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Geography illiteracy and reforming geography education in Egypt among university undergraduate students

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Abstract

For ages, Science has suffered from the ebb and flow of the same seashores. Geography in Egypt has been the center of these waves and fluctuations for more than fifteen years, although it takes about half this time in other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and even the United States of America. The result of this negligence of learning geography in the secondary schools in Egypt is reflected in the level of students and its effect on their knowledge about the geography of their country when they joined (present and not past) the university.

This paper aims to assess the level of geographic literacy among undergraduate students of geography in the Faculty of Arts, Minia University in Egypt, and to follow the reasons behind the decrease in the interest of studying geography, which has an impact on the level of students' information and knowledge about their country. Also the study investigates the factors that may have influenced this geographic literacy among students. The Educational system policy in Egypt has played a negative role in the intellect of the people, and drove them out of learning geography. Because of the various troubles in the educational policy scene in Egypt during the last decade of the twentieth century, the Ministry of Education decided to let the geography subject in the secondary schools into an optional subject. Consequently, many students do not choose it, and this leads geography to become a marginal subject.

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1. Methods and Materials

To measure the individual differences among the students in their knowledge about the geography of their country, this questionnaire is designed to meet the differences among them according to four hypotheses:

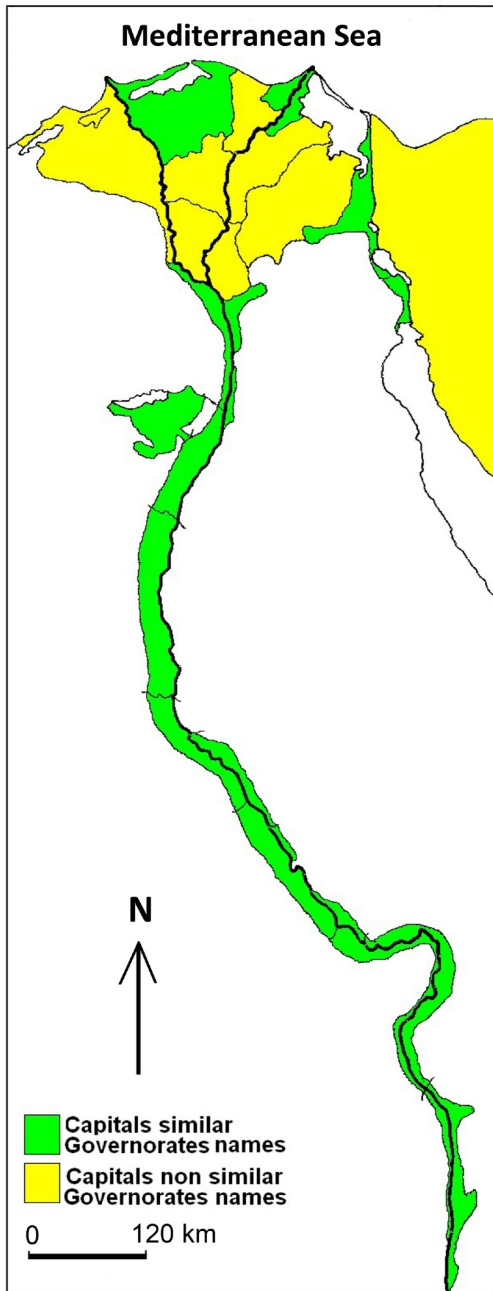


Fig. 1. Similar and non-similar Egyptian Governorates capitals

- Are there differences among students in the level of geographic information the country according to specialty whether cartography or general geography section?
- Are there gender gap differences between male and female students in the level of geographic illiteracy about their country knowledge?
- Are there differences among students concerning their residence status? So students who live in Upper Egypt know about their cities and local environment more than other students who live in middle Egypt or Delta.
- Are there any differences among students because of the educational, cultural level, or the level of English language?

2. Procedures

A questionnaire was applied to all students of Cartography Section (36 students) who attended lecturers of the Art Design on 21 Oct. 2012, and on the total sample students (13 students), in General Geography Section in 22 Oct. 2012

The survey was designed to assess the level of knowledge of the geography of Egypt, under the slogan (Know Your Country), these questions include background about the capitals of some governorates, the important cities in every governorate in Upper and Lower Egypt, famous industrial activities in both Upper and Lower Egypt, in addition to agriculture crops in both too. This questionnaire contains 50 points which include answers from MCQ questions, filling in the spaces, and open answers (See model 1 in Appendix)

The results of the study confirmed that the percentage of correct answers to all the questions are as follows:

- 24% students of Geography Department of the General Division
- 28% among students of Geography Department of the Cartography Division
- 26% among Male students
- 24 % among Female students

Figure 1 shows the Egyptian governorates capitals whose names differ from the name of governorate, as well as the governorates carrying the same name for both governorate and the Capitals.

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