

The Impact of the Arab Spring at an Egyptian University: A Personal Experience

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The Egyptian Revolution on January 25—part of the 2011 Arab Spring—and the consequent June 30, 2013 Revolution have marked important turning points in the history of modern Egypt. The curricula and courses offered by Egyptian universities, as well as their academic activities and employment structure, have been greatly affected by these momentous events. Furthermore, the revolutions have opened a wider territory of freedom and emboldened both staff members and stu-

dents. This article attempts to answer questions related to the changes that have occurred with regard to the university courses, activities and structures. The article is based on the writer's personal experience as an associate professor in the English Department and in the Faculty of Education at Alexandria University. It is further influenced by the writer's experiences as an elected member of the committee that observed—after twenty years of appointment by the National Se-

curity Department—the new elections for deans and heads of departments; the same committee also moderated debates among the candidates for these posts. As a teacher, I started a new course on revolutionary literature—which I personally designed and taught—and another on politics and media in collaboration with a colleague. From 2011 onward, I have linked and adjusted the materials of mandatory courses, “American Studies,” “18th Century English Novel” and “Contemporary Novel” to our revolutions and to current events. I constructed holistic courses by using the three domains of learning: the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor. The paper will discuss the way I used Bloom and Krathwohl taxonomies in combination with other methods to cover these domains. This has made the courses more authentic and livelier to the learners, encouraging them, to quote Paulo Freire, “to assume ...the role of creative subjects” and creating “a relationship of authentic dialogue” between teacher and students (5). The articles and texts I use, as well as the students' assignments and feedback, will be included in the paper as empirical materials.

Keywords: Higher Education; Egypt; Politics; Arab Spring

"...in every human breast God has implanted a principle, which we call love of freedom; it is impatient of oppression, and pants for deliverance."

Philis Wheatley

The Egyptian Revolution on January 25—part of the 2011 Arab Spring—and the consequent June 30, 2013 Revolution have marked important turning points in the history of modern Egypt. They have directly affected various professions and fields of life, and the Egyptian university is prominently among them. The curricula and courses offered by the Egyptian universities, as well as their academic activities and employment structure, have been greatly shaped by these momentous events, which have since opened a wider territory of freedom and emboldened both staff members and students.

This paper discusses and gives examples of the changes that have occurred at one Egyptian college with regard to its courses, activities and its employment structure. This will be based on the writer's personal experience as an associate professor of English and American literature, a former acting head of the English Department in the Faculty of Education at Alexandria University and as an elected member of the committee that observed—after twenty years of appointment by the National Se-

curity Department—the election of deans and heads of departments and that also directed debates among the candidates for these posts. The paper will show how the writer, by making use of Bloom and Krathwohl taxonomies in combination with other methods, constructed holistic courses by using the three domains of learning: the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor. The articles and texts used, as well as the students' assignments and feedback, will be included in the paper as empirical materials. The paper will also give examples of the newly introduced activities on campus which resulted from the freer atmosphere following the January 25 Revolution and pose questions about the future.

Courses Taught and Adapted

Literature is an interdisciplinary field that requires deep reading and extensive knowledge of other fields such as—to name only a few—history, geography, psychology, anthropology and most certainly, politics. It is not fictitious as some people claim, but rather a reflection of life and society at any given period of time. Hence, as a teacher of literature for more than twenty years, I have always been keen on conveying this interdisciplinary and realistic approach to my students as well as relating the foreign literature I teach to the

Egyptian and Arab context. Doing so has always made the study and teaching of literature engaging and interesting to both my students and myself as a teacher. But it has also entailed breaking many taboos and bringing them to the forefront. One important example is politics, which was banned from the Egyptian university campus until the outbreak of the January 25 Revolution.

Like many of my colleagues, I have always paid great attention to integrating the principles of civic education into the content and texts that I teach. Having engaged with the writings of great thinkers such as Paulo Freire (1921-1997) and Edward Said (1935-2003) provided me with part of the theoretical framework on which I based my teaching methodology. Hence, I have been careful to choose texts that cover themes which celebrate tolerance, diversity, acceptance of others and observance of human rights in general. Furthermore, I insist on the importance of training the students, especially those who hope to become teachers, in critical thinking. Having Bloom and Krathwohl taxonomies in mind, I have always been keen on raising debatable and controversial issues in my literature courses. This is particularly important for our students because the majority of them come from government schools, which rarely train their pupils in critical

thinking. Many have never before given a presentation. Hence, having debatable issues in class has always proven to be a successful means of engagement. These presentations enable the students to practice their ideas of diversity and tolerance through various important skills like understanding, analyzing, evaluating and synthesizing, which in turn, entails creativity. In this way, classical texts like Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and many others have been deeply and critically discussed in the classroom with reference to the current political, religious and social Egyptian background.

However, the outbreak of the January 25 Revolution was an outstanding event in the true sense of the word. It was a renaissance, a great awakening that took us by surprise and inspired indescribable feelings in many Egyptians. It was like the Phoenix rising from the ashes of death. Although there are rumors about possible conspiracies involved in the revolution, they do not, by any means, detract from the importance of the event and all the positive, patriotic and proud feelings that it awaked in the hearts of many Egyptians. It was inevitable that it would move us as teachers and students, and it was particularly influential for the courses taught in

the second term of the 2010-2011 academic year, which started in March 2011, forty days after the outbreak of the Revolution.

From that term until the present time, I have linked and adjusted the materials of the mandatory courses that I teach to include the two 2011 and 2013 revolutions. Among these courses are "American Studies," "18th Century English Novel," "Contemporary Novel" and "Modern Criticism." I will highlight one example by focusing on the first course, which I taught to second year students during the 2011 and 2013 second terms.

Linking this course to Egypt's contemporary situation was important for many reasons. First, to quote Donaldo Macedo in his introduction to Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, it helps students to make use of their own lived experiences: "If students are not able to transform their lived experiences into knowledge and to use the already acquired knowledge as a process to unveil new knowledge, they will never be able to participate rigorously in a dialogue as a process of learning and knowing" (19).

Another goal was to foster their sense of belonging to, and pride in, their country and their great Revolution. Furthermore, comparing the contents of the course to the current Egyptian scene, helped to bridge the gap between cultures. There-

by, through analysis, comparison and contrast students could learn that regardless of time and place, and regardless of cultural, social, religious and other differences, human beings share the need for liberty, equality and justice. Consequently, humans are willing to do anything for the sake of attaining these needs—even when a dear price is to be paid. Regarding the concept of knowledge for the sake of understanding and co-existence, I introduced the students to "Preface to Orientalism," an article written by the Arab American thinker, Edward Said, in 2003. The article was published in Egyptian *al-Ahram Weekly* only a few months before his death. That year marked twenty-five years since the first publication of Said's major work, *Orientalism*. We discussed the article with a focus on a selection of his most famous quotes such as: "But there is a difference between knowledge of other peoples and other times that is the result of understanding, compassion, careful study and analysis for their own sakes, and knowledge that is part of an overall campaign of self-affirmation". By so doing, I believed that the course would render itself authentic to the learners, and because students were encouraged to play an active role in it, the resulting classes were livelier. Thus, the students, to quote Paulo Freire, would "assume [...] the role of cre-

ative subjects” and, “a relationship of authentic dialogue” between teacher and learners was created (5).

The American Studies course is meant to offer the students an overview of American history and literature. Since it is a one term course, it touches upon certain major historical events such as the arrival of the European emigrants, especially the Puritans, the American Revolution, the American Civil War and the American Civil Rights Movement. Alongside these events, students examined texts that reflect these events and certain literary movements. For example, with the arrival of the Puritans they studied information about the settlers life style together with works by key figures of the time such as Ann Bradstreet, Jonathan Edwards, Cotton Mather. The American Revolution opens the door to the likes of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson as well as the beginning of individualism and other important movements such as transcendentalism. The study of the American Civil War is usually preceded by the examination of slave narratives and is followed by the Harlem Renaissance. Keeping this framework of events in mind, and taking into consideration the three domains or categories of learning: the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor—referred to as KSA (Knowledge, Skills, and Attitude,)—I decided to

have the whole course geared towards two major themes. The first theme was liberty and the second was the celebration of the individual, both of which relate to the idea of creativity. The importance of education was also a sub theme throughout the course. I chose texts that would highlight these themes and that would provide the students context for making comparison to the Egyptian Revolution. Thus, students gained the required course knowledge while simultaneously obtaining different intellectual skills that will affect their attitudes as future teachers and as responsible citizens.

In the following section, I will focus on some of the texts that I chose to fulfill the course’s objectives as well as the targeted themes. For example, in examining the Puritans, I asked the students to research their history, their persecution in England and the enforced escape and exile of a certain group—first to Holland and then to the New World, America. It is worth noting that students were already familiar with the Puritans through a course on the history and literature of England, which they had studied in their first term. I also asked them to read briefly about the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), a religio-political organization that was founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Bannā (1906-1949). This Movement promoted the Quran and had-

ith as the proper basis for the society. Due to class and course time limitations, we could not delve deeper into the contextual differences between the Puritans and the MB or their ideological variation, historical evolution and political allegiances. The same deep examination and comparison of other American and Egyptian phenomena was almost impossible due to time restraints. However, we briefly referred to the differences between the movements, and we compared and highlighted the points of similarity that instigated certain major events.

For example, concerning the Puritans and the MB, the students could easily see that despite belonging to different religions (the former are Christians, whereas the latter are Muslims) the two groups shared certain qualities including rigidity and self-righteousness. Furthermore, they both suffered persecution for a myriad of reasons; yet, ironically became intolerant themselves, and in turn, persecuted others. Students came to this conclusion, not only because of the brief research they conducted on the two groups, but also through examining multiple texts.

One of them, Jonathan Edwards’ Sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” was highly debated. It offers an example of a harsh-toned religious discourse that tends to portray God as the angry Person,

who is anxiously waiting to crush us like spiders. An interesting debate arose concerning this image of God. The debate centered on fear and love and which of the two is more effective in our relationship with God, or any authority figure, whether they be, for example, a parent, a director at work, or a school principal. The class was divided regarding this matter. Interestingly, some students were not troubled by Edwards' threatening and terrifying tone, believing instead that it is an effective way of making people do good. Students were also assigned to research and give presentations on the life and trial of Ann Hutchinson. She offers an excellent example of someone who, because she was different, was accused of heresy, a common charge awaiting any person who did not adhere to the social norm of the time. Hutchinson's situation was more complicated because she was a woman, which brought forth the issue of gender and women subjugation. This text, as well as Edwards' sermon, offered effective examples of the rigidity and intolerance that were starting to appear on the Egyptian scene at that time. Following January 25th Revolution, some of the people who called for freedom became intolerant of other opinions, which made it appear as if one dictatorship was to be replaced by another form of despotism. Furthermore, in

certain sects of the society—namely the Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood—a tone of religious fanaticism began rising against other groups of different and liberal views, even if they were Muslims. They even went so far as to ask those who differ from them to leave the country and immigrate to America and Canada. When I taught the same course with slightly different texts in 2013, it coincided with the rule of another ex-Egyptian president, Mohamed Morsi, a member of the MB group. The same intolerant atmosphere was again dominant in the Egyptian scene. Students were courageously, objectively and deeply comparing the Puritan context with the then current situation and regime. In this way, the study of the Puritans was historically and literally interesting and informative, and the class took advantage of the freedom granted to the university after the Revolution. Cognitively, learners acquired knowledge about this sect's life style and literature. The skills and activities they practiced moved many of them, as they expressed later in their course evaluation. They started to reconsider the ways they regarded those who differ from them politically, ideologically and religiously, and furthermore, the students evaluated the space of freedom that the society allows for expressing themselves as individuals. Students also compared the Puritans

with other religious, political and ideological sects who, throughout history and across the world, had also failed to accept others. Thus, the Puritan lifestyle and literature highlighted the themes of the course, namely, liberty, individuality and education. The latter helps us to learn about and to defend our rights and additionally provides us with some immunity against brain washing.

From the Puritans, the students then moved to comparing the American Revolution with their own January Revolution, only to discover similar factors initiating the two events despite the hundreds of years separating them. The students saw parallels in the despotic regimes that both colonists and Egyptians suffered from, the imposition of taxes in an unfair way and the gap between the ruled and the ruling regime, which was detached and condescending in its attitude. The learners were asked to research and give presentations on certain important concepts such as the social contract propagated by thinkers like John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This brought forth an interesting discussion regarding the contract that exists between the government and the governed. Students were bold in their criticism of the notion of the "patriarchy," which affects our societies, not only politically, but also socially. The majority refused and chal-

lenged the idea of blind obedience to the “father” regardless of what he does. In that regard, they made reference to the speeches given by the ex-president, Hosni Mubarak, during the eighteen days preceding his ousting. He famously played on patriarchal sentiments and the expectance of his subjects’ loyalty and obedience. To openly discuss and criticize a political presidential speech, was unprecedented in our university

This discussion brought forth once more the importance of knowing our rights and duties, which in turn is more likely to occur when people receive a proper education. So we discussed the importance of education—a sub theme in this course—and how, according to the French thinker, Michel Foucault, “Knowledge is Power”. During the discussion, we also made a cross reference to a great text that the students had studied during the previous year, George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. This novella highlights the role of ignorance and illiteracy in creating a dictator and in brainwashing the minds of people.

Two of the texts examined in relation to the American Revolution were Patrick Henry’s famous speech to the second Virginia congregation that was given on March 23, 1775, and “The Declaration of Independence” by Thomas Jefferson—a statement adopted by the Continental

Congress on July 4, 1776, announcing the independence of the thirteen American colonies then at war with Great Britain. Students gave excellent presentations on the two texts comparing them with what happened in January 2011 and the following months. They were also asked to review the many amazing and moving pictures and videos that were published on YouTube about the Egyptian January Revolution. The videos were of young Egyptians challenging death and literally embodying the meaning of Henry’s famous sentence “Give me Liberty, or give me Death!” There was in particular one photo of a young man standing boldly and stretching his arms before a large police car with a water cannon (see fig. 1) It was spraying water at the demonstrators in an attempt to scare and disperse them. Other images of the courageous young martyrs served the same purpose.

Students were also asked to read the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and to compare it with the above-mentioned texts by Henry and Jefferson and with the various statements and slogans that were repeated by the Egyptian demonstrators during the January Revolution, such as “Bread, Freedom and Social Justice”. They were also asked to read the different articles of the UN Declaration and to highlight in class the articles that

most appealed to them. Another mandatory course for our students during the second term is conversation. Since I did not have enough time in my American Studies course to discuss this topic in detail, I coordinated with the conversation course teacher and asked her to include the UN Declaration in her class. She did. In this way, she continued the debate, and the topic was discussed on a larger scale. One more successful and effective text was Ralph Emerson’s “Self-Reliance,” which is regarded as the manifesto of intellectual independence. Emerson, a transcendentalist, brought forth the idea of individuality, and his text tackled such important themes as foolish consistency, being oneself and imitation as suicide. A group of students was asked to give a presentation on this text. It was interesting to see how deeply they analyzed it. Many identified with Emerson’s ideas and agreed that we ought to look at the world with new eyes and to trust ourselves. The discussion brought about certain issues related to imitation, plagiarism and memorization. One of the major defects of the educational system in Egypt is its dependence on the skill of memorization in most of the teaching methods and assessment tools. Students typically learn by rote memorization instead of understanding, applying and analyzing what-

ever they study. This was reflected in their performance at university level. They find it much easier to read summaries of texts rather than the originals, and they find it better to memorize certain simplified notes about these texts than to make the effort to analyze them. The discussion we had about Emerson made some of them realize that doing so is a form of suicide by which they put an end to their individuality and creativity. Depriving the people of such qualities and gifts was planned and implemented by the previous political regime in Egypt and by any autocratic government or administration. By doing so, the people will follow blindly one single opinion, which is generally that of the ruler and his men.

One more text that served the purpose and opened ground for comparison with the Egyptian post Revolution context was "The Autobiography of Frederick Douglas," which is categorized among the genre of slave narratives. Time restrictions allowed for only the study of an excerpt from this autobiography, which revealed how Douglas was empowered by his ability to read and write. This brought forth Freire's metaphor of "knowledge" regarding it as "the bread of the spirit" unlike illiteracy which is "a poison herb intoxicating and debilitating persons". Douglas' text and other abolitionist writings fos-

tered the ideas of freedom and the individual's struggle to attain it. Students saw how the spirit of Douglas was weakened and whipped out of him by his cruel master, Mr. Edward Covey, a man known for "breaking" slaves. Douglas ran away and sought the help of his original master Mr. Thomas Auld, but he proved a disappointment. Finally he had to fight for himself, and he was successful. Similarly the Egyptians' spirit was, at one point, broken by the dictatorial and corrupted regime that ruled and enslaved them. However, they experienced their own resurrection, and like the Phoenix, they rose out of the ashes of death when they fought peacefully for their liberty. No other power, country or government would help them. Unfortunately like Mr. Auld, many of the governments that spoke of democracy supported our former regimes as long as their interests were fulfilled.

Students examined other texts that highlighted the course's themes. We ended the course with Martin Luther King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech. I could not think of a better and more optimistic ending than this piece of work. His dreams were fulfilled later when America elected, for the first time in its history, an African American President. It was important to make students feel that there is always light at the end of the tunnel. The choice

of King was also taken because, like our Egyptian revolutionaries, he insisted on non-violent resistance until the end; ours was also "Salmeya".

In every examined text, during every class discussion, and in every student's presentation, the categories of Bloom's revised cognitive and affective taxonomies were taken into consideration. I made sure that students would answer questions with key words that addressed the main categories of these taxonomies. For instance, targeting the levels of "remembering" and "understanding," students were able to define, describe and name the characteristics and figures of the Puritans, the transcendentalists, the Harlem Renaissance and other events and movements. They furthermore, had to explain, paraphrase and summarize these features in their own words. In an effort to improve their higher intellectual skills, learners were always asked to apply, for example, the characteristics of the Puritans to their literature. As mentioned earlier, they were also asked to compare and contrast historical groups with other similar sects and with the then current situation in Egypt. They were always asked to judge, evaluate and to give their opinions of whatever they studied, analyzed and presented.

To reach these higher intellectual levels, they were also asked to listen carefully to

the discussion or presentations given in class and to respond to them, that is, to either agree or disagree. They were also given the freedom to offer a completely different opinion. Many times we had debates in class regarding a certain issue, for example Edwards' sermon as mentioned earlier. Again, collaborating with the conversation teacher, these debates would continue on a larger scale. Thus the levels of "receiving, responding, valuing and organizing," which constitute the affective taxonomy, were attempted. This would usually lead to the last category: internalization. Students became more aware of the themes and concepts we discussed and thereby more determined in defending their rights. This was especially true of young women. Some, although not many, decided to help in their neighborhood by teaching reading and writing to illiterate people. This came out of their belief in the power of learning and education. The course was successful and left a great impact on students as is evident from their feedbacks, assignments and the power point presentations that they showed and discussed in class. Many students related each of the texts and the events we studied to the Egyptian Revolution in an authentic and analytical way. They were also very clever and bright in their choice of pictures and audio visual tracks. In this way, their

presentations reflected their understanding of the texts and events that they studied as well as their relation to their own Revolution. The students identified with all that they wrote about and studied. For example, one of the students, Menna El Kelany, wrote in her course evaluation: "The themes of liberty and freedom motivate me to defend my rights in the real life against any one. Moreover, the idea of individuality encouraged me more and more to follow my opinion and do not follow [sic] the herd. It also helped me to be more open-minded and respect the others even if they are totally different."

Another student, Asmaa Taher, wrote: "I think American Studies was one of the hardest but useful subjects that we studied in the second year. The themes that we tackled throughout the semester were very important especially the theme of liberty because it enabled us to understand the current events and our rights as well. We studied many important figures like Abraham Lincoln and Emerson and Jefferson, but I think we have to study literary figures not only politicians. I love this course...."

The students' actual understanding of the course and its contents revealed itself in their answers on their final exams. An important exam question contained excerpts from Jefferson's "Declaration of Independence," Phyllis Wheatley's letter and Du

Bois' *The Soul of Black Folks*. Students were asked to comment on these quotations and to relate them to Douglas's autobiography and Lowell's poem "A Stanza on Freedom". The way many students answered the question revealed a deep understanding of what we had discussed over the course of the semester.

New Courses

The January Revolution not only affected the content and teaching methodology of the existing courses, but also resulted in creating new ones. An example is a fourteen-week course entitled "The Arab Spring and the Media" which I designed and taught in collaboration with another colleague. For two academic terms in 2012 and 2013, we taught the course to American Students studying at the TAFL center (Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language) at Alexandria University. The course discussed the elements that lead to the Arab Spring in the Arab world in general, but also in four specific countries: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria in the chronological order of their revolutions. Other related issues were: the testimonies of those involved in the Arab Spring, the role of women and the repercussions of the Arab Spring for women, democracy in the Arab world, processes of democratic transition and the ascendance of Islamists to power,

the Arab Spring and the New World Order and power relations in the Middle East after the Arab Spring.

Since this was a media and politics course, we made sure that the reading materials covered a variety of articles, interviews and testimonies written from the Arab point of view and reflecting different—and sometimes even conflicting—opinions regarding the Arab Spring. The reason was that our American students had already been exposed to the West's point of view. Since they were studying in Egypt, it was time for them to read, hear and see the Other's point of view. Students agreed and indeed welcomed the idea. They also watched videos and documentaries. Among the texts they read was "Preface to Orientalism" written by Edward Said and which criticized "the US [']s hardening of attitudes, the tightening of the grip of demeaning generalisation and triumphalist cliché, [and] the dominance of crude power allied with simplistic contempt for dissenters and "others".

In each of the topics covered during the course, we observed the different categories of Bloom's taxonomies. Students read, analyzed and evaluated every opinion discussed in class. They also gave presentations that compared the situation in different regions of the Arab world. This

comparative and contrastive attitude added more depth to their presentations and the debates that we carried out in the class. Once more, we took advantage of the freedom and empowerment that our Revolution offered us in discussing different taboos related to politics and religion. This was evident from the positive feedback we received from students. They found the course "very informative" and engaging. It deconstructed certain clichés related to the Orient, particularly regarding the image of Arab women. It also gave them a chance to read the works of certain thinkers whose views are not always welcomed in America such as Edward Said and Noam Chomsky.

One more course, which I personally designed and taught in Arabic in the second term of 2013 to American Students studying in the TAFL center was, "Literature of the Revolution". We started the course with a theoretical background and a discussion of what constitutes the "literature of the Revolution" and "revolutionary literature." The course included revolutionary texts by polarizing rebellious figures like the Egyptian poet, Amal Donqol, whose poetry, despite his death more than 25 years earlier, is still alive and was even sung in Tahrir Square and by revolutionaries on different occasions. It was a

multi-genre course, and students examined testimonies by people who took to the Tahrir Square from January 25 until February 11, 2011, alongside poetry, songs by forbidden writers and artists such as Sheikh Imam, a novel, and an excerpt from an autobiography. This course could never have been designed or taught during the Mubarak regime. But, once more, the space of freedom and the courage inherited from, and created by, the January Revolution allowed me to teach it during the MB regime. The Centre administration shared the same view and agreed to the course and even invited an "unwanted" speaker, an opponent of the regime, the writer and columnist, Alaa al-Asawani, to discuss his novel, *Yacoubian Building*, and other works with the students. He did not meet the students off campus and had an interesting discussion with them and a video conference with their peers at Middlebury College in the US.

In teaching this course, the class buzzed with discussions, debates and interesting and unusual presentations by the students. One of the original research projects focused on the Harry Potter series as an example of revolutionary literature. The novels were then compared with the revolutionary poetry that the students had studied by Abu al-Kassem al-Shaby, Don-

qol, Zein al-Abdeen Fouad and Abdel Rahman al-Abnoudi. When reflecting upon this course, I see that it preceded the June 30 Revolution, and the reading material somehow anticipated it. The current regime at that time underestimated the power of the people and excluded most of the Egyptians from the decision making process. However, the Egyptian people had the final word and fulfilled the meanings suggested by the first text we studied, a poem by the Tunisian poet, Abu al-Kassem al-Shaby, entitled “If the people want to live, fate has to give in”. It was a moving poem, and the students listened to it sung by famous Arab singers. The students’ feedback was positive, and they admired the literary texts they studied and their strong revolutionary tones and ideas.

New Activities

The freedom resulting from the Revolution, not only affected the content of the courses taught on campus and the introduction of new courses, but also allowed us to discuss politics openly, and to bring many forbidden speakers to the university. We gave our students at the English Department a crash course, entitled “A, B, C on Politics,” the aim of which was to raise their political awareness. They learned about the constituents of the state, the

various governing bodies, the different forms of government and election and explored the Egyptian constitution. Some of the students who attended this course were interested in learning even more in hopes of spreading their acquired knowledge to raise political awareness in their neighborhoods and in different parts of Alexandria. We also had, for the first time on campus, a novelist, a columnist and scriptwriter, Belal Fadl, who, due to his opposition of the regime and the concept of heredity, was never favored by Mubarak and his men. He wrote publicly against Jamal Mubarak, the son of the ex-president, who was being prepared to succeed his father in the democratic election. Fadl’s meeting and discussion was lively and stimulating. Other guests included the novelist and columnist, Sahar al-Mougy, who shared her testimony from her eighteen days in Tahrir Square.

Having a crash course on politics, meetings with these intellectual and revolutionary figures, and having the mandatory courses geared towards the themes of liberty and individuality were very important. Following the Revolution, some students misunderstood the true meaning of freedom of expression and consequently behaved in a violent and aggressive way. This can be attributed to the fact that they were

brought up in a dictatorial regime that gave power to one voice only, that of the ruler. Hence, they were not trained to listen to each other nor to accept or respect a diversity of opinions. Furthermore, the educational system that they had been exposed to for years was also dictatorial and followed Friere’s negative theory of the banking concept of education in which

[...] knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable [the teachers] upon those whom they consider to know nothing [the learners]. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teachers existence—but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher. (72)

Another stimulating post-Revolution activity was electing the deans of colleges and the heads of departments. There was an election for a committee of three members, whose job it was to observe and di-

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rect the debates among the candidates for these academic posts. It was a fascinating and unprecedented experience. As a member of this committee, we organized a day for each of the three candidates for deanship. Each one of them met with all staff members at the college and discussed his/her program and objectives as a future dean. On the fourth day, we had a debate with the three candidates. Despite objection from college administration about holding this debate, we, the committee members, insisted on holding it. It was a success. The majority of college staff members enthusiastically took part in voting, and we had a democratically elected dean for the first time after twenty years of appointments by the National Security Department, which was humiliating to us. We used the same procedure when the department head post became vacant. The same positive attitude was prevalent among college staff members.

The Present

Four years after the outbreak of the January 25 Revolution and less than two years since the subsequent June 30 Revolution, much in Egypt has changed for the better and the worse. This applies to Egypt in general but most especially to the country's University microcosm. As a result of

the chaos that followed the fall of the MB regime, there is an attempt to indirectly prohibit politics on the university campuses. However, some university professors and students have learned to cherish their agency and are determined to never relinquish the rights they earned from their two revolutions. As a result, political issues must continue to be raised in the classroom, and students must be made aware of how politics can impose itself on the study and analysis of literature. We, the teachers and students, continue to refer to our two revolutions in our department's courses.

As for the employment structure, it has unfortunately suffered a drawback. The law regarding the election of deans has changed, and the candidates for the post are to be interviewed by appointed, rather than elected, committees. However, there is no returning to the past. Indeed, the wider territory of freedom provided by the Revolutions has drastically changed the threshold of fear. Inevitably, the majority has learned the language of rights and have realized that no position is immune from accountability.

Conclusion

The outbreak of the January 25 Revolution was a groundbreaking event after which

nothing remained the same. The Egyptian university was positively and negatively affected by it. This paper attempted to show the positive effect of this revolution, which has had its imprint on the courses, activities and employment structure of the university. It also brought more freedom to the campus, yet, the battle is ongoing. As a result of the chaos following the fall of the MB regime, there is now a new attempt to prohibit politics on the university campus. The law regarding the election of deans has changed, and the candidates for the post are to be interviewed by appointed, rather than elected, committees. I believe that university professors must continue to carry the torch of light, freedom and democracy brought about by the two Revolutions of 2011 and 2013. Suppressing freedom of expression is never the way to regain order. Rather, we should train our students to accept others and plant in them a respect for humanity, individuality, liberty and creativity, not as meaningless clichés, but as true living values that will make their world, life and countries better. The future is still in the making, but I believe that our dearly earned freedom will not be lost, but rather, will bear its fruit in due time.

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