

# *American Education in the Middle East - Liberation or Indoctrination?*

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**Presented by Maha Bali, MEd**

**Center for Learning and Teaching, American University in Cairo**

**PhD student, Dept of Education, University of Sheffield**

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I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.

– Mahatma Gandhi

# Positionality

- ☆ At the American University in Cairo (AUC)
- ☆ At the University of Sheffield
- ☆ Why I am doing this research
- ☆ Work-in-progress

# Other Universities

- ★ American University of Beirut (1890)

- ★ American University in Cairo (1919)

- ★ More recently:

- ★ Dubai
- ★ Sharjah
- ★ Kuwait

- ★ In Egypt, late 1990s

- ★ Private Egyptian universities (English)
- ★ German University in Cairo
- ★ British University in Egypt
- ★ Ahrum Canadian University



# About AUC



- ★ Private, non-profit
- ★ Liberal arts
- ★ Move to new campus
- ★ Corporatization language
- ★ ~5000 full-time students



# Some Paradoxes

- ★ How do you foster student autonomy if you require attendance in classes?
- ★ How do you maximize student learning when you have problems with simple communication?
- ★ How do you motivate students for liberal education when their department is discipline-focused?

# Aim of Research

- ☆ To elevate critical consciousness at the university
- ☆ To involve as many stakeholders as possible

# Background Informing Research

- ★ PhD research
- ★ Institutional research via other projects
- ★ Individual instructor assessments and informal discussions with instructors and students
- ★ Old-New Campus Research team



# Background on Incoming Students



- ☆ Schooling
- ☆ Social background
- ☆ Scholarships

# The Westernized Advantaged

- ☆ Language
- ☆ Pedagogical style
- ☆ Culturally prepared



# Example of Increasing Inequality in Egyptian Society

- ★ Full scholarship students (USAID) from all over Egypt
- ★ Must go back to their own town after getting degree
- ★ Cannot continue onto graduate studies abroad or even at AUC
- ★ Prepared for jobs not available outside the big cities



# Questioning Liberation: courses

- ★ Reduced number of Arab-world related studies required
- ★ Studying ARAB WORLD
  - ★ From US perspective
  - ★ As one bulk although this identity questionable: why are there no Egyptology courses required?
- ★ Teach Rhetoric/Writing in English
  - ★ Academically prepare for AUC courses
  - ★ Prepare for multi-national
  - ★ Does not prepare for Egyptian public life (students do not learn to write formally in Arabic)



# Questioning Liberation: student governance

- ★ Student newspaper often critical of university
- ★ Students have organized strikes, etc.
- ★ But administrative decisions important to students' lives are often taken without discussing with them
- ★ Classroom practices

# Questioning Empowerment Beyond Preparation for Multinationals

- ★ Liberal arts = broad curriculum beyond own discipline
- ★ BUT
- ★ Most applied fields (esp. engineering, but also business) are most popular
- ★ Departments put little emphasis on courses outside the discipline
- ★ Students have fewer elective courses to choose from – therefore get deeper into own major
- ★ Prestige/status

# Questioning Empowerment Beyond Preparation for Multinationals

- ★ In a workshop given to instructors about learning outcomes – the use of surveys from employers was considered the best guide

# Old-New Campus Research Team

- ★ Progress
- ★ Issues – others on campus not attending
- ★ Issues – not allowed to hold conference during board of directors' visit



# Creating Community Initiative

- ★ Involvement
- ★ Issues – whose voices get heard best?



# OneAUC: Intercultural Learning



- ★ What is happening?
- ★ Issues – how to speak the same language

# English Language Institute/ Rhetoric & Composition Department

- ★ Questioning selves
- ★ Issues with both



# Discussion Questions

- ★ Similar research?
- ★ How to invite big stakeholders to be critical?



# Summary and Conclusion

★ Let's write this together!

**Thank You**

[bali@aucegypt.edu](mailto:bali@aucegypt.edu)