	11.7	5.1	16.8
	63%	37%	100%

Source: Adult Education Authority, *the National Report on Literacy and Adult Education*, Cairo, Egypt, May, 2008.

Table 1 shows that illiteracy rates in Egypt is higher in rural areas than urban areas as well as among females than males. The majority of Egypt's Non-literates are poor, rural, adult women from Upper Egypt. Likewise, many of the urban Non-literates are migrants from Upper Egypt.

The illiteracy distribution across Egypt can also be classified in terms of the age; Table 2 shows illiteracy distribution in Egypt based on age:

Table 2. Distribution of Illiteracy by age (+10) (No. in million)

Age group	Population	Illiterates No.	Illiteracy rate
Over 60	4.6	2.6	56.5%
From 45 to 60	10	4.8	48%
From 15 to 45	35	8.2	23.4%
From 10 to 15	7.7	1.2	15.6%

Source: Adult Education Authority, *the National Report on Literacy and Adult Education*, Cairo, Egypt, May, 2008.

Based on the above table, the number and rate of Illiteracy in Egypt are generally more extensive in age group from 15- 45 years old (8.2 million illiterates), and less extensive in age group from 10- 15 years old (1.2 million illiterates). Thus, it is important to note that Egypt faces a serious illiteracy problem which represents chronic dilemma and needs sincere and hard efforts to be eradicated, as illiteracy threatens the fate of a wide sector of the Egyptian population and negatively affects their cultural and creative capacities.

4. Egypt's Policies to eradicate Illiteracy

As a member of the global community, Egypt has a commitment to eradicate illiteracy and achieve progress in formal and Non-formal education. Hence, laws have been enacted since the early 1990s to mobilize state and civil society efforts by launching the National Campaign for Literacy and Adult Education. The National Plan for Literacy targets illiterate youth and young adults aged 15 to 35 [43]. Egypt has intensified its efforts to eradicate illiteracy among illiterate people; here are some of these efforts:

4.1. The General Association for Literacy and Adult Education (GALAE)

The 1992 law stipulating the establishment of the General Association for Literacy and Adult Education (GALAE), granting it responsibility for planning, executing, implementing and coordinating educational activities in the country, represents the highest political involvement in tackling the problems of illiteracy in Egypt [43]. In 1994, GALAE launched a 10-year literacy campaign. Although it aimed only to enable adults to learn how to read and write Arabic and to use written arithmetic, GALAE oriented its curriculum to topics and vocabulary that most adults would find useful in daily life [29].

GALAE has developed an innovative approach described as "free and voluntary contractual agreement for literacy". The Association recruits teachers, educators, university students and vocational college graduates, and religious leaders to contribute to literacy eradication within their own communities. The Association identifies the needs and classifies the populations by age, profession and learning needs, offers books, stationery and teaching aids free of charge, and conducts testing every six months [14].

GALAE has published 46 books on a variety of subjects (16 of which were produced in collaboration with UNESCO, and opened 100 lending libraries in a number of regions [43]. In an effort to encourage lifelong and self-directed learning, GALAE is distributing, free of charge, taped literacy courses and guidebooks. Literacy classes have also been started in prisons, in community clinics, in women's organizations, in mosques and churches, in youth and sports centers with flexible times and encouraging incentives. Hundreds of young people have been trained to offer literacy, and health professionals, such as nurses and midwives in villages have also been recruited to contribute to these efforts. As well as a special daily newspaper entitled "Enlightenment" (Tanweer) has been produced and distributed free of charge to the newly literate [14]. Radio and television are also being used in illiteracy eradication efforts. These televised and broadcast literacy lessons are offered at different times during the day and cover the majority of Egypt's governorates. An agreement with NileSat, the Egyptian satellite channel, has been has been made at starting illiteracy eradication programs [43].

4.2. Caritas Egypt Adult Literacy Program

Caritas Egypt was founded in 1967 by Caritas international "to establish social justice and serve the poorest of the poor" in Egypt [8]. Caritas Egypt helps adults analyze and resolve problems of daily life through literacy, dialogue, and problem-solving. Inspired from Paulo Freire pedagogy, the program is based on human rights awareness. Environment and health awareness components are also closely given in the literacy sessions. The health program has been developed to respond systematically to the needs of the participants and their communities. It has four principal components: 1) general hygiene; 2) nutrition; 3) reproductive health; and 4) health and the environment. The program is implemented in deprived areas of the Cairo and Giza governorates and caters for 20,000 participants per year, of whom 85 % are women [46]. In 2006, Caritas Egypt was recognized by UNESCO as one of the best nine adult literacy programs in the world [41].

4.3. The Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education (ANLAE)

The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), which was held in Hamburg in 1997, provided a comprehensive and holistic view of Adult Education [43]. The establishment of the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education has been identified as one of the major results of CONFINTEA V (Hamburg, 1997). The ANLAE was established in 1999 in Egypt to support Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations and enable them to play an active role in literacy and Adult Education [43].

4.4. The Community Based Education Initiatives

Despite the Ministry of Education's effort to ensure access to all school age children, there are some groups who remain outside the school system, including children who have dropped out of mainstream schools (estimated at 0.22% and 2.9% of the age group from the primary and preparatory levels, respectively), and those who never enroll because of either extreme poverty or complete lack of access. In order to block this major source of illiteracy, the Egyptian government has provided various forms of educational institutions. Since 1992, the Ministry of Education and other partners have been providing a number of initiatives to provide quality education to those under-served, underprivileged, dropouts, and street children, and include both girls and boys. The Community schools, the one-classroom schools, and the Girls' Friendly Schools all fall in this category. All these initiatives have together created a type of education referred to as Community Based Education (CBE) [25].

4.5. Vodafone's National Initiative to Eradicate Illiteracy

Vodafone Egypt Foundation launched a national initiative to support in the illiteracy eradication efforts under the title of "Knowledge is Power". This initiative is considered, by virtue of its ambition and scale, as the largest initiative led by a civil society organization (CSO)

in the area of literacy. This is a reflection of its funding which reached EGP 50 million in the first two phases of the projects including its pilot, in addition to being the largest in terms of its geographical coverage which is currently covering 18 governorates out of Egypt's 27 Governorates [48].

Despite such a great strides in facing illiteracy in Egypt, high rates of illiteracy still exist in the Egyptian society, especially among women. Indeed women today account for two thirds of the Arab region's illiterates and according to the Arab Human Development Report, this rate is not expected to disappear "until 2040" [40].

5. Causes of Illiteracy in Egypt

The causes of the persistent high illiteracy rates in the Egyptian Society could be attributed to many factors, such as:

5.1. Lack of Awareness

Despite the great strides achieved in Adult Education in the Arab Region during the decades, it has been found that "The awareness in the region of the importance of education and its central role in achieving sustainable human and social development and a competitive edge on the global market has not been matched by the provision of the tools necessary to set effective policies and put in place implementable goals and strategies to achieve" [6].

5.2. Socio-economic Conditions

Illiteracy correlates with poverty. It is then no surprise that the statistics show that the highest rates of illiteracy are among poor rural adult women [41]. Limited financial resources lead some parents to decide to only send boys to school. There is a general belief that girls do not need schooling as their future roles are restricted to being mothers and homemakers [2]. There was also a large gap in school enrolment between urban and rural areas, rural poor being the most disadvantaged [38]. A striking result is from the Survey of Young People in Egypt [30] dataset which shows that poor youth aged 18-29 have been the most disadvantaged in terms of access to preschool. Whereas more than 70% of Egypt's youth in the highest quintile have attended kindergarten, the percentage falls sharply along the wealth group where it reaches only 11% for the lowest quintile. The phenomenon of illiteracy is largely rural, with 76% of all illiterate youth plus 70% of those who can only read and write residing in rural Egypt [30].

5.3. Gender Disparities

While there has been significant progress for girls in primary and secondary school participation globally, there remain disparities between regions and countries. The socio-cultural legacy that is prevalent in Arab societies means that women suffer from a lack of confidence in their abilities and capabilities on the political stage. This is heightened by the increase in illiteracy among rural women and the control of custom, which designates certain types of behavior by women as unseemly [26]. Despite some relative successes on gender issues, the Arab region's rank on gender empowerment is still low.

Egypt ranked 99th with a GDI value of 0.634 in the Gender Related Development Index for 144 countries [39]. In another international study that measured the global gender gap of 58 countries, World Economic Forum 2005, Egypt ranked 58th. Similar indicators can be presented for many Arab countries [17].

5.4. Inadequate Resources

Literacy programs often fail to meet the immediate needs of learners; the lack of qualified, trained educators and trainers; the shortcomings of the basic education system which produces illiterates and put them off learning; the lack of incentives for learning [43]. Adult literacy programs seem to be struggling to attract students, to keep them from dropping out, to get them to pass the literacy test and to prevent them from reverting to illiteracy. The poor Non-literates are often blamed for these failures [4,33].

5.5. Neglecting Rural and Nomadic Areas

Rural communities do not receive adequate education services comprising schools, teachers and material. Low attendance rates are attributed to economic reasons for males and to shortage of resources as well as poverty and early marriage for females. Moreover, the curriculum in rural areas has little relevance to daily life [13]. The rural people can also be characterized as unemployed, living in unsanitary conditions, lacking the capacity to engage in economically productive activities, illiterate and without political voice [24]. Like Rural communities, Nomadic areas receive little attention from the authorities compared to urban centers; schooling for nomadic children is inefficient to acquire the literacy skills and education relevant to their needs and life style. Enrollment rates are very low and less enforced in these areas, there is inequality between the sexes, and girls have low enrollment ratios. Repetition and drop-outs are very common [13].

5.6. Poor Access to Basic Education

While Egypt has made great strides in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of universal basic education enrollment, 27% of young people aged 18-29 have not completed basic education (17% have dropped out of school before completing basic education and 10% have never enrolled in school) [37].

6. Dangers of Illiteracy on Egypt's Future

Illiteracy inscribes a sense of powerlessness, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem on the illiterates, the effects of illiteracy on the future of Egypt can be seen from various perspectives, such as:

6.1. Political Dangers

In a practical sense, citizenship is incapacitated if citizens are illiterate. Their ability to understand social policy processes is seriously curtailed. Subtleties of policy and politics are lost on many [13]. People's failure to contribute to their societies as responsible citizens and participate in elections under the different systems can be attributed to cultural illiteracy as well as to lack of trust in the election results [26].

In the political life, illiteracy stands as an obstacle against practicing a real democracy where low rates of literacy and low political awareness, can lead to illiterates' votes being used by others [5]. Illiteracy and limited access to education stands as an obstacle impacting on citizens' -especially women- participation in parliament, and leads to the majority of women not being registered on the electoral register [34]. In Egypt, low rates of literacy and the economic difficulties have affected voter registration, particularly for parliamentary polls. Thus, candidates often use money to attract voters, to encourage them to vote and to gain a larger number of votes. In social terms, illiteracy reduces electoral participation and registration on voter lists. The illiterate citizen usually refrains from exercising his or her right to vote [26].

6.2. Economic Dangers

Illiterate people earn 30%-42% less than their literate counterparts and do not have the literacy skills required to undertake further vocational education or training to improve their earning capacity [9]. In their pilot study, Martinez & Fernandez [23] assures that the income of a person with poor literacy stays about the same throughout their working life. However, individuals with good literacy and numeracy skills can expect their incomes to increase at least two to three times what they were earning at the beginning of their careers. Young people who do not complete primary schooling are less likely to obtain jobs good enough to avoid poverty. Cree et al. [9] argued that the link between illiteracy and crime is clear. In various countries around the world, studies show that a majority of prison inmates have poor literacy skills. Also, amongst juvenile delinquents, up to 85% are functionally illiterate. This is a high cost to the economy in terms of maintaining prisons, administrating the courts and running the justice system.

6.3. Social Dangers

Illiteracy structurally excludes prospective learners in the educational, political, economic and social process. For those who have entered into adulthood and who for a variety of reasons have been excluded from the ranks of the literate, reality is shrouded in a mist of incomprehension, superstition and ignorance dominate the mind, knowledge is limited to immediately available memory, and memory as an individual faculty, as we all know is unreliable, especially with adulthood and age [13]. Illiterate people, particularly mothers, are more likely to adopt poor nutritional and hygiene practices in their homes. This leads to a higher rate of disease, accidents and other health issues, which in turn raises demand for medical services and causes job absenteeism (due to illness on the part of either the parent or the children). In developing countries, a child born to a mother who can read is 50 percent more likely to survive past age five [9].

7. Recommendations

Despite the significant progress that was made in Adult Education, Egypt is still below the required level in terms

of implementation of the Education for All (EFA) goals, and in terms of the great changes that Egypt witnessed after the Revolution. Egypt's large illiterate population and its huge and growing population, require a diversity of approaches, methods and techniques in order to face the illiteracy problem and promote the awareness of uneducated people politically, socially and economically. Here are some recommendations which may help:

7.1. Adult Ed. Learners

Priority has to be given to the younger and more deprived groups; transferring the literacy classes to illiterates' work places; creating new learning options for illiterates; providing services' packages for the learners in their education areas; providing positive incentives for the learners through integrated services packages; helping the learners to gain life and functional skills, which are suitable for the labor market.

7.2. Adult Ed. Teachers

Adult teachers have to be well prepared; adopting the concept of literacy, which says "*We learn to know, we learn to do, we learn to live together and we learn to make our dreams come true*"; recruiting Local school graduates as teachers for younger children in their local areas – particularly in remote areas and providing continuing professional development for all staff involved in Adult Education Programs.

7.3. Adult Ed. Programs

Programs have to be based on the adult learners' needs and interests; they also have to be designed and updated in a way which reflects the new changes happened in Egypt. Agnaou [4] and Rogers & Street [33] assured that a successful program should be flexible enough to address both stated and symbolic needs of learners.

7.4. Educational Authorities

Ministry of Education and Local Authorities should exert more efforts to get rid of the bureaucracy and boring routine; work to overcome the illiteracy problem and raise the illiterates' awareness to participate actively in new political life. This can be achieved through moving towards decentralization in implementing the literacy programs; providing appropriate funding; eradicating the origins of illiteracy problem (drop-out; repetition and poor access to Basic Education); strengthening local and international cooperation in the field of Adult Education; encouraging the NGOs' Initiatives; supporting post literacy stage to prevent learners from returning back to illiteracy; and developing a national Database for adult learning to be used on strategic and development planning. Street [36] warned that Policy planners and program developers often want to impose certain literacy practices on learners. This generally ends up in alienating the learners and causing them to reject the literacy program altogether.

7.5. Community and Civil Participation

NGOs can participate in educating illiterates and raise their awareness through inviting well-to-do, highly respected business people to contribute to literacy activities in their villages; cooperating with the Adult Education Agency to plan and implement Adult Education Programs; launching media campaigns in villages and remote areas to communicate directly with illiterates; raising funds to implement Adult Education programs especially in remote and deprived areas; evaluating the progress in Adult Education programs based on the achieved and expected results. Borode [7] declared that NGOs are universally recognized as active role players in development programs.

8. Conclusion

In the recent economic crisis, Literacy and Adult Education came up on the agenda as a tool for improving productivity and providing a possible solution to youth unemployment. Literacy and Adult Education can also be seen as a tool for positive change [19]. In countries suffering illiteracy, like Egypt, Literacy and Adult Education mainly consists of literacy courses and the basics of human rights, health and religious awareness. Whereas; in developed countries, where illiteracy is not a prominent issue, the focus of Literacy and Adult Education is on vocational training and continuous professional education to facilitate people's inclusion in the technologically advanced society [12].

This paper has demonstrated that the process of Literacy and Adult Education in Egypt focuses primarily on literacy, and most of the sectors inside Egyptian community still deal with Adult Education as a literacy issue. Egypt still suffers from low literacy rates especially among females; and illiteracy seems to prevail among those members of society who are also in both absolute and relative poverty and lack access to basic amenities. The paper focused on ways of linking Adult Education to development and the efforts of the government and NGOs to fight against illiteracy and other interlocking structural problems of poverty, gender inequality and lack of democratic culture in the Egyptian community. It discussed the need of the Egyptian society for Literacy and Adult Education -especially after the Egyptian Revolution- in order to raise the social, economic and political awareness among Egyptians to take an active part in forming the new era after current political changes. The paper concluded with some recommendations to explore alternative ways of improving quality and practice of Literacy and Adult Education programs under the rubric of lifelong learning. It argued that Literacy and Adult Education should be reconsidered as a means to improve the learners' quality of life, and the aim should be to embark on practices that would help learners to use acquired skills to improve their lives as individuals and positive members in the community, especially after the Egyptian Revolution which called for "*Aish, Horreya, Adala Egtema'eya!*" or "*Bread, freedom, social justice!*" [49].

References

[1] Abudu, Amadu Musah; Fuseini, MosesNaiim & Nuhu, Yusif, "Complementary Role of Functional Literacy Programs in Accelerating Literacy Rate in Ghana," *International Journal of Education and Research,* 1 (11), Nov. 2013.

[2] Adult Education Authority, *the National Report on Literacy and Adult Education*, Cairo, Egypt, May, 2008.

[3] African Union, *Education & Human Resources Program: A Strategic Framework for Deadline 2015*, Commission of the African Union, April 2005.

[4] Agnaou, F., *Gender, Literacy and Empowerment*, New York: Routledge, 2004.

[5] Al-Hadidy, Hana, "Research on Public Participation of Arab Women," In Al-Hadidy. (ed.) *Al-Mar'a Al- Arabiya wa-l-Hayat Al-Ama* (Arab Women and Public Life), Ibn Khaldun Center, Cairo, Egypt, 1996.

[6] Billeh, Victor, "Educational Reform in the Arab Region," *Newsletter of the Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries*, Iran & Turkey, 2 (9), summer 2002.

[7] Borode, M., "The Input of Regional and International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Towards the Development of Adult Education in the Developing Countries," *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1 (2). 132-139. 2011.

[8] Caritas Egypt, "Basic Adult Literacy Program," *Caritas Egypt Report*, Cairo, Egypt, 2011.

[9] Cree, A., Kay, A., & Steward, J., *the Economic & Social Cost of Illiteracy: A Snapshot of Illiteracy in a Global Context*, Final Report from the World Literacy Foundation, 2012.

[10] Daniel, John, "Education for All in the Arab World: Past, Present and Future," *Meeting of Arab Education Ministers on Education for All*, Beirut, Lebanon, 19-23 Jan. 2003.

[11] El Rafei, Moheb, et al., Country Study Summary: Arab Republic of Egypt, *IFAD-UNESCO Global Seminar on "Learning knowledge and skills for agriculture and improving rural livelihoods,"* Paris, France, 27-18 Feb. 2014.

[12] Fannoun, G., Responding to People's Needs Literacy in the "Parallel Education" programme in Palestine. In Denys, K. (Ed.). *Adult Education and Social Change: International Perspectives in Adult Education,* dvv international, Bonn, Germany, 2013.

[13] Hammoud H. R., "Illiteracy in the Arab world,", *Adult Education and Development*, 66, 83-106, 2006.

[14] Hammoud H. R., "Non-formal Education for Girls," *UNESCO*, Beirut, Lebanon, 2001.

[15] Handoussa, H., "Situation Analysis, Key Development Challenges Facing Egypt," *United Nations Development Program (UNDP)*, Cairo, Egypt, 2010.

[16] Iskander, L. "Adult Learning and Poverty Alleviation in Egypt" In Preece, J. & Singh, M. (Eds.) "Adult Learning and Poverty Reduction," *UNESCO Institute for Education*, Hamburg, 2005.

[17] Iskander, L. "Programme Delivery and Approaches to Curriculum Development in Selected Countries of the Arab Region," *Research paper prepared for the UNESCO Regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy*, Doha, 12-14 March 2007.

[18] Kahne, J. & Westheimer, J. "Teaching Democracy: What Schools Need To Do," *Phi Delta Kappan,* 85 (1), 34-67, Sep. 2003.

[19] Kassem, R., Beyond the Beaten Paths Youth empowerment through art projects in Egypt. In Denys, K. (Ed.). *Adult Education and Social Change: International Perspectives in Adult Education*, dvv international, Bonn, Germany, 2013.

[20] Krafft, C. & S. El-Kogali "Chapter 3: Education," *Report on the Survey of Young People in Egypt*. The Population Council, Cairo, Egypt, Jan. 2011.

[21] Loveluck, L. "Education in Egypt: Key Challenges," *Background Paper,* Middle East and North Africa Program, Chatham House, London, March 2012.

[22] Makramalla, Mona, "The effect of literacy acquisition on adult women in Egypt," *Unpublished MA. Thesis*, McGill University, 2013.

[23] Martinez, R. & Fernandez, P., "The Social and Economic Impact of Illiteracy: Analytical Model and Pilot Study," *UNESCO*, 2010.

[24] Maruatona, T., "Issues in Policy and Provision of Non-Formal Basic Education in East and Southern Africa, Diversifying Education Delivery Systems: Reviving Discourse on the Formal/ Non-formal Interface," *Workshop on Non-formal Education,* Gaborone, Botswana, 23-26 June 1999.

[25] MOE- Ministry of Education, "Status and Major Challenges of Literacy in Egypt," *Conference paper for Eighth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting on Education for All: Literacy for Development,* Abuja, Nigeria 21-24 June 2010.

[26] Mustafa, H., Shukor A.G., & Rabi, A.H., Building Democracy in Egypt: Women's Political Participation, Political Party Life and Democratic Elections, *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)*, Stockholm, Sweden, 2005.

[27] NCW, "National Report on Beijing +20, Egypt," National Council for Woman (NCW), Cairo, Egypt, 2014. Available online at:

[28] http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/headquarters/attachments/secti ons/csw/59/national_reviews/egypt_review_en_beijing20.ashx.

[28] Negm, S., *Adult Learning: A precondition for realizing human rights*. In Denys, K. (Ed.). Adult Education and Social Change: International Perspectives in Adult Education, *dvv international*, Bonn. 2013.

[29] Oxenham, J., "Reinforcements from Egypt: Observations from a Comparison of Literacy Strategies," *Adult Education and Development*, 65/2005.

[30] Population Council," Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE), *Preliminary survey findings*, Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center, Cairo, Egypt, 2009.

[31] Prah, K.K., "Democracy, Education, Literacy, and Development: Keynote Address," 10th Year Jubilee Celebrations of the Centre for International Education, University College of Oslo, Norway, August 28-30, 2007.

[32] Restyandito, Alan H. S. Chan, and Fransisca E. Lestariningsih, "A Review on the Use of Technology to Develop Literacy," *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 3 (6). 611-614, Dec. 2013.

[33] Rogers, A., & Street, B., *Adult Literacy and Development: Stories from the Field*, Leicester, UK: NIACE, 2012.

[34] Shvedova, N., Obstacles to women's participation in parliament, In Ballington, J. & Karam, A. (Eds.), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers,* A Revised Edition, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Stockholm, Sweden, 2005.

[35] Simah, J., M., "The Effects of Formal Education on the Traditional Education of the Girl Child among the Mendes of Pujehun District," *a PhD Dissertation*, ST. Clements University, British West Indies, 2005.

[36] Street, Brian, "Implications of the New Literacy Studies for researching women's literacy programs," In A. Robinson-Pant (Ed.), *Women, Literacy and Development: alternative Perspectives*, pp. 57-67, Routledge, New York, 2005.

[37] The Population Council, "Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE)," *Preliminary Report*, Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center, Cairo, Egypt, 2010.

[38] UNDP- United Nations Development Programme, *Egypt Human Development Report: Youth in Egypt: building our future*, Institute of National Planning, Cairo, Egypt, 2010.

[39] UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today's World*, UNDP, New York, 2004.

[40] UNDP, *the Arab Human Development Report 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, Regional Bureau for Arab States. New York, 2002.

[41] UNESCO, "EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006 Literacy for Life," *UNESCO Report*, Paris, France, 2005.

[42] UNESCO, "EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalized," *UNESCO Report*, Paris, France, 2010.

[43] UNESCO, "Literacy and Adult Education in the Arab World," Regional Report for the CONFINTEA V, *Mid-Term Review Conference*, Bangkok, Thailand, Sept. 2003.

[44] UNESCO, "Non-Governmental Organizations' Strategy for Literacy and Adult Education in Egypt," *UNESCO Report*, Cairo Office, Egypt, 2008.

[45] UNESCO, "The Hamburg Declaration: The Agenda for the Future," *Fifth International Conference on Adult Education*, Hamburg, Germany, 14 - 18 July 1997.

[46] UNSECO, "Basic Education Programme for Adults," *Regional Conference "Literacy challenges in the Arab Region: Building partnerships and promoting innovative approaches",* Doha, Qatar, 12-14 March 2007.

[47] Vermeersch, L., & Vandenbrouke, A., "The access of adults to formal and non-formal education in Belgium's Flemish Community Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit," *National report for comparative report of Subproject 5 of LLL2010*, Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College, Dublin, 2010.

[48] Vodafone Egypt, "Sustainability," *Report 2013*, Cairo, Egypt, 2013, available online at http://www.vodafone.com.eg/SustainabilityReport/EN/sustainabili ty_report_EN.pdf.

[49] Wright, Katie Bridget, "Bread, Freedom, and Social Justice: Understanding the Egyptian Revolution", First-Year Writing Contest, *Lake Forest College Publications*, Illinois, 2013. Available online at: Retrieved from http://publications.lakeforest.edu/firstyear_writing_contest/1.