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

**Institutional Research Conference 2009** 



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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
- Ahram 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

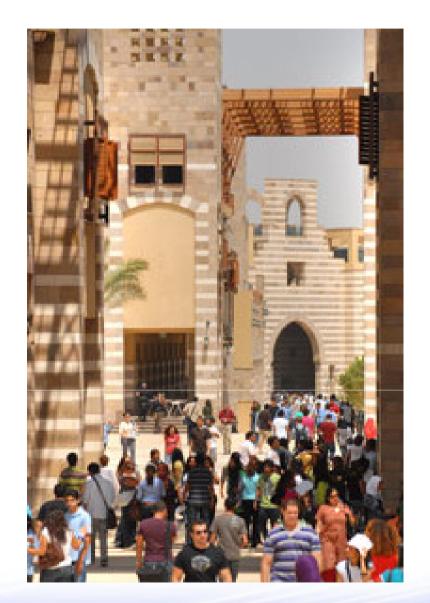
★ In a workshop given to instructors about learning outcomes – the use of surveys from employers was considered the best guide

### **Old-New Campus Research Team**

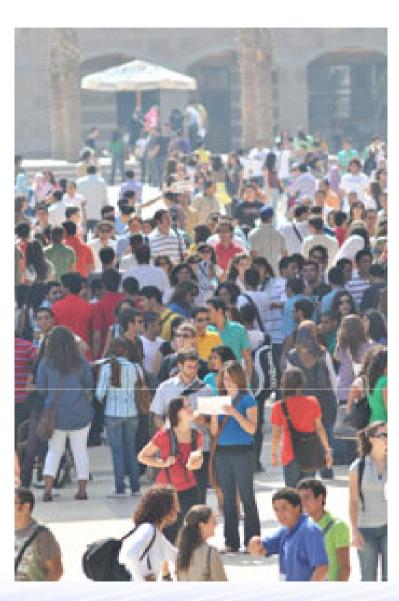
- \* Progress
- ★ Issues others on campus not attending
- ★ Issues not allowed to hold conference during board of directors' visit

## **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

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