

Human Resources Development Strategy, Approved Policies and Mechanisms for its Achievement

3-1 Preamble:

Since the onset of the Renaissance era, the Government of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Sultan of Oman, has adopted a wider definition of human resources development. The concept adopted considers this as the aim and ultimate goal of the development process. On the basis of this broad perception, all previous development plans have therefore attached significant importance to human resources development. The focus on human resources has been concentrated further and now it has become one of the main dimensions of the Vision for Oman's Economy: Oman 2020.

On the basis of the approved strategy for human resources development, the Sultanate strives to create quantitative and qualitative improvement in all fields of general and technical education, vocational training, higher education, health services, the labour market and in the different demographic indicators.

The achievement of all the dimensions of the Vision for Oman's economy relies on accomplishing economic equilibrium and sustainable growth, the diversification of income sources and private sector development. This cannot be realized without formulating a realistic and flexible strategy for human resources development.

Through the adoption of practical, integrated policies and mechanisms for human resources development, the Sultanate can prepare the Omani society to enter the 21st century. Competition in the next century will be based upon the industries that depend on science and knowledge. The success of nations in the coming century will be closely linked to the potentialities and skills of their people to cope with technological and scientific advances. This calls for creativity, intellectual understanding and scientific invention.

It is important to emphasize that caring for mothers results in the creation of a model nation. As women represent half of Omani society, the government has accorded special care to them since the commencement of the development process. As one of the fundamental bases of the development effort, equal employment opportunities in all fields have been provided for women by the state. Social indicators in the fields of education, health and labour market reflect the significant gains made by women in this respect. Girls now represent 48% of total students at primary stage, 46% at the preparatory stage, and more than half the students in the academic year 1995-96 at Sultan Qaboos University.

For historical and traditional reasons, the participation of women in the formal economic and social sectors, is still modest. However, women's participation in informal sectors, such as handicrafts and traditional industries, is relatively significant. Through this strategy, the government will strive to develop the role of Omani women and their contribution to the national economy within the next phase.

The first issue discussed in this chapter will be the vision for human resources. The challenges facing human resources development which hamper the achievement of the vision will then be reviewed. Such challenges are based upon the evaluation reports mentioned earlier in Chapter One. Finally, this chapter provides a review of the policies and mechanisms that will be adopted in order to achieve the approved strategy.

It must be noted here that all sub-sectors of the human resources sector are inter-connected. Thus, the programme is viewed as an integrated one, although each sub-sector is presented separately.

It is essential to emphasize that the implementation of the approved policies and mechanisms, however meticulous their preparation, need continuous upgrading and improvement, particularly as their implementation will continue over twenty five years. Therefore, the policies and mechanisms approved for implementing the human resources development strategy will be subjected to periodic review so as to ensure their viability, efficiency and conformity with new developments at domestic and international levels.

3-2 The Vision for Human Resources Development: ⁽¹⁾

Human Resource Development is one of the basic dimensions of the Vision for Oman's economy (which is based on sustainability of development, achievement of economic balance and diversified sources of growth) and at the same time it represents one of the basic prerequisites for the achievement of the vision. In view of the current situation, and the challenges at local and international levels, the broad focus of the vision for Human Resource Development is as follows:

'To develop human resources and the capabilities of the Omani people to generate and manage technological changes efficiently, in addition to facing the continuously changing local and international conditions, in a way that ensures maintaining the Omani traditions and customs'.

(1) Human Resources Development Sector consists of the following subsectors: Health, General Education, Higher Education, Technical Education, Vocational Training, Social Affairs and Employment in Public and Private Sector.

3-3 Challenges Facing Human Resources Development:

The significant improvement during the past two decades in the indicators relating to human resources development, has led to the Sultanate occupying a distinguished position among the developing countries. In some indicators, the Sultanate has exceeded several countries with a high human development record. However, there are still some challenges facing human resources development and the achievement of the envisaged future. These challenges, which have been discussed in the reports and evaluation studies, are summarized below:

1. The low level of productivity of labour resources. The reluctance of Omanis to join certain professions and occupations has led to reduction of their capacity to face future challenges, affected their integration with the world economy, and at the same time has hindered the substitution of expatriate labour.
2. The weakness and inadequacy of basic education to cope with the rapidly changing scientific and technological development.
3. The provision of a mechanism for creating suitable employment opportunities for about a quarter million Omanis, who are expected to join the labour market within the next century.
4. The existence of variations in employment conditions between private and public sectors (in terms of working hours, official holidays and pensions). These have led to a reluctance of Omanis to join private sector.
5. Challenges resulting from the need for reducing the size of the expatriate labour force (estimated in December, 1993 to be around 370,000 in the private sector working in different jobs and activities), especially those engaged in professions with low value added, and whose productivity is less than their real economic cost.
6. The increasing demands for basic services, such as health, education, housing, water and sewerage systems, resulting from the fact that the rate of population growth exceeds the growth rate of national income and government revenues.

3-4 Human Resources Development Strategy (1996-2020) and its Dimensions:

The most important dimensions of the human resources development strategy which will form the basis for the achievement visualized for this sector and the Vision for Oman's Economy: Oman 2020, are as follows:

- a. **First Dimension:** To achieve a balance between population and economic growth by reducing the current population growth rate to less than 3% by 2020, through reasoning and enlightenment.

b. Second Dimension: Provision of health services and reduction of the rates of mortality and infectious diseases by the following:

1. Provision of basic health services to the entire population of the Sultanate through a system characterized by cost effectiveness and efficiency. It is planned to promote general safety awareness and protection from diseases.
2. Provision of preventive health and emergency services.
3. Reducing the death and infection rates to levels equivalent to those of the advanced countries.

c. Third Dimension: Dissemination, encouragement, and patronage of knowledge and the development of education by:

1. Creating a climate that encourages the spread and promotion of knowledge and eradication of illiteracy.
2. According priority to the spreading of basic education, upgrading, and the provision of access to education for all people, so as to ensure equal opportunities for all people. This will be done in an efficient and cost effective manner.

d. Fourth Dimension: Establishing a post-secondary and technical educational system based on the provision of the main specializations required by the national economy, together with the provision of the necessary facilities for carrying out applied research in the social or economic fields.

e. Fifth Dimension: Providing a system for technical education and vocational training that is capable of preparing labour to adapt to the needs of various specializations and skills in the labour market, and the achievement of an income that conforms with performance and productivity.

f. Sixth Dimension: Creating employment opportunities for Omanis in public and private sectors, in addition to equipping them with training and qualifications that conform to labour market requirements. This may be achieved by the following:

1. Creating employment opportunities for interested Omanis, and providing them with necessary training and qualifications, according to the labour market needs. This is needed to avoid unemployment among Omanis.
2. Substituting expatriate labour with highly qualified Omani labour, in order to shift the economy from a low value added to a high value added economy. Furthermore, to increase the participation of Omanis in the labour market in general, with particular focus on the participation of women.

3. Increasing the efficiency of the Omani labour market by narrowing differentials between public and private sectors.

3-5 Policies and Mechanisms Approved for Achieving the Vision for Human Resources Development, and Strategy and Dimensions Thereof:

The following are the most important policies and mechanisms necessary for each sub-sector of human resources that would enable achievement of the overall strategy of human resources development. As previously stated, these policies and mechanisms will be implemented over a period of twenty five years. The development plans therefore, are the determinants of the policies and mechanisms that shall be implemented in each stage. Accordingly, the necessary programs and allocations will be determined within the framework of each plan.

A. Policies related to the First Dimension of Population:

It is intended that the authorities concerned establish a population policy as soon as possible. Table 3-2 shows the age composition of the Omani population in 1993, while Figure 3-2 shows the increase in the size of the Omani population up to the year 2020, according to the current annual rate of growth which is estimated to be about 3.7%.

B. Policies related to the Second Dimension concerning the Health Sector:

1. To increase in the number of beds to about 3 per thousand populations, in addition to the improvement of health facilities and upgrading referral services.
2. To upgrade efficiency and limit the misuse of health services.
3. To increase the output of the various professions and specializations together with the adoption of self reliance in order to meet the needs for certain new specializations.
4. To upgrade and further the means of community participation in planning, implementation and follow up, including realizing some health services costs.
5. To launch a study by the Ministry of Health in order to understand the approaches adopted by other countries for the import of medicines through the private sector. However, the following should be considered:
 - a. The quality of imported medicines and their fulfillment of the specifications indicated.
 - b. The availability of medicines at reasonable prices.
6. In order to achieve equilibrium between government revenue and expenditure starting from the Fifth Five Year Plan, and to provide additional funds necessary to meet the inevitable population growth and upgrading health, the following have been approved:

- a. Maintaining the Ministry of Health's budget at its current level and the provision of the required additional funds from the contributions by the public for part of the service costs. This will be accomplished by:

Charging fees on some health services. These fees should cover 2% of the Ministry's allocations in the first year of the Fifth Five Year Plan. This percentage should be annually increased to reach 10% by the end of the Fifth Five Year Plan, and continue increasing up to 50% by 2020.

- b. The Ministry of Health shall conduct the necessary studies in order to determine the appropriate approach for applying a health insurance system. As a tentative measure pending the approval of this system, a fee of O.R.5 should be charged annually for each health card (for Omanis or expatriates working in public sector) as of 1.1.96. This fee shall be raised to O.R.10 by 1998 if the health insurance system is not implemented by then. ⁽²⁾
- c. To stress the necessity of collecting the total treatment cost from expatriates in the private sector, whether directly or through provision of a health insurance system for those who wish to use government hospitals. At present, expatriates pay only part of their actual treatment cost.
- d. The Ministry of Civil Services, in co-ordination with the Ministry of Health, shall set necessary regulations for the rationalization of certain medical facilities currently being provided free to expatriates and their families in the public sector.
- e. The Ministry of Health shall provide basic health services to all people, while the other services shall be provided according to the facilities available to the ministries.
- f. The departments concerned shall undertake the necessary steps to charge fees on private rooms in government hospitals without any exception.
- g. Furthering the role of the private sector in the field of health services through:
- Provision of easy term loans for establishing hospitals, specialized clinics and laboratories.
 - Procurement of health services from the private sector.

C. The Policies Related to the Third Dimension of General Education (Ministry of Education):

In order to identify the policies and mechanisms related to the education sector in general, the educational stages are given the following names:

(2) In view of the study submitted to the Honourable Council of Ministers some amendments were introduced on this policy. It has been decided that as of 1.1.96 O.R.. 1 will be charged on the health card for Omanis and expatriates in public sector, and 500 baizas on each visit to the physician.

I General Education:

Basic education is taken to be General Education. This takes 10 years to complete. Upon completion, the successful candidate will be awarded 'General Education Completion Certificate'.

II Secondary Education:

This lasts for a period of two years. Upon completion the 'General Secondary Certificate' will be awarded.

III University Education:

The policies and mechanisms related to general education were formulated within the framework of these stages. These policies and mechanisms are as follows:

1. Upgrading the level of basic education until it compares favourably with the levels in advanced countries by the following:
 - a. Reviewing the curricula, giving more emphasis to scientific specialisations such as mathematics, science, computers and the principles of economics by increasing the number of periods allocated for these subjects and consequently reducing the periods allocated to the arts, taking into consideration the students' interests and capacities.
 - b. Teaching English language at the first stage of the basic education.
 - c. Cancelling the evening classes, which will result in increasing the length of the class period, thus giving more time for studying the basics.
 - d. Establishing the foundations of the basic education and its requirements. These include facilities, equipment, buildings, curricula, books, qualified teachers, educational guides, social workers, laboratory technicians and librarians. All these requirements should be met in order to enable the graduation of qualified students to join the labour market through technical education and vocational training or through pursuing education at higher stages.
 - e. Aiming at renewing school books every year.
 - f. Concentrating on modernizing and upgrading the educational curricula in order to cope with scientific and technological progress by focusing on the practical aspects of education and learning.
 - g. Upgrading educational practices in line with modern educational techniques.

2. To determine an appropriate form of secondary education that suits the requirements of the next stage, and ensures the graduation of students who are well prepared to join the labour market after training.
3. To improve the employment conditions of teachers so that the Ministry will be able to attract teachers of the highest caliber.
4. To strive to provide in-service training for educational staff. This will enable the upgrading of the level of educational performance, and professional efficiency through various courses, workshops and seminars.
5. The difficulty of obtaining all the additional funds required by Ministry of Education for the continuity of education on the one hand, and upgrading its level on the other, may require additional means. In order to encourage the citizens to contribute gradually to educational expenses after the basic educational stage, the following policies and mechanisms have been agreed upon:
 - a. Provision of free modern basic education for ten years for all citizens.
 - b. Advanced secondary education for two years. The government shall bear 70% of its cost, whether provided through the government schools or private ones. ⁽³⁾
 - c. Advanced technical education for two to three years, characterized by being flexible, gradual and equivalent to the secondary stage. The government shall provide an annual grant that covers 70% of its cost. ⁽⁴⁾
 - d. Vocational training that is available to all those interested in joining the labour market, regardless of their educational level. The government shall provide an annual grant that covers 70% of its cost. ⁽⁴⁾
 - e. University education for the graduates of the high secondary stage and technical education.

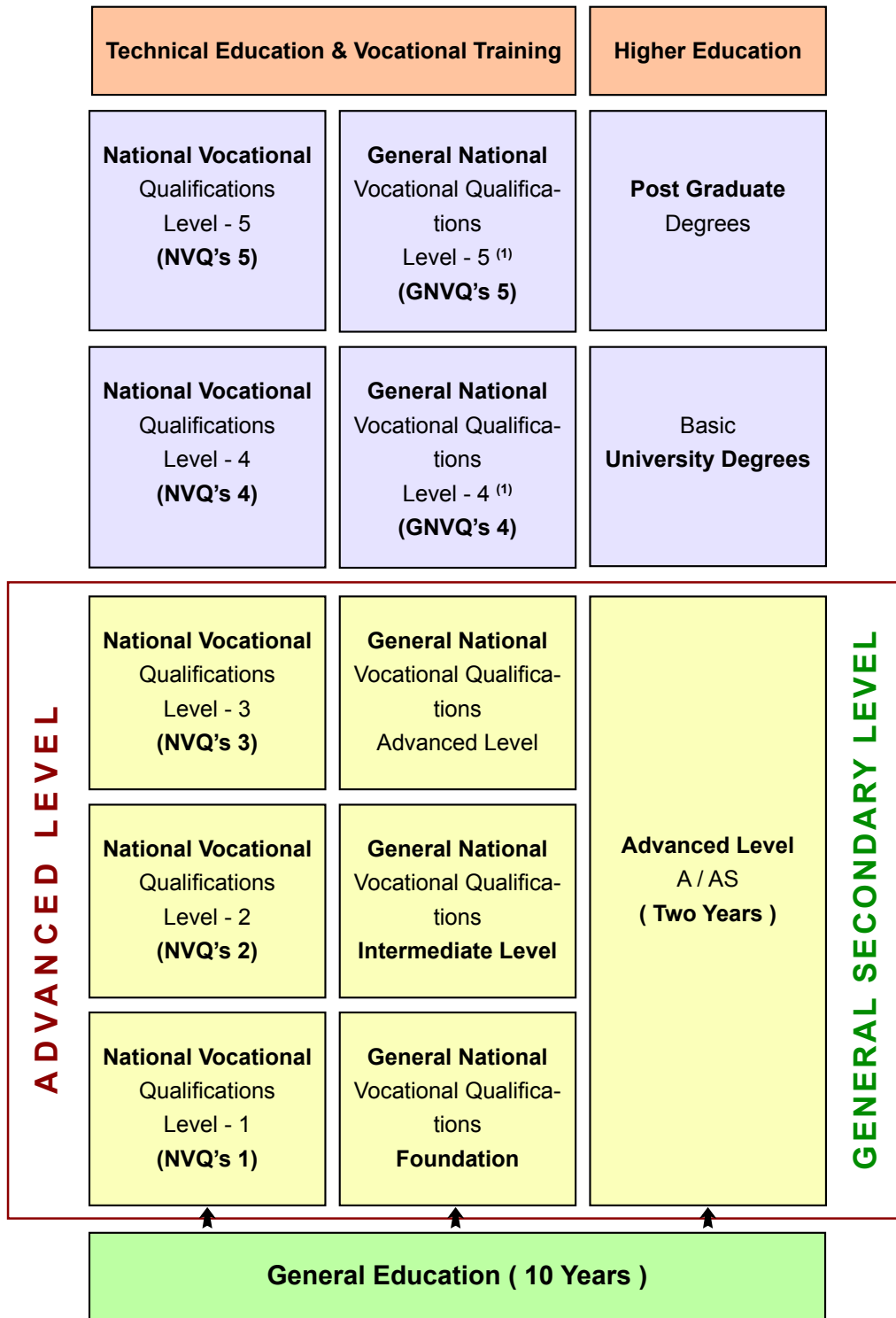
Figure 3-1 shows the educational systems approved for the next stage.

(3) The implementation of this policy depends on upgrading the basic education according to the most modern standards, as stated in (a). The implementation of such process may take 10 years.

(4) The Honourable Council of Ministers has decided that the government shall bear (100%) of the fees of technical education and vocational training during the first stage.

Figure 3-1

**Educational Systems approved in the
Vision for Oman's Economy - OMAN : 2020**



(1) These two levels have not yet implemented.

6. To approach specialized international organisations in order to ensure achievement of desired levels. These organisations will undertake periodic evaluation of educational standards in the Sultanate relative to the countries with higher educational standards. This practice is common in many of the industrial countries, where this system is used to measure student standards in mathematics and science, against students in other countries at same level.
7. To encourage the private sector to assume a role in the education sector through:
 - a. Provision of easy term loans for the private sector for the construction of schools, institutes and intermediate colleges.
 - b. Encouragement of parents and guardians to register their sons and daughters in private schools, so as to reduce the pressure on government schools. This can be done by providing an annual government grant equivalent to 70% of the cost borne for provision of education through these schools. The annual grant should not exceed O.R.400. It is important to note here that this amount covers 25% of the actual fees paid by the parents in some private schools. This shall be restricted to the general education category students, that is, for ten years, while kindergarten students shall be excluded.
 - c. The Ministry of Housing shall provide developed lands to the Ministry of Education. The latter shall allocate these lands to the private sector for the construction of schools and institutes, according to the law governing the right to utilise government lands. It has also been agreed that there is no need to increase the technical and administrative support for the schools constructed by private sector, as they enjoy other facilities, such as loans.
 - d. Development of a mechanism for private school supervision by the Ministry and provision of the Ministry's requirements to carry out this task.
 - e. Upon approval of government grants, the Ministry of Education should coordinate, with the concerned authorities, the process of setting appropriate regulations to determine a ceiling for the fees charged by private schools and to prohibit any increase without permission.

**D. Policies related to the Fourth Dimension of Higher Education
(Ministry of Higher Education):**

1. Sultan Qaboos University:

- a. To continue the provision of free education at Sultan Qaboos University. However, the authorities concerned shall carry out a study and present their ideas regarding

reconsideration of additional non-educational services, such as housing, meals and transport, currently provided by the University. The objective of this review is to alleviate the burden on the public budget, so as to achieve equality for all in this respect.

- b. To review the specializations available at the university, including the Faculty of Agriculture, in order that priority shall be given to the specializations required by the national economy. The Ministry of Higher Education should prepare the necessary study by the end of 1996.
- c. Since some of the university specializations are temporary and limited, a study is needed to determine the appropriate approach of instituting these specializations. The study should examine the feasibility of establishing new faculties or the utilization of scholarships and secondment for study abroad.
- d. The opening of complementary specializations in the scientific and humanities faculties shall be according to the requirements and needs of the country for qualified graduates of these specializations.
- e. The proposed new institutions, such as the Higher Institute of Jurisprudence at Nizwa; the Higher Institute of Arts at Sohar and the Fisheries College at Salalah, shall be programmed for implementation over more than one Five Year Plan.
- f. The allocation of land for the Higher Institute of Jurisprudence at Nizwa. The necessary studies should be carried out in order to implement it within the Fifth Five Year Plan.
- g. As regards Faculty of Sharia and Law, the following has been proposed:
 - 1. To transform the Islamic Secondary Institute into a building for the Faculty of Sharia and Law.
 - 2. The Institute of Jurisprudence, Oratory and Guidance, an affiliate of Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, should be merged with Faculty of Sharia and Law, according to a time schedule to be agreed upon by the departments concerned.
 - 3. Starting from the academic year 1996/97, the Islamic institutes in Sohar, Jaa'lan Bani by Hassan, and Salalah, with the exception of the Islamic Institute in Khasab, should be merged with the Faculty of Sharia and Law.
 - 4. All the financial allocations of the Islamic institutes should be used for the provision of the financial requirements necessary for the Faculty of Sharia and Law.

5. While preparing for this faculty, the authorities concerned should determine the number of entrants according to the job opportunities available for its graduates.
- h. Sultan Qaboos University may consider providing opportunities for a number of technical education graduates to pursue their university studies, subject to certain conditions to be set by the university.
- i. The number of years required for obtaining the degree in the various specializations of Sultan Qaboos University should be reviewed. This is due to the fact that the secondary and technical education will be advanced, and the period of study in most reputable universities is three to four years.
- j. Allow affiliation to Sultan Qaboos University. This will have a positive impact in reducing pressures on educational institutions and the labour market.
- k. Encouragement and motivation of the University Staff to conduct research and studies, and provide consultation services in all academic fields to all developmental sectors of the country.
- l. Continuance of scholarships for the Omani staff and researchers of Sultan Qaboos University in order to meet the University requirements of qualified scientific cadres of faculty members.
- m. To complete operating the University Teaching Hospital.
- n. To provide technical and administrative training opportunities for the employees and technicians of the University.
- o. To continue the development of the university curricula in order to cope with the development process of the local and international community.

2. Scholarships for Study Abroad:

- a. Upgrading the scholarships policy and complementing the public role through bearing part of the costs of scholarship in order to enable the maximum number of students to complete their university study. This should be on condition that the proposed specialization meets the requirements of the national economy, and according to the following basis:
 1. Provision of an annual grant for the secondary stage graduates, to enable them to continue their studies. The grant should cover 50% of the cost of their study abroad. The maximum amount shall be O.R. 4,200 for a maximum number of 800 graduates of general secondary or technical education each year. Selection should be according to competitive examination and specified criteria. The candidates should be linked to their prospective job, as the benefiting authority

might be able to contribute to part of the remaining cost of study. Scholarships should be undertaken in countries known to have educational systems of distinction. The numbers of scholarships should be reviewed in accordance with the developments in the Omani labour market. ⁽⁵⁾

2. To cancel the annual scholarships of government employees (20 scholarships) and to transfer the same to scholarships for students.
 3. To prioritize the obtaining of annual government scholarships (100 scholarships after cancelling the 20 scholarships of government employees) for outstanding students from social security and limited income families, according to the specified conditions. Consideration should be given towards directing scholarships to the countries known to have proven educational systems. ⁽⁶⁾
 4. To increase the opportunities available for government employees to study abroad to 40. However, each employee should pay tuition fees, while the government will pay his complete salary and allowances during his study period.
 5. To continue the current policy for post graduate scholarships (full scholarships). The minimum condition should be obtaining class 'very good', instead of the current requirement of 'good', and the maximum number should be 60 scholarships.
 6. To provide a maximum of 60 places for employees who obtained the class 'good', for the continuance of their postgraduate studies, provided that they bear their tuition fees while the government pays the full salary and allowances.
- b. To facilitate affiliation and distance learning at accredited universities in order to obtain basic university degrees or to enroll in postgraduate studies.
 - c. To allow the private sector to establish private colleges that award diplomas and higher diplomas, according to regulations and criteria currently being set by the Ministry of Higher Education.
 - d. To reconsider the membership of the Scholarships Committee, so that it should include qualified members from the private sector. This will enrich the deliberations of the Committee and achieve greater benefits.

(5) In its session No. 20/96 held on 2.2.1417 AH corresponding to 18.6.1996, and after reviewing the memorandum presented on financing the additional programme for human resources development, the honourable Council of Ministers decided to award scholarships to 200 students during the first year of the Fifth Five Year Plan. The number of candidates for these scholarships shall be increased by 100 each year. The objective is to reach 600 the scholarships in the academic year 2000/2001. According to this programme the total number of students on scholarships, during the Plan period, shall be 2000 students.

(6) The implementation of this policy depends on the commencement of implementing the first policy stated under (a) above.

3. Teacher Training Colleges:

- a. Meeting the national requirements for preparatory and secondary school male and female teachers through transforming the nine teachers' training colleges into six university colleges. The objective is to meet the private and public sector demand for preparatory and secondary school teachers. The new colleges should provide admission opportunities for about 2,000 to 2,500 students each year. Admission however, shall not be linked with the demand of the region hosting the college, and employment after graduation shall not be guaranteed.
- b. Students enrolled in these colleges shall bear part of the cost of study. Exemptions shall be made for social security groups and their equivalent. However, a maximum limit shall be specified for the places available in this category. ⁽⁷⁾

E. Policies related to the Fifth Dimension of Technical Education and Vocational Training Systems (Vocational Training Authority and the other authorities) :

1. Adoption of an open training and educational system characterized by flexibility which helps in the continuous upgrading of the skills of Omani labour.
2. Adoption of advanced technical education and vocational training systems. Such systems shall be capable of coping with the market requirements and the on-going technological developments.
3. To increase the participation of women and to encourage their enrollment in suitable technical education and vocational training programmes.
4. To adopt the following systems for technical education and vocational training, which will provide the students with different skills, according to the needs of labour market. (Technicians, skilled labour, and semi-skilled labour)

(i) General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ):

This will help provide technicians and skilled labour for the market.

(ii) National Vocational Qualifications:

-Omani National Vocational Qualifications (ONVQs)

-British National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)

for the provision of skilled and semi-skilled labour.

(7) The esteemed Council of Ministers resolved that the government shall continue to bear the cost of study in such colleges during the next stage and shall continue providing living allowance for the studentst.

5. To carry out follow-up and periodic evaluation of these programmes, in order to establish their conformity with the labour market needs, to make necessary amendments, and to benefit from international experience in this field.
6. These systems shall be provided through the following:
 - a. Technical education (GNVQ), through the government technical industrial colleges, without expanding these colleges.
 - b. Technical and vocational programmes provided by private institutes and establishments. However, these programmes should be approved by the government authority concerned.
7. To provide an annual grant equal to 70% of the cost of study for students enrolling in one of technical and vocational programmes provided by private institutes and establishments. The maximum amount per student shall be O.R.1,200 for technical specialisations and O.R.1,000 for the administrative specialisations.⁽⁸⁾
8. Due to the high cost of study in government technical colleges, the cost to be born by the citizen (amounting to 30% of the total cost) must be based on the cost of the corresponding private colleges.⁽⁷⁾
9. The technical education and vocational training authorities should conduct an annual evaluation in order to understand the extent of public interest in enrollment in this type of education.
10. Attention should be given to teacher training in order to raise efficiency and skills, through the educational institutions affiliated to the Council and concerned with implementation of NVQs and GNVQs.
11. Preparation and implementation of a national system of professional tests.
12. Designing of media programmes to enlighten people and reduce negative viewpoints in regard of the importance of specialisation and opportunities provided by the technical education and vocational training systems.

(7) The esteemed Council of Ministers resolved that the government shall continue to bear the cost of study in such colleges during the next stage and shall continue providing living allowance for the studentst.

(8) The Honourable Council of Ministers decided that during the first stage the government shall bear (100%) of the cost of Technical Education and Vocational Training which will be provided by private institutes. The Council also decided to raise the maximum limit of the fees to be borne by the government to R.O. 1400 on the average.

13. To reconsider the structure of the Supreme Committee for Vocational Training and Labour in order to include additional qualified and experienced members from the private sector, and to benefit from their experience.

F. Policies Concerning Employment in Public and Private Sectors:

One of the basic development objectives is the provision of increased opportunities of suitable employment for people, according to their qualifications and capabilities. In addition to this, the aim is to provide sufficient income for the family unit. The consensus is that development cannot be achieved without the availability of an educated and well trained labour force.

1. Employment in the Civil Service :

- a. The role of the Ministry of Civil Service during the next phase should be focused on.
 1. Assisting in the revision and updating of organisational structures of the government units, so as to be in line with the vision for development administration.
 2. Reviewing current civil service legislation in line with the requirements of the Vision for Oman's Economy: Oman 2020.
 3. Considering the reduction in the number of government employees to reach a maximum of 30 employees for each 1,000 population.
 4. Encouraging early retirement of employees with long service, and providing a package in line with this aim.
 5. Setting up the basis and criteria for national tests for interested candidates in order to evaluate their competence. Candidates wishing to be appointed to the Civil Service must pass the test. Passing the test does not place any obligation on the government to provide employment.
 6. Establishing an integrated modern database that includes all occupational data of the employees in the Civil Service.
 7. Determining the training priorities and alternatives according to modern and integrated scientific methodology.
 8. Continuing the Omanisation policy in the government sector in order to achieve the targeted percentage of 95% by the year 2020.

9. Preparing studies and research in order to improve and upgrade the administrative performance.
 10. Periodically upgrading civil service systems so as to accentuate the modern administrative concepts of a governmental post.
 11. Preparing work procedure manuals pertaining to the application of the civil service laws.
- b. The completion of the job classification project being carried out by the Ministry of Civil Service and its implementation before the end of 1996.
 - c. To relate the salaries in the civil service to the post rather than the grade as a step towards abolishing the linking between the grade and the qualification.
 - d. To simplify the procedures and to amend regulations to enable the Ministries and other government authorities to directly manage personnel affairs, such as, appointments, promotions and termination of service in accordance with the Civil Service and Pension Laws.
 - e. To upgrade the Institute of Public Administration so that it may function properly, and to study the feasibility of transferring it into a private institution in the future.
 - f. To standardize service rules to be applied by the various civil service units.

2. Employment in the Private Sector:

- a. To provide adequate technical education and vocational training for Omani labour in coordination with the authorities concerned so as to enable competition with the expatriate labour.
- b. To raise the current direct cost of expatriate labour to the real cost level incurred by the national economy according to the following principles:
 1. Fees imposed on expatriate labour should be increased from O.R. 60 to O.R 120 or 7% of the total salary of the expatriate, whichever is higher.
 2. This increase should be implemented as of 1st January 1996, coinciding with the commencement the new directives in the fields of general, secondary and technical education, vocational training and higher education. ⁽⁸⁾
 3. These fees should be fixed for five years.

(8) The Honourable Council of Ministers decided that during the first stage the government shall bear (100%) of the cost of Technical Education and Vocational Training which will be provided by private institutes. The Council also decided to raise the maximum limit of the fees to be borne by the government to R.O. 1400 on the average.

4. The total proceeds of these fees should be directed towards implementing the new policies for human resources development.
- c. Extending the social security umbrella to include national labour involved in various activities and sectors, particularly the unorganised sector, and businessmen in small establishments and handicrafts.
 - d. Regulating expatriate employment in certain professions and businesses that can be filled by the local citizens. However this should be based on a study that confirms the availability of national labour for these occupations.
 - e. Protecting the labour force through promotion of labour legislation.
 - f. Raising the awareness of private employers regarding the importance of health care, nutrition and housing for the workforce, since these factors contribute to productivity and the maintenance of stability.
 - g. Stressing the need to observe the Omanisation policies and percentages imposed on private sector establishments. These percentages should be reviewed and upgraded in line with labour market developments, taking into consideration educational and training outputs.
 - h. A substantial change in the structure of national labour will occur within the next few years, due to the graduation of thousands of Omanis available for employment in the private labour market, as shown in table No. 3-1. This is based on the estimates of national labour in both sectors.

Table No. 3-1

Distribution of National Labour in the Public and Private Sectors

Item	1993		2020	
	No. (Thousands)	%	No. (Thousands)	%
National labour :				
- In the Public Sector	175	73%	270	30%
- In the Private Sector	65	27%	662	70%
Total	240	100%	892	100%

- i. In the light of the above, it is necessary to reduce disparities in employment benefits and allowances between the public and private sectors, to encourage Omanis to join the private sector. Proposals for this include the following:
 - 1. Rescheduling the working hours in the public sector, for example, from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. This is on condition that working hours for municipal workers, schools and hospitals remain the same. ⁽⁹⁾
 - 2. Official holidays shall be maintained at their current level in the private sector, and efforts may be made towards unifying holidays in both sectors. Unless the first day of the 'Eid' coincides with a Friday, public sector employees should not be compensated for Thursdays and Fridays. However, the current weekend holidays should be maintained as at present.
 - 3. Unifying pension administration systems in the public and private sectors, provided that unification should not lead to the reduction of pension benefits of civil service employees.
- j. Developing handicrafts and traditional industries along with the agriculture and fisheries sector in order to ensure the employment of large numbers of the national labour force.
- k. Increasing the participation of women in the labour market, especially in occupations that suit their capabilities, together with the provision of appropriate support for establishing their economic projects.
- l. Upgrading the employment units in order to provide occupations for Omanis in accordance with studied plans and programmes.
- m. Introducing a unified job classification for the Sultanate to assist in designing labour force development plans in line with labour market requirements.
- n. Encouraging the establishment of private local employment offices to assist in providing employment opportunities for Omanis in the private sector.
- o. Recommending to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and other concerned authorities to control private sector employment by studying the appropriate working hours for business establishments and small restaurants.
- p. Providing an adequate climate, in terms of health and safety for the Omani labour force.
- q. Linking the occupation of the Omani employee with an increased sense of responsibility and duty.

(9) On 1.8.1995 this system was applied on experimental basis. However, the results were not satisfactory, and accordingly the system was reversed to its previous timing as of 14th October, 1995.

3-6 Quantitative and Qualitative Indicators of the Vision for Human Resources Development:

The Vision for human resources development, as mentioned earlier, involves the development of the capabilities of the Omani people to generate and manage technological changes efficiently, in addition to facing the continuously changing local and international conditions. All this should ensure maintaining the Omani traditions and norms.

The Vision is concerned with preparing the people to meet the challenge of some unpredictable variables which may occur during the envisaged time span. Therefore, the practical implementation stage of policies and mechanisms approved for the achievement of the Vision shall be subjected to continuous evaluation. The objective of this evaluation is to update these policies and mechanisms so as to conform with the recent developments and the actual implementation results.

The basic objective of the policies and mechanisms proposed (regarding population, health, general education, technical education, vocational training, higher education and the labour market) is to prepare the Omani people to explore the horizons of the twenty first century. This can be achieved by reaching objectives, upgrading indicators and subjecting them to more verification. The indicators related to these objectives, however, may be summarized as follows:

3-6-1 Population:

The formulation of a clear population policy for the Sultanate. This policy should assist in reducing the population growth rate to less than 3% by the year 2020, and avoid the negative impact of a substantial population increase on natural and financial resources of the country.

3-6-2 Health Sector:

The provision of free primary health care to all Omanis through a cost system characterized by cost effectiveness and efficiency and the provision of preventative health and emergency services. The framework of the approved policies is expected to facilitate the achievement of the following indicators:

- a. To raise the life expectancy at birth from 67.4 years in 1995 to at least 70 years in 2020.
- b. To reduce the infant mortality rate from 20 deaths per thousand live birth in 1995, to 10 deaths per thousand live births in 2020 ⁽¹⁾.

(1) Human Resources Development Sector consists of the following subsectors: Health, General Education, Higher Education, Technical Education, Vocational Training, Social Affairs and Employment in Public and Private Sector.

- c. To immunize 100% of the children against the six childhood diseases by the year 2020.
- d. To increase the number of beds available in hospitals by reducing the patient/bed ratio from 485 persons per bed in 1995 to 335 persons per bed by 2020.
- e. To increase the number of physicians per head of the population to one physician for every 715 persons in 2020 from one physician for every 844 persons in 1995.
- f. To increase the number of nurses from one nurse for every 346 people in 1995 to one to 325 people in 2020.

3-6-3 General Education Sector:

The provision of an integrated environment of scientific and general knowledge for human resources development is essential. Such an environment should enable the citizen to meet all challenges and changes that might face the national economy in future. Therefore, the development of national cadres and the upgrading of the skills of these warrant the initiation of the following measures:

1. The government commitment to provide free modern basic education for 10 years. The minimum level of basic education shall be increased to 10 years instead of 9 years, in the primary and preparatory stages.
2. The graduates of basic education should be of an age that enables them to join the labour market after attending short term courses (training programmes).
3. A two year secondary education that enables its graduates to enroll in university studies, according to the terms of admission and competition for the available places.
4. The provision of equal educational opportunities for the maximum number of citizens, as well as meeting labour market requirements.
5. The provision of more opportunities for citizens to enroll in post-basic educational stages and to benefit from the opportunities generated by the following fields:
 - Education at the various government colleges.
 - Private institutes and colleges
 - Distant learning
 - Short term courses available through the vocational qualifications system.

3-6-4 Higher Education Sector:

An educational system at post secondary education and technical education stage. This system aims at improving the indicators of higher education as follows:

1. Creation of a high level educational system characterized by being flexible and upgradeable.
2. To increase the enrollment in higher education from 9% in 1995 to 40% in 2020.
3. To increase the enrollment of women from the age group 20-40 to 40% in order to provide equal opportunities for males and females in higher education.
4. To achieve the participation of the citizens in sharing the cost of education for the post-basic education stage. Special consideration should, however, be given to the situation of students from families receiving social welfare, and those from limited income categories. This should entail the provision of the full cost of study, according to the approved systems.

3-6-5 Technical Education and Vocational Training Sector:

New systems for technical education and vocational training will be instituted. These will be in accordance with the accredited systems adopted by most countries. Such systems shall work towards achieving the following:

1. Meeting the renewable demand for professional jobs and high technical skills for the current and future labour market of Oman. This may be achieved through increasing the percentage of technical education and vocational training students from 4.5% in 1995 to 50% in 2020.
2. Developing technical education and vocational training systems that are flexible and open, allowing the Omani individual to continue education to higher levels if desired. These systems should also enable the citizen to change and upgrade his skills and specialization. Such changes would enable him to meet the required standards for technical, skilled and semi -skilled jobs available in the market. This in turn will help improve his living standard.
3. Encouraging the private sector to play a major role in the field of technical education and vocational training according to the approved systems, in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, flexibility and rapid adaptability. This will meet the renewable demand for technical, skilled and semi-skilled labour.

4. Seeking private sector participation in the formulation of policies related to the upgrading of technical education and vocational training, so as to ensure a continuous flow of well trained labour that meets private sector requirements.

3-6-6 Employment in the Private and Public Sectors:

In view of the assumptions and projections made regarding estimates of the population growth rates, and age groups by the year 2020, as indicated in Table 3-1, the structure of national employment in private and public sectors shall achieve the following results:

1. Offer rewarding employment opportunities for the large numbers of national labour that are expected to join the labour market within the next quarter of a century.
2. Implement all the policies related to the Omani labour market, in addition to upgrading basic and technical education and vocational training. The most important policies are concerned with Omanisation ratios in private sector establishments, the unification of allowances and benefits in the public and private sector, and to ensure that the Omanis will not face unemployment in the future.
3. Improve the indicators concerned with measuring the development of the labour market in the following ways:
 - a. To increase the Omani labour force from 17% of the total population in 1995, to about 50% in 2020.
 - b. To increase the participation of women in the total labour force from about 6% in 1995, to about 12% in 2020.
 - c. To increase the Omanisation ratio in the public sector from 68% in 1995 to 95% in 2020.
 - d. To increase the Omanisation ratio in the private sector from 15% in 1995, to about 75% by 2020.

Table 3-2**Distribution of Omani Population by Age Group and Sex****As on December 1993**

Age Group	Total Omani Population			
	Total	Male	Female	% Male/Female
0-4	255615	130207	125408	103.8
5-9	268658	136263	132395	102.9
10-14	240848	122959	117889	104.3
Total (0-14) Year	765121	389429	375692	109.7
% of Total	51,6%	51,6%	51,6%	
15-19	175309	90319	84990	106.3
20-24	110410	57920	52490	110.3
25-29	80781	40642	40139	101.3
30-34	65097	31989	33108	96.6
35-39	60703	28297	32406	87.3
40-44	46900	23324	23576	98.9
45-49	42295	21330	20965	101.7
50-54	40656	21107	19549	108.0
55-59	24442	13439	11003	122.1
60-64	27073	14949	12124	123.3
65-69	12778	6857	5921	115.8
70-74	14163	6952	7211	96.4
75-79	5416	2718	2698	100.7
80-84	6227	2970	3257	91.2
+85	5615	2715	2900	93.6
N.A.	240	153	87	
Grand Total	1483226	755110	728116	103.7
Percentage	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Source: 1993 General Census for Population, Housing and Establishments

Figure 3-2

Size of the Omani population up to the year 2020

(At current annual rate of growth 3.7%.)

