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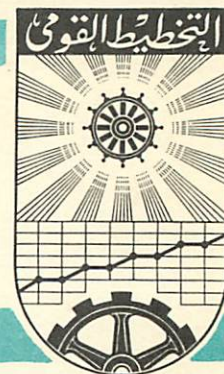
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SOME PROBLEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING IN THE ARAB WORLD

By

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I feel I must begin by defininf the terms of this title. I don't want to go into the meaning of the term problem, the term planning and the term educational planning ... etc. I only want to begin by saying that there must be two broad sets of problems. First the problems which face the educational planners as planners and those which face them as educators. In discussing these two sets of problems , I am not pretending I can encompass the whole field . The best title for this talk should be some problems as I see them.

The distinction between these two sets of problems as we have classified them in this present occasion is to some extent artificial because we are always dealing only with the human factor and aiming at maximising its output for the welfare of the society to which he belongs and also for his own benefit. That is why we cannot easily disentangle educational planning from social planning or from the overall national planning. It also accounts for the close interaction between planning in the education sector and planning in any other sector like that of Health, Industry or Agriculture. Every sector in society affects every other sector and is affected by it . This happens to the extent that you cannot distinguish between cause and effect nor between ends and means.

If we agree to this we arrive at the following conclusions:
First, Educational Planning should take place within the overall national planning . There must be a national body responsible for this overall national planning . For a country to establish such a body and to define its authority and responsibility there must be full readiness to do. This question of readiness creates a number of very illusive problems.

Secondly, any social planning educational or otherwise must take to account factors which have four characteristics:

They are numerous , they are varied, they are varying and they a are Intertwined . Ignorance may be attributed either to disease or poverty or both . Disease may be attributed either to ignorance or poverty or both. And poverty may either be attributed to ignorance or disease or both . One is apt to get some circular confusion in his thinking and be forced, if he does not give up in despair, to work out some plan the accuracy of which depends both on the planner and on the situational possibilities of pla-nning .

To make ourselves clearer let us take the outcomes of the disco-very of petrol in an Arab country whose basic economy was based on agricul-ture. The human ability native to the country is not prepared to handle the question of petrol . Large numbers of very skilled foreigners flock into the country to take out the petrol to ship it, to market it, to pur -fy it and maybe to establish related industries. A number of auxiliary trades appear which are usually also occupied by foreigners . Prices go up. Farmers are attracted to leave farming for jobs which are less skille but more paying. The farming ability tends to get lost for the country while the skilled ability necessary for the new situation is not acquired. New political and social complications begin to appear. Net income of th country may increase with an apparent progress in education but it is usu ally not in the direction which helps the native human resources to be cl sely wedded to the natural resources . People imigrate from rural to urban areas creating a vast number of problems on the horizontal level . They move also from one social class to another creating another great number of problems on the vertical level.

Here you get health problems, social problems , economic prob-lems, legislative problems ... etc. and in order to understand phenomen you find yourself in front of a number of hypotheses . If you want to carry out a well designed study you do not test for a single rigid hyp thesis but you have to select from a number of competing hypotheses com prising as we said factors which are numerous, varied, varying and inte related. To come back to our first point we emphasise that when we pre

problems for the educational planners as planners and others for them as educators we are really oversimplifying matters.

It is obvious that the second type of problems has been confronting us all along . We have always thought of problems , related for example to illiteracy and how to eradicate it. We looked at illiteracy as a stigma which has to be removed . We really tended to look at the ability to read and write as being more ornamental than useful. Egypt has been since the February Declaration very strong at abolishing illiteracy for the last forty years and inspite of all that has been expended we find that the progress made is not commensurate with the money and effort put in. In one Arab country the statistics tell us that 60 teachers are being used to teach 600 illiterates . That is to say one teacher for every 10 and even then we are not certain of the results .

Educators are also always thinking , for example , of examinations; whether they are necessary or not, whether they should be easier or more difficult, whether they should depend on memory or thinking ; theoretical or applied; inclusove or partial; optional or compulsory, long or short and so on . In fact it is even sometimes thought that examinations are too important and too sacred to be discussed . Examinations are at present being enthusiastically discussed in one Arab country. The University people think that the secondary certificate is an entry visa to the University . The logical conclusion to this is that everybody should therefore fail except those who are acceptable at the University . This means that the University is the only field open to those who finish their secondary education with success . This also means that those who succeed must not be more than one or two thousands per University . Failures will either repeat and create bottlenecks at the secondary level or will go out to life work with a sense of failure . Examinations thus treated instead of becoming a force for education turn out to be its very enemy. Apart from examinations educators are also thinking of the school syllabus, the time table, the school books, the homework, discipline, reward and punishment, obedience and rebelion. Leaving alone the pupil, they also

think of the teacher and how to teach him to teach. They think of the supervisor, the head teacher, the functionality of the building , the school meal etc. etc.

There are hundreds of such problems and educators have more recently extended their activities to study the educational ladder and its relation to both psychological and social qualities . A good deal has been done about the points at which the stem of the ladder branches off to some sort of specialisation .

Questions of organisation have also been occuring and recurring. Inspite of all that has been said about centralisation and decentralisation there is always that centrifugal tension between those who work in central offices and those who work in the field. There is always tension between pure planners, pure administrators and the technical administrators. There are problems between planners and executors and between those who mediate between the two.

And therefore we do not only plan our education, we also plan our administration and therefore we get another two sets of problems; administration of planning and planning of administration.

Every plan has of course to be evaluated while being implemented. This brings in the three famous sets: planning, evaluation and implementation and everyone of them is brought forward at various levels. Examples of these are planning at the national level, at the governorate level and at the city level and planning for various sectors and subsectors.

Between administration of planning and planning itself as well as between evaluation of planning and planning of evaluation, many are puzzled at the exact relationship between them. And the question is should it be a integral relation or a coordinative relation. If the relation is integral there is the oneness of the two activities while if it is coordinative there is only a conjuctive relationship between the two.

This very complicated picture makes it all the necessary that
we must plan our education, we must also plan for planning . We must eva-
luate our plans and plan our evaluation . We must also implement our plans
and plan their implementation . There is always the danger that one goes
on planning for education and does not educate like the person who spends
all his life trying to put his books in order but does not read. To fall
into this danger is not entirely abnormal .

I am also prone on account of the nature of the subject to go
off point from time to time and I have to exert an effort to bring myself
back to it.

I may ask myself now the question why plan. We plan in order
to know exactly what we are doing . The Arab countries have recently
emancipated themselves from foreign rule. Since World War II this eman-
cipation is Asia and Africa is progressing by leaps and bounds. All these
countries are left with marked economic backwardness. The efficiency of
the people is at its lowest and in order to raise the standard of living
you have to raise their income, to raise their income you have to raise
their productivity, to raise their productivity you have to raise their
efficiency, to raise their efficiency you have to think of maximizing it
at the individual and social levels and in order to do so you have to find
out the human ability , discover it, enlarge upon it in its three dimen-
sions of form, content and function.

In order to do so we begin by enthusiasm; by people who want
action and people who want to study before action. We get people who
want to act without studying and at the other end we get people who want
to go on studying without acting.

It is the job of the educational planner to enhance the felt need
or planning, as you understand it, in the minds of the public as well as
he top authorities and lagislators.

Through enthusiasm there was advancement of education in the Arab World during the last 10 or 12 years . But such advancement did not coincide with needs and was more out of proportion in some sections than in others.

It is true that the primary education has shown massive expansion. Taking the Arab countries as a whole it has more than doubled. As an example, the Seoudi Arabia primary school pupils in 61/62 are 4½ times what they were in 51/52.

Although there is tremendous progress in the education of girls but their percentage to the total number in primary education is 12% which is low and the percentage of primary school pupils to the total pupil enrollment is 86%. This means that development is highly needed to bring about the balance between girls and boys education at the one hand and between the primary and post primary education at the other .

We also find that the primary school pupils in Syria in 61/62 are 3½ times what they were in 44/45 and although primary girls education is developing at the same rate as that for the boys we find that girls in primary schools are only 29% of the total primary school population. It thought that the coeducational character of schools in the Syrian village create some resistance with some parents against girls education .

Studying the increase in school building and teachers at the primary level in Syria we find it progressing at practically the same rate that of pupils.

If we also examine the percentage of pupils at every stage, to the total school population, we find 82% at the primary level 18% at t post primary level including 2% at the Higher education level. Still tl is a lack of balance between education of boys and education of girls n only in these two countries but in the Arab World taken as a whole and only at the primary level but all along the educational ladder .: Girls

form about 25% of the total primary school population, about 20% of the total secondary school population and about 12% of the total University and higher education . The planner cannot start solving this problem without taking into full consideration both cultural, traditional aspects, economic questions, social conditions, resources, felt needs and aspirations . To go back again to the lack of balance that has to be restored between primary and post primary education we have seen that it is much less in one case than it is in another .

But it must be remembered that in order to make primary education available to all children of primary school age , post primary education in general and teacher training schools in particular have to be greatly encouraged and increased .

Let me take as an extreme example that of Algeria where 1½ million children of primary school age have to receive education. Thousands French teachers, presiously specially trained in France to teach in Alria, have withdrawn and gone back after the independance. The present actice is that any adult who can barely read and write can potentially come a teacher . Emergency procedures are bound by their very nature to only temporary . What Algeria needs in terms of manpower for primary ication is educators to train teachers . Such educators have also to be pared . I can immediately think now of missions of Algerian graduates Arab countries for teachers colleges where they specialise in preser- e and inservice training of primary school teachers . One can think of ablishing a number of higher training institutes in Algeria to train teacher trainers .

Here we may pause to find a serious problem facing the planners. acute social pressure demands primary education . Patient planning prepare the teachers . More patient planning says prepare the trai- of these teachers . Going further we say prepare the trainers who train the trainers of these teachers . In the long run this is exce- t but I can say that in any planning the emergency measures are more

appealing than long range plans. That is why the authorities in underdeve-. loped countries if they want to fulfil their mission they must manouvre their way somehow between the two .

There are also related to trainers of teacher trainers questions of how, when, where, how many, for how long, to what extent, for how much and so on and so forth for which a multitude of data is needed.

In connection with this problem I can also probably think of some similar solution for Yamen. Degrees of difficulty vary.

It is of course understood that the problem of teachers in gene ral and for primary education in particular is not as simple as all that although what we have presented is already sufficiently complicated .

First teacher education is affected both by the general econo of the country and by the status of teachers . It is not easy to attrac people to the teaching profession for example in Seoudi Arabia, in Liby or in Keweit. Petrol discovery has its polarising effects on manpower distribution .

If such difficulty is pronounced in a general way for general education it is more marked for certain areas like mathematics and phys and it is still more marked for the recruitment of teachers for technic education. This is true of the Arab countries taken as a whole but if take UAR we find that according to the manpower study recently carried out, then UAR will be 900 mathematics teachers short of its needs in 1 This is assuming that the present sources of teachers remain the same.

Our problem is not of course just finding the teacher but tl right kind of teacher . The question resolves itself to attracting p(selecting the good pupil teacher, giving him suitable training and em ying him in such a way that he can be retained . If we can have ans to these questions regarding men teachers can we have parallel answer

regarding women teachers. The answers acquire different magnitudes as they are analysed along different dimensions, i.e. city versus village; Mathematics and natural science versus languages and human sciences, technical schools versus general schools.. etc. etc.

The difficulty is not only related to teacher training, recruitment and retention but it extends over the whole field of Higher and University Education. In the newly developing countries there is always serious lack of balance. Professional technical and highly educated people are very few. If under some illusion they seem too many in some cases it is only because the rate of education is quicker than the rate of development of work opportunities. The community functions are not able to assimilate manpower. It is like putting a bulk of rich food in the stomach of a newly born baby. It creates trouble. Yet we have to strengthen the community. So planning has to be manipulated in such a way as to provide the right human material at the right time. This is a stubborn problem. Again the enthusiasm in newly developing countries for education has created abnormal situations. A survey of students abroad for the whole of Africa and Asia has recently shown that 80% of them are studying arts and literature, 20% are studying science and technical subjects. If we go on in Egypt at the present rate we shall have in 1970 an excess of 4338 graduates of the new Faculties and a global shortage of over 3000 Engineers.

These figures are probably in need of some correction but in any case they can indicate to us that if a country defines its targets it can to some extent calculate the manpower it needs to achieve these targets.

The Arab countries are in need of expanding higher education without upsetting the educational pyramid. In higher education priority must be given to technology science and vocational education. In this connection must mentioned that in any field we are also in need not only for trainers but primarily of trainers of trainers.

To mention the field of technical education the figures which we may quote are alarming. In Egypt for example technical to academic education in 1952 was 15:85. It is now beginning to exceed 25:75. There is great progress but we are far short of what we should be. Planned attempts have been made to raise vocational and technical education and to arrest the development of general secondary education. It must be said that public pressure is still encouraging academic education leading to so called white collar jobs. Again we come across the difficult task confronting the planner, i.e. to find out his way between social pressures and the realisation of social objectives towards social development.

The Sudan has recently given attention to technical education and has thus raised it in proportion to academic education from 6.3% in 1955/1956 to 9.8 % in 1961/1962. This means that 90.2 % are receiving academic education while the need for development is crying for reversing the proportion. In Lybia the percentage is 88 % and in Seoudi Arabia it is 92%.

But we may ask again here about the real social and economic need on the one hand as it is seen from above by the Architect of Society and as it is felt by the people.

For technical and vocational education to flourish it must be directly related to employment with good status prestige and worth while social security.

We must also remember the influences of past history in the Arab World. During the Turkish rule the high technical schools were only established for the Turks in Constantinople but vocational schools at the primary and secondary levels were established for orpheans and foundlings.

We have every evidence that foreign rule never really encouraged any form of technical , industrial, commercial or even agricultural education.

In order then to spread technical education in the Arab World
we have to create the clean mental atmosphere for it, we have to enhance
the receptivty of the people and we have to prove not only the need of the
society for it but to make it attractive to individuals as far as status,
prestige and security are concerned.

To my mind there is no other major way of creating respectabi-
lity to manual activity. But I must reemphasise that this is a stubborn
problem for the planner who while facing it falls between the needs for
social and economic development and the attitudes of the individuals.

Taking manpower question in general we have seen that we are in
need of figures to tell us about the manpower situation at present, the
manpower situation say in the coming 10 years and the difference between
the two. We also need to know what the educational and training institu-
ons can provide during that time. We have also to calculate deaths, re-
rements... etc. Doing all this we could arrive at planning for the edu-
tion and training which could provide for the needs of the country.

All this looks very neat but we cannot plan unless we collect
a and handle such data.

The main problems related to the question of mere data collecting
the Arab countries are:
st. The quick political changes taking place, which result in change of
   leadership. Some form of stability is certainly needed to help cry-
   stallise policies within which targets are defined. If such stabi-
   lity is not reached then movements are either sporadic or liable to
   control by some outside or strange force. In this case the need
   and trend for data collecting will change.

ondly. There are also quick economic changes accompanied by the appea-
   rance of certain activities and disappearance of others. Examples
   of these are what happened in Koweit and Seoudi Arabia due to the

dicovery of petroleum and what is happening now in Libya due to the same thing. Klaedoscopic changes are taking place in the total demographic pattern.

There are also questions of nomads which exist in almost every Arab country. In Jordan whose total population is 1.¾ millions there are as many as 55000. This is a real problem for the educational planners and some cooperative effort between Unesco and FAO has to be envisaged.

Then there are questions of communication which make the approach to the people in places like the Sudan extremely difficult for months.

There are a number of other questions related to ways of life and to beliefs, prejudice customs; etc.

When it come to professions, you find yourself standing agai the difficulty of classification. Job classifications used in advanced countries do not at all fit in other countries. Every category may have i principle of classifications. With less advanced countries the question of specialisation almost disappears but it begins to appear as a necessit when planning for the future.

If all these factors make data collecting difficult yet it do not make it impossible. If the Suedes have attempted to estimate the num ber of fish in the Baltic sea and if a statistician can give a figure to the number of hairs on the head of a man who is not bold headed then we still have hope .

With manpower studies there are also of course the questions of the actual needs of the country, and the question of the felt needs. Such needs have to be clearly and deeply felt by both the people as wel as the governments.

There are always differences as we have previously mentione between actual needs and felt needs. The planning bodies see that the country is in need of technicians and machine operators while the avera

parent wants his son to be a clerk even if he gets much less income. The government sees that economy has to be controlled while sections of the public see the need for the so-called complete freedom which may lead to monopoly, exploitation and the termination of freedom.

This leads to the necessity of dissemination of information concerning planning, plans, targets... etc. For this we use the press, the radio, public meetings, discussions and all the methods which will help bring about the right attitudes.

If conviction is appreciably raised it will help motivate the planning movements.

Objectives will be defined.

Targets will be set.

Machinery will be established to collect data, to process it and make good use of it.

Documentation centres, statistical units, research units ..etc.

When the authorities, the people and the educators are convinced such tools, statistics, documentation, research, committees.. etc. will grow succeed and flourish.

In some parts of the Arab World such units have begun and are functioning.

In others we have to create the readiness for having them, for making them feel that they are needed.

That is what I meant by saying that planning must be preceeded by creating the readiness for it. That readiness is a concern of the government and the public alike.

And there we get in our thinking not only to the stage of planning, its elements, machinery .. etc. but we find ourselves in some places at the stage of planning for planning, planning to bring to existence the readiness for planning.

I am not trying to be exhaustive in any sense but I seem to be airing my ideas about educational planning in a very non planned way. I left out the well known practices followed for taking into account the population increases, budgetting for a five years or a 10 years plan taking into account cost per pupil, per class and what to do per village , city or governorate.

To move on to an aspect of educational planning which is not directly related to the preceeding point but forms an important aspect of the total problem.

I may say that while a country is getting ready for independence the people have great enthusiasm as to what push they will give to education and its content, but when independence is achieved the enthusiasm tends to get less. Countries which were once enthusiastic about the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction have in them people who/begin after the achievement of independence to resist the change from the foreign language to the original language.

One of the serious and most difficult problems in front of the planner is the question of Arabisation in general which means:-

1st The use of the Arabic as a medium of instruction. There are are a few people who argue against this by referring to the difference between the colloquial and the classic or to lowering the standards, or to the inexistence of books or even to the impossibilities of teaching natural sciences and technical sciences in Arabic. If the use of Arabic as a medium is really vial and no one can possibly doubt this then all such resistances have to be well overcome as soon as possible.   How ?

The second question in Arabisation is that pertaining to the content of the curriculum in the fields of history, geograph, civics, languages.. etc.   This was the core of the 1957 agreement between the Arab countries. But resources are sometimes meagre.

The third question in Arabization is that related to the form of education. The French models which are being abolished in France are still defined in some parts of the Arab World. I saw that in a number of Areas

during my visits to schools in Arab countries. Of course neither the old French model nor the modern are suitable. The same applies to the English, American or other models.

The question is again more complex than what has been shown under
also
these three points. There is the revival of the public care and attention given to Folklore and cultural values in general.
                also
There is the removal of the sense of inferiority associated to local culture and the categorical sense of superiority associated with what is Western. I am not denying that science and technology as attributes of Western civilization had their impact and repercussion.

Anyhow for the question of the Arabisation of education we have to take into consideration questions of resistance to established habit of invested interests, of new attitudes and also the sense of power, progress and modernism attached to modern European languages and way life. Also those aspects related to science and technology.

We must know we cannot transplant we have to develop our own genuine Arab personality and we have to benefit to the maximum from what is happening in the rest of the world.

Thus doing we would develop to a high level retaining our Arab personality. And that is how we realise with the rest of the world mutual recognition, mutual respect, mutual understanding and peaceful living.

At this point I like to sum up some of the problems as I see them but I find it difficult to do so.

There are problems of funds and experts, problems of readiness and attitudes, problems of quality versus, quantity, problems of data, documents and the inefficiency of collecting data, etc.

There are problems of machinery, their functions, their relations etc. A manpower board, an overall planning board, an educational planning

board, one board for all sections and so on and so forth at various levels and in various sectors.

What are the relations between public opinion and planning opinion ?

For the content there is the balance of educational opportunities for boys and girls, for cities and villages, for stabilized people and nomads.

There is also the balance of technical and academic education, the balance at the various levels between primary, secondary and post secondary, the balance between education and the needs of the country. The problems of adaptation between actual needs and felt needs.

We may find it difficult at this stage to encompass problems for the simple reason that they are due to variables which are numerous varied and intertwined.

These same difficulties intrinsic to the nature of planning in general makes it all the more urgent that educational planning must be carefully studied and that we shall be clearer about it as time goes on.

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