THE HUMAN RESOURCES PATH TO DEVELOPMENT: A CHALLENGE TO MUSLIMS

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Deliberate societal change through implementation of measures designed to improve the quality of living for the masses is an objective that has been undertaken by many underdeveloped countries. This great, systematically conceived social transformation, carried out for human betterment, has come to be described in a variety of ways, most often simply as development. Earlier notions of development, conceived essentially in terms of economic growth, have recently been complemented by the addition of human resources as the critical element needing attention.[1] In the proliferating developmental literature the notion of development is viewed as a developing concept where scholarly discourse and analyses increasingly focus on peoples and values.[2] The development of human resources through education and training on a continuing basis is seen as the central element enhancing national development. The human factor is considered to be both a significant input into the productive process as well as the beneficiary of production. At a minimum empirical examples suggest that an acceptable level of literacy is necessary to foster economic growth, to improve production, to enable the acquisition of new skills, to introduce increasingly complex technonlogy and to enhance developmental changes in general. Among a number of Third World countries, such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Brazil, both higher rates of literacy and improving human resources have preceded their development to the point that they have now acquired the status of newly developed countries.[3]

Unfortunately, for the Muslim countries the poor quality of human resources seem to be a real stumbling block in their developmental goals. It is ironic that Muslims, who were instrumental in establishing some of the first universities in the world, many for the teaching of sciences, today have to acquire scientific talent from external sources in order to implement projects for, industrialization. Indeed, had it not been for the expatriate brainpower many Muslim countries would not have experienced industrial growth of the

kind they have up to this point.[4] Both the lack of intellectually skilled specialists and the absence of widespread literacy are a serious challenge to the uninterrupted economic development of the Muslim world.[5]

This paper, using a comparative framework, presents an analysis of the human resources, its nature and quality, in the Muslim world today. The focus of the paper is on the relationship between the quality of the human resources and economic advancement. Development and human resources are viewed as two sides of the same coin where improvement in one leads to the improvement of the other. The qualitative improvement in the level of skills in a population, measured by the rates of literacy and other indices of educational achievement, is the way in which development proceeds. As the quality of human resource* improve, so does the level of technology and work skills utilized in the productive process. In a sense development is actually the acquisition of ever advanced skills by a workforce, indeed by the population as a whole, so that increasingly advanced technology could be created and utilized. Education is viewed as the foundation of development where a direct positive correlation exists between the two. The concepts of development, industrialization and modernization are used synonymously in this paper and are treated as being interchangeable. The underlying premise in this study is that education is the key variable in the developmental process where it serves as a crucial instrument in transforming traditional societies into modern ones.[6]

It is over a millennium now since Muslims pioneered in the systematic study of science and laid the foundation of a remarkably vigorous civilization. In the early days of Islam learning was a cherished activity to be enthusiastically followed and the acquisition of knowledge almost a religious duty. Generally, science was the corner stone of the universities founded by Muslims; and Muslim scholars excelled in scientific disciplines ranging from astronomy to medicine and geography to mathematics. The achievements of the Muslims are well documented and remains unparalleled for its time.

Despite the earlier contributions Muslims today are at the nadir of their achievements in scientific and technological fields. In fact their conditions are so deplorable that a vast majority of Muslims in the world are unable to read and write even at the most elementary levels. Indeed, the Muslim world

today is largely backward, with people living in primitive conditions, bounded by hunger, 'disease, ignorance and poverty of incredible magnitude.

In order to examine the relative status of Muslims in the area of education and learning eight indicators of educational achievement were comparatively analyzed. For this exercise some 119 nation-states were selected and classified into three categories:

Industrial, Third World, and Muslim Countries Data on eight variables for each of the countries were gathered and analyzed. The full methodological discussion is reported in the footnote.[7]

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The widespread ability to read and write is the most fundamental achievement considered desirable for a country interested in providing a better quality of life for its people. Literacy is the foundation for everything that a country can achieve. It is the means for the fullest development of knowledge and skills of the workforce. Through literacy individual persons can actualize their potentials and attain the heights of their aspirations. Universal adult literacy is the avenue to modernization.

Literacy is the key element in the transformational drama which is now being played out in the Muslim countries. The success of industrial development is to a large measure dependent upon the level of literacy that can be attained among the Muslims. The ability to read and write not only enable people to acquire needed sophisticated skills but also to learn values and beliefs conducive to industrial living. While social change is difficult under any circumstances literacy at least makes it possible for people to understand that process and to have greater mental receptiveness to it. Perhaps even more important is that a literate population is an active one, engaged and involved, in all manners of social, political and economic activities, contributing to the national developmental process. In fact, people are mobilized through literacy, that is, literacy as the most fundamental type of education, and if education is acquired at a more advanced level, people have a tendency to become participants in the management of, not only their own lives, but of the society and the nation as well. Literacy and education, are of course,

avenues of empowerment for individuals, and once acquired, people rarely remain inert spectators in the society.

In the religion of Islam the centrality of learning is repeatedly emphasized in the Holy Quran which itself begins in its first revelation with the command to "read" and again to read in the name of the Lord who taught man "by the pen". Furthermore, the Prophet of Islam was an unlettered person, who paradoxically brought forth a Book, embodying a religion, broad in scope and significance, which appealed to the human ability to reason, to think and to be rational. The Quranic exhortation on learning was further elaborated by the many sayings of the Prophet who stressed the importance of education for both males and-females and considered the ink of a scholar to be holier than the blood of a martyr.

Many citations from the Quran and Sunnah can be provided to illustrate that Islam promotes personal and collective growth through learning and education. Hence, it follows logically that development is natural to Islam and that a Muslim society cannot fully be Islamic until its human resources are developed along the fundamental principles of the Quran and Sunnah. Islam actually raises the human individual to realize the highest perfection of his achievements and does this through the acquisition of knowledge. That is how God consciousness (or Taqwa) is attained on the part of the individual and that is also how an individual can become a fully functioning participant in the affairs of a community.

However, when empirical data on Muslim educational achievement is examined one is struck by the sobering reality it presents. The startling fact is that the rate of literacy in the Muslim countries is so low that individuals, and once acquired, people rarely remain inert spectators in the society.

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However, when empirical data on Muslim educational achievement is examined one is struck by the sobering reality it presents. The startling fact is that the rate of literacy in the Muslim countries is so low that whatever semblance of economic development has taken place is likely to encounter serious problems in the immediate future. The comparative data presented in Table I shows Muslims to be at the bottom of the three categories of countries considered. This Muslim mean rate is 35 percent lower than that for the Third World, though both groups are approximately at the same level of development. The data further suggests that almost two-thirds of the Muslims worldwide are illiterate, and that their literacy is almost 40 percent below the world average.

Table I Literacy

(Mean fates in percentages)

All Nations8 63

Industrial Nations 98

Third World Nations 59

Muslim Nations 38

When all 119 countries, the total population of the study, were rank ordered on the variable of literacy the bottom five included three Muslim countries, Mali, Niger and Sengegal, and two others, Ethiopia and Central African Republic, with significant Muslim populations. On a similar list of Muslim countries the two on the top as the most literate ones included Lebanon and Malaysia, both with substantial non-Muslim populations. The literacy rates for those two countries, from what is known about them, largely reflect the accomplishments of the non-Muslims peoples.

The raw data for the most populous nations in each of the three categories shows a literacy rate of 99 percent each for the USSR, USA and Japan in the Industrial group; 69, 42, and 76 percent for China, India and Brazil in the Third World group; and 68, 34 and 24 percent for Indonesia, Bangladesh and Pakistan in the Muslim group. It is interesting to note that India has a significantly higher rate of literacy than Pakistan and Bangladesh even though the three literacy than Pakistan and Bangladesh even though the three constituted a single country, British India, with a literacy rate of 12 percent on the eve of their independence in 1947.[8]

While one cannot expect much from the present composition of the Muslim population given its low level of literacy, the next best measure for the future supply of manpower is to look at the rate of school attendance. The data given in Table II indicates that the condition of the Muslims is again at the lowest end of the scale. Since less than half of the cohort population, aged 5 to 19, in Muslim countries is in school the pool created for the selection of future skilled workers is a small one indeed. Of course, as pointed out earlier, in the absence of a large, highly trained workforce the rate of industrial expansion, the creativity and innovation it requires, would be seriously affected. In the historical period since the industrial revolution schools have been utilized as a central mechanism for managing societal change, which is what economic development is all about but Muslim leaders have yet to learn that fact. With the opportunity for schooling denied to such a large proportion of the school age population, the Muslim countries condemn yet another generation to wallow in poverty and to suffer the indignities of a sub-human existence.

Table II School Age Population in School

(As percentage of population ages 5-19)

All Nations 58

Industrial Nations 75

Third World Nations 51

Muslim Nations 43

The small pool of pupils in school today will be the base for the selection of students for universities and colleges, which in turn is going to determine the number of scientists, scholars and engineers produced, as wll as other intellectual professionals. The ultimate result will be the shortage of capable people in various sectors of society.

They rank ordering of the 119 countries on the variable of school attendance indicated that of the bottom ten, a disproportionably high six were Muslim ones. When only the Muslim countries were similarly ranked, at the top were two small countries, Libya and Jordan, with Lebanon, a close third. More than a third of the countries on that list showed school attendance rates of 30 percent or less, including the large Islamic state of Pakistan, which is now, according to the Western mass media involved in nuclear research for building atomic bomb.

In today's world higher education is considered to be the major avenue for individual social mobility as well as the instrument for the creation of a technologically oriented society.[9] Both are regarded as necessary for the collective social betterment of a nation. Interestingly, those countries with high levels of higher education are also the ones with the most desirable quality of life, the most creative and the most progressive peoples. The comparative data given for the three categories of countires in Table III shows the Muslims to be once again at the bottom. In fact the Muslim rate of enrollment is fully 45 percent lower than that for the Third World, as state of affairs that could be considered shocking. The intellectual manpower for tomorrow, needed for pushing ahead with industrialization, will come from this small pool now enrolled in universities and colleges. As a percentage of the cohort population the number of people now receiving advanced

education is too small to make any effective impact on the developmental effort.

Table III

Enrollment in Higher Education

By Country Categories

(As a percentage of population aged 20-24)

All Nations 13

Industrial Nations 35

Third World Nations 11

Muslim Nations 6

The Muslim countries are so far behind in the field of higher education that one cannot imagine their ever catching up with the industrialized nations. Higher education is the primary source for the advancement of a country.

Since higher education is important for the immediate future of the Muslim world, two additional sets of data are presented on this variable. For further comparison, the most populous nations from each of the three categories were examined. That data is presented in Table IV. The three largest Muslim countries are seen as having uniformly low levels of enrollment in higher education. The tiny fraction of the cohort population preparing for intellectual work is certainly not going to be sufficient for radically transforming the Muslim societies into desirable social systems where decent life could be lived without the fear of hunger, poverty, disease and ignorance.

Table IV

Enrollment in Higher Education For Most Populous Countries

(As a percentage of population aged 20-24)

Industrial Third World Muslim

Nations Countries

USSR 21 China[10] 4 Indonesia 4

USA 58 India 9 Bangladesh 4

Japan 30 Brazil 12 Pakistan 2

The demand for highly qualified manpower continues unabated in virtually every Muslim country. The need for scientific and technical workers is great though managers and professionals are also sought. As a source for obtaining technically trained personnel the enrollment patterns in the institutions of higher education in Muslim countries do not provide much room for encouragement. The data presented in Table V verifies the generally low levels of involvement in higher education. The two countries with the highest enrollment are Jordan and Lebanon, both small nations, and at least one of them with substantial non-Muslim population. Fully three quarters of the Muslim countries have enrollment rates of 6 percent or less with one-fourth of the countries at the enrollment rates of one percent or less. At these rates the prospects for improving the quality of human resources in the Muslim countries is not too .encouraging, nor could one expect the production of a large number of scientists, engineers, scholars and other intellectual professionals.

Table V

Enrollment in Higher Education

For Muslim Countries

(As percentage of population aged 20-24)

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Country Higher Country Higher

Education Education

Jordan 32 Indonesia 4

Lebanon 28 Bangladesh 4

Syria 16 Guinea 3

Kuwait 15 Senegal 3

Egypt 15 Sudan 2

Iraq 10 Pakistan 2

Saudi Arabia 9 Yemen PDR 2

Turkey 6 Somalia 1

Libya 6 Mali 1

Morocco 6 Afghanistan 1

Malaysia 5 Yemen Arab R 1

Algeria 5 Mauritania .7

Tunisia 5 Chad 5

Iran 4 Niger 3

At the moment when the building of technological capability is vigorously pursued in the Muslim countries there is a great need for scientific and technical personnel.

The demand curve for such people is going to continue to rise upwardly as development moves into the next phase of industrial expansion. The present shortage, to some extent, is made up by the employment of expatriates, specially, in the oil rich countries, though others poorer have to do without the services of such technical people.

Owing, perhaps, to the weak structure of education, as seen earlier, the number of scientists and engineers in the Muslim countries, depicted in Table VI, is pathetically low. In fact, the rate for the Muslims is about 42 percent lower than that for the Third World countries. This weakness is reflected in the fact that none of the Muslim countries produce sophisticated

technological goods, such as aircrafts or computers as do the Third World countries of India, South Korea and Taiwan. The rate for scientists and engineers per million in Japan is 64,054, in Brazil it is 26,000; and in Pakistan it is 1,340. The preceding three countries while differing markedly in the rates for scientists and engineers have comparable population size.

Table VI

Scientists and Engineers

(Per One Million Inhabitants)

All Nations 7,127

Industrial Nations 23,824

Third World Nations 6,691

Muslim Nations 3,593

Indeed, a more meaningful comparison is to look at the total numbers of scientists and engineers in various countries, since it is through their collective efforts that the industrial development of a country is made possible. For that purpose the largest countries in each of the three categories were selected for examination. The data is presented in Table VII. As the figures show the Muslim countries have the lowest numbers even though these countries rank fifth, eighth and nineth largest in the world. The comparable figures for South Korea is 94,171 and Philippines 1,083,742 even though they have about half the population of Pakistan.

Table VII

Scientists and Engineers

For Most Populous Countries

(Totals for each Country)

Industrial Third World Muslim

USSR 13,000,000 China 5,296,000 Indonesia 95,339 USA 3,167,000 India 997,000 Banglades 23,500 Japan 7,046,000 Brazil 2,511,000 Pakistan 100,000

The number of scientists and engineers engaged in research and development is also important. That activity is at the heart of an industrial society. The numbers are equally discouraging since there "are, 45,136 scientists and engineers working in research and development in all the Muslim countries combined, compared with 34,800 in Israel alone, or 400,000 in Japan or a million and a half in the Soviet Union."[11]

Educational attainment as shown by the data on the Muslim countries leaves much to be desired. Evidently learning is not a highly cherished value among Muslims. One cannot expect people who have never been inside a classroom to value education. Unfortunately, that is going to be an impediment to education among Muslims for some decades into the future. The data presented in Table VIII shows that Muslims generally at higher rates have not had schooling than those in any of the other categories. The data indicates that more than three-quarters of Muslim adults aged 25 or over have not been inside a school, which is 94 percent higher than that for the Industrial world. The anti-education sentiment therefore will be a formidable one to overcome. A vast majority of Muslim parents being unable to comprehend the significance of education are going to be obstacles in the schooling of their children. The major reason for the low level of school attendance, seen earlier, is precisely the fact that parents themselves have never gone to school. The parental influence, of course, is overwhelming among the Muslims. Given the importance of home environment it is unlikely that parents would contribute to the cultivation of intellectual curiosity among their children to any great extent.

Table VIII

No Schooling (Percentage 25 + who never attended school)

All nations 61

Industrial Nations 3

Third World Nations 64

The comparable rates of no schooling for Japan is 0.4 percent, for South Korea 19, for Pakistan 81, for Egypt 86, for Morocco 92 and for Senegal 95

CONCLUSION

The data presented in this study demonstrates the sad plight of the Muslims in the field of educational endeavor. Actually the numbers tell a pathetic tale of the years of neglect in the arena of learning by the Muslims. Evidently, dominated by conservative theologians for generations, an attitude of anti-intellectualism seem to have permeated the Islamic culture. The contemporary educational underdevelopment of the Muslims is not the result of some capricious policies of the colonial powers but the deliberate denial of opportunity for social betterment by the oppressive rulers of Islam. This was made possible by the covert consent of the ulema who thus gave legitimacy to the existing social order.

In their callous disregard for the development of the individual, the present rulers, a motely collection of assorted authoritarian dictators, in the Muslim countries continue to exclude the talented from the benefits of learning and education. On the whole those with political power, with a few exceptions, have generally demonstrated their unwillingness to educate large numbers of people, owing no doubt to the fear of arousing the populace against the structure of injustices so prevalent in many Muslim lands. The ideal of universal literacy, compulsorily pursued in the advanced countries, is an anathema to most Muslim leaders. For the most part all education is a state monopoly with private sector rarely given the opportunity to participate in educational endeavors. Many private organizations have sought permission to build schools or universities but governments have generally turned them down on some lame pretext. The outmoded, elitist, decrepit educational systems inherited from the colonial masters is still the vehicle for educating citizens of various Muslim lands. The necessity for everyone to be educated, so as to become productive and contributing members of society remains to be recognized by the malevolent rulers, indeed, to be understood by their medieval minds. The existing mode of education is long overdue for a complete overhaul.

The current frenzy of developmental activity would be difficult to sustain much longer given the low level of educational attainment among the Muslims. The workforce is neither sufficiently skilled now nor will be in the foreseeable future to manage the transformational process towards industrialization. Only a crash program of literacy, education and the production of scientific manpower can save the Muslim ummah from retrogressive social explosion.

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[1] M.S. Knowles, Adult Education in the U.S.A. (New York: Association Press, 1970), L. Nadler, Developing Human Resources (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1790), pp. 5-10.

[2] Dilnawaz A. Siddiqui, "Human Resources Development: A Muslim World Perspective", in The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, Vol. 4, No. 2 (December, 1987), pp. 277-291. S.M. Qutb, The Islamic Basis of Development",-in Islam and Development (Plainfield: AMSS, 1977), pp. 1-11.

[3] See Lawrence J. Lau, Models of Development (San Francisco: ICS Press, 1980).

[4] Zeinab Karaki, "Technology"s Role in Industrializing the Arab World," Arab Perspectives, Vol. 7 (February-March, 1986), pp. 25-29.

[5] All Kettani, "Science and Technology in the Muslim World," Arabia: The Islamic World Review, Vol. 5, No. 3, January, 1986, pp. 22-24.

[6] Daniel Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society (New York: The Free Press, 1958).

[7] Methodology and Data.

For the purposes of this study the entire universe of nation-states was selected on the basis of two stringent criteria; one of sovereignty, that is independence for at least ten years, and the other, a population of at least a million. It was felt that these two conditions would, first, eliminate the

influence of colonial public policies, and second, exclude the mini-nation-states, whose extreme values may distort the measure reported in this study.

The 119 nation-states selected were classified into three categories: Industrial, Third World and Muslim. Per capita industrial production was the criterion used to differentiate the industrial nations from the no industrial ones. Since all the Muslim nations in the sample were nonindustrial, those were excluded from the Third World group to form a separate category. For inclusion into the Muslim category at least fifty percent of a country's people had to be Muslims with free and open practice of Islam allowed by the authorities. Twenty-eight countries of the world met these criteria without difficulty.

Althogether there were 34 Industrial, 56, Third World in addition to 28 Muslim countires. While the Muslim nation-states are a subset of the Third Workd with many features in common, they nevertheless, have unique characteristics of their own, sharing not only a community of beliefs but a unique historical culture as well.

One each of these nations a veriety of data on educational attainment were collected and some statistical operations as the computations of means were performed. Some socio-economic, data were also gathered, correlations run but not necessarily reported.

The data used in this study were obtained from such conventional sources as the World Development Report 1979, 1983, 1985: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1984 and Ruth Sivard's World Military and Social Expenditures, 1985.

[8] This expresses the mean for the 119 nation-states included in this study. Actually that number is considered to be the world average for the purposes of this study."

[9] The World Bank, Education Sector Policy Paper (Washington, D.C: 1980), Chapter I, et passim.

[10] A decade of Cultural Revolution had the most deleterious effect - on education in China hence the low enrollment. Chinese are now working furiously to catch-up.

[11] Richard Reeves, "A Reporter at Large, (Pakistan)", The New Yorker, October 1, 1984, p. 88.