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Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Egypt /
The American University in Cairo (AUC) / Kings College London

Empowering Egypt's Public Sector: Inside the Leadership for Government Excellence Programme

Adapting to a Changing World

As the world continues to evolve, countries and companies must adapt to meet the ever-changing needs of the global market. Technological advancements, demographic shifts, and economic fluctuations are just a few of the factors that drive the need for continual adaptation. However, with this evolution comes the challenge of ensuring that the workforce is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the demands of today's occupational landscape. Failure to address these obstacles could have significant consequences for global economies and societies.

In light of these difficulties, and as Egypt faces its own unique set of hurdles, including a rapidly growing population and a need to diversify its economy, the development of a capable and innovative public sector becomes even more crucial.

Empowering Civil Servants for a Stronger, Sustainable, and Inclusive Public Sector

The Leadership for Government Excellence programme (LGE) in Egypt is taking a proactive approach to equip civil servants with the tools they need to advance in their careers and is designed to provide them with the relevant knowledge, skills, and mindset to lead productively, manage change, and drive innovation in their organisations. By empowering civil servants with these skills, the programme ensures that Egypt's public sector is capable, strong, sustainable, and inclusive.

The goal of the programme is to help achieve Egypt's strategic vision 2030 with a holistic strategy that covers a variety of sustainable development objectives related to aspects such as economic development, energy efficiency, social justice, and environmental improvements. The programme covers a wide range of topics, including leadership theory and practice, project management, strategic management, data analysis, and communication skills, among others.

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The LGE programme was launched in July 2019 as a tripartite partnership between three institutions, each playing a crucial role. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MPED), as the monitoring arm of the government, with the American University in Cairo (AUC), represented by the School of Business and the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, providing customised and specialised high-quality education, while the School of Science and Engineering provides programme management support to participants during their project implementation phase. King's College London, the international partner, has an edge in overseeing public sector management in different geographies and various sectors. Together, these institutions complement each other to deliver a comprehensive programme that prepares civil servants with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in Egypt's public sector.

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"Egypt has earmarked skills and human capital as a key priority for action and investment

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Dr Sherifa Sherif, Executive Director of the National Institute of Governance and Sustainable Development, Egypt's Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, elaborated on the programme's strategic mission, "the LGE programme comes within the broader framework of equipping and investing in civil servants to become cornerstones and building blocks of capable, strong, sustainable and inclusive societies and communities." She continued by asserting the programme priorities, "Egypt has earmarked skills and human capital as a key priority for action and investment, boosting higher productivity levels as well as financial and economic performance across the different sectors and industries, creating more job opportunities, equitable income distribution, and better livelihoods."

Transforming Learners and Their Organisations

The LGE programme has had a transformative impact on its learners and their organisations. Since its launch, the programme has trained 120 government personnel from 24 ministries, including 40 women and 80 men. Its goal is to produce the leadership cadres to guide public service operations in the New Administrative Capital.

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Mohamed AbdelSalam, Executive Director of Executive Education at AUC School of Business, underlined the commitment of the university to the Leadership for Government Excellence programme, saying, "We are proud to be part of this nationwide effort, which is being carried out in accordance with the Administrative Reform Plan and Egypt's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, to improve the effectiveness of government work through investments in human resources, competence-building, and talent development in the public sector."

The programme has exposed participants to a rich learning environment that includes a wide range of topics, while its experiential learning approach has provided participants with practical knowledge that they can apply in their day-to-day work, helping them become more effective in their roles and better equipped to manage the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Dr. Timothy Sellick, Director of Custom Programmes at King's Business School, King's College London, explained why the university decided to participate in the collaboration, "King's saw this collaboration as an ideal opportunity to work with AUC to build upon a number of core strengths; leveraging the London eco-system, leadership development, and change plus our long-standing track record developing leaders within the public sector around the world. The aims of this programme appealed to the faculty body in terms of the ambition of the learning outcomes and the task these participants would face over the coming years."

In addition to providing participants with valuable knowledge and skills, the LGE programme has taken a comprehensive approach to ensure that its impact is disseminated throughout the public sector. By including participants from a wide range of demographics and sectors, including multiple governmental bodies, the programme ensures that the knowledge and skills gained are shared with colleagues and communities, amplifying the programme's impact beyond the initial cohort.

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Dr Amr Nabil, Institutional Governance Unit Manager, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, was a coordinator as well as a participant and highlighted what motivated him to be part of the programme, "I work in the government and I was keen to implement the government's principle in the public sector for civil servants. It was a great opportunity to learn from other governments, especially the UK. As a participant, there were areas about enhancing the public sector that I wanted to learn about and experience."

Along with the teaching of a variety of topics, the programme also implemented multiple attributes such as mindset skills, responsiveness, adaptability, agility, design thinking, and many others when approaching management systems and policymaking. All done by engaging participants on a personal level to aid self-reflection and self-awareness, which helps hone their skills in transformations, communications, and social skills.

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Baher Abdelazim, Media Consultant Assistant, Ministry of Social Solidarity, described what a typical day in the programme was like, "meeting with my colleagues and going through deep discussions about work, professional experiences, and social life created an awesome atmosphere. Gaining new academic knowledge every day with respected professors in Egypt and the UK was a valuable experience. Activities like the group project or the soft skills games were also fun."

The programme's impact has been examined through qualitative and quantitative measurements, as 24 projects developed by the learners have been either fully or partially implemented by their respective organisations, while several trainees have received promotions or taken up high-level government positions.

Due to its significant impact, the LGE programme recently received the EFMD's Silver Award for Excellence in Practice. El Khazindar Business Research and Case Center (KCC) of the AUC School of Business created the winning case study, highlighting the programme's success in equipping civil servants with the skills and knowledge to drive positive change in Egypt's public sector.

Heba Wahsh, Information Technology Consultant and Projects Manager, Ministry of Petroleum, described how the programme influenced her career, "after the LGE, I was more motivated to aspire to new challenges and I was selected among the new batch of prospective middle managers among the Egyptian petroleum sector. I joined more sector transformational mega projects that my team and I hope would vastly change how the oil, gas, and mineral resources industry operates in Egypt." She emphasised why programmes like LGE are important, "it is crucial that civil servants walk the talk of serving the public. Without programmes like LGE, I think this would be a difficult mission to accomplish. Multidisciplinary leadership programmes such as LGE unleash the knowledge, experience, ideas, and theories that help shape the future of our work and thus help aid our country. They give us the tools we need to make a real difference in the public sector."

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Despite the successful impact of the programme, it did not come without addressing particular challenges, such as the difficult journey of trying to find the right partners on national and international grounds. Moreover, timings were an issue, as organisers had to be flexible and work out what worked best in terms of the cohort groups' start, break, and finish times. They adapted the programme to better suit the group's needs once representation and a clear rationale were reached. In addition, feedback from the cohorts on the relative value of the experiential site visits helped ensure that the use of the time spent on such visits was maximised.

Ensuring a Strong Future through Sustainability and Good Governance Practices

Egypt Vision 2030 is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, which means a huge aspect of the programme is to disseminate sustainability and good governance practices – which are two sides of the same coin. This will ensure a strong future for all participants in the programme that will collectively improve the nation as a whole in the long term.

Overall, the Egyptian government is on track to implementing its ambitious 2030 agenda, as the ministry continues to capitalise on its successful initiatives - together with its partners - while constantly seeking excellence. With the New Administrative Capital still in its development phase, the LGE programme remains important and relevant to human capital development in the country with transformations that will undoubtedly help improve public services and boost citizen satisfaction over time.

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