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The Role of the Middle East in Foreign Textbooks: An Examination of  
the Egyptian Market

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

Upon examination of the history, it is evident that education, in the Middle East, like numerous other fields, has been developed, analyzed, shaped and transformed throughout the ages. Progress has continually shifted; moving forward from the enlightened days of Al Farabi who integrated philosophy with Islamic thought and backward to the purposefully archaic thought regression under the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman rule.

Within these centuries of Ottoman rule, Egypt, among other neighboring countries, declined to state of stagnation resulting from having its greatest scientific minds and talented artists uprooted from the community and exported. These were taken from their homelands to serve the Ottoman rulers in what is now, Istanbul (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.).

This meant that, in its relationship to the Western world, the tables were turned. While the Eastern world sunk deeper into regression, the West was steadily pulling itself out of the darkness of the Medieval Ages and advancing into the Renaissance. While the Islamic East once boasted the likes of Al Khwarizmi, Al Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al Ghazali, Ibn Manzour, Ibn Battuta, and Ibn el Nafis, the West was now credited with the likes of DaVinci, Descartes, Hobbs, Locke, and ultimately, Jean Jaques Rousseau.

The Geneva born, French Rousseau was the first to be credited with the use of the word “citizenship”. He was also among the first to examine childhood development through his books *Emile* and *Sophie*. In doing this, he paved the road to a post-industrial revolution philosopher whose work combined both society and education.

There is no doubt that, when considering philosophers of education, America’s John Dewey is widely recognized as the most renowned and influential author on the subject and today, his name is synonymous with progressive education.

Dewey was born in 1859 in Burlington, Vermont, and died in 1952, in New York City. Over the course of his lifetime, he bore witness to the growth and evolution of the United States; from an agricultural society to an urban-industrial nation. It was during this period that he developed his progressive thoughts about education.

Dewey wrote his seminal book, *The School and Society*, in 1907 in which he succinctly, proclaimed the fundamental basics of his educational philosophy and his own ‘psychology of learning’. The book focused on “the functional relationship between classroom learning activities and real life experiences and analyzed the social and psychological nature of the learning process.”(Dewey,1956, p. 75-76).

Dewey believed that a school generally functions as a society within a society defining society as a “number of people held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with reference to common aims” (Dewey, 1907 p. 23,).

In the same way that an adult understands that he/she lives as a part of an overall society, an adolescent recognizes his role or identity in the midst of this educational society, i.e. the school. Each is defined by his own self-image, as produced by every aspect of his/her own positionality which includes the content material taught in class, and the reputation earned as a result of his/her accumulated choices.

Today, many formal schools still use a teacher-centered learning environment or a 'transmissionist' approach to learning; one in which a teacher or coach transmits information to the students. However, psychologist Lev Vygotsky's Social Development theory encourages a learning setting, much like Dewey's approach, in which children are active participants,. According to Vygotsky, the role of the teacher is best described as a 'facilitator' that simply collaborates with students to help them acquire meaning (Vygotsky, 1978).

In examining Egypt's formal education system with its rows of desks, chairs and uniformed children, one pauses to reflect on the *kind* of adult citizens they system is rearing and are Dewey and Vygotsky's views taken into consideration when importing school systems across borders? In other words, what exactly is taught in the classroom? Do teachers and students understand that learning is a life-long process and are they empowered engage in this process effectively?

Numerous free thinkers such as Maxine Green and Paulo Freire have written of the need to implement a pedagogy that is designed to empower students. In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Brazilian educator, Freire writes, "The oppressors [educators] who oppress [students], exploit and rape by virtue of their power, cannot

find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both” (Freire, 2000, p.44). So, by force of reason, in order to sufficiently liberate, the stakeholders: the educators and/or the students, and/or the parents, and/or the community, and/or any who are involved in education policy must first recognize their oppressive and oppressed roles and attain the will and knowledge to break free.

When a system of education, such as the American one, is imported by other countries, a process of dilution occurs. Systems of education are structured within the societal, political and judiciary frameworks of their country of origin (HG.org Worldwide Legal Directories). It is, therefore, understandable that when a system is taken out of its natural setting or environment, changes must take place in order for it to function under different societal, political and judiciary frameworks. American schools outside of the United States must take into account the target countries’ educational laws and important differences in cultural values leaving the educational leadership in the host schools to create a hybrid between the two educational systems the result of which is that each one suffers the results of *ad hoc* hybridization.

Here is a practical example: there are a set minimum number of school days, a set number of contact hours allocated to determine class credits, and an established criterion for the weight of every course. So, what happens when two systems are merged? Which system’s requirements will be diluted or compromised and how will these affect the efficiency of the system; i.e. the variables mentioned above?

While pedagogies are vital to the success of the teaching and learning process so is the nature of the actual content resources brought into the classrooms, at this point primarily the textbooks assigned. This study examines the effects regarding the formation of textbooks and their inclusion, or lack thereof, of the cultural content of the host country or society.

Textbooks serve as the vessels that carry the targeted knowledge to the students. In the case of the American system of education in Egypt, let us examine the “medium and the message,” the phrase coined by Canadian philosopher, Herbert Marshal McLuhan in his 1964 publication of *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. In the book, McLuhan indicates that the *shape* of any content material has direct bearing on how that content will be received. (McLuhan)

American education is based on standards that are assessed by the acquisition of skills. Acquiring skills exists as a process that is not solely dependent on specific literature, for example, but literature that is sufficient in quality and effectively demonstrates the target standard. And so, consider for a moment the benefit of the inclusion of Tennyson, Shakespeare, E.A. Poe, E.E. Cummings, Richard Wright, Maya Angelou, Guy de Maupassant, Langston Hughes, Homer, Josephinia Niggli, Jane Austin, W. W. Jacobs, Richard Connell, Federico Lorca, Amy Tan and etc., for the average American child; a child who shares the same native language and/or whose international culture exists within the proverbial “salad bowl” of cultures represented by these well-known authors.

Within these textbooks, Americans are represented by the likes of Poe, Cummings and Connell. Europeans and those of European descent are represented by

the likes of Maupassant, Ibsen, and Lorca. Asians and those of Asian descent are represented by the likes of Tan, Basho and Buson. African Americans are represented through the inclusion of work by Huges, Wright, and Angelou. However, within this international community of celebrated literature, the Arab world either goes unrecognized, negatively stereotyped.

The average American student is acquiring values and information by examining works that have at least partially, if not predominantly, originated from his/her own culture to which the student relates and therefore more effectively bonds with the proffered material. The student will recognize and has the opportunity to feel pride in knowing that he shares the same heritage as these widely celebrated authors. Does this extend to the Egyptian student studying these same textbooks in Egypt or America?

The Egyptian child studying the works of brilliant minds whose work is considered worthy of inclusion in these standard-based textbooks is entirely alienated from the works in his/her own culture. Following McLuhan's proposition, the child may learn the standard or skill carried in the pages of these vessels or imported foreign medium but s/he will also acquire a very strong message: that the literary works of his/her own people were not seen as worthy enough for inclusion among the other internationally celebrated authors.

In a society, like Egypt, where foreign education, and foreigners in and of themselves, are perceived as "superior", it is necessary that the foreign textbook companies be the first to deliver the message that the Egyptian students' own cultural heritage is appreciated. Most parents, students, teachers and educational experts—in

fact, most Egyptians stakeholders--trust these textbooks and consider them reliable sources. The “messages” these textbooks contain affect people’s personal and cultural identity. In order for Egypt to transition its post-colonial period successfully, it is imperative that the “medium” include works created by its own people.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

Foreign textbooks act as the primary vessels that disseminate subject-specific resources to K-12 students in private schools in Egypt. Today, Egyptian experts in the field urge their international counterparts worldwide to carefully consider the social foundations of education and their implications on child psychology and upbringing. From a business perspective, there is a growing demand surmounted by nationalism for recognition and celebration of Egypt’s cultural heritage equal and equitable to that offered to the rest of the world. It will be a curious thing to monitor the pages of educational history as they unfold in years to come. Which publishing company will be the Harvard example among its peers? Which will be the first to take this step and cater to the market in today’s Arab world? Which will stand out as the pioneer amongst others to seize this opportunity to reshape and reconstruct a better educational experience for the children in Egypt and eventually; the Middle East?

In today’s formal education setting, students in the classrooms endure hours of rigid subject matter and coursework. Those that support these conditions believe it is

necessary to prepare students to the world outside their classroom walls that the classroom mirrors. There are countless views regarding what happened in Egypt during January and February of 2011 in the weeks of its historic revolution. Within the context of this study, we aim to examine the implications of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution specifically in relation to an emerging market for modified foreign textbooks that are inclusive of Egyptian/Arab literature.

While no area can singularly take all the credit or blame for the events that unfolded during the 18 days that changed the face of the 7000 year old nation of Egypt forever, a response may exist in the realms of history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, geography, mass communications, economics, political science, and other areas of academia.

On television, expert sociologists explain the heightened events in Egypt by attempting to explain the relationship between its people. Historians recite their timelines of monarchy, anarchy, colonization, freedom, martial law, heroes and traitors. Anthropologists analyze Gom3et el Ghadab (Friday of Outrage); trying to help us understand that the 25<sup>th</sup> of January is less about what society is today, and more about how it came to be that way.

They raise issues such as: when, in a megacity like Cairo, in which almost half its population lives in squatter settlements like Mansheyet Nasser (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2007) and the arm of total oppression is lifted, is it hard to imagine that those living in dungeons would, finally, storm the castles.

Literature teachers quote Sir Thomas Moore in their classrooms. Moore was an English lawyer, social philosopher, author, and statesman. In his book, *Utopia*, he

attempts to show that if a ruler suffers his people to be ill-educated, and their manners corrupted from infancy and then later punishes them for the crimes to which their first education disposed them, the only possible conclusion would be that this ruler first makes criminals and then punishes them.

During the unfolding of events on television, politicians and economists pointed accusatory fingers at one another while writers quoted musicians in newspapers, “poor people gonna rise up and get their share..talkin’ bout a revolution.” (Amiri, 2011, p.1) But the point is that everyone, from all the different academic fields and backgrounds, had an opinion.

Humanity passed through the agrarian and industrial ages and evolved past them with the birth of the Information Revolution in the 20th Century. Communication, and its evolution into ‘mass communications’ through the process of globalization, presented a powerful tool capable of sending information to, and receiving information from, all areas of the world. Consider, for a moment, the scope of with which we are dealing.

Humans are social beings. As human beings, we were designed to live and exist within groups, or societies (Paul, 1998, p.6). Adolescence is a crucial time in the course of human development. On a cognitive, emotional, social, and biological level, these formative years in our lives serve as a transition from the children we were, to the adults that we are shaping up to become. (Gullota, 2005, p.57,) Scientists and behavioral geneticists David Reiss, E. Mavis Heatherington, and R. Plomin, collaborated in a 12 year study examining adolescent behavior. The results indicated,

contrary to many beliefs, that parents seem “to have relatively little effect on how children turn out, once genetic influences are accounted for” (Paul,1998, p.1).

However, the results of that study are not deterministic. While our genetic code is a fundamental stamp on what must and will take place in our futures both nature’s genetics and the environment’s nurture combine to will dictate our overall destiny.

Evocative gene-environment correlations, is the awkward name coined by scientists to identify this ‘action-reaction’ process of experiencing, living with, learning from, and growing in accordance to your hereditary inclinations to speak, think, and/or behave a certain way (Paul, 1998). For example, if a child grows up to be a career criminal, it is not due to his genetic coding which, from the time he was in his mother’s womb, had predetermined that his one and only inclination and choice would be towards a life of crime ( Paul p.4).

It is important to keep in mind that the nature-nurture relationship does not end with “Mommy” and/or “Daddy”. They, themselves, were raised in social and educational environments that affected their inherited genetic traits and just as they were raised, they are raising children in social and educational environments that shape the youngsters’ cognitive and emotional characteristics.

Society includes several factors that mold the “culture of adolescence” (Gullota, 2005, p.57). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory stresses “the importance of social contexts in the study of the influence of the community on the adolescent. These include contexts such as schools, churches [or other places of worship], the

workplace, race/ethnicity, and the overall climate that may act as important influences". (Gullota, 2005, p.59)

Today, the environment in which children are raised is greatly affected by the effects of globalization to which adolescents who are developing their identities are particularly drawn. Globalization shortens the distance between people all over the world by means of electronic communication (Flew, 2002). Today, the analog process of typewriters, vinyl record albums and eight-track magnetic tapes are traded in for computers, CDs, and DVDs, which use numerical representation in binary code.

Fueling the immense power of mass media is what we now know as 'new media'; the interactive, integrated, tailored information available in abundance at the click of a computer mouse, the click of a remote control, and by turning to a cellular phones. Virtual communities are constructed online that cross the geographical boundaries of our physical world, bringing together same-minded people. (Barr, 2002)

This exciting new progression of mass communications embodies not only what we see such as graphics, moving images, shapes, and texts, but it also exists through the technological miracle of Wi-Fi connection. Like dust, it is carried in the air that surrounds us.

Key theorists such as Denis McQuail, a professor of sociology and mass communication at the University of Amsterdam in Netherlands, have dedicated themselves to researching and writing about the ideology of media influences and effects. He presents the Internet as an example of new media that changes the role of

the audience from one that is "perceiving" to one that is searching; from one that is consulting to one that is interacting. (McQuail, 2000).

The dream of the future, through the eyes of adolescents, has been explored by a number of different researchers give us some examples of who they are and what they say. And, while there are many variances in their methodologies, locations and samples, they uncover a considerable number of recurring themes. A review of the literature indicates that, for the most part, adolescent views are structured around elements of social and personal identity, material development, career, and educational advancement. These themes form the foundations of the present study which includes the examination of what bearing their textbooks have on their future goals.

“Effective goal setting is a critical socio-cognitive developmental exercise that enhances human functioning across the life span.” (Kulkarni, 2010, p. 276) Having life goals are an intrinsic part of what makes people move forward with their lives, i.e. grow. They help us stay on the right track, keep us in command of our lives, ensure moving forward during difficult situations and ultimately serve us by adding a sense of accomplishment to our lives and allow for motivation when hope is diminished. But what part of these adolescents' educational upbringing shapes or hinders the formation of these goals?

Albert Bandura's Social-Cognitive Learning emphasizes the roles of social exchange, and self-regulation to explain how the practice of goal-setting helps to create and harvest self-efficacy, form social networks and aid in the development of the brain. “Emerging evidence from neuro-scientific studies on human brain

development supports speculation that exercising executive functions and social cognitive skills (such as setting and working toward goals) during adolescence may shape brain function across the life span.” (Kulkarni, 1997).

Along these lines, this study focuses on the content matter delivered to these children K-12, and raises the question of how reflective it is of the students past, present, and future lives and experiences. The study focuses on textbook publishing because publishers and their curriculum specialists supply the content knowledge which they interweave with various state standards to shape and mold syllabi and curricula.

Textbook publishers exist in cut-throat competition to one another. The subject matter is diverse. Standards and benchmarks are included as a guiding tool in the index and are often edited and aligned to the content so that it flows chronologically within the textbook pages. Even the artwork is reflective of centuries of widely celebrated knowledge and beauty.

Because Egyptian public education is considered poisonous and private education is looked upon as the “future” foreign systems of education; American, French, British, German, International Baccalaureate (I.B.) and the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (I.G.C.S.E), are multiplying all over the country. However, in light of a plethora of choices, Egyptians have become wary of the resources upon which these schools rely. While accepting that the private schools may be of top notch quality where standards are concerned they are concerned that they may be opening a door to a greater harm in light of the cultural messages they send.

New private schools are opening their doors to a growing numbers of students, each looking to pay the tuition fees and receiving their textbooks; the written medium of their education. Therefore, securing resources that promote this education are a central focal objective. Foster (1999) and Hau (2009) both acknowledged textbooks as “cultural artifacts,” stating that the political and cultural interests of any individual nation, shape them (p. 253, p.129).

Schissler and Soysal (2005) describe textbooks as tools whose function is not only to communicate knowledge but rather as vessels that are used to carry and present what an entire nation requires to educate the future generation of its children. In light of this, Egypt – post January 25, 2011-revolution – is looking for the kind of education for its emerging generations of citizens; one that builds a positive sense of national pride and belonging amongst all Egyptian students; including those receiving an education from a foreign system.

The first step in this study was to review existing textbooks to see if they offer what these new Egyptian schools are looking. Unfortunately, but predictably, the search discovered none that offer stakeholders what they are looking for, i.e. at least the recognition of Egypt’s history and heritage; not necessarily as a focus, but simply inclusion.

Foster (1999) described an increasing calculated "sensitivity" to the inclusion of ethnic diversification in textbooks as a direct result of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. This inclusion of the long-ignored minority groups indicated that the central message of textbooks had shifted to a multicultural one. At that rate, Foster

was pointing a blaming finger at publishers who tended to overcompensate for decades of racial bias by depicting minorities as “tragic victims” (p.267).

Finally recognizing minorities in textbooks is surely one small step in the battle of representation, but Foster asserted that their story was “still told from a Western perspective”. (Foster, 1999, p.269)

Using a multitude of diverse publishers, teachers in Egypt have spent years portraying to thousands of students: the adventures of Odysseus, the complex psychology of E.A. Poe, and the genius of Shakespeare, but within the thousands of pages of those textbooks, Egypt’s students have not had the opportunity to see any part of them. They could have seen their Poet Laureate, Ahmed Shawki, or their Nobel Prize winner, Naguib Mahfouz. They could have examined the daring social and political literature that helped shape and define contemporary Egyptian literature. You need more examples e.g. scientific achievements of Egyptians abroad including Nobel winners, heart surgeons (Check Arab American Institute (AAI) web site—you’ll be surprised.

Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) cultural framework is erected on the assertion that, internationally, people are “guided by different attitudes, beliefs, customs, morals and ethical standards” (Blodgett, Bakir, & Rose, 2008, p. 340). Using Hofstede’s Cultural Framework as a backdrop, consider that the eyes of the average child in Arizona or Arkansas or New York, see very differently from the eyes of children living beyond the borders of the United States of America.

The world is created in diversity, and as leading textbook companies, many have done a commendable job at representing that array of difference in the world by

including the work of Guy d'Maupassant, Josephina Niggli, Bako, and Henrik Ibsen. Yet, in these textbooks, the thousands of years of rich Arab literature and artwork dating back to pre-Islamic Arabia simply does not exist. Even the work of contemporary Nobel Prize laureate, Naguib Mahfouz, goes unnoticed.

A child, on a psychological level, sees beyond the pages. He/she is able and does identify inclusion vs. exclusion. Beyond the literature, what message is being received by millions of students worldwide about their own cultures and about others?

Japanese school children read their celebrated authors of Haikus, South American school children see themselves in Mexican author, Josephina Niggli's work, French school children will identify with the heritage of Guy d'Maupassant. But the Arab children only see that, within their centuries of heritage, nothing has been thought worthy of inclusion in their foreign textbooks. Today, Egypt is undergoing a vast paradigm shift in every sector of its society. In living the aftermath of a revolution, Egyptians are seeking to rebuild their nation. There is a growing trend of nationalism sweeping the Arab world.

In Egypt, where the future of private education is based almost entirely on the importation of foreign systems, many changes are slowly coming. Parents, students, experts in the field of education; all stakeholders, are finding that it is about time, historically, for Arab children to see that their heritage is recognized by the world around them, just as other cultures are. Egypt's masses are ready to take their place within the pages of the textbooks that serve modern formal education.

### Chapter Three

#### Methodology

This is a feasibility study and it is designed to evaluate the educational textbook market in Egypt as well as analyze the potential impact of newer textbooks

published by major textbook publishers that include elements of Egyptian/Arab heritage; history, art and literature.

Cairo is a megacity with an estimated population of 10.902 million. An estimated 130 private schools cater to this growing population and the growing number of schools in the Greater Cairo area with its population of close to 20 million is rapidly increasing. The study examines the current market, after the 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2011, revolution and its effect on the field of education regarding content matter in school children's textbooks.

Having been subject to foreign occupation by the British and the French, Egypt was left with what nationals commonly refer to as "3oddet el khawaga" (Foreigner Complex). This entails that Egyptians continue to view foreigners as "superior" to themselves. Examples of this can be seen within private school systems. Prospective parents prefer foreigners to educate their children, in comparison to Egyptian nationals. The question of "qualification" became secondary to "classification". January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011 is slowing tearing down these cultural barriers.

What would these proposed, modified new textbooks entail? The study demonstrated the areas where the current text book publishers are lacking in their publications and the need for these companies to include some material in the areas of history, art and literature that will reflect the existence and recognition of the Arab world. By implementing focus groups to examine the market as defined by students, parents and teachers being the central stakeholders, this feasibility study targeted and identified the existence of this new market in Egypt and its demand for recognition during this time when nationalism is on the rise.

To take advantage of the market today, publishing companies must recognize the existence of centuries of literature and art work from the Middle East that are internationally recognized, such as the works of IbnKhalidun, YousifIdris, Nizar-Qabbani, and Egyptian Nobel Prize Laureate Naguib Mahfouz, and the demands of the Egyptian people to see this heritage recognized by the international institutions, to which they pay tuition money to, to educate their children. The study included advantages and disadvantages of both the current situation and the proposed plan.

The feasibility study will be conducted to assist the publishers in making the decision that will be in the best interest of the textbook selection procedure. Based on this study, textbook publishers will understand that post 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2011, a window of opportunity has opened in Egypt with a growing demand for their services.

The numbers of private schools in Egypt are growing and so is nationalism. At a time when references to Egyptian literature, history, and art are absent in most major international textbooks, an opportunity presents itself to a quickly and widely growing market. To what extent is there a market for more Arab-focused materials within content standards-based textbooks imported from the US?

A market analysis was conducted by examining the responses of stakeholders from an American private school in Cairo, Egypt. From this school the following participants were examined in the study: three focus groups of parents/guardians, each containing five members, three focus groups of students from the twelfth grade, each containing five members, and three focus groups of teachers, each containing five members.

Parents were selected by sending an announcement home with the students outlining the purpose of the study, the date and location, and a necessary RSVP. The first fifteen responses will be chosen.

Students were stratified by the number of years spent in the American system of education and their age. Those having spent five years and above, who are at least eighteen years old were then subject to random selection. The first fifteen of those who provided their parental/guardian consent form were chosen.

Teachers were invited to participate in focus groups during the lunch hour at their school. The first fifteen to sign up with the administration were selected.

Each focus group ranged between 30-45 minutes. During this time, the researcher gave a brief 5-7 minute presentation and then opened a guided discussion. The researcher mediated this discussion.

## Analysis

A market analysis was conducted by examining the responses of stakeholders from an American, K-12, private school in Cairo, Egypt. From this school the following participants were examined in the study: three focus groups of parents/guardians, each containing five members, three focus groups of students from the twelfth grade, each containing five members, and three focus groups of teachers, each containing five members.

Upon thorough examination of the discussions that unfolded during the focus groups, several interweaving themes recurred across the three categories of parents, students and teachers. These themes gauge the extent to which a market for new standards-based textbooks, inclusive of content selections from the Arab world, imported from the U.S., exist in Egypt's textbook market, today.

The recurring themes addressed the extent to which Egyptians could see themselves reflected or represented within these foreign textbooks. The participant expressed their feelings of exclusion, as Egyptians, by continually being denied representation in the international community captured within the pages of these foreign textbooks.

Furthermore, the focus groups explored how the "Arab" identity is, in fact, stereotyped in the context of these global standards. Discussions ensued around the politics that could possibly have fueled the decision to portray Arabs in this stereotypical light within these textbooks. And lastly, the groups spoke about their desire for the world to understand who they are, in comparison to the depiction they feel misrepresents them in foreign textbooks.

By examining these themes and their interrelations with the intent of this feasibility study, we will arrive at a collective truth. The intent of this study is to evaluate the educational textbook market in Egypt, as well as analyze the market's potential readiness for newer textbooks published by major textbook publishers that include elements of Egyptian/Arab heritage; history, art and literature, we will arrive at a collective truth.

Stakeholders who participated in this study; parents, teachers and students felt, overall, that the current textbooks were "good", "easy to read", "highly organized", and "rich in content". However, they did not identify, as Egyptians, with the content of textbooks. They felt that Egypt, in the international community, was not represented.

At that rate, they perceived the Arab world to be misrepresented, as far as global standards were concerned. While various participants examined the textbooks through a range of lenses; historical, social, and media-influence, the common thread of discussion in their analysis of why Egyptians are not represented and why the Arab world is so fiercely misrepresented was, in fact, political. Finally, the participants dared to imagine a future where the world's children read about who they really are; Egyptians who do not live in pyramids or own camels.

#### The Definition of "Arab" in Global Standards Textbooks

Based on their self identity, participants of our focus groups spoke of Arabia as the land known for its ancient citadels and olive trees and reflected on their own history. For years, they recounted, the nomads of Northern Arabia arduously traveled the bleached, blonde, bold deserts; homeless because they had no homeland. Their

tribe was their home and poetry resounded in "the very air they breathed." They bequeathed the world the treasures of *Antar* and *Imr'ulQays*; famed poems from the *Mu3alakat* (The Hanged Poems). From forth the predestined land came Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad; peace be upon them all.

From amidst the same generations that gave us Jalal al-Din Rumi and Rabia el-Adaweya, there lived a Persian man, a mystic, a poet who wrote in classical Arabic, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. named Farid al-Din Attar. Teacher group participants relayed the accounts of how Attar was said to recite *Manteq at-Tair* or *Conference of Birds*.

Attar wrote, "Having drunk entire seas, we remain quite surprised that our lips are just as dry as the shore, and we continue to seek out the sea to dip them there, without seeing that our lips are the shore and we ourselves the sea." (Khemir, p.13)

Contributing to the purpose of this study, our participants found that among the countless bodies of stories, excerpts, poetry, drama and the flood gates of images and credits packed into the foreign textbooks that were imported for use by Egyptian children in the private education sector, only one author shared a vaguely similar background to our intended audience. Her name is Naomie Shehab Nay and she is an American author of Palestinian descent. She was the *only* author of Arab descent found in the Holt McDougal Literature textbook on p.396. Additionally, hers was the only piece of literature that discussed the Arab world; specifically Jerusalem. Nay's single, non-fiction account that was written after visiting Jerusalem for the first time as an adult depicts the stereotypical "refugee" image the world has of the Palestinian/Arab identity.

The photographs seen illustrating the author's writing were prepared by Palestinian artist, Ismail Shamout. He depicts an impoverished Arab family in "traditional"/stereotypical dress with ten children; one is in his underwear.

Immediate feedback from all focus groups was that "the image looks like they're refugees" or "terrorists" and many participants were quick to add that, "no, this is not who we are."

So, in keeping with the views of John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky, even though many participants attested to and witnessed that teachers at NIS-American practiced the 'transmissionist' approach in their methodologies, the importation of this foreign system of education did not take into account the finer, necessary details of content matter that would adequately promote an environment where a, "number of people [were] held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with reference to common aims" (Dewey, p. 23, 1907).

#### Egyptians Cannot See Themselves in These Books

From the same land which name holds a protected place in the Torah, Bible, and Qur'an; the land that has, for 7000 years, infected the world with Pharaoh fever, a man was born to take his place as a literary genius like his predecessors before him.

Naguib Mahfouz, born in 1911 in Cairo, Egypt, began writing when he was a teenager; a young man of seventeen.

Focus group participants yielded that in Egypt, public education is currently viewed as fiercely lacking. Teacher group participants pointed out the Skinnerian approaches of the public schools, their intense focus on content matter, and their far weaker standards in comparison to the leaders of education in the international

community. For this reason, among others, parent and student group participants volunteered that many families in Egypt who can afford to pay the soaring tuition fees opt for the private sector to cater to their child/children's educational needs. They pay for the rigorous standards, the best-practice methodologies, and "the right qualifications" of those who can offer it.

Among the many views expressed by the participants of this study, our inability, as Egyptians, to connect with the content of these foreign textbooks was voiced as a great concern. Participants argued that while we can appreciate the quality of standards that are skillfully addressed in the current textbooks, any connection that is made with the content; the actual material being taught; the literature, the history, even the artwork is consciously "foreign".

Given the opportunity to hold these books in their hands, to open them, to turn the pages and examine every part of them, participants; representative of all stakeholders partaking in this study contributed repetitive examples of what they saw through Egyptian eyes. Some accounts include that the books incorporated literary descriptions of "Christmas" and "pancakes", and that this was "not a bad thing". The only problem for the children in Egypt is that when taken alone, "it could be dangerous." Pertaining to this, parent group participants explained that the socio-cultural differences between the East and the West are so vast, that being presented with the foreign West and excluding the national East may result in the children growing up with notions of confused identities. Are they American or Arab? Some parents believe that given the current circumstance, the children grow up as "neither."

Student participants acknowledged that their foreign education was better than a "national" or "Egyptian" education. Therefore, they consciously believed that the content of their foreign textbooks was better than the content of their "national" or "Egyptian" textbooks.

Based on this, by excluding the work of internationally celebrated Egyptian or Arab authors from the construct of these foreign textbooks, our participant students were left with a single overtone to their educational experience: that Egyptians, like them and their predecessors, are just not good enough and have no place among the prized examples of the world's literary work. Herein lies the danger that the parent participants spoke of earlier.

The definition of "Egyptian" in the eyes of the International Community

Stuart J. Foster (1999) described an increasing calculated "sensitivity" to the inclusion of ethnic diversification in textbooks as a direct result of the Civil Rights Movement.

According to this study's parent participants, history is repeating itself several times over on account of the injustice that Arabs are suffering due to misrepresentation. Inclusion of marginalized groups who had long been shunned meant the central message of textbooks shifted to a multicultural one (Foster, 1999). Here, participants question how long it will take publishers to include reflective work by Egyptians and/or Middle Easterners into this multicultural salad bowl.

The following account was volunteered by a parent: "In some countries they hear us speaking in Arabic and they ask 'Are you Arab'? and I say 'no, I'm Egyptian' and they say 'ah, the pyramids and camels'".

In general, such accounts were pivotal points in all focus groups. Parents said it one way, teachers another, and teenagers, yet another. The topic was definitive. Just the mention of "Egypt through foreign lenses" was enough to trigger Pharaoh fever; conversations did ensue.

#### "It's Political"

The news; prime time Middle East..*rocks surge into our living rooms*. Israelis are dead! The terrorist-light-bulb in our heads blinks at Tom Brokaw's report on broken windows, wounded soldiers and terrorist children. Our eyes flame, something should be done. The fiber of our perceptions mold at the hands of news channels, newspapers, books, magazines, and Internet. The list goes on and it includes textbooks. One student participant eloquently contributed that, "there is a difference between Hollywood and Holy Wars, but people don't see it..they only see Hollywood's vision of war and terror".

Various participants from the focus groups felt that children all over the world were purposefully raised to perceive Arabs (Egyptians included) in this negative light. America is a salad-bowl, one parent participant stated, did the whole world become part of America except for the Arabs? These participants are demanding that their existence be recognized and for what it truly is.

When faced with the question of 9-11, and its recognition as a pivotal point in the West's portrayal of Arabs, teacher and parent participants became emotional. Many recalled watching the events on the news, and/or becoming frantic about friends and family in New York. Other parent participants recalled their concerns about the effect 9-11 would have on their Egyptian/Muslim loved ones elsewhere in the U.S. and in Europe. In light of the magnitude of the 9-11 crisis, and the irrevocable effects it had on the world thereafter, it is worthy to examine some of the specific events that took place in the pre-9/11 era.

Among such events was the incorrect initial blaming of Arab people in the Oklahoma City bombing, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, may have caused or influenced the public to suspect that Arabs were most likely the master-minds behind heinous crimes of mass destruction and death.

Long before 9-11, in 1995, his name could have been Ahmed, Mohamed, or Hany, but his name was Timothy McVeigh, the terrorist also known as the Oklahoma City Bomber. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee reported, as El-Farra (1996) cites Bazzi (1995), that there was "a 250% increase in hate crimes against Arabs from the previous year" (pp. 1-2).

"We paid a lot of money for the phone because we called every day," an Egyptian, parent participant stated, recalling how worried he was about his sister who, at the time, lived near Oklahoma with her husband and three children. She "took off her veil because she was afraid."

The Oklahoma Hate and Harassment Report stated that from that Wednesday morning until the following Friday afternoon- when suspect Timothy McVeigh was arrested, all persons who appeared “Middle Eastern” instantly became suspects in the fatal bombing of the Alfred Murrah Federal Building. (Cajee, 1995)

Through their report of the affected communities, it was discovered that Muslims, Arabs, and other races of color suffered: “widespread fear and intimidation, commonplace verbal harassment at school, in public and in the work place, and a significant number of physical assaults and hate crimes” (Cajee, 1995).

Among some of the more serious incidents of hate crimes reported were:

- An Iraqi refugee in her early twenties, lost her baby after an April 20<sup>th</sup> attack on her home in Oklahoma City due to individuals who were angry about reports linking Muslims to the bombing.
- Drive-by shootings on April 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> that shattered the windows of a mosque and community center in Stillwater, Oklahoma.
- Several occurrences of beatings and physical assaults which including an attempted knife attack in an apartment parking lot, an international student being beaten in a supermarket parking lot, and other physical assaults reported by students.
- Local Islamic centers and Arab/Arab-American individuals reported an onslaught of hate calls. (Cajee, 1995).

Parent and teacher group discussions yielded that while negative stereotypes may influence the public’s perceptions about certain races, these negative images may also affect the way stereotyped races feel about their own heritage, culture, religion, and self-esteem.

Such feelings were reported from student groups. Twelve out of the fifteen Seniors set to graduate high school in June 2013, admitted that throughout their high school experience, they focused on the four core subjects; English, Math, Science, and Social Studies because they viewed them as the "important subjects" (taught in English using foreign textbooks), marginalizing Arabic Studies and Religion because they were "useless" or "unimportant" or "worthless".

All student participants defended their respect for core subjects such as English, Math, Science, and Social Studies, while they looked down on Arabic Studies; some stating, "what to do you expect? Every day, we are told not to speak in Arabic and it is our mother language..we are told to speak English only". Others went on to say, "..we are punished when we speak Arabic."

Stereotyping has a profound impact within each of its communities. It breeds anxiety, and a sense of helplessness, particularly in children. The persistent negative images breed a death of heritage, a fear, a sort of "shying away." (Shaheen, 2002)

Monteith writes, (as cited by Paul, p. 58, 1998), that by five years of age, many children have definite stereotypes about African Americans, women, and/or other social groups. Children do not have a choice about accepting or rejecting these conceptions, since they are acquired well before they have their own cognitive abilities or experiences to form their own beliefs. They must compete with all the forces that would promote and perpetuate these stereotypes: peer pressure, mass media, or simply being ignored/shunned and etc.

When a stereotype or the reinforcement of that stereotype removes the need to examine individuals based on their character, this may only help encourage misconceptions rather than attempting to present a well-researched character. El-

Farra(1996) cites Morris International as writing that, “when stereotypes are perpetuated, this causes children to adopt misconceptions such as 'Arabs are rich and have oil. All Arabs are named Mohammed. All Arabs are nomads'.” (p. 3)

Participants across the groups agreed that when children learn about a country, through their representative authors and etc., it is important that they learn about the true country, and not the stereotype.

Numerous current events that may have passed or are still continuing may have also played an important role in the public stereotypes of Arabs. These highly publicized events may have also influenced the content and depiction of Arabs in school textbooks during their respective times. One of the major continuing factors is the Arab-Israeli conflict. The American media coverage may often portray distorted images of victims and aggressors within this conflict. In a situation of crisis, (that is, when the US feels that it is threatened), it becomes necessary for tailored media attention.

The unbalanced coverage in mainstream media places the Arab states in the position of violence and power, while Israel is left as a nation attempting to protect its freedom and people. This is evident in the “disproportionate number of unfavorable references to Arab states, their leaders and their actions. Similarly, bias is evident in a disproportionate number of favorable references to Israel.

What else is to be concluded, then, except that as authors of social landscapes, we first raise the world's children to view Arabs stereotypically and then remotely attempt to break down these stereotypes after they have reached adulthood?

Real Dreams are Born into this Nation

For the majority of student participants who conveyed a strong desire to leave Egypt, in search of a better life abroad, this holds true the accounts of Kulmari (1997) who expressed the same life-goals as the general mass of the world's teenagers, but away from their nation; their homeland. In recognition of this, parent participants conveyed that perhaps if their educational resources could have played a part in forming a more positive bond between the students and their national identity, then perhaps, this would not have been the case today.

Parents and teachers were dumbfounded as to how their heritage; one they know, understand, and recognize to be so rich in literature was not relayed in international textbooks.

Along these lines, a parent recounted that, Taha Hussein, Egypt's late Dean of Literature was a *blind* man, and yet possessed the genius that earned him his place in literary history. "What other country could boast that?" one parent asked.

Naguib Mahfouz, the Egyptian Nobel Prize Laureate, lived and died and until today, the world does not celebrate his work alongside those less notable. Parents ask *why*, when literature is our heritage dating all the way back to pre-Islamic Arabia, specifically citing the Mu3alakat (the Hanged Poems).

Some teachers adamantly shared the views of parents. They said it was "our right, culturally." Others stated, on an academic level, that it's not such a big deal because the students study some of it in their Arabic Studies classes.

So I asked the students. And indeed, they had studied some of the in their Arabic Literature classes. When I asked them how they felt about the literature not

being at all available in the English textbooks, most agreed that, although some of it was really quite complex and fascinating, it was still not as "prestigious" in comparison to the rest of the world's literature. One student offered the analogy that we (Egyptians) do not have the brilliant minds that "stand out" like Shakespeare is to writing or Mozart is to music.

So when will we be good enough for the world? Some students, even now, do not feel the true worth of their 7000 year heritage stating that Egyptians have to keep "improving their writing" so that they can earn a place in foreign textbooks.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

The market analysis conducted at the Dr. Nermien Ismail American School, an American, K-12, private school in Cairo, Egypt, yielded eye-opening results. Focus group participants included three groups of parents/guardians, each containing five members, three groups of students from the twelfth grade, each containing five members, and three groups of teachers, each containing five members.

After analyzing the discussions that stretched across the focus groups, several interweaving themes were identified across the three categories of parents, students and teachers. These themes demonstrated that there is, in fact, a growing market for

new standards-based textbooks, inclusive of content selections from the Arab world, imported from the U.S., that exist in Egypt's textbook market, post the 25<sup>th</sup> January Revolution.

The recurring themes addressed the extent to which Egyptians saw themselves as *poorly represented or misrepresented* within these foreign textbooks. The participants expressed their feelings of exclusion, as Egyptians/Arabs, by continually being denied accurate representation in the international community as demonstrated within the pages of these foreign textbooks.

The ancestors of the Arab people lived at a time when borders had not yet been hammered into the Earth and skyscrapers did not eclipse the sun. But such is the Earth that our participants were born into. Theirs is one of passports, visas, asphalt, credit cards, air-conditioning, rocket ships and frozen produce.

Since the days of Attar and the likes of Rabia el-Adaweya, humanity has bore witness to the agrarian and industrial ages and transcended their existentiality with the birth of the Information Revolution in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Communication, and it's evolution into 'mass communications' through the process of globalization, presented a powerful tool that was capable of sending information to, and receiving information from, all areas of the world. Consider again, for a moment, the scope of what the world is dealing with.

Textbooks are in and of themselves a powerful means of communication; not just of content knowledge and standards, but of how the writers of these books view the world and how they dictate what the world's children will be subjected to learning.

Furthermore, the focus groups discussed how they perceived the "Arab" identity as stereotyped in the context of these global standards. Discussions ensued around the politics that the participants viewed as possible reasons that fueled the decision to portray Arabs in this stereotypical light within these textbooks. But for the millions of children across the world who have never visited the Arab world, or experienced learning in a classroom alongside an Arab classmate, who encounter Nay's single non-fiction account (Holt McDougal Literature, p. 396) accompanied by Shamout's stereotypical images, this is the only truth they will ever know during these formative years of their lives.

And lastly, the groups expressed their desire to see a future in the international textbook companies that reflected a more realistic understanding about Egyptians/Arabs in comparison to the depiction they feel misrepresents them in foreign textbooks.

Foster pointed an accusatory finger at publishers who according to him, were overcompensating for decades of racial prejudice by depicting ethnic minorities as "tragic victims" (p. 267). While including minorities in textbooks, even with brief mention, is a step in the right direction, their story is still told from a Western perspective, Foster asserted. (p.269).

Also, he maintained that ethnic groups are incorporated into the fabric of history "only in relation to White society," and rarely interact with each other (p. 272). According to Foster, American history remains a "triumphant story" despite the attempt to add minorities (p. 267).

In 1957, after publishing many works, Mahfouz gifted the world of literature with the Cairo Trilogy: *Bayn al Qasrayn*, *Qasr al Shawq*, and *Sukkariya (Palace Walk, Palace of Longing, and Sugarhouse)*. The famed trilogy brought him fame throughout the Arab world as a “depicter” of traditional Egyptian urban life. Mahfouz captured the essence of the Egyptian people, in ink.

"With *The Children of Gebelawi* (1959), he began writing again, in a new style that was said to frequently conceal political judgments under allegory and symbolism. Works of this second period include the novels: *The Thief and the Dogs* (1961), *Autumn Quail* (1962), *Small Talk on the Nile* (1966), and *Miramar* (1967), as well as several collections of short stories.

The year 1988 marked a milestone, not only in the life of this literary genius, but indeed also in the history of Egypt, when Naguib Mahfouz joined the likes of Anatole France, Bernard Shaw, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. It was the year he, like them before him, was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize in Literature." ( Nobelprize.org. 20 Nov 2012 )

In accepting the Nobel Prize, Mahfouz said in his speech,

“..and I would like you to accept my talk with tolerance. For it comes in a language unknown to many of you. But it is the real winner of the prize.

Permit me, then, to present myself in as objective a manner as is humanly possible. I am the son of two civilizations that at a certain age in history have formed a happy marriage. The first of these, seven thousand years old, is the Pharaonic civilization; the second, one thousand four hundred years old, is the Islamic one.”

Naguib Mahfouz died on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, 2006. He bequeathed the world over thirty novels, more than a hundred short stories, and over two hundred articles. Much of his work has been made into movies which have quickly gone viral throughout the Arabic-speaking world.

"In Egypt, each new publication is regarded as a major cultural event and his name is inevitably among the first mentioned in any literary discussion from Gibraltar to the Gulf." ( Nobelprize.org. 20 Nov 2012 ) Yet, in the eyes of the major

international textbook publishers, his work did not merit a single page worth of an excerpt, poem, short story or even a reference. This exclusion stands in vast contrast to his Nobel peers; Shaw, Hemingway, Faulkner, Sartre and Camus whose works are seen as worthy of being offered to the children of the international community.

By examining these themes and their interrelations with the intent of this feasibility study, we will arrive at a collective truth. The intent of this study is to evaluate the educational textbook market in Egypt, as well as analyze the market's potential readiness for newer textbooks published by major textbook publishers that include elements of Egyptian/Arab heritage; history, art and literature, we will arrive at a collective truth.

While stakeholders that participated in this study; parents, teachers and students felt, overall, that the current textbooks were already "good", "easy to read", "highly organized", and "rich in content". They did not, as Egyptians, identify with the content of textbooks. They felt that neither ancient nor contemporary Egypt, in the international community, was represented.

At that rate, they perceived the Arab world to be misrepresented, as far as global standard textbooks were concerned. While various participants examined the educational vessels through a range of lenses; historical, social, and media-influence, the common thread of discussion in their analysis of why Egyptians are not represented and why the Arab world is so fiercely misrepresented was, as stated before, political. Finally, the participants dared to imagine a future where the world's children read about who they really are; Egyptians who do not live in pyramids or own camels.

Consider that for the most part, adolescent views are structured around elements of social and personal identity, material development, career, and educational advancement. It is necessary for us to perceive the impact of the use of these foreign textbooks on the views of the participants in this study. What do the parents want for their children? The self-efficacy that comes by seeing their true reflection included alongside other international talents in the pages of the textbooks they study. What have the children decided for themselves? ..that their minds are not good enough in comparison to "foreigners". What are the overall goals of the participant teachers? "To empower our students to become well-rounded cosmopolites that can feel pride in who they are, as global citizens."

Textbook publishers are powering through their cut-throat competition, they continue to define and refine the quality of standards-based textbooks, all the time oblivious to the much bigger picture at hand. The black or white-ness of American textbooks is now sown along the seams of tolerance. Centuries of trouble are slowly being transmitted as a long past history, and still, the Arab world goes unrecognized.

## Chapter Six

### Recommendations

This study has yielded eye-opening results. It has identified that the participants at this American, K-12 school in Cairo, Egypt, recognize the detrimental effects of utilizing these current foreign textbooks as the primary medium and resource in the education of Egyptian youths. Upon recognition of this reality, it is

imperative to examine the extent to which this may be a recurring result in other schools in Egypt that offer an international education, and utilized similar resources.

A more pressing area for research, after this, is to present this evidence to the international textbook publishers as a proposal to account for the findings in their next publication. Therefore, it is my suggestion that this study be replicated at different international schools in Egypt that utilize these foreign textbooks.

In addition to this, I would recommend that the school at which this study was conducted, a plan be made to formulate and implement a framework of necessary measures to rectify the unfavorable effects of its choice in primary resources. It should, at length, attempt to bridge the gap between the students and their dysfunctional relationship with their national identity, promote a sense of belonging to something "good" and "important" among the students, and harvest a more positive national spirit.

Upon completion of the above stage I also suggest a possible longitudinal study of these same criteria of participants over five years to measure the correlations between the new textbook designs and their feeling of self-efficacy on a national level. One area that may prove beneficial to gage this would be to periodically assess their knowledge and appreciation of Egyptian/Arab literature, art, history and etc.

Another area that is well worth examination is the effect of varying methodologies of promoting a foreign target language of instruction, on national identity. Are our methods of refining the students' acquisition of a target language hindering their views of their own heritage and cultural identity?

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Annex I

Focus Group Questions for Parents

1. Through your eyes, how is the audience for these textbooks defined and described?
2. What do the authors articulate as cultural goals in the use of these texts?
3. What do the authors identify as characteristics and symbols of Egyptian identity?
4. Which Egyptian groups, themes, and cultural or historical events are emphasized in the textbook content and how are they depicted?
5. Are you satisfied with these cultural/historical messages being transmitted to your children?
6. What are your thoughts or feelings about Arab literature, artwork, or history? Is it important for your children to be aware of this content material?
7. If there was another textbook publisher that delivered the same standard of content material but allowed for inclusion of contemporary Egyptian literature, art work, and/or history, would you prefer the use of that textbook and select it as a replacement for the current books?

## Annex II

### Focus Group Questions for Students

1. Can you recall, throughout your years of study, a literature selection written by an Egyptian or Arab author? If so, in which textbook; which year of study?
2. Which textbook, if any, reflected art work, or history, or literature from the Arab world?
3. What are your thoughts or feelings about Arab literature? Is it important?
4. What are your thoughts about the construct of these textbooks in regards to their content matter?
5. Do you see any part of yourself in it?
6. If you could alter the textbooks themselves, in any way, what would you want your younger brothers' and sisters' experiences to be like? Why?

### Annex III

#### Focus Group Questions for Teachers

1. To what extent do you think your students connect with the textbooks that you use? Why do you think that is?
2. Over the years, have you come across content material in the textbooks that you use that reflect Egyptian/Arab literature, art, or history?
3. In regards to the Math and Science textbooks, to what extent do you feel the photographs/examples reflect the average Egyptian/Arab child? Do any of the example problems use names common to Egypt and the Arab world? How do you feel about that?
4. Do you ever supplement your curriculum by including classic or modern Egyptian/Arab work in translation? Why?
5. When you give problem examples in Math and/or Science, do you use foreign names of people or Egyptian names of people?
6. Consider the following two examples:
  - a) Nickolas has four marbles, he gives two to Martha and one to Samule, how many marbles will Nickolas have left?
  - b) Khaled has four marbles, he gives two to Sara and one to Ahmed, how many marbles will Khaled have left?Which of these examples will be more accessible to Egyptian children and why?

