Education 2.0

Chronicles of Technological and Cultural Change in Egypt

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25. The Rise, Fall, and Aftermath of Take-Home Research Projects

Linda Herrera and Heba Shama

Abstract

In March 2020, schools across Egypt closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MOETE) cancelled the traditional end-of-year in-school exams in the transitional years of Grades 3-9 and replaced them with a take-home research project. The very idea of a project went against deeply engrained norms and practices around assessments. This chapter traces the rise, fall, and aftermath of the research projects. It draws on official Ministry communication and social media monitoring combined with in-depth interviews with teachers, parents, and students. Rather than judge this experiment in assessments in simple terms of 'success' or 'failure', the projects allow us to understand the agility of the predatory education marketplace, the prevalence of a 'people versus the state' ethos, how cultures of learning change from the top down and bottom up, and ways that behaviors that begin online spread into mainstream culture and alter education practices.

Keywords

cheating, distance learning, projects, digital inequality, social solidarity, digital resources

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1. An Experiment in Assessments

The Egyptian educational system has historically been dependent on traditional teach-to-the-test assessments that rely heavily on memorization. This system has shaped students' educational socialization and spurred a massive market for tutoring and other educational services focused on test preparation. In 2020, following the nationwide school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the usual end-of-year tests were disrupted. The Minister of Education and Technical Education Dr. Tarek Shawki (2017-2022) substituted exams with research projects for the 'transitional years', meaning Grades 3-9. This alternative assessment had never before been tried. As an idea, the research project idea aligned with core goals of the Education 2.0 reforms which advocated multidisciplinary and exploratory learning for higher order thinking skills, collaboration, and student engagement with digital tools and resources. But what happens when end-of year-assessments suddenly shift from being based on an exam in a highly regulated environment, to an open book, month-long, take-home research project? What does this experiment reveal about how cultures of learning shift or change, whether from the top down or bottom up?

Recognizing the unique opportunity to track this novel assessment experiment, we set out to document the arc of the projects from conception, to students completing and delivering projects, to near universal pass rates, to the fallout and its aftermath.[1] In order to understand these different phases, we undertook social media monitoring complemented by interviews and analysis of official Ministry announcements. We especially observed the highly active Facebook pages of the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MOETE) and the Minister

1 The research for this chapter was collected for the Education 2.0 Research and Documentation Project, under the direction of Linda Herrera. Many thanks to members of project team who contributed to the research. Heba Shama (co-author of this chapter), Hany Zayed, Nairy AbdElShafy, and Dina Mokbel, tracked social media, interviewed teachers and students, and met for regular debriefing sessions. For information on how the project designed its remote research during the COVID-19 pandemic see Herrera and Shama 2020.

Tarek Shawki, teacher groups, parent groups, and student groups.[2] These were all spaces of lively debate and information, and sometimes misinformation, sharing in real time. Cognizant that not everyone is online, and that among people who are online only a minority tend to be vocal, we also undertook longitudinal remote interviews with people connected to public schools at the primary and middle school levels. We conducted a series of interviews over four months with five teachers, five students, three mothers, one school technology specialist, and one school principal. We used purposeful sampling to ensure we included participants from different governorates and included people without Internet access.

2. Arc of the Research Projects

On 14 March 2020, the Education Minister Dr. Tarek Shawki confirmed that out of 109 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country, seven of them were schoolchildren (Youm7 2020a). The same day, the Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly announced a presidential decree to close schools and universities starting 15 March.[3] The Ministry had to quickly decide how to handle the remainder of the semester and what to do about end-of-year assessments. It could have doubled the grade of the first semester exams to arrive at a final grade for the year. This would have meant simply ending the academic year early. The Minister rejected this idea, insisting that students needed to continue learning. He came up with the idea of the research projects so that the children would learn how to access the Egyptian Knowledge Bank

2 We monitored the teacher groups, Egyptian Teachers Union *Etihad mu'alimi misr* with more than 500,000 group members, and Diary of the Egyptian teacher *yawmiaat almu'alim almisri* with more than 250,000 group members, the parent groups 'Egyptian Mothers Union to Advance Education' (*Etihad omahat misr lil-nuhud bil-ta'lim*) with more than 105,000 group members, and 'The Egyptian Parents Union—The Interest of Our Children is Above All' (*Etihad 'awlia' 'umur misr - maslahat 'awladuna fawq aljamie'*) with roughly 50,000 group members. Numbers of group members are from 2020.

3 Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouly initially announced that schools and universities would be suspended for a period of two weeks starting from 15 March 2020, a 'temporary and precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus'. However, as the virus continued to spread, schools and universities remained closed for the remainder of the academic year.

(EKB), search for online resources, and present them. Though he initially faced opposition from within the Ministry, they quickly came on board to ensure that everything was in place for the projects. One of his advisors at the time recounts,

> It was Dr. Tarek who came up with this idea [for the research projects]. Everyone was telling him to just double the first semester exams and skip the end of year exam. [...] Lots of people in the room were opposing it. But the idea was to help the kids learn through the EKB portal, to figure out the system. Everyone had to embrace the change and to act quickly (see Chapter 8 in this volume).

Deena Boraie, Senior Advisor for Assessment, Examinations, and Curriculum, asserted that the projects were supposed to promote deep learning rather than memorization and were consistent with what they were doing with Education 2.0 overall. She helped the Center for Curriculum and Instructional Materials Development (CCIMD) design a very simple rubric to make it easy for teachers to score the projects.

In a much-anticipated television appearance on 19 March 2020 to inform the public how the Ministry would deal with the school shutdowns, the Minister announced that students in the transitional years would not sit for their usual in-person end-of-year exams. Instead, they would produce 'research projects' in key subjects over the course of two months. In only four days, his team had launched 'study.ekb.eg', an e-learning platform for students in KG to Grade 12 where all study materials would be available and incorporated in the Learning Management System (LMS)Edmodo housed in the EKB (Education 2.0 Research and Documentation Project 2020a and 2020b). With the use of an electronic white board, the Minister demonstrated how to navigate these platforms (see Fig. 25.1).[4]

4 Edmodo allowed teachers to remotely share content, distribute quizzes and assignments, and manage communication with students, colleagues, and parents. See Chapter 20 in this volume about how Edmodo eventually went out of business, and the still unanswered questions about what happened to all the school, student, parent, and teacher data.

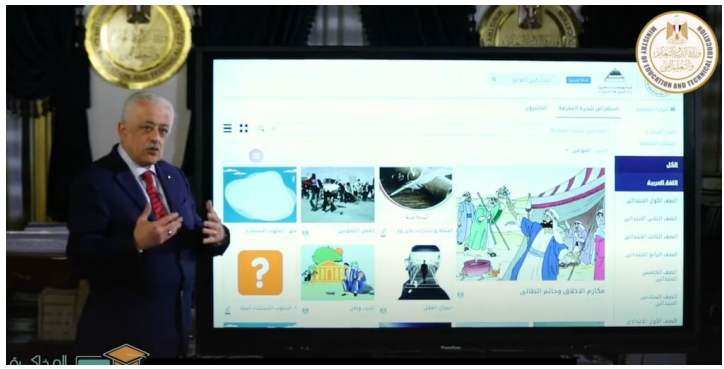

Fig. 25.1 Tarek Shawki demonstrates how to use the digital platforms for educational purposes. Still from 'Ministry of Education Egypt Response to COVID-19: Digital Platforms (March 19, 2020) (1/2)', Education 2.0, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbVwroiTrdI&t=727s

Shawki had been wanting to change the existing model of assessments away from memorization and testing but consistently encountered roadblocks and strong resistance.[5] The pandemic provided an opportunity. In another break from norms, students were given the choice of doing the research project individually or in a group, with a maximum of five students per group. Shawki explained that doing the projects in groups would help students 'learn skills such as teamwork, self-learning, team spirit, and how to search and cite resources' (TeN TV 2020). He explained,

> We are learning new things, and maybe even benefiting from this crisis which led us to do [research projects] [...] We decided at the ministry that after this crisis is over, we are going to replace the traditional exams in all regular school years with research projects, starting from September 2020. So, from now on, there will be no traditional exams in transitional school years, and no more exam committees. Instead, you will have one or more research projects. I think this method will be more fun. It allows students to develop new skills and benefit from the advantages

5 See the video from 6 May 2018, 'Argument of Parliament's Education Committee with Tarek Shawki about Teacher Training', YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ql3umwvoLd4

> of the new system. We believe this is much better than the traditional assessment process (TeN TV 2020).

On the day the Ministry disseminated detailed project guidelines, the word 'research' was trending in google searches in Egypt.

The Minister expected students and their parents to be delighted with this alternative to the dreaded traditional exams, but this was not the case. A member of the Minister's team recalled that people were initially saying that projects were for students in the university and not suitable for children from eight years old. But when they saw the age-appropriate instructions, 'they could not really complain'.[6] The rubric for each grade included instructions about how to include the title, introduction, summary, the findings, conclusion, list of references, the choice of topics, and how to find information using schoolbooks and the online learning platforms. For example, in Grade 3, students could choose between four topics; tourism, energy, health, and water.

Almost immediately, a flurry of groups on social media sprouted. Parents, students, and teachers initiated and joined groups to ask questions, answer questions, or identify private tutors who could help them do the projects. Students and teachers made 'how-to' YouTube videos that explained the projects. One video that attracted a lot of attention was by a fifth-grade girl named Ola. She explained with remarkable clarity in a cute and precocious way how to do the projects and use the resources of the Knowledge Bank. The Minister posted her video on his Facebook page with the comment:

> One day after the research projects were announced, I saw this video of an Egyptian girl in the fifth grade in a public school in Kafr Saad in the Damietta Governorate. Look at the intelligence of this child and her deep understanding of the subject. Egypt is doing just fine, and our children are fine (Shawki 2020b).

That video subsequently got picked up by the Egyptian television Channel 1 and was aired as an example of the resourcefulness of Egyptian students (see Fig. 25.2).

6 From an interview with Ingy Mashour by Linda Herrera on 11 May 2020, who at that time was the Minister's Executive Assistant.

Fig. 25.2 Still of a fifth grader Ola Abdel Hamid explaining in a video posted on Facebook on how to do the projects, 10 April 2020, https://www.facebook.com/tshawki/videos/10223128119816036

All students were supposed to upload their completed projects to Edmodo by 15 May. By that time, 11.5 million students, 1.16 million teachers, and 750,000 parents had subscribed to the platform (Shawki in World Bank 2020). For students unable to access the platform, they had a way to submit their work offline in their schools. The MOETE received and graded nearly 19 million projects. Initially, the Ministry declared the experiment a great success. In a joint conference in September 2020 between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, the Minister stated,

> The Ministry of Education and Technical Education has succeeded in an unprecedented achievement in Egyptian education. We evaluated nearly 19 million research projects for Grades 3-9 and held electronic exams for 1.2 million students at home for Grades 10 and 11. This means we are closing the academic year 2019/2020 with proper education. Students passed to the next academic year only after being tested on their accumulation of knowledge, understanding, and comprehension of the current year's curriculum (General Authority for Information, Government of Egypt 2020).

Not long after the government announced the great success of the projects a more somber reality set in. It came to light that a high proportion of students who completed projects (Grades 3-9), or took

at-home electronic exams on their tablets (Grades 10-11), resorted to some form of cheating. This revelation considerably changed the narrative of take-home projects and take-home exams.

3. The Fallout

After the dust of the projects had settled and the new academic year 2020-2021 was underway, it emerged that a robust market sprung up among all segments of Egyptian society for the buying and selling of research projects. Education 'entrepreneurs', had sold projects for sums ranging mainly between LE 50-LE 300, but parents in upscale areas were paying upwards, and sometimes significantly upwards, of LE 1000.[7] The Minister railed, 'Research was sold on the sidewalks!' (al-Youm7 2021) (in 2020, the exchange rate was roughly LE 16 to USD 1).

By December of 2020, the Minister vowed to permanently eliminate research projects as a form of assessment. He declared, 'There will be no more research projects instead of exams... There will be no student in Egypt who will pass the year without an exam no matter what happens' (Youm7 2020b). 'We have cancelled the research system' (al-Watan 2020).

Deena Boraie, who worked on the project rubric, said,

> It turned out to be a total disaster. You can imagine what happened. Projects started becoming a lucrative source of business. We started hearing about projects for sale and the prices being charged for them. Parents were buying projects for their kids. Those parents who could not afford the prices started screaming that it was unfair. [...] I mean, projects were going for all kinds of prices, and of course we saw the usual divide between the rich and the poor. The costs ranged enormously across the country [...] But the fact remains that a large portion of projects were not done by the students, but by teachers, or by clever entrepreneurs who made quite a lot of money out of this. Of course, this was definitely not our intention. It completely missed the purpose of deep learning and developing young people's skills. [...] Of course, we will never repeat it again (see Chapter 6 in this volume).

7 This information is based on Education 2.0 Research and Documentation Project documentation of posts and advertisements collected on WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Telegram, and through interviews.

The Minister expressed especial indignation towards parents, who he accused of not caring about the learning process but only about their child's grade, and of undermining principles of equal opportunity and meritocracy (al-Watan 2020). He stood by the method of the projects in principle, and complemented those diligent students who benefitted from them, but bemoaned that too many people exploited the situation (al-Hekaya 2020). At the same time, the Ministry had to also address mass cheating on the remote exams for high school students.[8]

The arc of the projects was fairly short (see Fig. 25.3). From the time they were announced in March 2020, to revelations about widespread cheating in December of 2020, the Minister did a complete about turn and vowed never to repeat the research projects again. While one might conclude that this was a 'failed' experiment, that would be shortsighted. As a social educational experiment, there is a lot more to unpack about the projects from the students, teachers, and parents who participated in them.

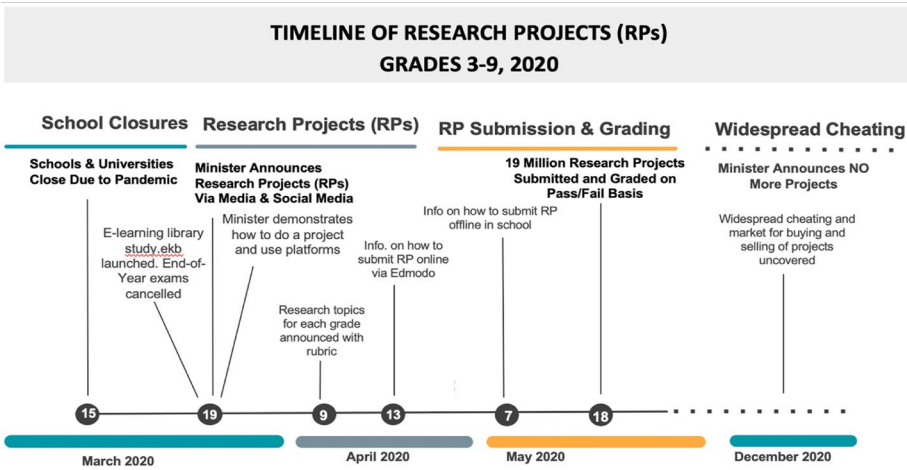

Fig. 25.3 Timeline of research projects for Grades 3-9, 2020-2021. Graph by Herrera and Shama.

8 The Minister spoke openly about cheating during the in-school high school exams where 'students smuggled in phones and used computer applications. We are speaking about a [wide] phenomenon [of cheating]' (Shawki 2022).

4. Accommodating the Digital and Non-Digital

When schools closed, families across Egypt scrambled to figure out how to access the Ministry's online platforms to ensure their children could finish out the year. Nothing seemed to be as strong a motivator to get parents onto these platforms, than the pull of the end of year grades. In 2020 at the time of the projects, roughly 54% of the population were online. During the first year of the pandemic, the number of Internet users jumped 8.1% which led to a 57% Internet penetration rate by January 2021. Mobile connection was far more widespread, with almost 93% of the population having a mobile connection (Datareportal 2021). Still, large swathes of the population were offline, particularly in rural and remote areas. In efforts to overcome uneven Internet access and address the digital divide, the Ministry disseminated information about the projects online, via television and radio broadcasts, and directly through schools. It also invested heavily in educational television channels, Madrasitna 1, 2, and 3, to reach households without Internet. Still, families with no or limited Internet access felt they were at a disadvantage and tried to find workarounds.

One mother from a village in the al-Sharqia governorate with a daughter in Grade 6 was worried about whether her daughter would be able to do the projects. To get online, her daughter had to borrow a cell phone from either her brother or father, but she could not us it for a long stretch of time. As a solution, she joined a group of five classmates to consult with a teacher. He charged LE 50 per student, which the mother called a 'symbolic fee' compared to what other teachers in the village were charging. He instructed the group on how to do the projects in detail. Even though they had the option of buying a ready-made project, they were determined to do it themselves, and did so.

In a different village in al-Sharqia, a stay-at-home mother had two daughters, one in primary and the other in middle school. The family had a television but no Internet. Her neighbors did not have children in the same grades, so the mother contacted her extended family to get more information about how to do the projects. Since they needed to access online resources to finish the year, she felt compelled to purchase a new smart phone. This unexpected cost presented a considerable financial burden on the household, especially during the pandemic. There were

also additional costs for data. Even with all this investment, it was not always possible for her daughters to access the Internet. She explained,

> Online educational videos are good, but only when the Internet is available. Here in our village, the Internet is already weak. And even when my daughter went to her friend's place who has Internet, she needed a card that costs LE 50. They still couldn't access what they needed because it was slow. I mean, this (online) system will be fine when all the technology is available.

In a town in South Sinai, a working mother who had Internet but was not on social media, initially reached out to her co-workers for help. She tried to get information on the projects, but they were all as lost as her. She explained:

> There are ten other parents at my work who have kids in Grade 9 like me. Every one of them feels lost. We are waiting and hoping that the Minister of Education or the Prime Minister will explain to us in a better way about what they are doing.

In her case, television became the more reliable medium for information and updates. She watched evening call-in talk shows (with hosts Ahmed Mousa, Basma Qotb, and Amr Adeeb) where the Minister himself made appearances. These programs also provided her with insights on how other parents—the ones who were calling in—were dealing with distance learning.

In a more remote location in South Sinai with almost no reliable Internet access, local communities found in-person ways to support each other. In one community, families from the school reached out to the Imam of the local mosque. A male Arabic teacher recalled how in their conservative community, the mosque was a more suitable venue than online groups to communicate with the children. He explained:

> Most of my students are Bedouins and they live in remote desert valleys. They don't have access to the Internet. Some parents don't even allow girls to have a cell phone. The community has its own traditions. Some things are changing of course, but not to the extent where I can communicate directly with the students online. I can't even record a video for them to watch.

For these families and teachers who lived and worked outside large towns and urban areas, they felt at a clear disadvantage. However, since

the projects were graded on a pass/fail basis, with near universal pass rates, the projects flattened differences between students.

5. Solidarity on Social Media

During the first year of the pandemic (2020 and 2021), the rate of social media users in Egypt grew by seven million users, a leap of 17% (Datareportal 2021). With over forty million Egyptians on social media, it provided a means to gauge public concerns, sentiments, and debates. While one cannot use social media as a substitute for a statistically valid public opinion survey, it can provide insights into the pulse of the society. Through monitoring a select number of social media groups, we observed how quickly a new vocabulary entered the online public discourse and became normalized. In the first three months of school closures, a new terminology was spreading throughout posts in education-oriented social media groups with words like 'project template' (*al-qawalib or namadhij*), 'Knowledge Bank' (*bank al-maarifa*), 'platform' (*minasa*), and 'upload' (*rafae*). As noted above, the term 'research' (*bahth*) was trending in Google searches in Egypt. Intentional or not, the projects were pushing the society into participating in and accepting a changing world of online learning, and people were helping each other through it.

Mothers emerged as a highly vocal and proactive group on social media on educational issues. In one of the popular mothers' Facebook groups, 'Egyptian Mothers' Union to Advance Education', they shared information on the projects and the online system. Some of them explicitly expressed how they preferred the projects over end-of-year exams because they, the parents, could do the work themselves. The exams on the other hand, required costly private tutors and still, they could not be sure about how their kids would perform. Other mothers were more concerned about how to keep their kids motivated. One mother complained, 'My son is in sixth grade. At the beginning he used to complete the worksheets. But after the research projects were announced he started saying that he won't do anything anymore'.

People expressed mixed opinions about online and distance learning, but sentiments were largely negative. Some were talking about the limitations of online learning and the physical need for a teacher in the education process, while others talked about the problems with

over-reliance on the Internet and the difficulty of getting their students off screens. A post by one mother named Youmna generated a lot of engagement. She wrote,

> Unfortunately, to be brutally honest, online education has proven to be a failure. Why? 1) Students are not concentrating. There are no proper channels of communication to deliver the information. 2) The Internet speed is weak and slow, which interrupts receiving of information. This causes so much distraction. 3) Some websites that deliver lessons for high schoolers delete the videos after a short period. This prevents students from continuous learning. 4) There are websites that are accessible only through a fee, which makes it unequal. 5) Students watch the videos as if they are watching a movie at the cinema, without any sense of concentration.

Other mothers weighed in on her post with comments:

> Mother 1: Learning through the Internet is such a failed experiment. Our children don't know how to learn from the videos. They think they are on vacation.
>
> Mother 2: We have discovered the true reality of our education system… the system is ruined. There is no development, it's all a fiction… the kids will fail and will not learn anything.
>
> Mother 3: It's true that online education is not for all students. There is no alternative to the school and the teacher, but I do respect all the effort being put for online education. Despite being in a crisis, we were able to offer online lessons.

On 9 April, the day the Ministry issued the project rubric, the mothers' group shifted from debating the downsides and merits of online schooling to going into full action mode by sharing educational resources and supporting each other on research projects. Male and female teachers on the page disseminated information, answered questions about submission dates and deadlines, clarified what to include in the introduction, word counts, and how to find sources. Page members asked specific technical questions, like how to do the research on the phone, or how to convert a Word file to a PDF. For instance, one mother asked, 'How can I make a rectangle shape on word from my phone?' Another asked, 'Where can I find sources to help me do the research project […] I used the schoolbook, but I need resources other than EKB… Thanks'. Their questions were always met with responses in the comments section. Some members of a page shared template models and how-to videos from sources they

had found, including by the Minister himself posted on the MOETE's Facebook pages, as well as from 'education influencers' who posted on different YouTube channels and platforms.

The collective experience of everyone being involved in distance learning sparked public discussions about the role and value of schools and teachers. Some mothers expressed being more comfortable without schools and exams since they could more directly take control of their children's education. However, the majority of them expressed missing and appreciating schools. A series of exchanges on a mothers' group reflect these positions:

> **Eman:** There is no education without schools... anyone who says otherwise is delusional. If that was the case, advanced countries would have closed their schools and universities and continued their education remotely... Technology is an aiding tool, not an alternative.
>
> **Madam Medhat**: The student and the teacher are the two faces of the same coin, and the currency is the school.
>
> **Hend**: Indeed, the school made a big difference.
>
> **Dalia**: Hahaha, it is indeed exhausting to keep them at home**.** Did you figure out how to occupy their time?
>
> **Om Loka**: Unfortunately, the confinement has made them reject any alternative to the phone and the Internet. We spend little time playing together because most of the time they are on their phones.
>
> **Amany**: During this stay-at-home period, we learned the importance of schools. They carry the burden of taking care of the kids in the morning. It's also much better for a mother to go to work, take a break from the house and the kids, and then come back, instead of being a mother 24 hours a day. We also learned that staying at home causes so many fights.
>
> **Om Ojjo Wa Loka**: Kids have no alternative but the school.

6. Listening to Teachers

Teachers found themselves in a difficult position. They seemed unclear about their role with the shift to distance learning. Many teachers on social media expressed fears that the proliferating educational platforms and services could undermine them and further erode

students' relationship with their schools. Schools had already long been suffering from low attendance rates. As reported in Oxford Business Group (2020), the Government of Egypt reported that 'only 37% of students generally attend school for a full seven hours per day, while the remaining 63% attend morning or evening shifts which last four and a half hours'. One female science teacher from a middle school in the al-Gharbia governorate said in an interview,

> Edmodo is a nice idea, not bad. But when teachers need to communicate with students through websites, this will affect the student's connection to schools. There are already many students who just show up for their attendance grade and for the exams. Unless the Minister comes up with another system next year and forces students to go to school during certain days, this connection will be lost. I am sure he has some system in mind.

Teachers active on the Facebook group, Egyptian Teachers Union (*Etihad mu'alimi misr*) engaged in lively exchanges about the projects. They questioned the value of a project and wondered if children did them on their own.

> **Teacher 1**: Parents are the ones who did the research projects. And the ones who couldn't do it themselves went to the cybers (Internet cafes) and hired someone to do it for them. Research projects are a lie and a way to exhaust parents. It would have been better to avoid all this and directly promote students to the next academic stage. Faking the gains with something that did not happen is the ultimate mistake here.

> **Teacher 2**: If you were involved in correcting the research projects, you would know that they had no benefit. And if you talked to any student, you would know they did not do the projects themselves.

A female science teacher acknowledged that projects were okay as an emergency measure during the pandemic, but the Ministry should return to traditional exams after the crisis (which they did). She explained,

> I understand that research projects were applied due to COVID-19 conditions, and I think there were some benefits for the students. But we will not be able to assess the differences between students through projects. Next year, there must be an exam. Students at this stage should develop their skills and be tested on their ability to read well and write well.

In the end, the project experiment had little bearing on student pass rates for the year as 98.5% of primary school students passed the year (compared to 97.4% for the 2018-2019 academic year) and 98.6% of middle school passed (compared to 96% for the 2018-2019 academic year) (CAPMAS 2021).

7. A Failed Experiment? Not Quite

One might be inclined to call the research projects a 'failed' experiment because of the fallout resulting from mass cheating and profiteering. From the point of view of the moral economy, the projects put a spotlight on a predatory education marketplace. Agile education entrepreneurs and only too willing parent and student customers, participate in a system that normalizes cheating and inhibits academic learning. Yet, even with the cheating, a lot of other learning, problem-solving, and forms of social solidarity were taking place.

Over thirteen million students, parents, and teachers created accounts and uploaded the projects on the learning management system, evidence of a steep technological learning curve. Words like 'project template', 'Knowledge Bank', 'research', 'platform', and 'upload', became commonplace, testifying to the speed at which new vocabularies and behaviors enter mainstream culture. Students made how-to videos to share with fellow students, while parents and teachers formed mutual support groups on social media where they helped complete strangers from different parts of the country. Even as digital inequality remains a pressing issue, people offline turned to neighbors, family, colleagues, and school or religious communities for information and support at the local level.

The research projects represent an historic milestone in educational assessment in Egypt. Unwitting or not, they generated different forms of learning and triggered active processes of collective problem solving. They offer a window into how behavioral and social change occur when something new, something unexpected, gets injected into the education system. This experiment also points to the possibility of transcending the teach-to-the-test assessment system that has been the cause of so much disdain from many circles. But the change is not likely to come through directives from the top down only, but through a process of

exchange and understanding with the drivers of the system, the teachers, families, and students, with all their resourcefulness and forms of social solidarity, from the bottom up.

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