

The success of the public sector in filling job opportunities by Omanis has led to the emergence of a new term (Omanization) aiming to fill the private sector by nationals. Omanization is a very wide concept that has been revealed during the Fourth Five-year Development Plan. It encompasses the recruitment of nationals and most importantly the implementation of human development strategy. Omanization claims to support Omanis to be qualified for job positions that expatriate labor currently occupy.

Although it has been long since the policy has applied, yet there is no significant progress in pushing down unemployment.

The regulations of Omanization had stipulate specific percentages for the private sector to apply for the nationals with no specification for the type of jobs.

This has led companies to concern about fulfilling percentages required by assigning Omanis in low paid jobs that do not need skills, qualifications and even experiences. According to the Public Authority for Social Insurance, more than 50 percent of Omani employees in the private sector are earning a salary less than 500 OMR.

How far has Omanization reached in the private sector so far is 14 percent which is not pleasing at all.

The current practice of Omanization revolve mostly about companies achieving the proclaimed percentages in their sector regardless the type of jobs. As lesser job positions are easily reachable; statistics show that 43 percent of Omanization has been in lower level jobs in which Omanis do not enjoy a sufficient amount of salary.

So there is a quantitative specification, but there are no crystal clear regulation of the qualitative part which include the type of jobs.

In fact the bottom level jobs are not the only issue. The big deal is that it has been estimated that on average graduates spend at least three to four years seeking for a job. Moreover, in general only 47 percent of Omani graduates manage to access labor market. This cause a huge dilemma as more than 50 percent of fresh graduates are not occupied to practice their role of serving the society. This has been reflected in the global competitiveness report of (2016-2017) as findings show that out of 138 countries, Oman has been ranked 82 in the labor market efficiency.

Based on the Ninth Five-year development plan. (2016-2020), the new concept of Omanization spot the light to the middle layer of job pyramid for jobs like middle

management. It has imposed that 50 percent of Omanis must be filled in that level jobs instead of foreigners.

It is really challenging to achieve that, immense forward moves must step promptly to mitigate any possible risks and pressures. Although it is very competitive and limiting to find a career in the job market nowadays, here comes the role of human development by cooperating with different organizations to match the needs of the market with the desire of the nationals.

The role of institutions that develop human resources has increased as human development is a shared responsibility between the public and private sectors. It has been known that lack of vocational training and weak English language are two main obstacles that stand against Omanis in the private sector. Therefore, assist must be addressed to those in need to be qualified with the foundation of any job seeker.

The good news is that the new criteria of the Omanization would concern mainly on the types of jobs that need to be Omanized. So there would be diversified percentages from the bottom to the top of the career ladder. There must be a career planning for national employees to reach higher level jobs to perform well locally and to compete internationally.

The lower level jobs that Omanis take as a result of the skilled training institutions are probably good temporary solution but they are not solving the core problem. Oman needs to increase the competitive ability of nationals so that they are qualified to have high positions.

One of the considerable endeavors that must be adopted are payment policy linked to productivity along with the elimination of the payment gap in the retirement scheme between the public and private sector.

Omanization is a solution to the unemployment, but new changes are also required to achieve more results. For instance, allow the creation of new jobs based on the qualifications of the nationals in both sectors. For example, the position of financial affairs specialist in schools would be better off placed by finance or accounting graduates rather than allowing teachers of such specialist to change their field to take that position.

Therefore, the creation of new jobs would definitely fill the gap of unemployment and at the same time would enhance the productivity and overall performance of the organization.

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Also it is critical for the government to keep its regulatory role, but it has to be more supportive especially to SMEs as they would help to create job opportunities for the nationals.

An important point is that private sector have to provide safe environment for a long-term career. It has been noticed that employees in the private sector are replaced from time to time. This would increase the turnover cost and would make nationals prefer getting a job in the public sector.

Another inspiring solution is to assign an annual award for the companies that have Omanized above the imposed percentages.

Most importantly, high education institutions are supposed to increase the number of seats in the most demanded majors like accounting so that students would be more selective in their choices.

The talk of the reality of Omani labor market can be extended to many aspects. The reflection that it has so far would define the steps that each individual would have to take. However, the ultimate solutions of this issue are not yet specified.

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