

Statistical Bodies in Egypt An Overall View

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to classify statistical bodies in Egypt, studying their role in advancing the area and suggesting some views in this concern.

It is rather appropriate to classify statistical bodies in Egypt into academic and administrative ones. The essential aim of the academic bodies is to prepare statisticians while the administrative ones are aiming at providing information and contributing to the process of decision making.

The major suggestions are to improve outcomes of such bodies, to strengthen links between academic and administrative bodies, establishing strong ties within the different levels of the administrative bodies and to highlight the issue of statistical literacy.

Keywords: Census, academic bodies, administrative bodies, statistical literacy.

Introduction

Egypt was one of the oldest countries in attempting statistics in the modern sense, at least among Arab and Middle East countries. The first census was carried out in 1882, where the total number of population was about 6.7 millions. The government conducts a census of the Egyptian population every ten years. The total number of population was about 77.8 millions in 2010, to become now about 90 millions.

The sixties of the last century have witnessed great advances in both the education and applying statistics in the country. By the years 1960 the Faculty of Economics and Political Science was established affiliated to Cairo University with statistics as a major specialization, in 1962 the Institute of Statistics, Cairo University was re-established - originally established in 1947 associated with the Department of Statistics at the Faculty of Commerce only for Postgraduate Studies- to "The Institute of Statistical Studies and Research" and in 1964 the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) was established as the official statistical agency of Egypt that collects, processes, analyzes and disseminates all statistical data and the census.

The following remarks can throw the light on the above mentioned information:

- 1- The Faculty of Economics and Political Science currently hosts five departments: Economics, Political Science, Statistics, Public Management, and Computer Science and its applications in social sciences. Furthermore, the Faculty has created nine research centers and programmes.
- 2- The Institute of Statistical Studies and Research has granted various diplomas in statistics and different other fields, from 1973 to 2005. Holders of diploma in the field of Statistics, Demography, Operation Research, or Computer and Information Sciences were allowed to obtain M. Sc. and/or Ph.D. degree in their respective fields after meeting the enrolment requirements, while the graduates of some faculties – or some of its departments - are exempted from the condition of having diploma in order to continue their postgraduate studies.
- 3- CAPMAS has four sectors; Statistics, Public Mobilization, Information Technology, and Regional Offices.
All its presidents are ex-officers, having-as a fact- the rank of Major General.

Although the CAPMAS is well recognized for its great efforts in the area of statistics, there are -at least- two criticisms to its work; hindering research work -as every researcher in the country should have a prior permission to carry on his research, and being involved in politics- as the Egyptian Copts accused it with underestimating their population.

- 4- Almost all science faculties have departments of statistics and departments of computing. In the nineties many faculties of computers and information were established in some Egyptian universities.
- 5- In almost all ministries or governmental departments in Egypt there exists a department/office for statistics, as well as statistical departments/departments of research in big companies.

Results

Having an overall view on statistical bodies Egypt, it is rather appropriate to classify these bodies into academic and administrative ones. Academic bodies include: Institute of Statistical Studies, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, departments of statistics in faculties of science and faculties of commerce, faculties -and departments - of computers and information. Apart from faculty members, the major aim of these faculties and departments is to provide administrative bodies with leaders and specialists in the area. It is worth to note that high degrees graduates of these bodies, particularly holders of M.Sc. and Ph.D, use to look at joining university staff, while some specialists in administrative bodies are trying -by having studies for these degrees- to improve their positions at the bodies they are working. However, it is not easy to say that matters go as simple as that, because the policy of appointment in all bodies in Egypt -in general - lacks some criteria.

The administrative bodies include CAPMAS and departments/offices of statistics in all ministries and governmental departments, in addition to statistical departments and/or departments of research in big companies. Although one of the major responsibilities of the sector of statistics in CAPMAS is “Carrying out population research and studies” it is recently come under criticism for acting just as information regulator and information provider. Duplication and inconsistencies of official statistics produced by different administrative bodies are not unusual, but they are -however- decreasing. A “Freedom of Information Act” is currently under preparation for consideration by the parliament. It is hoped that the Act will ensure high level of transparency and disclosure in line with international best practices.

As for other departments and offices of statistics in Egypt, they differ very much in their level of proficiency according to many factors, some of them are their tasks -whether they start with raw data or depend on other statistics, the level of the officers, the size of their publications... etc.

Needless to say, policies in all fields, whether social, educational, demographic, or economic, are based on statistics, actually the whole product of statistical bodies. Nevertheless, policies can vary when dealing with the same data, depending on the visions- may be the believes- of the person (s) who are dealing with the data. For example, the increase of population in Egypt from about 6.7 millions in 1882 to become about 90 millions in 2013 represents - at the moment- a crisis, as the increase is not proportional with the capacities of the country. To start dealing with such a crisis, one may have many different polices. Some consider reducing the rate of increase of population - keeping plans of development, while others concentrate on the use of the increase in population to achieve much more development. Some policies tend to be in between the above mentioned policies. The matter which the writer needs to stress can be stated in the following points: 1- National policies should be based on accurate statistics, 2- Policy formulation - specially at the national level- must be taken by both “technicians” and

political people from all trends, and 3- It is not appropriate -in our era- to have “statisticians” as such, but demographers, economists... and so on with transdisciplinary view in his/her area of specialization.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the writer mention some suggestions to develop the existing statistical bodied in Egypt as follows:

- a) Increasing the proficiency of the academic bodies through plans to develop higher education. Actually, plans started in this direction, attempting to raise “quality of higher education”. Nevertheless, there is some need to rationalize these plans.
- b) Improving the outcomes of CAPMAS by many different procedures, eg stressing the research nature of its work, achieving transparency, abolishing hinders facing research in the country in its part, ... and so on.
- c) Developing training policies in all administrative bodies at all levels. Some guide lines in this respect are:
 - (i) Every officer must have during his/her “working life” -at least- a certain number of training sessions.
 - (ii) The subject of these sessions must be “flexible” (and changeable).
 - (iii) The methods of teaching of each session is subject to scenarios planned -and implemented- by a group of specialists. In all cases, lectures must be a minimum among these methods, while a variety of methods should be employed such as workshops, dialogues, analyzing actual events, using advanced technology... etc.
 - (iv) Some of the basic aims of these sessions are to motivate and help trainees to educate themselves (continuously) and to deal with people as well as with data.
- d) Connecting between both academic and administrative statistical bodies in Egypt by different means; joint projects, exchanging leaders, joint sessions.. and so on.
- e) Connecting among departments/offices of statistics in all ministries and companies and CAPMAS in many different terms, eg joint meetings, joint training sessions, joint research work... and so on.
- f) Last -but not least- combating statistical illiteracy, keeping in mind that about –at least- 28% of the Egyptian population are illiterates.

The only suggestion - at the moment- to improve statistical awareness has two main folds; Connecting between official statistical curricula - at all educational stages- and the real life in both teaching and examinations – including the literacy programmes.

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