NGOS AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN EGYPT: SHARED AND CONTESTED VIEWS

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ABSTRACT

There is an increasing global interest in education in that it represents both a challenge and a global necessity. Currently many international agencies and local nonprofit organizations are intervening to support education in various parts of the world in order to bridge the education growing gap. In Egypt, among 15500 NGOs, approximately 1310 non-profit organizations are working in education to compensate for the gap in education.

To what extent have the performance of education-focused NGOs been successful in delivering educational services, or in going further to effect on the education quality? This study will take place with education-focused NGOs in Egypt to explore the impact of vision, organizational identity, experiences and capabilities of NGOs, social capital, and the environment represented in the participation of local community, and the influence of government and donors.

The mentioned factors are considered as variables that are assumed to influence on the performance and of NGOs either as individuals or in working together or with other individuals or entities. The study attempts to explore, as well, the effect of presumed performances of NGOs.

Key words: nonprofit organization, performance, education reform, community of practice.

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INTRODUCTION

This research proposal addresses a call for a better understanding about how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) function and contribute to social development in developing countries (Miller-Grandvaux et al, 2002; Baradei, 2004; Gajda, 2007; Makuwira, 2004). In particular, it focuses on the factors that have an impact on the performance and the success of NGOs, in Egypt, in their contributions in education.

The idea for the study was motivated by the researcher's interest in and close familiarity with deficiencies in state-provided education in Egypt (described in Section II below) and the role of education-focused NGOs who provide services to supplement it (described in section III). Despite the earnest efforts of such groups, Egypt's education system continues to operate sub-optimally. The proposed research is intended to address this paradox.

An Overview of Education in Egypt

The Egyptian education system is highly centralized and is the responsibility of the government, represented by the Ministry of Education (MOE) (El Baradei, 2004). In Egypt, 90% of children attend public schools, 8.4 % are in private schools under the responsibility of MOE, and 2% are in religious schools related to Al-Azhar (Abu Gazaleh, 2004).

The education system in Egypt is comprised of two pre-university phases; compulsory and non-compulsory. The compulsory phase consists of two levels; primary and preparatory. The Egyptian government characterizes these first two levels as basic education, and state law mandates the attendance at those levels (Gazaleh, 2004; Hanushek, 2006). Egyptian children enter six-year primary school at age 6 and then transit to a three-year preparatory school. Basic education is followed by three years of non-compulsory secondary

education (Gazaleh, 2004, Hanushek, 2006).

Primary schools have been tuition free since 1940 (Wahba, 2000), and during the past four decades the Egyptian education system has expanded rapidly (Wahba, 2000). Pre-university education comprises 15.5 million students, 1.5 million teachers, and 38,922 schools (MOE, 2006).

The government expenditure on education represents 3.9% GDP, which is not sufficient to provide full access to good-quality education (UNDP, 2006; UNDP, 2004; Galal, 2002; World Bank, 2002). There is a shortage of financial resources with a misallocation of resources, and teachers' remunerations are very low, making it difficult to attract qualified staff (El Baradei, 2004; UNDP, 2004).

The shortage in funding, results in physical disrepair, and in lack of maintenance of school buildings. In 1992 outdated schools were estimated at 40% (Birdsall & O'Connell, 1999; Galal, 2002), with inadequate infrastructure (El Baradei, 2004; Galal, 2002), insufficient school buildings (El Baradei, 2004), and overcrowded classrooms (Birdsall & O'Connell, 1999). Mean class density increased from 39.9 students in 1980/81 to 45.1 in 1990/91 (Galal, 2002; UNDP, 2004; El Baradei, 2004).

In recent years Egypt registered a setback in the eradication of female illiteracy and the primary schooling of girls (Mazawi, 1999; Fergany, 1994); in 2004, the net primary enrolment ratio was 96% (UNDP, 2006). It was cited by Hanushek for primary and preparatory levels as 97% and 74% respectively (Hanushek, 2006). But, the enrolment rate in rural Upper Egyptian was 69% for boys and 54% for girls (Richard & Adams, 2000).

The challenge is to improve teaching and learning in the basic-secondary system. (World Bank, 2002). The low level of teaching reflects on the need for private tutoring. A

survey carried out in 1994 found that 64% of urban primary children and 52% of rural children had received supplementary tutoring (Bray, 2005; Fergany 1994). It was estimated that more than 50% of students in basic education resort to private tutoring (UNDP, 2004).

Private tutoring and in-school tutoring groups had no significant impact on achievement (Fergany 1994; Bray, 2005). Further, private tutoring, private group tuition and non-ministerial books constitute about 37.5% of spending on education per child per year, for both poor and non-poor students (El Baradei, 2004). There are limited opportunities for students to practice activities or learn skills. That atmosphere does not encourage students to react, share or freely express themselves.

There are high drop-out rates, exceeding 13% in the 1990s (Galal, 2002; Birdsall & O'Connell, 1999); 10% of girls and 13% of boys repeated the final year of primary school (Birdsall & O'Connell, 1999). These high rates of repetition and dropping out may reflect the low returns on education (Birdsall & O'Connell, 1999; Galal, 2002).

In general, most influenced by the challenges of education are girls and poor students; the most disadvantaged governorates are in Upper Egypt (Fayoum, Minia, Assiut, Sohag), as well as rural Lower Egypt (El Baradei, 2004). Egypt still faces problems of both attainment and quality (Hanushek, 2006), inadequate access and quality, and inefficiency in the schooling system (Jagannathan, 2001). According to Galal, this results in the education system not providing markets with the quantity and quality of educated individuals consistent with the demand for labor (Galal, 2002; UNDP, 2004).

NGOs in Education in Egypt

We adopt for this research a definition of NGOs proposed by UNESCO, in which NGO is described by that organization as a private voluntary grouping of individuals or

associations which is autonomous, non-partisan and non-profit sharing, and is organized locally, nationally or internationally for the purpose of enhancing economic, social, and spiritual and development equity of target groups as mutually (UNESCO, 1998).

Vakil (1997) has similarly defined NGOs as: private, self-governing, formal and non-profit organizations that are gearing to improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people. UN specifies that the NGO's resources should come from its members or from volunteers' contributions, the second restriction is that they cannot be engaged in violence , they should not be in unsubstantiated or politically motivated acts against governments represented in the UN (Willetts, 1996).

The NGO sector in Egypt is represented by approximately 15,000; predominantly small community-based organizations that concentrate on service delivery and social assistance (Ibrahim et al., 2003). Over the past three decades, NGOs have succeeded in contracting with MOE to intervene in public schools with educational projects and activities in basic education, especially in primary schools at remote and rural areas in Upper Egypt, "the most disadvantaged areas". The number of non-profit organizations working in the field of education in Egypt has increased and is estimated to be approximately 1310 (Baradei, 2004), which represents 8.7% of the total number of NGOs.

MOE Established the department of nonprofit organizations in MoE in December, 1998 to coordinate the relations between schools and nonprofit organizations (MOE, 2006), and issued decree no. 30/2000 on the involvement of nonprofit organizations in the school Board of Trustees. From 1999 to 2005, MoE started 1212 educational projects with 619 non-profit organizations to serve 19,000 students in public schools, with a total fund of $17 million (MOE, 2006).

NGOs Performance in International Education Reform

In different countries, NGOs have been observed as instrumental in the improvement of both practices and policy. For example, studies have documented how NGO have advanced educational reform by working collaboratively in Bangladesh (Bray, 2001), Kenya ((Kremer, 2003) and Tanzania (UNESCO, 1998). Similarly, Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond, and Wolf observed NGO reform efforts in Ethiopia, Guinea, and Mali; they described how NGOs have collaborated in a number of other countries, including Malawi, to affect broad reforms (Miller-Grandvaux et al, 2002).Also, Makuwira reported that NGOs working in basic education in Malawi participated with local communities in decision-making and policy development processes (Makuwira, 2004). And in a study in India about the role of NGOs in primary education, Jagannathan discussed the positive effects of shared vision and collaborative capacity building on successful educational reform (Jagannathan, 2001).

In summary, previous researches on education-focused NGOs noted their escalating relevance and roles, substantiates their abilities to mobilize local communities and governments as dominant partners (Bray, 2001), and documents their contribution to development (Chabbott, 2003). In addition, these studies demonstrate the support and cooperative engagement provided by "northern" (developed market) NGOs to southern (developing) markets

According to these studies NGOs have succeeded in influencing government policy and in building relationships between varieties of education stakeholders.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

There is a dearth of literature on the efforts of education-focused NGOs in Egypt and their potential in improving education. This calls for inquiry about how NGOs can play critical roles in the space between the market and the State (Lewis, 2001) to address long festering deficiencies in education provision.

The proposed research attempts to explore attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of a variety of actors involved with education in Egypt, in an effort to better understand what NGOs, to date, have (or do not have) made as a significant contributions in education in one area of the country. Particularly, we are interested in how actors (NGOs themselves and others) perceive the role and potential of NGOs as individual service providers, or more broadly, as a community of practice with shared mission of educational reform (Gajda, 2004, Barab and Duffy, 2000).

The inquiry assumes that NGOs performance can be compromised by a variety of factors both internal and external to these organizations. Consequently, we are also interested in identifying both facilitators and inhibitors of NGO performance. Is it that NGOs who are providing educational services, assume (or do not assume) themselves to be agents for educational reform? Is it that they possess or lack the time, capacity, or resources required to have that impact?

The Research Question

How and to what extent does performance of education- focused NGOs –individually and collaboratively promote education reform in Egypt? What factors influence individual and collaborating performance of education-focused NGOs?

The conceptual model includes the variables of vision, organizational identity, experiences and capabilities, social capital, the environment of local community or government or else (see Figure 1). Presumably, education-focused NGOs may be tended to their own mission statement and to what they ought to do as tasks, and they may be tended to a mega mission to affect on education to realize the education reform. In both cases, the variables are assumed to affect on the performance of NGOs in education. The study attempts to explore the influences of these variables as facilitators or inhibitors on the performance of education-focused NGOs and the effect of their performance. The study attempts to explore, as well, other factors that influence on the NGOs' performance and the effect of this performance.

FIGURE 1
The Factors that influence on the Performance & the Effect of education-focused NGOs
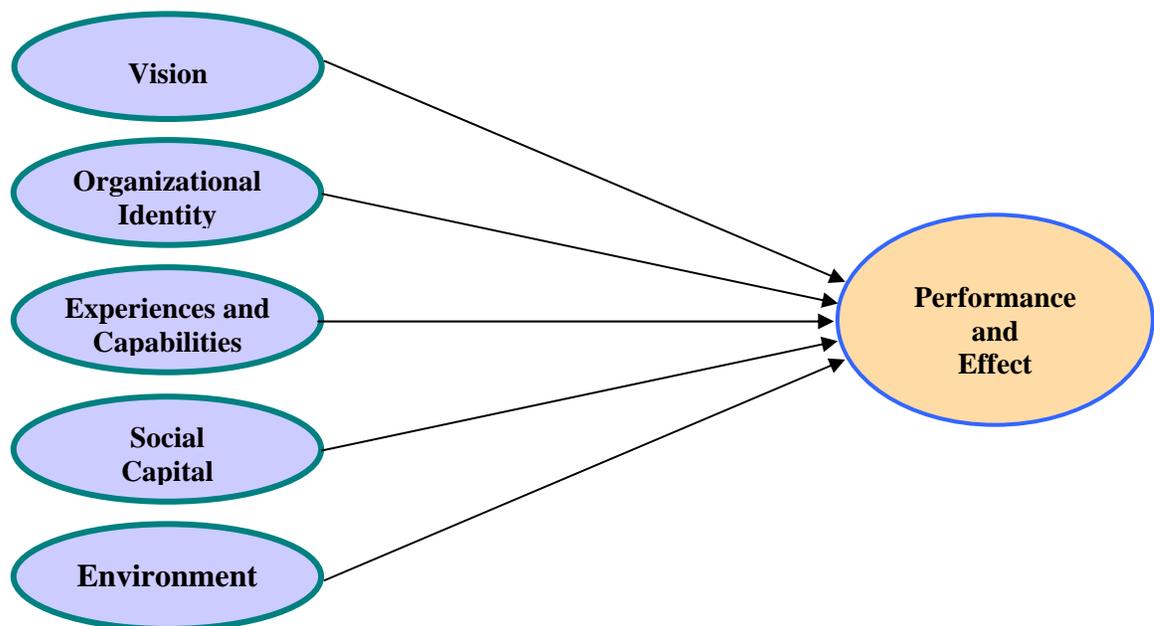
Performance and Effect:

Fowler stated that performance and institutional position of NGOs, as civic actors, determine by the ability to be, which means to maintain its specific identity, values, and mission; the ability to do, which means to achieve stakeholder satisfaction; and ability to relate, which means to manage external interaction while retaining autonomy (Fowler, 2002).

As performance, Lewis stated that NGOs need to manage in three main area – the organizational domain of their internal structures and processes; their developmental activities, which may be form of projects or programs, campaigns or services; and finally their management of relationships with other institutional actors – the state, the private sector, other NGOs and organized components of the other communities - in which NGOs operate (Lewis, 2001).

There is a specific area of services provided by each education-focused NGO at its particular local communities and according to its own vision and mission statement. These contributions reflect the need of each NGO to realize its "individual organizational performance" and achieve its own success**.** Lau and Ngo asserted on local culture that plays a significant role in the design of effective performance appraisal systems (Lau & Ngo, 2001).

There is a link between accountability - carried out from a wide variety of stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries, staffs, and partners - and performance; that lead to speculate on the range of approaches which NGOs might use in to prove that they are valuable and effective agents of development (Fowler, 1996; Brown, 2001).

Fowler, as well, states that there are difficulties in assessing operational performance; firstly, the measures of development are very complex, containing both tangible or physical elements and intangible factors of human and organizational processes and capacities, and

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secondly, the possibility of attributing the cause of change to an NGO's work is very restricted (Fowler, 1996). On the other hand, performance must be judged from the perspectives of those who affect or are affected by the organization's behavior (Fowler, 1996).

The research attempts to explore different factors that affect on the NGO's individual performance and success which consequently affect on their contribution in education. As for Waddell, one of the outcome of NGOs is the creation of processes and procedures that lay the groundwork for evolving the action plan (Waddell, 1997), and for fulfilling their mission statement. NGO performance and success in education can be achieved through the NGO individual performance, as well as through the intervention of NGOs as a community of practice.

Regarding the effect of NGOs' performance, Kremer stated that education is widely considered to be critical for development (Kremer, 2003). Bray identified education as central to nation- state building, in its capacity to create citizens, introducing individuals into a national consciousness and building in them an attachment to the state and its chosen development strategy (Bray, 2001), and Chabbott considered education as a human capital and a human right (Chabbott, 2003).

The Article 7 of the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien, stated that: National, regional and local educational authorities have a unique obligation to provide basic education for all (Bray, 2001) In this context Bray stated that education quality is a prerequisite for the actualization of individual potential and the full exercise of individual human rights, ensuring more equitable distribution of development benefits (Bray, 2001).

As for Rich, the innovation in the schools that has a lasting effect on the school programs, and the quality of teaching and learning; educational reform must come through redistribution of power and resources; the policy must change before the reform occurs (Rich, 1979).

There is an effect when people, at school and community level, have the collaboration as an essential value (Gajda, 2007), and when they learned from their own experience and related their education to life problem (Lewis, 2001).

As for Hursh at al, successful effect on education requires changes in the culture of the school, changes in curricular goals (Hursh, et al 1996), and the change in culture may be the target or the task of an external element like NGOs, where they can build the capacity of school staff, and provide the school with the external sight that may help in rebuild a new culture and new programs or new approaches in education.

Hursh et al argues that education needs a community of learners that includes participants not only within schools but between schools, interest group, and mediator (Hursh, et al 1996); in terms of supporting rather than contesting (Mazawi, 1999). Healey argues that the process to reach an effect on education is inherently difficult, messy, and long term; it needs to begin to create pressure on public sector institutions to be accountable for policy choices; that needs to have a critical mass (Healey, 1997).

Elmore argued that the might focus first on changing norms, knowledge, and skills at the individual and organizational level before the focus on changing structure, and that require reformers to invest in developing knowledge, and in reaching new structure that issue a change in practice rather than reaching new practice (Elmore, 1995).

That demands an inquiry about the NGOs performance ant the effect of this performance on school management, on teaching attitudes, and on involving community into the educational process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research conceptual model includes some variables which are: Vision, organizational identity, experiences and capabilities, social capital, and environment. We presume that these variables represent some internal and external factors that impact on NGOs' performance. In the remainder of this section we review pertinent literature on each of the aforementioned variables which were concluded by presenting them graphically in a conceptual model.

Vision

Hogue defines vision as a clear picture of what can be; vision creates the focus of what collaboration can accomplish, fostering positive, creative and synergistic thinking (Hogue, 2000). Hogue stated that ideally vision is created by all partners, and it should establish for partners the image of acting and working together (Hogue, 2000). As for Larwood, vision may also represent a pattern of organizational values that underlies a unique visionary pattern for an organization's future (Larwood, 1995).

Building a vision is an intellectual task that requires a balance between action and reflection. Reason argued that action without reflection and understanding is blind; just as theory without action is meaningless; "it is the new way of thinking that preserve our civilization" (Reason& Bradbury, 2001).

Learning and reflection support NGOs to build their vision; Hara and Kling combine between learning and effectiveness; they stated that organizational learning is one important

lens that helps us understand organizational effectiveness and organizational change (Hara&
Kling, 2001).

As for Kaplan; objectives should be derived from the organization's vision; if
members do not understand the vision they are even less likely to understand the strategy
intended to realize that vision; without understanding vision and strategy, members cannot
adapt their work to contribute to effective strategy implementation (Kaplan, 2001).

Hogue argues that commitment and vision are double threads, overlapping and
reinforcing each other. People with commitment demonstrate a spirit to make things happen;
she considered that commitment is supported when each partner knows what to do, how to do
it and when the work should be completed (Hogue, 2000). For NGOs, one outcome is the
creation of shared vision and shared ideas (Waddell, 1997).

Vision is a form of leadership in which a "visionary leader" may alter an
organizational culture to bring others to understand, accept, and carry forward new plans for
the organization, and vision plays a role in transformational or visionary leadership
(Larwood, 1995).

As a vision, some NGOs are engaged in long-term community development work,
others provide short-term emergency relief in response to natural disasters (Lewis, 2001). So,
vision is the resource of: the current objective of each NGO; the temporary and short term
goals, or long term and future goals. Therefore, the study attempts to assess to what extent
the vision has an effect on the NGO individual performance, and to explore what kind of
vision that helps NGO in directly contribute in education, or rather in building a shared
vision and a community of practice between NGOs and with other stakeholders which may
collaboratively lead to education reform.

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Organizational Identity

The organizational identity unifies organizational members (Ashforth and Mael 1989), and it has insight into the character and behavior of organizations and their members (Gioia at al, 2000).Lewis defined NGOs as group of organizations engaged in development and poverty reduction work at local, national, and global levels around the world(Lewis, 2001).NGOs can be large or small, formal or informal, externally funded or driven by volunteers, charitable and paternalistic or radical and empowerment-based, and one NGO might combine several of these elements at any one time (Lewis, 2001).

Organizations are social design directed at practice; through the practices they bring together that organizations can do what they do, know what they know, and learn what they learn (Wenger, 1999), and their internal processes determine (who we are) and create an organizational history in context of interaction with communities (Wenger, 1999).

Albert and Whetten's (1985) define organizational identity as that which members believe to be central enduring, and distinctive about their organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten and Godfrey, 1998). They describe organizational identity as the set of beliefs shared between managers and stakeholders about the central, enduring, and distinctive characteristics of an organization (Albert &Whetten, 1985; Scott and Lane 2000)**.**

According to Wenger; building an identity consists of negotiating the meaning of our experience of membership in social communities (Wenger, 1999). As for Hogg and Terry; social identity base on intra-group interaction and processes; it is influenced by beliefs about the nature of relations between the in-group and relevant out-group (Hogg and Terry 2000)

Values, beliefs, and meaning from the larger culture are embedded in identity (Scott and Lane 2000). Internalization (or the culture in organizational terms) is the more salient, stable, and internally consistent character of an organization (Ashforth and Mael 1989).

Gioia and others argue that organizational identity usually is portrayed as that which is core, distinctive, and enduring about the character of an organization (Gioia at al, 2000). Scott and Lane describe organizational identity as emerging from complex, dynamic, and reciprocal interactions among managers, organizational members, and other stakeholders (Scott and Lane 2000).

According to Ashforth and Mael identity is tacitly understood by managers that a positive and distinctive organizational identity attracts the recognition, support, and loyalty of not only organizational members but other key constituents (e.g., shareholders, customers, job seekers (Ashforth and Mael 1989).

Wenger find identity as a pivot between the social and the individual; it is the social, the cultural, and the historical with a human face (Wenger, 1999). Concerns about identity are just as profound as concerns about survival (Whetten and Godfrey, 1998; Wenger, 1999).

On the other hand; identity influences how individuals interpret issues as well as how they behave toward them; organization's image and identity guide and activate individuals' interpretations of an issue and motivations for action on it. Those interpretations and motivations affect patterns of organizational action over time (Dutton and Dukerich 1991).

Identity brings to the fore the issues of non-participation as well as participation, and of exclusion as well as inclusion. Our identity includes our ability and our inability to shape the meanings that define our communities and our form of belonging (Wenger, 1999).

Experiences and Capabilities

Diversity in social practices produces substantial individual differences in capabilities (Bandura, 1989). This could constitute an introduction to integrity between different NGOs, but that needs a dynamic capability in each organization to be competent with other organizations. Dynamic capabilities are often combinations of simpler capabilities and related routines which may be foundational to others (Eisenhardt, 2000).

Strategic decision making is a dynamic capability in which managers pool their various business, functional, and personal expertise to make choices that shape the major strategic moves of the firm (Eisenhardt, 2000).

Building the experience of NGOs in services of development requires review and regular factorization of prior experiences to refresh energy and result in a lesson being learned. As for Bandura, the cognitive factors partly determine which environmental events will be observed, what meaning will be conferred on them, whether they leave any lasting effects, what emotional impact and motivating power they will have, and how the information they convey will be organized for future use (Bandura, 1989).

The cognitive asset of each NGO represents the core of its capability that enhances or hinders its contribution to the community. As for Bandura, people tend to select activities and associates from the vast range of possibilities in terms of their acquired preferences and competencies; similarly, they activate different social reactions depending on their socially conferred roles and status (Bandura, 1989).

Social Capital

Bourdieu defined social capital as "a sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed

by individual or social unit. Social capital comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through the network" (Bourdieu, 1986).

Adler and Kwon define social capital as the resource that will create the environment in which different actors can move, communicate, and invest their efforts. Adler and Kwon consider social capital as the goodwill engendered by the fabrics of social relations that can be mobilized to facilitate action (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

One type of social capital is bridging views that focus on social capital as a resource inherent in the social network, tying a focal actor from one organization to other focal actors in other organizations (Adler and Kwon, 2002). The other type of networking relates to the bonding views focusing on collective actors' internal characteristics (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Putnam argues that bridging and bonding social capital can have powerful positive social effects (Putnam, 2000).

Fukuyama stated that social capital can be embodied in the smallest and most basic social group, the family, as well as all groups, the nation (Fukuyama, 1995). It includes both formal and informal civic groupings (UNDP, 2001). Actors can create social ties, but the willing structure can enhance and invest these social ties that actors mobilize by creating new ties, and accordingly social ties create opportunities for social capital transactions (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

Inherent personality traits mean that some persons are talented in building social capital; however, the continuity of social capital depends on social structure. Social capital sources lie in the social structure within which the actors are located; social capital is available as a function of actors' location in the structure of their social relations (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

Social capital is created according to an essential feeling of trust and is a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or in a certain part of it; trust is inherited through ethical habits (Fukuyama, 1995). A high degree of trust will permit a wide variety of social and participatory aspects of relationships (Fukuyama, 1995; Makuwira, 2004).

According to Fukuyama, the acquisition of social capital requires habituation to moral norms of community and the acquisition of virtues like loyalty, honesty, and dependability, based on the prevalence of social, rather than individual, virtues (Fukuyama, 1995).

Putnam states that social capital calls attention to the way in which our lives are constructed (2000). If NGOs succeed in building social capital, that will affect the flow of information and make solidarity available to the actor (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Putnam also states that social capital is close to "civic virtue"; social capital calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations (2000). Again, this is the responsibility of organizations, if their structure is willing to invest the social capital that was built in creating these dense networks and discover their most powerful roles with communities and in the field of civil society that the nonprofit organizations are emerging of (Lewis, 2001).

Lesser and Storck stated that communities of practice serve as generators for social capital (Lesser and Storck, 2001). So, the current study represents an opportunity to discover the mutual influence between community of practice and social capital

The study attempts to explore these factors and to explore to what extent they enable each NGO in its own Individual performance. On the other hand, the research assumes that education-focused NGOs are working in the same climate, facing the same challenges, and

having the same interests. These conditions of challenges, experiences, and individual

performance may conduct NGOs to build together a "community of practice".

Environment

As for Edwards, the work of NGOs locates in the spaces that exist between

communities and institutions of different kinds of legitimacy, accountability and other

external relationships (Edwards, 2002). They may keep a distance from the state and run their

projects parallel to those of the state, and interact closely with local government and play a

strong role in local development, as they can play a role in helping certain population groups,

or filling the gap in the state services, or pressing for a change in the national strategy (Clark,

2005).

Governments have an eminent role; they can open new doors for NGO activity or

conversely bring a set of restrictions (Lewis, 2001), or invite NGOs to have some roles with

local communities Clark, 2005) And as Lundy stated, NGOs can advocated a combination of

government decentralization, devolution to local communities of responsibility for natural

resources held as commons, and community participation (Lundy, 2002).

NGOs can form together and with school staff and group of interest at local level a

community of practice. In community of practice, there will be multiple linkages and

relationships of trust that connect the organizations involved; these relationships could be

built through organizational leaders, or they could be built as institutionalized relationships

with expanding activities, and for long-term partnerships (Waddell, 1997).

community of practice is a group of professionals who share a common 'language of

practice' (Argyris et al., 1985), a group of people dominated by specific field of skills and

techniques (Lesser and Storck, 2001), who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic (Wenger et al, 1998).

NGOs can learn and deepen their knowledge and expertise through apprenticeship (Argyris et al., 1985), interacting, and mutual engagement on an ongoing basis (Wenger, 1999). In this perception, communities of practice are the prime context over which the members of the group interact (Lesser and Storck, 2001), and in which they have mutual engagement, determine common sense, develop a tacit understanding that members share, accumulate knowledge, and become bound by the value they find in learning together (Wenger, 1999; Wenger et al, 1998).

On the other and, local community is seen as the appropriate body to carry out restoration and care, and is envisaged as being capable of acting collectively toward common interests, reconciling the conflicting interests (Leach, 1999; Lundy, 2002; Barkin, 2002). Collaboration with communities and with the group of interest can hold countervailing sources of power and may become key players with other type of stakeholder (Gray, 1989; Mazey, 2001).

With local communities, Partners as individuals or entities, by working together can pool scarce resources, be considered, themselves, as a resource of information, support, and legitimacy in order to achieve a vision that would not otherwise be possible to obtain as separate actors working independently (Gajda, 2004; Mazey, 2001). According to Wenger et al, communities are not confined by institutional affiliation; their potential value extends beyond the boundaries of any single organization (Wenger et al, 1998).

In a relation with local environment, Lundy stated that NGOs are better placed for the task of fostering popular participation which includes articulating the needs of the poorest

and most vulnerable groups (Lundy, 2002). In their interaction with the local environment, NGOs may provide instruments which emphasize the participation of the poor (Clark, 2005).

That demands an inquiry about the different relation between NGOs, and with government, and the local communities to recognize its influence on the performance and effect of NGOs.

AREA AND METHODOLOGY

The research proposes to examine the views of 20 leaders of NGOs that are providing education services in one disadvantaged area in Egypt, and a representative sampling of members of other critical constituencies including government, the teaching community and NGO donors.

The research will be conducted in the town of Minia, one of Egypt's most disadvantaged areas in terms of education, and where numerous education-focused NGOs currently work as individuals, or with other NGOs, in basic education with public schools at rural and urban areas.

The research will be conducted through a qualitative approach using semi structured interviews (see appendix A, relating The Interview Questions). The interviews will be conducted in person.

The responses of participants will be recorded, translated to English, and analyzed in order to compare sharing and contrast views of the understanding of participants. The research will explore the influence of: Vision, organizational identity of NGO, experience and capabilities of NGO, social capital, and environment as facilitators or inhibitors on NGO's performance, and on the quality of their contribution in education. That will lead the

study to discover the factors that affect on NGOs to perform as individuals or collaboratively as a community of practice. Furthermore, the study will attempt to explore the effect of NGOs contribution in education reform when they perform as individuals and when they act collaboratively as a community of practice. The analyses of participants' responses will be included in the research report as qualitative research issued from the field work interaction.

APPENDIX
The Questions of the interview

– Name :

– Organization :

– Position :

– Years of experience:

1. Please tell me about your background and how you came to work here
   Prompt for:
      - Education
      - Experience

2. Please tell me about this organization and the work that it does
   Prompt for:
      - History?
      - Mission?
      - Goals and objectives?
      - Funding?
      - Who do you serve and how?

3. How would you describe your organization's major contributions?
   Prompts:
      - What is the effect of your work?
      - How do you measure success (measurements and process)?

4. What is the most satisfying aspect of your work personally?

   Tell me about a time when you felt particularly proud about the work of your organization.

5. What are the major challenges and obstacles associated with your work?

   Tell me about a time when you felt particularly frustrated about the work of your organization.

6. How and to what extent do you work with the following to accomplish your goals?
   - The business community?
   - Government?
   - Media?
   - Other NGOs?

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