

# Educational Developments in Oman

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Before highlighting the regulatory framework aspects of the education in private sector in Oman, below is a brief about three main levels of education in public and private sectors in Oman beside international schools:

- **Public Education:** Ministry of Education is in charge of formulating the policies of education, administration and management of the education system in Sultanate of Oman;
- **Private School Education:** This is delivered by private schools licensed by the Ministry of Education which approves its syllabus ; and
- **Higher Education:** Ministry of Higher Education is the responsible body for regulating the higher education in the Sultanate in public and private universities and colleges as well as recognition of certificates issued by educational institutions abroad.

In addition to the administrative and regulatory bodies mentioned above the Education Council, plays an important role in formulating the policies and provision of legislative proposals to both Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education as well as observing the performance of the educational institutions in the country and issuing reports in this regard to the relevant authorities.

## Regulatory Framework in Oman

- Public schools are established by Ministry of Education in different governorates in Oman which offers three levels of education, elementary, primary and secondary.
- Private schools are subject to foreign investment rules and cannot be established without the issuance of a trade license by Ministry of Commerce and Industry and an approval from Ministry of Education. An Omani local partner is required to establish a private school and cannot be wholly owned by a foreign investor with the exception of GCC nationals who are accorded similar treatment to Omanis.
- Most of private schools take the form of limited liability companies in Oman. Limited liability companies are run and managed by managers compared to private universities that are run through a board to be appointed by the council of trustees.
- Private universities can be established in the Sultanate given that the majority of the funds in the share capital of the universities are owned by Omanis and the main objective of the university is not realization of profits.
- The establishment of private universities and approval of its articles of association are made by way of issuance of a decision by the Minister of Higher Education upon a request made by the founders of the private university.
- The Council of Higher Education determines the number of private universities that may be permitted to be established pursuant to the provisions of the relevant laws and regulations.
- It is not permitted for a founder to withdraw from the project of incorporation of a private university before the lapse of five years from the date of commencement of education. Withdrawal before this period shall be invalid.
- The private university shall have a board of trustees structured by a decision of the founders. The boards of trustees' responsibilities are to appoint the head of the university, his deputies and the members of the university board.

- The board of the university, among other functions, is responsible for:
  - o Determination of the conditions of admission to the college;
  - o Determination of the conditions of appointment of the deans and the board of colleges, research and scientific centers.

In addition to the public and private universities in Oman there are Applied Science Colleges in most of the governorates in Oman that include Sur, Sohar, Nizwa, Ibri, Salalah and Rustaq. Applied Science Colleges are mainly regulated and administered by the Directorate General of Applied Sciences. The programs offered in these colleges include information technology, design, communication studies, international business administration and engineering.

## **Conclusion**

As outlined above the regulatory framework is clear in terms of the legal and administrative structures of private schools and universities to be adopted in order to run educational activities in the Sultanate. Albeit the fact that the number of students in Oman is relatively low compared to other countries the interest of private educational institutions is on the rise due mainly to the availability of the infrastructure and the financial support granted by the government for building the universities' campuses and sponsoring students to study in these universities.

The Education and Higher Education Councils have been continuously proposing and formulating new policies which ensure development of education sector in Oman since their formation. The main projects that are being undertaken by the education councils include the formulation of national education strategy 2040, restructuring of education system and school education law. Like these types of projects will ensure transformation of education in Oman in the near future which will open Oman market for more players in the educational sector. The recent issuance of the Protection of Competition and Prevention of Monopoly Law in Oman will further ensure that opportunities for investment in educational sector are offered equally to all types of investors either locals or foreigners as well as there will be no monopoly in this sector in Oman market.