

Pre-college education is handled by UNRWA and private institutions - mostly of a religious affiliation. Elementary education through the sixth grade is compulsory for boys and girls.

High school education is characterized by the dominance of purely academic subjects. Less than 10 percent of all pupils in the secondary cycle are enrolled in vocational schools.¹ The rest are enrolled in "literary" or "scientific" streams of study whereby they are basically prepared to pursue higher education after they pass their Tawjihyah* national examination. High marks in the Tawjihyah are looked upon with tremendous desire and respect because they help facilitate admission to prestigious lines of college education, namely, medicine and engineering. Of 8845 pupils who had successfully passed their Tawjihyah in 1979², 4530 of them scored over 70 percent, which theoretically qualifies them for university education, that is if they manage to secure admission somewhere.

College education is accessible in institutions inside and outside the country. A large proportion of high school students is absorbed in local universities and higher institutes of education. In 1981 there were three accredited universities: Birzeit, An-Najah and Bethlehem. There were also six teacher training institutes, one polytechnic, three junior colleges, and a para-medical college. The total absorption capacity of all these institutes is in the range of 2500 - 3000 students. This is considerably smaller than the number of pupils who pass their Tawjihyah every year, usually

1. Computed from Administered Territories Statistics Quarterly 1980, op cit, p 155.

2. Ibid, p 155.

* The common name of the certificate awarded at the successful completion of secondary education.

over eight thousand. Consequently, a large number of students is still obliged to seek higher education abroad.

The situation of higher education in the West Bank is a source of some paradox. Notwithstanding its attractive aspects, the role of higher education in developing the West Bank itself and accentuating the commitment of the Palestinians to their land is certainly unsatisfactory. Against a background of limited investment opportunities and discriminatory economic policies during the past fifty years, college education of West Bank youth has become a pre-requisite for their subsequent emigration to other countries where their services are in demand.

This problem has been effectively facilitated by the quality of higher education pursued by West Bank students. Due to a number of complex factors the largest proportion of them go into social sciences and literary subjects. This has entailed very serious consequences on the recruitment potential for such sectors as agriculture, handicraft industries, and service professions, which are left largely with school dropouts and pupils who could not, for various reasons, make their way to any form of college education. Consequently, the nation with one of the highest rates of college education in the world has had no more skilled man-power in its productive economic sectors than an average under-developed country. This is a striking indication of an educational system which is specialized in meeting the needs of other countries for educated man-power, with a disregard for its own needs. And unless a quantitative and qualitative re-orientation in the West Bank's educational system is envisaged along criteria which are more sensitive to local economic and political needs, then the very presence of the Palestinians on their land may be at stake.