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▶ Government spending on education and skills, and the educational requirements of the labour market **in Egypt**





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ISBN: 9789220416938 (web PDF)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54394/IOTJ8193>

Also available in Arabic: الإنفاق الحكومي على التعليم والمهارات، والمتطلبات التعليمية لسوق العمل في مصر
ISBN 9789220416969 (web PDF)

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► Contents

A. Spending on education in Egypt	4
► Spending levels	4
► Educational spending by level of education	7
B. Educational requirements of the labour market	9
► Education and ISCED in Egypt	10
► Occupational employment and ISCO in Egypt	11
► The ISCO-ISCED Correspondence matrix for Egypt	13
► Educational requirements of the labour market in Egypt	13
C. Key findings and recommendations	15
► Policy recommendations	16



► List of Figures

► Figure 1: Public spending on education as a ratio to GDP, and as a ratio to public expenditures	5
► Figure 2: Public spending on education as a ratio of GDP in OECD countries	6
► Figure 3: Public spending on education as a ratio of public expenditures in OECD countries	6
► Figure 4: Economic Classification of the budget chapters for education sector as a percentage of total government spending on education over the period (2018/2019- 2020/2021)	7
► Figure 5: Public spending on pre-university and higher education as a percentage of total public spending (public expenditures) in Egypt	8
► Figure 6: The distribution of government spending on the education sector (%)	8
► Figure 7: Educational Requirements in Egypt (% of the employed)	15

► List of Tables

► Table 1: Broad correspondence between ISCO-08 and ISCED 11	9
► Table 2: Egypt's education levels and ISCED	11
► Table 3: ISCO-88 major groups with number of sub-groups and skill levels	12
► Table 4: Educational requirements (in percentages) for occupations major groups	14



► Introduction

Countries investing more in education, training and employability achieve better employment results. This is increasingly true in a world economy that requires increasing levels of competency at faster paces of technological adoption. Adequate levels of public spending on education, skills and employability, as well as the quality of the services offered and their relevance to labour market needs, are essential to fostering economic growth, and a quality of growth that makes good use of a country's core asset, its labour force.

Egypt compares well with other OECD countries on levels of public spending in education. There is considerable evidence however of a misalignment between the needs of the Egyptian economy and the skills of its workforce. In official labour market statistics, the more educated, the more likely individuals are to be unemployed. This apparent paradox has grown over the years with the rise in tertiary enrolment. Other sources, from enterprise surveys researching skills needs, reports and statements by employers organisations, and other research (Assaad et al., 2018; El-Hamidi, 2010) further corroborate the importance of the skills mismatch in Egypt.

► A. Spending on education in Egypt

Spending levels

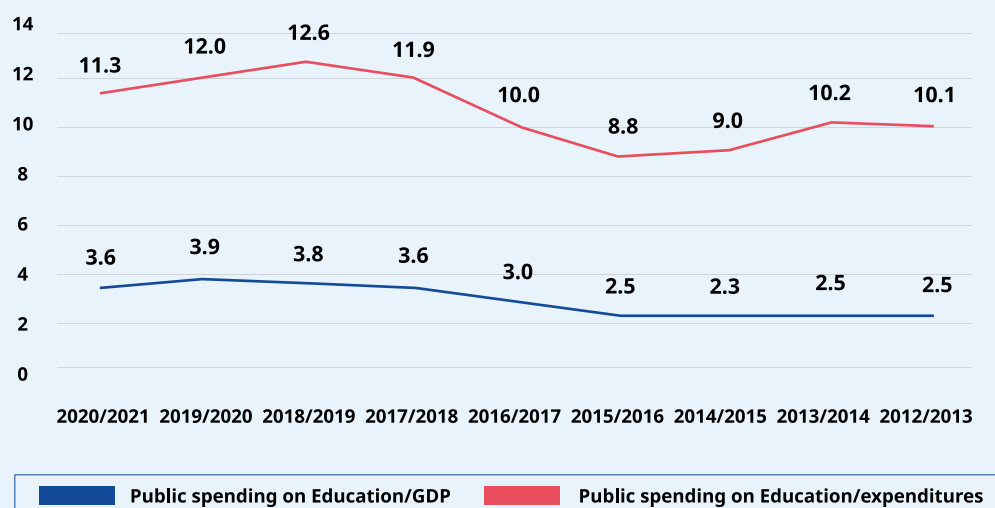
Spending on education in Egypt compares fairly well with spending in other OECD countries. With 2.5% of GDP and 10% of total public spending, educational expenditures in Egypt in the fiscal year 2020/2021 are at around the average level of spending in OECD countries. The Government of Egypt (GoE) exerts much efforts in supporting and developing the education sector, considering education a powerful force capable of accelerating the rate of economic growth, improving the process of income distribution, facilitating social mobility, reducing poverty, improving the quality of life of citizens, building a more solid and cohesive national identity, and in order to improve the educational level.

Taking into account its youthful and fast growing population, spending on the education sector should be further increased. The Constitution guarantees the right to education to every individual. Under its Article 19 it stipulates the state's obligation to allocate a percentage of public spending on education that is not less than 4% of the gross national product. Under Article 20 the Constitution establishes a duty for the state to develop general as well as technical and vocational education in accordance with international quality standards and in line with the needs of the labour market. It adds that spending allocated to university education should equal 2% of the gross national product, and that scientific research should be allocated another 1% of the gross national product.

Education constituted about 10.7% of the total government expenditure on average during the study period and amounted to about 3.1% of the gross domestic product on average during the same period. It is noted that the ratio of government spending to total spending in the state budget has stabilized at 10.1% in the fiscal year (2020/2021). Government spending on education is about 2.5% of GDP in the same fiscal year.



► Figure 1: Public spending on education as a ratio to GDP, and as a ratio to public expenditures

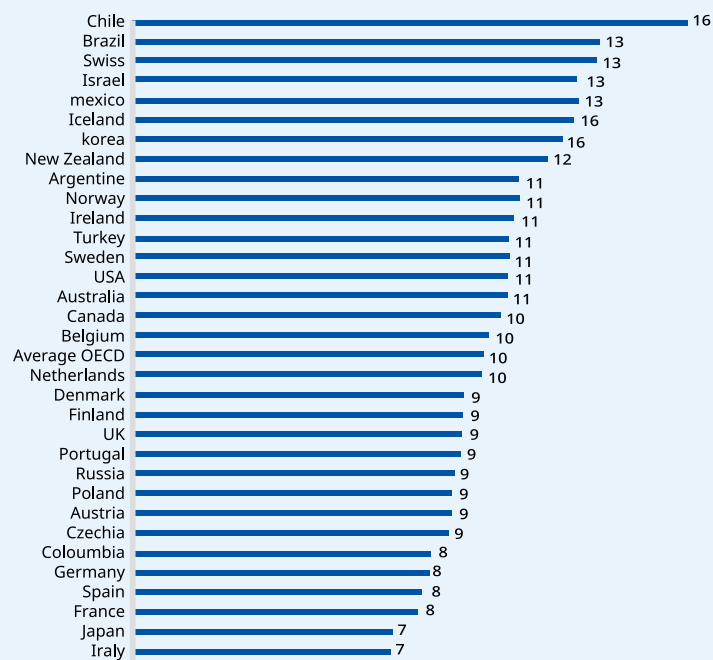


Source: calculated by the Ministry of Finance

If a comparison is made between Egypt and a sample of (OECD) countries with regard to the percentage of spending on education as a percentage of GDP, it turns out that this percentage ranges between 2% to 5%. This indicates that this percentage in Egypt (2.5%) is relatively higher than that of Turkey, Japan, Russia and Ireland, but less than other countries such as Chile, Italy and Korea (3%), Finland, New Zealand and Sweden (4%) and Norway (5%).

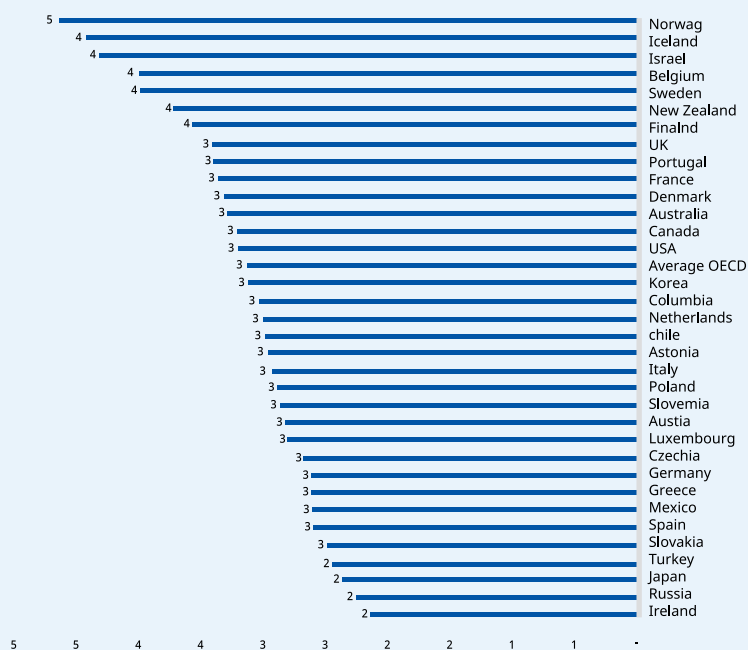
It is observed in a sample of (OECD) countries that spending on education as a percentage of government spending in those countries ranges between (7%-16%). This percentage in Egypt accounts for 10.1% which corresponds to the average spending of (OECD) countries, as well as Canada, Belgium and the Netherlands. But it is lower than South Korea (12%), Mexico, Switzerland and Brazil (13%), as well as Chile (16%).

► Figure 2: Public spending on education as a ratio of GDP in OECD countries



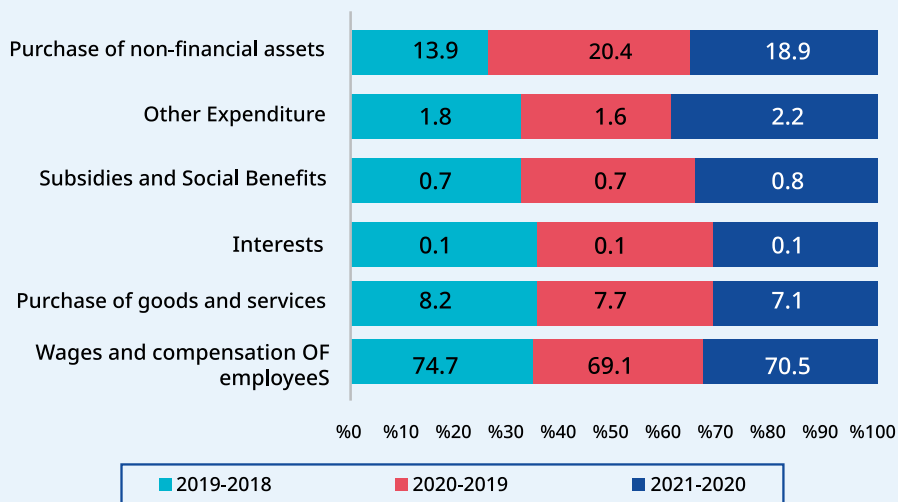
Source: OECD 2021

► Figure 3: Public spending on education as a ratio of public expenditures in OECD countries



Source: OECD 2021

► Figure 4: Economic Classification of the budget chapters for education sector as a percentage of total government spending on education over the period (2018/2019- 2020/2021)



Source: OECD 2021

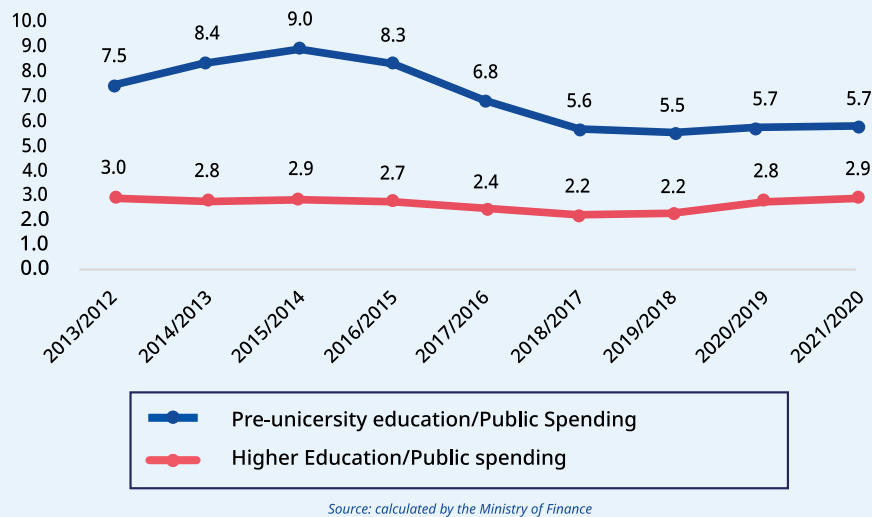
The structure of government spending on education in recent years illustrates the state's efforts to adjust the priorities of government spending on the six items of the budget for the education sector. There is an effort to increase investment spending (Chapter VI - the purchase of non-financial assets) and reducing the first chapter represented by wages and workers' compensation. The above chart shows an increase in the percentage of investments in the education sector from 13.9% in the fiscal year (2018/2019) to approximately 19% in the fiscal year (2020/2021). Wages decreased from 74.7% in the fiscal year (2018/2019) to 70.5% in the fiscal year (2020/2021).

Educational spending by level of education

Government spending on pre-university education occupies the higher share in comparison with the higher education spending; that accounts for 5.7% of the total government expenditure, and 1.4% of GDP in FY 2020/21. The share in total public spending has remained constant for spending in university education but decreased fairly significantly for primary and secondary education over the last decade.

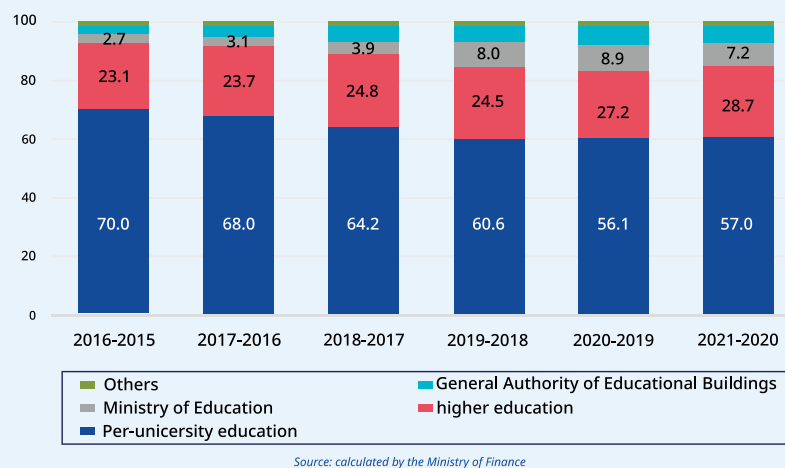


► Figure 5: Public spending on pre-university and higher education as a percentage of total public spending (public expenditures) in Egypt



The chart below confirms data from the previous in showing a significant increase in the share of spending for tertiary education and a relative decrease in spending in pre-university education. The latter benefits from 57% of total spending on education in FY 2020/21 while tertiary education receives 29% of spending in the same period. This share is one of the highest in the MENA region, among countries with available data, which signals the high priority given to tertiary education in the education budget. The same has been noted in a recent public spending review for Egypt (World Bank 2022). Per student spending has increased substantially in nominal terms over the last five years. Between FY2016 and FY2020, nominal per student spending rose from EGP 7,581 to EGP 11,847. Moreover, in FY2016, per student spending constituted 25 percent of GDP per capita.

► Figure 6: The distribution of government spending on the education sector (%)



The chart below confirms data from the previous in showing a significant increase in the share of spending for tertiary education and a relative decrease in spending in pre-university education. The latter benefits from 57% of total spending on education in FY 2020/21 while tertiary education receives 29% of spending in the same period. This share is one of the highest in the MENA region, among countries with available data, which signals the high priority given to tertiary education in the education budget. The same has been noted in a recent public spending review for Egypt (World Bank 2022). Per student spending has increased substantially in nominal terms over the last five years. Between FY2016 and FY2020, nominal per student spending rose from EGP 7,581 to EGP 11,847. Moreover, in FY2016, per student spending constituted 25 percent of GDP per capita.

► B. Educational requirements of the labour market

Educational attainment statistics represent the educational supply in a country, while employment statistics can be used to represent the educational demand in a labour market, by considering how employment is distributed across occupations and what the educational requirements of these occupations are. Educational attainment statistics in Egypt are produced by CAPMAS, the national statistical organisation, in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Labour force statistics, and in particular data concerning jobs and occupations, are produced by CAPMAS in line with the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)¹. The ISCED and ISCO classifications have been designed to converse with one another at a broad level of correspondence (see Table 1). ISCO groups occupations in 4 skills levels that are aligned with the broad levels of education in ISCED.

► Table 1: Broad correspondence between ISCO-08 and ISCED 11

Major groups	ISCO skills level	ISCED 2011 correspondence
1- Managers (excluding in own-account/micro enterprises)	3+4	5+6+7+8
2- Professionals	4	5+6+7+8
3- Technicians and associate professionals	3	4+5
4- Clerical support workers	2	2+34
5- Service and sales workers	2	2+35
6- Skilled agricultural, forestry and fisheries workers	2	2+35
7- Craft and related trades workers	2	35
8- Plant and machinery operators and assemblers	2	35
9- Elementary Occupations	1	1

¹At the time of preparation of this study, Egypt applied ISCED v.11 and ISCO v.88.

At country level, such a broad correspondence can be refined via the preparation of a national correspondence matrix between educational programmes and occupations. The normative exercise consists in identifying what level and type of education is appropriate for a given occupation. Data on the actual educational attainment of workers in each occupation informs the identification (years of education, highest credential obtained, type of education – vocational/technical, or general/academic). Importantly and not to “institutionalise” misalignment (over- or under-education) in a labour market, the appropriate level of education will deviate from the actual education attainment observed in the labour force data. An expert valuation, bringing together education-sector and labour-market expertise, as well as the national statistical office on issues related to coding standards and practices, ultimately determines the correspondence between a certain type of education and a certain type of job.

The international and Egyptianised versions of the ISCO framework (CAPMAS, 2006, 2017; ILO, 1988) provide detailed descriptions of the occupations including their skills requirements, and represent therefore a starting point for this exercise. Experiences from other countries are also useful, but the level and types of skills expected for a given occupation vary from a country to another: demand-side factors (expectations from consumers of final and intermediate goods and services), and supply-side factors (the skills it takes to compete in an occupation) are country-specific in many ways. What actual competencies are acquired via different levels and types of education also differ from a country to another.

This approach represents a contribution to the appraisal of educational policies in Egypt, by considering how much the educational output may tally with the educational requirements of the labour market. Important limitations should be noted. First, the relevance of education should not only be appraised from economic or labour standpoints; education fulfils other goals beyond forming employable or productive individuals. Secondly, this analysis is based on the current needs of the labour market using trend-employment data from 2009 to 2017. Current needs differ from the medium and long run needs depending on demographics and how the economy transforms. Third, the analysis looks at the data for persons that were employed during the period, and does not consider the educational requirements of the jobs that would be needed to absorb the un- and under-employed, or the potential labour force.

Education and ISCED in Egypt

Table 1 presents the correspondence between Egypt’s education programs and the ISCED classification. Egypt mandates universal education until the preparatory or lower secondary level (ISCED level 2), which is thus considered for the purpose of this study the minimum educational requirement for all employment. Six educational categories are distinguished: lower secondary general and vocational education, upper secondary general and vocational education, post-secondary vocational and short-cycle tertiary technical education, and tertiary academic education².

Columns 5 and 6 are based on official education curricula in Egypt. Column 7 shows the actual number of years spent at school from labour force survey data. The latter is, as expected, slightly higher than the former.

²Egypt is currently establishing six technological universities to provide longer-cycle technical education. These will be categorised as tertiary technical education. Since this new type of tertiary education is not yet available, they do not appear in labour market data and thus it is not included in this mapping.



► Table 2 Egypt's education levels and ISCED

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Level code	Title of formal Education level	Title of formal Education level (Arabic)	ISCED code	Length of program (years)	Cumulative years of schooling (approx.)	Average years of schooling (LFS 2017-2010)
1	Lower secondary general	التعليم الإعدادي	ISCED 24	3 years	8/9 years	9.1
2	Lower secondary vocational	المدرسة المهنية	ISCED 25	3 years	8/9 years	9.1
3	Upper secondary general	التعليم الثانوي العام	ISCED 34	3 years	11/12 years	12.3
4	Upper secondary vocational	التعليم الثانوي التقني	ISCED 35	3 years	11/12 years	12
5	Post-secondary vocational and short-cycle technical education	السنتين الأخيرتين من برامج المدارس الفنية المتقدمة (5 سنوات) 45 - Nursing and dentistry 55	ISCED 45 and 55	2 years	13/14 years	14
6	Tertiary academic education	برامج البكالوريوس والليسانس	ISCED 66, 76, 86	4-7 years	15/16 years	16.1

Occupational employment and ISCO in Egypt

The International Standard classification of occupations (ISCO-88) used by CAPMAS classifies occupations into major groups (1st digit level), sub-major groups (2nd digit level), minor groups (3rd digit level), and unit groups (4th digit level) (ILO, 1988). ISCO defines an occupation as a set of similar “jobs”, which in turn are coherent sets of tasks and duties executed by one person. The concept of skill is defined as the ability to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job. ISCO defines four levels of skills, from higher-level to lower level skills, as shown in Table 2 below.



► Table 3: ISCO-88 major groups with number of sub-groups and skill levels

Major group (1-digit)	Number of sub-major (2nd digit) groups	Number of minor groups (3rd digit)	Number of unit groups (4th digit)	ISCO Skill level
1. Legislators, senior officials, and managers	3	8	33	Levels 3 and 4
2- Professionals	4	8	55	Level 4
3- Technicians and associate professionals	4	21	73	Level 3
4- Clerks	2	7	23	Level 2
5. Service workers and shop and market and sale workers	2	9	23	
6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	2	6	23	
7. Craft and related trades workers	4	16	70	
8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers	3	20	70	
9. Elementary occupations	3	10	25	Level 1
0. Armed forces 1 1 1 --	1	1	1	-
Total	28	106	357	



The ISCO-ISCED Correspondence matrix for Egypt³

The Correspondence matrix relates six levels and types of education to occupations at job-entry and at the most detailed occupational level, that is up to the 4th level of disaggregation (for 357 types of occupations)⁴. In some cases, a sub-major group of occupations (ISCO's 2nd digit) is sufficiently homogeneous for all of its occupational minor groups and units to be assigned the same educational requirement (as for Professional groups 21, 22 and 23). In other cases, it is necessary to assign educational requirements at more detailed (third or fourth) levels. The matrix is presented accordingly, adding further detail where needed.

For most occupations several educational requirements can be considered as appropriate, including at the most detailed level of disaggregation. In these cases and for each occupation all educational requirements are applied equal weights.

For certain occupations educational requirements are defined by law (doctors, nurses, teachers or construction engineers). In these cases, the legal provisions are directly applied.

In some cases, different educational requirements should be applied for the same occupation if exercised in the public or in the private sector. For instance, "production and operations managers" in the public sector (consisting of large corporations) are assigned the highest level of educational requirements, while those in the private sector (consisting mostly of small and medium enterprises) are assigned a lower requirement. As shown in Annex 1, significant variations can be observed in the years of schooling of workers in the same occupation whether they operate in the public or in the private sectors.

The years of education among workers employed in Egypt in the public and in the private sector, as well as the share of employment by institutional sector, have been used as benchmarks and reported in the table. The averages are calculated from LFS annual data for the years 2009 to 2017.

Educational requirements of the labour market in Egypt

The educational requirements of the labour market in Egypt are estimated by applying the normative distribution of educational requirements by occupation, defined in the Correspondence matrix, to the current employment structure in Egypt. Occupational employment is provided by official labour force surveys (LFS), conducted annually by CAPMAS on a sample of over 90'000 households. The surveys identify within each household the persons that are employed and in which occupation they are employed.

The Correspondence table is defined down to the 4th level of disaggregation, for 357 occupations. At that level of disaggregation, the LFS data is not robust enough, with too few observations and important yearly variations in the less common occupations⁵. The data can be considered robust enough at the 3rd level of disaggregation for 106 types of occupations. Knowing from the Correspondence table which educational requirements apply to each of these occupations, and the share of persons working in these occupations (as their primary job), it is possible to then infer the educational requirements in the Egyptian labour market.

Employment data and its occupational distribution is sensitive to short-term business cycle fluctuations that should not inform longer-term valuations of educational requirements. Changes made to the surveys and their questionnaires over the years also need "harmonising" to produce a consistent series⁶. Harmonised labour force survey data for each year between 2009 and 2017 is used, and an exponential linear smoothing is applied to correct for this limitation and mitigate other sampling and non-sampling factors.

³This work has been conducted by experts from the national statistical office (CAPMAS), the Ministries of Education, Higher Education, Manpower and Finance, and ILO.

⁴The 4th digit level is the most detailed level of disaggregation in the international ISCO framework.

⁵Labour force surveys sample households, not occupations, and therefore are not to be considered entirely representative at a very detailed level.

⁶The study for this purpose uses the data harmonized by the Economic Research Forum (ERF)

When several types or levels of educational requirements may be appropriate to any one of the 106 occupations in this distribution, all educational requirements are considered with equal weights. For instance, an occupation that requires either upper secondary vocational or general education (levels 3 and 4 in the classification), would yield educational requirements of 50% for each educational level. In fact, the expert valuation has not made a distinction between general and vocational education for lower secondary education.

Table 3 shows the distribution of educational requirements for the main occupation groups, once 3rd level analysis is re-aggregated with employment shares weighted.

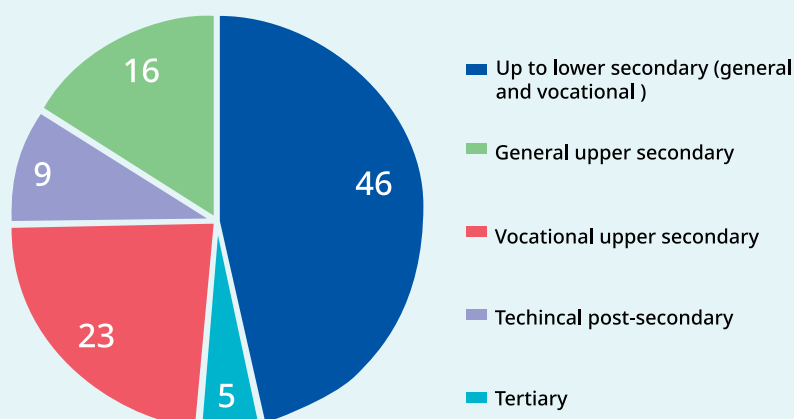
► Table 4: Educational requirements (in percentages) for occupations major groups

ISCO major group	Share in total employment (%)	Share in total employment (%)				
		Lower Secondary (levels 2/1)	Upper secondary general (level 3)	Upper secondary vocational (level 4)	Post-secondary (level 5)	Tertiary (level 6)
1. Legislators, senior officials, and managers	6.1	0.1	0.05	0.05	3.0	3.0
2. Professionals	13.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.9
3. Technicians and associate professionals	8.5	0.4	1.4	1.4	4.9	0.4
4. Clerks	3.1	0.0	1.3	1.3	0.5	0.0
5. Service workers and shop and market and sale workers	8.8	5.0	1.7	1.7	0.2	0.1
6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	24.3	12.1		12.1	0.0	0.0
7. Craft and related trades workers	17.3	10.5		6.8	0.0	0.0
8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers	9.6	9.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
9. Elementary occupations	8.1	8.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	98.70 ⁽¹⁾	45.9	4.4	23.3	8.7	16.3

(1) Employment does not add-up to 100% partly due to smoothing approximations and partly because occupation 999 (others/unclassified) is omitted.

This analysis, illustrated in Figure 7 below, finds that 46% of employment in Egypt requires a lower-secondary level of education, either in the general or in the vocational tracks. 28% of employment requires upper-secondary education, with about 5% in the general track and 23% in the vocational track. 9% requires post-secondary technical education, and 16% requires tertiary education.

► Figure 7: Educational Requirements in Egypt (% of the employed)



► C. Key findings and recommendations

This analysis finds that 46% of employment in Egypt requires a lower-secondary level of education (either general or vocational), 28% of employment requires upper-secondary education (with about 5% in the general track and 23% in the vocational track), 9% requires post-secondary technical education, and 16% requires tertiary education. This data is relevant for Government policy as inputs into public financing and educational programming, for further analysis and modelisation. As stated above, this analysis is based on the current needs of the labour market using trend-employment data from 2009 to 2017, and current needs differ from medium and long run needs depending on demographics and on how the economy transforms. It also does not cover the quality of education, and only focuses on relevance from a labour market perspective. Educational programming also needs to take into account the inner dynamics of the educational system, as well as the constitutional and legal imperatives that apply in Egypt. On the supply side, it has only been possible for this study to distinguish educational spending data between higher education and the rest, finding that overall educational spending stands at about 2.5% of GDP, with 28% invested in higher education and 57% in pre-primary, primary and secondary education. A finer disaggregation of educational spending, especially between general and technical/vocational education and between pre-primary, primary, and lower and upper secondary levels, could not be obtained. It would be imperative for policy purposes that such information be available to policy makers.



Policy Recommendations

Key policy recommendations are suggested below.

- Develop the GoE's knowledge of the current and projected requirements for education and skills in the economy, and better relate overall educational spending and policies to these requirements. This would involve conducting regular surveys and tracer studies in the labour market, and evaluation of educational programmes. A concrete example in that regards has been the recent introduction of a Skills module in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Employment, Wage and Hours of Work Establishment Survey (E&W) produced by CAPMAS. The data collected through these two surveys reflecting both supply and demand sides will facilitate the identification of skills gaps and educational levels mismatches in the labour market.
- Conducting an Education Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) to assess the real cost of educational outcomes for different education levels and types. This would not only allow for better public policy but may also inform private sector actors in the education field, to improve its overall quality and relevance;
- Accelerate the transition towards results and performance-based budgeting in the educational sphere, including on the basis of a clearer understanding of the economy's needs for broad levels and types of education. Government funding is not currently linked to any performance-based outcomes or system-level objectives. Rather, it is determined mainly based on historical basis and negotiations between individual public education institutions and the Ministry of Finance. For higher education additional methods to relate public funding to results, quality and relevance may lead to large improvements in the efficiency of funding allocation and quality of higher education.
- Developing productive educational institutions, i.e. revenue-generating activities in vocational, industrial and commercial schools. This would bolster public resources but also allow to bring education and the world of work closer, and raise students' employability and entrepreneurship skills. For higher education institutions, universities' ability to market their research and training services should also be promoted.
- Encouraging community and corporate social responsibility participation in financing and elaborating education curricula ; cost-sharing and dual-delivery arrangements between public and business actors, again to bridge the educational and economic worlds and address some resource challenges.
- Increase public funding for and develop capacities for career guidance at MoE, MoHE, MoM. Career guidance services and events should start from high school, for better informed educational and career choices. National campaigns with employers and for more information of educational prospects vis-à-vis the labour market skill needs would also be useful.
- Schools and university curricula should also be improved for relevance to the skills needed in the job market, in close partnership with employers.



Acknowledgements

This report is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) through its project Advancing the Decent Work Agenda in North Africa (ADWA').