

Problematizing University Citizenship Education in Post-Revolutionary Egypt: Reimagining Universities for 'Bread, Freedom and Social Justice'

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Within the wake of January 25, 2011 Egyptian Revolution, as the precarious socio-political transitions in Egypt materialize, Egyptian youth and educators are seriously considering the kind of state they want and their relationships to it as well as to their fellow citizens. Such debates have inevitably spilt over into the fundamental institutions of the Egyptian state, most notably Egyptian universities. As a contentious space, universities in Egypt provide a vital site for exploring the tensions, power dynamics as well as hopes reflecting the broader society as well as the reimagined roles of the university.

As part of my larger dissertation fieldwork in Egypt conducting qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological interviews with 24 university students and educators, this presentation is guided by the question how do university students and educators conceive the current role of the university in fostering citizenship education?

Through the lens of critical pedagogy and active citizenship education, I will showcase that participants demonstrate a moral and political will to reform universities towards adopting democratic and active models of citizenship education. Despite a number of challenges, participants perceive the university as important site where students can be change agents and where change agents are fostered, where critical thinking is valued and promoted, where the university is seen as an essential part of the public sphere, where student empowerment is nurtured, and as a space where relevant pedagogy, peace education and the construction of good humans can occur. Furthermore, to enhance university citizenship education in Egypt, participants call on universities to focus on such reforms as faculty and student development, civic engagement programs and international opportunities. I conclude by arguing for the importance of active university citizenship education in Egypt. Moreover, in the face of multifaceted challenges to universities in Egypt, if university policy makers, administrators, professors, and students fail to address the problems of the universities comprehensively, cohesively, and creatively, Egyptian public and private universities may be faced with continued instability and severe consequences.