

## The East-West Education Forum

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### The Challenge

“A recent report by the World Economic Forum ranks Egypt in last place for its quality of primary education.”<sup>1</sup> Teachers in Egypt are underpaid and often do not show up to school so that they may earn money through private tutoring. Classrooms are overcrowded, with about fifty students per class. Additionally, in the U.S., where language and cultural studies are lacking, “Educational failure puts the United States' future economic prosperity, global position, and physical safety at risk.”<sup>2</sup> Culture influences the way students are taught and the way that they learn. Being exposed to new cultures can enhance one’s worldview and shape their brain’s activity and methods of learning.<sup>3</sup> Rather than rote memorization, students must explore their cultures, identities, and learning abilities to develop into self-learners who will be ready for the workforce and develop entrepreneurial and leadership skills.



### Project Overview

Instructors will be trained to teach students with diverse learning styles and have the opportunity to obtain a certificate of achievement/completion. Teachers from Egypt and the U.S. will be selected and paired to go through a series of four workshops over the course of one month (one per week) to learn teaching methods that help students become self-learners, and to teach in ways that cater to students with visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning needs. Teachers will discuss what they learn together, compare their perspectives, and discuss how they will apply the training to their classrooms. Teachers will report back on the immediate impact of how their teaching methods changed and how the students responded.

Each professional development workshop will focus on a topic that addresses challenges in education, and emphasizes how cultural understanding and diversity greatly enhances the quality of education. The topics will be as follows:

- 1 – Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to match the needs of students with diverse strengths and abilities.
- 2 – UDL applied to classroom behavior management.
- 3 – Self-Directed Learning (SDL) methods.

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<sup>1</sup> Keddie, P., (2013). “Inside Egypt’s Dismal Primary Schools,” *Al Jazeera*, Dec. 19, 2013. Available from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/12/inside-egypt-dismal-primary-schools-201312157919225472.html> [Accessed Sep. 21, 2016].

<sup>2</sup> Council on Foreign Relations: Task Force Report. Available from: <http://www.cfr.org/united-states/us-education-reform-national-security/p27618> [Accessed Sep. 26, 2016].

<sup>3</sup> Ambadi, M., “The Mind in the World: Culture and the Brain.” *Association for Psychological Science*. Available from: <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2011/may-june-11/the-mind-in-the-world-culture-and-the-brain.html> [Accessed Sep. 25, 2016].

## 4 – SDL implementation.

At the end of the project teachers may opt to collaborate to offer their classes an educational cultural exchange; whether it be through writing letters, drawing pictures, teaching each other a lesson virtually, or another idea that align with existing curriculum.

Results reported by teachers will be used for data collection and analysis. In later phases of the project, this will be used to compare how methods apply across cultures and serve as a basis for further research and ideas to initiate discussion in a network of educators across the globe.

### **The Goal**

To help students become self-guided learners through improved teaching methods. To enhance the quality of education in both the U.S. and Egypt and raise awareness of the need for more innovative and applicable learning and teaching methods. Also, to raise awareness of the importance of cross-cultural understanding as it applies to education and youth development.

### **Population Served**

Target audience: Teachers in Egypt and the U.S.

Secondary audience: Youth in Egypt and the U.S.

### **Project Milestones**

**Phase 1:** Connect teachers through virtual exchange and training. Train teachers on self-guided learning, behavior management, and universal design principles. Teachers report on the effectiveness and impact of the program.

**Phase 2:** Analyze feedback and measurements of program effectiveness. Report results, develop research ideas and discussion forums.

**Phase 3:** Build an online network of resources for educators and a platform for educators to communicate and collaborate.

**Phase 4:** Develop a toolkit for education advocacy.

### **Expected Outcome**

The East-West Educator Forum will build a strong network with educators who can advocate for the improvement of quality of education in their countries and raise awareness about innovative teaching methods and the importance of self-guided learning and its applicability across cultures. Teaching methods that allow students to become self-learners will help them become future leaders and entrepreneurial-minded citizens, making them ready to adapt in an evolving market.

### **Furthering Foundation's Mission:**

This East-West Education Forum furthers the Gabr Foundation's mission by fostering dialogue and the exchange of ideas between the U.S. and Egypt in regards to education. Greater understanding will be built about diversity and education in the U.S. and Egypt, and will connect education experts to expand their worldview, and to expand resources and ideas on improving education.