

Challenges Regarding Sustaining Family Professions in Lebanon



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Family professions are a global phenomenon that affects various countries and is a major source of employment as well as an effective economic growth engine. In Lebanon, such professions have been known since the end of the nineteenth century (1857) and were characterized by craftsmanship and simplicity in their beginnings, and then developed with mechanization to the age of technology, and we became in front of leading family institutions and companies in several sectors, including industry and services. Its role has emerged since 1957, but despite its development and role in preserving family heritage and its transmission through generations, these professions face a variety of challenges, depending on their origins and size.

Family professions play an important role in the Lebanese economy. Despite wars, conflicts, and various economic crises, the latter has survived and played an important role in the Lebanese economy, particularly after the 1975-1990 war. It accounted for 80% of sector productivity and employment of workers from various social groups (Gulf Cooperation Council Family Business Network Aug 2016).

These professions are classified into three sizes: small, medium, and large. Handicrafts and handicrafts, industrial, commercial, and banking services are also classified as family businesses. Soap making in Tripoli and Darb al-Sim, copper-making in the Qalamoun region, bell making in Beit Chabeb, basket-weaving in Barbara, pottery in Rashaya El Wadi, loomsmithing (or textile weaving) in Zouk Mikael, and bladesmithing (or knife-making) in Jezzine are some of these family crafts that still exist. Others, such as the textile industry and silkworms, went extinct because there was no demand for them in Europe, so most of the export went to Europe, so people went to another economic activity, such as the silk industry, which was owned by well-known families in various Lebanese regions, went extinct due to a lack of transmission to the second generation, where the children engaged in other specialties and did not care about their parents' professions.

Industrial professions have been passed down from generation to generation and are still flourishing in many sectors, such as the Hallab Foundation in the

confectionery industry, the Ghandour factory in the food industry, which was established in 1857, Cortas 1925, Rifai 1948, and the Lebanese Arak (Lebanese distilled spirit) and wine industry and its global spread, and Almaza Beer, owned by the Jabr family, and the manufacture of industrial pottery for fireplaces and roofs in 1975.

Since the 1830s, several banking and financial services families have emerged. On the cultural and media front, we can point to the Al-Nahar newspaper, which was founded in 1933 and is now in its fourth generation. Mercedes (Gargour & Family) for trading and importing vehicles, Renault (Bassoul & Heneine), Toyota (Boustany & Rasamny-Younis), and others can be added as exclusive trading companies. Fattal Company for Trade and Industry founded in 1897, and Abu Adal Group, founded in 1956, are two multi-activity groups.

The continuation of these institutions faces numerous challenges, particularly in light of Lebanon's crises and the absence of the state's guiding role in this field. And what about the difficulty for parents in identifying any economic and social vision to motivate their children to continue working in family businesses? How do children contribute to the long-term planning, development, and change in parents' professions?

Technological advancement has played a significant role in the development of sectors and in allowing children of the new generation to transfer their skills and abilities to the parent institution to add a culture of innovation and renewal to what their parents established. As a result, social cohesion between parents and children is important through traditions that reflect common values among group members and achieve cohesion between them. Furthermore, by instilling positive social values and cultivating a sense of family and social loyalty. A company or organization is frequently run by two or three generations at a time, creating an environment in which family members come together through their methods, which may be identical or contradictory at times.

In light of Lebanon's ongoing economic and social crises, demand for some craft and manual professions has increased due to a decrease in citizens' purchasing power and the desire of young people to return to their parents' professions, such as sewing, garment alteration, and shoe-making. In this regard, we must not overlook the significance of industrialists' initiatives to serve the local community by constructing productive sectors and creating job opportunities for villagers such as women and retirees in rural areas and neighboring villages, particularly for youth groups seeking to reduce migration. But none of this negates the fact that family professions today face unique challenges and require a great deal of attention and support to continue and contribute to the process of social and economic development.

Suzanne Menhem

Assistant Professor & Researcher
Lebanese University