Private Education In the sultanate of Oman
Obstacles and Challenges
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Introduction

The period of change, or as the Omanis refer to it "the renaissance", began with the accession to the throne of Sultan Qaboos bin Said 43 years ago on 23 July 1970. The new ruler announced his intention to improve the conditions of all his subjects, making the most of the sultanate's oil wealth in order to achieve his ends. A lot of attention has been paid to develop education and made it available for each citizen. The number of students and schools increased from a mere three primary schools with 900 boys prior to 1970 to a post-1970 renaissance period of almost 600,000 students of both sexes and 1427 schools in 2002. While in 2011, the number of schools increased to 1045, the total enrolment of students in general education was 523,112 (Ministry of National Economy, 2011). The decline in number “between 2000-2010” is a result of the application of birth control policy. The general (pre-tertiary) education sector in the Sultanate of Oman has taken a proactive role in achieving (primary–preparatory–secondary) education for all. The role of education in the country’s socioeconomic development has been among the many changes that have reshaped the Sultanate of Oman today (Al-Lamki, 2002).

In terms of Oman total population is 2,773,479, The Omanis is 1,957,336 and Expatriate is 816,143 (Sultanate of Oman, Supreme Council for Planning , 2010, p.5). Rapid population growth constitutes one of the most critical problems confronting Oman, placing incremental pressure on its finite water and other natural resources and challenging the state abilities to accommodate school and university graduates with jobs and build adequate urban and rural infrastructures.

Successful localization policies are critical to the resolution of difficult social problems in Oman relating to rising populations and youth unemployment. Successful localization is proving difficult; however, Localization (nationalization) strategies are now firmly embedded in Gulf Cooperation Council countries to tackle present and potential unemployment problems. Omanization is an effort to contribute to a better understanding of a complex socio-economic arena. The size of the youth population, high unemployment and differentials between public and private pay and conditions are putting the current social contract under pressure (Salih, 2010).
Indeed, events in the “Arab Spring” of early 2011 give witness to the pressure on the government in Oman in terms of social justice and unemployment issues for nationals.

Development strategy, Vision 2020, aims to achieve the status of a "Newly Industrialized Economy" and double Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (in 2010, 4%), thereby enhancing living standards and reducing disparities between the regions. Endowed with limited oil reserves, Oman seeks to build solid foundations for future jobs and wealth creation by expanding the capacity of non-oil sectors. The main objectives of Vision 2020 are industrialization, led by downstream gas-based/export-oriented projects, more infrastructural investments - co-funded by private investors and increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Ministry of Economy 1995).

Schooling begins at age six and, despite some drop-out, most students stay in education and sit for a General Education Diploma at 18. Higher education is served by one state university and 26 private universities and colleges. In addition there are colleges of applied science, banking, health and five vocational training centers which are administered by different ministries and organizations. The numbers of students at these institutions is around 100,000 (Statistical Yearbook, 2009). The annual output of graduates from higher education is around 40,000 (EIU, 2009b).

A consequence of having one of the fastest growing post-secondary education systems in the world is that the number of college and university graduates each year already exceeds the numbers of jobs available through economic expansion and natural labor turnover (Al Barwani et al., 2009). The World Bank (2004) reported that governments in the Middle East have acute challenges in creating and providing jobs for those who have benefited from intermediate and higher education for whom the threat of unemployment is high. Conversely, unemployment is lower among people without higher levels of education and who are not qualified to work in the public sector even though the wage levels and conditions that they experience may be poor. Given the youthful bias of the population this situation is tightening and underlining the importance of local employment strategies. A confounding factor is concern about declining future oil revenues and the ability of the State to fund further and higher education as generously as it has done (Chapman et al., 2009). Therefore the government encourages local private sector and outsiders to invest in education. In 2007, the government administered 50% of Higher education institutions and 50% were supervised by the private sector. The projection is that there is a tendency to expand the private ones as the government continuously encourages the private investment to be more involved in education whether general or higher education. However, there is a great concern among the public about the quality of education and the availability of
career. They also concern about social justice and equal opportunity for all regardless of there family’s economic and social conditions.

Focuses on the issues surrounding the privatization of schools in the contemporary age is debated at all levels- National and International. Nature of privatization, Privatization of the public sector, Grant of subsidies to private sector, indirect encouragement of the private sector and Purposes of privatization is discussed in brief and analysis of Omani context is considered in details below.

This theoretical paper main objective was to assess the extent to which private education in Oman maintains the quality desired by public, employers and achieve social equity.

The paper employed document review drew on Omani government documents, including a substantial number of government reports, published research about private education in Oman and the wider international research literature.

Privatization of Education

Neoliberal reformers have emphasized the role that market mechanisms can play in reconfiguring the public sector. In education, reformers argue that consumer choice and school competition can lead to more effective and efficient public education systems. Debates over education policy have highlighted the question of whether or not parental choice of schools represents a form of privatization — a question reflecting the tension over the extent to which schools should be directly subject to market forces (Lubienski, 2006).

Is school choice a form of privatization? Typically, in US education for example, the term "privatization" is used in reference to services peripheral to the classroom, such as transportation or food service (Reed, 1997). Fewer speak explicitly of privatization in reference to the provision of teaching. Instead, activists often use terms like "market-based" or "private practice" to describe such arrangements. Often, uses of the term in research on education policy indicate a general imprecision in how it applies to school reform. Indeed, since there are many forms of market expansion, there are many different school choice schemes. To the degree that these arrangements are based on (1) consumer choice, and (2) autonomy of and/or competition between providers, there is an increase in market-like dynamics from the old, state-administered common school model. Therefore, these reforms can be described as "marketization" in education. But are they privatization (Lubienski, 2006).

Nevertheless, the term "privatization" still appears in an almost arbitrary manner in school choice debates to describe some of these different arrangements. In order to make sense of privatization and school choice, some analysts assess school choice programs according to different criteria, particularly funding and ownership of the means of provision (Whitty & Power, 2000).
For decades economists, sociologists and others have debated the nature of education as a public or private good. Typically, reformers seeking an expansion of the state's role in providing education laud the "public good" effects of mass education: increased literacy, civic participation, inculcating a common culture, tolerance, social and human capital, social efficiency, equity, and so forth. On the other hand, education is often treated as a private good, as individuals compete for more prestigious credentials to enhance economic opportunities, for example, or as businesses seek to transfer training costs onto schools (Gelberg, 1997).

Private schools, also known as independent schools or non-state schools, (Zaidi, 2011) are not administered by local, state or national governments; thus, they retain the right to select their students and are funded in whole or in part by charging their students tuition, rather than relying on mandatory taxation through public (government) funding; at some private schools students may be able to get a scholarship, which makes the cost cheaper, depending on a talent the student may have e.g. sport scholarship, art scholarship, academic scholarship etc. Private schools are typically more expensive than their public counterparts. (The New York Times, 2012).

In USA , the term For-profit education (also known as the education services industry or proprietary education) refers to educational institutions operated by private, profit-seeking businesses. Using the framework outlined above, it is difficult to see how different forms of school choice privatize education in the usual sense, since such reforms almost never transfer ownership of public schools to private hands (Miron, 2012). While there are increasing examples of private “education management organizations” EMOs contracted to run public schools, that form of privately administered provision does not necessitate "school choice"—since districts can hire such managers while maintaining attendance zones. Across the American states, almost 300 private companies referred to as are taking a big bite out of the public school apple. According to a new report, EMOs now operate 35 percent of all public charter schools, and these schools account for more than 40 percent of all charter school students. In the for-profit sector, the number of companies has remained relatively stable for the past few years, yet many of the large and medium-sized for-profit EMOs are expanding the number of students they serve on their campuses, and there has been a dramatic expansion in “virtual schools.” Further, the number of students enrolled in schools under non-profit management has been growing even more rapidly (Horwitz, 2012).

In most school choice plans, there is still a semblance of public governance, as state or elected authorities charter autonomous schools, for instance, and even schools accepting vouchers often have to meet minimum government requirements (Lubienski, 2003). Certainly, most school choice proposals and programs in the US maintain public funding, and presume public access. Likewise, while reformers may attempt to inject competition into education by borrowing aspects from business models, they correctly note that the schools are still publicly owned, funded, governed, and accessible (DeWeese, 1994; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000;
Finally, school choice proponents argue that the public is the primary beneficiary of choice, in terms of freedom to choose, and enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

Privatization of Education in the Sultanate of Oman

Privatization of education in Oman includes general and higher levels. The private sector and international investors are encouraged by the government. The encouragement is based on the assumption that private sector should be responsible in developing human resources and Omani society. This policy initiates challenge of diversity of educational opportunity for students and parents. Therefore this section focuses on the analysis of privatization of education at higher and general levels.

I. Privatization of Higher Education

Privatization of higher education in the Sultanate of Oman is a recent phenomenon. Traditionally the practice has been for the government to provide free higher education to all Omani nationals. This trend started in the 1970s with government-sponsored scholarships for studies abroad, there being no higher educational facilities in the country at that time. Subsequently, the government initiated a program to develop and establish local post-secondary institutions in the country, including the opening of the First and only university in 1986. During this period of renaissance (1970 to date), investment in basic education has taken precedence. Consequently, free basic education has been made available to all Omani nationals under a program of continuous and rapid expansion across the whole country. This has resulted in a large population of secondary school graduates competing for limited opportunities for higher education in the country. Responding to the disparity between basic and post-secondary education, coupled with financial austerity in the wake of competing demands from other public needs, a Royal Decree was issued in 1996 to promote the development of private higher education colleges in the country. To encourage the private sector to assume a role in the education sector, the government initiated subsidy schemes. These schemes include provisions for loans with subsidized interest rates and the allocation of government-developed lands for the construction of educational institutions. Following the Royal Decree, the number of private colleges and universities started to mushroom. Private investors have the opportunity to establish new private universities and colleges in the Sultanate and are offered a number of incentives (MoHE, 2011).

The Ministry of Higher education encourages the private sector to establish colleges and institutes of higher education. There are 19 privately owned Colleges of Higher Education which operate under license from the Ministry of Higher Education and are at different stages of development. There are seven Universities. Most of these institutions are affiliated to Universities in the UK, USA, Australia India or Germany. The first women's college in Oman, the Mazoon College for Management and Applied Sciences, opened during 1999. This was
followed by Al-Zahra College for Girls. Table (1) shows the list of these institutions and number of students enrollment. The existing provision for higher education is still insufficient, which means that a considerable number of Omanis go abroad for their post-secondary education.

Table (1) Number of Students enrolled in Private colleges and Universities in Oman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Institution Name</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sohar University</td>
<td>5,133 59 5,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Dhofar University</td>
<td>2,837 0 2,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Nizwa University</td>
<td>6,644 27 6,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>German University of Technology in Oman</td>
<td>363 7 370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Arab Open University</td>
<td>1,816 0 1,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Buraimi University</td>
<td>993 0 993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Sharqiyyah University</td>
<td>858 0 858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>International College of Engineering and Management (ICEM)</td>
<td>975 24 999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>International Maritime College Oman (IMCO)</td>
<td>801 156 957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Caledonian College of Engineering (CCE)</td>
<td>2,270 974 3,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Majan University College</td>
<td>1,574 624 2,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS)</td>
<td>678 62 740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Muscat College (MC)</td>
<td>1,085 181 1,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Scientific College of Design (SCD)</td>
<td>974 0 974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Al Buraimi University College (BC)</td>
<td>2,359 0 2,359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Gulf College (GU)</td>
<td>1,180 1,663 2,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Al-Zahra College for Women (ZCW)</td>
<td>1,122 0 1,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Middle East College for Information Technology (MECIT)</td>
<td>3,341 497 3,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Sur University College (SUC)</td>
<td>1,295 0 1,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Oman College of Management and Technology (OCMT)</td>
<td>713 0 713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Mazoon College (MC)</td>
<td>1,460 79 1,539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>AL-Bayan College (BC)</td>
<td>336 22 358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Waljat Colleges of Applied Sciences (WCAS)</td>
<td>1,009 28 1,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Oman Tourism College (OTC)</td>
<td>459 0 459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Oman Medical College (OMC)</td>
<td>1,020 0 1,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Oman Dental College (ODC)</td>
<td>356 0 356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41,651 4,403 46,054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These institutions offer post-general education in business administration, economics, and commerce and computer sciences. The majority of courses’ programs are taught in English language, hence there is a growing demand for English language courses. The diplomas awarded at the end of one to three year courses in some of them qualify the students to enter overseas
universities. Most of these institutions’ administrators and owners claim that Programs offered have been diversified in alignment with the requirements of the job market and national economic development, but in reality most of them are duplicated and repetitive.

Private Higher Education is formalized and regulated by a number of Royal Decrees and Ministerial Decisions; namely Royal Decrees 41/99 and 42/99 which regulate the establishment of private Higher Education Institutions; and Ministerial Decision 36/99, an executive bylaw for implementing these two Royal Decrees (MoHE,2011). Royal Decree 67/2000 is designed to further regulate private sector activities in Higher Education and to encourage effective and positive contributions. It identifies the support provided by Government to the private higher education sector; which includes a land grant, certain customs exemptions; as well as, for private universities, a matching grant of 50% of capital contribution to a maximum amount of RO three million. In addition, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said endowed a Royal grant of RO 17 million for Omani-owned private universities. So far, this grant has been awarded to Sohar University, Dhofar University, Nizwa University, Buraimi University, and Sharqiyah University, for construction of facilities and for equipment directly related to improving the quality of education(MoHE,2012).

The Ministry of Higher Education encourages private Higher education investors (HEIs) to choose reputable universities as partners in academic affiliation agreements for the purpose of monitoring and improving quality, diversifying program offerings, and increasing the prestige of the degrees awarded by private HEIs (http://www.cas.edu.om/).

The Sultanate, unlike some other GCC countries, has been reluctant to encourage cross-border education or the establishment of branch campuses of international universities as in Qatar, UAE and Bahrain. This is because of a desire to concentrate on developing an Omani system of Higher Education largely on its own terms, and to help preserve traditional culture and values. Until recently, the only branch campus operating in the Sultanate has been the Arab Open University (in affiliation with the British Open University). GUtech, the German University of Technology relies on the guidance and academic support of RWTH Aachen German university. Université Toulouse Capitole is scheduled to open a branch campus in Oman the near future. Another promising model is represented by Oman Tourism College and the International Maritime College of Oman, which serve industry directly and are partly owned by Government in partnership with private sector interests that include overseas companies (Al Busaidiya,2013). Many advocators support such kind of institutions, and it is expected that they will increase in the near future.

II. Government Higher Educational Institutions
Since its establishment in 1986, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU has become an established centre of knowledge and expertise in fields that relate to Omani culture and national development, as well as a wide range of academic disciplines. The University’s preeminence has been achieved by excellence in the enactment of the University’s four main responsibilities: teaching; research; community engagement; and, cooperation with other Higher Education Institutions in and outside the Sultanate. The University currently has nine colleges: Arts & Social Sciences, Commerce & Economics, Science, Education, Agriculture & Marine Sciences, Engineering, Medicine & Health Sciences, Nursing and Law. The total number of students enrolled at Sultan Qaboos University during the academic year 2009/2010 was approximately 17,000. www.squ.edu.om. Table (2) shows the number of students enrolled in these institutions.

Table (2) The Number of students Registered at the government higher educational Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Institution Name</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sultan Qaboos University</td>
<td>6423</td>
<td>5907</td>
<td>12331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Colleges of applied Sciences</td>
<td>3913</td>
<td>3922</td>
<td>7835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Technical Colleges</td>
<td>15307</td>
<td>9114</td>
<td>24420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Health Sciences Institutes</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>1576</td>
<td>2104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Institute of Al Sharia Sciences</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Foreign Scholarship and Grants</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1559</td>
<td>3568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28618</td>
<td>22514</td>
<td>51132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Through the Directorate-General of the Colleges of Applied Sciences (CAS), the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) is responsible for the administration and management of six Colleges of Applied Sciences. They were established in 2007 by Royal Decree 62/2007. They have a long history, beginning in the 1970s when they were established as teacher training institutions awarding a two-year diploma in Education. In the mid-1990s the Colleges were converted into Colleges of Education offering a four-year Bachelor of Education. In 2007, approval was given to transform the Colleges of Education into Applied Sciences Colleges. Remaining under the jurisdiction of the MoHE, the CAS currently offer five degree programs – in Information Technology, International Business, Communication Studies, Design, and Engineering. These programs are also offered at the private institutions. There are seven technical colleges which are supervised by the Ministry of Manpower. The total enrollment in these colleges is (23064) in the academic year 2009/2010. The Ministry of health supervises 14 institutions preparing Omanis for jobs available in the health sector. The Central bank manage the Institute of Banking and Finance Studies While the Ministry of Al Awqaf and Islamic Affairs
is responsible for administering the college of Jurisprudence Shariahah. There are some colleges which are supervised by the Ministry of Defense and Police. Establishing government higher education institutions go through a long process, therefore it is observed that their development is very slow compared to the private ones.

III. Privatization of General Education in the Sultanate of Oman

General education means schooling provided for age group from 6-18 years old. The term private schools, according to the Ministry of Education’s definition, are international school or bilingual school or monolingual one. A private school is an independent school, but since some private schools receive financial aid from the government, it can be an aided or an unaided school (MoED, 2010).

Private schools and kindergartens were established concurrently with the government schools in 1970s’. At that time kindergartens in Oman did not have a cohesive, well-structured program as compared with the situation today. This was very much dependent upon the teacher and their level of competence and / or interests and resources available. This situation existed from 1972 up the late eighties of the twentieth century. Since that time, the Ministry of Education has developed its own Kindergarten curriculum that meets the needs of the children and facilitates learning through role-play.

According to the educational statistics available to the Ministry of Education in the academic year 1972/73 there were only two private schools with a total of (115) students, distributed on the stage of pre-school education and elementary school, and the number of faculty only (12) teachers. The private schools and kindergartens number continued its growth vertically and horizontally in terms of the number of schools and school stages and the number of students enrolled, bringing the number of schools in (2005/2006) to (158), where the number of students acceded twenty-eight thousand student. During the 2010-2011 school year, a total of 79 such schools (grade 1-12) enrolled almost 108,000 students. Table (3) gives a comparison statistical numbers and percentage between Private and Government schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Private Schools</th>
<th>Government Schools</th>
<th>Total/P&amp;S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/2006</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>28183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/2011</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>65326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Ministry of Education set up Guidelines for Omani Private Schools and Kindergartens. The guidelines as issued by the Ministry of Education, with the aim of applying the Ministry’s conditions and specifications regarding school buildings, furniture and educational materials, are also implemented by kindergartens. Supervision of kindergartens was the responsibility of the Private Education Department Supervisory Section until 1998. After the restructuring of the Private Schools Department in 1998, a separate section was created whose sole responsibility was the supervision of kindergartens at both an administrative and technical levels. As a result of an increase in the number of kindergartens throughout the Sultanate of Oman a need arose to expand supervision to include regions outside Muscat. The kindergarten curriculum, as applied in one of the GCC Countries, was adapted to suit Omani conditions and addresses the needs of Omani children. The curriculum have seven components, which are as follows: My Kindergarten, My Safety and health, My Family, My body, My book, My clothes .In the academic year 1993, another component was added, which was “Oman, My Country”. The aim was to familiarize children with their country and its culture as well as to develop positive attitudes towards their country’s images and features and to prepare them as good citizens. There are different kinds of private schools operating in Oman such as:

**A- Global (International) Schools:**

Global Schools are the ones that have obtained accreditation from internationally recognized educational institutions that implement internationally recognized educational programs in the targeted educational area and follow all procedures as stipulated by the Directorate General of Private Schools. Oman also retains a number of independent private coeducational day schools of international renown and a majority of which are private educational grammar establishments. These include the American British Academy, the British School Muscat, the Indian Schools, The Sultan's School and Muscat School. These schools usually charge high fees and they are opened for children whose parents can offer covering the cost of their children’s education.

The Ministry of Education states the following conditions that must be met for the opening of a global school as follows (MoED.2012):

1. Evidence of the financial capacity of the applicant to finance the construction of the school (an amount of 150,000 RO) is required, as a minimum requirement, provision of a bank guarantee for that same amount to be made to the Directorate General of Private Schools, Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman)
2. Proof of accreditation from an internationally recognized educational institution or branch of global schools that are managed by an internationally recognized educational institution.

3. The premises must conform to all the conditions and specifications as stipulated by the Ministry of Education. In the event that no premises has been constructed at the time of application, then the applicant must provide proof of ownership of a piece of land (that has been attested by the Ministry of Housing) that will meet all the rules and regulations governing the construction of global schools.

4. To apply international programs and qualifications as approved by international educational institutions, after these programs have been approved by the Directorate General of Private Schools, Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman.

5. To follow the assessment procedures as stipulated by the international educational institution, that oversees the school.

6. The school must provide all the requirements of the implementation of international programs and qualifications.

7. Provide an integrated proposal for the project, to include the following: School site, map of the building, details of school fees, a detailed explanation of educational programs and qualifications, institution responsible for supervising the school, the qualifications of candidates being considered for positions of administrative staff and faculty of Education, Sultanate of Oman, to ensure that the applicant fulfills the conditions of the post.

8. The license is personal to the named institute and may not be waived either explicitly or implicitly, unless having first received, in writing, the consent of the Directorate General of Private Schools. The ministry has right to revoke the license without any obligation to compensate that may result from the license having been withdrawn / cancelled. The school will be closed with immediate effect if the waiver was given without the consent of the Directorate General of Private Schools, Ministry of Education.

The above conditions must also be met by a private school which requests transformation to a global school. They are obliged to obtain official permissions from the Directorate General of Private Schools regarding the employment of teaching and administration staff.

**B- Bilingual schools**

Bi-lingual schools are opened for Omani and other Arab children. They provide an education based on the foundations of Oman’s cultural inheritance and applying the government school curriculum, while looking beyond immediate horizons for further enlightenment. English is introduced as a second language early on alongside the primary medium of instruction, Arabic. *Al Ibdaa School* and *Al Sahwa* Schools are examples. Schools which plan to apply Bilingual Programs should fulfill the following requirements:

1. Subjects which are taught in Arabic and use government syllabus include: Islamic studies (1-10), Arabic (1-12), social studies (3-10), physical education (1-12), life skills (1-12),
art (1-12), music (1-12), Islamic culture (11-12), this Is my country (11-12), and research curriculum (11-12).

2. To get text books, teachers' guides and educational bags of government syllabus, an official letter should be written and enclosed by the required numbers of books and guides.

3. The subjects that are taught in English from grade 1 to 10 are: English, science, chemistry, physics, biology, math and information technology or computer.

4. The books of English language syllabus, science, chemistry, physics, biology and math should be chosen according to the approved lists by the ministry bearing in mind the enclosed comments regarding some of the science books.

5. When teaching math and science, it should be considered to apply scope and sequence which are approved by the ministry for these two subjects.

6. The school has the right to select information technology or computer subject for grades from 1 to 10. In case of selecting information technology, the school can follow one of two options: applying scope and sequence which belongs to government syllabuses or Future Kids syllabuses which are supplied by Mosaic Institute.

7. Schools are allowed to follow the assessment system of their own subjects under the condition of being approved by the Evaluation and Supervision Department in the Directorate General of Private Schools.

8. Schools are allowed to apply their own syllabuses in the subjects hereof: art, music, physical education and life skills under the condition of being approved by the Educational Programs Department prior to application.

9. Schools are allowed to use supplementary or basic educational programs or curricula, provided that they should receive a prior approval from the directorate.

10. Schools are allowed to apply the recommended study plan for grades 1 to 10 program. Alternatively, they are allowed to apply their own study plans after being approved by the directorate.

11. Schools are obliged to apply the approved study plan of the Bilingual programs in grades (11and12) and be familiar with the curricula and evaluation systems of the subjects in the study plan.

According to The Ministry Statistics, approximately 11.1 per cent of children in education in Oman are at fee-paying schools. Those who are induced to do so have a wide variety of different motives, including:

• academic standards, which are generally higher than those found in the government schools;
• a wider education, taught in longer school hours, with subjects, options or levels beyond the national curriculum;
• well-endowed facilities, sometimes in buildings with extensive grounds;
• lower pupil-teacher ratios, and teaching staff attracted by higher salaries;
• extra-curricular opportunities, available due to the longer school days, commonly in sport, drama and music, but also many other possible fields;
• particular characteristics not offered at government schools (such as a stage school, boarding education, meals or a more competitive ethos);
• perceived social advantages or privileges, including the "public-school accent" and networking.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The national documents related to education in Oman emphasize the role of the private sector in developing education. There are a diversity between both sectors – private and government- in terms of education quality. Efforts have been done recently to set up regulations to control private educational institutions. Interfering of international organizations and regional interests in developing education is clear in the gulf region as well as in Oman. Most of financial contribution and government support to the private institutions is not invested in developing the quality of education. The applying of different curricula at school level in particular widen the gap between generations. Most privatization concentrates in academic rather than technical education. The issue goes beyond general education to higher education as private universities and colleges are increasing in number in Oman, but their quality is questionable. Graduates encounter problems in finding employment are due to the quality of their higher education qualifications. More money is sometimes, though not always, an important input in raising instructional quality. The Omani government needs to revisit the policy of funding private educational institutions and enforce the laws and regulations to ensure proficient graduates whose experience can allow them to compete in the international job market. More attention should be paid to develop the state schools and higher educational institutions to achieve social justice and ensure the application of human rights which emphasizes that education is a right for each citizen.

References


