Education and Development in the Arab Region

Old Problems and New Challenges

The Case of Egypt and Oman

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Abstract

The topic of Education and Development in general is not a new topic especially in the Arab Region. This piece of research considers as an extension of the field of education and its impacts on the development of the countries. As many researchers and both international and national organization have exerted a notable efforts in analyzing and studying the education systems and their roles in the rising of the nation development through reform programs and development, this research focuses on this area of research shedding light on achieving EFA goals and MDGs in general as specific areas for achieving development in the Arab Region with specific focus on two case studies (Egypt and Oman). Development of the countries cannot be achieved separately from the role of education and its future impacts on the welfare of the states as well as its building of the mentality of the generations, their knowledge, and their physical skills and health.

This research sheds light on the role of education through the EFA goals in 2000 and before that the MDGs as complements in this development in 1990. It also pays attention to many of the governments and countries crucial to the role of the EFA in achieving the most difficult part of national welfare and development. This research cannot neglect the supporting role of the international agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, etc in supporting financially and technically the developing countries with specific to the Arab region in order to raise their educational, economical, political, and social conditions.
Acknowledgement

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFA</td>
<td>Adult Education Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGFUND</td>
<td>Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development</td>
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<td>ANER</td>
<td>Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate</td>
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<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>CLCs</td>
<td>Community Learning Centers</td>
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<td>ECCE</td>
<td>Early Childhood Care and Education</td>
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<td>EEP</td>
<td>Education Enhancement Programme</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education For All</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
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<td>FTI</td>
<td>First Track Initiative</td>
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<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GER</td>
<td>Gross Enrolment Rate</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<td>GPI</td>
<td>Gender Parity Index</td>
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<td>GTZ</td>
<td>Germany Agency for Technical Cooperation</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japan International Cooperation Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIFE</td>
<td>Literacy Initiative For Empowerment</td>
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<td>NBPS</td>
<td>National Book Programme for Schools</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Monitoring Learning Achievement</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOHE</td>
<td>Ministry Of Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRL</td>
<td>Recognition of Prior Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Rial Omani</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIMSS</td>
<td>Trends of International Mathematics and Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab of Emirates</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNESS</td>
<td>UNESCO National Education Support Strategy</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nation Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNGEI</td>
<td>United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

Education is the most important investment in the constitution of society. It is a basic human right whereas it “…is considered a universal right in the UN Declaration of Human Rights” (Stromquist cited from Lauder et al., 2006, P.973). In addition to its role in shaping the lives of students, it is also a core factor for the formation of the human capital and sustainability of human development; hence it plays a crucial role in the economic, social, and political conditions of any society (Chinapah, 2006). Education is a continued, lifelong social process and the school is a form of this process. As human development, it provides the learner with abilities of communication, participation, creativeness, self-learning, mastery, innovation, and interaction. Furthermore, it creates the domains of the labour market. Education is an important mean of sustainable human development and essential for achieving international development targets. Education and learning of all kinds are key tools in enabling change of a societal and individual nature in order to achieve development (Global Action Plan, 2006). In addition to its purpose for producing knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, education is also essential for good citizenship, reduction of poverty, and sustained economic growth. All these purposes make education as a core area of public policy and on the top of the national agendas in all the world countries. Education is recognized as a cornerstone for economic and social growth. It also promotes innovation and national productivity, as well as achieves individual and public benefits, values of democracy, and social cohesion. In short, one can say that education can be recognized as the beacon which lights the path to the passers and to the lost ships.

Individuals, societies, and countries benefit from education in terms of improving the health of individuals and strengthening the health of nations’ economies through establishing the fundamental basis of economic growth. It can be seen as an engine of growth whereas it contributes in development and economic growth based on its high quality in order to the needed skills of the economy and labour market. It also can be seen as a good capital where it helps to develop the human resources that are needed for economic and social transformation. This in turn relates to the concept of human capital, which is based on the value of developing skills that are seen as an important element in activities' production. From this point of view, education develops and improves persons' capacities as well as upgrades the living condition of the entire
society. This coincided with the most important words for Julius Nyerere, the Tanzanian political leader, which is “Education is central to the process of development; for people cannot be developed, they can only develop themselves” (Maamouri, 1998, p.7). Considering education as an engine for change and development makes all the developing countries invest their moral and materials efforts in education and improving its quality. As a result of the perception of achieving good position and gaining financial reward through completing the educational cycle, the pressure on the higher education has increased, which in turn enhances the idea of that the expansion of education promotes economic growth (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008).

The first human development report in 1990 began to assert that people are the real wealth of nations. The relation between education and human development or economic development growth is complementary and interconnected whereas the existence of challenges and shortcoming in one side promotes and stimulates the other side to rise up and take steps forward. Therefore, a lot of studies that were contributed in the field of the relation between education and development around the world affirmed that education is a core element for achieving economic growth in both the developed and developing world. Furthermore, the expenditure on education improves the productivity of the labour market, or what is known as ‘the benefit-cost approach’.

All of the world countries have been affected in the 1990s and during the economic crisis. This in turn affected passively on education and its quality, and widening of the ‘knowledge gap’, which has resulted from the disparity in countries’ or groups’ capability to participate in the benefits of new production processes and technological innovations. There are many countries that have fallen behind with providing their population with the needed skills and capacities for the global labour force and to the world knowledge (Haddad et al., 1990. Among these countries with no clear representation is the Arab region (Haddad et al., 1990).

Notwithstanding and with all the divine values of education that contribute in building up the societies economically, socially, and morally. Still there are a lot of shortcomings in achieving the complete picture of education and its positive reflection in the communities. For example, the recent revolutions which are sweeping the Arab world as a result of overlapping reasons of poor educational outcomes, unemployment, lack of democracy and freedom, spread of corruption and weak political authority, etc. The percentage of unemployment of young people among the age group of 15-24 years old is estimated at 25% in the MENA countries. By 2020
there will be a need for 51 million jobs for the previous age group, most of them in low and middle income countries. For example, youth unemployment in Egypt is about 34% with about more than two years of ‘the waithood’ which is the period between education and getting a job (Adams, 2011).

On the other side, the Arab countries and other countries have started to reap some positive outcomes from education that is visualized in the form of rebellion or rejection of the dominant autocratic regime. These rebellions happen in everything and in all over the countries in order to get rid of that dominated system and have it replaced with a new democratic and fair system which can help in development and achievement of better living condition for people. That is what is called the contribution of educated youth in the Arab Spring. These uprisings resulted from the failure of education to produce highly qualified employees and its mismatch to the labour market requirement, which in turn is due to the low level of political conditions as well as lack of qualified management and administrative capacities and the spread of corruption. In spite of the large investment of education and allocating suitable funds for education in the region countries, the result is high level of education with mass unemployment. The investment of expanding access to education, quantity, has affected passively on the quality of education. While in many other countries more education leads to low risk of unemployment, in some countries of the Arab region that means the opposite. In Egypt for example, the unemployment rate increases at the university level and post-primary education, with around one quarter of the unemployed being females. That is one of the reasons which have promoted all of the university graduates from both genders to be leaders of the youth groups on Al-Tahrir Square in Cairo.

The decline of the education system in the Arab region can be attributed to many reasons including low quality of teaching processes and teacher training, focusing on rote learning instead of developing flexible skills and a problem solving approach, or last-resort source of employment for entrants to the civil service. All these reasons make the education systems geared towards a public sector job market and for entry to post-primary education. In both cases the result is either not completing the post-primary education cycle or those who do it do not have the skills and capacity that are needed for the employers. Furthermore, the limited accountability of the governments under which the policymakers serve and which is reflected through their plans and education polices neglect the students concerns and needs. In addition,
the Arab students see that their education systems reinforce the political control of their governments and societies (Watkins, 2011).

In summary, the political failure- autocracy and bureaucracy- of the Arab government in managing the affairs of the countries as well as their dependence on self-interested elites who are disconnected from the population are the fuel behind the recent protest against the political regimes in the region. This calls for the coming governments, which are supposed to be based on a democratic basis, to invest in its asset of children and youth through democratic reform and an agenda for development, education, and employment. This coincided with the speech of the United Nations secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon to the General Assembly concerning the sustainable development goals beyond 2015. This development based on education and its contribution of improving health, promoting democracy, reducing poverty and boosting economic growth, and achieving development in all fields of the society (Rose, 2012). All the world countries, developed or developing, high-income or low-income, are in need to improve their education system while taking into account that not all the countries have the same problem. But on the contrary every country or region has its own problems and challenges to face that are produced from the rapid changes in the world economy and knowledge transformation. Therefore, all the countries have to participate and exchange experiences through adopting and using successful educational techniques and approaches in order to improve the learning environment of the students and then to develop the society in general. That can come gradually in terms of good national planning and management of the education system’s strong and weak points. However, not all the successful approaches and techniques in the developed world can be applied in the developing countries. This can be attributed to factors of economy, political conditions, human capacities, and knowledge.

“The ability of societies to fulfill the development tasks they aspires to achieve is connected with a set of policies and programs they set and implement, with the outcome of their awareness of their history and civilizational heritage, the lessons learned from their experiences, their realization of the present and its challenges, their reckoning with the future and its requirements, their conviction that human capital is the basic foundation in the fulfillment of development tasks, and that education is the corner stone
in the preparation, training and mobilization of the abilities of human capital, in order to meet national and regional needs” (ALECSO & ALS, 2008, p. 6).

That is why the concept of human capital integrating with reform programs has become a critical factor for prosperity and continuous development of progress. During the last three summits for reforming of the education system, the Arab countries recognized the urgency for that reform before their regression, which made them put education reform in the top of their national agendas. Providing compulsory quality education was on the top of the Algiers Summit (2005), while the Khartoum Summit in 2006 affirmed to a radical qualitative change in education and education policies. The third Summit which was held in Riyadh in 2007 introduced details of the educational situation in the region and proposal for its development. Despite the large failure of the region in general to achieve the desired results from their education system in regards to development, the entire region in the last few years strove to develop the performance and improve the quality of its education systems in order to be able to contribute to building their societies and be able to possess the goods and services that are needed for national and international competition (ALECSO & ALS, 2008). Achieving development in the region, and in the whole world, is closely related to the extent of achieving EFA, MDGs, developing education reform programs, and improving the economic growth, etc.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Research

In order to cover the selected topic of the research, the study, firstly, gives brief vision of the education and development in the Arab region dependent on the data from UNESS documents, UNESCO resources, and other researches with a quick reference to MDGs and EFA. Specifically, as the main concern of this research, the study re-analyzes the national development of education in Oman and Egypt as well as reflects the effective role of UNESCO in those two countries in the scope of comparative design. Furthermore, the study analyzes the extent of the progress that has been achieved and introduces some of the key problems and priorities that face them in the context of achieving goals of EFA Dakar 2000. The overall purpose of the study can be realized through the following questions and objectives:
(1) Reflection of education and development in the Arab region through EFA and MDGs - in general, and the pioneering role of the international agencies in supporting those goals.

(2) Measure the progress and the outcomes that have been achieved in Oman and Egypt over the past few years as practical and developed steps towards Human Development in general and education development in particular.

(3) What are the national and emerging priorities and challenges that face the educational development process in the two countries?

(4) The supportive role of UNESCO in order to assess the development that has been achieved as well as addressing the gaps in the two countries in light of their national educational development context.

(5) The similarities and differences between the two countries, as a result of the previous objectives, in regards to progress and decline of educational development - which can be shown in the analyzing chapters as well as in the findings.

1.3 Delimitation and Limitation of the Research
Because of the challenges of limited time and resources, the study tries to be specific in analyzing the educational situation through the lens of the UNESCO’s role in developing and refreshing the Arab educational systems, as well as giving an analysis of the progress and decline of achieving EFA goals and their causes. The framework of the UNESS reports, which is a strong instrument of UNESCO for assessing the countries development in education, will be the guidelines of this study. This means that the study will be limited on documentary analysis to some of the topics that deal with these kinds of studies. The researcher’s focus on progress and challenges of the two countries regarding achieving EFA is due to her curiosity to monitor the recent achievement and obstacles that each country has passed.

1.4 Significance of the Research
As with other different studies in the same field of education in the Arab region that monitor and assess the progress, challenges, and priorities, this study will continue the path of addressing the extent of achieving the EFA and their relation to the MDGs goals in the recent years in the
region in general and in both the two selected countries. This assessment can be clear in the light of the effective and active role of UNESCO in order to introduce the national and international efforts towards developing the education systems in two countries. This comparative study will be like a torch, which will reflect some of the aspects in progress and achievements that have been done in the recent years through comparative study of the two countries and within each country during the sequence of years. Moreover, this study will reflect to what extent the proposed solutions of developing the education system in each country have been already achieved and progressed in addition to touching the actual and existence gaps and obstacles which face them. In some cases, there might be ignorance of some aspects in light of the limitations of some studies or because of the time factor in conducting the study. Hence, this study will try to introduce some of the new ideas in regards of comparing the two countries from different views through reflecting the similarities and differences in the two countries regarding the progress and decline that has been introduced, as well as the aspects of improvement or declining. This study will pay attention to the policymakers, politicians, and administrations which decide and re-arrange their priorities in favor of the rise of their national educational systems. Furthermore, it will pay attention to solving some of the urgent problems and difficulties (e.g. unemployment, illiteracy, drop-out, etc). Throughout the study, an understanding of the progress that has been achieved and the importance of collaboration between the national and international sides, as well as the importance of effective community participation in developing the education system, which in turn benefits the whole society and the consideration of secondary values will all be taken into account.

The use of secondary analyses may serve purposes of examining how a different analytic approach might change the conclusions reached from the first analysis. Or addressing objectives or questions not considered in the original analysis (Boslaugh, 2007). Consequently, the study is going to produce new findings and to some extent answer questions that may be not questioned through other studies. The findings of this study may bear with them new insights to the international agencies concerning new initiatives, adjustment of their funding policy, technical assistance, or intensification of their efforts in certain areas of intervention. In conclusion, the benefits behind the comparative education studies are not only to learn about other countries but also to learn about our own. Consequently, Sadler argued that the comparative study might lead to appreciation of domestic education system as well as providing awareness of shortcomings.
and gaps (Bray et al., 2007). Furthermore, lessons drawn from the comparative study approach could be used to aid in the development of other nations both new and old (Noah and Eckstein, 1997). In other words, the lessons learned from this study can be guidelines to other similar statutes.

1.5 Ethical Considerations
This study is based on a re-analysis of international and national documentation and literature, hence, the researcher of this study will take into account the principles of integrity and credibility in introducing and showing the ideas and data that need to be re-analyzed. On the side of reflecting the own ideas of the researcher regarding the development issue in Egypt, the researcher, as an individual of Egyptian society, will be objective in addressing the related issues and facts that sweep the field of development as well as the role of international agencies. She also will try to reflect an actual side of the truth that the Egyptian people live in regards to educational, reform, and development issues.

1.6 The Structure of the Research
This research is composed from eight chapters. Ch.1 introduces the entrance of the study through its introductions, aims and objectives, its limitation and its significance. Ch.2 reflects the status of education in the Arab region through addressing in short socio-economic conditions, the political situations of the region, as well as a quick overview for EFA, MDG. Ch.3 shows us the contextual information of the two case studies of Egypt and Oman through introducing the area of education and development in the two countries. Ch.4 contains the methodologies of the study with its advantages and disadvantages. Ch.5 goes in depth to address the areas of reform and strategies, challenges and priorities in the two countries through intensive study for EFA as one main objective of this study. Ch.6 introduces the theoretical and conceptual building of the study through the connection between them and the study itself on one hand, and on the other to guide and help the progress of the study. Ch.7 continues to deepen the core of this study through addressing the supportive role of UNESCO in education and development, in the region in general and in the two cases, in specific. Ch.8 comes to the end of the study by presenting the findings of the study. At the same time, this chapter can be seen as the beginning for further research and future studies.
Chapter Two - Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Study

Theory and methodologies are essential structural building parts in any study. This study includes multiple theories and concepts related to the topic of the study including many issues regarding education and the role of donors in supporting the national education, as well as the framework of achieving EFA goals. The following is interconnected theories and concepts of the study. These theories and concepts help to understand the relationship between education and development.

2.1 Comparative Education

Comparative education is a discipline in the social sciences involving the analysis and comparison of different types of educational systems. People in this field are interested in developing meaningful terminology and standards for education worldwide, improving educational systems, and creating a framework for assessing the success of education programs and initiatives. That includes examination of the strengths and weakness of different systems, the comparison also looks for the changes, developments, obstacles in one country, one region, and one system over time or through a certain period of time. This can be visualized during this study, which addresses the development in the Arab region with specifics on the two selected countries in terms of analysis of the achievement and reforms in the education systems in both countries as well as reflection of challenges and priorities in both countries. This comparative study reflects the aspects of strength and weakness in both systems in order to help in gaining advantages from one system or avoiding the obstacles from the other.

The field of comparative education characterized by contextualization cannot be vacuums where the other political, economic, social factors contribute in shaping the educational systems and determine their outcomes. Comparative education is “not strictly a discipline, but a field of study covering all the disciplines which serve to understand and explain education” (Bray, Adamson, and Mason, 2007, p. 35). The 21st century has brought new perspectives (which arising from globalization and the changing role of the state), forums for scholarly exchange (internet and electronic journals), and tools (technology of information and transportation) to the field of comparative education. This provides the field with new aspects of
development and expansion in the light of openness to the world (globalization). In this study, this point helps in addressing the issues of concern from a global side in terms of comparing the achievements or decline with different parts of the world or within the same countries and region in the light of broad criteria and measurements through using developed international technology and communication aspects.

According to Bereday, the comparative education field has passed three phases; the first one originated in the 19th century and was called the period of borrowing by Marc-Antonio Jullien de Paris. Bereday described it as descriptive data from one country and copied them elsewhere. The second phase was the period of prediction in the first half of the 20th century where Sadler asserted on the strong connection between education and society. The third period was called the period of analysis which included an evolving of theories and methods, and the last phase—which was added by Bereday- was a continuation of the tradition of the period of prediction. Noah and Eckstein developed those stages through their work of “Towards a Science of Comparative Education” where they provided five stages: a) travelers’ tales that includes information about foreign countries, habits, values, institutions, etc. b) educational borrowing, c) encyclopedic work on foreign countries in the interests of international understanding, d) the stage of determining the factors and forces that shape the national educational systems, e) the stage of social science, which reflects the relationship between education and society through use of empirical, political science, quantitative methods of economics, and sociology (Bray, Adamson, and Mason, 2007; Noah and Eckstein, 1998).

All these stages gradually develop into any kind of comparative study. Whereas this study starts from a wide range of the description of the country in general and then gradually goes in depth by reflecting on the education systems with its fundamental components, challenges, and progress. Comparative education is an integrated part for explaining phenomena, firstly, within educational systems and institutions. Secondly, surrounding education and linking it with its social environment which constitutes the social part of the education process. Hence, the study tries to connect between education and development in the Arab states in general and in specific the two selected countries. Problems of change and progress are the main concern of the field of comparative education and in this study as well.
2.1.1 International Agencies and Comparative Education

UNESCO, World Bank, and OCED are examples for supporting national education systems through comparative education. The main purpose of these organizations in the context of comparative education is to contribute to peace and security, especially after World War II, by enhancing cooperation among countries through education, culture, and science in order to attain justice through the law, freedom, and human rights without distinction of sex, religion, language, or race. In 2002-2007 there were 3 strategic objectives of education-with emphasis of MDGs 2000-including: a) promoting education as a fundamental human right, b) improving education quality through different contents and methods as well as promoting universal values to share and c) promoting innovation and experiences as well as sharing information, best practices, and policy dialogue in education. In this context, the need of comparative education was urgent in order to determine practical ways for improving quality of education besides extending its quantity around the world. Hence, UNESCO has an important policy advisory role, similar to the policy makers’ role, for the national governments.

UNESCO’s support depends on the desire expressed by the countries themselves in the form of technical assistance for designing an education development plan (e.g. Oman), reinforcement of national capacities in areas of educational planning, policy formulation, human and financial resources (e.g. Egypt), or technical management, or rebuilding of the educational system in the case of crisis or emergency (Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, Somali). Industrialized and less developed countries are the main areas of UNESCO support with much focus on the less developed countries. The global economy and the educational competition have helped to heighten the prominence of international and comparative studies. Not only many researchers, but also consumers, planners, and funders of education are very interested in international and comparative studies in order to find ways of dealing with the implications of competitive market forces, league table, multiple innovations, and demands for more cost effective ways of increasing access and improving the provision of education quality (Crossley and Watson, 2003). The field of comparative education has many units for comparison such as comparison of places, systems, times, cultures, values, policies, educational organizations, etc. The main concern of this study is to compare two states in the same region (Egypt and Oman) with two national systems. As Bray and Kai cited that, “comparison of systems within countries would have permitted identification of instructive similarities and differences, and would have promoted
understanding of the forces which had contributed to those patterns” (Bray, Adamson, and Mason 2007, p. 124). Since the 1990s, education was regarded as a tool to reinforce national strength, which increased till its peak in the second part of 20th century, but with globalization those views started to decline. However, international agencies still focus their efforts on the nation state, and their promotion and maintenance of the national education systems.

2.2 Globalization, Education, Internationalization, and the Nation State

The concept of Globalization has two potentials; the first one is to recover people from poverty and loss while the second one is to lead them to marginalization and impoverishment. These negative impacts affect not only weak or poor countries and government, but also they bear strong storm on the entire global system. Education also plays an important role in the investment of people, knowledge, and skills that become essential for participation in global economy, which is closely related the core of Human Capital Theory. Consequently, globalization increases the rewards of education, and it also raises the costs of exclusion from it, especially for women. Lifelong learning and skills as well as increasing the investment in education are crucial if the globalization is to work for poor people. Add to that the main targets of development through Universal Primary Education by 2015, and gender equality in primary and secondary education by 2005. In one viewpoint, education can be seen as a ‘good’ and as a’ human right’ in the same scope of the UNESCO objectives and the main idea of EFA program (Robertson et al., 2007).

In light of globalization theory and as Green (2006) argues national governments would stop their control on education systems divested from any specific characteristics. Hence, the historic function of education that is based on transmission of national culture and reproduction of national labour power would decline gradually as well as the national education system as the historical product and main institutional support of the nation-state would prepare itself to the new order (Lauder et al., 2006). Likewise, within the scope of universal and standardized education systems, the role of school will change. It will reduce its role as disciplinary knowledge, dispensers of rational and socialization and instead develop and certify the competence of the individuals. In addition, the national objectives of education will be limited to
fulfilling the global economic competition. That is why all the world countries are involved in reform processes for their education systems including the main elements of the education process (methods, curricula, teacher training, etc).

Recently, the education system has been partially internationalized through enhancing the internationalized dimension of curriculum (especially in secondary and higher education), spreading the policy of borrowing, and the increasing mobility of students and staff. Although this kind of education is not hundred percent applied in all the world education system, most of them have started changing even if they still remain national. Furthermore, most of the world’s governments still control their education systems and use them in order to achieve national goals. Consequently, most governments consider education as nation-building including economic and social objectives. The education systems, as national institutions for producing future workers and future citizens, are key means for maintaining high living standards in the face of global competition for the advanced nations and economic development for the industrialized nations (ibid). That also can be noticed in Oman where the government is trying hard to increase Omanization through developing the curricula and matching them with the labour market in order to prepare the students for global market as well as to reduce the dependence on foreign workers as a kind of nationality. “Skills formation has been a major objective of education for governments both in the developing world and in the advanced nations” (Lauder et al., 2006 p. 194). Most of the governments believe in the value of education and training with regard to their critical factor of competitive advantage and national economic performance, whereas many economists do not see a relationship between skills and products. While others see that the supply of skills is secondary for raising the demand of them.

Globally, forming citizens and shaping national identities are the primary functions of education, which can be reflected through the national languages and cultures that are included in the curricula. Furthermore, the governments call on education to enhance culture and national values as a source of social cohesion and national solidarity (as the case of Oman where the education system promotes cultural heritage in addition to its openness to the global world and culture). There are two kinds of countries that form their education nationalism. The first kind integrates the multiple ethnic cultures and religions into a single national identity. The second kind includes a number of countries that impose strict ethnically based nations of nationalism.
2.3 Human Capital Theory

2.3.1 Education and Human Capital Theory

*Education is an investment that can help foster economic growth, contribute to personal social development and reduce social inequality. Like any investment, it involves both costs and returns. Some of the returns are monetary, and directly related to the labour market, while others are personal, social, cultural or more broadly economic. Some returns accrue to the individual while others benefit society in general, for example, in the form of a more literate and productive population (OECD, 1996) (cited from Crocker, 2006, p. 5)*

In the light of the previous lines, education implies economic value beside its social and human value according to the publications of one of the world foremost economic policy organizations “OECD”. The previous few lines summarize the interconnected roles of education and its impact on the human life, in specific, and the development of the society, in general. This view of education derives its origin from human capital theory which in turn established its base from the concept of education and its outcomes on society and the individuals.

Human capital theory (was announced in 1971 by Theodore Schultz) suggests that education or training raises the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, which results in improving the future life and income of the individuals in particular and to the society for granted. In other words, an educated population is a productive population (Jin Xiao, 2001; Olaniyan and Okemakind, 2008). Another point of view sees education as a capital good that can be used to develop the human resources necessary for economic and social transformation. The idea of education as a capital good relates to the concept of human capital, which emphasizes that the development of skills is an important factor in production activities (Olaniyan and Okemakind, 2008). The education role in the scope of human capital as a critical input for innovations, research and development activities is modifying in growth and development to be an intentional effort for creating new ideas which in turn leads to technological progress (ibid). Technology can be considered as the driver of the modern economy, but human capital is the fuel (Becker cited from Laduer et al., 2006).
Formal schooling or on-the-job training can be ways of investment in human capital. This kind of education or training raises the productivity of the workers which in turn leads to an increase of their wages. Many studies affirmed that there is a positive relationship between formal schooling and the variation of the salaries in the well-developed and less-developed countries. As a result of technological changes and globalization, human capital development became an important feature for the economic progress of the nations which in turn is connected to the development process. In addition, the labour markets around the world are encouraging individuals to have an amount of technology-based skills. However, the educated in the Arab region do not have these sufficient skills to enter the global market. “The contribution of education to economic growth and development occurs through its ability to increase the productivity of an existing labour force in various ways.” (Olaniyan & Okemakind, 2008, p. 159). Human capital arises out of any activity that is able to raise the productivity of individuals. The principal example of that is full-time education.

Many of the developing nations have realized that the education system is the principal mechanism for developing human knowledge. Consequently, they invest much on education in order to impact knowledge and skills to individuals as well as to impart values, ideas, attitudes and aspirations, which may be in the nation’s best developmental interest (ibid). The theory of human capital clearly indicates that in the Arab world, education should be viewed as an investment. It will help us in examining the result to which education contributes to the welfare of the Arab people’s life.

2.4 Development and Modernization theories
The Theory of Modernization became the dominant explanation of how low-income countries could improve the living conditions of their populations through numbers of prescriptive policies in order to encourage economic ‘take off’ (Robertson, 2007). This theory focuses on the needed internal factors to be addressed in order to achieve development while the Dependency Theory focuses on external factors. For example, western countries achieved development on the basis of two aspects of the wise use of internal investments and education as well as on the back of slavery and colonial period (ibid).
Education was playing a central role within modernization theories. Some authors, Inkeles and Smith (1974), considered it as a mean for creating ‘modern’ individuals and others considered it as the key which opens the doors to modernization. Consequently, education is a fundamental factor for development of the technical and cultural skills which are needed for economic development. The mass education system is considered a main pillar for a developed country (Robertson et al., 2007).

### 2.4.1 Education and Modernization in the Arab region

The post-independence periods of (1920s-1970s) was the initial expansion of education services in the Arab states. This expansion was met by large numbers of illiterates which are estimated to be 85-90% in the 1940s and even more than that the percentage level has arrived to 99 % in the case of rural and females’ illiteracy. After independence, the state’s policies were directed towards promotion and training of an indigenous, local, professional labour force and towards an integrated economy. The expansion of formal education, literacy campaigns and establishment of higher education institutes were a reaction of the requirements of recruitment of the needed human capital, which are affected largely by the lack of sufficient and broad literate infrastructure. On the other hand, these exerted efforts constitute pressure on the areas of national resource allocations, planning, quality of training programs, etc. Expanding access to education to all the society’s groups in the whole region and within the scope of ‘democratization of education’ became the main feature of educational policies in the Arab states. Free-of-charge public education that is subsided by the state, as a provision of social welfare services, can be seen as an integrated part of the state policy to ensure its legitimacy as well as maintain the repressive hegemony of the state’s leaders and elites. Till recently, in Egypt, Syria, and the Gulf countries, the entrance to the state position was conditioned by higher education degrees and credentials.

The emergence of the public school system in the Arab states did not completely deprive from the inherent contradictions, but it has caused increased conflicting interests. The expansion of public education meant marginalization of community-based patterns of education such as kuttab, khalwa, madrasa which were considered religious institutes. This kind of change did not only mean a kind of ‘modernization’ and ‘transition.’ It also meant transformation of the
bases of power, determination of new sources of authority, (from religious to political and social) and the matter of valid knowledge

This large expansion of public education has produced opposition and resistance by the groups that recognize the monopoly role of state to the educational services as danger for their positions within the broader power structure. The expanding of public education was a part of a comprehensive social, political, and economic transformation of the power structures regulating intergroup relations. In Egypt, excessive dependency of the public education system to the state’s regulations and control leads to the gradual constitution of a community-based web of loosely coupled explicit, but ideologically united, private, Islamic, or any other formal and informal educational settings. Those institutions usually are on the opposite side in regards to the state’s definition of the services and policies of education. In her analysis to some of the local and national reports in newspaper, she painstakingly reconstructs competing narratives about education. They were about the strict clash within the socio-political circumstances as well as the different social and cultural interpretations, which they acquire in the scope of power formation between the state-entrenched elites and the other opposition groups.

The situation is different in Oman, Yemen and other countries. In Oman the communities of marginalized nomads are persistent in providing their children with educational resources. The Bedouin women in the Harasiis tribe ensure safe access to education for their daughters through undertaking radical reorganization of their mobile households by moving their camps near the schools where their children (especially girls) can attend, to overcome the barrier of long and unsafe access to schools. This innovative and brave behavior of the Harasiis women was met by conservative attitudes of the urban (Egyptian) male head teacher as not unbecoming for mature girls to be in the same place as the adolescent boys. One can summarize that while the policy of the government to exclude the girls from education or physical segregation of sexes, the opposite was of the side of the of the Harasiis women through their persistence to educate their daughters. Consequently, the education extends to both sexes.

The policies of the state towards the nomad communities have affected their transition to modernity and in the same time integrated them into mainstream society. Furthermore, the cultural factors that related to family structure and traditionalism of nomadic societies were the reason behind the low academic performance and achievement, especially for girls. From this point of view “marginalized communities are able to generate and institutionally sustain
innovative modes of behavior with respect to the consumption of educational resources” (Lauder et al., 2006, p. 986).

Generally speaking, and from the previous short lines, the expansion of education in the Arab countries cannot only be due to the state-initiated policies. But this expansion can also be attributed, rather, to intervening factors of the civil society process. The educational policies are integrated with the political conflict and socio-economic structure. As such they cannot be separated from the cultural and political context in which they are formulated and negotiated. Consequently, the context is very important and critical in recognizing the interaction among policies of the state and local and global processes. This expansion of schooling has an important role concerning the reformation and transformation of sociopolitical power. Furthermore, it generates interpretations of tradition and culture that enables competing groups to frame schooling and educational resources and their values. As such, the role of schooling in the transitioning of the Arab societies into modernity becomes a useless intellectual exercise and misleading one.

2.5 Education and Development in Scope of the ‘Consensus View’
The development of the modern education system, in regards to the industrial countries, aimed to promote the nation-state. Through conflict and consensus theories one can grasp the challenges that face education in the 21st century. In the light of the ‘consensus view’ which argues that the particulates of human beings’ lives have been replaced by universal ways of being, relation to others, and knowing. The expansion of education has provided children with the socialization and the selection role of their adult future as workers and citizens. Regarding socialization, a common high culture is needed where students can learn a kind of universal education, which enables them to deal with the abstract symbol system of math, literacy, and science. The consensus view centered on the fair role of its social democracy, whereas all individuals are equal before the law. In his argument Emile Durkheim stated that the state provides individuals with education that gives them the means of life and the meaning of life itself, in addition to its protection from self-interest (Lauder et al., 2006).

“Education is a crucial type of investment for the exploitation of modern technology” (Lauder et al., 2006, p. 9). The education is the fuel of the technological innovation where
education has achieved a great importance as a source of technological innovation. As such and with the spreading of technology in the workplace, the unskilled jobs will decrease while the jobs that required specific knowledge will increase. From this point of departure, education plays a crucial role in providing the learners with the required technological needs as long as the employers want to make sure that the workers are competent in their chosen field.

Within the scope of the consensus theory, the industrialization gave the priority to human capital rather than the machines, lands, or physical labour. Consequently, the students should have the opportunity of education that enables them to get jobs that have higher rewards in society on the basis of efficiency-which relies on selecting the most proper student for the jobs with technical requirements.

“...national economic development proceeds best when investment in physical capital is complemented by an appropriate development of the human capital stock, of which education and training form a large part” (Noah and Eckstein, 1998). As a result, education contributes directly and indirectly to economic growth, especially in the poorer countries through higher incomes, lower fertility rates, higher levels of labor, capital productivity, improvements in health, and improvements in the quality of children.

Chapter Three -
Methodologies of the Study
3.1 Research Strategy
As Bryman (2008) mentioned, the deductive strategy includes that the theory and the hypothesis which deduced from the theory comes as the first step, then the data collection follows the guidance of the theory. This study is based on the deductive approach where the researcher based her data on the guidelines of interconnected theories and concepts such as globalization, development, human capital, and comparative education and their relation to the collected data by using ‘secondary analysis’. This study demonstrates the process whereby hypotheses are deduced from existing theory, which consequently guides the data collection so that they can be tested. In the light of the previous theories in the next chapters, there will be a connection between the theories and the collected data in order to reanalysis them.

This study, in general, is a quantitative one, which entails a deductive approach through the relationship between the theory and the research, and it is also concerned with the quantification in collecting and analyzing the data depending on the secondary analysis method for re-analysis of the pre-collected data from other documents and researches. And in the same time, the study tries to take the qualitative side in that it is sometimes the qualitative approach that serves as testing the theory and not only generating it. One can say that the study seems to take the form of the mixed-methods approach, but not in the methods of collecting the data but in terms of the relation between the theory and the research. The quantitative side can be reflected in this study through the partial dependence on statistics and the deductive approach, while the qualitative one can be introduced through testing of the existing theories and their relation to the re-analysis of the data as well as the study’s slight reliance on concepts and descriptions of the current educational situation in the two selected countries in terms of analyzing certain objectives (EFA goals and UNESCO’s supporting role).

3.2 Rationale for Selecting the Countries
This study compares between two countries, Egypt and Oman, in explaining the degree of achieving EFA goals, and MDGs in brief, as well as the pioneering role of UNESCO in supporting and raising the educational system in both countries. The researcher of this study chooses these two countries in particular because of the following reasons:
The Education system in Egypt is the largest one in MENA countries, which in turn justifies the intention of many researchers to study it.

Although Egypt contains the highest percentage of population in the region, it tries to achieve good quality of education in addition to expanding the access through involvement of different literacy programs with the cooperation of national and international agencies.

Oman, on the other side, is selected because it achieved great success and progress in regards to its education system through a short period of time (since 1970). The numbers of schools has expanded, the quality of education has improved, new initiatives have emerged, and modern programs have been applied in order to develop the education process. Consequently, the author tries to reflect all these issue in the light of the current study to show to the reader the extent of progress that Oman has achieved.

Although many natural difficulties exist such as dependence on non-Omani workers, as well as the low percentage of population, Oman could improve its conditions and achieve high position in regards to HDI.

All these reasons are the motivations behind conducting this study on the two cases in order to see the extent of progress that has been achieved in both countries with regards to achieving EFA. Furthermore, the obstacles, needs, and challenges are on the other side of this study in both cases.

### 3.3 Research Design

The technique for collecting the data of this study is Secondary Analysis for examining the documents. “Secondary analysis is the analysis of data by researchers who will probably not have been involved in the collection of those data” (Bryman, 2008, p. 296). In other words, analysis of the data has been collected by other researcher, institution, NGOs, etc. It also includes analysis of the data for purpose that is differently used than the primary purpose of the study. In other terms it includes, “any further analysis of an existing data-set which presents interpretations, conclusions, or knowledge additional to, or different from, those presented in the first report on the data collection and its results” (Marshall, 1998).

The aims and research questions of this study, which are posed by the researcher, are addressed through the analysis of data from the documents and reports of UNESCO as well as
other related researches. The value behind using this method is for saving time and financial resources where the researcher will not have to go to the selected countries (Oman and Egypt) in order to conduct the study and collect data related to the topic of the research. It is good to analyze data that is being collected by government departments and their different representatives. One of its advantages is that it will avoid the long-suffering public. They would not be bothered by interviewers and by questionnaires popping through their letter boxes. This study is based on analysis of data that have been collected by UNESCO’s institutions in the course of their field of study.

The data that is going to be analyzed through this method will be in good quality as long as the researcher will depend on her analysis on data that already is reliably collected by international organizations like UNESCO, World Bank, and other documents like UNESS. The secondary analysis guarantees good quality work starting from the rigorous sampling procedures of the highly experienced organizations that are collected through the data related to monitoring and evaluating the progress of the education in the Arab region (UNESCO), and its dependence of gathering the data on developing structures and its well controlling procedures of the emerging data. The researcher of this work pursues a research interest in the context of the education field in the Arab Region depending on the utilization of existing data from the UNESS Reports in the two chosen countries. Furthermore, the researcher wants to reflect a new and distinct side from the original work where the researcher conducts a comparative study between Egypt and Oman. This comparison depends on the data that has been collected in the field of progress and development in education as well as the priorities and challenges that face the two educational systems. Moreover, the study is characterized by a new feature that is not mentioned in the reported or the cited researches. It conducts a comparison between the two countries in regards to certain goals. It has been contended that the approach can be used to generate new knowledge, new hypotheses, or support for the existing theories.

The breadth of data available by the national governments or by the international organizations in regards to the topic of interest is an important advantage for this method. The researcher of this study is concerned with some certain issues and their effects on other variables, which have not been a matter of interest for the initial analysis of the reports or the research. Furthermore, the theories and concepts that are used in this study provide new ideas of the analysis. “The arrival of such new theoretical directions may promote a reconsideration of the
relevance of the data” (Bryman, 2008, p. 299). The elements of validity and reliability are already in existence as long as the researcher depends on her analysis and on valid and reliable resources that do not need to be re-examined. But sometimes this issue is likely to be jeopardized as a result of varying overtime “...figures cannot be regarded as providing a picture of the true level of crime” (Bryman, 2008, p.307). The existence of data is exposed to change either for progress or for decline as the element of time.

The Disadvantages of this Method
The inherent nature of the secondary analysis is a disadvantage of this method whereas the primary collected data may not cover the whole objectives of the research in regard to the selected period of time. The ways of collecting data by others need a period of familiarization, which can be essential and cannot be estimated. According to Bryman 2008, secondary analysis provides the secondary analyst with high quality data that she or he could not collects by himself or herself. However, the collected data will not cover the whole objectives of this study as long as the existent data have not been collected with regard to the topic of interest of this study (the comparative study between the selected countries through re-analysis of the collected data of UNESS and other researches).

In the light of this way of analyzing the data, it will be difficult to the researcher to answer all questions related to the data as long as she did not conduct the process of collecting the primary data by herself like the other methods that are conducted on the work field. In addition, the researcher of this paper cannot get the message behind some data as long as she is far from the practical part of collecting the data. Sampling of the types of secondary data and information that are associated with EFA goals and the role of UNESCO in Oman and Egypt will be used (e.g. poverty, health, employment, education, gender equality, etc. The relation between variables in the context of this method is not constant because of the nature of change that sweep the world and specifically the movement of development and reform in the region.
Chapter Four-
The Context of the Study

4.1 Developmental Context

This chapter gives a general overview of the Arab region through looking at its political, economic, demographic, educational, social, and cultural setting, as well as a quick feedback of the MDGs and EFA in the region in order to analyze the most prominent features in the developing process. The background of this study will include an overview of the many sides to give a clear picture in order to remove the ambiguity barrier of the readers concerning a certain points that are included in this study. This background will give a general overview of description of the Arab Region in general with much focus on two selected countries to be analyzed Oman and Egypt as well as their education systems.

Maamori (1998) has argued that the Arab region has been subject to a series of dominations in the 16th and 17th centuries by the tri-continental Ottoman Empire. In 1922 and with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, all the Arab World (except Saudi Arabia and northern Yemen) fell under European imperial domination. Most states became independent in the 1950s and 1960s, but soon they came under control of military dictatorships. Arabic is the official common language (in addition to other ethnic minorities who use some other languages) for about 325 million people, which constitutes the estimated population of the region according to the 2005 estimation, which in turn represents about 4.9% of the world population. This percentage was 240 million in 1993, and it increased to 300 million in 2000. The total rural population of six of the Arab countries including Egypt and Oman constituted about more than 50% of the population of the whole region. Furthermore, the Arab region has the same conditions of the rapid population growth with an estimated annual average growth rate of 2.0% (2000-2010), compared to the world average of 1.1% per year. The region’s countries have similar cultural, social, and political situations.

108.8 billion dollars represent the increased of the Arab World Gross Domestic Product GDP which in turn constitutes about 2.7% of the world GDP. The average GDP per capita in 2005 was 54.7% of the world average which implies disparity in the region. For example in 2005 about 455 dollars was the GDP in
Yemen while in Qatar it was 54.024 dollars. This rapidity is followed by high levels of unemployment especially for young people. That disparity of GDP results from the disparities of distribution of wealth among the region’s countries, which in turn is visualized in forms of high rates of unemployment in populations in some states more than others, and within the country itself and between its different region (e.g. rural and urban areas). For example, the Gulf countries are considered one of the wealthier labour importing countries as well as migration from inside and outside the Arab world. Other countries like Yemen, which ranks as the 150th on the UNDP’s Human Development Index, is one of the least developed countries in the world (UNESCO-Beirut, 2008; Mervat & Morris, 2006). Despite the increase of the illiteracy rate, two-thirds of adults are literates in the region. There is a spread of development and modern education in some countries like Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon.

4.1.1 Human Development Indicators

Although there is progress of human development in the Arab region, it faces many deficiencies. There are many disparities in the socio-economic development with the highest income countries like Qatar, Kuwait, UAE (which ranked number 32 in the world in the top human development category according to HDI, 2010), and Oman with more than US$ 10,000 (GDP) per capita including the middle income ones (that include the majority of the countries between US$ 890 and US$ 9,584 GDP per capita). Egypt’s GDP per capita is estimated to be US$1,207. The lowest income countries like Sudan, Yemen, and Mauritania have less than US$ 800 (GDP) per capita (UNESCO-Beirut, 2008).

The Human Development Index (HDI) was 0.699 in the Arab countries and 0.691 in the developing countries (in 2005) according to UNDP. The educational situation in the region is weak whereas the rate of adult literacy in the Arab world is estimated to be 70. 3% compared to 76.7% in the other developed countries which conceals a shortage of financial and human efforts in that domain in the region. In the area of Net Enrollment Rate NER, the region achieved progress which can be estimated by 65.5% compared to 64.1% of the developed countries and which in turn is considered below the international average which is 67.8%. Although some Arab countries like Yemen, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco allocate from 6.7% to 9. 6% from their GDP on education, the rates of enrollment in these states are low which implies weakness of the government and the policy of resources’ allocation and distribution as well.
On the side of gender disparity, the Arab countries have the higher proportion of gender disparity concerning adult literacy rate, labour force participation, unemployment, and school enrollment. The Arab world and North Africa suffer from high rates of unemployment which is estimated to be 12% and 11% respectively with comparison to the world rate which is 6.3%. The unemployment rates in the Arab countries are in favor of women where females' unemployment rate varies between 16% and 17%, while males' unemployment rates vary between 9% and 10% (with a difference of 7.9%).

4.1.2 Economic and Political Situations
Although the economic indicators of the Arab region are better than in other countries in the world, they rank in the lowest positions with regards to the development indicators. Furthermore, the huge sub-regions and within the country economic disparities, need serious reform and better distribution of resources in the Arab region. Not only the economic challenges that contribute to the delayed development in the whole Arab region but also improving the governance, democratization, institutional reform, increased civil society participation, and more political freedom are the challenges of the Arab region. Examples for practical steps were taken since the 2000s such as the first national human reports in Egypt in 2005 and in Jordan in 2006 by the National Councils for Human Rights as proof of the governments’ new measures of reform for more political freedom and better governance since the early 2000s (UNESCO-Beirut, 2008) Despite that progress, the region ranks in the fifth last position of the worldwide countries concerning the public sector accountability. The recent revolutions, or what is known as ‘the Arab Spring’, in most of the Arab countries contributes to a temporary and recent delay of the progress wheel on the sectoral levels of society including education, health, economy, tourism, politics, etc. But in the long run, these revolutions may help in the restructuring and rebuilding of the Arab societies. Education can be seen as one of the fuses in addition to the awareness of the people especially among the young generation with the policies of odious dictatorships, which were in control in the last decades.

To achieve the development in the Arab region is not always feasible because the security situation has been destructive especially with the US-led war against Iraq in 2003, the subsequent Israeli violence against Palestinians, and the Israeli war against Lebanon in 2006. Moreover, the national and international terrorist network in Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, and
Morocco. All these events have affected passively on the development efforts where the focus was paid either for humanitarian affairs or for issues of national defense and security (UNESCO-Beirut, 2008).

4.1.3 Education, Employment, MDGs, and EFA Goals in the Arab region
Arabic countries' labor market is characterized by a wide spread of unemployment especially among the youth. In his speech to the BBC News, the senior World Bank official Marwan Muasher affirms that the Arab region has to pay more attention and take more practical and serious steps for education quality as well as equipping the students with the needed requirements of the labour market which are critical thinking, innovation, and problem solving abilities. Furthermore, the need of continuous education reform in the region follows along with economic development as long as the youth constitute the majority of the region’s population which means about 60% of its population is young people under the age of 30 years old. All these young people are in need of jobs and work which means they require the government and the competent authorities to exert more of an effort starting from the education sector (Gavlak, 2008). Consequently, much attention has been paid to the national and the international agencies to create new jobs and conditions in order to prepare new places for the new generation in the labour market. The national government should also pay more attention to the knowledge society through providing the new generations with the required knowledge and information related to their life requirements.

To attain a knowledge society or knowledge economy, the most crucial factor is the dependence on intellectual capacities of the workforce and not only the dependence on national resources or material products. Many studies that applied to that topic affirmed that the knowledge gap is the determinant of the world economy and it is not only the income gap that justifies the affirmation of the 2003 Arab Human Development Report which referred to the Arab region as facing the main long-term problem of ‘lack of knowledge capital’, and the decline of that quality represents the most important challenge in the region (Gonzalez et al., 2008).

MDGs
The relation between MDGs and EFA is closely related whereas the achieving of the six EFA goals will ensure the achievement of the MDGs. On the other side, achievement of MDGs will
create an atmosphere for achieving the EFA. "The MDGs include a selection of numerical and time-bound targets that encapsulate people’s most basic aspirations for a better life. Between 1990 and 2015, countries agree to halve income poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality; reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds; cut maternal mortality by three-quarters; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis; ensure environmental sustainability; and build a global partnership for development" (UNDP, 2003, p. 3).

During the last few decades the Arab states have achieved notable progress in regards to many MDGs goals that can be monitored in forms of an increase literacy rate from 35% to 77% during the period of 1970-2001 such as access to safe water and sanitation, expanding of primary education, etc. 12 out of 20 Arab countries will be on track to achieve youth literacy by 2015. Reducing rural illiteracy, which is double compared to urban illiteracy, is one of the main priorities for some countries like in the cases of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Concerning gender disparity in adult literacy, the rate of females' illiterates to males' illiterates increased from 71% in 1990 to 83% in 2001. The following figure shows that Kuwait has the highest percentage of literacy (94.5%), while Mauritania and Morocco have the lowest percentage which indicates that they are on the top of the countries region which has the highest percentage of illiteracy rate.
83% of the population has gained access to new infrastructure including clean water. The available data shows that most of the region's countries are on track to achieve access to safe water by 2015 like in Egypt, while other countries like Lebanon and Djibouti have already achieved water coverage. Conversely, Oman, Libya, and Tunisia are off the track. Even with access to safe water, the issue of regional disparity can be cleared whereas the urban areas are the advantaged areas because they have access to clean water like in Egypt, Comoros, and Djibouti. On the other hand, more than 40% of the rural population does not have access to clean water in Oman, Tunisia, and Morocco.

Since the 1990s, the percentage of primary school children has stopped at 80% and the percentage of girls to boys in both primary and secondary education slightly rose. Recent estimations show that the enrollment of primary education is at a high 80% and more than 90% in Qatar and Jordan, while in secondary and tertiary education the rates are low. That can be attributed to high rates of drop-out or non-completion rates of the primary cycle as a result of the child labour force, low quality of education, etc. Add to that the high level of maternal mortality rates (500 per 100,000 live births). About 13 countries in the region will be able to meet this goal by 2015 whereas countries like Egypt, Comoros, and Morocco have exerted notable efforts to reduce in 2001 mortality rate to between 40 and 80 deaths per 1,000 live births. Meanwhile
UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Tunisia, Libya, and Qatar were among the countries that achieved the lowest levels of child mortality in the region. During the period from 1990 to 2008, mortality rates have declined by half in the region. But the least developed countries such as Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, and Djibouti are still off track. During recent years, the Arab countries have faced challenges of development in terms of the existence of more than 6 million children in need of joining the educational cycle, and despite redoubling the efforts for females' access to education, the Arab education system still suffers from gender disparity, especially in the rural and remote areas. Consequently, more than half of the illiterates' populations are women which are reflected through their limited political participation and by their representation in the legislatures’ seats which is estimated to be 5% (Gavlak, 2008; Gonzalez et al., 2008; UNDP, 2003). “As of 2003 women had not exceeded 12 per cent in any parliament in the region” (UNDP, 2003, p.10).

The relatively poor economic performance in the 1990s and early 2000s, inadequate financing of social policies, and increasing political tensions and conflicts constitute obstacles and problems in the face of achieving the required degree of MDGs. The Arab region as a whole has experienced sub-regional disparities in the scope of the Third Arab Human Development Report (AMDGR) for 2010. The high income countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are on-track to achieve most of the MDG targets; in contrast it is the poorer countries that lag significantly behind. Specially, those with conflict conditions like Iraq and the Occupied Palestinian Territory making it unlikely that they will be able to meet the majority of the targets by 2015. With regard to halving the proportion of people living below $1.25-a-day however, Arab countries are on-track to achieving it. Nonetheless, the national poverty lines in the region did not experience significant progress in reducing income poverty in rural areas. Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Egypt, Syria, and Kuwait are making progressive steps towards this target. 46% and 40% of the poverty percentage can be found in Mauritania and Yemen respectively (UNDP, 2003).

Generally speaking, although there are many countries in the region that are off track to meet MDGs by 2015, the region in general can recover the ground through pursuing the regional, national, and international initiatives.

EFA Goals
Achievement of the six goals of EFA will help in achieving the MDG agenda and reduce poverty as well. As the Arab countries have achieved notable progress in regards to MDGs, they also have achieved serious progress with regards to EFA. However, they are among the countries in which their progress in this area is insufficient and off track in regards to some goals and on track in regards to others. For example, there are about 6 million children who are out of school—around 9% of the world’s total—, and about 60 million illiterate adults who in turn require much effort in order to achieve and sustain developments in education.

To improve the quality and equity of education in the region, a number of stakeholders, decision-makers, and ministries of education have cooperated and doubled their efforts in order to ensure children enrollment, and that they remain at their schools. They are also working towards overcoming challenges of gender and improving educational services for marginalized groups through a number of programs and initiatives of community education like in the case of Egypt through the project of Community School and Street Children Schools which targets include the disadvantaged children in normal schools and re-socializing and integrating them into social services.

### Table 4.1.3a Projected growth in school-age population by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>School-age population (in millions)</th>
<th>Growth %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe</td>
<td>137.5</td>
<td>117.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>848.1</td>
<td>795.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>264.1</td>
<td>260.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America and the Western Europe</td>
<td>238.7</td>
<td>240.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South and West Asia</td>
<td>843.9</td>
<td>880.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>176.3</td>
<td>192.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>444.4</td>
<td>552.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>2,990.7</td>
<td>3,075.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As the table shows, the Arab region is among the world’s regions (South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa) which are experiencing growth in the population of school-age children.
The growth rate is estimated to increase by 8.9% during the period from 2010 to 2020. That can be due to the increase of the population in the Arab region as well as to the decline of infant mortality in many countries of the region.

Despite the increase in the school age population, the primary net enrolment ratio has increased by more than one-tenth. However, the Arab region is one of the world regions that have achieved a fast increase of enrollment rates at the primary education level compared to the other regions. This is clear from the following figure.

Figure 4.3.1b Primary enrollments and keeping pace with population growth

Gender gaps have decreased at the primary and secondary levels whereas girls’ enrollment has increased in the region during the last decades as a result of the increased awareness of the importance of female education and its impact on the development process in the national and regional levels. A high share of national income for education has been spent by national governments (UNESCO-Beirut, 2011). Despite the progress of the education system all over the world including the progress of working towards achieving the goals of the 2000 EFA in Dakar, there are still around 72 million out-of-school children, and about 57% of them are girls. The share of the Arab states constitutes about 6 million, and that can be seen in the following table:
Table 4.1.3b Out of school regional sum of primary school age children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Regional sum of primary school children of primary age not in Primary or Secondary. Total</th>
<th>Regional sum of primary school children of primary age not in primary or Secondary. Male</th>
<th>Regional sum of primary school children of primary age not in primary or Secondary. Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab states</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>8,728,801</td>
<td>3,693,478</td>
<td>5,035,324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>6,992,975</td>
<td>2,940,873</td>
<td>4,052,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td><strong>6,682,985</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,822,871</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,859,115</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td><strong>5,801,433</strong></td>
<td>2,434,211</td>
<td><strong>3,367,222</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UIS database, 2009

Moreover, there are about 774 million illiterates. Most of them are women from rural and poor areas. Inequality of income and gender issues is delaying the progress of EFA goals in the region. Poverty is a challenge that the region has faced since Dakar (2000). 1% of the Arab population fell below the poverty line in the period from 1990 to 2000. This percentage increased to 10% in the least developed countries (Yemen, Mauritania, and Sudan) which in turn refers to the increase of the poor population in the region. This represents a difficult challenge for achieving the EFA as well as the MDGs in different countries of the region. The poverty challenge is due to the increase in the regional population which in turn has led to deficiencies in achieving the required targets for meeting the EFA & MDG goals, as well as the desired degree of development in the region. Furthermore, the factor of conflicts with its passive impacts on the education sector in the region is an important element for delay in achieving EFA goals (e.g. decline of enrollment of children in the conflict countries Iraq, Sudan, and Palestine) as well as passive social and psychological impacts on the different age groups of the society.

The gender disparity is one of the most cross-cutting challenges that face EFA goals. There was an increase of GPI from 0.54 in 1990 to 0.81 in 2000. The discrimination of women and girls in education constitutes one of the most crucial obstacles for achieving EFA in the region. Despite the quality of education in the region during this period being advanced to some extent, the regional countries still face low qualities of education which is not sufficient for
increasing completion rates or supporting achievement of learning. Centralized governance and management of education, low levels of teacher training and professionalization, inadequate and mismanaged funding, and outdated curricula are common shortcomings of the education system in the Arab countries. Concerning literacy development in the 1980s the rate of literacy increased by 11% which did not coincide with the expectation of the Jomtien Declaration. So far in the next decade (1990) this percentage increased to 61.5% (UNESCO-Beirut (2011)).

Knowledge and skills are developed through education as the basic building blocks of development. The policy makers in the region face challenges of quality education while the governments exert double the effort in favor of expanding universal education. The number of universities has increased from about 117 universities in 1990 to 175 in 1996 which increased 49.6% during these six years. To achieve education development as a key feature of the nation’s development, quality of education has to be achieved, and that is according to goal number 6 of EFA goals. Hence, improving all the educational pillars including textbooks, curriculum, and teachers’ professional and financial conditions as well as teaching the learning processes, and the school environment and management are the right way towards education and human development (Bonits, 2002). This can be visualized through using a problem-solving approach, matching curricula with the labour market requirement, dependence on critical thinking and creativity, developing teacher training programs, etc.

4.1.4 Educational Spending & Women’s Participation in the Labour Force in the Region

Approximately 4.8% of the GNP is considered the average of the Arab countries spending on education which is higher than the average at any point during the 1990’s. This resulted from the government’s awareness of the importance of education in developing the nations. However, many regional disparities exist within the region with respect to spending on formal and non-formal education. Morocco and Saudi Arabia expensed 24.9% and 22.8% respectively on education from the total government expenditure while the average among the other Arab countries was 17.2%. On the contrary was Lebanon which spent lower than the average (only 8.2%) on its education system.

Women’s active share in the labor market is found in Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, and Yemen. While in other Gulf countries, the participation of women is fewer and limited
because of traditionalists and state authorities. Although the oil-countries such as Libya, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Kuwait could achieve domestic development, they lack major aspects for human development like the limited participation of women in the workforce and in political roles. On the other hand, poor-oil countries like Egypt, Syria, and Jordan try to achieve domestic development through improving their education systems and investing in human resources like developing women’s participation in the labor force and developing literacy programs especially for women (ibid).
Chapter Five -
Education and Development in the Two Case Studies: Egypt &
Oman

5.1 Egypt’s overall development context

Egypt is located in Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea between Libya and the Gaza Strip. It also borders the Red Sea north of Sudan and includes the Asian Sinai Peninsula. Its total area is estimated to be 1,001,450 sq km. Egypt is famous for many natural resources like petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, phosphates, manganese, limestone, gypsum, talc, asbestos, and zinc. Egypt faces continued issues with regards to polluted water and air, rapid growth in population, unemployment, high rates of illiteracy especially for women in the rural areas, and poverty. “The rate of population growth is expected to significantly drop from 2.1% (1975-2004) to 1.8% (2004-2015)” (UNESS Egypt, 2008, p. 10). Its total population in 2009 was 82,999 million and it reached to 90 million according to 2012 estimate, about 82 millions inside Egypt and about 9 millions abroad, (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt). Islam is the

Source: UNESCO- Beirut, 2011, p.52
dominant religion with about 10% to 15% Christians and other minorities. Egypt consists of 29 governorates “muhafazat”. It won independence from British occupation in the 28 of February 1922. The formal language is the Arabic language. Although Egypt is a democratic country, the government is highly centralized with the president having extensive executive powers. Furthermore, instead of the presence of a multi-party system which in turn refers to political reform and development, the case in Egypt is different where the space of democratic change remains slow (UNESCO-Cairo, 2008). Recently and with the successive revolutions in the other countries, actual democracy constitutes a challenge in Egypt as well as the other Arab countries.

5.1.2 Socio-economic Conditions and Human Development

The government of Egypt participated in the 2000 Millennium Declaration goals. That has determined the long-term plans for achieving its goals related to reducing illiteracy rate, declining disparities in development progress between urban and rural areas, creating new jobs, and accelerating the decline in fertility. According to the indicators, Egypt is on track to achieve 70% of the MDGS whereas it is expected to halve the poverty rate in 2015 according to the 2004 MDGs Second Country Report. The living standards and the economy for the majority of the population improved. However, 18% of Egyptians and up to 40% in the rural Upper Egypt area still live below the poverty line. Overall poverty has increased and is back to the same level as in 1995/1996 which is currently 19.6% as a result of the economic crisis which had swept the world and had passively affected the developing counties like Egypt in 2008 (UNESCO-Cairo, 2008). That has led the government at the national level to allocate one third of total public investment to Upper Egypt which in turn helped in reducing the gap between Upper Egypt and the other parts in the country in regards to socio-economic and development indicators. The drop in Suez revenues and tourism as well as the prolonged closure of the stock market which followed the recent revolution has adversely affected the overall economic activities in Egypt. Furthermore, the increase of food prices over the world has influenced Egypt’s inflation and poverty level; since Egypt is the world’s largest importer of wheat. The World Bank, one of the international agencies, has supported Egypt in these situations. Poverty and development disparities between north and south (Upper) Egypt has lead to comparable access of education which can be clearly observed in Upper Egypt and other regions as a result of poverty, the aforementioned disparities of development, and the weak political situation. Unfortunately and in the light of the current
position and after the events of the 2011 Revolution, halving the poverty may need changing the timeframe- longer than the expected 2015 goal as a result of the losses that have swept the various sectors of the state, specifically the sector of tourism and stock market, in addition to the increased debts of the country.

To increase the female enrollment in education at its different levels has drawn the attention of many competent authorities in order to strengthen women empowerment and increase their involvement in political positions and the work force. According to a 2004 report, Egypt will not to be able to eradicate infant mortality in 2015 to 25/1000 live births. Both infant mortality and malnutrition among children under five have decreased by half, and life expectancy has increased to 71 years. It will not be able to eradicate adult and youth illiteracy in 2015, and achieving universal primary education by 2015 will be impeded as a result of regional disparities

Since the mid-1990s, the lack of substantial progress on economic reform has limited foreign direct investment in Egypt and has kept annual GDP growth in the range of 2-3 % in 2001-03 and increased slightly by 4.4% and 5% in 2004 and 2005 respectively (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt). In 2011 the total GDP was $231.111 billion, and the GDP per capita was $2,892 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt). Egypt can be classified as a lower middle-income country that has achieved economic growth despite the increased pressure by international donors to implement reforms. The government has instituted a privatization program and has committed itself to the implementation of reforms requested by donors. Prior to the recent event of the 2011 January revolution, the global economic crisis had impacted Egypt’s real GDP growth, inflation, fiscal balances, and poverty levels. Whereas unemployment had risen to 9.4% and capital inflows had declined (especially the decline of foreign direct investments which had fallen by 39%). To recover the economic growth, the Egyptian government had implemented plans depending on additional spending, social benefits, and subsidies. That had led to growth of the GDP to 5.3%. Despite the robust activities in tourism and the communication sectors, the recovery was too slow (and still slow) to significantly affect the increasing unemployment rate (UNESCO-Cairo, 2008; World Bank, 2011). The unemployment rate reached 16.7% in 2009 and the following table shows the sequence of the high rates of unemployment during the last decade.
Table 5.1 Unemployment rates among men and women (15-29) in Egypt 1998, 2006, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female 19-29</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male 15-29</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Egypt Human Development Report, 2010

Since the dawn of the 21st century Egypt has undergone major economical, political, social and educational reform efforts. It was also a decade for eradicating illiteracy whereas about 50% of Egyptians are illiterates. However, the issue of quality remains the most important challenge that faces the country rather than the access to education. “In 2000, education was regarded as an issue of “national security”. Since then, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has espoused “Education for Excellence and Excellence for All” to guide the Ministry’s efforts towards attaining reform and development” (UNESCO-Cairo, 2008, p.5).

The Human Development Index (HDI) has increased by 17% from 0.589 in 1994 to 0.689 in 2004 which has ranked Egypt from the low to the medium category of global human development. The increase of the population growth rate and the decline of infant mortality have led to an increasingly young working-age population which has resulted in problems of unemployment. The contribution of the government to improve the development level of the country through increasing its public expenditure on education as well as the other sectors of the society (which estimated to be about LE 15 billion) has helped in improving the human development indicators. Consequently, the unemployment population has increased from 1.8 million in 1993 to 2.15 million in 2004. Most of them are at the 15-25 age group with about 66%
of them having secondary or intermediate education; 35% of these are women; 25% of them have graduated from higher education (UNESCO-Cairo, 2008; NHDR, 2010). Egypt is ranked in the 113 position of HDI, and it belongs to the Medium Human Development countries.

5.1.3 The Educational Position and Reform in Egypt
In articles 8, 18, and 20 of the Egyptian constitution, the state provides free and compulsory basic education. This is provided at all levels. Egypt has committed itself to educational reform since Dakar 2000 which implies the following directives:

- Promote early childhood enrollment from 18% in 2006 to 60% in 2012, then to 75% in 2015.
- Ensuring UPE for all children, which mean 100% and combined the special need children with the regular enrollment.
- Enhancing technology in basic education schools and continuing training of educational cadres.
- Reducing illiteracy rate from 29.3% in 2006 to 15% in 2015 with focus on female illiteracy.
- Achieving quality of the education process.

5.1.4 The Egyptian Educational System
The Egyptian educational system is the largest one in the Middle East and North Africa in the countries (MENA) and in the world as well. It consists of 3 stages of education: the primary level (from grade 1-at the age of 6-to grade 6), preparatory level (from grade 7 to 9), and the secondary level which includes general, technical and vocational (from grade 10 to 12). In the secondary stage, most of the students from the technical education start working rather than joining higher education. Till now, Early Childhood Education (ECE) is not officially included in the educational system. More than 90% of the students are enrolled in public education and 7% of them in private education. While in the pre-school stage, the enrollment in private institutions exceeds the public ones and the enrollment in Al-Azhar has increased from 8% to 13.2% in the period from 2002 to 2006.
5.2 Oman’s Overall Development Context

The Sultanate of Oman is located in the southeast of the Asia (specifically in the extreme southeast of the Arab Peninsula). It is bordered by the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. The total area of Oman is 309,500 sq km. The capital city is Muscat. According to the 2010 estimate, its population is about 2,967,717 (about 73.5% are Omani citizens and about 25% are non-Omanis) with an annual growth rate of 3.2% (2006 est.), an infant mortality rate of 16.8/1000, a birth rate of 23.9/1000, a life expectancy of 75.3 years old for males and about 82.22 for females. According to the second census in 2003, the less than 15 years old age group constitutes more than one-third of the population which has important impacts on the educational policies and developmental plans (UNESCO-Doha, 2008; Rassekh, 2004; ALECSO, 2008). Arabic is the official language in addition to other languages (e.g. English, Baluchi, Urdu, Indian dialects). Islam is the main religion with 75% being Ibadhi. The literacy rate is about 80.4% (2003est.). It has many natural resources such as petroleum, copper, chromium asbestos, some marble, natural gas, gypsum, and limestone.

5.2.1 Political and Economical Context

Oman is an absolute monarchy where Qaboos Bin Said has ruled as sultan of Oman since 1970 after his father. His extensive modernization program has opened the country to the outside world. Furthermore, he has placed it on the international arena, and has preserved a long-standing political and military relationship with the UK. However, the modernization program has coincided with preserving the Omani traditions and culture. The government is encouraging
local people instead of foreign workers in order to reduce unemployment (which was estimated to be 15% according to a 2004 est.) and limit dependence on foreign countries through training in information technology, business management, and English. Although there is no Omani legislative assembly, Majlis al-Dawla and the Shura Council (Majlis al-Shura) are the two consultative bodies. In 1971, Oman joined the Arab League and the United Nations.

Oman is one of the upper middle-income countries in the Middle East with notable oil and gas resources, a substantial trade surplus, and low inflation. The sequenced five years-plan resulted in developing the country. The GDP developed from 7,639 million (R.O) in 2000 to 15,512 million in 2007 according to the latest published statistics from the Ministry of National Economy, 2008 (Badar & Atweh, nd.). According to the 2009 estimate, (GDP/PPP) increased to $69.48 billion, and per capita it was $23,900 which reflected improvement of individual living standards. The total GDP/PPP, according to 2011 estimate, was $80.022 billion and per capita $25,953 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oman). The real growth rate is 2.7% and the inflation rate is 5.3%. The government is privatizing its utilities and diversifying its economy to attract foreign investment. During the period from 1970 to 2008, Oman has achieved high development in economic growth because of the oil which resulted in development of the country’s infrastructure, social services, and ongoing urbanization of the country. Oman is ranked 89 in concerning the HDI, and it belongs to the High Human Development countries.

5.2.2 Political Share of Woman

H.M. the Sultan Qaboos has stressed on the importance of giving women the same chances and opportunities like men. Consequently, women were granted the right to be elected to the Majlis al-Shura in 1997. In addition, the Omani government can be seen as the only government in the Gulf which has appointed women for the Minister of Higher Education, the Minister of Social Development, the Minister of Tourism, and the President of the Public Authority for Craft Industries (UNESCO-Doha, 2008). Previous to 2003, voters were selected from among the elite, and only about a quarter of the population was allowed to vote, but then the sultan extended voting rights to everyone over 21 years old. Furthermore, Oman has kept good national and international relationships where it maintains peaceful relations with the Middle East, follows a moderate independent foreign policy, and emphasizes on regional cooperation with
other Gulf States through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which was established in 1981 (ibid).

5.2.3 Education Situation in Oman

“Oman has had a non-formal educational system throughout its history. However, the history of a modern educational system is not long, since its beginning was only in 1970 under the wise guidance of H. M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said” (Raseekh, 2004, p. 6; Issan & Gomaa, 2010, p. 19).

Since 1970, the development of education in Oman has passed 3 stages: the first stage focused on the rapid quantitative development of education which included the increasing the number of schools and students also; the second stage, which started in the 1980s, was the beginning of improving educational quality by the Ministry of Education; and in 1995 to 2003 was the third stage, education reform, which started after the declaration of the ‘Vision of Oman's economy 2020’ (Issan & Gomaa, 2010; Rassekh, 2004). Since the declaration of the ‘Vision of Oman’s economy 2020’, education reforms have become a priority in order to develop the educational system in the Sultanate of Oman. The main features of those reforms are ensuring universal access of education for all Omani citizens and providing them with lifelong skills in addition to a desire for moving towards a new modern society. Hence, in 2001 the strategic plan has been initiated to ensure that students will be adequately prepared for the requirements of higher education and the labour market through restructuring secondary education (Issan & Gomaa, 2010). As long as education is considered the cornerstone of building learners’ civilization and workers’ skills in order to develop the country’s economy and self-reliance (UNESCO-Doha, 2008), it has been one of the main priorities in 1970. This is in order to develop a domestic workforce, as being the vital factor in the country's economic and social progress.

5.2.4 Education System in Oman

Education in Oman is free of charge up to the secondary education. There were only three formal primary schools with 909 males students in the whole country in 1970 (Chinapah, 2006; Raseekh, 2004; ALECSO, 2008). The education system rapidly expanded where in 2006/2007
there were about 560,000 students attending 1053 public schools including 20,000 students in private schools. Furthermore, the number of teachers increased from 30 in 1970 to 39,993 in 2007. Public expenditure on education was about 4.6% of the GDP and 26.1% of total government spending. The education system consists of:

I. Pre-school education is offered by the private sector and some public organizations for children less than 10 years old. Kindergartens are available mostly in large cities and enrollment is estimated to be 15%.

II. Basic Education is divided into two cycles: the first one from grades 1 to 4 and the second one from grades 5 to 10. Then two years of post-basic education follows the basic education. The first schools to start introducing the new system in the academic year of 1998/1999.

III. Higher education was recently established in 1986 with the establishment of Sultan Qaboos University. Before that the government was sending the students to other Arab countries like Egypt, Kuwait, and UAE or offering scholarships to US and UK to complete their higher education. 1994 was the start for establishing many private and public universities after the increased number of students in higher education who were joining other universities in Egypt, UAE, and Kuwait. Since last year, new universities (A’Sharqiya University) have opened their door.

 Approximately 40% of Omani high school graduates pursue some type of post-secondary education. The centralization approach is the general policy in Oman, but decentralization has been adopted on a small scale at the local level to meet the challenges in the country (Issan & Gomaa, 2010 & Chinapah, 2006).

**5.2.5 Education and Reform in Oman**

“Individuals are now the only sustainable source for competitive advantage” (Lauder et al., 2006, p. 195). The investment of human capital as a substitute for the richest natural resources—oil and gas, which is more likely to exhausted sooner or later, is an important factor for Oman’s future. That has led Oman in the last decade to focus more on education and its reform (Rassekh, 2004). This is the basic principle which is the theory of Human Capital, based on the government of Oman’s focus on education in general and has given the most attention to education reform in order to face the challenges of education that have affected the educational development. These
reforms are including the entire educational system since the 1980s until now and are including the sixth Five-Year Development Plan and the seventh that is in progress (Issan & Gomaa, 2010). In Oman, “His Majesty’s government realized that planning for the massive national developmental process required a clear vision with regard to priorities. Starting from 1976, national development was based on five year plans that included detailed areas of priority with regards to education” (Al-Shaibaniya & Girffith, 2008). The Third Five-year Plan aimed for planning and implementing of programs that reduce the foreign labour and depending on domestic well-skilled and qualified workers. Consequently, the MoE has started a policy of Omanization in order to enhance the national workforce of teachers and administrators through employing them (ibid). These sequenced steps were based on developed thinking and awareness of the most crucial priorities and challenges to be met through well-developed plans and reform.

The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of encouraging decision making at the regional and local levels, and the cooperation between local regions in Oman through the Organizational Structure in 2008 to reflect the ministry’s decentralization policy. Oman adopted a system of centralization to ensure that all the schools throughout the entire country maintain the national standards and to allow for the deployment of strong accountability mechanisms. The ministry’s policies ensure that the schools are responsible for their implementation include: following the curriculum and teaching plan, using the textbooks, qualified teachers and employees; and distribution of financial resources (Al-Shaibaniya & Griffith, 2008).
Chapter Six -
Progress and Reform, Challenges, Priorities and Strategies of Education in the Two Case Studies

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section tries to reflect many studies that are related to the topic of research as well as giving information, firstly, about the status of MDGs and EFA goals in the two countries. The second section explains the priorities, strategies and challenges that took place in the education system in the two countries.

6.1 Commitment to Achieve the MDGs in the Two Countries

While the period to assess the achievement of the MDGs by 2015 is very near and despite most of the region’s countries including Egypt and Oman not likely being able to meet all the goals in the specific time given, both of the two selected case studies could achieve notable progress in achieving those goals, and still do the best in order to develop and improve their conditions. In spite of the economic growth in Oman, some challenges need to be tackled. The indicators of the 2004 MDGs stated that about 18% of the children under five years old are underweight which in turn means the necessity of establishing concrete measures in order to decrease this level. Despite the decreased fertility rates, the “poverty pockets” are still relatively high. Furthermore, rates of young people’s unemployment are high. “A report of UNICEF-14 stated that around 25% of Omani households live with 250 riyals (approx. 650$ as of exchange rate of 22nd of May 2008) per month” (UNESCO-Doha, 2008, p. 14).

The Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) in primary education progressively increased from 82.7% to 89.7% in the period of 1994 to 2007 with an increase of about 7.6%. This refers to the exerted efforts by the country in order to expand that education. Moreover, the literacy rates of the youth (15-24 years) are also increased from 92% in 1993 to 98% in 2003 with an annual growth of 0.39%. Although the improvement of the position of women in Oman concerning their active and increased participation in the workforce and the political life has increased, their participation and representation in those fields are still in need of more effort and support. The percentage of women in decision-making positions in the government increased slightly in 2004 and 2005 to 6.7% and 6.8% respectively, while the percentage of women’s seats in the Al-Shura...
Council in 2003 and 2005 remained the same low percentage of 2.4% as well as their large participation in the MoE.

Oman has achieved great improvement in child mortality rates where it is the only country in the Arab region to reduce the mortality rate under 5 by two-thirds in the period between 1990 and 2005. In 1990, the Under-Five Mortality Rate has decreased from 31/1000 live births to 12/1000 live births in 2009. The country achieved universal immunization of measles with more than 98.90% in 2005. Through the sixth five-year plan 2001-2005, the Ministry of Health was committed to reducing the mortality ratio and achieving the best level of health care, which led to the reduction of the under-five mortality rate. Although maternal mortality ratio has been decreased to less than 15, children mortality and maternity health education are challenges. The prevalence of marriage between cousins is a key reason for 68% of children death. Not only in Oman but also in most of the Arab countries, the phenomena of relatives’ marriage is dominant, and that is because of the common cultural heritage and the Islamic culture which promotes these customs and habits.

Developing health services is included in the development plan whereas the government policy is to develop Omani human resources and to encourage the private sector’s participation. The MoH focuses on initial health care as a core aspect of health policies and an increased expenditure budget for quality health care and services. “The budget of the Ministry of Health increased from 392, 9 million USD in 2002 to 518, 9 million USD in 2005” (UNESCO-Doha, 2008, p. 17). As a result of the expansion of the health system, the number of infected people of HIV/AIDS reached 1453 of which 25.3% were in the 0-24 age group. The malaria and tuberculosis rates were decreased by the end of 2005. Although the Sultanate of Oman is located within the arid regions where water resources are limited, the country intends to halve the percentage of people without sustainable access to sanitized, clean water by 2015. Hence, economic growth and the government’s commitment to improving the quality of life of its citizens led to developing the social life. Moreover, the state is responsible, within the context of the social security system for the care of its citizens in the case of sickness, old age, incapacity, and emergency according to the Basic Law of the State (ALESCSO, 2008).

Concerning MDGs in Egypt, the government intended to halve poverty by 2015, according to the Millennium Development Goal’s Second Country Report (2004). The report praised the fast and sustained progress in sanitation and water, infant and child mortality, and
maternal mortality. However, there are significant regional differences between Upper and Lower Egypt in regards to access to public sewage (90-97% access in urban governorates and in urban Lower Egypt compared to 56% access in urban Upper Egypt) and in estimated levels of infant mortality. Weak governance led to marginalization of environmental policies and mishandling of the main environment problems. Furthermore, youth literacy (15-24) will not be reduced by 2015 as well as delayed achievement of the UPE by 2015 as a result of regional disparity. Funding and expenditure costs for achieving MDGs are key elements for that. Not only Egypt but also most of the region’s countries have the challenge of finance and expenditure of the MDGs as the fundamental challenge which hinders achieving these goals and the EFA goals as well. The need of decentralization is also a basic demand for achieving those goals in addition to having a strong political context to attain the required targets. The fifth Five-Year Plan (2002-2007) is aimed at improving the living conditions of the individuals through improving GDP, reducing poverty and income disparities, reducing population growth rates, preserving natural resources, and building up human capital and achieving full employment. It also includes taking into account gender equality, promoting of family planning and reproductive health services, eradicating adult illiteracy, and providing quality services for children especially health services (UNESCO-Cairo, 2008). Although Egypt could improve and develop many of these goals and targets, the way is still long for achieving the complete picture of the desired reform in light of the low economic growth and the internal problems related to development and reform.

6.2 Assessment of EFA goals in Egypt and Oman


Before going in depth into the status of EFA in Egypt, the coming lines introduce a view of the education policy and situation during the last decades. During the nineties which were characterized by EFA, Egypt participated in this initiative and committed itself to achieving the goals of the EFA as the basis for the educational process. As a result of the Egyptian concern for achieving EFA and its goals, the country has achieved progress at the quantitative and
 qualitative levels that put it into a position of admiration and appreciation by international organizations concerned with education such as UNESCO, UNICEF, WB, etc.

EFA can be seen as a candle for enlightenment for the Egyptian society in general. Most of the community groups started to take an active and effective role for reforming the educational system in the country. For example, more community participation has increased in the education process including curriculum development, management systems, and assessment of students’ learning processes and achievements. In addition to the active role of national and regional organizations in the reform process, the international organizations as well has supported the qualitative and quantitative reform process in the Egyptian educational system in order to keep pace with modern requirements including globalization, critical thinking, democracy, innovation, etc. Despite the policy of the Egyptian education system based on the real needs and requirements of the Egyptian people, the Egyptian education system still faces shortcomings and challenges such as a population problem, communication and technological revolution, competition and economic development, globalization, violence and terrorism. In 1996, Education reform in Egypt addressed the quality of education through making education as an issue of national security to face the above mentioned challenges (NCERD, 2001; Gillies, 2010, Dixon, 2010; El-Baradei, M & El-Baradei, L 2004). This national security issue can be visualized through the democratic bases on which education is based: equality of education for all individuals in the society without discrimination and this can be clearly seen through articles No. 8 & No. 40 in the constitution of 1971. As an individual of the Egyptian society, the author of this work sees that sometimes the policies can be taken as words written in paper and rarely applied in reality. For example, the bases of democracy cannot be reflected by the number of schools where the dominant teacher-centered approach in teaching still exists. Especially in the rural areas which in turn can be due to a lack of inspection, weak school management, as well as a lack of financial support that encourages and allows space for a pupil-centered approach through a number of activities, teaching materials, and resources.

One can notice that- especially in the last period-the system of favoritism is dominant in the governmental jobs. The selected elites were assumed the high position jobs while the classes of common people would be far away from these high positions and assume the low and middle positions without consideration for their degree or their educational levels. One can summarize
that the socio-economic position can determine the employment status in the governmental positions.

Returning to the objectives of educational policy, education aims to achieve a number of criteria including achieving EFA goals and curriculum reform in order to face the new century requirements as well as the labour market's needs. On the other hand the students have to hold onto their national identity, values, and culture in the face of external cultural invasion. This makes education a continued learning process and should be considered as a lifelong learning process. Furthermore, developing teachers’ capacities through training and guiding the students’ behavior for respecting the surrounding environment through keeping it clean are important. This in turn makes them understand the problems of their environment and consequently makes them try to find resolutions as being part of this environment (NCERD, 2001). The following lines contain the details of the EFA progress and challenges in the two countries:

### 6.2.1 Goal 1 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

“Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children”.

Early childhood care and education facilitates the cognitive and language skills of the child, improves their physical well-being, and develops their emotional and social capacities as well as the individual’s personality. ECCE leads to economic benefits, like in Egypt where there is a benefit/cost ratio of 3:1 which is likely to increase to 5.8:1 in the case of ECCE addressed children at risk (UNESCO-Beirut, 2011 & 2008). The Egyptian government with the cooperation of MOE has contributed in developing early childhood education through formulating a committee in order to introduce ideas, studies, and opinions in regards to this stage of policy. Furthermore, a number of schools and classes are included in this level of education which have been established and provided with the required needs, equipment, and facilities. As a result of these efforts, the number of children and teachers in this stage has increased and has reached 3227 and 5736 respectively in 1999/2000. Most of them are females with only 129 male teachers. To provide quality in this stage, the schools have cancelled the old ways of teaching at this level which was dependent on books, homework and examinations and were replaced with teaching cards and teaching activities instead. In addition, this provides an opportunity to
marginalized children who stand to benefit most from this education through broadening their access to the public sector and not only through monopolizing education to private institutions or sector.

Ministries of Education in many Arab States have included ECCE in their divisions, since 2005 as well as many universities have developed and offered courses for study and research at the national level, such as Oman. Oman has developed this level of education which led it to be on track to achieve this goal by 2015. The number of the children attending this level increased from 7348 in 2000 to 8433 and 9429 in 2005 and 2006 respectively, and the annual growth rate of this stage has increased between 1995 and 2005 by 7.3% (Chinapah, 2006). On the other hand, the enrollment of this stage in Egypt in the 2006/2007 school year was lower than other countries that have the same economic conditions. Therefore, Egypt is off track to achieve this goal by 2015. That can be attributed to the lack of awareness of the importance of this education for the future life of the child, in addition to the lack of funding and resources to expand that education with its various demands for modern teaching materials, qualified and trained teachers, and available department at the schools. Furthermore, there are urban-rural disparities concerning the enrollment rate with 63.3% for urban and 36.7% for rural areas (UNESCO-Cairo, 2008).

The government policy with the cooperation of international agencies such as CIDA and the World Bank is to increase the enrollment rate from 13% to 60% by 2012, especially in the remote areas through programs (which started in 2005) of providing 2,698 new kindergartens in the whole country as well as improving the quality of education through revising the curriculum, teacher training, and establishment of national standards. In addition, the project builds educational professionals’ capacities within this department of education in the ministry and within the Department of ECCE in the ministry (UNESCO-Beirut, 2011). The increase of ECCE enrollment coincides with the projections of the five-year plan (2007-2012) to include the ECCE as a part of free compulsory education through the program of Egypt’s Early Childhood Development. Recently, there is a new trend in Egypt, as well as other Arab countries, for establishment centers of resource and training in order to improve the quality of ECCE service provisions (UNESCO-Beirut, 2011).
### Table 6.2a Gross Enrolment Ratio in pre-primary education (GER)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gross Enrolment Ratio in Pre-Primary education %</th>
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<th>Gross Enrolment Ratio in Pre-Primary education %</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
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<td>School Year ending in 1999</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>School Year ending in 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>GPI (F/M)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.95</td>
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<td>Oman</td>
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Source: UNESCO GMR, 2011

From the previous table one can notice that the enrollment in this level of education in Egypt during the period of 1999-2008 has increased from 328 to 580, but in Oman one cannot monitor the progress during this period as long as the data is missing in 1999. Furthermore, the GPI in the two countries is similar whereas Egypt and Oman could reduce gender disparity in this education. The gender disparity in Oman is in favor of females where they out enroll boys in this level. While in Egypt the situation is different.

#### 6.2.2 Goal 2 Expanding Universal Primary Education (UPE)

“Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality”.

Concerning this goal there was a sense of global, collective responsibility for access to basic education as a universal human right in addition to the purposes of economic development (Robertson, 2007). As a result of expanding the primary education in the last ten years, which has been encouraged by the mobilization campaigns and political commitments arising from the World Education Forum in 2000, the number of children attending primary school has exploded over. Furthermore, secondary education faces a large demand of the graduates from the primary schools. Especially in the countries which have expanded their primary stage. Nonetheless, countries all over the word focus on expanding access to both primary and secondary education as well as improving the quality of learning services (Huebler, 2011). Notwithstanding,
achieving UPE by 2015 is far from certain at the global level. "Despite the notable progress made in access to and participation in primary education since Dakar 2000, there are still grey areas which call for immediate action" (UNESCO-Beirut, 2011, p. 15).

Universalization of education in Egypt has started since the first Egyptian constitution in 1923. Specifically article No.19 which states compulsory education for all children which in turn justifies the quantitative progress of primary education enrollment during the last few decades in the country. The signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 was also a reason for expanding education as a human right for all human beings. Introducing free education was another step for the universalization of education (NCERD, 2001). The free education policy is seen as a support for education for all citizens in Egyptian society in one hand, and on the other hand it enhances the idea of education as a fundamental investment for the development of society (Human Capital Principle). Egypt is one of the countries (e.g. UAE, Qatar, Tunisia) that are on track to achieve UPE with an Adjusted Net Enrollment Rate (ANER) of 95% or above in 2009. However, the number of out-of-school students in Egypt exceeded half a million students, including 70% of them being girls. The government in Egypt has made good steps towards giving marginalized and disadvantaged children the opportunity of learning as well as improving their educational level. That can be seen in the context of ministerial decree No.48 in 1994 which provided the opportunity for fatherless orphans and low income-children to improve their performance through educational tutoring groups. In the area of supporting girls’ education, the ministry has established One-Classroom Schools for non-integrated girls in the primary cycle and to prevent the drop-out of this stage in the remote and rural areas. Furthermore the Community Schools for the age group of 8-14 are considered a clear symbol for achieving EFA.

On the other hand, the challenges that face the education system in Oman, like other countries such as Mauritania, Iraq, and Sudan, will hinder achieving universal participation which makes Oman off track to achieve this goal by 2015. Egypt and Oman are among the countries that maintain a retention rate of their students at the last grade of primary education. They also equal in that both are missing one goal of the EFA goals. Oman will miss the UPE; Egypt will miss the gender goal.
Table 6.2b Total adjusted net enrollment rate of primary education

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>Oman</td>
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<td>World</td>
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In the light of table 6.2b, the total adjusted net enrollment rate of primary education in the region in general has gradually increased. These began from the end of the 1990s as a result of the exerted effort by the Arab states to reform and expand the access in this education, and as a result of responding to the international conferences of education. That can be seen as an actual step for achieving one of the EFA goals which were internationally agreed upon. From the previous table, there is also notable progress in expanding that education on the level of the two selected countries. That also can be seen in the light of the increased percentage of net enrollment in primary education. Both of Egypt and Oman have achieved notable progress in expanding access to this education and that is explained through analyzing this study. Furthermore, one can notice that the expansion of this education can be clearly seen all over the world whereas the world in general witnessed this increase, but still much effort is still needed in order to achieve the required results from the EFA goals. That can be achieved through reaching the marginalized groups, the disadvantaged, and the conflict-affected groups which are the main, current focuses of multilateral and bilateral organizations.

6.2.3 Goal 3 Promoting Learning and Skills for Young People and Adults

“Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes”.

The Jomtien Conference (1999) identified life skills as core elements of learning and content of basic education in order to develop and improve the capacities and lives of the
learners. Then the Dakar conference (2000) expanded the definition to include life, values, skills, and knowledge acquisition in order for learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and on the top is learning to be. Lifelong learning concepts share equal promotion of this goal which focuses on the needed skills of the youth and adults through formal and non-formal education. Consequently, the expanding of the 3rd EFA goal makes life skills learning available at all education levels and settings inside and outside schools. The 2007 National EFA Mid-Term Review Reports of some Arab countries provided an overview of the progress in the 3rd goal. In Egypt for example, subjects of life skills and continued education are included in the curricula as well as use of strategies of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Second Chance Programs (which are commonly used in Asia and Latin America). Notwithstanding, lack of recognition by officials and the public, lack of funding and lack of coordination are challenges that face the NFE in Egypt (UNESCO-Beirut, 2011 & 2008). In Oman the content of literacy programmes were updated and functional literacy programmes such as sewing, agriculture, health, etc, were introduced as well as introducing pilot projects and innovative initiatives for developing life skills between adults and young learners. Expanding access to education and providing the learners with lifelong skills are the features of the reform in Oman in order to coincide with the requirements of international markets and other aspects of globalization.

6.2.4 Goal 4 Adult Literacy

“Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults”.

Anderson and Bowman (1965) stated that a 40% literacy rate in a country is important but not sufficient for economic growth and human development. At least, a 70% or 80% literacy rate must be achieved to have economic growth (Maamori, 1998). Moreover, economic growth is related to the highly educated and literate societies. Within the scope of the Mazawi study on the educational expansion in the Arab region, during the 1990s “Egypt finds itself in an absolute setback compared to the rest of the Arab countries, and in a still greater one compared to the rest of the third world as far as girls’ literacy is concerned” (Lauder et al., 2006, p.983) as well as for the primary schooling of girls. One of the disappointed goals of achieving the EFA in Egypt is the illiteracy rate which presents about 44.75% compared to the total illiteracy rate of
the region (nearly 70 million people are illiterates in the region according to UNESCO estimation in 2008), so that Egypt is off track to achieve 50% improvement of adult literacy by the period in question. A high rate of illiteracy constitutes a fundamental obstacle in running the development wheel in the country. Furthermore, combined with Morocco, they account for nearly half of the regional adult illiteracy. However, in the past few years, Egypt as well as Kuwait and Yemen have achieved progress in adult literacy where it increased by about 20% (UNESCO-Beirut, 2008). 1990-1999 was the first period for Eradicating Illiteracy and Adult Education (EIAE) and is considered as a priority for improving the developing plan to the country. This announcement aimed to eradicate the illiteracy rate, develop the creative capacities for the illiterates, and benefit from their human right of education within the context of the equality principle of the constitution.

Eradication of illiteracy can be achieved through the cooperative work among all political parties, governmental, and non-governmental institutions through expanding enrollment in basic education, connecting between opportunities of vocational training and lifelong learning with programs of illiteracy eradication, and highlight cooperation among formal, non-formal and governmental institution through introducing national campaigns for illiteracy reduction. In this field, the minister of education has participated in spreading of ‘General Agency for Illiteracy Eradication and Adult Education’ (GAIEAE) in all the Egyptian governates in order to implement of the programs and plans of this campaign. The first phase of this campaign was in 1990-2002 and the second phase was in 2002-2007. In order to attract the illiterates to illiteracy eradication programs, Egypt has followed updated and non-traditional strategies that integrate different systems and educational techniques through establishing computers and English language classes, adopting the civilization concept of eradication of illiteracy, developing special programs of illiteracy eradication for special needs persons, and using distance education through TV channels, local radio station, etc. The notable achievements of this campaign during the period from 1999 to 2000 were the following: its focus on the female illiterates especially in the deprived, remote, and rural areas in order to raise and develop their roles in developing their small families and then the entire society, increase the number of literates as a positive result of this campaign, and match these programs to the vocational training in order to raise the living conditions of Egyptian families (NCERD, 2001). The researcher of this study has witnessed increased interest by the local and international agencies in supporting the literacy program,
especially in the rural and remote areas during the 1990. Social organizations like CARITAS have exerted notable efforts in that regard, and there were numbers of illiterates who have completed their education and have joined higher education. Most of them were females in rural areas.

On the contrary is Oman which is considered one of the countries that would be able to halve illiteracy rates among adults by 2015, although its illiteracy rate was so high in 1970 where it was 65.7% with 43.9% being men and 88.3% women. The experience of literacy programs such as Learning Village was a successful experience for the decline of the illiteracy rate in the country with the cooperation between the local communities and organizations. Recently Oman’s literacy rate was estimated to be 80%. Despite the problem of illiteracy in the Arab countries, Egypt and Oman (as well as other countries in the region) have made good steps to tackle this problem such as closing urban-rural and gender gaps (e.g. initiatives of One-Room Community Schools for improving rural females’ education) in the former and the successful collaboration between the government and civil society in the latter (e.g. initiative of Learning Village).

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<td>97.6</td>
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<td>World</td>
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</table>

Source: UIS Database, 2009

… Missing data

The previous table shows that the percentage of literates in Egypt was 84.9% in 2005 and 2006 which in turn refers to the delay of Egypt in meeting the fourth goal by 2015. This percentage is not clear during the coming years as shown where the data is missing in these years. On the contrary, 97% is the percentage of literates in Oman. 3 in 2003 and it increased slightly to 97.6% in 2008 which reflects notable progress in reducing adult and youth illiteracy
rate as a result of the above mentioned efforts by community participation. The data for monitoring the progress in that regard in the last two years is missing.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>44*</td>
<td>57*</td>
<td>31*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
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</table>

From table 6.2d, the literacy rate in Egypt during the period of 1985-1994 was estimated to be 44% (according to the national estimate most of this percentage were males). In the period of 2005-2008 this percentage has increased to 66% as a result of national and international efforts. This percentage is expected to be 73% by 2015. This information indicates that the illiteracy rate is gradually declining in the recent years. In Oman the literacy rate is higher than Egypt during the three years from 2005 to 2008 by about 21%, and is expected to reach 88% by 2015. Despite this progress, both of the two countries will miss this goal by 2015.

6.2.5 Goal 5 Gender Disparities

“Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.”

The EFA in Dakar 2000 and the Millennium Declaration established an initiative aimed at a time-bound gender equality deadline. It focused on achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005 which is near to the third goal of the Millennium Development (MDGs). Oman has a GPI of 1.17 in 2008, indicating that girls out enroll boys at the pre-school education level. Girls’ enrollment in the primary stage exceeded the boys. Furthermore, Oman could eliminate gender disparity in 2005 at the secondary level. Oman, Kuwait, and UAE are the only three countries that met the target of reducing gender disparities in both primary and
secondary education (GPI between 0.97 and 1.03). The number of female students increased from 12.7% in 1971 to 48.5% in 2005 (Chinapah, 2006). So long as female education is considered an important investment in the future of the country, starting from the crucial role of females in constituting the first small community, family, and up to the larger society as well as their contribution in the economic status of the country by their participation as a part of the workforce (Chinapah, 2006). Gender disparity can be seen clearly in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) where this level of education is planned exclusively for boys in Oman and other countries. While Egypt is near to achieve this goal in that level of education. By contrast, Egypt is one of the seven countries-including Sudan, Yemen, Iraq, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia that have missed that goal in both the two levels (primary and secondary) with gender disparities in favor of boys. Concerning gender achievement, the girls perform better than boys in both Oman and Egypt. Egypt also has gender disparity in favor of literacy for adult men. On the other hand, women’s active participation in the labour force in Egypt is more than in Oman.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td><strong>0.91</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.92</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
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<td>0.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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Source: UIS database, 2009

** UIS estimates … Missing data

From this table, one can notice that the Arab region has also achieved progressive steps in reducing the gap of gender in primary education since the conferences of Jometien and Dakar. Oman and Egypt in specific have almost closed the gender gap in that education. Oman has achieved progress in closing the gender gap in primary education since 1999 which is estimated to be 99%, but during the last decade it witnessed decline in that percentage. During the period of 2004-2008, there was no available data concerning this point in Oman as can be seen in the
previous table. So the researcher of this study is not able to do further analysis of the extended progress during this period, but one can expect that during this period the progress was slightly higher or maybe there was a decline in that point. In 2003 there was decline of achieving gender parity index which is estimated to be 96% compared to the previous years. On the other hand, there was a slight leap (1%) in 2009, estimated to be 97%. That reflects the need of more efforts in the regard of the concern to close the gender gap in primary education. At the world level, there is notable progress in achieving gender parity in primary education which is slightly achieved, and which in turn needs to double the effort in order to achieve equality of education with quality for learners, especially girls and integrating them in all the fields of education and the labour market as well.

**Table 6.2f Gender parity Index for gross enrolment ratio in secondary education**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1999</th>
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<td>Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arab states</td>
<td>0.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td><strong>0.91</strong></td>
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<td><strong>0.93</strong></td>
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<td><strong>0.93</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>1.01</td>
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<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.97</td>
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<td>0.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: UIS Database, 2009

** UNESCO estimates  ... Missing data

From table 6.2f, it is clear that the region is achieving progress during the period from 1999 to 2009 in reducing the gender disparity in secondary education. That is according to the fifth goal of EFA for closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005. One can also notice that still there are many countries of the region that need to improve this goal, whereas the achievement of this goal in the region is slightly observed. From the two previous tables, Egypt missed this goal; the percentage in both levels of education (primary and secondary) is the same in 2004 (0.94%). On the other hand, Oman is close to reducing the gender gap in secondary education, but still there are more efforts needed especially still the TVET is limited for boys during the last years. However, there are new efforts and initiatives for including
girls in that kind of education to decline gender disparity. The whole world could not achieve that goal in the specific period, but there is notable progress in general to close the gap in that education by 2015.

6.2.6 Goal 6 Quality Education

“Improving every aspect of the quality of education and ensuring the excellence for all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all learners, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills”.

The aim of the EFA goals is to provide children with the basic needed skills for their lives, and quality of education is the key to achieve that (UNESCO, 2009). Proper human capital development depends not only on the existence of education itself but also on the quality of the education being delivered. The problem of quality is compounded with the lack of information regarding the quality of education in many Arab states. Jordan, Oman and Egypt have assessed the performance of their students and the results from these studies suggest many areas for improvement (Bontis, 2002).

The most important question that forms the challenges facing quality education is how to monitor progress toward achieving better quality education? The answer can be clearly introduced through the assessment of students’ achievement and learning, which in turn is related to other factors and determinants. Schools and socio-economic environments of students as well as their impacts on the entire society constitute an extensive dimension of quality in addition to the developmental context of education in the countries. According to the results of TIMSS in 2003 and 2007, Egypt is one of the Arabic countries that showed progress in science, while 1 out of 100 students in grade 8 reached the advanced benchmark in Mathematics. That can be attributed to the outdated curriculum which does not give space for the students to think and create as well as the dependence on non-trained teachers or less qualified ones. Recently all these issues have been given more attention by the MoE.

Furthermore, quality of education can be translated into terms of international criteria for implementation of the whole educational process including teaching methods and resources, community participation, school’s responsibility and accountability, etc. To achieve quality, Egypt, like some other states in the region, rented schools and decreased double-shift schools,
while Oman supplied schools with well-equipped learning materials and an environment with computers labs, libraries, audio-visual aids, air conditioning, etc. Egypt included concepts and international issues such as democracy, women’s rights, tolerance and peace education and so on in the curriculum contents. In Oman, the curriculum reforms accompanied basic education reform in the country included reducing the content overload with theory and abstract concepts as well as aiming to support their policies for development of a knowledge economy (UNESCO-Beirut, 2010).

In Egypt, 12% of persons have had less than two years of education which can be attributed to reasons of marginalization and deprivation in education that in turn results from inequality that can be centered on the population of the poor, females, and in rural areas. Over one-quarter of girls from the poorest 20% of households have less than four years in school, and nearly half have less than four years. Low quality of education, the costs of education, and parental poverty as well as the failure of the government to overcome the reason for inequality are fundamental reasons behind the problem of a high drop-out rate in Egypt (NCERD, 2001). That in turn makes the graduates who are lacking adequate education and who have not completed their secondary education, subject to marginalization, poverty, and insecurity.

The Egyptian Household Education Survey that was conducted in 2005/2006 by USAID assured that the most commonly mentioned reason for primary school dropout according to the opinions of parents/guardians was unwillingness of the children to stay at school as a result of the boring atmosphere of the teaching process. In the area of textbook content and gender-sensitivity requirements, the primary education’s textbook in Oman and Egypt are reinforcing the traditional heritage that highlight the men’s working role and the women’s house work role and children care. As good steps for improving quality, both countries have focused on teacher training programs where there were about 90% of qualified teachers in Oman and about 71.7% in Egypt according to UNESCO-Beirut 2007 Quality Study (UNESCO-Beirut, 2010).

Oman is one of many Arab countries that have made progress in teaching methods where it applies student-centered methods and develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills for the students. On the other hand Egypt still depends, partly, on teacher-centered methods as well as rote and memorization education.

To improve education quality by monitoring and evaluating education at different levels, Oman is among the countries that participated in the MLA Project (1993-2001). The resulting
data has provided essential information, which is related to the teaching and administrative practices as well as socio-economic conditions of the students and their families and the students’ aspirations to the MoE as factors that affect students’ achievements. This was the first step for the reform programs UNESCO-Beirut, 2008).

6.3 Priorities & Strategies in the Two Countries

Egypt has determined three specific goals that are included in a national strategic framework as being the key priorities for improving the quality of pre-university education. They are access, quality, and the education system. Concerning access: Although the number of new schools has increased from 11,000 schools to 30,000 or more in the recent years, in addition to about 20% of schools working for two educational shifts, there are still priorities such as a) new schools need to be constructed (3500 schools) by 2011/2012 and during a 6 year period with costs about LE 7.1 billion, and financing them through the civil society and the private sector, as a result of the increased population in Egypt. Furthermore, the increase of children enrollment has led to an increasing density of classrooms which almost reaches to 60 and 70 pupils in one classroom, especially in the poor and rural areas. Classrooms density in turn prevents achieving good quality of education hence and insufficiency for global competition, b) increasing the number of classes for special needs students with IT support to guarantee them access to good education, c) increasing girls’ access to education through supporting the initiative of the National Council of Childhood and Motherhood by providing new classes for absorbing large numbers of girls and decreasing the gender gap, supporting and encouraging the successful experiences of girls’ education such as through UNICEF Community Schools, USAID New School Programme, One Classroom Schools, d) supporting and upgrading the quality of pre-school education, e) improving illiteracy from the current percentage of 28.6% to 10% in 2009, especially for rural females.

Concerning Quality: a) school-based reform and preparing schools for accreditation, b) development of teacher’s conditions and human resources through establishment of the Professional Academy for ensuring quality of training programmes according to standards of quality, improving the capacity-building of educational leaders at the ministry and school levels, developing teacher’s skills of English language and technology, linking of promotion and salary to performance through certain framework for teachers, solving the issue of shortage of teachers
by redistributing teachers, giving additional incentives, hiring new teachers on temporary contracts, etc (Ministry of Education, 2007-2012); c) upgrading quality of education through maximization of technology usage through training teachers on the use of this technology, providing schools with computers in cooperation with donor agencies, developing lessons for teachers and students online; c) developing examination and assessment systems through implementing comprehensive portfolio-based assessment in the primary education, reviewing the design of exit examinations of the secondary schools in cooperation with MOHE; d) developing a national curricula based on active learning in line with developing new methods of teaching as well as developing textbooks and integrating technology, e) paying more attention to excelling students through establishing special centers for them in accordance with international standards, f) developing technical education and spending about LE 5.853 billion for construction, maintenance and development by 2011. It is the same as the latter process of developing the curricula, methods of teaching, caring about excellent students in that education, as well as developing teachers’ and inspectors’ capacity through development of training programs.

Concerning the education system: a) setting up the supportive system of decentralization, b) determining responsibilities and roles of central and local management at all levels to ensure the highest level of efficiency in implementation, c) establishment of school-based management, d) building systems for information, monitoring and assessing in order to support decision making and reform sustainability. The last Egyptian President ‘Mubark’ approved a series of initiatives that intended to strengthen scientific research and higher education. They include the following: establishing new state and private universities in order to increase the involvement of the private sector in education, increasing the number of students studying at science faculties from 40% to 60%, building specialized international universities for technology and industry in cooperation with donors, and offering a research fund to enhance scientific research and link researchers with the industry (UNESCO-Cairo, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2007-2012).

Oman has determined its strategies and national priorities on the qualitative and quantitative aspects through expanding access and improving quality. The strategy of Oman includes achieving the maximum enrollment rate in general education, increasing the enrollment of the higher education to 50% for the 18-24 the age group, increasing learner-centered
education, increasing fit for purpose, and providing life-long opportunities. The seventh Five-Years Plan (2006-2010) is aimed to expand access and quality of education through improving internal efficiency, school management, developing curriculums in order to fit the labour market requirements, expanding the use of IT and human resource development, increasing the enrollment rates in literacy programs, decentralizing the administration, and encouraging the participation of the private sector. Furthermore, the Sultanate of Oman has intended to expand participation of higher education to the whole population through the strategy of expansion of the private university system which in turn will require more participation of the private sector. The sixth development plan in Oman (2001-2005) addressed the issues and priorities of expanding UPE for all through free education, textbooks, transportation, further implementation of the basic education programme, and development of quality education services at all levels. In general, the recent priorities in Oman are briefly: developing in-services teacher training, improving the systems of examination and educational evaluation, revising secondary education in order to prepare qualified generations that can integrate with university education or with a professional field afterwards, developing and modernizing curricula especially mathematics and science, and organizing the private education sector according to the new regulations prepared (WDE, 2006/07).

6.4 Progress and Achievements through a Number of Initiatives

The achievement of the six Dakar EFA goals has gained the concern of the regional countries as well as has received impressive political participation. Hence, the improved level of spending on education in the region, which constitutes an average of 4.9% of the GNP and about 15% of total government spending in 2007, as well as the developed sectoral reforms are aspects of this actual participation. Some of the gained fruits of the EFA goals in relation to the two countries are: a) integration of more girls in schooling especially in Egypt, b) increasing the enrollment in the primary education; c) decreasing the illiteracy rates, d) developing national strategies for ECCE, especially in Egypt, e) improving the quality of education through educational reforms which are under implementation. Those points will reflect the actual progress and development in the two countries.
To reach the unreachable as well as to make the basic education fit the needs of disadvantaged children and rural girls; the Ministry of Education in Egypt has developed many educational initiatives, with the cooperation of bilateral donors and many UN organizations which include the following:

a) Initiative of UNESCO-Friendly School for Street and Working Children in Egypt: The aim of this initiative is to gather street and working children, enroll them in multi-level classrooms, and provide them with the equivalent accelerated programme to the National Primary Educational System. Developing a suitable curriculum, using innovative teaching/learning methodologies and offering incentives are the means to meet the educational, economic and social needs of the children, which this model has been designed for. This model has been applied in 27 Schools in different governorates “mohafazat” in Egypt and the MoE will apply it to 50 schools all over the country.

b) Initiative of Girl Friendly School: This initiative works to provide educational opportunities for girls in remote areas in seven governorates in Egypt. Through meeting the educational and social needs of girls, the purpose is to eliminate gender disparities which can be achieved with this program. As a result of cooperation, the number of girls who enrolled in this program is 10,674 in 434 schools which participating in this initiative.

c) The One Classroom Schools for Girls in Rural and Marginalized Areas in Egypt: It was applied a long time ago in order to provide easy access for drop-out girls living in marginalized and rural areas. More than 3,000 schools in the country have provided and have enabled the girls to have easy education close to their homes, and provided them with life-skills and professional efficiency for improving their living conditions.

d) UNICEF Community Schools Model: The concept of one classroom and multi-grade schools form the focal point of this initiative, which focuses on marginalized children, especially girls. However, this model pays more attention to the needs and participation of the community in the school management area and the use of active and self-
teaching/learning approaches. More than 20,000 children are enrolled in the initiative in 339 community schools in Egypt.

e) One-Room Community Schools: This is an innovative approach for adult illiteracy. These have been established to help rural females acquire basic life-skills from within the community as well as to diminish the gap between males and females’ education.

Concerning the management system, the government has started actual steps to introduce change concerning its commitment to revise the current management system by adopting a strategic planning and management approach in order to improve the efficiency of education delivery. Furthermore, the MOE is emphasizing decentralization in the new strategic management approach. Both MoE and the MoHE have carried out standards for education quality which are considered as a first step towards determining performance indicators and strategic goals for the future education development. These Strategic planning and mechanisms of quality assurance have been applied at the schools and universities level through pilot projects in school development planning. Law No. 82/2006—which has been issued by the government for establishing the National Authority for Accreditation and Quality Assurance- introduces approaches for quality check through a comprehensive evaluation and accreditation of the school (UNESCO- Cairo, 2008). This is to support the school’s capacity to self-evaluation according to accreditation standards with the purpose of establishing an integrated system of standards in line with international standards (UNESCO- Cairo, 2008). It also emphasizes confidence in the outcomes of the educational process for quality education insurance (UNESCO- Cairo, 2008).

Regarding progress and achievement in Oman for promoting gender equality, the MoE has introduced the course of ‘Life Skills’ for both genders. This course is for developing their skills concerning the daily living, instead of the Domestic Economics course for girls only, and Vocational Training for boys only (Chinapah, 2006) as mentioned above. In order to reduce regional disparities, MoE built many new schools and provided free-of-charge transportation for the students in remote areas with costs estimated to be 6% of the annual recurrent expenditure. The progress that has been achieved in Oman was during the fifth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005). It focused on expanding UPE for all children in spite of gender, ethnicity, place, etc, as well as the impressive progress in the basic education sector which has gained national and international
cooperation, as well as community involvement. The main changes and reforms of education in Oman depend on many factors:

a) Increasing the Omanization ratio through encouraging the local labor workforce and national qualified personnel in the MOE through developing the curriculum and integrating creative thinking in the teaching process and matching them with labor market needs.

b) Enhancing national capacity in order to meet globalization challenges as well as enhancing the institutions’ performance and the importance of ICT. To achieve this, Oman decided to increase the quality of education through extending the school year, days, and hours as well as providing computers, science laboratories and learning source centers as well (Gonzalez et al., 2008).

c) Encouraging the private sector’s participation of the movement’s growth of the national economy as well as developing the human skills for substituting the depletion of the oil and gas. The Omanization ratio in the public and private sectors, even in 2000, represented about 34.3% according to the 2001-2005 Sixth Five Year Development Plan which relates to human resource development. Consequently, substituting expatriate labour with highly qualified Omani labour is one of the strategies for human resource development up to 2020 which corresponds to that of the Fifth Five Year Development Plan document.

d) Attaining Democratization. Since the 1980s, Sultan Qaboos has intended to establish democratic governance and to maintain the traditions and customs of Omani society as well. This can be achieved through good governance, rule of law, accountability and transparency. Consequently, the sultan encourages popular participation without providing the political structures for the people to contest his executive power (Rassekh, 2004).

New changes and progress have been attached to the new educational system. The former education system did not sufficiently prepare the student to have a good opportunity in
the labour force, but with the new system, which started with the reform, many things have changed including: integrating new subjects into the curriculum like life skills and educational technology, extending the school day and year, improving the system of student assessment and so on (Salha and Nariman, 2010). Furthermore, The increased percentage of females both among the students and teaching staff was one of the outcomes of the second and the third stages of the educational development in Oman (Issan & Gomaa, 2010; Rassekh, 2004).

The Ministry of Education started new programs in 2007/2008 to be implemented during the current seventh Five-Year Plan (2006-2010) as well as (Oman 2020) they included: Expansion of Basic Education System means upgrading post-basic education for the 11th and 12th grade in order to encourage the continued development of skills, enabling young people to benefit from educational training and work opportunities schemes after full time education.

Learning Difficulties Programme in the MOE provides services for students with special needs including Basic Education schools, rather than transferring them to specialist schools. The aim behind these programs is to expand access of education to all in order to achieve the goal of ‘Education for all’. This programme began in two schools in 2000/2001. The Ministry’s experience of placing students handicapped by hearing difficulties and special educational needs in normal classes in four basic education schools has achieved positive results in 2006-2007 and has been extended to cover four educational regions. Currently, in 2007-2008 this program covers 300 schools across the country. Furthermore, in 2006 the University of Sultan Qaboos introduced the Diploma Course of special education and the ministry cooperated with UNICEF in order to organize a number of workshops to help teachers deal with the special needs students. This helps in increasing the number of qualified teachers for special needs students (UNESCO Doha, 2008; Chinapah, 2006; Gonzalez et al., 2008).

By 2008, the number of schools increased to more than 1,000 schools including 90% of public primary, preparatory, and secondary schools. The percentage of girls is 48.7% of all the pupils registered until secondary school certificate. Oman has achieved progress during the last decade regarding technical education through opening many technical institutes. By contrast, vocational training is an obstacle of Omani education which constitutes an important gap between education and training on the one hand and the market’s needs on the other (BTI, 2010).

The aim of the education policy, within the frame of literacy programs and centers, in Oman is to reduce the percentage of illiteracy to 14.7% by 2010 and to 13% by 2015 by
persuading more adults to join these programs as well as through media programs. Consequently, the Omani ministry in 2006 extended two-year literacy programs for 3 years from grade 4 and raised its level to grade 6 with the support of UNESCO to develop books and select its topics. Recently, visual and blind impaired illiterates were included in the literacy classes. A community-based approach (e.g. Mirisi- the Learning Village) was a successful example for illiteracy reduction.
Chapter Seven -
The Role of Educational Partners on Education and Development in the Arab states: The Case of UNESCO

7.1 The Role of the International Agencies
The importance of education was and is still recognized in several international conventions and in many national constitutions in 1990 where the landmark for the international meeting of ‘the World Conference on Education for All’ took place in Jomtien under the joint sponsorship of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank as well as the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000. Starting from the importance of education for development, UNESCO, World Bank, as well as many other agencies have affirmed that education—in general and literacy as well as primary education in specific—is the cornerstone for economic and social development. According to the argument of Anderson and Bowman (1965), they say that 40% literacy among the population of a country is essential but not sufficient for economic growth and development which require 70% or 80% literacy rate. Lockheed and Vespoor (1991:2) have asserted on the importance of the competence of primary education in the process of economic and social development as well. One of J. Oxenham (1980) studies argued that sustainable development can be achieved in the case of continuity of the children at primary school from four to six years. The World Declaration of EFA in 1990 affirmed that all people in a certain society shall be able to seize the opportunity for education to meet their basic learning needs in the light of the last two views, which affirm the crucial role of literacy and primary education in achieving the development of human beings and societies as well. Furthermore, quality of education in the Arab countries is affected by the difficulties and complexities in terms of acquisition and retention of reading and the other skills of the Arabic language.

To improve and raise the national educational systems, the international organizations have contributed in the development of most of the world countries, either through financial support or by technical assistance in the forms of programs, projects, and conferences. One of the main focuses of this study is the UNESCO’s supporting role for developing national education.
through UNESS reports which is one of UNESCO’s cooperation strategy with its Member States in the field of education (UNESS, 2008). UNESS is the instrument of UNESCO to determine, describe, and analyze the gaps and needs of the education systems in order to develop and activate the role of UNESCO in the field of education development. Consequently, UNESCO has been asked, consistent with the Paris Declaration, to improve and activate its responsiveness to the priorities and needs of national education as well as to strengthen its relationship with other agencies (ibid). The benefit from the new cooperation and support of UNESCO for the cooperating countries will lead to new developments in the national education plans, programs, and projects starting from new gaps and needs that have been generated from past lessons. From the short, previous lines the study focuses on the role that UNESCO plays in supporting countries’ development through the scope of the educational situation within different policies, activities, and strategies.

This chapter discusses the role of international agencies including multilateral and bilateral organization in supporting financially and technically the development and education in the Arab region with more specifics to the pioneering role of UNESCO in supporting the national education systems in both Oman and Egypt. This chapter, quickly and firstly, addresses the role of some international organizations in supporting the rise of the education systems in the Arab countries with regards to supporting the achievement of EFA goals in the region, specifically the role of UNESCO.

7.1.1 The Role of International Organizations in Supporting Education and Development in the Arab Region

UNESCO:

“Through the establishment of six specific education goals, the Dakar Framework for Action laid the foundation for structured and comprehensive policy and practice review and development in the education sector across the world. As the lead agency in cooperation with 4 other partners (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, the World Bank) in the achievement of these six goals, UNESCO’s role is to support policy dialogue initiatives,
implement monitoring and advocacy activities, mobilize funds and strengthen national capacity” (UNESCO Regional Bureau, 2011, p. 4).

The role of UNESCO constitutes a fundamental one where it can be seen as a champion of EFA. Its role extends to many effective roles such as providing expertise and policy input, providing international leadership in order to help create learning societies with educational opportunities for all populations, and enhancing partnerships to strengthen the capacity of countries and improving the leadership of national education to achieve quality education for all. It also monitors progress of achieving EFA and promotes dialogue and exchange by convening EFA stakeholders in a regular way. The champion role of UNESCO is based on its respect of education as a universal right for all people of the world and its role in promoting peace around the world. The work of UNESCO in education is determined through a number of strategies including:

- **From Access to Success:** This means that all children in the legal school age should be enrolled including the marginalized groups and made sure that they complete and achieve progress and success in their education as well as being addressed issues of gender. That can be achieved through effective strategies and improved educational quality and the evaluation of educational outcomes as well. This can be seen through the programs of including marginalized children in schools as the initiative of UNESCO-Friendly School for Street and Working Children in Egypt.

- **National Planning:** UNESCO’s role here is to enhance the national education planning through its National Education Support Strategies (UNESS) which improves the basis for the national educational needs assessment. UNESCO has launched the UNESS and developed a planning tool for designing evidence-based education cooperation in order to respond to the expectations of Member States which is playing a more strategic role for supporting national education priorities. UNESS works as strategy that analyses the development, challenges, priorities, needs and gaps that may exist in terms of human, technical, and financial resources, and it is designed for 80 countries including 13 Arab States.
Accountability to and Partnership with Member States: in this context UNESCO works continually with ministers of education in the developing countries in order to emphasize that its programs and activities are successfully supporting national plans and strategies in EFA. UNESCO’s monitoring and evaluation role can be implemented through conjunction with MoE.

Education for Work: integrating students into secondary schools is a big task which in turn requires reform of curricula that will be able to produce "Thinkers who work and workers who think". Post-primary education including secondary, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) should be relevant to a developed workforce.

Literacy: "The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) is a global strategic framework for collectively accelerating literacy efforts in 35 countries whereas at present 85% of populations with insufficient literacy competencies reside" (Global Action Plan, 2006, p.24). The implementation of LIFE includes a three pronged approach with focus on universal quality, basic education, creation of literate environments, and scaling up of developed literacy programs for youth and adults.

Teacher Training: is an important feature of the development strategies of UNESCO. The Teacher Training Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA) links with other initiatives, as well as links with higher education, forms the main gates of UNESCO to support and develop in this area. In cooperation with the UNESCO-led EDUCAIDS initiative, UNESCO tries to address the issue of teacher gap and find out relevant solutions.

Through national and regional capacity development, UNESCO with the cooperation of its institutes in different countries tries to continuously develop the capacity of the educational staff in schools, universities, ministries, and in other contexts. In addition to this role, UNESCO supports the governments of countries to formulate their national policies and to articulate their priorities with development partners.
7.1.2 UNESCO Supporting Role in Egypt

The role of partnerships in the Egyptian education system is an essential and crucial one for improving its quality and supporting the reform for development. The strong relationship of trust between UNESCO and the authorities of Egyptian education is reflected through a principle role of UNESCO as a supporter and advisor for all government efforts in Egypt. The government welcomes, cooperates and highly appreciates this role. Responding to the challenges and gaps that face achieving EFA and MDGs in Egypt, UNESCO has played a crucial role in supporting these areas through focusing on 4 areas of intervention with an overall aim of developing human resources in Egypt through improving access, quality, and equity in the pre-university education system in Egypt, which can be seen as the key indicators of EFA and development. These areas include Literacy; Early Childhood Care and Development, Educational planning and monitoring, and Professional Development of Educators. It has supported, monitored, and evaluated many projects and programs in Egypt during the last decade. For example, to expand and target basic education for all children including special needs, it supported the Fourth and Fifth Annual Educational Conferences of “Circle of Inclusion” and “Embracing Diversity” in order to draw community attention to the rights of special needs children to receive suitable education with good quality. UNESCO supported-technically and financially-as well as monitored and evaluated the project of ‘One Classroom’ which is aimed to decrease the drop-out population, especially for the children of remote areas, working children, and disadvantaged children.

The UNESCO office in Cairo (the capital of Egypt) plays a significance role in supporting education in Egypt and the reform process since it has been established in 1947. It supported the national education for development as well as many other initiatives at the national and regional level where it is recognized as the leading UN agency of the national education in Egypt at the public level. Harmonization and collaboration with the Egyptian government, donors, and other partners of UN agencies as well as NGOs constitutes the key strategies of UNESCO in Egypt to achieve national, regional and global priorities. Hence, it focused its past and current support on achieving education for all with special attention to literacy, teacher training, and HIV/AIDS prevention education. Furthermore, the Cairo office has paid more attention to achieving EFA goals.
The launch of the Literacy Initiative For Empowerment (LIFE) in Egypt has achieved great progress, whereby a steering committee has been established that included a collection of NGOs, members of civil society from the private sector, from UNESCO, and officials from the government. The goal of its needs assessment is to identify the needs and challenges of literacy in Egypt in order to prepare a LIFE Country Action Plan. In cooperation between UNESCO and the Faculty of Education in Ain Shams University, two practical steps were taken to implement the LIFE initiative by producing 500 copies of a CD entitled “Geographic Map of Literacy in Egypt”. Furthermore, Egypt is also among the 10 chosen countries on a world scale for the implementation of the first phase of LIFE.

Regarding meeting EFA goals especially for women and disadvantages groups, the UNESCO Cairo office has a strategic role for capacity building among different stakeholders through workshops of ‘Society, Women, Water, Ethics and Peace’ and ‘Innovative Methodology for Building Literacy’ as well as providing an opportunity for the Environmental Science Education to enroll 100 Egyptian students from the marginalized areas of El Haganna. UNESCO has also contributed in activities that enhance Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). National Capacity Building and Creative Programs Development for Adult Education in Egypt is an important project for improving the quality. This project focuses on capacity building of the literacy national education plan in the country. Capacity building activities are the means of UNESCO in regards to supporting the Adult Education Authority (AEA). The project was a step for innovations in literacy programs because it led to modernizing the contents of learning and training, and to training managers and literacy facilitators of AEA.

Many CLCs in the Arab States are implementing with the cooperation with UNESCO Regional Bureau-Beirut and its regional offices in 6 countries including the Cairo office in Egypt. The USAID, JICA, Formedia, GTZ, CIDA, African Development Bank, World Bank, United Nations organizations are all supporters of the Egyptian national education development. Exchanging experiences and ideas as well as providing the necessary technical assistance are the main goals of the donors. An example of the international partnership is the ‘National Book Programme for Schools’ (NBPS) in cooperation with USAID which in turn provided schools libraries around the country with 22 million books. UNESCO supported the participation of educational personnel and teachers in various capacity-building initiatives through developing their capacities by training, conferences, and so forth for developing the pre-school education in
Egypt. The Early Childhood Development Project was carried out with collaboration between AGFUND and the MoE in order to develop the curriculum and improved the capacity building of the personnel in that education.

In the light of the 2006-2007 Biennium, UNESCO participated in numbers of meetings and initiatives for promoting the entire agenda for EFA, as well as building partnerships and monitoring progress towards achieving EFA in cooperation with the Doha office, and participated with ministers of education in other MENA countries in regards to integrating ICT in education, access and literacy. In May 2007 the UNESCO Cairo Office has held ‘The Regional Workshop on Enhancing Capacities of Facilitators in Literacy and Non-Formal Education’. In June of the same year, UNESCO has organized the ‘Training Workshop on Planning and Management of Literacy and Non-Formal Education’. With great progress and practical steps because of the UNESCO participation in quality education, the UNESCO Cairo Office participated in the third Arab Seminar for Education on Education and Sustainable Development in the Arab Region, which took place in Beirut 2006. In addition the office participated in the regional workshop program in 2007 on ‘Enhancing Teachers Competencies in ESD’ for developing strategies at all levels to support education for sustainable development with more focus on the essential role of teachers in formal and non-formal education. As for the participation of the special needs students, UNESCO supported the Seventh Annual Educational Conference entitled ‘Making a Difference’ for Developing Skills of Special Needs Children (ADVANCE) in March 2007.

7.1.3 UNESCO’s Supporting Role in Oman
Since the presence of UNESCO in Oman in 1972, the country has benefited from the efforts and achievements in the last three decades. Oman has achieved great and quick progress in the field of education with regard to EFA. In this context, UNESCO provided technical assistance to programs and activities as the leading agency for education in the country. Sometimes it can be difficult to separate activities targeting Oman directly with corresponding allocated amounts of money and human resources. UNESCO has a strong partnership with H.M the Sultan in supporting the efforts that are related to education. However, Oman is not a common UN country with regard to development. The sultanate as an upper-middle income country does not need a financial assessment for development, but it is in need for technical assistance of education and
expertise. Consequently, the UNESCO Doha-Office has supported the country with the needed assistance, cooperation and activities. During the period from 2000 to 2007, the office has implemented some programs including:

1- *Attaining Basic Education for All - Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):* the enrollment of this stage is low and most of the kindergartens are established by the private sector, so Oman cooperated with the UNESCO-Doha Office and the regional office in Beirut. Hence UNESCO monitored the assessment of the ‘Kindergarten Programme’ in 2005-2006, as well as did a study for establishing a pre-school center in Sultan Qaboos University Campus. The “Early Childhood Care and Education Consultation Meeting” have been held in 2006 with cooperation between the UNESCO Beirut and Doha offices, and the Oman National Commission for UNESCO. This meeting worked as exchange of experiences and policy reviews.

2- *Supporting Post-Primary Education and Secondary Education:* secondary education in Oman urgently needs to be adapted to challenges and changes such as the growing number of pupils, the low enrollment rates, and the gender disparity through discussions of related issues in the 2002 International Conference of ‘Secondary Education for a Better Future: Trends, Challenges and Priorities’.

3- *Supporting Post-Primary Education-Higher Education and the Knowledge Society:* through the 2001 International Conference on the University of the 21st century which aimed at development of higher education with focus on Oman, the conference’s workshop stressed developing programs and frameworks for researching and creating professional opportunities for the graduates. The conference stressed the importance of partnership in order to decrease financial burden for Higher Education Institutions.

4- *International Symposium on the Strategy for Education in the Sultanate of Oman 2006-2020:* It was held in 2005 for discussing and presenting the education in Oman including management, students’ progress, quality of education, and funding. This symposium was conducted with the cooperation of UNESCO, MoE, and MoHE.
5- HIV/AIDS and Education: in 2006 the UNESCO Doha Office collaborated with MoE and the Oman National Commission for UNESCO with regard to training sessions on HIV/AIDS Education Prevention in order to insert that kind of education in the curriculum, globally, in order to supply the learners with knowledge of how to protect their health and equip them with the necessary ways for dealing with these diseases.

6- UNESCO sponsorship of supporting literacy programs: where it selected and developed the books and curriculum that relate to the three-year programs of literacy classes in 2005-2006 (Chinapah, 2006).

7.2 The Role of Different Agencies in Supporting the Educational System in the Arab Countries

UNICEF: The organization is considered one of the main partners for the movement of the EFA and MDGs as well. It’s supporting role for the countries in need is visualized through its extensive programs as well as providing the main sectors with technical support. It also calls for the rights of children to have education and gender equality. Furthermore, it is considered as the first responder to countries for education in cases of natural disasters or civil conflicts. The participation of UNICEF in the EFA has added great value to the EFA movement. That can be clear from its work with national stakeholders and providers of problem-solving support through different program involvements: a) providing technical support for countries' different sectors such as health and nutrition, water and environment, early childhood development, and HIV/AIDS, b) using technical tools and models which are based on developments in different settings as well as allocating standards for easy solutions like the case of School-in-a-Box for learning in emergencies and Child Friendly Schools for quality. UNICEF contributes in knowledge building in education through research and evaluation. The advocacy for girls' education is one of the priorities of UNICEF because of its expertise and experience in gender issues. As one of its priorities, UNICEF increased its financial expenditure on the educational sector through its Medium Term Strategic Plans (MTSP). Furthermore, UNICEF gives priority to
the EFA-FTI in countries by increasing the amount of funds that are allocated to those movements (Rose, 2006).

The World Bank: According to Pauline Rose, the role of the WB expanded over time from a development agency, in the 1970s during the presidency of McNamara, to become a self-styled ‘knowledge bank’ in the 1990s (cited from Lauder et al., 2006). Although effective in integrating the role of different international agencies in supporting different activities, the WB has played and also plays a fundamental role in supporting and enhancing a particular development agenda, especially one in favor of the education sector. Since the emergence of human capital theory, the WB started to integrate itself into the education sector, especially in regards to vocational and technical training and education at the secondary and higher education level. In the 1970s the education sector began to be taken seriously by the WB with a shift to primary education. The great attention that had been paid to education since the 1970s has made the WB to change its lending priorities which included diversification and expansion with greater priority to primary education. The money lending of the WB to pre-primary and primary education has increased from 10.6% in the 1970s to 36.1% in the 1990s. Furthermore, the bank works to ensure that about $2 billion a year with about 50% of this amount goes to basic education and mobilizes additional resources for EFA. Not only that, but the Bank also works cooperatively with other donors and stakeholders in order to manage the implementation process of education programs funded through large-scale trust funds that are channeled through the Bank. The WB provides leadership support to the program of FTI with the purpose of joining more than 40 countries to the partnership by 2008, as well as ensures that education in general and EFA in specific, have gained the priority of the bank strategies and policy documents such as Country Economic Memoranda (CEM), the PRSPs, and Country Assistance Strategies (CAS). That makes education a macroeconomic and a resource allocated decision at the country level. The bank enables the partners of the EFA to have a conversation with the Ministries of Finance which manages large-scale financing and also ensures that first priority should be given to education and the EFA, in particular which are the most important roles of the World Bank.

UNDP: The strategic direction of the UNDP in supporting the EFA during this decade can be summarized in the following points: supporting the achievement of MDGs is the core aim for the UNDP. It gives outlines for action and effective strategies at the national level, specifically in
terms of strengthening capacities for use of instruments, tools, and methodologies for mainstreaming the MDGs in the budgeting processes and developing plans. In the context of the UNDG which is considered as a UN reform, the UNDP-as members in it- is ensuring the connection between the achievements of the MDGs and the EFA are within the UN reform as well as in the UNDG strategy documents and agenda. Furthermore, the contributions of the UNDP in the EFA can be clarified through its active participation in all the related meetings of the EFA especially for those of the five EFA convening agencies.
Chapter Eight -
Findings: Needs and Challenges for Education and Development in the Arab states

From the previous enriched study which included valuable information and data that had been collected by many different organizations and researchers, this chapter tries to collect all the previous information and integrate it into the findings for this chapter. It also introduces the summary of what the author of this paper found as new information or as an assertion. This chapter concludes the challenges and needs for developing education, in specific the society and the economic growth in general, in the Arab region with more detail for the two cases (Egypt & Oman).

The educational system and its structure in the whole Arab region still face shortcomings of deterioration, inadequacy, and low levels of quality as its outcomes. Moreover, the system still faces high rates of drop-out and repetition especially in the rural areas. Consequently, cooperation between the region’s countries at the national level is needed for achieving good quality of education for all without taking into account any kind of discrimination at any level e.g. gender, regional, ethical considerations, as well as their active and positive response to international collaboration and support. An important issue that should be taken in account, concerning the low performance, achievements and illiteracy of the majority of the Arab students is the complexities of the Arabic language's standards that are used in formal and non-formal education. Many of the students even the universities' students are not able to read or write perfect Arabic.

As mentioned before or what can be understood between the lines, UNESCO- as the top of the international supporting agencies of the education in the world, especially in the developing countries- has adopted many studies, surveys, and researches in order to assess and evaluate the progress and decline of education in these countries. After the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States-Beirut implemented the 2006-2007 survey for knowing the opinions of the member states in the role of education for sustainable development, the results showed challenges at the social dimension such as weak participation of woman and youth in the social and political life, lack of health awareness of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and the need for development of management and administration at the private and public level.
Challenges at the economic dimension include: unemployment and poverty, scarcity of resources in general and the need to rationalize them, and low participation of woman in the labour force. In addition, the lake of awareness in regards to the environment led to an increase of air pollution and water scarcity (UNESCO Regional Bureau-Beirut, 2008).

At the level of assessment of the education process and the surrounding elements, the region countries still lack much basic and fundamental issues in that regards. The Arab countries in general need to make space for participation in education through the actual participation of the parents in their children’s teaching as well as giving a space for the voices and opinions of the parents and employees to be heard so that it is reflected in developing the actual curricula and taking into account the labor force requirements. Not all the regions could achieve that. However, there are actual initiatives for that from other states in the region.

Give the private sector a space to invest and innovate at all the educational stages. For example in Tunisia, the private sector can deliver education, but the schooling offered has to be a perfect mirror of that offered by the state. If the impetus of the revolution is used to makes these new spaces, then this will make change possible and pave the way for short to medium term reforms such as: early childhood development programs, teacher professionalization, curriculum reform, etc (Andersen, 2012).

8.1 Challenges and Gaps for Achieving EFA in the Region as a Whole

Despite this notable and great progress in achieving EFA targets, there are challenges which face or in other words impede meeting those goals by 2015, not only in the Arab region, but in the whole globe in general. These challenges include: a) providing quick access to formal education whereas there are still more than 70 million out-of-school children in the world (6 million in the Arab countries) with about 57% of them being girls, b) providing the best start for the children through policies that prepare them for primary education especially in the case of disadvantaged children, c) reducing the financial burden on the poor, which represents an obstacle to the children who have a right to education, d) ensuring access and good quality education for the children in the fragile states and conflict-affected countries, e) addressing the issue of gender within the school atmosphere, improving education quality whether in school or in adult learning.
programs, f) paying more attention to programs of adult literacy and increasing the budget that is allocated for them, g) and raising the domestic budget and external aids for achieving EFA.

The low enrollment in secondary and tertiary education in some countries in the Arab region results from the high drop-out rates and non-completion rates, which in turn constitute challenges to education in the region. These rates of drop-out result from the poverty of families which cause the parents to let their children join the labour market at early age with no sufficient knowledge or work skills. Another reason for the high drop-out rates is the low quality of education which also does not stimulate the parents or the children themselves to continue their education process, especially in the rural areas. At the same time, the value of education is being diminished as the case of Egypt. One can say that the low enrollment of secondary and tertiary education in the region can be seen as the obvious reason of high drop-out rates and non-completion rates which in turn resulted from low-income families and low quality of education.

![Figure 8.1 Reasons of low enrollment in secondary and higher education](image)

Poverty & Low quality lead to High drop-out & Low enrollment rates in Secondary and Higher Education Non-completion

The previous figure explains itself. The low enrollment rates in secondary and higher education result from reasons of poverty, and low quality of education which in turn lead to high drop-out and non-completion rates in the primary cycle. Consequently secondary and higher education face challenges of low enrollment rates.

As well as the disparities within the country, regional disparities-according to the different levels of development and progress-constitute a key structural problem in the region which can be clearly seen since Dakar 2000. Starting from this yardstick, the national government has to pay more attention to the marginalized groups in the rural and remote areas through addressing the urban rural disparities of gender, access to infrastructure, sanitation and clean water, employment, etc. These groups have suffered and still suffer every day from lack of basic human services and rights. It is important to take into account that negligence of these
groups passively affects societies in terms of the growth of the neglected groups’ outrage on the society, which can fuel their desire to destroy it in the form of terrorists, gangs, beggars, etc.

The Arab region suffers from widespread unemployment which results from interconnected reasons such as poverty, mismatch between education and labour market skills, as well as the increased population of the unemployed female group. These reasons push the Arab states to find quick and effective solutions in order to address this problem. The Arab states are in need of generating and creating new policies and ways that integrate females in the labour market more than before. They are also in need to improve their curricula in order to meet the demands of the labour market’s skills. This can be achieved in light of full knowledge of the seriousness of the situation and its effects on all aspects of society. This knowledge can be translated into forms of adequate planning for absorbing large number of graduates into the labour market. That is after providing them with the required skills and mental knowledge in order to understand and apply what they understood. Creating good school environments that include curriculum reforms, adequate teacher training and providing sufficient and developed materials are the right way for that reform and development.

Concerning eradication of illiteracy in Egypt, there are a number of challenges that face this goal in the beginning of the 21st century. They are summarized as the following:

- Achieving the role of MoE through ensuring that all the children are enrolled in the education process and prevented from dropping out as well.
- Increasing the financial resources that are allocated for these programs with the support of the rich.
- Enhancing women participation as well as their attendance and seeing that they continue in these programs.
- The elimination of the problem of escaping from illiteracy programs by developing post-illiteracy programs.
- Enhancing and strengthening non-governmental and voluntary institutions so that they can be active and have roles and responsibilities in these programs (NCERD, 2001).

Oman should put the education sector as its top priorities. It allocates about 11.9% from its GDP for military expenditure. Despite the expenditure of the ministry on transportation as being 7%, it should pay much more attention to this area in order to achieve access for all. To
improve the area of quality, the MoE has cooperated with the MoHE in Oman in order to prepare qualified teachers through programs of pre-service teacher training, in addition to the ministry top-down approach to in-service training with job-embedded staff development (Chinapah, 2006). All these efforts intend to prepare the teachers well to the realities of the classroom, as well as to upgrade their qualifications in order to give them absolute responsibility of their classes and therefore improve their students’ learning outcomes.

8.2 Progress in the Region, in General, and in the Two Cases in Specific

As a result of the permission from the Arab governments to give space to the private sector to invest in education, the expenditures on development and education have increased. At the same time, the institutes and systems that provide training and learning outside the formal institutes have also increased. Concerning access with good quality, most of the regional countries decide their educational priorities in order to achieve the global EFA goals. For example, the MoE in Oman makes sure that all the schools in the country’s regions (rural & urban) are involved in the reform programs for improving access and quality. Furthermore, the concern of the ministry is to make sure that all the students have the sufficient number of instruction hours in order to prepare them for international standards. So that the ministry is keen to reducing the number of double-shift schools through building new schools or extending the current buildings to absorb the students during the seventh Five-Year Plan 2006-2010.

With regards to the role of community participation and private sector involvement of expanding education, the MOE encourages the private sector to positively act in the reform process which has resulted in the increase of students’ enrollment in private schools during the past few years. The MoE sees the existence of UNIT which links between the ministry and the private sector as a progressive step towards the development of the country. That can be clearly seen through the cooperation between the two sides. For example, computer manufacturers can arrange training courses for teachers in return for purchasing computers for the schools by the ministry as a kind of swap, or provide teaching materials, e.g. developing materials on environmental issues by an oil company, etc (Chinapah, 2006).
The ministry works on giving the responsibility to the schools in order to manage and develop itself through the policy of decentralization. While this system is not broadly applied in Oman, the ministry started a pilot project by giving certain responsibilities to 20 schools in the country which in turn was expanded to other schools. This decentralization requires much from the school authority: it needs training of interpersonal communication, the use of technology in the school administration, community and private sector outreach, etc. Furthermore, it needs an increased focus on the targets of students’ learning and assessment. The purpose of this decentralization is to develop a comprehensive accountability system as well as to give the schools the absolute responsibility in running their own affairs. Hence, the ministry’s role in turn is to make sure that the allocated funds are used in the right way to achieve the desired outcomes.

In the area of illiteracy, the civil society organizations and the nongovernmental participation constitutes an effective indicator in the region in regards to the field of non-formal education such as the implementation of literacy programs and campaigns as well as the developmental projects of the local community. This can be reflected in many of the Arab countries. In Oman the experience of the Mirisi- the Learning Village as an example of Community- is based on the approach to eradicate the illiteracy rate in the country especially in the rural areas. In Egypt, One-Room Community Schools is another example for eradicating illiteracy among adults, especially for rural girls, as well as eliminating gender disparity. All these achievements reflect serious attempts that are supported by national and international efforts in order to move forward the development and welfare of the countries. However, still more and more actual efforts are in need to be seriously applied in light of fair governments, national cooperation, promotion of international support, and at the top priority is the need of cooperation among the Arab countries in raising their countries’ conditions, economically, socially, and educationally.

8.3 Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research

The lessons that can be learned and can be helpful for further research are the following:

- The Arab region is not a homogenous region whereas there are fundamental differences and similarities in each country but also within one country. For example, what works in one country may be not suitable for the other one.
• The presence of a political well, a wise organization, and a qualified administration and management are fundamental bases for the change and development of all the sectoral levels of society. The case of Oman is a clear example for the political well with the desire of making changes, modernization, and achieving development. This political well has transferred Oman from a small education system to a strong one during a short period of 30 years. This political well is still absent and unknown in the case of Egypt.

• More community participation is deeply and significantly needed to increase the educational level. The successful world models can be considered as examples to follow.

• The area of providing qualified and well-trained teachers can be seen as the yardstick for improving both quality and access of education. Improving this need is the fundamental factor for expanding formal and non-formal education.

• A crucial issue is the urgent and important need to match between education inputs and outputs. Simply put, there is a shortcoming in the area of what is being taught and what is being produce in the area of required skills for the labor market. This point, in specific, is gradually related to the previous point. The presence of qualified teachers is one main factor for providing the students with enough knowledge and skills which are needed for their future career. Oman tries to apply new methods and techniques in order to reduce the country’s dependence on a foreign labor force and replace them with a national labor force by providing them with the required facilities and skills. In those regards, Egypt needs more facilities, funds, and organization in order to reduce the unemployment rates which results from the combination of factors including, mismatch between education inputs and the labor market demands, limited job availability, and the knowledge gap which in turn impedes the benefits from new technologies and innovations.

• This research might help in addressing issues that may not be included in the content of the EFA goals—such as issues of corruption, unemployment, knowledge gap, lack of real communication, coordination and cooperation among the region’s countries and their impacts on the continuous progress and development.

• The problem of regional disparities is that they need to be solved between and within the countries of the Arab region in order to achieve welfare and prosperity of the population at all the society levels. The regional disparity in the area of access to education is one
main challenge that faces achieving progress of EFA in the region. That in turn urges the national and international organizations to pay more attention and redouble their efforts and support, especially in the area of gender disparity and in the area of marginalized groups.

In short, both Egypt and Oman, in addition to the other Arab countries, face new challenges of improving education quality and access in terms of achieving EFA goals and MDGs. They also face a recent and urgent challenge of achieving political stability and applying democracy with its correct meaning and context (the case of Egypt). Money is not the only the way for achieving progress or development. Although there are many rich countries, they still lack the wisdom to allocate their resources in order to improve their educational systems. On the other hand, many middle income countries and sometimes including low middle income countries could achieve better results than the rich countries. That can be attributed to an ambitious political will, qualified management and administration staff, good planning for the urgent needs and requirements of the country, as well as practical steps for raising the current low level of education to meet the requirements of the global competition in light of the suitable international political agenda that can agree with that change and development.
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