

## Education system needs its own revolution to succeed

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The process of transformation begins with democracy, but it does not end there. The first uprising brings political change; a second is now needed to transform Arab learning. The failure of Arab education is one of the underlying causes of youth discontent in the region and has serious cultural, economic and political consequences.

Today, the Arab world's contribution to international scientific research is negligible. No Arab university regularly ranks among the world's 500 best institutions. A major project to eliminate illiteracy must be a top priority of Arab governments. I find it hard to believe that between 25 and 50 per cent of the Arab population of 350 million remains illiterate. Egypt's higher education system puts hundreds of thousands of students through a university education that is not sufficient for our modern world. A hierarchy of universities must be created. The best operate as non-profit organisations. Technical and vocational education must be upgraded to increase skill levels.

Finally, enhancing scientific research is essential for future development. Arab nations should allocate substantial resources to establish research and development centres of excellence.

The current education system has suffered, like every other area of Egyptian life, from corruption. It is time for meritocracy to replace nepotism and favouritism.

The choice is ours: either become 350 million people of the cave, *ahl al-kahf*, or 350 million people of the cosmos, *ahl al-kawn*.

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