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## ‘Successful’ Alternative Education: Still Reproducing Inequalities? The Case of the Community School Program in Egypt

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***'Successful' Alternative Education: Still reproducing inequalities? The Case of the Community School Program in Egypt***  
***L'éducation alternative 'à succès' : Reproduisant encore les inégalités ? Le cas d'un programme scolaire communautaire en Égypte***

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**Abstract**

Community schooling is an alternative form of education that centers on partnerships between the community and/or the state, aid organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The Community School Program (CSP) in Egypt sparked a social movement in education in that country, with disparate actors all coalescing around the CSP as an alternative, empowering model of education. This study, drawing upon data from in-depth interviews and observations, examined the relationship between the CSP and the dynamics that formed, shaped and co-opted it. Our analysis examined the program's processes and legacies on its former students. The study found that critical factors in the program's success were its cost for the students, physical proximity, and quality teaching. After completing the program, these students faced significant challenges in mainstream secondary education. The CSP model is now converging with mainstream education. The interplay of national and global discourses shaped the CSP's formation and continues to shape students' social and academic learning through the evolution of its program.

**Résumé**

Les écoles communautaires représentent une forme alternative d'éducation centrée sur des partenariats entre la communauté et/ou l'État, des organisations d'aide, ou des organisations non-gouvernementales. Le Programme d'École Communautaire (PEC) en Égypte a suscité un mouvement social en éducation dans ce pays, avec des acteurs disparates se regroupant tous autour du PEC comme un modèle alternatif et autonomisant d'éducation. À travers des entretiens en profondeur et des observations, cette étude a examiné la relation entre le PEC et les dynamiques qui l'ont formé, l'ont modelé et l'ont coopté. Notre analyse a été au-delà des chiffres pour examiner les facteurs, les procédés et l'héritage du programme PEC sur ces anciens élèves. L'étude a révélé que les facteurs critiques étaient la viabilité financière du programme, la proximité physique, et un enseignement de qualité. Après avoir complété le programme, ces étudiants font face à des défis importants dans l'éducation secondaire ordinaire. Le modèle PEC est maintenant en train de converger avec l'éducation ordinaire. L'interaction des discours nationaux et mondiaux façonne la formation du PEC et continue de façonner l'apprentissage social et académique des élèves à travers l'évolution de son programme.

**Keywords:** alternative education; Education For All (EFA); international aid education; education borrowing and lending; social reproduction; community schooling; cultural capital; neoliberalism

**Introduction**

"Bread, freedom, social justice" was the rallying cry during the 2011 uprising in Egypt (Mittermaier, 2014), and certainly a key component of social justice is quality education affordable to all. These rallies drew attention to the reality that despite certain quantitative and qualitative progresses (such as the increase in the number of schools, or the move to more active learning pedagogies), free quality education was still a wish rather than a reality for many Egyptians (Egyptian Ministry of Education [EMoE], 2007). This also despite Egypt's long-term commitment to Education for All (EFA), a global campaign to provide out-of-school children with a basic

human right: to be in school and to get a quality, relevant education by the year 2015 (UNESCO, 2015). There have been some successful international collaboration projects, which have sought to provide innovative education programs in Egypt, such as the education enhancement programs in cooperation with the World Bank and European Union (Mohamed, 2014). One may also consider the UNICEF Community School Program in Egypt as one of these projects. Globally, community schools are seen as successful tools of EFA, and community schools are widely acknowledged in educational circles to be exemplars in broadening school access to the most difficult-to-reach populations, while providing quality education (Academy for Educational Development [AED], 2006; DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz & Hartwell, 2007). The focus of this paper is the UNICEF-Community School Program in Egypt (henceforth referred to as CSP). This program was designed to reach the unreached populations: children who face geographic, gender-based, and economic disadvantages, with a *quality* education (Zaalouk, 2006). Other key goals of the CSP were student democratization, active-learning and teacher education development (Zaalouk, 2006), in a context of government awareness that a vacuum of education in many rural populations and rote learning pedagogy for school-goers left many susceptible to fundamentalism (Ginsburg & Megahed, 2008; Sayed, 2005).

Previous studies have examined the institutional and governmental narratives and dynamics of the CSP, as well as ethnographic studies of graduates of the program (e.g., Farrell, 2002; Farrell, 2004; DeStefano et al., 2007; Hartwell, 1995; Hartwell, 1998; Zaalouk, 2006). However, a closer look reveals that some of these prior studies are advocacy in nature and have tended not to examine the pressures the students face after they leave the CSP program, nor do they examine how the education model has evolved over the years since its founding. While a problem-solving and advocacy lens is understandable, it lacks critical examination and there is a dearth of independent, nonadvocacy literature on the CSP. This is especially important as development work is critiqued for being inequitable in its outlook even as it works towards equity (Brehm & Silova, 2010). Also, the neoliberal discourse, so prevalent in Egypt, continues the perpetuation of social inequalities even as it tries to work towards social justice.

In response, our study provides unique insights, grounded in the perspectives of the program's recent graduates, and unpacks various national and transnational dynamics contributing to the successes and gaps of the CSP. On the positive side, the voices of the program's graduates show that the community school education was financially, physically, and emotionally optimal for them, and that their most valued benefits were cultural and social capital. Less favourably, two worrisome trends may pose serious threats to the program's ongoing success. One is the haunting legacy expressed through the CSP's graduates' sense of despair, as they have transitioned from this semi-independent, active, and less bureaucratic primary school program to formal and highly structured secondary school experiences within the public education umbrella. The second and related trend is the program's loss of its some of its unique qualities inscribed in its initial mandate (such as active learning pedagogy and a modified curriculum) as it is being co-opted and mainstreamed into the existing formal education system. More broadly, the case of the CSP speaks to the impact of political and economic dynamics on education. In doing so, we aim to present student perspectives on the impact of the CSP on their lives and offer relevant considerations for alternative education and EFA policy and planning, derived from our application of reproduction theory to the obstacles that hamper students' aspirations for social justice and mobility.

We begin by surveying how social reproduction has historically been effected through schooling in Egypt. We detail the context, characteristics and influence of the CSP as a transformative, alternative school model and situate the CSP story in the broader narrative of EFA.

We connect the CSP to both the social reproduction and ‘borrowing and lending’ frameworks; provide a sketch of this qualitative ethnographic study, and our approaches to data collection and analysis. This is followed by the findings and discussion, which detail the story of an initially promising and ambitious pursuit of social justice. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of this analysis for EFA as well as for the politics and economics of education aid.

### **The Context of Social Reproduction through Education in Egypt**

Formal education in Egypt has long been intertwined with reproduction, privilege, social mobility, and colonization. H. Maehler (as cited in Parca, 2013) describes how literacy in ancient Ptolemaic Egypt was seen by both Egyptians and Greek settlers as a way to both reproduce and improve one’s social status. Literacy was a costly investment in the future of children and their parents, and was linked to social privilege (Parca, 2013). From the 7<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, education in Egypt was solely Islamic, divided between high quality instruction with well-known teachers for the children of the ruling dynastic elites, and poor education with less experienced teachers for the masses (Tibawi, 1972). The first modern technical schools were brought to Egypt by the successive French and English colonizers with the endorsement of the local elite. Together with Mohammed Ali (Egypt’s ruler from 1805-1848), they imported the Lancaster factory schooling method to displace the traditional village Islamic schooling, assured that the modern education system could help sustain the existing power structure and also modernize Egypt (Progler, 2004). This modern education was innovative, effective, and efficient, and provided a technological edge over the Islamic education. However, it was confined to the wealthy and powerful.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Egyptian system further divided into two streams: (i) modern secular education, with predominantly Western influences, and (ii) Islamic education. Each of the streams has its hierarchy, stratified along private and public (commonly referred to as ‘national’) lines. Presently, the current secular national system is divided between English and Arabic schools. The Islamic education system includes Islamic *kuttabs* (early primary Islamic schools) and *madrassas* (secondary and higher Islamic education institutions). All educational institutions were controlled more firmly by the state control after the rise in fundamentalist terrorism that occurred in Egypt in the 1990s (Cook, 2000). Islamic schools became the centerpiece of state control, leading to the closure of some and the reforming of other schools’ curricula in order to drop fundamentalist content, as well as the establishment of community schools as alternatives (Doumatto & Starrett, 2006).

The output of students’ education in Egypt and their socioeconomic status are directly linked through private tutoring, a key education force across the various education systems, a fact acknowledged even by the state (EMoE, 2013). Although the rise of private tutoring is a global phenomenon, the level and spread of private tutoring in Egypt is at levels few other countries are at, where 80% of students are in tutoring year-round (Sobhy, 2012). Several studies estimate that the average Egyptian household spends between 20 and 50% of household income on private tutoring (Hartmann, 2008; Bray, 1999).

Despite the long history of education and the extensive and diverse education infrastructure, Egypt has not been able to resolve concerns for education access and quality, and subsequently disappoints many Egyptians, especially those on the margins. Egyptian public education faces numerous challenges: a perennial lack of funding; a high level of dropouts; curriculum overload; continued teacher-centered pedagogy; a stressful testing system; the rise of private tutoring; overcrowded schools with few facilities for activities; family poverty; corruption; teacher demoralization and absenteeism; and lack of safety due to remoteness of schools from the

communities, especially in the Upper Egypt. There are an estimated 490,000 children out of school in Egypt (UNDP & Ma'had al-Takhtīt al-Qawmī, 2010). Importantly, educational access and survival rates are drawn along familiar gender, income, regional, and urban-rural lines. Around 80.4% of rural girls have never been to school (UNDP & Ma'had al-Takhtīt al-Qawmī, 2010).

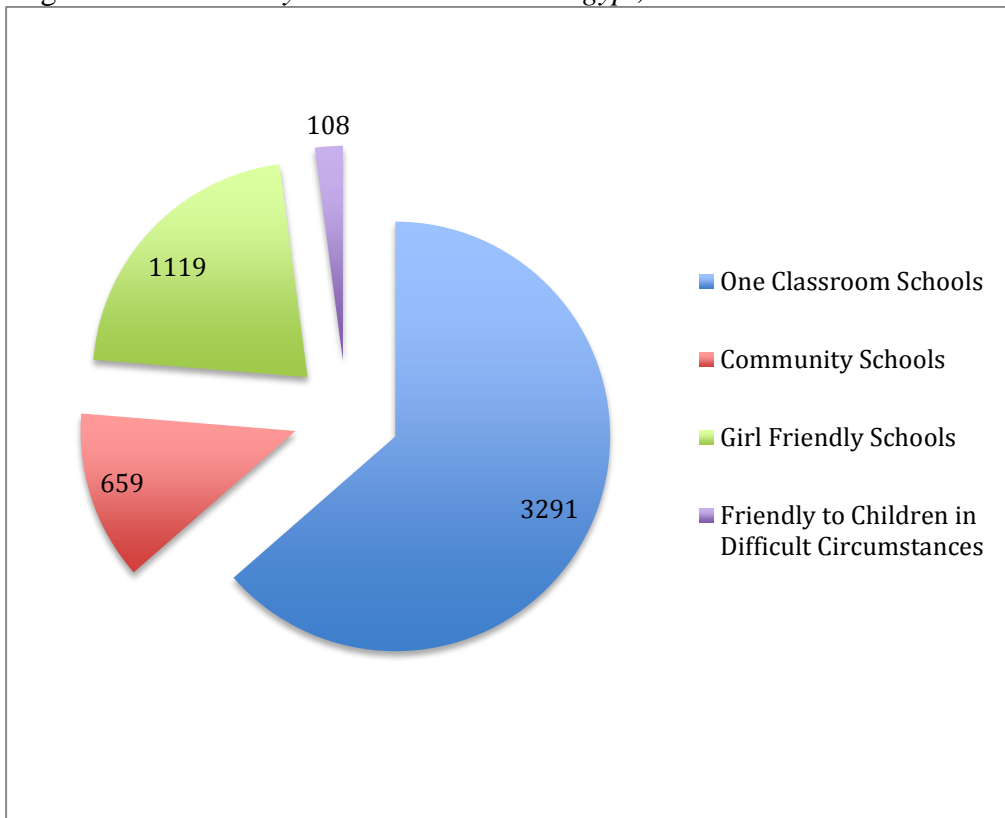
### **CSP in Egypt: Alternative Education for Change**

The CSP started the alternative education movement in Egypt, and as such is a good entry point to understand the dynamics of a movement that sought to address the above equity concerns for practical and political reasons. Stimulated by the EFA goals established in Jomtien in 1990, the CSP in Egypt was set up in villages that did not have easy access to public schools. Community schools became an example of public-private and national-global partnership. UNICEF-Egypt solicited land donations from local landowners, created a partnership between the EMoE, local elders, UNICEF and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA, the predecessor of the current Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, DFAIT), and provided technical assistance in the forms of curriculum development and teacher training (Zaalouk, 2006). EMoE paid the teachers' salaries. Critically, the CSP sought to create a model that did not replicate EMoE schools numerous challenges as detailed earlier, but developed a different model that depended on active learning, teacher development through support networks and reflections, and a diffusion model of growth. From the outset, the CSP was forged as a partnership in which the schools would follow a modified Ministry curriculum, but its students would take government examinations to have the option to continue general academic schooling after the program.

Although there are only 659 CSP schools founded by the UNICEF partnership and its management successors based on the original UNICEF-CSP model (EMoE, 2013), this number does not adequately reflect the number of community schools in Egypt as a result of the CSP. The success of the UNICEF-CSP's students in the government examinations gave legitimacy to alternative ways of schooling (Farrell, 2002; Zaalouk, 2005), and subsequently, the EMoE and other aid organizations created their own Community-Based Education (CBE) schools. Accordingly, there are different mutations of CBE in Egypt today, run by different entities: the One-Classroom Schools teach both academic subjects and vocational skills at the primary level and are managed by the EMoE; the Community Schools that are the legacy of the UNICEF-CSP in Egypt are currently administered largely by the Misr El-Kheir Foundation, an Egyptian NGO; the Girl-Friendly Schools specifically target closing the gender gap and are run by the National Council on Childhood and Motherhood; and the Friendly to Children in Difficult Circumstances Schools is a CBE program with greater flexibility run specifically to meet the different psycho-social needs of street children. Mainstream education has also been influenced by the UNICEF-CSP, as it triggered paradigm shifts within the EMoE at large, in areas such as curriculum development, pedagogical understanding, and public policy (Zaalouk, 2006). Figure 1 shows the various community schooling programs in Egypt in 2012/2013.

Currently, the CSP is going through one of its largest expansions: while 659 schools were established through the UNICEF-CSP program during the previous 20 years (EMoE, 2013), the current administrator, Misr El-Kheir Foundation, plans to establish 1000 schools in the next two years (Misr El-Kheir, 2014).

Figure 1 *Community-based Education in Egypt, 2012/2013*



Source: EMoE (2013), p.1

### **Community Schools as a Global Best Practice**

Well before the Egyptian case, community schools were already promoted as a ‘global best practice.’ By the early 1990s, community schools as alternatives to existing formal schools had sprung up in other parts of the developing world, such as the Escuela Nueva in Latin America, and BRAC in Bangladesh (Farrell, 2008). Even though community schools, as a social-contextual construct, have meant different things to different stakeholders, there are some common elements that cross the various contestations over community schools. First, community schools are both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and members of the community. Second, community schools may have a scope that is broad, as they often target academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement. Third, they offer a modified curriculum that emphasizes real-world learning and community problem-solving (Coalition of Community Schools, n/d.). A key and deliberate feature of community schools is that they have some form of a *relationship* with the communities in which they operate, as opposed to solely state or organizational relationships. Community schools have been described as less formal and less concerned with strict syllabus and examination systems: having more friendly student-teacher relations, multi-grade teaching, cultural sensitivity, a learning pace based on students’ progress, and creating and using local resources, experiences, and knowledge.

### **Conceptual Framework: Reproduction Theory and Borrowing & Lending Theory**

We employ reproduction theory because it highlights the tension between how schools play a large role in reproducing power hierarchies through promoting dominant culture on one hand (Bourdieu, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lamont & Lareau 1988), while on the other hand some scholars assert the necessity of teaching dominant culture to students from disadvantaged families to prepare the students for engagement with different societal norms (Delpit, 1988). Reproduction theory offers useful insights into understanding how education that increases school access, school learning and test scores, and school graduation rates may still fail to improve life chances (Apple, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Giroux, 1983). As we will explain, the use of reproduction theory is appropriate because we consider schools as central agencies in the nexus of race, class and gender inequality. Reproduction theory posits that schools transmit a culture and habitus that is 'superior' and in line with the dominant groups in society. The culture and knowledge that is considered 'superior' reflects power relations in society, but this social respect built on power relations is seen as 'objective' superiority. School inculcates this 'superior' habitus, that is, an internal disposition towards what Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1990) call a "cultural arbitrary" based on power relations. Thus, the cultivation of this habitus, or tendencies, is a critical tool for social mobility, as it is associated with the dominant class. However, habitus also comes with limitations that will always confine those who do not originate in that class, even though they may be unaware of these limitations. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) give the example of appropriating Chinese culture: though one may appropriate Chinese culture, it is not possible to substitute theory for what is lived, one will never be as Chinese as someone *born* Chinese. Reproduction theory also faults those who educate the disadvantaged classes in the ways of the dominant classes as, it claims, they are profitably employed in a monopoly of cultural capital.

Implicitly and in complex ways, language, and the ways in which language locates its speakers in a particular position in the socio-economic strata, serves to preclude those from the lower socio-economic strata from reaping the expected and desired social and economic rewards from their education (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). In contrast to a more direct, observable form of exclusion such as unequal access to schools, social, linguistic and cultural capital serve to exclude school-goers by relegating them to less desirable positions, forcing them to internalize the social hierarchy so that they self-eliminate based on their perceived chances of failure and marginalizing them in favour of those who are over-selected for their more valued cultural resources (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Michael Apple (1990) and Henry Giroux (1983) suggest that while schools reproduce the status quo through hegemonic tools such as language, hidden curriculum, and other forms of biases (e.g., racism, classism, sexism, etc.), schools should be seen as sites of contestation by multiple actors such as the students, teachers and administrative staff, where struggle for meaning, identity and hope happens at every instructional moment. This contestation provides glimpses of hope and opportunity amidst the reproductive structure, even though these hopes are limited and at times reversed by the larger forces within and outside of schools. Understanding the larger sociopolitical context of teaching is therefore critical for understanding how to resist and make hope more enduring.

Borrowing and lending theory also helps to understand why global best practices lead to limited hopes at an international scale and offer us insight into understanding the CSP's evolution as a model. Successful borrowed and loaned educational models such as the community schools undergo multiple transformations as they journey from one place to another: practices are modified, hybridized, enhanced, and even rejected (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Silova, 2006; Steiner-Khamsi &

Waldow, 2012). Borrowed ideas may gradually lose their original transformative and innovative purposes, meanings, and structures, and morph into existing local structures, reproducing the existing mediocre education and status quo (Silova, 2006). Teachers may become exposed to many innovative and critically important strategies at centralized training workshops, but cannot apply them to their classroom practices upon their return because their schools and broader communities remain top-down, resource-poor, and driven by narrowly-conceived tests which encourage rote learning (Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012). When borrowed models do not consider these systemic issues, they create a deep sense of frustration on the part of the reform-minded teachers, managers, and hopeful students.

The above insights help our understanding of how the CSP and its role in the students' lives can be interpreted in the larger context of how education innovation rises and falls. This context of contested meanings of education also shows that education in general and its particular expressions such as community schools, active learning pedagogies, and standards can serve various agendas, reflecting both opportunities and challenges to the policy makers and practitioners.

### **Data Sources and Analysis Approaches**

This paper is based on an ethnographic field study by the first author. The data was collected from in-depth interviews conducted with 11 graduates of the program, aged 12-17, in 2013 in the Upper Egypt. These graduates, the study's principal participants, had recently graduated from two different community schools and were in their first year of public secondary schools (Grade 7). In addition to interviews with the CSP's recent graduates, observations and informal conversations were also conducted with community school staff. Purposive sampling of the schools was done by engaging with student cohorts from the two different schools deemed exemplars by the CSP administrators. The two CSP schools were 70 kilometers apart. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Arabic, which allowed the researcher to understand deeply what their CSP education had meant to them through probing into the hopes they developed and the challenges they faced (Warren, 2001).

Admittedly, the 11 participants are unlikely to represent all graduates from all of the CSP programs. However, the primary goal of the study was to draw out common themes and issues in order to develop a deeper understanding of impact of the CSP (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010). In other words, when international aid education succeeds in its declared goals, what are the deeper impacts on the lives of those it purports to aid?

Since all communication and interviews were in Arabic, the recordings were translated as the primary researcher was doing the transcribing. This also allowed for contextual, situational, and linguistic nuances to be retained. The participants' names were changed for anonymity. The data was coded and analyzed using NVivo, and constructivist grounded theory was deemed most appropriate because of its recognition of participants' voices, social contexts, and power differentials (Charmaz, 2011). Thus, the data and theory were mutually informing and transforming (Denzin, 2004).

Theoretically, the study is framed against the objectives of education as a social investment for social mobility. This aligns well not only with education reform in Egypt, but also with the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education and EFA goals. Education is seen as a tool to eradicate poverty as it enhances the most valuable capital students have - their productive labour - as a means of improving their lives.



## **Findings**

In this section we discuss a number of key themes and issues that emerged from the study, including the challenges the CSP faces as it moves into an uncertain future. The focus of this analysis is on the 11 former students' perspectives and experiences of two UNICEF-CSP primary schools. The overall analysis indicated that all 11 participants considered education to be a key part of their life and identity, and as a way to better themselves personally, socially, and economically. Broadly, the findings' themes coalesced around two main interlinked issues: (1) factors driving their education gains during their time at the school, and (2) their experiences in education post-CSP. Education gains rested on three factors: (1) the schools' proximity to home, which was crucial for gendered barriers; (2) the quality education received, which, interestingly, was tied to their close relationship with their teachers; and (3) the economic feasibility of schooling that was functionally free. Their experiences in education post-CSP varied according to socio-economic background, with their socio-economic markers indexing them as players or non-players in a high-stakes testing environment. Family financial means determines whether the students can afford private tuition or not, making them contenders or non-players in the high stakes testing environment. Considerable effort, stress and lack of access to key test preparation suggest that failure is on the horizon for those who cannot afford private lessons.

### ***Key Findings on CSP Schooling Experiences***

Physical proximity was the principal and crucial condition of attending the community school voiced by almost all the participants. The government primary school was in town, not the village, thus a 40-minute walk away and too far for the girls to walk safely alone because of the risk of sexual harassment. One participant described it as follows:

My family did not agree for girls to get an education at the Ministry school, they said no, girls don't leave the house... they refused the idea of an education for girls, and as soon as we saw the school here opening up, we said these are schools close to home and a chance for us to learn and know how to read and write.

Parents later allowed their daughters to go to the more distant government preparatory school after the primary cycle was finished. As one participant put it, "At the beginning no one at all agreed. But, when I went to Grade 1 and became very clever, they agreed." In this way, the CSP acted as a stepping-stone for parents who initially stipulated that their daughters could only attend the close CSP and would later need to stop.

Teacher quality was clearly defined by the participants as working with them as students based on their actual previous understanding and skills, rather than external expectations of what learning students should bring to school. The participants highlighted that quality teaching meant taking enough time with the material to ensure that all students understood, and using varied pedagogical methods to reach the students on their own terms. The participants commented on how a school day with fewer, longer lesson periods allowed for the time necessary to teach in such student-centered ways. Saeed was a participant whose father was an inspector with the EMoE, and thus had extensive knowledge of all the public schools in the locality. However, the father sent his children to the CSP because, "the CSP [schools] teach well, but the others don't teach well. Because they care about the kids, if we don't understand they explain it once, twice, thrice."

The teachers' attitude was remarked upon specifically by the participants. Participants remarked on how much time, care and effort teachers invested in creating positive experiences from the students' first days at school, "they are the ones who taught us the basics at school and we love to come here". These early experiences laid the foundations for a love of learning, and the

students repeatedly expressed how their relationships with their teachers were conduits for their school attitudes: “I loved my teacher and when I love the teacher I love the subject” and “She made things easy for us, so she was the one who made us love school and learning”, Teachers were paired with the students for the entire primary cycle and so strong relationships were developed. As well as investing time in their relationships with the students, the teachers also took time to invest in the students’ relationships with each other. For students who had transferred from EMOE schools, the treatment they received at the CSP contrasted sharply with their previous schooling experiences, which the students described with statements such as “they [the teachers at the Ministry schools] made us hate school”, “here they treat the kids well whereas there they insult them with hitting and bad language” and “I feel there’s no caring there [at the Ministry school]. Here they care.”

A primary goal of the CSP was to provide a functionally expense-free school for the children, compared to the ‘free’ public education that requires parents to pay extra hidden and visible costs. Although the notion of public education is that it is already free, from Table 1 it can be seen that the differences between ‘free’ and functionally free can be quite significant. The extra expenses render public education unaffordable for many disadvantaged families, in particular private tuition, and mandatory ‘school donations’. One cost that is not possible to recoup in any schooling, particularly for the boys, is the lost income the family does not receive when the student spends the day at school instead of working.

Table 1 *Comparing between CS and EMOE school associated expenses for students*

<i>School associated expenses</i>	<i>Community Schools (CS)</i>	<i>Ministry Schools (MS)</i>
<i>Uniform expenses</i>	None, uniforms not required	Yes
<i>School fees</i>	None	Donations ‘requested’
<i>NGO free food support</i>	Student receive	Students do not receive
<i>School supplies</i>	Provided by school	Student responsibility
<i>Private lessons</i>	Not necessary	Very important

Sources: Field notes, 2012/2013

Above all, the participants described the attitudes they learned as more important than learning to read and write, with every single student discussing ‘talking well’ as a significant gain from his or her education. Clearly, these participants already knew how to speak Arabic, the language of instruction, before starting school. The talking that they were referring to signified the codes for dealing with urban mainstream manners of speaking and with respected people in their community. They defined ‘talking well’ as the rules of conversation, having good manners, being considerate of others’ feelings, having respect for the old and the young, and being intelligent in choice of topics of conversation.

### ***Key Findings on Student Transition to EMOE Secondary Schools***

After their primary CSP education, the students met significant challenges in the secondary EMOE schools that threaten to derail their educational aspirations. In particular, the expense of private lessons, vital in a system that streams via very high stakes testing, is crippling. Private lessons are not optional for students wishing to seriously pursue their education, and even the government recognizes that the financial cost of a general secondary education is prohibitive for many due to the necessary costs of private tutoring (EMoE, 2007). Graduates expressed widespread feelings of

frustration and bitterness at not being able to afford the costs of private tutoring. For one young woman, Farah, the blow was very bitter:

Sometimes a whole day goes by without a single teacher coming to us...if you want to understand, you have to take a private lesson. Where is the money? Where will my parents take the money from to spend, my siblings...Where am I supposed to get the money from? Where will my other siblings eat and learn from?

The adjustment from the CSP program to the public school was stark for many participants. Differences in the curriculum between the CSP and the EMoE (as indicated in Table 2) forced the students to come up with strategies to compensate for concepts they were expected to know in the new system. These included asking other students to help them and relying on their own extra studying, strategies that were not always successful. The increased walking distance to school cut into the time the students had to study and help in their homes. Their learning fell through the cracks as some teachers skipped going to their classes altogether, and other classes were not even assigned a teacher, such as Mohammed who had had no geometry teacher since the beginning of the school year four months earlier. While these experiences were not the norm, they remained commonplace, and significant amounts of time, stress and money were expended making up for the missed classes. Although the teachers in the secondary school were not homogenous, any real efforts to teach were not supported by the school environment, and were complicated by the short time frame of the lesson relative to the curriculum requirements, the constant moving around, the lack of the teachers' classroom management skills and the disruptions caused by some students. In sum, although the students continuing their secondary education is a step closer to achieving their dreams, it also brought into sharp relief the structural barriers they increasingly face as they progress through the system in the form of unaffordable private lessons, inconsistent teaching at the EMoE schools, and streaming through high stakes testing.

### *Changes in the CSP model*

Differences in the CSP model between its description in the literature and actual reality when the primary author conducted the fieldwork can be seen in Table 2. Furthermore, at the time the study was conducted the program was undergoing a major overhaul towards standardization in preparation for a huge national expansion.

Table 2 illustrates that the original model of the CSP is converging with the mainstream public schooling model. The participants in this study were part of one of the last cohorts to use the modified, reduced CSP curriculum. As subsequent cohorts use the same curriculum as the EMoE schools, students are faced with the need for more 'efficient' blocks of didactic learning to have time to cover the requirements of the curriculum. Thus, although the active learning pedagogy in 2013 was found to be similar to when the CSP was founded, this was being phased out. Also, from a focus on local facilitators with some education extensively trained to teach in the CSP model, recruitment now targets formally qualified teachers and university graduates, reflecting a change in recruitment strategy that can be seen in teachers' longer commutes. Thus, recruitment must draw from a wider geographic area. These changes in the central features of the CSP attest to a wide-ranging convergence with the national model of schooling, and call for recognition and consideration of the implications.

Table 2 *Changes in the CS model*

	CS 1999	CS 2013
<i>Pedagogy</i>	Learning corner activities (active learning) in 2 blocks of the day	Currently the same as 1999. Plans underway to reduce active learning blocks as more didactic learning needed
<i>Curriculum</i>	Adaptation of government curriculum	Adoption of government curriculum as is
<i>Assessment</i>	Government-administered, based on CS curriculum	Government administered, based on typical government curriculum
<i>Other changes in CS since starting</i>		
<i>Homework</i>	No	Yes
<i>Class period time</i>	75 minutes each	45 minutes each
<i>Multi-grade</i>	Yes	No
<i>Administration</i>	International NGO	Egyptian NGO
<i>Physical property</i>	Basic requirements of space	More requirements regarding bathrooms, spacing, etc.
<i>Teacher education requirements</i>	Some high school	Both university degree and diploma of education necessary
<i>Teacher commute</i>	Walking distance	Requires transportation

Sources: Farrell, 2008; Field notes, 2012/2013; Interviews with teachers, 2012/2013; UNICEF, 2010; Zaalouk, 2006.

### **Schools reproducing or schools transforming: Discussion and Analysis**

The above findings highlight the successes and challenges created by the CSP. This study confirms other findings (Farrell, 2002; Zaalouk, 2006) that demonstrate that the CSP succeeded in its declared goals which were increasing school access for children facing multiple social and economic barriers to their education, developing community partnerships, and forging an innovative educational model. Moreover, this study unpacks factors that were relevant to these participants' educational journeys: increased school access through physical proximity and a genuinely expense-free education; a quality education due to teacher excellence, friendly attitudes and relationship building; and the learning of social skills, such as talking well and confidently. However, once these participants shift into mainstream secondary schools their challenges are significant, as they have indicated. Here, the compounded expenses of public school and out-of-school private tutoring, teacher absenteeism, and rigidity are the realities of new schooling life for the students. In addition, as Table 2 shows, the CSP itself is losing its unique qualities in the process of aligning with the mainstream system, even though this alignment is seen as scaling up the CSP. Massive expansions often focus solely on numbers, with the result that quality-related processes go unaddressed and even discouraged, privileging of quantified outcomes over those that are not easy to quantify (Lingard, 2011). In accordance with this, we can trace in the empirical findings a shift in the CSP model through three key educational choices and their corresponding implications that together reveal paradigm shifts for the CSP program. : (i) the knowledge hierarchy; (ii) empowered teachers versus empowered managers; and (iii) social reproduction versus social transformation.

### **Whose knowledge?**

The tension reflected in converging the CSP schools to align with the EMoE schools is a reflection of the tension between curriculum for locally relevant learning and dominant group learning in community schools, a dilemma echoed globally in community schools (Hoppers, 2005; Muskin,

1997). On one hand, locally relevant learning promotes student learning and growth within their community, but does not qualify them to engage with the wider society. On the other hand, dominant culture learning promotes the students' ability to deal with wider society generally, even though it relegates them to lower strata, marginalizes those outside of the dominant culture and prepares students to leave their communities, a fact illustrated in numerous empirical and theoretical arguments (Fanon, 1967; Delpit, 1988; Milligan, 2003; Hoppers, 2005). Thus, even though dominant culture education is meant to be empowering, it continues to structure inequities through the positioning of particular knowledge and culture as superior and partially developing them. Dominant culture education promises social mobility (e.g., 'I can be a doctor, I can be anything'), whereas the reality of structural barriers blocks any real chances of this happening. Education based on the dominant culture offers exposure to the knowledge of the dominant group and shows the students how to come into it, with the caveat that coming into the social structure of the dominant group through education does not offer much opportunity to go beyond an economic and social capital ceiling that may prevent them from accessing opportunities available to others (Bourdieu, 1991; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Thus, the hierarchy continues to be reflected in key educational choices that hamper social mobility. This is reflected in the shift from an adapted CSP curriculum to a EMoE curriculum how the CSP raises students' hopes at the primary level, hopes that are soon dashed at the secondary level. The CSP education does not address and prepare students for navigating the realities of secondary school as well as the broader socio-cultural contexts that put a ceiling on students' mobility. While it may be argued that the CSP cannot be expected to do everything, plaudits of the program must address the students' broader challenges. Education is promoted as the quintessential solution to improving one's life when it often does not fulfill that key promise.

### **Empowered teachers versus empowered managers?**

An unexpected finding of this study is that teachers' roles have shifted from the beginning of the CSP program in 1999 to the fieldwork in 2013, from knowledge co-creators to knowledge transmitters. Evidence for the transformation of teachers' roles from empowered teachers to empowered managers in the CSP can be seen in three dimensions of teaching: curricular, pedagogical and assessment. In the curricular dimension, losing autonomy to adapt the curriculum to students' needs redefines the teacher-student relationship from one where the teachers meet students where they are at, to a rushed relationship under work-required pressures. These pressures are likely to detrimentally affect student-teacher relationships, a key factor students in this study identified for their successful education. In the pedagogical dimension, the shorter periods significantly reduce the time that can be afforded to active learning, as didactic learning is deemed more efficient to covering a greater breadth of material at the expense of engaging deeply with the learning (see Table 2). With regards to assessment, no longer is the formal assessment of the CSP schools different from the standardized testing done by the EMoE. Thus both curriculum and assessment have explicitly converged with those of the EMoE. Taken together, these changes reflect a changed conceptualization of the role of teachers, from a practice with considerable autonomy to deskilled delivery. From these students' standpoint, caring teachers and the student-teacher relationship are central to a quality educational experience. The benefits of strong student-teacher relationships are likely to be overlooked within the current focus on standardization and expansion. As Iveta Silova (2006) suggests, borrowed educational ideas may lose their original purposes and meanings and align more closely with existing educational models when systemic issues are ignored. Also indicated in the findings, teachers now need to be more highly qualified,

and are given less autonomy in their teaching, a finding echoed in the literature on educational trends globally (Zaalouk, 2013). The political and economic structure and the imposed ideology of education as a technical-economic process has deprofessionalized teachers' work and positioned them as technicians of implementing plans.

### **Social reproduction versus social transformation?**

'Talking well', defined as spoken and written language codes and interactional styles of the dominant culture, was the most pivotal gain these students mentioned in dealing with mainstream society and respected people in their community. Cultural capital theorists argue that this is the cultural and linguistic capital that is used to distinguish different classes through locating speakers in different social positions, both externally to society but also as an internalized social hierarchy that limits the self (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). In the language of *habitus*, these students were expressing the value of the cultural capital that is evidence of the higher-status culture acquired at school and associated with an education. Their social location embodied in language is advancing and limiting them, making invisible how particular class and social groups' preferences are normalized (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, while promising social mobility, their education also holds its own seeds of ruin, as their cultural capital is attached to the social conditions that produced them and, strengthened with other structural barriers such as financial incapability in a high-stakes testing environment, will reproduce those same social conditions, through eventual academic stratification. Thus, analysis of the CSP program's graduates highlights the limits of schooling in one of its primary functions, that of social mobility and justice. The CSP may be a successful model in increasing school access and transforming pedagogy and mindsets, but it continues to result in inequality for its students. Without a corresponding change in post-CSP education and wider society, academic and social success in the CSP does little to prepare students for a society that is based on direct and indirect exclusionary mechanisms that disavow students of successful educational outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

This study of the CSP program has traced two key findings. First, an education program that is successful and actually seems to achieve its EFA-stated goals of increasing access to education to address poverty and social rigidity, can also lead to social stratification through moving the stratifying point. Even transformative education does not necessarily adequately prepare students for structural challenges. A critical assumption of education is that it has the potential for social mobility, but serious hopes at reaping the desired benefits of education (such as social mobility) depend largely on the financial means parents have to support their children, particularly in the secondary school stage. Where before *access* to education was the stratifying point, it is now *quality* of education. This study indicates that the students' expectations reflect a growing realization that high hopes, hard work and often great sacrifice are not enough to escape being 'locked-in' to one's current socio-economic position. They were taught to hope and dream big, then left in a society structured so it is impossible for all but a few to achieve the success they were taught to hope for. A more nuanced understanding of the complexity of students' lives post-educational efforts should be seen as a basic indicator, beyond the statistics of children in school, to understand the wider implications and the discursive framework within which the CSP operates.

Second, the heart of the CSP model itself is being dismantled, not by outright removing the program itself or its transformative components, but by dismantling the very conditions necessary for its transformative components, such as good teacher-student relationships and active learning.

The paradigm behind the CSP model is changing from an organic, socially transformative paradigm, to a mass-produced, reproductive paradigm. Management and government emphasis on growth numbers and the difficulty quantifying relationships, parent and students' transforming their paradigms, girls' agency, and even student and teacher frustration conceals the heart of the CSP and makes it possible to hollow out its meaning and morph the CSP into a reproductive model rather than a transforming one. Pressure to meet EFA goals drives the focus on the numbers of students educated, overshadowing the intended purpose of education and the possibilities education is meant to represent. Currently, the CSP's ongoing evolution presents a 'meat vs. beans' dichotomy to the program administrators. One administrator stated:

We need to increase the number of new schools even if the quality is poor because a poor education is like a meal of Egyptian fava beans, *ful*, whereas a quality school is like a meal with meat, *lahma*, in it. Therefore, it is better to feed everyone *ful* than to feed some people *lahma*.

Is it in fact a beans vs. meat choice? Although student voice clearly points to the quality of their education as being transformative, the schools now focus on increasing access and efficiency rather than the original vision of increasing access to a *quality* education; *ful* vs. *lahma*, or beans vs. meat. The massive upswing in the number of new schools to be built; a focus on *numbers* versus the previous focus on *process*; the focus on *quantity* versus the previous focus on *quality*; and the changes in teacher recruitment, school curriculum, and pedagogy - all of this points to a hollowing out of the CSP's original vision driven by global neoliberal trends and political-economic realities.

The CSP has served many of the goals its supporters intended: increased access to education, increased democratization of students, and diverting students away from a fundamentalist influenced education. For the students, however, beliefs in the promise of education as a tool for social mobility do not seem likely to play out in the trajectory necessary to make social mobility a reality. It is important to engage with the multiple millions of children who have already been through aid education programs or other forms of education supported by aid, and to take a close look at the legacies of education in their lives. Consideration of the structural challenges that these students face raises a number of critical questions: Has education truly 'empowered' these students, as has been assumed? Or has it brought them within the orb of dominant society and the world order at disadvantaged levels? The experiences of students in the CSP program suggest that ignoring the socially reproductive role of schooling leaves the students thwarted. The existing structure of society is reproduced, not changed. On a broader scale, by simultaneously creating hope for transformation and social mobility at the primary community schools and dashing them at the secondary public schools, the story of the CSP, like many other well-intended global education models, illustrates how such models may facilitate and reproduce inequalities in novel ways.

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