

Egypt's Youth Issues and Their Enlightenment to China's Youth Work

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Abstract: *The issues of youth concern the country's internal affairs, diplomacy and future development. Under the influence of economic, political, historical and demographic factors at home and abroad in Egypt, the problems closely related to Egyptian youth, such as unfair education and high unemployment rate, have not been well solved, which has become an important factor in Egypt's turbulent situation. The Communist Party of China attaches great importance to youth and youth work, insists on taking economic construction as the center, actively solves youth problems such as education and employment, gathers youth strength, and promotes the harmonious development of society.*

Keywords: *Egypt; Youth issues; China's youth work; Enlightenment*

1. Introduction

As a major political and military power in the Middle East, Egypt's achievements in domestic economic development and civil society organizations serve as a model for other countries in the Arab world to follow. Egypt's domestic population ranks first among Arab countries. According to the data of Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), up to May 2021, Egypt's population has exceeded 100 million.^[1] The youth aged 18 to 29 with the most intensive age distribution are about 20.2 million, accounting for about 21% of the total population of Egypt, similar to the total population when the Egyptian Revolution broke out in 1952. The huge youth population has provided sufficient labor force for Egypt and made indelible contributions to the rapid development of Egypt's economy. However, it has also brought a series of social problems to Egypt, such as low-quality higher education, high unemployment rate, and security threats caused by the rise of radical Islamic forces. To some extent, the sudden change in the political situation in Egypt at the beginning of 2011 and the failure to solve the problems of Egyptian youth are important factors leading to the unrest in Egypt.

The solutions to the Egyptian youth problem affect all aspects of Egyptian society, and the views of Egyptian youth on international affairs also directly affect Egypt's foreign attitudes and policies. As a result, in the face of the fact that the number of young people in Egypt has increased dramatically, how to solve the youth problem in Egypt is the biggest problem faced by the Egyptian government for a long time, which will be one of the fundamental national policies to ensure the long-term stability of Egypt. The youth problem in contemporary Egypt is manifested in many aspects. This paper only discusses the education and employment issues that are most closely related to Egyptian youth, and reveals the enlightenment of solving the youth problem.

2. The Problem of Youth Education in Egypt is Prominent

Historically, Egyptian education has a high reputation in the Middle East. Egypt in the Ptolemaic dynasty was famous for its rich collection of Alexandria library. Al-Azhar University established in the Fatimid dynasty was one of the oldest universities in the world. After the July Revolution, with the advancement of the nationalization of the country, the Egyptian government established a set of modern education systems, which promoted the rapid development of education. However, contemporary Egyptian youth education faces many problems. On the one hand, the inequality in education is prominent. After the July Revolution, Egypt gradually formed three types of secondary schools: state schools, private schools and experimental schools. About 50% of the experimental schools students achieved excellent results. Private schools students take the second place, about 35%; However, the teaching quality of state schools is the worst, with only 9% of the students with good grades. However, the relatively high tuition fees of private schools and experimental schools are

difficult for poor families to bear, which leads to better grades and more opportunities for children from middle and upper class families to receive higher education. About 80% of the rural students had never entered the schools. Even if they entered schools at the very start, nearly 65% of the students chose to drop out, resulting in the high illiteracy rate in the rural areas of Egypt.^[2] Obviously, in terms of education, the social and economic status of Egyptian youth directly determines whether they have the right to receive education fairly, which shows that there are significant inequities in Egypt, and the inequities not only manifest the differences in class and urban and rural areas, but also in tribal differences and gender differences, etc. On the other hand, the quality of education in Egypt remains poor. Egypt has a large number of young people. In addition, the government has implemented free higher education policy and “wide in and wide out” training policy to alleviate the employment pressure, resulting in the overcrowding of Egypt's higher education system. The scarce education funds can not meet the needs of teachers' further education and the updating of teaching equipment. In addition, the teacher-centered indoctrination education model makes it difficult for Egypt's higher education to keep up with the development trend of the times, and students' innovation and critical thinking are also limited. At the same time, the lack of academic freedom, the lack of college teachers' enthusiasm and students' enthusiasm for learning all lead to the low level of education quality in Egypt. The World Economic Forum ranked 140 countries in *The Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016*. Egypt ranked 139th in the quality of higher education system and higher education management, and 133rd in innovation ability.^[3] The emergence of Egyptian youth education problems is closely related to the country's economic and social development and political environment. For example, Egypt's economy mainly depends on oil, canals, tourism, remittances and other incomes, which are vulnerable to fluctuations in the international market and have great instability, while the surge in population will offset the achievements of economic development. In addition, the Egyptian government mainly invests in higher education rather than primary and secondary education, and mainly flows to cities, which has caused educational inequity.

In order to solve the problem of youth education, the Egyptian government recognizes the necessity of reforming higher education and needs to make appropriate adjustments in the use of higher education funds to make them more fair and effective. In the face of the competitive labor market, Egypt's higher education needs to combine education with the labor market and cultivate more high-quality talents to adapt to the labor market. At the same time, the education reform policy and future expectation of the Sisi government is to reduce the overlapping tasks between the Ministry of higher education and scientific research and other national institutions in the fields related to scientific research. And a unified system has been established to evaluate the performance of ministerial universities and research centers, and tracks the efficient and effective implementation of their plans and policies. Egypt will also strengthen communication and coordination mechanisms between the relevant authorities providing health and education services and other relevant government agencies. In addition, the Egyptian government actively promotes the issues related to accountability and its role in building an inclusive, equitable and high-quality education system in the 2018 global education monitoring report of UNESCO. However, the reform of Egyptian universities cannot be divorced from the inherent historical framework, as well as the political and economic needs. The government's centralized control over Egypt's higher education system can only lead to various problems, which may in turn affect the country's development through a vicious circle.

3. The Problem of Youth Unemployment in Egypt is Serious

The problem of youth unemployment has existed in the period of liberalism in Egypt, eased in the Nasser period, and became more and more serious since the Mubarak period. In 2007, according to the Egyptian human development report of the United Nations, about a quarter of the young people aged 15-24 in Egypt were unemployed, for example, about 23.8% in the Maghreb region, while the world average was less than 12% in the same period. ^[4]The youth unemployment rate in Egypt has experienced a process of rising and falling since Sisi took office. According to the statistics from the World Bank, Egypt's youth unemployment rate was 32.39% in 2014, 34.29% in 2015 and 24.54% in 2019. ^[5]The above data shows that the youth unemployment rate in Egypt is gradually easing, but its overall unemployment rate remains high. The problems of Egyptian youth unemployment are manifested in many aspects. For example, Egyptian youth are full of the expectation of building a better future when entering society, but they are beaten to pieces, which has a great negative impact on their view of society and view of life. In particular, students with higher education disdain to work in some informal sectors, and most of them are willing to be civil servants and enjoy a secure life. Even if reality and life are difficult to coordinate, they prefer to hide in the nihilistic “ivory tower” rather than

condescend to engage in some grass-roots work. Therefore, the attitude of Egyptian youth employment is very negative. At the same time, under the influence of Egyptian tradition and culture, the unemployment problem among young women is even more serious. During the period from 1998 to 2006, although the unemployment rate declined, the unemployment rate of young women was far lower than that of young men. During this period, the unemployment rate of young men was decreased by 42%, while the unemployment rate of young women was decreased by only 26%. Since the global economic downturn in 2008, the deteriorating economic situation in Egypt has led to a further decline in the employment rate, and women have been even more impacted. Since 2014, the female youth unemployment rate in Egypt has soared from 40.4% in 2015 to 57.8% in 2020. The emergence of youth employment problem in Egypt is closely related to the demographic transition in Egypt, which is in the “youth bulge period”, but there are also reasons such as the disconnection between the education training model and the labor market. As a result, Egypt’s employment market is oversupplied in some fields and in others, the demand exceeds the supply. Therefore, Egypt needs a plan to solve this problem.

With the rapid growth of Egyptian youth population, Egypt’s economic development is very slow, so it is difficult to provide sufficient jobs in the short term. The problem of unemployment not only plagues Egyptian youth who are at a turning point in their lives, but also has a broad impact on the whole Egyptian society. In 2002, Mubarak made a speech at Alexandria University, promising to provide more employment opportunities for young people and pay attention to their roles in society. In the first open presidential election in Egyptian history held in 2005, in order to win the support of voters, Mubarak promised to continue to promote economic development, pay more attention to social justice and effectively improve people’s lives. Although Mubarak’s actual actions are far inferior to his promises, the issue of youth employment has become an important aspect that the Egyptian government dare not ignore. So far, Egypt has held many World Youth Forums. At the end of each forum, the Egyptian government emphasizes the important role of youth and the significance of solving youth problems. For this purpose, Egypt also specially established a National Youth Commission in 2002, with many institutions under it. It is committed to promoting the development of youth education, sports and employment, and has achieved certain results. In 2018, the Egyptian Ministry of education and technical education launched a series of ambitious reforms. In the newly formulated strategic vision for social and economic transformation in 2030, education and training were listed as the seventh pillar, hoping to promote the solution of youth employment through education. However, if the economic situation of Egypt does not get a real improvement, it is difficult to solve the problem of youth employment in Egypt. Moreover, the role of Egyptian education reform in solving the employment problem will not appear in the short term.

4. The Enlightenment of Egyptian Youth to Chinese Youth Work

The direct trigger for the outbreak of the Egyptian youth problem is the high unemployment rate, insufficient employment rate and unfair distribution and other basic livelihood problems. Just as the reasons behind it lie in the unfair social education, the imbalanced educational structure and the unreasonable domestic industrial structure. The overall level of economic development is not high. Egypt’s youth education and employment issues are also problems which exist in China’s current stage of development. Chinese government’s focus on economic construction and its efforts to solve people’s livelihood issues such as education and employment are concrete measures to actively solve the youth problems. Chinese government has always attached great importance to youth and youth work, pays attention to listening to the voice of the youth, timely solves the youth problems and issues the phased program document of the “Medium and Long-Term Youth Development Plan (2016-2025)” to support youth development. The Chinese government demands that from the strategic height of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, we attach importance to and care for the young generation, constantly strengthen youth education, and create good conditions for their growth, and success. According to the “Overview of China’s Education–Development of National education in 2020” released by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, in 2020, the final year of the “13th Five-Year Plan”, “the gross enrollment ratio for senior secondary education has reached 91.2%” and “the gross enrollment ratio for higher education has further increased to 54.4%”.^[6] China’s education modernization drive has continued to advance and high-quality development has been gradually achieved. Youth employment is the largest livelihood project, which is related to people’s well-being, economic development and the future of the country. The Chinese government attaches great importance to youth employment. The Chinese government requires governments at all levels and all sectors of society to take effective measures to effectively do a good job in the employment of

college graduates, to do everything possible to overcome the adverse effects of the COVID-19, and to enthusiastically support and help college graduates to achieve employment. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 and other factors, the employment pressure of Chinese youth has increased, but according to the “2022 Chinese College Students Employment Report” (Employment Blue Book) based on the annual college graduate tracking data, which is written by the Mycos Research Institute, the employment satisfaction of the 2021 undergraduate and vocational graduates is 74% and 72% respectively, ^[7] which are higher than previous years. Chinese youth can achieve employment and realize their own socialization process.

5. Conclusions

Youth are the most active and dynamic force in society and the hope for the future development of the country and nation. The issues of youth are closely related to social economy and politics, affecting a country's internal and foreign affairs. All countries in the world should pay attention to and strive to solve the problem of youth. The Egyptian youth problems have their own particularity but also have their universality. Other countries should learn from the emergence, development and solutions of the Egyptian youth problems to solve the youth problems in their own countries.

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