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Expectations vs. Reality: A Potential for Conflicts in the Lebanese Workplace

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study was designed to determine the degree to which students from an American-style Business School in Lebanon expect the managerial behaviors that they are taught in the classroom to actually exist in the Lebanese workplace. Broadly categorized as accountability, gender equity, religious tolerance, consultation, and transparency, the authors found little indication that such expectations existed. In fact, the relative strength of the responses was so weak that they were barely above neutral on a 10-point scale. What was perhaps most troubling was that the expectation for the elimination of bribery and corruption actually declined as students matriculated through the curriculum. At least for the time being, it appears that Lebanese business students do not anticipate encountering American-style management practices when they enter the workforce.

Keywords: Accountability, Equity, Tolerance, Consultation, Transparency, Management Practices

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BACKGROUND:

The issue of globalization often centers on the issue of “hegemony” which Antonio Gramsci (1971, 1975) saw as the ability of dominant (as he saw it western imperialist) powers to infuse their values into the cultures of developing countries. From a management point of view, the “chief instigator” in all of this seems to be “American style” business education and the extent to which it is dominated by American textbooks, journals and institutions (Mir, 2003; Grey, 2002, 2004). Proponents quickly argue that business education has the capacity to enhance the economies of foreign countries; that is if these societies would only accept the logic of the American mode of managerial conduct.

Of course, the influence of American-style business education is not restricted to the third world. As Julian Birkenshaw (2011), a Professor at the London Business School, noted in *Fortune Magazine*:

“Consider a few basic facts. At London Business School, one of the top B-schools outside North America, more than 90% of the faculty received their PhDs in North America. The same is essentially true at Insead (France), IESE (Barcelona), the Indian School of Business (Hyderabad), and CEIBS (Shanghai). The top management journals, from *Fortune* to *Harvard Business Review* to *Administrative Science Quarterly*, are all based in North America. The top management consultancies, from McKinsey to BCG, Bain and Booz Allen, all have deep American roots. Management ideology is, in essence, the last bastion of American hegemony.”

Business education goals and objectives: In discussing education in general, Olanaran and Angello (2008) defined hegemony as the imposition of the value structure of a dominant culture on non-dominant and less economically developed countries. Destradi (2010) argued that hegemony is a more subtle way in which foreign powers attempt to portray their goals in a common manner thus intimating that they should be globally adopted. In business education, this “benign approach” to hegemony is couched as “leadership” with the end-goal being to improve the way business is currently conducted in foreign societies. Yet there are those who argue that there is a hidden economic motive. According to Turnbull (2010) “the current model of business education preserves the status quo of twenty-first century capitalism and leaders appear to be powerless to act against a dominant ideology that reveres shareholder value above all else.”

Within the business school environment, American values are considered to be sacrosanct since they are backed up by statutory law. This is reflected by the faculty members’ tendencies to select instructional materials that are founded on the American management ideal. In fact, work place realities are given “short shrift” since the possibility of reverting to “pre-modern” approaches to leadership would be unthinkable (Kjonstad & Wilmott, 1995). The underlying assumption is that business students will see the inherent logic of the American approach and therefore implement these ideas when they begin to climb the corporate ladder.

Management from an Arab perspective: Managerial approaches in the Arab World, which is composed of 22 countries in the Middle East and North Africa, arose from a unique set of cultural factors. Often portrayed as being at odds with “progressive” Western values, at least one study revealed that Muslim workers are more contented and productive in a company run by Muslims and based on Islamic ideals (Hashim, 2010). Branine and Pollard (2010) have gone so far as to suggest a “utopian” vision of Arab leadership based on Islamic values which provide the structure for its own unique management approach founded on the following principles. (pp. 718-21)

- a) *Intention* (A person will be rewarded or punished according to their intentions)
- b) *Mindful of God* (A person can avoid evil actions and achieve a level where the mind is perfectly in tune with good deeds, piety and justice.)
- c) *Kindness and care* (By working to please God, the person will behave at his/her best without the need for any human supervision.)
- d) *Justice* (All people are equal. What truly counts is their actions and deeds.)

- e) Truthfulness (The love of truth reflects the notion of personal responsibility for every uttered word and reinforces organizational attempts to evaluate and assess practices.)
- f) *Conscientious of self-improvement* (Striving to improve requires managers and employees to work harder and improve the quality of their products and services through the promotion of learning, training.)
- g) *Sincerity and keeping promises* (Sincerity creates an organizational culture of trustfulness and cooperation between employees and employers.)
- h) *Consultation* (Managers are expected to seek advice and to consult with their subordinates before making decisions.)
- i) *Patience* (Being patient in making decisions reduces the possibility of making mistakes and increasing the chances of success in negotiations.)

The problem with Arab management, at least as Branine and Pollard (2010) see it, is not that the Arab system is essentially flawed but rather, it has been diluted and corrupted by non-Islamic influences. What is interesting is that if one did not know that these values were taken from the Quran, they could just as easily be viewed as prime examples of American ethical values. Branine and Pollard go on to argue that not only would multi-national corporations benefit from following these tenets, Arab countries would improve their ability to attract foreign investment. While their argument is compelling, there is little evidence that any such “idealized approach” to management exists in the Arab world or anywhere else of that matter.

The Situation in Lebanon: Often viewed as a microcosm of Arab and Western value systems, Lebanon serves as an ideal location to compare Middle Eastern and American approaches to management. With a culture that is deeply-rooted in “paternalistic” traditions, the Lebanese tend to view gender equality somewhat differently (ILO, 2004; Khalaf, 1993a, 1993b). Also placing it in opposition to Western values is Lebanon’s history of corruption. The 2013 Corruption Perception Index placed Lebanon 127th out of 177 nations with a rating of 26/100. (TI Country Rankings, 2014) The country’s rating under the Heritage Foundation’s 2014 *Index of Economic Freedom* places it in 96th place with a rating of 59.4/100. To make matters worse, Lebanon’s corruption rating of 24.5/100 continues to decline. (Index of Economic Freedom, 2014) Obviously, such levels of corruption tend to undermine attempts to achieve “accountability” and “transparency”.

What many opponents of “Arab values” fail to realize is that Arab business leaders do not necessarily conform to Western stereotypes (Muna, 1980; Ali, 1998, 1990, 1996, 1995; Ali and Azim, 1996; Weir, 2001). Admittedly there are high Power-Distance levels (80) in Arab organizations but not markedly higher than Singapore and India (77) or Mexico (81). Therefore to view the Arab style of management as purely top-down is patently incorrect (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Gerster & Day, 1994; Ronen, 1986; Hofstede, 1980). In fact, the Arab system is far more complex than its western counterparts. Its roots can be found in “Arab tribal power” that were necessary for desert survival and which evolved into the leadership/authority paradigm that Ali (1995) labeled “sheikocracy”.

This uniquely-Arab approach to leadership is characterized by hierarchical authority, clearly-defined rules and regulations, an emphasis on political networking, and an overall patriarchal approach to governance. The sheik’s power was based on their family and tribal affiliations so

therefore, persons who were close to the leader shared in his power. This gave rise to the tradition of political patronage (known in the Arab world as *wasta*¹) in which members of the extended family of the sheik, along with close friends and associates, were recognized as holding both power and authority (Hutchings & Weir, 2006; Abdalla, Maghrabi, & Raggad, 1995; Weir, 2001). The existence of “wasta” appointments often results in individuals being elevated to positions far above their level of competency with the work being done behind the scenes by a cadre of technocrats. This has given rise to an extremely bureaucratized structure with high levels of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Gillespie and Riddle, 2003).

The end result is a rather cumbersome and inefficient organizational structure that is epitomized by technocratic divisions of labor and a strict adherence to established rules and regulations. But it is worth noting that while it may take longer, things do get done reasonably well and the “wasta appointee” gets the credit. On the surface, this is highly reminiscent of Weber’s vision of rational-legal authority (1947) but such a comparison fails to consider the extent to which this authority is deeply rooted in familial and associative relationships. These exogenous factors subordinate organizational imperatives since those with close ties to the leader are granted appointments while those without *wasta* are repeatedly ignored (Abdalla & Al-Homoud, 2001, p. 511; Abdalla et. al., 1995).

There is evidence, however, (Muna, 2011) that Lebanese managers may indeed carry their classroom knowledge with them, particularly when they work outside of their home country. By comparing Lebanese managers in the Gulf countries to those working in the United States and Lebanon, Muna noted that those working in more culturally-diverse countries were significantly more participative and less autocratic than those executives working in their home country. In fact, he listed three recurring themes that identify successful Lebanese executives: (p. 875)

- (1) Ability to adapt to new situations and cultures, and to work well with different nationalities; and the ability to learn from adversity (being forced to leave their war-torn country).
- (2) The great impact of role models (most mentioned were parents, or bosses and mentors at work upon arrival to a new country).
- (3) Integrity, dedication, early responsibility, and hard work directed towards high ambitions and goals.

¹*Wasta*, from the Arabic word "*wasat*" which commonly means medium but also often means something akin to intermediary, intercessor or middle-man.

Professors are thus confronted by two divergent views of Arab leadership and management. One characterizes the system as consultative, open, networked, personalized, and willing to adapt while the polar view portrays the system as corrupt, inefficient, and nepotistic (Abdalla et al., 1995). There is far less disagreement on point however. Since the system is deeply rooted in tradition inside of Lebanon, it is unlikely to undergo a rapid change.

DEVELOPING THE HYPOTHESES:

Progressive Values Embedded in American Business Education: The authors elected to focus on five key value systems that form the foundation of modern business practices in the US. Broadly classified as accountability, consultation, equity, tolerance, and transparency, these values form the core of the AACSB-approved curriculum which treats them as sacrosanct and as such, not generally open to discussion (Panitch & Ginden, 2004; Goodstein, 1981). In this particular study, the authors obtained responses from students at three levels of business study: introductory, senior capstone, graduate. The researchers fully expected their personal acceptance of these standards to rise as they matriculated through the curriculum. However, due to the deeply engrained management practices in Lebanon, no such expectation was held for the implementation of these standards by managers in Lebanon.

Accountability: Giddens (1984, p.30) defined accountability as follows: “being accountable for one’s activities is to explicate the reasons for them and to supply the normative grounds whereby they may be justified.” Viewed from this perspective, the expectation is that superiors will abide by existing rules and regulations and deal with their subordinates in a fair and impartial manner. Diametrically opposed to this notion of equality is the tradition of *wasta* which Tlaiss and Kauser (2010a) discussed in terms of its impact on Lebanese women in the business world.

“While having a strong network of friends and family members in important positions provides assistance in recruitment, promotion, and training and development opportunities, *wasta* also destroys any form of equality by providing undue advantages to a group of individuals who may not necessarily merit such advantages and denying others because they lack a network of influential friends.” (p.486)

While some, especially those who benefit from the process, consider it a normal part of Arab society, this does not mean they respect the beneficiaries. While Mohamed and Mohamed (2011) found a higher level of support for the process among the lower socio-economic groups in Egypt, their respondents tended to view “*wasta* appointees” as less competent.

Given that *wasta* appointments are sought after by those who can obtain them and at least accepted by those who cannot, it is unlikely that the system will ever change. In fact, Finlay (2008) reported that students did not believe that this approach would be implemented by Lebanese managers. As a result, the authors drew the following *accountability* hypothesis: H^1 : “Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding equal treatment in regard to promotion and rewards will be adopted by Lebanese managers.”

Equity: Stobart (2005, p.275) defined equity in the following manner: “Equity is defined as a qualitative concern for what is just. This involves, but is not the same as, equality of opportunity and of outcome.” Arguably, equity remains the cornerstone of American business practices since it is firmly rooted in American law. It is manifested in a variety of ways, particularly in terms of “inclusiveness” and our attitudes toward gender and race. Exploring this “legal connection” more deeply, we find that Gramsci may have been correct in his assessment of hegemony. Writing in the Brigham Young University Law Review, Douglas Litowitz comments on the issue of inclusiveness as they related to Gramsci’s assertions (2000, p. 515).

“The current legal system is hegemonic in the Gramscian sense in that it induces people to comply with a dominant set of practices and institutions without the threat of physical

force and that this hegemony is overarching [inclusive] because it encompasses people of diverse races, classes, and genders.”

Di Lorenzo (2007) asserts that equity is a key value in business education with much of the field of business ethics effectively given over to discussing equity at work and in appropriate behaviors when dealing with stakeholders. While Tlaiss and Kauser (2010b) hold a generally negative view of *wasta*, they contend that it may have provided the key to achieving some semblance of gender equality in Lebanon’s “male dominated” workplace. In fact, women managers in Lebanon view *wasta* as the solution to organizational structures and practices that hamper their promotion potential.

Metcalf (2008, p. 97) offered a potential explanation for the difference between the approach of American women to the issue of gender equity and their “sisters” in Lebanon.

“The priorities of western women, day care, abortion rights, higher pay and economic equality with men are of less significance to women who are struggling for elementary rights to vote, to have access to education programmes, to work of any kind and to an end of sexual discrimination. While feminist issues are only now being recognized, religion is still an important regulator of everyday life and of a source of female identity.”

Since it is clear that men and women are not on a strictly equal footing, there is reason to believe that that neither gender expects to find anything different when they enter the workplace. Finlay (2008) reported just such a finding with students being significantly more likely to find the concept consistent with their personal beliefs than that is would be implemented by Lebanese managers. As a result, the authors drew an additional relating to gender equity: H^2 : “Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding gender equity will be adopted by Lebanese managers.”

What is far less clear from the literature is the extent to which the Lebanese society will be as accepting of the same equity issues when they relate to members of other races. The Lebanese society is far from homogenous in terms of race and religion but their exposure to other races is essentially limited to “domestic workers and day laborers” from Africa and Polynesia who toil for a few hundred dollars a month. The exception to this is in professional circles where members of other ethnic groups do tend to prosper. Finlay (2008) found that by and large, Lebanese managers did not look on member of other races as equals. Given this knowledge, the authors drew an additional hypothesis regarding racial equality: H^3 : “Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding racial equity will be adopted by Lebanese managers.”

Tolerance: Crick (1971, p. 44) characterized tolerance as “the degree to which we accept things of which we disapprove” and it has become another commonly advanced ideal that is manifested in American management practices. Despite the negative publicity generated by fundamentalist groups within the Muslim faith, religious tolerance is considered to be an essential Islamic virtue (Kurtz, 2005; Asali, 1994). But one must remember that Lebanon is also a religious microcosm in which the sectarian groups are inextricably tied to political ideologies. Although this inter-

religious conflict reached a peak during Lebanon's lengthy civil war, its effects are still felt in Lebanese politics today (Ghosn and Houry, 2011).

In the workplace, religious tolerance can be measured in two ways: employee satisfaction and discrimination. An early study of Lebanese workers by Sidani and Gardner (2000) found that organizational policies which run counter to workers' religious values had a negative impact on job satisfaction. At the same time, they found no relationship between the degree of religious commitment and negative attitudes toward women in the workplace. While Messarra and El-Kassar's survey of 349 Lebanese employees (2010, p. 161) found no overall perception that "my religion affects my colleagues' attitude towards me at work", they did note that the majority of males agreed with the statement "religious affiliation stereotypes me in a certain way at work."

It is well documented that Muslims view tolerance and compassion as key virtues (Kurtz, 2005). The problem with Lebanon is that there is no clear line of demarcation between religion in politics and if anything, they are one in the same. Inexorably, these political problems spill over into the workplace and given the country's unique history, it seems unlikely that religious tolerance would flourish there. Indeed, this was precisely what Finlay (2008) reported. Since there is no clear line of demarcation between religion and politics in Lebanon, the authors drew the following hypothesis regarding tolerance: H^4 : "Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding religious tolerance will be adopted by Lebanese managers."

Consultation: Yukl and Fu (1999, p. 220) expressed the following view of consultation. "Consultation is also a form of empowerment because it provides subordinates influence over important decisions. Consultation provides an opportunity for subordinates to voice concerns about adverse consequences of a proposed change." In Western cultures, the United States in particular, it is now accepted that leaders have an obligation to consult with their subordinates on important issues and to keep them informed of pending decisions that may affect their personal well-being. This ideal is not only a core behavior in Anglo-American management texts; it has become a key element in modern HRM. Because of the tribal traditions upon which it is based, a number of studies have suggested that this approach is consistent with Arab leadership in general and Lebanese leadership in particular (Neal, Finlay, & Tansey, 2005; Welsh and Raven, 2004; Ali, 1993).

While tribal cultures did compel the sheik to listen to his followers and keep them informed when it came to critical matters, he was in no way required to follow their advice. Coupled with the paternalistic nature of Arab society, one would be lead to believe that consultation, at least as American business programs define it, would be inconsistent with Lebanese management practices. Since Finlay's (2008) findings were consistent with this belief, the authors drew the following hypothesis: H^5 : "Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding consultive approaches to management will be adopted by Lebanese managers."

Transparency: Transparency International defines transparency "as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It hurts everyone who depends on the integrity of people in a position of authority." The authors chose to examine the critical issue of transparency in three ways. The

key dimension to the issue of transparency concerns the question of secrecy. Since much of the political and business activity in Lebanon has traditionally been carried out “behind closed doors” transparency as we know it in the West is a somewhat “alien” concept. In addition, the limited degree of “sheikocratic” consultation in no way ensures that subordinates will receive all or even most of the information that concerns them.

The tradition that the decisions of the leader are neither open to scrutiny nor challenge suggests that secrecy would be a natural part of Arab management. Whereas Finlay (2008) addressed this issue in more general terms, the authors chose to confront the issue directly when it came to keeping employees informed about decisions which could affect their welfare. As a result, the authors drew their first hypothesis regarding *transparency*: H^6 : “Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding keeping employees informed about decisions that can affect them consultive approaches to management will be adopted by Lebanese managers.”

Closely related to information sharing is the issue of dealing with employees in an open and honest manner. As previously noted, the sheik was required to consult with the members of his tribe when it the entire tribe’s welfare was a stake. This did not mean however, that he was always required to put the tribe’s interests before his own nor was he required to inform them of the fact. As a business school Dean was overhead saying in the UAE, “I prefer to give the faculty less information than they need to know since it keeps them guessing”. This tradition that the decisions of the leader are neither open to scrutiny nor challenge exists both in the public arena and in private. These factors would suggest that Lebanese managers are not likely to implement a policy of “total openness”. This was precisely what Finlay (2008) noted and this led the authors to draw their final hypothesis regarding *transparency*: H^7 : “Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding open and honest dealings with employees will be adopted by Lebanese managers.”

The final, and most critical aspect of the transparency question, stems from the issue of corruption, the existence of which certainly places the country’s business practices at odds with American values. Deeply rooted and endemic, much of the corruption in Lebanon stems from the system of *baksheesh*² payments that were fostered during four centuries of Ottoman rule (Cavico and Majaba, 2010).

According to “Western thought” the problem lies with ethics (or lack thereof). Certainly there is no more overriding concept that permeates the American business curriculum than ethics and it is so important that accredited business schools now teach it throughout the curriculum with specific applications for each sub-discipline. Lack of ethical values is touted at the “enabler” of corrupt practices but according to Marens (2010), the textbook definition of ethics is essentially an American invention and as a product of American global hegemony, he views the American definition of ethics as “smugly insular and self-congratulatory” and a classic example of the arrogant assumption of American moral superiority.

Corruption in Lebanon runs the gamut from out and out bribery to the absence of equal treatment under the law. In short, corruption has become viewed as just another cost of doing business and as such is unlikely to change. This is consistent with Finlay’s (2008) findings and with this in

mind, the authors drew the following hypothesis regarding the implementation of anti-corruption policies by Lebanese managers: H^8 : “Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding bribery and corruption will be adopted by Lebanese managers.”

²*baksheesh*, from the Persian word *bakhshīdan* meaning “to give” as in a bribe to expedite service

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Development of the Instrument: The current study is an extension of the work done by Neal and Finlay (2008) regarding American hegemony in business education. Their initial study relied on statements regarding management ILT as indicators of the degree to which “modern” business practices were being accepted by students. The current investigation expanded on their methodology by refining the instrument to directly confront the issue of corruption which is often cited is a major cause of Lebanon’s inability to attract foreign direct investment. Secondly, while Neal and Finlay (2008) gathered information from senior-level students, the current inquiry broadened the sample to include students who were taking introductory and graduate courses.

The second improvement created a means of tracking the growth of hegemonial acceptance among business students as they matriculated through the curriculum. As the students progress through their major or into graduate study, these hegemonic values are continually emphasized. As a result of this “indoctrination”, students in American business programs are sensitized to these issues, adopt them as the only acceptable way for managers to act, and acceptance becomes second nature. The question here is not whether Lebanese students are similarly effect but the extent to which they believe that they will encounter these “ideal” managerial behaviors when they enter the workplace. Given that managerial behavior in Lebanon is time-worn, culturally-based and deeply engrained, the authors hypothesized that student expectations for managerial implementation would not rise accordingly.

The students, who were randomly selected from a population of was 2078 undergraduate business students, and 257 MBA students during the spring and summer of 2012, were asked to volunteer their responses and no incentive for participation was offered. This technique produced a total of 465 usable responses divided according to the demographic variables in Figure 2. The rate of response was 15% for undergraduates and 61% for MBA. Given the size of the sample and the high rate of response, the authors feel comfortable in asserting that this group of students was representative of the population of “American-educated” business students who will be entering the Lebanese workforce during the next few years.

Statistical Analysis: The authors employed a two-tiered approach to analyzing the data. For the purpose of evaluating the various the core hypotheses, a univariate analysis was selected. The authors applied the Scheffe’ option available in ANOVA since it guards against the occurrence of Type 1 error and the resulting likelihood that spurious significant relationships could be declared (Hair, Anderson & Tatham, 1995).

Hypotheses arising from the criterion variables: This study focused on the five key socio-economic values that underpin generally accepted managerial practices in the west. Furthermore, this project was designed to determine the extent to which these values are perceived as being extant in the Lebanese workplace. The statistical summary of the ANOVA analysis of the eight questions comprising these five categories is provided in Table 1

Table 1
ANOVA Results
A Comparison of Levels of Agreement with Appropriate Behaviors
By Stage of Business Education
N= 463, df = 461

Hegemonic Managerial Behaviors	F Value	Sig.
H1: Appropriate behaviors regarding promotion and reward structures	.830	n.s.
H2: Appropriate behaviors regarding gender equality	2.128	n.s.
H3: Appropriate behaviors regarding racial equality	11.580	.000
H4: Appropriate behaviors regarding religious tolerance	.066	n.s.
H5: Appropriate behaviors regarding consultative approaches to management	1.992	n.s.
H6: Appropriate behaviors regarding keeping employees informed about decisions that can affect them	4.158	.016
H7: Appropriate behaviors regarding open and honest dealings with employees	1.682	n.s.
H8: Appropriate behaviors regarding bribery and corruption	3.800	.023

The data summary in Table 1 show limited support for the authors' expectation that there would be no significant differences in the students' expectations that they will enter a workplace in which the values they have been taught will be practiced. This was true for equal treatment in terms of promotion and reward strictures, open and honest dealings with employees, gender equality, religious tolerance, and consultation. Interestingly however, highly significant differences (at or below $\alpha = .025$) were noted for racial equality, keeping employees informed about critical matters, and most surprising of all, bribery and corruption.

Since some significant differences were noted, the authors employed the Scheffe option to evaluate the ranked mean responses from the three student groups (A = introductory; B = capstone; C= graduate) where significant differences were noted. The results, w3hich are summarized in Table 2 do not show a clear trend among the groups in terms of their expectations. Furthermore, since this was a ten-point scale the mean responses were in most cases rarely above neutral (5.5).

Table 2
Scheffe Ranked Means Results
A Comparison of Levels of Agreement with Appropriate Behaviors
By Level of Student's Education

Change Scores: Hegemonic Managerial Behavior	Means	Scheffe $\alpha = .05$
Appropriate behaviors regarding racial equality	A = 4.92 B = 5.38 C = 6.14	A < C
Appropriate behaviors regarding keeping employees informed about decisions that can affect them	A = 5.14 C = 5.74 B = 5.81	A < B
Appropriate behaviors regarding bribery and corruption	C = 4.99 B = 5.57 A = 5.86	C < A
Note: A = introductory courses; B = capstone courses; C = graduate courses		

In regard to racial equality, the expectation that this would be present in the workplace actually rose at each subsequent course level with the students enrolled in introductory courses being less likely to believe in racial equality implementation than graduate students (means: A, 4.92; C, 6.14). Similarly, students in the core courses (mean = 5.14) were significantly less likely to believe that their future employers could keep them apprised of important decisions than seniors (mean = 5.81). In fact, the difference between student groups A and C were marginally significant ($\alpha = .06$) as well. Finally, the critical issue of corruption elicited results that were essentially opposite with the graduate students (C = .499) being significant less likely to believe that corruption had vanished from the Lebanese workplace than those who were taking their first courses in business (A = 5.86).

Accountability: Many authors have asserted that the system of wasta-based appointments will never change and some have actually found that women support the approach (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010b). Not only do the data in Table 1 support this expectation, the low mean ratings (A = 4.73; B = 4.92; C = 4.58) suggest a uniform level of disagreement that Lebanese managers are likely to change their time-worn behaviors. This finding led the authors to accept hypothesis: H¹: (Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding equal treatment in regard to promotion and rewards will be adopted by Lebanese managers) and concluded that students do not expect to enter a workplace in which equal reward structures are present.

Equity: Given the reality that Lebanon is essentially a patriarchal society, it was not anticipated that students would expect to find gender equality in the Lebanese workplace. While the means show that the students are progressively, albeit barely, hopeful that things will get better (A = 5.32; B = 5.60; C = 5.87) their low levels of expectation and lack of significant variation led the authors to accept the hypothesis on gender equity: H²: (Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding gender

equity will be adopted by Lebanese managers) and concluded that students do not have high expectations of entering a gender-neutral workplace.

Quite unexpectedly, this was not the case for racial equality. In fact, the expectation that racial equality would be present in the workplace actually rose at each subsequent course level with the students enrolled in introductory courses being significantly less likely to believe in racial equality implementation than graduate students (means: A, 4.92; B, 5.38; C, 6.14). What this may suggest is that graduate students at this university, a high percentage of whom are typically employed on a full-time basis, have encountered other racial groups in professional capacities. However the strength of their beliefs show only a bare minimum in terms of confidence. Given these findings, the authors rejected hypothesis H³ (*Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding racial equity will be adopted by Lebanese managers*) and concluded that graduate students are somewhat more likely to expect racial sensitivity in the workplace than students enrolled in core courses.

Tolerance: The intricate relationships between religion and politics in Lebanon are known to extend far beyond the voting booth. They govern who people associate with, where they attend religious services, which political groups they support and who they go to in order to obtain favorable treatment. The authors contended that students, regardless of their sensitivity training, would not expect the workplace to be any different. The data in Table 1 show uniformly low levels of expectation in regard to this issue (A = 5.27; B = 5.36; C = 5.26) thus supporting the authors' expectations and leading them to accept hypothesis H⁴ (*Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding religious tolerance will be adopted by Lebanese managers*) and conclude that students do not expect to enter a work environment where religious tolerance is practiced.

Consultation: Since there was no requirement in tribal societies that forced a sheikh to consult with his tribe on all issues, the authors were led to feel that consultation, at least as we know it, would not be practiced in Lebanon. The results from Table 1 confirmed that suspicion and while the mean level of expectation (C = 5.69; B = 6.06; A = 6.16) declined as students reached the point when they would be applying for work, the differences were not significant. This led the authors to accept hypothesis: H⁵ (*Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding consultive approaches to management will be adopted by Lebanese managers*) and conclude the students do not expect their future employers to follow the text-book approach to consultation.

Transparency: The authors were interested in three specific dimensions of transparency and all three were tangentially related to secrecy. In a country where openness is a rarity, any number of deals can be cut in the since the bright light of day brings with it all sorts of damaging ramifications. Despite suggestions that tribal traditions suggested that a leader was obligated to keep his followers informed of key developments, the fact that they were not compelled to do so led the authors to expect quite the opposite.

As a result, the authors were somewhat surprised by the data in Table 2 which showed an increasing, although extremely weak, tendency for students (A = 5.14; C = 5.74; B = 5.81) to expect to receive this type of information from employers. The means rose significantly from the core level to senior capstone courses and while dropping off slightly, were marginally significant

at the graduate level as well. However, the level for seniors with a mean rating of 5.81 still indicates that students are undecided if such information will actually be provided. Based on the levels of statistical significance however, the authors to accepted hypothesis H⁶ (*Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding keeping employees informed about decisions that can affect them consultive approaches to management will be adopted by Lebanese managers*) and conclude that while expectations do rise by the time business students reach employability, they are by no means confident that Lebanese managers will provide information regarding decisions which may have an impact on their professional lives.

Such was not the case when it came to open and honest dealings with employees. Perhaps it is because these decisions are closely related to *wasta*-based hiring and promotion practices but regardless of the reason the means were consistently low (C = 5.19; A = 5.21; B = 5.56) and statistically similar. This lead the authors to accept hypothesis H⁷ (*Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding open and honest dealings with employees will be adopted by Lebanese managers*) and conclude that students who will soon be entering the workplace are under no illusion that their bosses will consistently deal with them in an open and forthright manner.

The one factor of most concern to the authors, given its consistently devastating impact on the Lebanese economy, was bribery and corruption. It has been nearly 500 years since the Ottoman Turks invaded Lebanon and brought the system of *baksheesh* that now permeates the entire country. This incipient corruption, while not necessary supported by the population, has become such a fact of life among business owners and managers that the authors assumed the students would have become numbed to its existence. While the results in Table 1 seem to suggest exactly the opposite, a closer examination of the ranked means shows a steady fall in mean expectations from the introductory to graduate level (A = 5.86; B = 5.57; C = 4.99). What this seems to suggest is that younger students are hopeful that the situation will get better but by the time they reach the graduate level and enter the workforce, they have reached the conclusion that nothing has changed at all. Because of this finding, the authors rejected hypothesis H⁸ (*Overall, there will be no difference between the student groups in terms of their belief that appropriate behaviors regarding bribery and corruption will be adopted by Lebanese managers*) and concluded that as business students enter the workplace, they come to the realization that the corruption which has plagued their country is far from over.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Student work-place expectations are an important aspect of human resource management. They govern the way that new workers view both their managers and peers and the behaviors which they feel will be most likely to “get them ahead”. Although prior studies have suggested that while Lebanese business students gradually come to accept the American-style management approaches taught in their classes, they are under no illusion that anything will change for the better in the Lebanese workplace.

The findings from this study, which focused on students at three important stages of their academic careers, showed somewhat mixed results. In terms of accountability, gender equity, religious tolerance, consultation, and open and honest dealings with employees the difference in mean levels of expectation were insignificant. Furthermore, since the mean ratings generally ranging between 5 and 6 on the ten-point scale, this indicates that the subjects were generally unsure as to whether these practices would be implemented. This finding alone suggests that the attitudes that students expect the behavior of their future employers to be essentially inconsistent with the “appropriate behaviors” that they have been taught.

Even in the case of racial equality, where the mean ratings were significant and consistently rose from the introductory level, the mean for graduate students was only 6.16 which constitutes barely agree. The same was true for “keeping employees informed” which, although significantly different, ranged from 5.14 to 5.81 indicating at best an attitude of hopeful uncertainty.

It has been said that “corruption is like mushrooms, neither can flourish in the bright light of day.” Educators in Lebanon are most hopeful that business education will eventually bring an end to the endemic levels of corruption and the strangling effect it has on the Lebanese economy. While the authors found a significant difference in the expectancy levels, the reason behind this variance was disheartening. The levels of expectation fell from a high of 5.86 with students taking core courses to 4.99 at the graduate level. The implications of this are clear. While students may initially be somewhat hopeful that things will get better, by the time they enter the workforce it is painfully apparent that the corruption continues to flourish.

So what does all this mean? To begin with educators have by no means been operating under the illusion that change in the Middle East will occur immediately. As is the case with all cultural advancements the impact is, at best, generational. But what this does tell us is that although we may make a change in the thought processes of our students regarding appropriate managerial behavior, the question remains as to whether the reality of the workplace will “trump” idealism and continue to mire Lebanon in the status quo. Given these findings, even the most optimistic among us is left to wonder.

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