

Manpower Limitations and Effective Public Administration in Middle Eastern Countries

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Abstract. The aim of this paper is to throw some lights on the effect of manpower limitations on the performance of public administration in Middle Eastern Countries.

The paper is divided into five sections. Section one examines the availability and distribution of manpower in Middle Eastern Countries. Section two investigates the availability of skills for public administration. Public service training will be examined in Section three. Section four investigates the salaries and conditions of employment in the government sector. Section five will sum up the main findings of the paper.

Introduction

Over the recent decades governments in most Arab Middle Eastern Countries have tended to play an active role in development, building infrastructures and often engaging directly in productive activities. Their policies have also been critical in determining the environment in which the private sector operates.

This paper does not suggest that other constraints on managerial capacity are not as important. Each tissue needs a study by itself and it is hoped that this paper be a first of a series of studies on factors limiting effective public administration in this part of the world.

Availability and Distribution of Manpower

The percentage of population of working age (15-64 years) in most Arab Middle Eastern Countries is significantly less than that rate in developed countries. Thus, while this rate averaged 67% in the industrial market economies in 1985 [1, p. 283], it did not exceed 55% except in Kuwait (58%) and the United Arab Emirates (67%)

[1, p. 283]. This may be at least in part due to higher birth rates and lower life expectancy rates. Birth rates in Arab Middle Eastern countries are nearly twice those of the industrial market economies and life expectancies are ten to fifteen years lower [1, pp. 222-223]. Table 1 shows that between 1965 and 1980 there has been a significant shift in the labour force of these countries away from agriculture and in the direction of industry and services. There seems to be an increasing concentration of the labour force in the services sector, especially in the oil exporting countries. Actually, the percentage of the labour force in the service sectors of the oil producing countries is quite comparable to that in the service sectors in the industrial market economies [1, pp. 282-283].

The data in Table 1 shows that the average annual growth of the labour force in Arab Middle Eastern countries, particularly the rich oil exporters, exceeds by far its counterpart in developed and other developing countries [1, pp. 282-283]. This suggests that the supply of manpower is increasing at a fast rate and the problem turns from one of availability of labour to one of educating and training the potential labour force as well as finding productive work for the increasing labour force and for the thousands who are already unemployed or underemployed in some Arab Middle Eastern Countries.

Here, we must distinguish between the rapidly developing oil-rich Arab countries with their shortage of unskilled, skilled and expert labour, and the poor countries with an increasingly growing labour force that cannot be absorbed because of limited resources. In a way, the two have been complementing each other: the oil rich countries solving their problem of labour shortages by importing labour from the poorer countries and the poorer countries relieving the pressure of the excessive labour force by exporting such labour and benefiting economically from the financial remittances of its emigrant workers. Saudi Arabia, an oil rich country, provides us with an excellent illustration of this exchange between poor and rich countries. Thus, we find hundreds of thousands of expatriates who have come from various Arab countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The positions filled by these people both in the public and private sectors cover the whole range of occupations, from those requiring expert and highly specialized manpower such as university professors, doctors and engineers to unskilled labour at the lower end of the array.

The export of labour from poor countries to the oil-rich Arab oil countries, however, is only a temporary solution to the problem of excessive labour supply. The oil-rich countries have been moving gradually towards self-sufficiency through extensive plans aiming at developing their human resources. What is happening in Saudi Arabia, which is by far the biggest importer of foreign labour, may be illustrative of this trend. Saudization of the working force has been declared as one of the important goals of development, and extensive efforts are being exerted to meet this goal.

Table 1. Labour force in middle eastern countries

Country	% of population of working age (15-64 years)		% of labour force in						Average of annual growth of labour force		
	1985	1985	Agriculture		Industries		Services		1965-1980	1980-1985	1985-2000
			1965	1980	1965	1980	1965	1980			
Egypt	55	55	46	15	20	30	34	2.2	2.6	2.7	
Iraq	50	50	30	20	22	30	48	3.6	3.7	4	
Iran	53	49	36	26	33	25	31	3.2	3.3	3.2	
Jordan	49	37	10	26	26	37	64	1.7	4.4	4.2	
Kuwait	58	2	2	34	32	64	67	6.9	6.2	3.5	
Libya	50	41	18	21	29	38	53	3.6	3.7	3.5	
Oman	50	62	50	15	22	23	28	3.8	5.2	2.7	
Saudi Arabia	54	68	48	11	14	21	37	4.9	4.4	3.5	
Syria	48	52	32	20	32	28	36	3.3	3.4	4	
U.A.E.	67	21	5	32	38	47	57	-	5.2	2.1	
Yemen AR	51	54	41	12	18	33	41	1.6	2.8	3.1	
Yemen DPR	51	79	69	7	9	14	22	0.7	2.6	3.4	

Source: ref. [1, pp. 282-283]

Over the last thirty years, seven universities have been established and the enrollment of Saudi men and women has been steadily increasing. The number of Saudi students enrolled in these universities during the academic year 1408-1409 was 95600. Every year about six thousand new Saudi graduates enter the labour market [2, pp. 10-12].

Technical education and vocational training has been one of the important activities aiming at the Saudization of the labour force. Several public institutions are engaged in these activities, notably the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training, the Ministry of Education and the General Presidency for Girls' Education. In the year 1406-1407, 32371 students graduated from these schools, as compared with 29309 graduates in 1405-1406 and 29011 in 1404-1405 [3, p. 13].

In order to meet the increasing demand for highly qualified persons in the growing industries in both the private and public sectors, two industrial colleges have been established last year in the industrial cities of Yanbu and Jubail. In addition to the first year of general education, each of these two colleges has three departments offering the following areas of specialization [4, pp. 16-19]:

- 1) **The Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering** with opportunities for specialization in computer engineering technology, electrical engineering technology and electronic engineering technology.
- 2) **The Department of Mechanical Engineering** with opportunities for specialization in plant engineering technology, production engineering technology, air-conditioning and refrigeration engineering and mechanical design and drafting.
- 3) **Department of Chemical Engineering** with opportunities for specialization in environmental control engineering, chemical and industrial laboratory technology and industrial management and control technology.

The growth of the number of Saudi faculty members at King Saud University is a good example of the success of the Saudization policies. Table 2 below shows this trend over the last 15 years. The number of Saudi faculty is expanding at the average rate of 70 members per year. Presently there are 620 teaching assistants working for their Ph.D.'s abroad. Most of these students are expected to return with their degrees within the coming eight years. By then the size of the Saudi faculty will probably be double its present size.

Table 3 below shows the forecast made by the Secretariat General of the Manpower Council in Shaaban 1408, regarding the growth of the Saudi workforce in the various occupations between 1406 and 1415 (1986-1995).

Table 2. Saudi faculty members at King Saud University 1973-1989

Year	Full professors	Associate professors	Assistant professors	Total
1973-74	1	21	75	97
1974-75	1	13	86	100
1975-76	2	14	86	102
1976-77	2	16	96	114
1977-78	4	15	128	147
1978-79	8	20	147	175
1979-80	10	26	141	177
1980-81	16	49	177	242
1981-82	20	58	193	271
1982-83	24	66	232	322
1983-84	29	75	276	280
1984-85	28	82	288	398
1985-86	28	96	318	442
1986-87	39	92	372	503
1987-88	43	120	411	574
1988-89	59	156	428	643

Source: ref. [5].

Table 3. Development of the share of the Saudi workforce in various occupations

Occupation	Percentage of Saudis	
	1406 %	1415 %
Technical and Scientific	13.8	51.5
Administrative	50.1	75.1
Clerical	52.1	75.8
Sales	37.3	56.5
Services	38.1	46.5
Agriculture	73.8	89.5
Production	44.0	55.6
Machine operations	44.0	55.6
Construction	10.1	15.8

Manpower in the Public Sector

The role of the state in Arab Middle Eastern countries has been expanding rapidly especially since the end of the second world war. This growth in the role of the state has resulted in substantial increases in public employment. This trend is likely to continue. From National Annual Abstract of Statistics, various issues, Table 4 gives information on the share of government in non-agricultural employment and the growth in public employment in a number of Arab Middle Eastern countries. The figures suggest high growth rates, particularly in Egypt, Jordan and Syria. This rapid growth partly reflects the demand for more public services. For example, the number of school enrollments in most Arab states increased from 16.6 million students in 1970 to 37.1 million students in 1984 [6, Table 2-2]. This has required an increase in the number of public school teachers from 553 thousand teachers in 1970 to 1.6 million teachers in 1984.

Table 4. Growth in public employment in middle eastern countries*

Country	Share of government in non-agricultural employment (1983)	Growth in government employment (1975-1980)
Egypt	38.1	7.9
Iraq	28.5	4.9
Jordan	34.4	5.6
Oman	26.8	5.0
Syria	30.1	5.2
Yemen A.R.	27.9	5.2

* The growth rates were estimated using the compound growth formula:

$$N_t = N_0 (1 + r)^t$$

Where r represents the growth rate.

Another principal reason for the rapid growth in public employment is the desire of governments to improve tribal, ethnic, or regional representation [7]. A third reason for the growth in public employment is the use of public payrolls as a means for combating unemployment. The government of Egypt, in particular, has been acting for a good number of years as "employer of the last resort". It is estimated that over-staffing in this country exceeds 40 percent of total civil service employment [8].

The overstaffing at lower levels imposes a financial burden on the state, undermines morale and obstructs efficient management. A clear distinction must be drawn between managing the public service with competent staff and using it to tackle

unemployment. For the latter, temporary public works programs are cheaper and more effective than discriminate increases in public employment.

The overstaffing at lower grades coexists with shortages of senior professional and technical people. These shortages were met in the oil producing countries by employment of expatriates. These countries face serious difficulties in filling certain posts in the public sector, particularly for teachers, engineers, managers, accountants, economists and doctors. In other Arab Middle Eastern countries, skill shortages in the public service are more qualitative than quantitative. This stems from the uneven quality of secondary and higher education, the strong demand from the private sector for good graduates and the fact that government salaries are too low to attract or retain enough capable individuals. Even the private sector in many of these countries is facing the problem of attracting and/or retaining some of its highly qualified personnel. This is in part due to the deteriorating economic conditions in such countries as Jordan, Egypt, Syria, the Sudan and especially Lebanon, and in part to the attractiveness of the opportunities available in richer countries. This latter point will be discussed in the next paragraph on the brain drain.

A) The Brain Drain

For the over-populated countries such as Egypt, the export of labour makes an important contribution to their balance of payments.

Although, the brain drain could have some harmful effects even in the few instances in which there appears to be a relative abundance of skilled people, it cannot be denied that the remittances of the Egyptian emigrants are considered a valuable and badly needed supplement to Egypt's national revenue. This applies to other poor countries that are exporting labour, skilled or unskilled. It must also be realized that the brain drain from poorer Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt is in part the consequence of the lack of jobs or opportunities in the countries, and in part the attractiveness of more remunerative jobs in the oil rich countries and of greater opportunities for personal development in industrial market economies. Extensive economic development in these poor countries could slow down this trend and the limited resources remain the main problem.

B) Competition with the Private Sector

The slow down of the brain drainage would only alleviate the problem of labour shortage for public employment. As the process of economic development accelerates the public sector is apt to face competition from the domestic private sector. It is important to note here that this competition should not be allowed to be a zero-sum game, in which one party ends up as winner and the other party as loser. In either case society will be the loser. Therefore, plans should be developed aiming at insur-

ing that the supply of expert and skilled manpower will keep pace with the increasing demand for such manpower in both the public and the private sectors. In other words, the long run solution to this problem lies in producing more skills of all kinds which means increasing the responsiveness of the formal educational system to trends in the labour market. Recent research confirms the strong association between education and economic growth. But the immediate shortage remains and can be met partly through job related training and more imaginative personnel policies [9].

Education and Training Manpower

Available statistics suggest that a great deal of progress took place in the area of education in most Middle Eastern countries during the last two decades. Table 5 shows that the numbers enrolled in primary and secondary schools increased substantially between 1965 and 1986. The number enrolled in higher education as the percentage of population aged 20-24 more than doubled in less than two decades. The increase is very striking in the case of the rich oil-producers. Thus the number of students enrolled in higher education in Saudi Arabia increased from less than 7 thousand students in 1970 to over 94 thousand students in 1985 [10, Table 85].

However, the data in Table 3 suggest that most Middle Eastern countries still have a long way to go particularly with respect to female and secondary and higher education. This would naturally put an extra financial burden on the budgets of these countries, which currently devote over 10 percent of total expenditure to education as can be seen from the data in Table 6.

There is no doubt that spending on education over the past years has enabled these countries to build larger stocks of scientists, technicians and researchers as can be seen from the data in Table 5. The data in Table 7 reveal that Egypt is more equipped than any other Middle Eastern country with qualified manpower and researchers. This is not solely due to its size, but also to the fact that higher education in Egypt has had a long tradition alongside the prevalence in Egypt of a strong positive attitude toward the value of university education. Other countries with similar population size and higher per capita income (*e.g.* Iran) have a much smaller stock of qualified manpower than Egypt. The attitude towards education as well as the availability of institutions of higher education play a major role in producing skilled and trained persons.

Training is another main source of supplying the public sector with qualified manpower. According to a World Bank staff working paper, training, despite its growth, still received less emphasis in developing countries than in public sector organizations in industrialized countries [11]. Interest in training for the public sector, however, has been growing in many Middle Eastern countries. Thus institutes of

Table 5. Progress of education in Middle Eastern Countries: percentage of age group enrolled in education

Country	Primary						Secondary						Tertiary	
	Total		Primary male		Primary female		Total		Secondary male		Secondary female		Total	
	1965	1985	1965	1985	1965	1985	1965	1985	1965	1985	1965	1985	1965	1985
Egypt	75	85	90	44	60	76	26	62	37	73	15	52	7	23
Iraq	74	100	102	108	45	92	28	55	42	69	14	39	4	10
Iran	63	112	85	122	40	101	18	46	24	54	11	37	2	5
Jordan	95	99	105	98	83	99	38	79	52	80	23	78	2	37
Kuwait	116	101	129	102	103	99	52	83	59	85	43	80	...	16
Libya	78	127	111	...	44	...	14	87	24	...	4	...	1	11
Oman	...	89	...	97	...	80	...	32	...	43	...	21	...	1
Saudi Arabia	24	69	36	77	11	61	4	42	7	51	1	33	1	11
Syria	78	108	103	116	52	101	28	61	43	72	13	49	8	17
United Arab Emirates	...	99	...	99	...	99	...	58	...	53	...	65	0	8
Yemen AR	9	67	16	112	1	22	0	10	...	17	...	3	...	...
Yemen DPR	23	66	35	96	10	35	11	19	17	26	5	11	...	...

Source: ref. [1, pp.280-281].

Table 6. Government expenditure on education as a percentage of total expenditure

Country	1972	1986
Egypt	....	10.8
Iraq	....	....
Iran	....	10.4
Jordan	....	12.2
Kuwait	15.0	12.6
Libya	....	....
Oman	3.7	10.1
Saudi Arabia	....	....
Syria	11.3	....
U.A.E.	16.5	9.7
Yemen A.R.	....	22.5
Yemen D.P.R.	....	....

Source: ref. [1, pp. 266-267].

.... not available

public administration for in-service training and pre-entry training have been established in most of these countries. It is suspected, however, that the quality of public service training in general is still low. This is primarily because it is usually treated as a discrete event, rather than as one element in a comprehensive program of organization development. In many cases, little effort has been made to adopt training programs borrowed from abroad or to generate indigenous ones [12]. As a result, many programs are classroom based and tend to teach the skills that trainers know rather than build upon the knowledge that trainees already possess. Many programs rely on stylized examples rather than on trying to solve problems. Few offer rotational assignments that are tied to a training and career development plan, and that attempt to broaden civil servants' outlooks and help them develop their skills in different jobs and organizations. Attempts to introduce Western management practices (such as position classifications, performance, budgeting, participatory learning and team research) are either rejected outright or fail eventually [13]. In addition to the opposition of those who have a vested interest in the status-quo and to the natural resistance to change, two important factors may have led to this rejection or failure. First, the tendency to ignore preparing the grounds for the innovation. This involves in part gaining the support of those persons who will be involved with or affected by the change through a sound public relations program, and in part through training programs aiming at giving the public employees who will be implementing the new system the needed skills and knowledge. Second, the tendency to take the imported system as a package ready for implementation without giving due consideration to the need

Table 7. Stock of qualified manpower and researchers in Middle Eastern countries (1980) (thousands)

Country	Stock of qualified manpower	Potential scientists and engineers	Total No. of scientists, technicians	No. of scientists engaged in research	No. of scientists engaged in research in the areas of social science & humanities
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Egypt ⁽¹⁾	–	492.5	26.6	19.9	3.5
Iran	465.5	294.6	2.3	2.1	–
Iraq ⁽²⁾	68.3	43.6	–	–	–
Jordan ⁽³⁾	17.3	11.6	1.3	1.2	0.4
Kuwait ⁽⁴⁾	118.6	11.8	1.0	0.5	0.3
Lebanon ⁽²⁾	–	28.5	0.2	0.2	–
Libya	11.6	20.6	2.6	1.1	0.3
Qatar ⁽⁵⁾	10.4	1.5	0.05	0.03	–
Saudi Arabia ⁽⁶⁾	–	33.4	–	–	–
Syria	44.9	24.5	–	–	–
Yemen	2.1	1.4	–	–	–

- (1) Data in columns (1) & (2) relate to 1976, data in other columns relate to 1982.
(2) Data in columns (1) & (2) relate to 1972, data in other columns related to 1982.
(3) Data in columns (1) & (2) relate to 1977, data in other columns related to 1982.
(4) Data in columns (3),(4) & (5) relate to 1984, data in other columns related to 1977.
(5) Data in columns (3),(4) & (5) relate to 1983.
(6) The figures refer to people with university education.

Source: ref. [6, Table 2-2].

to adapt the program to its new environment in the light of the needs, problems and constraints of the local situation.

Manpower planning and development has also been gaining interest. In Saudi Arabia, for example, this interest started in 1960 when the higher committee for manpower was established. In 1980 (10.8.1400 H), a Royal Decree was issued establishing the manpower council whose functions are to study, on a continuous basis, the manpower needs of the Kingdom and to plan and coordinate the efforts aiming at the development of the human resources for both the public and private sectors. The importance attached to the role of this Council is indicated by the fact that nine of its twelve members are of the leading ministries in the council of ministers.

Salaries and Conditions of Employment in the Public Sector

To succeed in recruiting qualified staff and retaining them, the public sector must be prepared to offer salary and other fringe benefits that compete with alternative job opportunities. This is particularly important for staff with unusual skills: public service compensation too often fails to attract and retain senior professionals.

Middle Eastern countries differ greatly with respect to salaries offered in both the public and private sectors. Naturally, salary levels are strongly related to the prevailing economic conditions including the cost of living and the per capita income. However, available evidence indicates that, as elsewhere in the world, private sector salaries tend to be higher than those of the public sector. Thus Jordan and Egypt have experienced flight of skilled civil servants to local private sectors and to nearby oil-producing countries. However, despite the relatively poor salaries, many individuals value government services for its other benefits such as the security of tenure and the power and prestige associated with high office. For this reason, complete equality between public and private sector pay is generally neither necessary nor desirable [14].

Nonmaterial rewards for good performance are in many cases effective. As the employees' needs become adequately satisfied, Maslow's higher needs start emerging and they tend to become strong motivating forces. This is particularly, although not solely, true in the case of professionals and highly educated persons. In these cases, therefore, increased motivation and higher performance can be achieved through non-pecuniary policies such as rewarding performance with enhanced prestige, considerate supervisory behaviour, increasing employees' participation and enriching jobs.

Another aspect of manpower limitations in the public sector of many Arab Middle Eastern countries relates to the fact that personnel departments play a relatively passive (sometimes even negative) role, administering an ingrained system of rules rather than developing policies for improving public sector management. In order to build effective career development systems, to improve public sector pay and conditions, to link incentives more closely to performance, the status of the personnel function in government should be raised and the managerial capacity of the personnel offices should be strengthened.

Conclusion

Oil rich Arab countries have a shortage of labour while poorer Middle Eastern countries have an over supply. The two sides are complementing each other. Thus oil rich Arab countries are importing professional, skilled and unskilled labour from the poorer countries. But this can be only a temporary solution to the problem facing

both sides. Oil rich countries are trying to solve their labour shortage problem through extensive efforts aiming at the development of their human resources. Also, with the completion of the greater part of their infrastructure construction plans, their need for imported labour has been declining. Thus, it may be said that they are gradually moving in the direction of self sufficiency. The need for some unskilled labour, however, may continue due to prevailing attitudes towards manual tasks.

For the poorer countries, the solution of the problem of excessive labour supply is more difficult. The gradual shrinking of the labour market of the oil-rich Arab countries leaves the industrial economies as the main alternative labour markets. These markets, however, are not as viable as the labour markets of the oil-rich Arab countries. Restrictive immigration regulations make access quite difficult except perhaps for the highly qualified persons. Workers who manage to enter these markets in general, and their families in particular, are apt to face serious adjustment problems, cultural, linguistic and educational. Finally whereas work in the oil-rich countries has always been a temporary stay after which the workers go back home with their savings, work in many Western countries tend to lead to permanent emigration with the consequent loss of manpower as well as most of the financial remittances.

The long run solution of the problem of excessive labour in the poorer Arab countries is therefore the development of a viable economy capable of absorbing the existing labour force. Their limited economic resources constitute serious obstacles to development. But these obstacles are not unsurmountable. What is needed is the development of sound plans aiming at mobilizing all the human and material resources for total development. The successful implementation of such plans requires efficient and effective public administration, and a stable political system. The presence of such plans and their effective implementation will make it easier for these countries to receive financial loans and aid from foreign sources. A stable political system alongside plans to encourage foreign investment could also bring into the country badly needed foreign capital.

The vital role of public administration in contributing to the development of sound socio-economic plans and to their effective and efficient implementation cannot be exaggerated. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that Arab Middle Eastern countries should devote their efforts to uplift the quality of their public administration systems. Sound career development plans should be developed and implemented. Training should not be limited to teaching skills and imparting knowledge, but also special emphasis should be given to instilling attitudes and behavioral patterns which are conducive to good management. Organization and management principles or techniques copied from the West may not be suitable for the particular environments of these countries. Therefore, one of the major responsibilities facing Middle Eastern governments is the adaptation of imported management principles

and techniques and the identification and development of native ones. Joint cooperative efforts between the governments on one hand and universities, research institutes of public administration, consultants and scholars on the other hand may be one of best courses to meet these responsibilities.

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عجز العمالة والإدارة العامة الفعّالة في دول الشرق الأوسط

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ملخص البحث: يهدف هذا البحث إلى إلقاء بعض الضوء على أثر عجز العمالة على أداء الإدارة العامة في دول الشرق الأوسط. قسّم البحث إلى خمسة أقسام؛ يتناول أولها توفر العمالة وتوزيعها في دول الشرق الأوسط. وبيّحت القسم الثاني توفر المهارات للإدارة العامة. أما القسم الثالث، فيتناول تدريب الخدمة العامة. وفي القسم الرابع يتحدث البحث عن الرواتب وظروف العمل في القطاع الحكومي. وتلخّص أهم نتائج البحث في القسم الخامس.