

**Social Work and Privatization  
Egyptian Viewpoint**

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**FIRST:**  
**INTRODUCTION**  
**ON THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Since mid eighties and the Egyptian society has been going through an economical process of change that aims at transporting it towards a state of private investment administration of its large institutions. This process means that the public administration, public and governmental sector systems will eventually be freed in an attempt at straightening up the economical path for the Egyptian society to achieve high development rates in its different sectors.

Social work is one of the humanitarian professions that aims at extending a helping hand to the different institutions and systems in order to achieve the best production results. In the industrial sector, for example, we see the profession aiming at achieving more gains for the industrial companies and making them ready to stand in the face of market competition.

In the educational institutions, the profession always tries to achieve the highest possible rate of students' performance. This attitude of the profession is very conspicuous in many different institutions, as the profession aims, in general, at achieving the best results for its clients.

In 1936, the first school for social work was established, and since then, the profession has always been affected to a great extent, by the different periods of political and economical changes that the Egyptian society had witnessed.

Since 1936 and till the early fifties, the social profession was affected by the liberal concept concerning both practice and function. These effects do not mean the presence of profession's efforts in

developmental fields sponsored by the Ministry of social Affairs during the forties and specially in the Egyptian rural areas.

After the July 1952 Revolution, and till the mid seventies when the whole society was going through a gradual political and economical process of change towards a social concept, this change has affected the profession deeply. It has been transferred, as a result of the social concept, to becoming mainly a government profession. After that, from the mid seventies to the beginning of the nineties, the system has been transferred again to a liberal system, and this process of change is very well represented in the emergence of the **privatization concept** since the late eighties and the transfer towards private administration. Such changes are having their toll over the profession and its practitioners as they feel they have been placed in a critical situation. This critical situation is represented in the change in the ethics and circumstances of the practice during a certain period of time that did not give ample time space between each period to affect any quick orientation with the changing concepts.

By going back to the history of the profession in Egypt, we find that the social workers had tried to practice the profession by making use of the developmental orientation more than the clinical one, a situation that added more hindrances and contradictions to the ethics and methods of the profession's practice during the coming future.

#### **THE PROBLEM OF THE RESEARCH :**

The problem of this study has been crystalised in an attempt to recognize the direct and indirect effects that will affect the profession of social work as a result of the social and economical transferences that are taking place in the Egyptian society at the present time. These changes concern the educational institutions of the profession. The tutors and professors of the profession and also the students and practitioners. Also

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we have to recognize the conditions that should be present in the profession during the future in order to face these changes.

## **SECOND :**

### **THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK :**

The researcher attempted at dealing, within the study's theoretical framework, the emergence of this profession, and its development in Egypt and the social and economical circumstances that affected the profession, in addition to the present situation in Egypt and the problem of disorientation with the present social circumstances as a representation of the critical situation facing the profession at present. A summary of this problem will follow:

#### **(1) The Emergence of the Profession & its Development in Egypt:**

The historians who wrote on the social profession in Egypt, have all agreed that the profession had passed through five stages or phases, each of which witnessed and represented an important development in the practice and each of these five stages was influenced by the political, economical, social, ethical, cultural and religious factors that were current in the Egyptian society during the period of this stage. (Sherif & Sayed, 1985, PP 167-202).

##### **a- The Starting or Initial Stage: Prior to the 19th Century:**

This stage incorporated three basic periods:-

- \* The Mamluks period.
- \* The Othoman period.
- \* The French occupation period.

Social services during these initial periods were closely linked to the main religion, specially Islam, as represented by the *Wakf* Islamic system which started during these periods in addition to the

- 2- Most of the graduates might not find suitable job vacancies that could accommodate them and hence, they would be on the unemployment list. 22/31
- 3- The feeling of inferiority in comparison to other professions and other fields that can be functional within the free market, system. 16/31
- 4- They might be forced to work in unprofessional jobs. 7/31
- 5- They might leave other unprofessional to do their jobs. 9/31

#### **THE FOURTH QUESTION :**

The following are the conditions that the experts have mentioned as imperative for the profession to prove its value in the free society:

- 1- The reconsidering of the educational regulations by using orientations, as the fields orientation, which is the most appropriate under these circumstances. 27/31
  - 2- Giving more importance and consideration to field work training and research work. 19/31
  - 3- The importance of carrying out pioneer experiments in practice by the profession's scientific institutions in cooperation with the syndicate and the Egyptian Society for Social Workers an idea of what could be expected of them in practice in private organizations. 22/31
  - 4- Preparing press campaigns and communicating with the specialized institutions to clarify the role of the profession in the society. 18/31
  - 5- Conducting researches that will help pave the way for the professional practice within the private organizations. 12/31
  - 6- Finding ways to push the issue of preparing the private practice law in order to give the practitioners the opportunity to work outside the boundaries of the governmental institutions. Only then their creativity and innovations for the welfare of the practice could be seen. 19/31
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**THE FIFTH QUESTION :**

The experts have unanimously agreed upon the necessity to raise the standard of scientific level and the proficiency of the practitioners during the present phase. 29/31

30 respondents out of 31 affirmed that both the scientific level and proficiency level of the practitioners are extremely below standard at the present time and that they will keep on being low unless real changes take place whether in the stage of training the future practitioners of the rehabilitation for the present practitioners.

As for the needed proficiencies during the coming phase, the experts mentioned the following :-

- Proficiencies concerning mediation, negotiation and bargaining. 22/31
- Defense proficiencies. 18/31
- Proficiencies in guidance and giving advises and directives. 19/31
- Proficiencies in team work. 6/31
- Proficiency in research work. 3/31
- In addition to other proficiencies pertaining to the traditional practice. 18/31

All experts, without any exceptions, have affirmed the importance of providing adequate, functional and active programs that would assure the least possible needed proficiencies for the students.

**THE SIXTH QUESTION :**

Some experts 25/31 added that the profession will not be able to practice in the light of the free economy system unless it exerts real strenuous efforts with all its institutions, to prove its importance to the new system and its needed interference in helping the different institutions to achieve their economical goals, or else these institutions will refrain from

*Zakaa* (Islamic aims tax) and the social solidarity systems which stem from the Islamic legislation.

The social services were confined to private efforts of people who wanted to extend a helping hand to the needy and poor and who understood the current social problems at that time.

However, there were efforts exerted by the authorities embodied in founding the Ministry of Wakf 1835 and other attempts made like establishing the first government reformatory for juvenile delinquents in 1898, in addition to establishing the first two courts for juvenile delinquents' cases in Cairo and Alexandria in 1905, and the issuing of some laws concerning the juvenile delinquents.

**b) The Spreading stage: from 1919 to 1938 :**

This stage is closely linked to the 1919 Egyptian Revolution and its current social, political and economical circumstances like: the increase of national, social and religious awareness and also the Declaration of Independence in 1922. The most conspicuous factors in this stage were the spreading of the social organizations and the establishment of specialized institutes in social service, these institutes and schools like: the Cairo Institute for Social Work that was founded in 1937 by the Egyptian Organization for Social Studies. Also this Organization had started to carry pioneer experiments in developing the Egyptian rural areas. The most famous of these experiments are the ones that were conducted in El Manayeel and Shatanof rural areas. Ahmed Zeitoun confirms that this stage was known by its:

- Growing independence of the social activities from the religious influence.
  - Starting to appoint employees in social work.
  - Following the footsteps of foreign social activities.
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- Increasing interest of the government in social aspects through founding the Higher Council for Social Reform in 1936 and offering limited governmental financial aid to the social organizations.

**c) The third stage covers the period from : 1939 to 1951:**

This stage is called the stage of supervision and directives, as the Ministry for Social welfare was established in 1939, and started its activities by establishing social care centres in the rural areas, these centres offered the inhabitants the needed social and health care services. Also this stage had witnessed the graduation of specialized practitioners from the schools of Social Work and the government had also established a governmental institute for social work in addition to the issuing of the Social Security law of 1950, that gave some members of the community the right to receive a monthly pension.

During this period of time, the government started to interfere in the activities of the privately founded organizations by issuing the law 49 for 1945 that was followed by another in 1952 that increased the control of the government over these privately founded and administered organizations.

**d) The Fourth stage covers the period from 1952 to 1960 :**

This stage is called the stage of organizing and coordinating. The most important happening that affected social work at this stage was the July 1952 Revolution which resulted in the setting of new general policies and plans concerning social welfare and the development of social work education which gave the chance to the practitioner to climb the academic ladder till he can obtain a B.Sc. degree in social work starting from 1958.



Also unions were formed by the decree of 384 for the year 1956, for organizing the work of the organizations and social institutions in Egypt.

**e) The Fifth stage is the stage of socialism planning: from 1961 to 1967:**

This stage is distinguished by the issuing of the July Socialist Laws and the publishing of the National Charter and the forming of the Socialist Union as a people's political institution to lead the public. The government became fully responsible for the social care and social security programmes and accordingly, the government's control on public activities had increased and so did the number of practitioners in the government institutes like: schools, hospitals and factories. The government had assumed full responsibility for creating new jobs for all the graduates of the universities and institutes. Including of course the graduates of the social work schools and institutes.

The contemporary professors of social work who had witnessed this stage, affirm the fact that the institutes that taught the social work profession were in danger as some officials looked upon them as places that prepare students for a liberal profession and not a socialist one. Some officials had even suggested the closing down of the institutes of social work, a threat that instigated the professors of this profession to change the colours' of this education. They switched to the socialist colours' and tried to link the profession with the central planning programmes of the government.

Many studies and literature were published confirming the close links that bind the social work profession to the socialist regime, examples of such literature: Social Work in the Socialist Society.

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The profession had started to concentrate on the developmental methods of study as a consolidation to its existence in the community. The profession, then started to discard the clinical methods. This stage had its impact on the profession as Reda believes, on various aspects. The most important of which are :-

- \* The overcoming of the routine over the practice of social work in the governmental organizations which deprived the profession, in these organizations, from any professional inventiveness or creativity.
- \* Attempts were made to naturalize or adjust the profession to meet the socialist ends., (Reda, 1986, P.345 and El Gohary, 1992).

This stage, however, had witnessed many intertwined problems which had resulted from the emergence of several effects over the society. El Gohary had summarized these resulting effect in :-

**a) National Problems :-**

- \* Emigration to the oil contries with both its positive and negative effects.
- \* Sense of belonging and national awareness of the Egyptian citizen who had just been through a totalitarian regime where he was intentionally alienated from participating in decision making.
- \* Religion as a strong pressing factor on the society and the impact of the alien religious currents that reject the society.
- \* Corruption that was nurtured during the past totalitarian regime.
- \* Addiction as a problem that threatens lives and wealth.
- \* Contamination of the environment and the mushrooming of the squatter housing problem.
- \* Crime.
- \* deterioration in the services and general utilities.

- b) This period will also be witnessing other various changes and development in the field of social services, (El Gohary, 1992, PP 40-48), the social work profession and, as an example of these new changes, the covering umbrella of social security and pensions for many sects of the society as per the Law for the year 1975, and also the founding of the Body for Building and Developing the Egyptian Village in 1972.

As for the social work education, higher education leading to master degrees started in 1973, then doctoral degree in 1975, and the transference of the Institute for Social work to a college affiliated to Helwan University. Also the increase in the number of institutes and colleges that follow academic curriculae in the field of social work. These institutes have covered all the governorates of Egypt, from Alexandria to Aswan. Their number at present amounts to nine institutes and colleges. It goes without saying that from such a number of academic institutions the number of their graduates will be continuously increasing.

**(2) The Social Work in Egypt at the Present Time :**

It is believed that the continuing changes that are taking place in the Egyptian society since the end of the last century, and the reflections they had over the nature of this society, and under the social welfare system and its affiliated professions, like social work profession, had lead, undoubtedly, to a very important question that is related to the present form of the profession within the frame of present changes economical, social and political that our society is now witnessing since 1967.

Quite a number of those related to the field of social work at present, have observed that social work profession has faced a lot of difficulties in catching up with the continuous changes occurring and it is still

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being faced with many hindrances and difficulties in following closely in the footsteps of these changes in a way that does not consolidate its existence as a profession that can face the problems the society is suffering from.

A study was conducted in the Higher Institute of Social Work in 1992 and was titled: "The identity of Social Work in Egypt". This study tried to make a full survey to describe the reality of the social work practice in Egypt in the different fields and the problems that face the social workers. This study has lead to very interesting findings that are related to the practice. The following are the most important ones:

- a) Social work, in general, is being practiced in Egypt mostly in governmental institutions with few exceptions of privately administered organizations, which give to the profession the bureaucratic governmental stamp.
- b) The social worker suffers from many problems, the most important of which is the proficiency rate and the weak position specially in secondary institutions.
- c) The practice of social work profession is seen more in institutions that follow the system of 'self-help' and 'group-help' more than organizing the community, yet this does not deny the presence of this system in some developmental institutions.
- d) The underdeveloped and obsolete tools of the practice which had not developed since the '60's.

This study has reached an important finding concerning the harm that was done to the profession as a result of its being under the protection of the government since the July 1952 Revolution. The educational institutions have relied, for its existence, on the government that fill them every year with undergraduates, and employing their gradutes in governmental institutions to get paid without looking closely at their

fitness and proficiency for such jobs, a factor that made those employees' very secure and so they nipped in the bud any hope for developing their profession. (Eweiss and others, 1992).

Many studies that were carried and conferences that were held during the '90's had shed more light on the problems that the profession is suffering from, and its stand concerning the social changes that are taking place, there is, however, another study, that was carried by a social work researcher on social work between the practical profession and bureaucracy, as social work is being practiced in Egypt currently in the bureaucratic governmental institution. The most important of its findings was that the professional practice is suffering from the rigid government rules that prevail in the work atmosphere and the weakness of the resources and abilities and the complete lack of creativity and innovation, This result coincides with the general findings of the research titled: " The Identity of social Work in Egypt", (M.Fahmy, 1993, P. 413).

As for the labour field, which is the most threatened field among the different fields of the practice, because of the strong trend prevailing to transfer industrial institutions to private investment ones. One of the studies has proved that social work in industrial institutions is still being practiced according to the concepts that were prevailing during the '50's, and is still using traditional tools to the extent that it is still functioning according to the clinical methods and did not develop towards the developmental orientation which the practice had adopted in some fields. The study had suggested more care to be given to the labour field through developing and progressing the labour social work education and to reach the labour organizations and participate with the labourers in taking decisions.

Moreover, the study added another suggestion about finding a suitable form for private practice in Egypt that could give the small

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industrial enterprises the change to make use of the services offered by the profession as a means to develop the labour productivity and without necessitating the permanent presence of a social worker there. (A. Mageed, 1993).

Abdel Moshen tried to analyse the present reality of education as follows :

- a) Education depends on the Western model, specially the American one.
- b) The increasing number of graduates with a lack of a clear government educational system.
- c) Expansion in post-graduate education in social work with a lack of well defined policy.
- d) The failure of the educational system in making use of the scientific empirical accumulation of the practice and profession.
- e) Deficiency in Arabic literature in social work.
- f) Interest in methods of practice but neglect in the fields.
- g) Large gap separating the educational from the practice institutions.
- h) Most of the practice is being carried out in the government body which lead to a bureaucratic and professional crises.
- i) Absence of an Egyptian theory that can set directives to the practice. (A. Mohsen, 1992).

This study attempts at adding to the existing literature and researches in this field in order to reach the best methods and concepts that should be adopted by the profession whether at the present time or in the coming future, in a way to make it as pliable to the expected future changes as possible.

### **THIRD : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

This research has depended upon analyzing the experts, views who specialize in the issue of developing the social work professional practice.

The analytical method used is a qualitative analysis that used a six-questions questionnaire. These questions give the specialist the chance to express his opinion on the issue in an unrestricted way, a method known in research work as an open-ended questionnaire. This field tool was distributed among 36 experts who work as Professors in the social work faculties & institutes and social workers (more than 20 years of experiences), 31 responded received their questionnaires and five failed to respond in filling the forms.

We could describe this study as descriptive as it describes the effects of the present social changes in Egypt and their impact over the practice and social work education.

The queries concerning education were defined as follows :

- 1) What are the direct and indirect effects of privatization on the social work educational institutions?
- 2) What is the impact of these effects on those who teach in this field?
- 3) What are the effects on the proficiency and efficiency of the students after their graduation?
- 4) What are the needed conditions for the profession to consolidate itself in the future?
- 5) What are the needed proficiencies that any practitioner need to acquire for the coming future?

#### **FOURTH : FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH:**

The research findings could be summarized in the following points:-

##### 1) Description of the Research Population:

The research population consisted of 31 specialist or expert who teach and practice social work material in the institutions and colleges of social work. Their characteristics could be defined according to the following:

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* Age factor	: 38 - 48	12/31
	48 - 58	14/31
	more than 58	05/31
* Position factor	: Assistant Prof.	08/31
	Associate Prof.	09/31
	Prof.	03/31
	Social workers	11/31
* Specialization in the Methods:		
	Case work	06/31
	Group work	07/31
	Community organization	05/31
	General Practice	11/31

## 2) Open - Ended Interviews :

### First Question:

The findings reached from this question have indicated the direct effects of this system on the social work educational institutions that could be defined in the following :-

- 1- The presence of facilities presented for whoever founds an institution for practitioners without seriously studying its feasibility in doing a good job. 18/31.
- 2- Increase in the number of the social work educational institutions and the resulting outcome of graduating armies of graduates not needed in the job market. 16/31.
- 3- The inability and inadequacy of the present theoretical curricula in facing the impact of the expected changes. 09/31
- 4- The present status of training is so poor and inadequate on both quality and quantity levels that it cannot prepare suitable practitioners that have the proper training to face future challenges. 20/31



As the indirect effects, the following are the most important findings:-

- 1- The admission of students who are not interested in majoring in this field of study and accordingly, their performance is much below standard and when they actually graduate are faced with the fact that they have to practice the profession or they might be forced to take any other irrelevant job. 20/31
- 2- Increase in the number of the private educational institutions without setting a general policy for teaching this profession in Egypt, these institutions turn easily to business-oriented enterprises and not academic. 09/31
- 3- Expected deterioration of the profession and practitioners, status because of the inability of the practitioner to present tangeable and functional benefits to the society due to the prevailing educational system. 21/31

As for the ability of these institutions to cope with the new system in the Egyptian market, the findings were as follows :-

The responses of the respondents on this issue branched into the following :-

- \* It can face this new system. 10/31
- \* In its present state and ability, it cannot face this new system. 09/31
- \* It can under certain conditions. 12/31

The experts defined these conditions as follows :-

- The imperative presence of a clear general policy for the social work education. 5/12.
  - Setting rules and conditions for establishing social work educational institutions. 4/12
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- Carrying researches and studies in addition to preparing conferences and seminars that would concentrate its efforts on solving the problems of social work educational system in Egypt. 9/12
- The development of translation and adoption of the scientific and practical expertise of the profession and specially among the experiences of the developing countries. 7/12
- Giving more concern to establishing permanent channels of communication between practitioners and academicians and exchanging views between them. 10/12

#### **THE SECOND QUESTION:**

The respondents confirmed that the most important effects of this system over the professor who teaches the profession and who meets the challenges of the continuous increase in the number of the students and the decrease in his income, are as follows :-

- 1- The absence of a strong for good performance. 15/31
- 2- Weakness of abilities to create and research new modern educational methods. 9/31
- 3- The weak standard of the text books and the absence of up to date scientific material. 22/31
- 4- The absence of strong communication with students which affects their personal and professional attitudes. 6/31

#### **THE THIRD QUESTION:**

As for the effects concerning the adoption of the free market system on the students, the experts have responded as follows:-

- 1- The professional performance expected to be weak due to failure in adequate preparations. 19/31.

developmental fields sponsored by the Ministry of social Affairs during the forties and specially in the Egyptian rural areas.

After the July 1952 Revolution, and till the mid seventies when the whole society was going through a gradual political and economical process of change towards a social concept, this change has affected the profession deeply. It has been transferred, as a result of the social concept, to becoming mainly a government profession. After that, from the mid seventies to the beginning of the nineties, the system has been transferred again to a liberal system, and this process of change is very well represented in the emergence of the **privatization concept** since the late eighties and the transfer towards private administration. Such changes are having their toll over the profession and its practitioners as they feel they have been placed in a critical situation. This critical situation is represented in the change in the ethics and circumstances of the practice during a certain period of time that did not give ample time space between each period to affect any quick orientation with the changing concepts.

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employing social workers or transferring whoever they already have to other unprofessional jobs or fire them if they have the chance.

#### **AT THE END**

This study recommends the importance of the existence of a form of active cooperation between the social work institutions whether the educational or professional, with the other institutions that are concerned with the practitioners' welfare like the syndicate, and the professional societies in order to prepare the well-trained practitioners and the rehabilitation of the veteran practitioners in order to have the proper training by which to face the upcoming circumstances that might uproot the profession, its practitioners and its institutions under a regime that cannot tolerate the presence of a profession which is considered valueless and unimportant.

It also refers to the importance of private practice which will support the profession identity. This means that the education policy and process should concentrate on teaching students specially post graduates the essential professional skills and tools needed for this private practice.

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