

Youth in the Middle East and North Africa

Expanding Economic Prospects in Urban Areas

**Highlighting Global Lessons, Creating Local
Solutions**

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An Egyptian Partnership Initiative

To Enhance Youth Opportunities

The LEAD Experiment

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What is LEAD? A Pioneer Experiment

- ❖ **On Sept. 14, 2004, the American University in Cairo inaugurated officially a pioneer program under the title “Leadership for Education and Development Program” (LEAD)**
- ❖ **The program’s vision is “to prepare Egyptian students for the 21st century and qualify them with the vision of Egypt’s future”.**
- ❖ **Basic qualities to be acquired are: leadership skills, respect for work, transparency, respect for others and tolerance of differences, communication, presentation, and negotiation skills.**

- ❖ Students receive full accommodation in the university hostel on a full-board basis with access to all facilities: laundry, gym, computer labs, dining and entertainment areas.**
- ❖ They receive vouchers for three meals a day, seven days a week, and health insurance.**
- ❖ The objective is to provide an environment conducive to the program objectives.**
- ❖ They are required to maintain a minimum of “B” average.**
- ❖ They are delegated responsibility to plan, organize and manage seminars, conferences and workshops.**

❖ Students are involved in community participation through the community service clubs already offered by the university.

❖ The top third students are allowed a year abroad study in U.S. A. universities.

❖ A committee monitors and reviews the program monthly in light of its mission.

❖ The total cost of the program is 100 million L.E.

❖ The cost of each student per year is 144,000 L.E. , with a total cost of 500,000 L.E. for the four years.

Recruitment of Students: Advertising and Selection Procedures

❖ Advertisements were placed in the more-commonly read newspapers before the results of the high school certificate (Thanawya Amma) were announced.

❖ Later ads were made after results were publicized.

❖ Parallel information was disseminated through the Ministry of Education, to all governorates.

❖ Announcements were made in a radio channel known to target youth.

❖ Selection criteria were: a minimum of 85% for the high school certificate from a public school; 90% score in English; quality participation in extracurricular activities.

❖ Seven male and seven female students were selected from public schools in each governorate.

❖ They were given written tests, followed by a 15 minute interview individually.

❖ One male and one female was then selected from each governorate, to proceed with the regular entrance requirements of the university.

❖ Equality in gender and geographic distribution is a major component of the program, as sponsored by the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action.

The Relevance of LEAD: The Educational System in Context

The significance of the program is in the context of the problems in the Egyptian education system.

They are:

✓ Inequality of opportunity: private vs. public schools; private tutorship; rural-urban discrepancy; gender bias.

✓ Public expenditure on education is low: 14.7% of total expenditure and 5.1% of GDP, the largest portion is for salaries, while there is a shortage in equipment and infrastructure.

Socioeconomic Background: Youth in Context

- ❖ The role of the program is relevant to existing socio-economic conditions.**
- ❖ Egyptian youth are caught in the midst of these problems: high inflation, unemployment, an unbalanced labor market, low economic growth rate.**
- ❖ The age structure of the population pyramid is dominated by youth, hence the high dependency ratio.**
- ❖ The labor market is unable to absorb this segment.**
- ❖ National plans do not coordinate the educational system with the needs of the labor market.**
- ❖ Curricula do not provide proper training for work.**

The Function of LEAD: Challenges to Overcome

- ❖ The program aims to enhance opportunities for youth from the less privileged social strata by allowing them access to an elitist university.**
- ❖ They are offered liberal education, a higher quality that broadens their scope of learning.**
- ❖ LEAD addresses the gender bias/gap in education.**
- ❖ The program is a good example of partnership for development, in line with MDG 8: “develop a global partnership for development”. It is a partnership by USAID, the Egyptian Ministry of International Cooperation and the American University in Cairo, while**

supervised by the Egyptian Ministry of Education.

❖ The program offers skill training suited to the needs of the labor market, considering the existing inadequacy in this respect.

Response from the Beneficiaries: The Students' Perceptions

Because it is still early to evaluate the project, I conducted a study on a small number of students in an informal setting to address their performance/adjustment.

Results:

✓ Students joined the program for quality in education, proper training for work and better job opportunities.

- ✓ **Consequently, most of them are in majors in demand in the modern work force.**
- ✓ **They admit that extracurricular activities have made them more mature.**
- ✓ **Their attitude reflects critical thinking an outgoing personality and willingness to pursue learning.**
- ✓ **They do not have problems of adjustment with the student body on campus.**
- ✓ **They have enthusiasm to benefit fully from the privilege they were granted.**

✓ They are proud to have succeeded in taking full responsibility for organizing 2 conferences—a learning experience and good exposure to important figures and information.

✓ The common problem faced is the overload in the program. Some feel it is the source of psychological pressure. Others feel ‘it is worth it’.

✓ Students refuse to talk about problems in the program, but they refer to them as “challenges”.

A Final Word:

- ❖ LEAD is an attempted experiment to solve the many problems facing Egyptian youth.**
- ❖ It can provide lessons to be learned.**
- ❖ It is early for evaluation, but a later one is recommended to test the impact of the students as competitors in the labor market.**