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Editorial Comments

The current edition of the International Journal of Business and Economic Development (IJBED) contains ten thoroughly researched and scholarly articles. Each conforms to the Academy's editorial policy and has been selected with a view to disseminating knowledge both applied and theoretical. Most of the papers have an economic development focus, whilst others are more sectors specific with clear implications for both national and regional development. At IJBED we are fully committed to a robust selection process, but equally empathetic to those who we recognise are often having to research and write in a second or sometimes third language. What follows certainly makes for a stimulating read, one that I believe will also provide food for thought as well as grounds for discussion.

The opening paper of this edition is entitled: The direct and indirect impact of country personality on behavioural intentions for travelling: the full mediation effect of the affective country image by Carlos et al. In an age where countries are in a constant quest to gain material advantage over their rivals the study of country personality has become mainstream. A recent study undertaken by researchers at the University of Toronto, Canada compared a Environmental Performance Index (EPI) to the national personality traits of 46 countries. This research paper takes as its focus two Lusophone countries, namely Brazil and Portugal. With their historic, cultural and linguistic ties, it is inevitable that there is a natural affinity between both countries. That said, it raises some questions about how such research might take things further by exploring issues such as ethnicity, as this might well have a bearing on the paper's findings and conclusions. Some individuals in Brazil and further afield might have a somewhat ambivalent attitude to Portugal due to slavery and conditions of servitude centred upon race. This in itself raises questions as to how Portugal might be perceived by different communities depending upon their ethnicity and past experience.

A rather surprising finding is the fact that some 58.8% of respondents had visited Portugal in the last five years, something that implies a degree of affluence amongst the respondents. Additionally I would have been interested to gain an insight into the number of repeat visits and how Portugal itself was targeting its own branding with the intention of attracting Brazilian visitors. In concluding that; "...international business markets should focus on developing marketing strategies emphasising the distinctive personality of their country destinations." it raises questions as to how various bodies both in the public and private sector measure the effectiveness of such campaigns. Naturally the national brand develops over time, although there may of course be the danger that countries pander to supposed national stereotypes and in so doing paint themselves into a corner. What is clear is the fact that billions of dollars are spent every year endeavouring to convey positive values whether these are with regard to trade and investment or in tourism. This research provides a timely reminder that national brands are significant and yet just as complex and potentially problematic as those of other branded products that are competing for our attention, recognition and our appreciation.

The next paper takes us to Sub-Saharan Africa. Does firm size affect stock returns? Evidence from the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange by Mazviona and Nyangara offers some insight into an economy that in their own words is undergoing; "significant structural transformation". Economies in times of stress are apt to manifest strange characteristics and yet whilst Zimbabwe has endured near economic meltdown, what surprises many observers are the fact that the Zimbabwean Stock Exchange is in a position to function at all. The paper's authors make clear that they have endeavoured to reduce the potential for skewed findings by taking a number of

significant measures, for example using a portfolio of stocks in the regression tests. Such measures are not only important when examining an economy liable to extreme fluctuations, but offer some practical measures that might be deployed by others engaged in similar research. In choosing to examine 64 common stocks listed on the ZSE it might have been helpful to gain some additional idea as to their precise nature and value. The research states that only 4 of the stocks were mining companies, yet it would be interesting to know how these compared in stock valuation when compared with the total valuation of the other 60 stocks.

This study has certainly chosen a significant time, and the justification for the period of research gives further evidence to the importance of this study. The measured and well reasoned analysis ensures this paper has a wider message, although in the light of the continued political machinations at a national level one suspects that the vital issue of confidence will continue to be an unwelcome spectre that haunts the ZSE.

Poverty takes many different forms and rural poverty, especially in developed countries is a topic that has often been overlooked. The third paper of this edition is State level employment, accessibility, and rurality by Abington and Jelavich. Rural deprivation, the poverty of opportunity and the almost hidden nature of rural poverty has slowly begun to become a subject of serious research. This paper having to some degree taking its inspiration from the seminal report Jobs and Economic Security for Rural America (White House Rural council, 2011) makes a purposeful attempt to elucidate this important subject further and explore theories and models in regards to greater connectivity that might provide possible solutions to rural unemployment. The means of measuring the rural nature of a population is itself an interesting process, one that raises questions about the precise role of peri-urban areas. By combining population density figures with comparisons between those living in metropolitan and "micropolitan" areas there is an attempt to define the target population and quantify their need. Once done what this study throws up is a clear issue of need in regard to employment opportunities, one that is considerably exacerbated by limited access to transport. This appears to echo similar studies in other developed countries, especially in regard to public transport, that is assuming it is even available. Where this research brings real value is in the fact that it appears to identify the fact that whilst increased transportation helps facilitate employment opportunities, there comes a point in urban areas where employment prospects are actually reduced, presumably because in certain sectors a saturation point is reached. Rural stimuli is all very well, but if all schemes do is funnel a rural population into towns and cities, then it would seem that any benefits of increased opportunity are at best short lived. With the world rapidly moving to point that the vast majority of us live in towns and cities we would all do well to remember those who perhaps do not have the same opportunities that urban dwellers take for granted. There is an additional factor that has a bearing on the world of work and that is new technology and the trend in some sectors for greater flexibility and in some cases the ability to operate partially or wholly from home. The fact that the US has recognised that a problem with regards to rural deprivation is significant and what is more there would appear to be a rare consensus across the political parties that something must be done.

The next paper has a particular relevance for those institutions and organisations that are concerned about the issue of staff turnover. Organisational commitment and turnover intentions: evidence from Nigerian paramilitary organisation by Faloye raises some serious concerns about the fact that there would appear to be an upsurge in personnel voting with their feet and leaving organisations whose primary purpose is to protect the state. Employee turnover is an issue that is often glossed over by those in leadership and management roles and yet is a very serious cost, one that is not always fully appreciated. Traditionally HR departments, where they exist, have a tendency to be either somewhat secretive about this issue or routinely act

defensively. Enlightened organisations routinely afford employees with an exit interview and opportunity to express their thoughts about their time with the organisation. In truth such exit interviews and the forms questionnaires that accompany them have their limitations as invariably most employees are extremely wary about being candid for fear of that this might count against them should they require a reference in the future. Issues such as loyalty, motivation and morale are central to organisational success and thus it is all the more disturbing that a time of increased insurgent activity in Nigeria one of the consequences has been a haemorrhaging of staff from paramilitary organisations. There is of course a debate to be had about the commitment factor of some personnel, but equally it is apparent from the findings of this timely work that many staff in the light of the activities of groups such as Boko Haram has begun to engage in their own calculated risk assessment. Porous borders, inadequate protection for the rank and file and a general sense of anxiety has resulted in staff being; "likely to leave for greener pastures" - some might say greener and safer pastures. Whilst this research takes as its focus on do State it is not unreasonable to assume that its findings can be applied to other parts of Nigeria and begs the question what is being done to address matters. Those in senior roles cannot afford to dismiss such findings and with national security at stake would do well to reflect honestly and be take steps to address what appears to be a growing problem.

The fifth paper: Impact on quality culture of total quality management practices factors by Alotaibi takes as its focus the construction sector in Saudi Arabia. This technical piece of research reminds us of the importance of elements that should be central to total quality management in any organisation, namely the commitment of the senior management, working with employees and being customer focused. These are a powerful trinity, ones which whilst central to success are often overlooked or difficult to read appropriately during day to day operations. This paper addresses a number of the ways in which TQM can be achieved through the likes of education and training and positive employee relationships, but laudable aims, often remain just that. The culture/state of mind of an organisation affects both internal and external relationships and as the paper makes clear unless those in senior roles see the value of TQM and its ability to provide competitive advantage there is little likelihood of real commitment or desire for change. People often speak glibly of continuous improvement without giving serious thought as to what this entails both for an individual or for an organisation. Societal structural mechanisms are bound to come into play, especially with regards to power structures, with matters being made all the more complicated by economic insecurities, which in themselves often mean that employees are fearful of innovation lest this results in reduced hours of work or loss of employment. The processes that exist and the manner in which they are reviewed and adapted elucidate much about an organisations willingness to change and those who are the agents of positive change. Ensuring compliance with deadlines requires a determined and focused leadership/management, one that leads by example and acknowledges and celebrates that embraces such core values.

The next paper Analyzing the relationships between organisation justice dimensions and selected organisational outcomes - empirical research studies by ElDin Aboul-Ela raises an issue that is often neglected. Injustice or perceived injustice creates resentment and is a running sore in a relationship. From our earliest childhoods many of us harbour memories of the hurt of apparent injustice, something that is a veritable cancer at the heart of interpersonal dealings as well as organisations. This Egyptian study makes clear that in order to avoid the dangers of such a corrosive presence there is a need for people to be listened to and for equity and trust to be reinforced through the presence of justice in its various forms. Whilst there is a general understanding of what injustice is, justice itself can often appear a nebulous concept. With power relationships coming into play in the workplace it is extremely difficult to ensure that

justice is indeed blind and that no one is seen to be above the law. This paper states that; "Organizations should be alert to the employees' needs...", but it is hard to avoid the fact that here we are talking of employees, individuals who may well be reluctant to seek their rights for fear of being deemed trouble makers or in some way a troublesome element. Justice not only needs to be done, but needs to be seen to be done, something that is easier said than done.

The point of focus of this study in itself raises some questions about its limitations. Firstly, in choosing to focus on International Schools, some might believe that these bastions of privilege already benefit from a sense of entitlement. Certainly employees in such institutions generally have a clearer sense of their rights and are far better placed to articulate their concerns and grievances when compared with individuals in other sectors or on the margins of society and in locations outside Cairo. Injustice where ever it is found impedes performance and thus the fact that this research highlights the pivotal nature of justice ensures that is relevant and has something to say not only in an Egyptian context, but to other countries and sectors. The fact that female respondents make up the overwhelming majority of respondents is a point of concern and has the potential to skew the findings. That said, it is important that the idea of justice in its diverse forms is highlighted and this research certainly manages to achieve this.

The role of women in the workplace is a topic of considerable interest, especially as it relates to GDP. The seventh paper: The contribution of the Saudi woman in economic development by Elimam et al endeavours to elucidate this topic. From the outset it is important to note that there is often a lack of understanding of Saudi society and its "conservative laws and habits" and some outsider's invariable fall back on a default position of assuming that in some way the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is misogynistic in both outlook and in its actions. This is not only simplistic, but highly erroneous and whilst cultural context does mean there are a variety of factors that inhibit the full participation of women in some aspects of Saudi society, this research amply makes clear the desire of the Saudi Government to affect incremental change. The fact that there is a high level appreciation of the direct correlation between women's degree of participation in the workforce and GDP is surely significant. Issues such as early marriage and status in law clearly act as bulwarks against change, yet figures produced by the World Bank show a marked improvement in women's literacy levels of late. The comparison made with Qatar is an interesting one, all the more so as Qatar shares many of the elements that have are central to an Arab society. Degrees of change may vary, but this research articulates with clarity that change is not only possible, but economically desirable, something that will be increasingly important to Saudi Arabia as it seeks to diversify its economy further.

The next paper: The proportion of expenditure on children to family's income in Saudi Arabia by Al-Banawi produces an array of interesting findings that provide genuine food for thought. This is a topic that generates considerable interest whenever it is explored. Each year the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) issues its annual report entitled 'Expenditures on Children by Families'(also known as 'The Cost of Raising a Child'). In 2014 this report stated that the average middle-income family can expect to spend \$245,340 on a child born in 2013 until they are 18 years of age. Such a figure is without any regional adjustment or recalculation based on likely inflationary costs. This Saudi research makes clear that calculating such costs has a direct bearing on planning, especially in the fields of education, healthcare, housing, general social provision etc. Naturally, cultural context is important and as a rule Saudi families are larger than those in North America or Europe. Whilst the study centres upon the commercial city of Jeddah, for reasons outlined in this paper, there are questions as to precisely how accurate it would be to extrapolate its findings across the rest of the kingdom. Demographic variations mean that there are likely to be certain limitations that said, there are some useful indicators located within it. Right across the Arab World young populations have seen rising

expectations, something that has not only had an impact on consumption, but on the body politic itself. Significant improvements in healthcare have transformed life expectancy in many respects and yet this paper provides the reader with some possible matters of future concern, especially as the number one point of expenditure in Jeddah families appears to be fast food. There is already a wealth of scientific and anecdotal evidence emerging that indicates rising levels of obesity across the Arab World and thus this does not bode well for the future. Advertisers are eager to ensure that they win an increasing share of the market when it comes to consumer products aimed at the young and peer pressure especially in regard to clothing, gadgetry and junk food means that in respect of the issue of diet there is a health time-bomb ticking away. The study's use of Engel's Food Share Method along with other more recent methodology adds credence to this research and its conclusions speak volumes about core values. Inculcating an appreciation of "needs, wants and wishes" along with financial prudence are matters that concern all societies.

The penultimate paper of this volume is entitled: Global digital divide: determinants of cross-country ICT development with special reference to Southeast Asia by Nipo et al. With the constant march of new technology comes the notion that in some respects a chasm has opened up in regard to the degree of accessibility and the use of elements of this technology. This timely piece of research is keen to stress that there are a variety of reasons for this and these include the fact that much of the language of ICT is English, a fact that for many in Asia acts if not as a deterrent certainly as an inhibitor. As in other field's rural area appear to be stuck in the slow lane in many respects and thus economic disadvantages are compounded by uneven access to new technology. The need to create a "digitally inclusive society" raises questions about prioritisation, technology transfer, infrastructure investment and leadership. Certain Asian countries have shown themselves adept at ensuring access that yields tangible benefits not only in terms of economic activity, but also in terms of knowledge transfer and active participation. Yet for all the pockets of success, this research highlights the importance of strategic planning, for only then will ICT usage be optimised to the degree that it has been in Europe, North America and Australia and New Zealand. This solid piece of research provides some clear pointers and conclusions that would do well to be heeded and acted upon in some of the countries featured.

Human capital is something that warrants the interest of all societies and thus it is fitting that the final paper takes as its focus the importance of investing in youth. Delivering long-term sustainable growth through investment in young people-Saudi Arabia by Yusuf is a very clarion call for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to invest in those that will help carry the country forward. The country's heavy reliance on petrodollars has tended to mask the importance of human capital, yet events regionally, especially with regard to the so-called Arab Spring have concentrated minds. This paper articulates with clarity that whilst considerable sums are being invested in education, the current structure of the economy is such that in some respects it is lopsided and apt to underperformance in fields of endeavour such as innovation and research and development. An over-reliance on foreign workers and a poor work ethic amongst some Saudis holds the country back. Deep seated cultural issues have also thwarted efforts to try and ensure greater female representation in the work force (something that was also apparent in the findings of the seventh paper in this edition). Yusuf is at pains to point out that the problems are being addressed and that a number of initiatives have been undertaken with a view to putting the country on a firmer footing with regards to the optimisation of its human capital. Democratic predictions underscore the need for further action, not only in urban areas, but across the country. Equally whilst education is crucial, this paper makes clear that societal attitudes are equally important, a fact that social commentators generally agree are far harder to

shift. The progress currently being made may well have unforeseen consequences, both with regards to aspirations and expectations and thus it is interesting to see that the Government of Saudi Arabia recognises that it must endeavour to invest in young people now if there is to be a chance of long-term sustainable growth.



Mark T Jones

Associate Editor of the International Journal of Business & Economic Development (IJBED) and Director of the Centre for Innovative Leadership Navigation (CILN), London, UK