7 What Has Changed in Education Since the Revolution?

The 2011 uprising is a watershed event in contemporary Egyptian history. The Revolution, as it is commonly referred to in Egypt, denotes the unprecedented scale of peaceful mass demonstrations and the eighteen-day sit-in in Tahrir Square that led to the removal of Mubarak. January 25 was the start of a cycle of protests that continued in tumultuous months of protest, government reshuffles and historical elections and referenda. This chapter asks what changed in relation to the production of lived and imagined citizenship in schools in the critical years immediately following the Revolution. I first outline changes in the wider political, economic and social context, before mapping key changes in the educational sphere, presenting novel analysis on trends in teacher salaries and public spending on education. The remainder of the chapter analyzes my research with students and teachers, teachers and stakeholders from 2016 to 2018. It updates the discussion on the themes that are methodologically and conceptually developed across Chapters 1–6 in relation to informal privatization, permissiveness and violent punishment, and maps key changes to textbooks, rituals and student narratives relating to citizenship and belonging.

Key Developments in the Post-Uprising Context

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, henceforth the SCAF, formally assumed power from the removal of Mubarak in February 2011. In the months following the removal of Mubarak, the rallying cry of the protesters for "Bread, Freedom, Social Justice" was not completely ignored by the SCAF. Freedom of expression and association witnessed a clear blossoming, and significant concessions were made with regard to selected socioeconomic demands. There seemed to be some recognition of the pitfalls of Mubarak's crony neoliberalism and attempts to project the image of the emergence of a new order. This period witnessed an alliance between the SCAF, the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi forces (Roll 2016, Létourneau 2016) that was critical to the large Islamist

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electoral victories in the relatively free elections after 2011. These victories culminated in the election of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi for the presidency in June 2012. Dissatisfaction with Morsi's performance led to the mass protests of June 30, 2013 that preceded his removal by the army on July 3, 2013. The current president and ex-Minister of Defense, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, was elected in 2014 after a brief interim presidency. The Sisi regime also initially seemed to be distancing itself from the model of the Mubaraks and recalling the legitimacy of the Nasserite model of a welfare and developmental state. A number of major projects and reform plans for different sectors were embarked upon.

However, the neoliberal direction of austerity, subsidy reduction and privatization was eventually presented as the only way to prevent Egypt's bankruptcy and access international credit. Many of the changes introduced after the Revolution were either reversed or their effects were eroded by subsequent changes. For example, a gesture toward progressive taxation that had raised the income tax rate for the highest earners to 30 percent in the aftermath of the Revolution was revised back to 22.5 percent in August 2015. The effects of the introduction of a minimum wage in 2012 and salary increases in selected sectors have been wiped out in real terms by the rise in prices for key goods and services that was unleashed by the currency devaluation of November 2016, as well as the reduction of subsidies on key goods and services, especially energy prices.[1] By 2017, the annual inflation rate reached 34 percent, the highest in almost a hundred years, while food prices rose by 43 percent in a country that is highly dependent on food imports.[2] The currency devaluation was part of a bailout package by the International Monetary Fund launched in 2016.

There was little change to the trends inherited from the Mubarak era, including poverty, high youth unemployment, low public sector wages and endemic corruption (Chapter 1). Poverty has continued to increase despite these new direct transfer programs (Hussein 2020a).[3] From 2012 onward, the rates of youth unemployment remained around 30–35 percent, and unemployment among educated youth in particular ranged from 50 to 60 percent (World Bank 2019c; ILOSTAT 2019). Perceptions of corruption and the absence of the rule of law are similar to pre-uprising

[1] Salary increases for the security services and judiciary might have enjoyed an upward trend in real terms.

[2] *Al-Masry Al-Youm* newspaper, August 14, 2017.

[3] Loan conditions also included increases in direct transfers to the poor and additional measures to increase food subsidies. These increases were limited, have also been eroded in real terms by inflation and are not expected to cover those who will fall below the poverty line as a result of the new economic policies (see El-Sharnoubi 2017).

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levels.[4] A 2019 increase in public-sector wages that barely restored workers to their predevaluation real incomes, excluded teachers and had no impact on the vast segments of the workforce in the informal economy and the private sector, half of whom receive wages below the new public-sector minimum wage of 2,000 EGP per month (Hussein 2020b). Rights to participation also underwent important changes in this period. Limits on expression, association and organization continued since 2011 with varying intensities and patterns, and have been codified into new laws and institutional structures (Hamzawy 2017). The disbanding of the pro-Muslim Brotherhood sit-ins in August 2013 represented the biggest incident of police repression in Egypt's modern history. By April 2014, key cadres of the secular groupings that had led the protests since 2011 had also been imprisoned and their various groups and activities outlawed. Political expression and media freedoms were also progressively undermined (Badr 2020).

Official discourses of legitimation underwent significant flux after 2011. Under the SCAF, there was official acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the Revolution, along with the assertion that it had been protected and supported by the army. The rise of Gamal Mubarak, a figure from outside the military establishment, his allies and their corruption were articulated as the main causes of the 2011 protests. With the prospect of Gamal's takeover after his father eliminated, there was no reason for protests to continue and it was time to rebuild the country. The Brotherhood had little time to fully develop their legitimizing narrative that oscillated between Islam, the restoration of stability and drawing legitimacy from the Revolution. The removal of Morsi in July 2013 was accompanied by an intensification of nationalist rhetoric, the reliance on new legitimizing narratives and the rearrangement of regional alliances.[5] The new legitimizing discourse revolved around demonization of the Muslim Brotherhood, the war on terror, the continuity of the January 25 Revolution in the June 30 Revolution, and the inseparability of the

[4] Corruption remains prevalent after the revolution and recent anti-corruption campaigns have almost entirely disregarded petty corruption (Fayed 2017b). According to Transparency International, Egypt's 2017 score of 32 in perceptions of public-sector corruption ranks it at 117 out of 180 countries. This is similar to its pre-2011 rankings on the same indicator (Alissa 2007). In 2018, Egypt ranked 110 out of 113 countries in the Rule of Law Index that traces perceptions of how the rule of law is applied in a host of areas, including the justice system, regulatory enforcement, security issues, fundamental rights, government powers and corruption (WJP 2018). Egypt's ranking in 2021 was 136 out of 139 countries (WJP 2021).

[5] The ceding of sovereignty over the two strategic Red Sea islands of Tiran and Sanafir, and thus control over the Straits of Tiran, to Saudi Arabia, can be seen as symbolic of the regional realignments.

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army and the people throughout Egyptian history (van de Bildt 2015). In addition, the regime is portrayed as protecting Egypt not only from religious fascism and foreign conspiracies but also from the prospect of state failure.[6]

Education after the Uprising: Ambitious Plans, Budgets Halved

These broader transformations all had their implications for education. One clear and positive change in the educational field after 2011 was the increase in teachers' salaries. In the beginning of the school year in 2011 and again in 2012, teachers engaged in sizable strike action demanding better pay and conditions.[7] The first stage of the pay increase came as part of the introduction of a minimum wage for all public sector employees in 2012. This was followed by further increases in teachers' salaries that came into effect in 2014. However, the post-2011 increases have largely been eroded by waves of inflation, especially after the 2016 devaluation, and teacher's salaries remain very low by international and regional standards. By 2018, the average monthly salary could be estimated at about 2,725 EGP (152 USD), which is equivalent to $716 PPP, when adjusted for purchasing power parity.[8] This represents 70 percent of the pre-uprising average of $1,022 PPP (Chapter 1). It is also one-fifth

[6] In 2017, for example, the president called upon the media and intellectuals to create "a phobia of the collapse of the state" among citizens, whereby even valid criticism of the weak performance of state institutions is portrayed as destabilizing the state. These statements were widely covered in media outlets – for example, *Al-Ahram Al-Arabi* on July 25, 2017.

[7] Starting in 2011, over 130,000 teachers were also gradually transferred from precarious poorly paid contracts to the official Teachers Cadre system.

[8] Estimating teacher salaries over time is exceedingly challenging in the absence of official publicly accessible data. I estimated the average salary in 2018 based on the publicly available salary table at the time, which incorporates the 2014 salary raise, and where starting salary is 1,853 EGP, reaching 3,666 EGP. I calculated the average based on the numbers of public-school teachers at each level of the Cadre in the 2017–2018 MOE Statistical Book. The PPP amount, considered more appropriate for international comparison, is based on the World Bank PPP conversion factor, private consumption (LCU per international $) for 2018 of 3.806. Actual salaries in 2018 might have been slightly different than the 2014 table figures, due to small annual increases and deductions since 2014 salary raise. However, higher estimates that circulate in the media often reflect desired or promised salary increases or might rely on salary information that is not representative of the national average (such as those of Giza and Cairo). The large regional variation in salaries has been noted in earlier studies, where salaries in a handful of governorates, including the capital, can be *more than double* the national average (OECD 2015, 184, see also MOE 2010). In fact, other available estimates of net salaries in 2018 were 5–10 percent lower than the salary table after adjusting for deductions.

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of the average OECD teacher salary and one-third of salaries in countries like Brazil and Turkey (OECD 2018). In addition, salaries in 2018 represented around 73 percent of GDP per capita, compared to 123 percent in 2010.[9] An OECD study estimated salaries at 160 percent of GDP per capita in 2012 with the post-uprising increase, while underlining that evidence points to an average wage of 3–3.5 times per capita GDP as conducive to a productive education system (OECD 2015, 184). Until 2021, the new public sector minimum wage had not been applied to teachers, although they do receive small annual increases.[10] The deteriorating conditions of teachers have exacerbated teacher shortages so that by October 2019 the Ministry of Education admitted to a massive shortage of 300,000 teachers.

Plans were announced in 2018 for the introduction, in the same year, of "a new education system" branded "Education 2.0." Despite the ambitious vision it presented, the initial conceptualization, prioritization, budgeting and implementation did not offer clear prospects for tackling the fundamental problems of quality, equity and management in the system: in terms of teaching quality, teacher shortages and wages, poor infrastructure and poor and inequitable distribution of resources (Chapter 1).[11] Instead of increased spending to match this ambitious overhaul, public spending on education has declined to about half its pre-uprising levels and is very low by international standards. By 2018, spending on (preuniversity and higher) education as a percentage of GDP had declined to 2.16 percent, half of its 2014 levels, in spite of the 2014 constitutional stipulation of a minimum public spending on education of 6 percent (4 percent for preuniversity and 2 percent for tertiary) (EIPR 2021). The budget allocated to preuniversity education for 2018–2019 represented 1.7 percent of GDP or slightly over 6 percent of public expenditures, compared to 3.5 percent of GDP and 12.6 percent of public expenditures in 2010.[12] The corresponding OECD

[9] I calculated average annual salaries as a percentage of GDP per capita (current LCU), based on World Bank data.

[10] Teachers were excluded from the 2019 public salary increase on the grounds that the state budget could not accommodate teacher salary increases because of their large numbers.

[11] Analysis of different aspects of the reforms can be found in the author's publications in English and Arabic from 2018 onward, including research and policy papers and a number of op-eds in the Egyptian daily *Al-Shorouk*.

[12] The 2018 calculations are based on the official government of Egypt figures, where expenditures on preuniversity education and total public expenditures are obtained from the 2018–2019 budget (MOF 2018) and GDP is obtained from the website of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development. The 2010 figures are obtained from an MOE report (MOE 2010, 168 and 179).

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average, as well as the averages in countries like Mexico and Turkey, is around 3.5 percent of GDP (OECD 2020). In fact, when taking into account that the system caters to over twenty million students, spending per student is very low in international comparison. Average annual spending per student in 2018 amounts to a very modest EGP 4,400 or $1,160 PPP.[13] This represents about 10 percent of the OECD average and 20–50 percent of the average in countries like Chile and Mexico (OECD 2020). Similar to pre-2011 trends, this deficiency in public spending on education is compensated for by private spending, primarily on the pervasive tutoring that has transformed education over the past decades (Chapter 2).

When asked what had changed in education in general since 2011, most respondents in 2016 and 2017 said either that there had been no change or that change had been for the worse. Sentiments were more negative in 2018, following the first steps of the introduction of Education 2.0. Students and teachers expressed a very negative view of education more generally and of their own schools in particular. They used the same pre-uprising tropes of the system as dysfunctional, unfixable and education as nonexistent (*mafish ta'lim*/there is no education). They elaborated on this with reference to widespread cheating, poor Arabic language skills (including among secondary school students), the rising costs of private tutoring, high truancy and the general disregard of school regulations. Teachers complained about the unqualified minister and the failure of management, and referred to the promised salary increases as annual promises to motivate teachers to carry out their assignments in the exam-monitoring period. Several teachers also referred to short-lived experiments with curriculum improvements, for example, to introduce "cooperative learning," but like previous attempts, these quickly ended due to a lack of resources and follow-up, high classroom densities and lack of teacher buy-in.

Business as Usual in the Privatized State

On private tutoring in particular, there was limited change in student and teacher discourses compared to the pre-uprising research (Chapter 2). General secondary students agreed that the Ministry's efforts, including declarations of the illegality of tutoring and the announced closures of unlicensed tutoring centers, had no impact on their absence from school, their enrollment in tutoring, teachers shirking their duties in school, nor

[13] Average spending per student of 4,409 EGP is obtained by dividing the 2018–2019 *preuniversity* education budget of about 88.7 billion (MOF 2018, 32) by the number of *public* school students of about 20.1 million in the same year (MOE 2019).

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on the high cost of tutoring. Teachers similarly observed no impact on tutoring enrollment, and linked this to a lack of interest in real reform on the part of policy makers. School was therefore still constructed as a place where "We don't do anything," even if it remains an arena of sociability, especially for girls. Students referred to the patterns of teachers running classes as tutoring revisions to their own private students, that "They don't really teach," and that "They only care about formalities." Technical school students also noted rising tutoring costs and referred to the patterns of de facto compulsory enrollment in tutoring and normalized cheating. Some general secondary students also recounted stories of teachers attempting to coerce them into enrolling in tutoring (overt coercion being more common in technical than in general secondary, and in lower grades than in the secondary stage).[14] Recent data indicate that the prevalence of tutoring has been increasing over time across all levels (Sieverding, Krafft and Elbadawy 2019). Tutoring also remains expensive, with the average expenditure on tutoring for current students being equal to 18 percent of average per capita consumption (CAPMAS 2016).

Permissiveness, or normalized noncompliance with school regulations, has therefore arguably only intensified. Little had changed in the systematic violation of school regulations, from attendance to dress code and the integrity of examinations (Chapter 4). Pervasive truancy was reflected in comments about school attendance as "a waste of time" and "our relationship to the school is that we go there to submit our papers to have a placement number for the exam." Students agreed that the ministerial emphasis on restoring "discipline in schools" had no impact on their everyday interactions or rates of attendance. Again, echoing pre-2011 themes, girls also referred to noncompliance with regard to expectations of modesty, commenting, "Girls come to school with one outfit and leave with another for going out," and "The school mosque is like a hair salon" that girls use for grooming.

Especially in technical schools, students referred to the normalized patterns of cheating. Systematic exam cheating across the system is confirmed by recent official studies indicating the poor literacy skills in the basic education stage, which suggests that many students had cheated on their exams so as to pass without being able to read and write.[15]

[14] According to one study, half of the students at the basic education stage (grades 1–9) enroll in tutoring with their own classroom teachers (Ille 2015).

[15] In May 2015, the Minister of Education announced that about 30 percent of 3rd and 4th primary students had failed a nationwide diagnostic literacy test. Another study that found that over 35 percent of preparatory stage students cannot read and write (MOE 2014, 63).

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Cheating is commonly justified as equalizing unequal conditions, including income-determined access to quality education and tutoring, the convoluted difficulty of exam questions and the unfairness of the university admission system (whereby a student's entrance to a college and their future prospects depend on very small grade differences). While cheating in technical education is still as neglected as the track as a whole, a trend toward organized cheating in general secondary has attracted a lot of public attention. Even general secondary students defended a famous Facebook page that leaked final-year exams. In June 2016, a major crisis erupted over the leaking of general secondary final exam questions and model answers. The leaking of the exams, and the subsequent rescheduling of some exams, prompted widespread outrage in the media and a wave of student demonstrations demanding the resignation of the Minister of Education. Students also referred to trends of extralegal access to exams and answers, as well as to reports of instances whereby the children of local elites are assigned to separate examination halls, where they are allowed greater leeway for cheating. The measures taken to reduce reliance of private tutoring and reform assessment for the general secondary track were therefore met with skepticism.

Contested Punishment: Restraint and Continuity

Reflections on violent and humiliating treatment reveal more dynamism than issues around privatized public services. Social and political commentary since the Revolution has highlighted increased levels of contestation and lower citizen tolerance for violations by figures of authority. The revolution itself and the protest cycle from 2011 to 2013 are manifestations of such contestation. Whether it is violations by police officers or beatings by teachers, ordinary people have been showing less tolerance and greater resistance to such practices (see Ghannam 2013, for example). This greater sense of entitlement also went through periods of flux, mirroring the political changes that had arguably encouraged them. For most respondents, one of the most notable changes after 2011 was a rise in forms of defiance among students. Teachers especially highlighted examples of increased contestation of physical and verbal punishment. As one teacher remarked, "Now when you tell a student, 'Come here, girl' (*ya bit*, derogatory), she answers back that she has a name you should call her by." Students also referred to their own opposition to such behavior, notably using new formulations that suggest a greater sense of entitlement to respect and redress: "If he verbally aggresses me (*ta'ada 'alaya lafthiyan*), I tell him I will make a complaint to the supervisor or administration, so he backs down." Students referred

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to teachers using more negotiation and dialogue to resolve conflicts. Even in interviews with male technical school students, who are usually the recipients of the harshest forms of punishment, they referred to teachers controlling students less through physical punishment and more through grades and emotional appeals and reprimands, or what some referred to as moral punishment (*ʿiqab maʿnawi*), such as using statements like: "I have now lost faith in you," or "You are not a man, so do not speak to me." Although such emotional punishment remains officially prohibited in Egypt, students found these methods more acceptable than direct humiliation or beating. Student reflections on the contestation of punishment should however be seen in light of the difference between secondary education and earlier stages, where beating is harsher and more prevalent (ELMPS 2012).[16] As one student put it, "In preparatory there is a lot of beating of course, but not in secondary," and "The teachers know the difference: in preparatory the students don't talk, but in secondary they talk back."

While there seems to have been a positive trend of reduced harsh punishment, this does not imply a reversal of normalized patterns of beating and humiliation in secondary education, nor in the younger grades. News and social media continue to report cases of severe punishment by teachers, including an incident that resulted in the death of a preparatory school child in 2015. The Ministry continues to issue regulations prohibiting physical and emotional punishment, but action is rarely taken against teachers who violate these regulations. Even in cases of severe physical assault that end up in court, teachers still receive unexpectedly light sentences. Interviewed teachers did not shy away from referring to their own resort to harsh punishment: "We start with words first, and if there's no effect, then we use kicks (*bil-shalut*)"; or "We beat the students based on the principle of 'beat the tied-up one and the loose one will be afraid'" (i.e. making an example of some students to intimidate the others); or "I curse their fathers and mothers and say go away, you son of a shoe (*imshi ya-ibn il-gazma*), and you can write that down." Boys continue to be the main recipients of corporal punishment, and there is strong continuity with pre-2011 gendered patterns and discourses (Chapter 3). For example, teachers in the girls' public general

[16] According to a 2012 survey, 80 percent of respondents said that students in their primary school were subject to physical punishment, more than half saying that this occurred either daily or frequently (ELMPS 2012). The percentage is somewhat lower for the older preparatory schools, with 70 percent of respondents reporting regular physical punishment in their schools and even lower in secondary schools, with 30 percent saying there was regular physical punishment, and 50 percent saying students are never beaten (ELMPS 2012).

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school explained that girls at this age should not be beaten, that the maximum is "verbal violence" and "normal curse words like 'donkey' and 'stupid.'" Teachers agreed that boys, on the other hand, are casually kicked and beaten with sticks and that "a boy would not respect the teacher without beating." Students referred to the arbitrary nature of punishment: "A teacher's punishment depends on which student he is facing." Students' statements also reflected the distinction between disciplinary and repressive or exploitative punishment (Chapter 3): "We have a brotherly relationship with some teachers, and we can accept a beating from them because there is a human relationship and the beating is brotherly, not oppressive (*akhawi mesh qahri*)." "Disciplinary" physical punishment, motivated by concerns perceived as legitimate in upholding institutional norms, was largely accepted: "Beating is sometimes in 'official' things: for example, if I arrive late, there is a beating."

Several teachers and students also noted that violence by male students increased after the Revolution, as violence by teachers decreased. Teachers in one school referred to the "rapidly rising curve of violence among students." A student in the same school explained that he physically attacked a teacher once because the teacher cursed him using vulgar language and that the supervisor let him go back into class afterward "because he saw that it was the teacher who was at fault." Another explained how he completely humiliated a teacher and was suspended for a week, that that was better because he could just rest at home, and that the teacher was later transferred to another school. Student violence, the loss of control over schools and the portrayal of students as unruly and ungovernable were already prominent themes among teachers before 2011 (Chapter 4), but they clearly found new resonance after the Revolution.

In private schools, where violent punishment is not a prominent issue, teachers still felt their authority was being undermined, but through very different kinds of practices. They portrayed students, especially in the aftermath of the uprising, as using collective action "for any demand," including administrative issues like changing class schedules. Secondary students were especially seen as subversive, "protesting for the sake of protesting," "always objecting" and "from the Down! Down! Gang" (*min shillit yasqut yasqut*) [referencing the chants of the Uprising: "Down with Hosni Mubarak"]. Many teachers therefore emphasized what they perceived as the negative aspects of what had become a vocal student body. Several teachers also employed anti-Revolution tropes, interpreting the Revolution as having encouraged young people to be impolite and purposelessly subversive. This was articulated in terms of students having a higher voice, "not understanding what freedom means," being bold,

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misbehaving and "lacking respect for elders after they had seen the elder in the country [the president] being disrespected."

Teachers were not uniform in their portrayal of these trends. Some teachers, while agreeing that there had been a rise in assertiveness, portrayed it more positively. They saw students as copying and learning from the wider context, noting that "students really changed … they know their rights" and that "now they demand their rights." They were able to challenge authority because "it worked outside: a president was removed." A number of teachers also said that they had changed their own views and behavior – for example, imposing fewer limits on students, or no longer engaging in behavior they forbade to their students, like using swear words or eating in class. Overall, teachers seemed to agree that, while this trend was most marked immediately after the fall of Mubarak, it was still leaving an imprint on student behavior. These trends point to generational transformations that are at the heart of perspectives on the Revolution and that will remain critical for future political developments.

Forms of participation, expression and organization in schools saw a clear change in the aftermath of the uprising. This was noted in respondents' remarks on students organizing protests and in media reports of students removing photos of Mubarak from schools across the nation in 2011. Rights to participation in schools oscillated in line with political events and their forms arguably varied based on social class. However, despite larger margins of freedom between 2011 and 2013, expression in the schools was not simply free after the Revolution, the dynamics in each local context playing a key role in determining the responses to signs of collective or political actions in schools.[17] This margin of freedom had almost disappeared by 2016. Especially in comparison with the immediate post-2011 years, teachers agreed that there is currently far less freedom of expression for them and for students.

Discussing politics and religion is still "forbidden in schools," as teachers put it. Close security monitoring returned forcefully to the schools since the removal of Morsi. As one teacher in a private school explained, "I have zero freedom to speak in school … The ministry supervisor tells me to stop talking politics on every visit he makes to the school … He tells me you will not be able to withstand prison." Teachers in the private schools mentioned examples of colleagues who were

[17] For example, even after the removal of Mubarak, police officers stormed a school in Qena in an attempt to obtain the names of students who had been demonstrating for the removal of Mubarak's photographs from official textbooks and for the removal of the governor of Qena (as reported in *ElBadil Newspaper* on February 28, 2011).

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assumed to be Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers and were made to resign after 2013. But fear of repression was not the only reason they felt more restrained, as the polarization in society itself was expressed as a key constraint. As one private school teacher explained, "Before June 30, yes, we could talk … now we cannot talk … It's coming both from the school administration and our own inclination … Of course, there is *amn el dawla* (state security) everywhere, and they do report what happens. You cannot talk freely with your own colleagues … it's forbidden regardless of being in a public or private school." Students also seemed to be visibly guarded and did not elaborate on current political realities as they did in pre-2011 fieldwork.[18]

Textbook Citizenship Narratives under the SCAF, the Brotherhood and Sisi

Promises of comprehensive reforms to school textbooks have been made since the removal of Mubarak, and after every major political change since. Although textbook reform is generally a rather slow process, there have been important changes and considerable public debates about the content of textbooks from 2011 to the present. The main areas of change and contention relate to whether and how the uprising and the subsequent events are portrayed, how the old and new regimes are discussed, claims about the Islamization of textbooks under the Brotherhood and calls for reforming textbooks to combat extremism and violence since Morsi was removed from power. These are all issues that are directly linked to questions of citizenship and national belonging.

The most notable changes to textbooks under the SCAF (2011–12) included the swift removal of photos of the ex-first lady and paragraphs devoted to the late Mubarak era more generally from the textbooks. This was accompanied by the insertion of short sections praising the January 25 Revolution in some textbooks and celebration of its achievement of its goals of removing the corrupt Mubarak regime. Portraying the Revolution as succeeding in its limited goals paved the road for condemning the continuation of protest. Protesters making additional demands for transitional justice and deeper socioeconomic and political reforms could be portrayed as creating strife, unrest and economic loss, and the ongoing Revolution could be construed as a mixed event "with positive and negative aspects." As explained in Chapter 5, Arabic essay questions in national exams are key means whereby the regime conveys

[18] This is likely due to the fear of repression, but it is possible that it was easier to establish trust and rapport with students in the more immersed pre-2011 research.

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succinct messages of appropriate political discourses to students, and are far quicker to introduce than textbook changes. By the middle of the 2011–2012 school year, students in one educational district were asked to write an essay on the following topic: "The January 25 Revolution is an event that changed history. Discuss its positive and negative aspects." A question in another exam asked students to expound on this sentence: "Work and real production cannot be achieved in the light of the continuation of revolutions, and Egypt these days needs work instead of demonstrations that obstruct production." Essay topics under SCAF therefore reproduced the Mubarak-era theme of juxtaposing protest to productivity and stability (Chapter 5). The Revolution was already being stripped of its initial portrayal as a positive, peaceful and patriotic undertaken by "pure youth."

Despite significant media hype at the time, changes to textbooks were similarly limited under the one-year reign of the Brotherhood (Attalah and Makar 2014). However, the changes were suggestive of at least three potential trajectories. The first was a conservative "Islamizing" direction, especially given the Brotherhood's alliance with the Salafi forces throughout the transitional phase. For example, two minor modifications were noted in secondary school textbooks: A picture of an Egyptian women's rights pioneer was removed from the textbook (although the description of her role was not), as were pictures of young people killed in the January 25 protests (martyrs of the Revolution). This suggests a more conservative or Salafi orientation in which images of humans are frowned upon, as is political protest. A comparison of a 2012–2013 civics textbook with earlier versions shows that earlier references to national unity substantiated by illustrative images of the Coptic cross and Quran were removed, and a section on "political consciousness in Islam" was more prominently positioned (Sasnal 2014). There were also media reports of modifications being planned to remove from an assigned novel references that "contradict sharia" so that "wine" is replaced with "cake" and "amorous relations" with "legal marriage." Another minor change came in the form of a grammar exercise sentence in a primary Arabic-language textbook: "*Al-Ikhwan* [The Muslim Brothers] are the builders of humanity … *Al-Ikhwan* are the route to progress." This recalls Morsi's inauguration speech in Tahrir, where he referred to the blood of men who had watered the roots of the trees of freedom with their sacrifices "in the 1950s and 1960s" (when the Brotherhood was repressed under Nasser). This kind of change suggested a direction toward rewriting the history of Egyptian nationalism in terms of the struggles of the Islamist forces and of the Brotherhood in particular. It is also consistent with "Brotherhoodization" (*Akhwana*) or the staffing of state institutions with

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Brotherhood cadres, initiated under Morsi. There was, however, a third direction exemplified by the 2012 Civics Textbook for Second Secondary General. Although it bears some of the hallmarks of Islamist framing and discourse, explicitly declaring the ineligibility of Christian citizens for the highest public positions like the presidency, it is written from a rights-based perspective, giving detailed attention to a range of political and associational rights and freedoms, emphasizing economic and social justice, and displaying and respecting the diversity of the Egyptian political landscape. Although the textbook was developed at the height of the Revolutionary era before Morsi came to power, the Brotherhood did not prevent its introduction. Another textbook – *I The Egyptian* – discussed in the following sections, whose authorship committee was at work when Morsi was in power, also reflected more inclusive and pro-Revolution views.

Overall, however, over this very short period, the textbooks remained largely unchanged, and exam questions also stayed within the old orientations. For example, the anti-protest discourse was apparent in Arabic essay questions, as in the topic "Peaceful sit-ins are a legal right that has prerequisites (*shurut*), but if it turns into the occupation of streets and squares and stops the flow of traffic and the obstruction of institutions and attack on property, it becomes chaos."[19] It is precisely such narratives that legitimized the repression unleashed on the Brotherhood's supporters when their sit-ins were violently dispersed in 2013 and their subsequent protests were attacked and prohibited. While the essay questions could have been influenced by other forces within the state bureaucracy, the anti-protest rhetoric reflects the Brotherhood's generally hostile attitude to protest by non-Islamist forces since 2011. It is also consistent with the larger ethos of the textbooks. Based on a study of post-2011 Egyptian history in textbooks, Ehaab Abdou shows how they reflect and reinforce a template that "prepares large segments of Egyptians to be receptive to possible abuses of power, including the state's crackdown to reduce or oppress dissent, which is justified by successfully mobilizing fears such as imminent foreign intervention or possible chaos" (Abdou 2017a, 93–4).

Even after the removal of Morsi in 2013, most textbooks remained substantially unchanged (Attalah and Makar 2014, Sasnal 2014). However, after the election of Sisi, during the 2014–15 school year, MOE reported that it had made changes to 30 textbooks and designated 1,290 books for total revision over the following three years. Most of the

[19] Politicized essay questions often receive national media coverage; see, for example, Makhlouf (2012).

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focus went to the issue of "combatting terrorism." A ministerial committee reportedly revised all Arabic-language textbooks in order to "purify them from topics that may incite violence or extremism or point to any political or religious inclinations." The most controversial changes included the removal of sections of the assigned novel *Uqba bin Nafi'* concerning the violent behavior of a conquering Islamic military leader, and the removal of a reading passage in which triumphant birds encircle hawks and set them on fire as they sing nationalist chants (risking a parallel with incidents of ISIS burning prisoners being reported in the media in the same period). Textbook revisions and "purification" therefore essentially meant deleting potentially "violence-inciting" sections without changing the kind of novels and topics students must study or the actual ethos and basic orientations (including Islamist ones) of the curriculum (Chapter 5). The Ministry in fact came under fire in the liberal media after 2014 for its ongoing consultations with the Salafi Nour Party on educational matters.

By 2017, textbooks had revealed more substantial changes. One of the most notable themes has been the discussion of the January 25 and June 30 protests. As these themes are integral to constructions of citizenship and national belonging, it is fruitful to examine them in some detail. One example can be found in the 2016–2017 *History for Third Secondary* textbook, which ends with a short chapter on "the two revolutions." The four-page text summarizes the most significant political events from 2011 to 2014. It reflects the key elements of the official narrative on the transitional phase and the regime's portrayal of its rise to power. It equates both events in importance, portraying both as "revolutions" and both as positive and necessary, and therefore seeks to draw legitimacy from both. Referring to January 25, the text states that the people felt that they had achieved the goals of the Revolution, especially with the fall of Mubarak, and that the SCAF protected the Revolution and enabled it to achieve its goals. According to the text, the Muslim Brotherhood ruled in the same manner as previous governments by protecting its interests through both legal and exceptional means. The text explains that Morsi issued a constitutional declaration to enable him to rule exclusively, placed Brotherhood members in key positions across the state apparatus (Brotherhoodization) and mismanaged the country in general and the economy in particular, leading to rising foreign debt and inflation. The people therefore sought to withdraw trust from Morsi, "who did not fulfill any of the demands of the Revolution," and called for early elections (p. 152). Morsi rejected this call, the opposition rejected his invitation to dialogue and the people came out to the squares in a new revolution on June 30, 2013. The army leadership issued a declaration

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giving Morsi 48 hours to respond to the people's demands. His supporters held sit-ins in two public squares, which "noticeably disrupted the lives of people in those neighborhoods" (p. 153).

After a brief listing of events, the text concludes that with the election of Sisi, "a new page in Egypt's modern history was turned after two consecutive revolutions: January 25, 2011 and June 30, 2013, which put Egypt on the right path to the implementation of democracy, the elevation of the people's interests, and the achievement of progress, growth and prosperity" (p. 154). Significant controversy came with the final-year national examination for this subject, when students were asked to answer the question "What if Sisi had not made the June 30 Speech?" This opaque hypothetical question sparked widespread criticism, leading the Ministry to announce that this question would be removed from the final scores. A Ministry official assured the media that no student answers "that carry political connotations" would be scored. Another official announced that all sections and any reference to the two revolutions will be removed in the following year's textbook and admitted that they have caused increasing problems in schools, as well as for setting examinations.[20] The textbook was still being assigned in 2019–2020, however, and the offending chapter had not been removed.

Two other 2016 textbooks presented contrasting portrayals of the Revolution, citizenship and national identity. One is the *National Education for First Secondary* textbook entitled *I the Egyptian* (*Ana al-Masri*), the other is the *National Education for Third Secondary* textbook.[21] While both textbooks provide theoretical discussions of democracy, political participation, the constitution and electoral processes, *I the Egyptian* prefaces many of its discussions with a glorification of the January 25 Revolution. Upturning key tropes of pre-2011 textbooks, it depicts revolution as a consistent and positive characteristic of the Egyptian people, who carried out their first revolution for social justice under the Pharaohs. As outlined in its preface, "good citizenship" is seen as a defining trait of the Egyptian character across history, which believes in the values of citizenship that support nation-building, such as freedom, tolerance, love, brotherhood and unity. A member of its authorship committee described

[20] As reported in *AlMasry AlYoum* newspaper on June 17, 2017.

[21] Both textbooks were accessed from the textbooks portal of the Ministry of Education (http://elearning1.moe.gov.eg/) in the summer of 2017. The cover of the online version of NETS retained the dates of the previous academic year 2015–16 (http://elearning1.moe.gov.eg/sec/semester1/Grade3/pdf/trbia_wtanea_3sec.pdf), while *Ana al-Masri* stated the 2016–17 date (http://elearning1.moe.gov.eg/sec/semester1/Grade1/pdf/trbia_wtanea_1sec_sb_wb.pdf).

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the technocratic and nonideological manner in which the task was approached, but also that the endeavor was initiated in 2012 under Morsi in a novel process that involved competing voices and different orientations, even if not all were equally heard. Although National Education receives far less student and media attention as a pass/fail subject (Chapter 5), it is still striking that one of the most pro-Revolution textbooks was still in use in 2016–2017. By 2019–2020, however, the book was no longer being assigned, although two short assigned readings in the Arabic Language textbook for this cohort presented a positive treatment of the January Revolution and the struggles of Egyptians for freedom.[22]

National Education for Third Secondary for 2016 offers a completely different perspective. It ends with a chapter on "Revolution as a model for political participation." The chapter starts by explaining the "political values of revolution" as valorizing "national consciousness." Revolution is constructed as a quest for renewal, which not only involves modernization and progress but also includes acceptance of the other and of the technological and information revolutions. The third element of revolution is freedom, which the text explains does not mean chaos or indecent behavior that disrespects religion or morals, but rather freedom of thought controlled by an authority that delineates what is creativity and what is an affront to religion law or traditions. Freedom also encompasses freedom of belief, "according to the correct understanding based on the renewal of religious discourse" (p. 45). The fourth element is a woman's freedom "to express her political and social opinion and to be an effective element in all fields that religion calls for, especially that women have not achieved their rights yet" (p. 46). The text then presents revolution as a valorization of security (*al-thawra qima amniya*). Here students learn that the purpose of revolutions is not change to the worse, the spread of chaos, the use of arms, terrorizing of citizens or (moral) loss of youth, but rather radical change for the better through the achievement of security for citizens, protecting the young from losses and eliminating corruption in all its meanings (p. 46). The text proceeds to highlight revolution as a valorization of morals, self-actualization and the affirmation of cultural identity, critique and creativity (but not as a vessel for foreign ideas), as renewal of religious discourse, and finally as

[22] In the 2019–2020 Arabic Language for First Secondary textbook, one assigned reading reflects on the struggle of Egyptians for political, social and economic freedoms, while an assigned poem offered homage to the martyrs of the January Revolution, glorifying their struggle and emphasizing that this was a peaceful revolution for "bread, freedom and social justice."

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valorization of "work and production." It continues to briefly explain the January 25 and June 30 Revolutions based on the official narratives.

The text is therefore fascinating for the manner in which it uses the discussion of revolution to reproduce an anti-revolution discourse and embeds this into securitized narratives and traditional values seen as appropriate to emphasize to young people. The text mixes very conservative ideas with a supposed defense of freedoms in a framing that is significantly legitimized in reference to religion, while implying an anti-Islamist message of moderation. This discussion was, however, substantially revised in subsequent years. In the 2019–2020 version of the textbook, the first part of the text was completely removed, and the subsequent interpretation of the two revolutions was replaced with a discussion of "Egyptian Revolutions as a Model for Political Participation," which offered a very brief overview and listing of the reasons for each of the 1919, 1952, 2011 and 2013 revolutions, albeit giving more space to the latter.

Taken together, these three examples of how the Revolution has been portrayed reflect the overall attitudes of the regime and its hesitation in pushing too forcefully away from the Revolution or toward its own narrative, and in developing and policing a coherent narrative. They demonstrate the multiplicity and diversity in textbook discourses and their messages, even when they stay within official parameters or red lines. In the end, the pro-Revolution textbook was no longer assigned, as was the most heavily securitized anti-Revolution rhetoric. What remains is a more ambiguous and incoherent balancing act between 2011 and 2013. The flux, hybridity and uneven change in textbook narratives at such a delicate historical juncture is perhaps to be expected. Recent scholarship has shown how Nasser-era textbooks also evinced diversity and multiplicity in ideological and nationalist narratives, especially in its earlier years (Makar and Abdou 2021).

Finally, the continuity in the long-standing silences of the textbooks should be noted. While referencing terms like prosperity and corruption, there is very little discussion of the rights to protection and provision at the heart of student concerns (Chapter 6), and the rallying cries of the Revolution. In 2014, a new section in the *Third Secondary History* textbook portrayed the Sadat and Mubarak eras collectively in a more negative light, primarily in relation to economic liberalization and privatization policies. This turned out to be a minimal change that did not resonate in other textbooks. Textbook changes, and therefore this analysis, revolve mainly on the parameters of participation and legitimation in terms of political values and the relationship with political Islam.

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The National Drama in School

After the removal of Morsi in 2013, military personnel oversaw the performance of a pro-army song in the morning assembly across the country. Almost every year since 2013, attempts were made to introduce pro-army songs into *tabur*.[23] Almost every year, declarations were made about the importance of reinvigorating the nationalist rituals in *tabur*. Various measures to "instill national loyalty" in schools have also been announced since 2014, including the establishment of "Intellectual Security Clubs" in schools to spread official narratives. Student participation in the daily rituals of national belonging in *tabur* was however as limited as it was before the uprising. With reference to the Ministry's purported efforts to reinforce and monitor nationalist rituals, teachers in a boys' general school commented that this is all "words on paper" and that there are more teachers than students in *tabur*. As one teacher noted, "Students salute the flag with their hands in their pockets" and "about 20% attend while 80% wait outside the school and enter when *tabur* is over." Teachers in this school explained that *tabur* involved two brief components: the anthem and the flag salutation, with occasional additions of school news and a saying or *hadith* of the Prophet. This is already far short of the ideal conceived by the Ministry (Chapter 6).

Interestingly, however, students in the same school explained that saluting the flag consisted of chanting "long live Egypt" (*Tahya Masr*) three times and "God is great" (*Allahu Akbar*) three times, the latter Islamic chant not being part of official regulations. Teachers also noted that, despite recent declarations, *tabur* inspection visits are not a new phenomenon, especially in primary and semiprivate experimental schools, and that any teacher who did not perform the rite of saluting the flag was summoned for investigation by state security. Responses also reflected the diversity in the ability and willingness to follow the official guidelines. In a girls' general school, teachers noted that the Ministry's declared interest in *tabur* was indeed reflected in their school and that the assembly was prolonged because the students have to say the whole anthem and not just the first paragraph. They quickly explained, however, that national belonging cannot be measured by the anthem or flag, but rather by feelings of "ownership of the country."

[23] In the lead up to the 2018 presidential elections, there were official directives in some governorates, including Cairo, to broadcast a new pro-army special forces song in *tabur* as well as during the break. The production of the song *'Aalu Eih* is seen as part of Sisi's "presidential campaign," but not all versions of the song have footage of Sisi: see www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRSFp4-Rbpc. The lyrics celebrate the bravery and sacrifices of soldiers who were killed in the war against the Islamist insurgency in Sinai.

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The overall image remains one of noncompliance, avoidance and disorder. In response to more general questions about *tabur*, students in general secondary shared statements like the following: "We don't know what the flag salutation is in our school," "We come at our own pace," "We don't attend *tabur*" and "We don't wake up early." Referring to first secondary (where there are higher attendance rates in general schools), another student explained: "We attended *tabur* once last year … There was nothing in it … just noise. They make you do exercises … We just talk to each other … If someone says something [on the microphone], we can't hear it … Some students clap, but we can't hear." Students explained that, despite the announced "discipline" measures, there was no real penalty for missing *tabur* (or for absence from school): "They were strict in the beginning … We signed a declaration that we would attend, and then we didn't go, and nothing happened … If they had punished us, we would have arrived early."

Girls in a technical school provided more vivid details of the state of *tabur*. They first asked me "what anthem?" They could not recognize the words to the national anthem when I mentioned them. One student commented, "Here we don't have this anthem … The anthem is just some unrecognizable words." Another commented that the last time she had heard it was in primary school, "where we chanted 'Long Live the Arab Republic of Egypt' and then 'God, Nation, Belonging (*Allah, al-watan, al-intima'*).' " The second part is again an unsanctioned Islamized addition to the decreed salutation of the flag. They also explained that they do not attend *tabur*, that they arrive late and that no one penalizes them for this. One girl, however, noted that she did attend *tabur* and explained that it involves the school radio and news and that it is the same girl who presents it all year round, where she recites the Quran, the proverb of the day and a piece of general knowledge. Students explained that the teachers themselves do not monitor *tabur* (except for the first few rows), and some of them gather together and chat on the side. However, if there is inspection by district officials, everything looks great, and the teachers are there and they scold or beat the students if they are not disciplined during *tabur*.

With reference to the pro-army song introduced into *tabur* after the removal of Morsi in 2013, a number of students were aware that *Tislam al-Ayadi*[24] was played for some time in their school, but then stopped.

[24] The long song *Tislam al-Ayadi* praises the army and soldiers in general for their sacrifices in defending the nation. A video of it features images of soldiers and footage of Sisi in military attire, as he was still Minister of Defense. While not making direct verbal or visual references to the removal of Morsi, it was quickly produced after June 2013 and is widely seen as praising the army for ending the rule of the Brotherhood.

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The song was a source of open contention among respondents. Upon its mention, one student commented, "This is not an anthem, and it is contested and its place is not the school." Another added, "Why should they play it? This is not a patriotic or nationalist song." While not referring to their own political positions, a group of teachers remarked that an adjacent school used to play *Tislam al-Ayadi* during *tabur* and that that was "wrong because it divides the school into two sides, and for sure there are students who lean to one side and others who lean to the other." Finally, none of the teachers or students I interviewed had heard of the "Intellectual Security Clubs" announced by the Ministry or any other initiative to strengthen national belonging. In one boys' general school, teachers did refer to new religious seminars sponsored by the Ministry of Religious Endowments, where an Azhari sheikh came every Monday to speak to students about correct religious understanding (as part of efforts to promote "moderate" state-sanctioned Islam). They noted, however, that the lectures stopped after two months.

As in the pre-2011 narratives, students articulated national belonging as tied to the denial of protection and provision of citizenship rights, although the theme of political repression appeared in many responses. The collective discussions generated by the theme of national devotion echoed the oppositional non-belonging expressed in pre-2011 research centered on themes like economic exclusion, undignified treatment and exit. The first responses immediately referenced unemployment and underemployment: "Love of Egypt … when we graduate, we don't work with our degrees." When one student affirmed that she did love Egypt, one of her peers retorted, "Do you love it because you get free *tamwin* [a basket of rationed subsidized goods]?" Expressions of national devotion were therefore countered with reference to the very limited forms of state provision. Several students, including girls, noted that if they had the freedom, they would leave the country. Notably, several respondents brought up political repression in response to questions about national belonging. As one teacher put it, "Girls come from their homes with their own position toward the country. They are coming from families where there have been political arrests or bad economic conditions. Each student has a particular position toward the country, and there is frequently little scope for debate about it." Despite expected self-censorship, veiled sympathy with the Muslim Brotherhood was apparent in some of the interviews, especially among teachers and especially in general secondary schools. When asked about national belonging among students, teachers in a boys' general school referred to students who have intellectual interests and strong oratory skills and are members of the Muslim Brotherhood and remarked that others are against them, but without having convincing arguments.

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Teachers in private schools especially noted a difference between the immediate post-2011 era and subsequent years in terms of expressions of national belonging. In commenting on *tabur*, they agreed that there was a greater sense of belonging among students and that this was observable during the salutation of the flag and the national anthem in the morning assembly (which is more consistently performed in private schools). One teacher called the period after the revolution "the most beautiful time" because of student enthusiasm, respect for the ritual and seeming sincerity. As one teacher put it, "They stood with reverence and interest." She immediately made comparison with the current situation, saying, "Now they sing *zabadi zabadi*" (referring to a mocking version of the anthem, where the word *biladi* [my country] is replaced with *zabadi* [yoghurt]). Several teachers also agreed that they themselves felt they belong to the country more and had greater interest in *tabur* in the aftermath of the Revolution. Teachers said that they felt proud of being Egyptian and that "others" "respected us more." One teacher who worked in a private school where foreign teachers were also employed elaborated on the changing dynamics between Egyptian and foreign teachers. She described the subsequent reversal of the increased respect for Egypt, Egyptian teachers and the nationalist rituals of the school. Teachers also observed a rise in interest in politics among students in the same period, compared with a reluctance to engage in political debate thereafter, due to fears of both repression and heightened political polarization. Apart from ruptures and continuities, the post-2016 interviews point to increased political polarization, possibly increased pro-Brotherhood sympathies, and a higher salience of political repression in discourses around citizenship and national belonging.

Conclusion

Considered along the parameters of lived citizenship, protection, provision and participation in schools all underwent a period of flux and reversal after the Revolution. Narratives of legitimation, belonging and citizenship also underwent significant changes in textbooks, rituals and everyday discourses. While the provision dimension of education (its funding, quality and privatization) saw significant changes that were quickly reversed, the dimension of protection exhibited more dynamism in relation to harsh punishment and noncompliance. Participation in nationalist rituals and collective action underwent clear but short-lived change. Student and teacher reflections indicate a trend toward increased entitlement and a reduction in the intensity and severity of violent punishment. Contestation and challenging behavior were seen as

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rising among students. Notably, private school students seemed to engage in more collective, protest-like contestation, demanding changes or greater rights; whereas public schools engaged in more individual contestation and retaliation to everyday violations of dignity. Despite these changes, there were clear continuities in earlier patterns, including the gendered, classed and arbitrary nature of harsh punishment, and the pervasive noncompliance with school regulations, including widespread cheating and avoidance or a lack of regard for nationalist rituals.

Despite the continuity in official constructions of imagined citizenship, textbook changes since 2011 reflect a distancing from the Mubarak era and a pronounced incoherence in portrayals of the Revolution. The debates around textbook changes and the example of the withdrawal of the 2017 exam question relating to the regime's official narratives highlights an awareness of the deeply contested narratives of these events. This awareness is partly the result of the long-standing Islamist influence in the educational sphere in teacher recruitment and textbook content (Chapters 1 and 5). As such, official narratives of the deposition of Morsi would be especially resisted in the education sector. Especially since 2014, there was also discussion around eliminating texts that may encourage "violence or extremism," although actual changes to the Islamized orientation of the textbooks have been very limited.

Especially in private schools, teachers emphasized a notable increase in students' sense of entitlement, collective action and political engagement and national belonging in the two years following the removal of Mubarak. Beyond this period, the citizenship narratives developed by students were remarkably similar to pre-uprising discourses. There was a clear return to the pessimistic outlook of blocked opportunities that had been interrupted by the excitement and optimism of the revolutionary phase. Oppositional non-belonging centered on protection and provision but political repression became more prominent in constructions of exclusionary citizenship, while the attribution of unjust realities to the regime and the head of state had disappeared. The most noteworthy difference between pre- and post-uprising trends remains the exception and rupture in the status quo that the Revolution itself represented on almost every front.

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