Teacher Standards in Egypt after the 25th of January Revolution

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Abstract: Education is mainly concerned with fostering as well as flourishing the skills, demanded by the job market. When education serves the needs of the job market, the economy of such a country will be revitalized. As a result, this society will be "dedicated not only to economic growth and material wealth but also to the pursuit of social justice" (p. 63). Hence, citizens' demands for humane goals will propagate drastic adjustments in the country's political regime. What is deduced from such a long, yet fruitful process is that educational amendments will significantly impact the economic structure. Having been resurrected, the economic growth will result in a more democratic society, free from racism, inequality, prejudice, stereotyping, and many other social stigmas. In case of Egypt, civilians desired the implementation of the previously mentioned process; thus, on the 25th of January 2011, a revolution erupted in El Tahrir square. Such a revolution had several fundamental aspirations, one of which was the amelioration of the education system. To further elaborate on the problems of education, schools "serv[ed] the interests of the elites, as reinforcing existing inequalities, and as producing attitudes that foster the acceptance of this status quo" (p. 69). In addition to the rigorous control of the elites on schools, parents' low socio-economic status obliged their children to be admitted to inferior, public schools that lacked facilities and resources. Furthermore, a huge part of the educational issues is related to teachers' performance or output in class. Eventually, setting and monitoring standards in relation to learning environments, instructional strategies, and learning differences will not only ensure the highest learning outcome but also ignite teachers' output. Proposing teacher standards to be implemented in Egypt and suggesting a method of follow-up are the two main purposes of this paper.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Franklin Roosevelt, the 32nd president of the United States of America, once said "the real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education" (Hurn, 2001, p. 62). With the shortcoming of a democratic regime in a given country, education, thus, is at stake. Therefore, the notion 'education' must be well-defined in order to address its issues which will, in turn, enhance the political atmosphere in a country. An ethereal definition of education was proposed by Durkheim (2001); he believed that education must "arouse and develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual, and moral states which are demanded of him by the political society" (p. 53). According to such a definition, education is mainly concerned with fostering as well as flourishing the skills, demanded by the job market. When education serves the needs of the job market, the economy of such a country will be revitalized. As a result, this society will be "dedicated not only to economic growth and material wealth but also to the pursuit of social justice" (p. 63). Hence, citizens' demands for humane goals will propagate drastic adjustments in the country's political regime. What is deduced from such a long, yet fruitful process is that educational amendments will significantly impact the economic structure. Having been resurrected, the economic growth will result in a more democratic society, free from racism, inequality, prejudice, stereotyping, and many other social stigmas. In case of Egypt, civilians desired the implementation of the previously mentioned process; thus, on the 25th of January 2011, a revolution erupted in El Tahrir square. Such a revolution had several fundamental aspirations, one of which was the amelioration of the education system. To further elaborate on the problems of education, schools "serv[ed] the interests of the elites, as reinforcing existing inequalities, and as producing attitudes that foster the acceptance of this status quo" (p. 69). In addition to the rigorous control of the elites on schools, parents' low socio-economic status obliged their children to be admitted to inferior, public schools that lacked facilities and resources. Furthermore, a huge part of the educational issues is related to teachers' performance or output in class. As emphasized by Spindler (2001), "the student is not expected to ask questions, but instead is supposed to give the correct answers" (p. 25). With the lack of professional standards in the field of teaching, any candidate can join the field without

having the necessary potentials. Eventually, setting and monitoring standards in relation to learning environments, instructional strategies, and learning differences will not only ensure the highest learning outcome but also ignite teachers' output. Proposing teacher standards to be implemented in Egypt and suggesting a method of follow-up are the two main purposes of this paper.

II. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

First, crafting a motivating, learning environment will ignite students' performance in classrooms. Daniels (2011) highlighted the fact that "when teachers create motivating learning environments, students behave better and achieve at higher levels" (p. 32). Moreover, she stated that teachers occupy a crucial role in motivating students in classrooms. The role of teachers is not confined to arousing students' curiosity about "Steinbeck, fractions, or the periodic table" (P. 33). However, teachers are obligated to go the extra mile in creating an inspirational, learning environment for students. In order to discover the constituents of a motivating, learning environment, Daniels interviewed middle level students. Furthermore, she unveiled two factors, contributing to healthy, learning environments which are: respect, and time management. First, appreciating and respecting all students directly influence their performances in class. In many schools, some teachers exhibit hostile attitude towards their students. When interviewed, a student mentioned the effects of teachers' respect on students' participation as well as behavior in class: "My first period teacher messes around with us. It's exciting in his class…We behave better in that class (p. 34)."Another way of establishing a healthy, beneficial learning environment is by aiding students in managing their times. Middle class students, when asked about their biggest obstacles, expressed their concerns in managing their times by saying: "I don't like it when teachers give so much homework or projects and not enough time to do it" (p. 34). Usually, pupils are crammed with many assignments in a tight time frame. To look at the brighter side, the majority of students recognized the importance of home works and their fundamental roles in shaping students' futures. When asked about the load of assignments, a student replied "doing homework can actually help you improve your grades and lets you practice for when you have a test" (p. 35). Daniels stressed on the notion that teachers must guide students on "how to balance the competing demands on their time" (p. 35). On one hand, this will contribute to setting up a better, learning atmosphere. On the other hand, this will create an intimate bond between teachers and students based on respect and conversation. Daniels believed in the vital role of assignments; however, the outcomes of such workload will "reach a point of diminishing returns" (p. 36). In order to counter this problem, she saw that teachers need to cut down the huge workload as well as teach students time management skills. She deduced the fact that "Teachers who create motivating learning environments also actively teach students how to balance commitments and manage their times" (p. 36). From my own point of view, various assignments address the different needs of students in a given classroom and avoid boredom. In a nutshell, an inspirational, learning environment can be established via respecting students and teaching them time management skills.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Second, utilizing various instructional strategies will not only flare up students' participation in class but also transform them into active learners. Due to the outstanding development of technology, teachers need to ditch traditional instructional strategies in which "teachers teach the content of the curriculum while students discuss and practice after lessons and then complete assignments" (Hsu, Chen, Chang & Hu, 2016, p. 2) and start implementing new ones. One of the new, yet effective instructional strategies is flipped classrooms. The main concept behind a flipped classroom is to augment students' participation in classrooms. As suggested by Hsu, Chen, Chang, and Hu, students in a flipped classroom will "watch videos of the curriculum content prepared by their teachers for them, engage in discussions and practices in class, and then complete their assignments" (p. 2). Thus, more room will be dedicated to in-depth activities, like individual and group discussions, debates, experiments, and practices. In order to test the efficiency of such a strategy, a mixed study was conducted by Huang and Hong in a school in Taiwan (2015). They randomly picked 40 10th graders to attend a flipped English classroom, whereas another 40 10th graders were haphazardly selected from the same school to "be the comparison group" (p. 1). The experiment reflected that students, who attended a flipped English classroom, were motivated to learn English and scored highly in the post test more than the other group. A student commented on the flipped classroom strategy saying: "I like this class because the small group discussion reduced my English learning anxiety (p. 13)."

Furthermore, Huang and Hong (2015) interviewed an English high school teacher after implementing the flipped strategy in her class and she observed that "students participated in classroom discussion more actively in comparison to their regular English class even for low English proficiency students" (p. 14). Moreover, another experiment was carried out in the National Taiwan Normal University to scrutinize the adequacy of such a strategy. According to Hsu, Chen, Chang and Hu (2016), 39 students, who were selected from the General Surgery of the Tri-Service General Hospital to take part in the experiment, were to attend

traditional classes, while 43 students from a university were to be present in a flipped classroom. After these classes came to an end, questionnaires were distributed to both groups. These questionnaires demonstrated that the flipped strategy "improved student performance and generated positive student attitudes towards the experience" (p. 12). In a nutshell, giving up the traditional instructional strategies and making use of out-of-the-box techniques will, without a question, impact students' performance as well as participation in classrooms.

IV. LEARNING DISABILITIES

Third, educators must take into consideration students with learning difficulties. When studying subjects, like Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and many others, students with learning disabilities encounter many obstacles; these courses "require complex cognitive skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, evaluating, analyzing, and interpreting data" (Steele, 2007, p. 25). Such requirements, Steele believed, can be a roadblock for students with learning difficulties. In order to help these students, teachers must be well-aware of the most common learning problems which are Communication Disorder (CD), Attention Deficit or Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD), and Learning Disabilities (LD). Steele stressed the fact that when teachers are familiar with such learning problems, they will "make modifications that will help students with learning problems succeed" (p. 25). In addition, teachers need to recognize the symptoms of the previously-mentioned learning problems. First of all, students, suffering from LD and ADHD, have problems with visual processing; therefore, they will be unable to comprehend notions, like the periodic table. Second, pupils, diagnosed with LD, ADHD, and CD, encounter problems with auditory processing. Thus, they will be incapacitated to comprehend the flow of information, presented in debates, and presentations. Third, students with LD and ADHD, experience not only memory losses but also aural problems. In addition to their inability to recall information, they experience dilemmas when it comes to deciphering the lexicons of others. Steele revealed some strategies in which teachers can utilize to aid students with learning disabilities in classrooms, one of which is collaboration. Teachers must team up with special education tutors to be able to tailor curricula according to their needs. Thus, "teaming efforts help teachers meet the challenge of successfully teaching students with learning problems" (p. 26). Another strategy, discussed by Steele, is setting goals. To further explain this step, Steele said: "If a particular study strategy helps students improve their grades on science tests, they may try the same approaches for other content subjects and see improvement there as well (P. 26)." In addition to collaborating with special education tutor and setting goals, teachers can go through the difficult vocabulary which was discussed in previous sessions before starting the class. This approach is beneficial to students with learning disabilities not only in remembering what was previously tackled but also in training them to take notes which is extremely difficult due to the fast pace of sessions. The final method, as stated by Steele, is employing pictures, graphs, and outlines during the class. This approach will enable students to remember the content of previous sessions. After getting accustomed to all these strategies, pupils can start applying them to any other subject.

V. FOLLOW-UP METHOD

Fourth, questionnaires, as a means of measuring the previously-mentioned standards, have proven to be efficient as well as reliable. According to Kyriakides et al. (2014), "students are in a key position to provide information about teachers' behavior in the classroom" (p. 125). Nevertheless, in order to examine the efficiency of questionnaires in the field of education, Kyriakides et al. reviewed many published papers in eight journals, which are Teaching and Teacher Education, European Journal of Teacher Education, School Effectiveness and School Improvement, Effective Education, Oxford Review of Education, British Educational Research Journal, Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness and American Educational Research Journal. Surprisingly, they unveiled the fact that 44 studies in the above journals made use of questionnaires to measure certain standards in schools. Moreover, 73% of these studies were pursued in 20 states during the last two decades. As a result, questionnaires are becoming very popular in all fields, especially the field of education to measure certain standards. Aiming at utilizing questionnaires to measure the quality of teaching, Kyriakides et al. conducted an experiment in six European countries which are Slovenia, Ireland, Greece, Germany, Cyprus, and Belgium. They used a form of questionnaires, called Dynamic Model. Briefly, the so-called Dynamic Model assesses four interrelated elements: student, teacher, school, and system. Kyriakides et al. stated that "the teaching and learning situation is emphasized and the roles of the two main actors [teachers and students] are analyzed" (p. 127). In addition to students and teachers, schools and systems are being assessed as well, for they have significant impacts on the teaching and learning processes in terms of developing educational policies. When developing the Dynamic Model, Kyriakides et al. stressed on eight elements "which describe teachers' instructional role and are associated with student outcomes" which are "orientation, structuring, questioning, teaching modeling, application, management of time, teacher role in making classroom a learning environment and classroom assessment" (p. 127). Before conducting the experiment, external observers were hired to attend classes with students for a full semester. After the semester came to an end, questionnaires were handed to the

observers and students. After the data was collected and analyzed, they observed that "student ratings were found to be highly correlated with data provided by external observers" (p.127). Kyriakides et al. argued that: "There is no solid feedback instrument for teachers. How can teachers, especially in-service teachers, who are usually the only adults in class, receive feedback on their own functioning? (p. 139)."

IV. CONCLUSION

To sum up, reforming education was one of the central objectives of the 25th of January revolution. As a way of rectifying the education system, four standards in relation to leadership skills, learning environments, instructional strategies, and learning differences were proposed. These standards will not only upgrade teachers' outputs but also boost learning outcomes. First, there are different kinds of leadership skills, such as transforming, moral, and paternalistic. An experiment revealed that students' participation flared up when teachers exhibited one or more type of leadership skills in classrooms. Second, respecting students and teaching them time management skills proved to immensely contribute in constructing a healthy, learning environment. Third, converting passive learners into active ones is not a walk in the park; however, this conversion was proven to be easy by integrating various instructional strategies, one of which is the flipped classroom technique. Such a technique will give students ample time to review the curricula at home, and class time will be dedicated to diligent activities, such as debates, discussions, and experiments. Flipped classroom technique was proven to ignite students' performances in classrooms. Fourth, by being well-aware of students' learning disabilities, teachers can make the necessary adjustments in the curricula to suit their needs. When explaining a lesson, teachers must utilize certain techniques to aid such students, like reviewing difficult vocabulary, and employing pictures and graphs. What is stunning about these techniques is that students with learning difficulties can apply them to various subjects. Furthermore, to ensure the applicability of the previously mentioned four standards in classrooms, a follow-up method must be thoroughly selected. The 'Dynamic Model', a type of questionnaires, is proposed to assure the implementation of such standards. To further elaborate, the proposed method was tested in six European countries, which are Slovenia, Ireland, Greece, Germany, Cyprus, and Belgium in 50 different schools. Nevertheless, researchers observed that 44 studies, which were published in Teaching and Teacher Education, European Journal of Teacher Education, School Effectiveness and School Improvement, Effective Education, Oxford Review of Education, British Educational Research Journal, Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness and American Educational Research Journal, used questionnaires to measure specific standards in schools as well as universities. This method proved its worthiness when researchers found out that students' ratings in the questionnaires matched those of the observers'. Thus, it is safe to say that questionnaires are trustworthy, reliable methods of follow-ups.

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