



SULTANATE OF OMAN
THE EDUCATION COUNCIL

Executive Summary

The National Strategy for Education 2040

The National Strategy for Education 2040

Executive Summary

First Edition
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Illuminating Words

“ It is well understood that education is the basis of development. In the various stages of education and through its diverse curricula, national manpower, which is necessary for domestic development and for the implementation of its programmes, is prepared. Therefore, it has been necessary, for the success of development plans and the execution of its programmes, to work to secure the quality of output of all types of educational establishments in accordance with the general policies of the state, to help attain the goals that we all aspire to achieve.

During the past period, various systems of education and curricula were implemented and different training programmes were executed, but the matter calls for greater attention to be accorded to linking the educational output to the requirements of the labour market. Hence one of the priorities of the current stage of development and the next stage, which we prepare for is to revise the educational policies, its plans and its programmes, which need to be developed to keep pace with the changes that the country is going through. More attention should be accorded to the requirements imposed by scientific and cultural development towards the evolution of a generation armed with awareness, knowledge and the abilities required for worthwhile work. The establishment of the Education Council seeks to promote this sector.

Therefore, all departments in charge of education at all levels have to cooperate with this Council in total dedication and perseverance. We would also like to call upon the Council of Oman to present its opinion in this respect to the Education Council, and we are confident that joint efforts will lead to the desired results. ”

From the speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said at the Council of Oman in 2012.



Preamble



Education is among the most important pillars of sustainable environmental, economic and social development. Education is a priority for the country in its quest to develop its human resources to enable it to compete in the open international economic arena.

Since the beginning of the Renaissance, the government of the Sultanate of Oman realized the importance of education in leading the comprehensive development of the country, and it directed its educational plans towards spreading education and making it accessible to all. The present stage of the country's development, means that the government's new priority is to improve the quality of education. The need now is to promote innovative knowledge and appropriate values so that Omani human resources possess the required competencies to enable them to make a positive contribution to national development.

The world is presently witnessing fundamental changes as a result of scientific developments and the information technology revolution. The concept of development has changed and is no longer confined to econom-

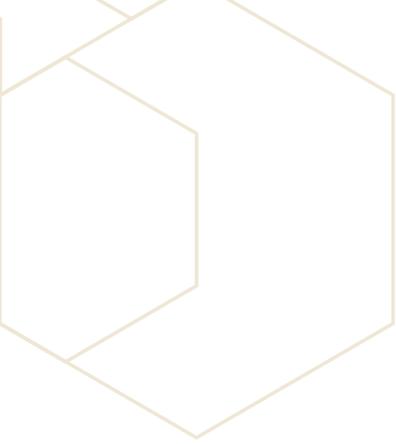
ics, but now also includes the concept of sustainable development based on human resource development, the creation of a knowledge-based economy and the building of capacities and skills of individuals.

The Sultanate of Oman is undergoing a transitional period of moving away from an economy dependent on oil to a policy stressing economic diversification. This development requires improvement and reform of the educational system. The objective of this reform is to bring about the comprehensive development of the individual so that Omani citizens possess the global competitive capacities that will enable them to deal with new variables and changes.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said recognised the importance of education in helping to keep pace with the rapid changes in knowledge and technology. In his speech to the fifth annual sitting of the Council of Oman in 2011, His Majesty stressed the need to focus on developing awareness and responsibility among Omani students, and helping them to acquire experience and skills to reach higher cognitive levels. His Majesty announced directives to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of education in the Sultanate of Oman to achieve these aspirations and to enable its citizens to benefit from job opportunities in the prioritised sectors of the Omani economy identified by the Supreme Council of Planning.

His Majesty's speech to the Council of Oman in 2012 reiterated these same principles. His Majesty emphasized "revising the educational policies, its plans and its programmes, which need to be developed to keep pace with the changes that the country is going through. More attention should be accorded to the requirements imposed by scientific and cultural development towards the evolution of a generation armed with awareness, knowledge and the abilities required..."

The Education Council was established by Royal Decree No. 48/ 2012, to act as the authority concerned with drawing-up general policies for all levels and types of



education in the Sultanate of Oman. Prior to the establishment of the Education Council, the former Higher Education Council had played an important role in the development of higher education.

The remit of the Education Council is to direct, support and supervise the performance of institutions affiliated to it to ensure that they implement the general policy of the State and meet the requirements of comprehensive development. Within this context, and according to the jurisdictions and tasks assigned to it, the Education Council decided to update the education strategy document (2006–2020) which had been based on a number of studies conducted by Omani and international experts in collaboration with concerned parties. These efforts resulted in a new document entitled “The National Strategy for Education in the Sultanate of Oman 2040”.

In recognition of the fact that education requires collaboration between educational institutions and society, the Education Council organized a national symposium in October 2014 entitled “Education in the Sultanate of Oman: the Road to the Future”. The objectives of the symposium were to extend societal participation and to exchange information and views with a large group of officials, experts and specialists within Oman to enrich the National Strategy for Education. It also aimed at developing documents on other projects and initiatives supervised over by the Council in collaboration with the concerned parties responsible for education and planning.

The National Strategy for Education is based on four major elements, i.e. setting a new framework for education, capacity building, transfer of jurisdictions and responsibilities to educational institutions and the adoption of an outcome-based approach. It also addresses all dimensions of the education system through five sub-strategies: educational management, students’ enrolment and progress across educational levels and work sectors, the building of quality in education, research and development and

educational funding. An extended executive plan for the strategy was also developed. It includes projects and initiatives, which are ordered according to their priority, and specifies the parties responsible for implementation, the proposed timescale and the expected outcomes and indicators.

Long-term strategies cannot be rigid and static, but must be flexible and fluid to enable them to respond to rapid changes and new demands. Consequently, the National Strategy for Education contains two very important elements; the first is a flexibility to enable it to respond to developments and changes in the period up to 2040; the second is that it will be subject to continuous revision and evaluation at the end of each implementation stage to enable updating and improvements when required.

The Education Council calls all parties concerned with education in the Sultanate of Oman to work together with a strong national and professional commitment to implement the National Strategy for Education. Such a commitment will make a significant contribution to achieving the vision and objectives of the Strategy. Only by developing and improving the efficiency of the Omani education system can we ensure a brighter future for Oman and the Omani people.

Khalid bin Hilal bin Saud Al Busaidi

Minister of the Diwan of the Royal Court
Chairman of the Education Council



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The Enigma of the Planetary Nebulae

An example of a young planetary nebula NGC 7127 approximately 2000 light years away with discrete shells of material surrounding it and being blown off by the dying star (DST image)

The Helix Nebula: The closest planetary nebula at 450 light years from Earth

Star Birth

Star formation is a complex process that involves the collapse of a cloud of gas and dust into a protostar. This process is triggered by various factors, including the presence of nearby stars and the density of the gas cloud. The resulting protostar eventually evolves into a main sequence star, which is the most common type of star in the universe.

Main Constituents of

The main constituents of a star are hydrogen and helium. These elements are the primary building blocks of stars and are responsible for the energy production that powers them. Other elements, such as carbon and oxygen, are also present in stars, but in much smaller quantities.

Part One:

Introduction to the National Strategy for Education 2040



1- Preface

Since the very beginning of the modern Omani Renaissance, the government of the Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, has devoted significant attention to the development of human resources. The government has exerted great efforts to train and upgrade the qualifications of Omani nationals to enable them to contribute to the development of society and humanity at large. Education and training are at the core of human development, and both have received specific attention in government plans and projects.

The government's attention to education and training has been reflected in setting legislation, developing policies, and upgrading of programmes and institutions.

The government is aware of the importance of continuous development in order to cope with changes and to face challenges. The government aims at enabling education to achieve its objectives in spreading knowledge, using technology, encouraging research and innovation to produce enlightened generations capable of making a positive contribution to the country's development and to engage effectively in the international arena.

Following this approach, the National Strategy for Education 2040 was prepared to act as a primary source for the development of policies on the reform of the educational sector in the Sultanate of Oman's future five-year plans.



2- Developmental Planning

The developmental planning process began at the outset of the Omani Renaissance in 1970 and was led by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. The government was committed to a series of five-year plans specifying long-term objectives for the economic and social development of the country. As a result of these plans, the Sultanate of Oman was able to build the foundations for an economic and social transformation in the period between 1970 and 1995. They also allowed people to look forward to the future, attain continuous self-growth and to interact with the world.

In 1995, “The Vision for Oman’s Economy – Oman: 2020” was prepared to provide a clear vision to drive Oman to the 21st century. It aimed at transforming Oman’s economy away from its dependency on oil resources and expatriate labour to one which achieves sustainable development through private initiatives, a national workforce and renewable resources.

Within a framework of economic diversification and an open financial and commercial system, Oman began to reconsider its priorities in 2012. It initiated a new developmental planning phase through the establishment of the Supreme Council for Planning with a remit to set strategies and policies to achieve sustainable development. In addition, the Sultanate supported the development of small and medium sized enterprises in recognition of their potential to provide significant revenues for the economy.



3- Human and Economic Development

Since the beginning of the Omani Renaissance, the government has regarded human resource development to be the target rather than the means of the development process. As His Majesty Sultan Qaboos explained:

“Development is not a goal in itself. Rather, it exists for building man, who is its means and maker. Therefore, development must not stop at the achievement of material wealth and a diversified economy. It must go beyond that to contribute to the formation of the citizen who is capable of taking part in the process of progress and comprehensive development. Such goals can be achieved through the improvement of the citizen’s technical and professional ability, the stimulation of their creative and scientific capabilities, and the improvement of their diversified skills. All this must be directed towards serving the country and achieving the happiness of all citizens.”

From the Royal Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, on the occasion of the “Conference on Oman’s Economy-Vision 2020”, June 1995.

This concept of human resource development has been reflected in all of the five-year plans.

As result of these efforts, the United Nations Development Programme Report of 2010 on human resources development noted that of all the countries studied, Oman had achieved the fastest growth. Among its major accomplishments were enrolment rates of 97.8% in basic education schools and 84.3% in post-basic education in 2010/2011, and an increase of students (aged 18-24) joining higher education institutions, rising from 12.6% in 2000/2001 to 28.7% in the 2010/2011.

In 2010, the National Postgraduate Scholarship Programme was launched. The aim of the programme was to provide Oman with a highly qualified national workforce covering all the specialisations required by the public and private sectors.

The achievements of education in Oman were focused on spreading education throughout the Sultanate. It is recognized that improving the quality of the education system remains an important challenge. Moreover, the focus was on educational institutions rather than on the education system itself.

During the last forty years, the Sultanate of Oman has adopted developmental policies which have focused on diversifying the economy, industrialization, privatisation, and supporting the private sector. The Omani national economic indicators for 2012 indicate that the impressive growth rates were due to high oil prices and expansionary fiscal policies; by the end of 2012 the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) achieved a growth rate of 19% at current prices. However, Oman’s economy remains highly dependent on oil and gas revenues. The contribution of oil to the GDP in 2012 was 52%, while oil and gas combined amounted to 85%.

The private sector is regarded as an important partner to the public sector in the quest to accelerate the economic development of the country. However, the most significant challenges facing this sector are its continued dependence on expatriate labour, which was estimated at 89% of the total workforce in 2013, and the limited work opportunities available to Omani nationals, particularly for the young.

4- Oman and the Emerging International Economic Powers

Oman enjoys an important strategic geographical location which makes it a main link between the Far East (India, China and South East Asia) and East Africa, Egypt and Europe.

The international balance of economic power is presently undergoing a fundamental change. The 2012 Human Resource Report estimates that the new emerging economic powers of China, India and Brazil will account for 40% of world production by 2050. This change increases the importance of Oman's geographical location and opens

great opportunities for trade, projects and technological innovations. Simultaneously, operating in a competitive global market presents significant challenges for Omani businesses. It is important that improvements are made to the education and training systems to ensure that the Omani workforce is capable of competing internationally.



5- Challenges

Local and international studies and reports have shown that the education sector in the Sultanate of Oman faces a number of challenges. These challenges can be categorized into five main areas: management, students, quality, research and financing.

1. Management of education

- The need for strategic planning in the education sector.
- The need to use data and statistical indicators to inform educational policy-making.
- Education is being supervised by multiple bodies, especially in higher education. This leads to duplication of efforts and resources as well as weaknesses in strategic planning.
- The need to reinforce administrative and financial autonomy in government educational institutions to facilitate more effective working practices.

2. Students

- The need to increase pre-school enrolment rates and to set policy for this stage of education.
- The need to improve students' motivation towards learning, especially male students.
- Limited workplace training opportunities for students throughout their studies.
- The lack of suitable employment opportunities for graduates at different levels of education and the need to diversify the economy and create job opportunities throughout the country.

3. Improvement of quality assurance

- The need to improve school graduates' performance in Mathematics, Science, Arabic and English.
- The need to equip students with 21st century skills and competencies such as analytical thinking, problem solving, creativity, innovation and research skills.
- The proportion of Omani staff in higher education is very low. There is also a lack of professional development programmes provided for teaching staff.
- There is a need to provide data and statistics on labour market needs to ensure alignment between education and the labour market.

4. Research

- There is a need to improve research in higher education institutions.
- There is a lack of Omani personnel with the required research capacities in higher education institutions
- There is a need to increase the contribution of research in education institutions towards economic and social development.

5. Financing

- Education depends on government as its main source of finance and there is a lack of alternative sources.
- Private education institutions depend on study fees as the main source of their funding.
- There is a need to distribute resources evenly across school education and higher education to provide students with opportunities for study at various levels of education.



6- Required Change for the Next Phase

In 2012, the Sultanate of Oman began a new development phase by setting national goals for the developmental plans. Oman's movement towards a knowledge-based economy requires reform of the current education system to enable it to contribute to the achievement of the national development goals. The education system needs to be dynamic in order to meet the needs of the labour market and society. It should consider the following:

Consistency with the national objectives in the developmental plans

Educational institutions should ensure that their academic programmes, courses, pathways and research are consistent with the national objectives in the developmental plans.

Investment in the young generation

The General Population, Housing and Establishments Census 2010 showed that 35% of the total population of Omani nationals were under 15 years of age. These young people represent Oman's future human capital and they need, therefore, to be provided with high quality education. It is crucial that they are equipped with the necessary skills of initiative, competitiveness and self assertion in order to prepare them for a variety of occupations.

Consistency between education and economic development

The Sultanate of Oman has adopted a policy of economic diversification and supporting the non-oil sector. While oil and gas and related industries will continue to be of great importance, the government's policy for the new phase is to encourage small and medium sized enterprises, logistic services and the knowledge based economy. As a result, educational programmes should match the economic plans and investments of the Sultanate.

Reinforcement of quality, performance efficiency and transparency

Achieving quality in education requires improving the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of the education system. It also requires transparency by providing reliable data about the performance of the system in order to ensure better decision-making. In addition, the provision of information on referential standards based on best practice to evaluate educational institutions will help education leaders take strategic decisions to reinforce quality in the education system.

Skills development

Skills have become the global currency of the 21st century. Therefore, the outcomes of the education system should include a set of skills and competencies which meet the requirements of dynamic and unpredictable local and international labour markets. Skills development should therefore be prioritised in the reform of the Omani educational system.

Building a culture of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

The contribution of an education system to economic and social development depends on its ability to build a culture of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Educational institutions should endeavour to build a society that encourages and rewards success and creativity. They should reinforce a desire in learners to embark on new ventures and to learn from mistakes. Society should embrace diversity since success can be achieved through acceptance of continual change and investing in opportunities.



7- National Strategy for Education 2040

In 2003 the Council of Ministers directed the former Higher Education Council to develop a strategy for the development of education between 2006 and 2020. The Council developed the strategy and submitted it to the Council of Ministers, although it did not receive formal approval.

In his speech to the Council of Oman in 2011, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said explained that the Government's future plans would focus on social development, particularly on aspects related to citizens' living requirements. This focus would be reflected through the provision of increased work opportunities, training programmes, professional development and improving productivity efficiency as well as scientific, cultural and cognitive development. Hence, His Majesty called for a comprehensive evaluation of the educational process.

This was reiterated by His Majesty in his speech to the Council of Oman in 2012:

“During the past period, various systems of education and curricula were implemented and different training programmes were executed, but the matter calls for greater attention to be accorded to linking the educational output to the requirements of the labour market. Hence one of the priorities of the current stage of development and the next stage, which we prepare for is to revise the educational policies, its plans and its programmes, which need to be developed to keep pace with the changes that the country is going through. More attention should be accorded to the requirements imposed by scientific and cultural development towards the evolution of a generation armed with awareness, knowledge and the abilities required for worthwhile work”

The former Higher Education Council set up a committee chaired by the Ministry of Higher Education and included representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Manpower, Sultan Qaboos University and the Secretariat General of the former Council of Higher Education. The committee agreed to update the education strategy document 2006–2020 taking into account the reviews carried out by local and international experts, developments in education and new government directives.

A technical team of specialists from all parties concerned with education was formed. The team was assigned the task of reviewing, editing and updating the education strategy with the aim of ensuring that education fulfils its role of preparing a national cadre in accordance with the future aspirations of the country. This process resulted in a new document entitled “The National Strategy for Education 2040”.

8- The Vision of Education

The Vision of Education was revised to reflect the future direction of education in Oman. It was developed in-line with the principles and values of Islam, the thoughts of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the Basic Statute of the State, the philosophy of education in Oman, the moral values of Omani society and the five-year development plans of the Sultanate.

The educational vision in Oman is to:

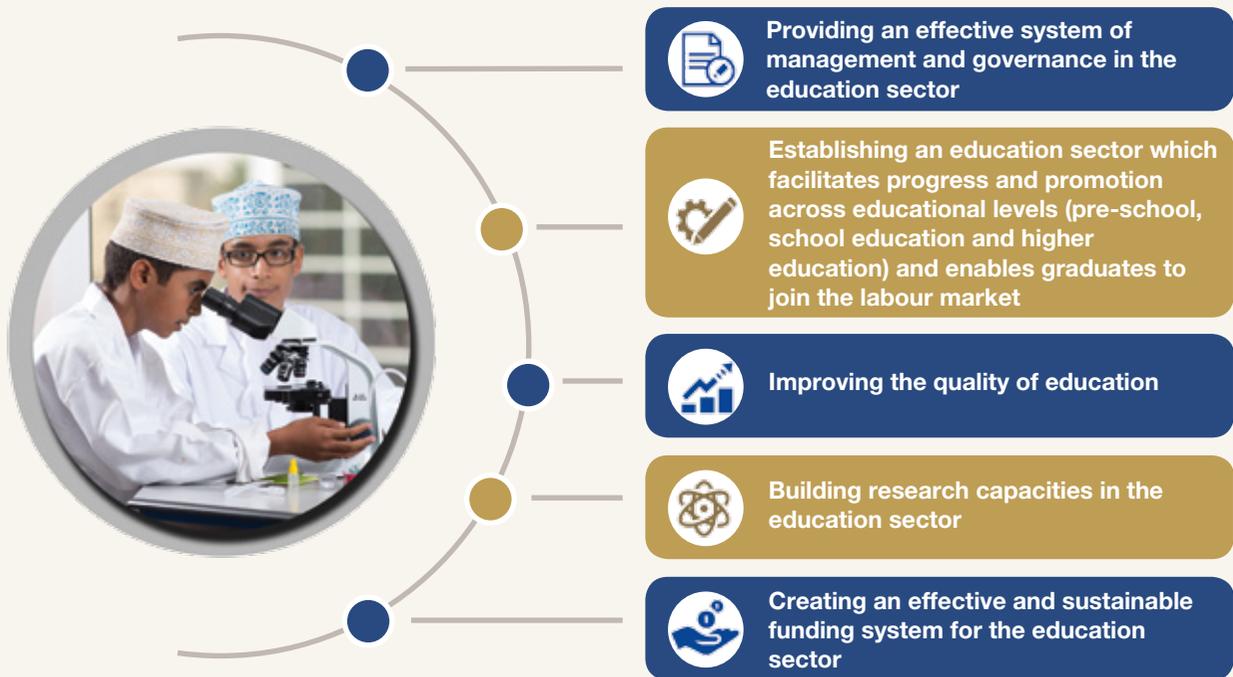
Equip human resources with the values, knowledge and skills to enable them to be productive in the world of the knowledge economy, keep pace with the continual changes in the world, maintain their national identity and intrinsic values, and contribute to the advancement of human civilization.

The vision was formulated on six components:

Maintaining Arabic and Islamic culture; reinforcing national identity; diversifying educational paths; supporting research, innovative and creative capabilities; promoting work ethics; and being effective in the world's knowledge economy.



9- The Main Objectives of the National Strategy for Education 2040





Part Two:

Principles
and Strategies



1- General Principles of the National Strategy for Education 2040

The strategy is based on four principles which pave the way for five discrete strategies. Each of these strategies discusses a specific aspect of the education development process. The principles form the basis for the proposed changes to the Omani education system as described below.

Principle 1: A new framework for education

Setting an effective framework for education is the first step towards achieving the objectives of the strategy. The framework includes an organizational structure which identifies the body responsible for strategic planning, policy-making and shaping educational laws and legislation. It also identifies the organisations responsible for implementation and monitoring (quality assurance and accreditation), and identifies the interrelationships between the various components within the education system.

Principle 2: Capacity building

Implementing the strategy successfully requires those responsible for supervising education to build capacities and expertise in the management of education in order to achieve improved quality performance.

Principle 3: Transfer responsibilities to educational institutions

A gradual transfer of responsibilities from ministry-level to schools and higher education institutions is necessary. This can be achieved through training and capacity building that would enable the institutions to achieve greater administrative and financial autonomy. This would create more flexibility for institutions in performing their duties and facilitate the decision-making process.

Principle 4: Adoption of an outcomes-based approach

An outcomes-based approach in educational planning, development, reviewing and funding will be phased-in. This approach allows for greater transparency and effectiveness in distributing resources, improves the transition of students from schooling to work, and provides practical means to evaluate the performance of schools and higher education institutions through the focus on outcomes, especially student competencies.

2- Strategies

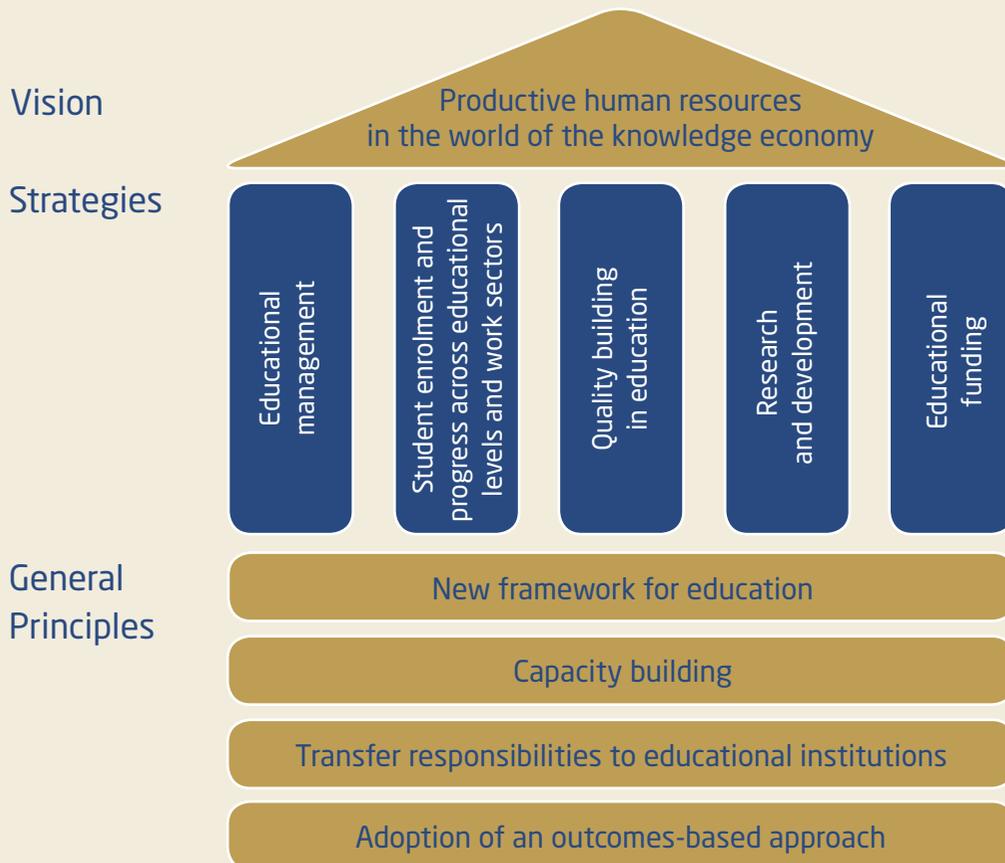
The National Strategy for Education 2040 includes the following five strategies:

- First: Educational management**
- Second: Student enrolment and progress across educational levels and work sectors**
- Third: Quality building in education**
- Fourth: Research and development**
- Fifth: Educational funding**

These strategies were set in accordance with the general principles identified in the National Strategy 2040. They are derived from recommendations contained in previous studies and national and international symposiums.

These strategies discuss ways to tackle the challenges facing the strategy's vision. Each strategy starts with a general objective and recommendations on how to achieve that objective.

General Framework of the National Strategy for Education 2040



■ Strategy One:

Educational Management

In response to local and international developments, education in Oman has witnessed the establishment of a number of bodies in the last two decades, such as the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA), the Research Council, and the National Centre for Career Guidance. Private education has also witnessed a huge expansion.

Despite these structural changes, there is still a need for improvements in processes related to strategic planning, legislation, supervision and implementation processes.

The objective of this strategy is to identify the roles, responsibilities and interrelationships among the specialized councils and other concerned parties to enable the education system to achieve the national objectives effectively.

The recommendations of the strategy on educational management

1. The Education Council undertakes the responsibility of supervising the implementation and evaluation of the education strategy.
2. The Ministry of Education supervises and regulates pre-school education. It sets the standards of pre-school education and provides support to gradually spread pre-schooling throughout the Sultanate. It also ensures having a unified policy in pre-school education followed up by a single authority.
3. Restructuring the school education ladder into three cycles as follows:
 - Cycle 1 (4 years): grades 1-4, for students aged 6–9
 - Cycle 2 (5 years): grades 5-9, for students aged 10–14
 - Cycle 3 (3 years): grades 10-12, for students aged 15–17
4. The Ministry of Higher Education regulates the public and private higher education sectors. The Ministry sets legislation and regulations, and monitors implementation. The jurisdictions of the Ministry of Higher Education will be revised accordingly.
5. Establishment of a government university by merging the colleges of applied sciences (Ministry of Higher Education) and the colleges of technology (Ministry of Manpower). Vocational training centres and fishermen training institutes remain under the supervision of the Ministry of Manpower.
6. Applying principles of governance in higher education institutions and reinforcing the roles of all concerned parties to follow academic principles and rules in decision making.

7. Establishing a central unit in the Ministry of Education responsible for evaluating the performance and quality assurance of school education.
8. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) is responsible for the management of education quality.
9. OAAA is an independent entity, although it reports to the Education Council. It is led by its board of directors.
10. OAAA is the sole official body responsible for setting, implementing and updating an accreditation system for higher education institutions and its components including institutional and programme standards.
11. The Ministry of Higher Education licenses new higher education institutions after obtaining approval from the Education Council.
12. The Ministry of Higher Education licenses new academic programmes in all higher education institutions.
13. Building administrative and technical capacities in both school and higher education institutions to enable them to manage their educational and academic affairs.
14. Gradual transfer of administrative and financial jurisdictions to schools and higher education institutions as a step towards self management.
15. Setting legislation on administrative and financial accountability for educational institutions.
16. Developing and updating training programmes to prepare staff in administration and supervision in accordance with the requirements of the education system.
17. Improving the performance of senior management in higher education institutions by providing advanced training programmes and reviewing best administration practices in international universities.
18. Developing an electronic system for data management to promote the efficiency of management in educational institutions.
19. The Ministry of Education and parties responsible for higher education to develop a comprehensive plan to improve facilities and infrastructure in educational institutions.
20. Improving school building specifications to meet the educational requirements and the topography and population density in each area.
21. Building residences for teachers in remote areas.
22. Providing hostels with proper specifications for higher education students.
23. Expanding the transfer of management of services in higher education institutions to the private sector. These services to include management of residences and other services according to circumstances in each institution.
24. Enacting a school education law and a higher education law which set the jurisdictions, responsibilities and frameworks suitable for the Omani education system and in-line with the local and international contexts.



■ Strategy Two:

Student Enrolment and Progress across Educational Levels and Work Sectors

Data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicate that in 2012, about 33% of the Omani population was under the age of 15. In order to prepare these young people appropriately, they need to be provided with a high quality education system.

It should facilitate their progression across different paths according to their abilities and interests, provide them with 21st century skills and competencies, and develop their entrepreneurship abilities. This will ultimately prepare these young generations to participate effectively in the development of the Sultanate.

The objective of this strategy is to ensure that all students of pre-school and school age in all parts of Oman have access to education. It also aims to ensure that the education system facilitates effective student progress and advancement from school to higher education and eventually to the labour market according to their abilities and qualifications.

The recommendations of the strategy on student enrolment and advancement through educational levels and work sectors

1. The Ministry of Education implements the plans and policies that ensure the provision of quality education for all in schools and that it provides the necessary support.
2. Adopting policies and programmes for pre-school education to enhance progression of students through school educational levels.
3. Introducing compulsory basic education (cycle one and cycle two).
4. Developing a database to follow-up students across all educational levels and beyond.
5. Taking the necessary measures to increase enrolment rates in post-basic education.
6. Introducing technical and vocational pathways in post-basic education that allow students to continue their education or join the labour market.
7. Identifying factors resulting in the low attainment of male students and developing a plan to address those factors.
8. Adopting policies and programmes to improve students' performance according to specified performance standards.

9. The Ministry of Education develops a national plan for the education of students with special needs in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Development.
10. Improving literacy programmes for the age group of 15-44 years to eradicate illiteracy by 100% within this group.
11. Improving the adult education programme and making it an integrated component of the education system.
12. Taking the necessary measures to gradually raise the enrolment rates of the 18-22 age group in higher education institutions to reach 50% by 2035.
13. Providing support facilities, services, special programmes and human resources to create an appropriate educational environment for students with special needs in higher educational institutions.
14. Amending enrolment requirements in higher education institutions to provide opportunities for qualified adults over the age of 25 to compete for government scholarships.
15. Strengthening cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education to ensure that students proceed smoothly from one educational level to another.
16. Evaluating and improving post-basic education curricula to achieve alignment with higher education and the labour market.
17. Improving the school curriculum in light of the national curriculum standards and international best practice in order to achieve better school education outcomes and to ultimately cancel the foundation programme in higher education institutions.
18. Establishing a centre for assessment of students' abilities for those joining higher education institutions.
19. Developing a qualifications framework which contains technical, vocational and academic pathways. These qualifications should be part of the national qualifications framework and should allow students to transfer across different pathways.
20. Developing the vocational and technical education curriculum in light of the national qualifications framework taking into consideration achieving the vertical and horizontal integration, the individual and social development of students, and life-long learning.
21. Providing the required support to enable the National Career Guidance Centre to deliver career guidance services to all basic education and post-basic education students.
22. Reinforcing the role of occupational guidance centres and establishing occupational guidance centres in all higher education institutions to provide guidance and advice to students so as to prepare them for work.
23. Raising students' awareness towards having their own businesses and encouraging them to establish small and medium-size enterprises by utilizing government support.
24. Developing entrepreneurship skills of students at all educational levels, and building links between the entrepreneurs and related parties.
25. Providing practicum for students at all educational levels and establishing a programme which ensures the provision of training opportunities for all students.
26. Providing support to the National Centre for Research in Education and the Labour Market to develop a system to monitor changes in business sectors in order to enable continuous update of educational programmes.
27. Establishing skills councils for all work sectors to provide the required data for higher education institutions in order to link the education outcomes with labour market needs.



■ Strategy Three:

Quality Building in Education

The Sultanate of Oman has made significant achievements in the provision of education throughout the Sultanate. Yet, the quality of education remains a challenge.

Efforts to improve quality tended to be confined to educational institutions rather than to the whole education system. Quality in education requires improving the management in the institutions and building the capacity of teaching staff.

The objective of this strategy is to achieve a quality education system that delivers high quality outcomes in-line with international standards.

The recommendations of the strategy on quality building in education

1. The Ministry of Education establishes an internal quality assurance system for school education.
2. Oman Academic Accreditation Authority develops a system to manage quality in school education.
3. Oman Academic Accreditation Authority continues working on developing a national academic and institutional accreditation system, and implements this system in-line with the growth and change in the higher education sector.
4. Preparing national capacities in quality assurance for education institutions.
5. Supporting the Oman Quality Network in Higher Education (OQNHE) in pursuit of enhancing quality in higher education.
6. Developing a comprehensive national academic qualifications framework which covers the entire education system.
7. Approving the Omani Standard Classification of Higher Education.
8. Improving and updating the Oman Standard Classification for Higher Education.
9. Making the teaching profession attractive and setting standards for the selection of students to teacher preparation programmes.
10. Implements teacher preparation programmes (for both, students with subject-specific degrees and students studying generic educational programmes) per the vision of the Ministry of Education taking into consideration the competencies required in the teaching profession.
11. Establishing the Specialised Centre for Professional Training of Teachers to provide in-service training courses to enhance professional practice and develop teachers' capabilities and potentials.

12. Introducing a teacher licensing system for all schools in Oman.
13. Taking the necessary measures to ensure providing the Ministry of Education with teachers in all subjects.
14. Improving educational supervision in schools to facilitate better teaching and learning.
15. Set a long-term plan to raise Omanisation in higher education institutions to 60% by 2040.
16. Introduce a teacher preparation programme for higher education teaching staff as per international standards.
17. Developing a plan to encourage international mobility of Omani academic staff.
18. Developing a performance evaluation system for teaching staff in schools and higher education institutions.
19. Establishing an accountability policy to assess performance of teaching staff; and introducing regulations for providing staff with performance-based incentives.
20. Introduce undergraduate programmes that produce graduates who are well qualified in their specializations and knowledgeable in other related disciplines.
21. Moving towards the use of student-centred teaching methods to develop students' essential skills for life and work.
22. Employing varied evaluation methods to assess students' performance and their achievement level of the learning outcomes.
23. Establishing a national centre for educational evaluation and assessment.
24. Building academic partnerships with international universities, organizations and schools to establish communication, exchange expertise and transfer of knowledge.
25. Higher education institutions adopt benchmarking criteria with esteemed international higher education institutions to raise the performance of these institutions to international standards.
26. Improving the information technology infrastructure in educational institutions.
27. Supporting the use of cutting-edge technology, e-learning, capacity building and infrastructure improvement in schools and higher education.
28. Reinforcing the role of educational institutions in instilling values, citizenship and positive attitudes; and, encouraging voluntary work among students.
29. Introducing a system to follow-up the outcomes of higher education institutions to evaluate the competence of graduates and their alignment with labour market needs.
30. Reinforcing cooperation and partnership between educational institutions and the local community to improve the quality of educational outcomes and contribute to the development of the local community.



■ Strategy Four:

Research and Development

The five-year development plans have consistently highlighted the importance of research in the development of science and technology. The future vision for the Omani economy, Oman 2020, regarded research as a main pillar of sustainable development. It is crucial for the transfer of technology and, as a result, research was regarded as a major element for the achievement of economic diversification in the future vision.

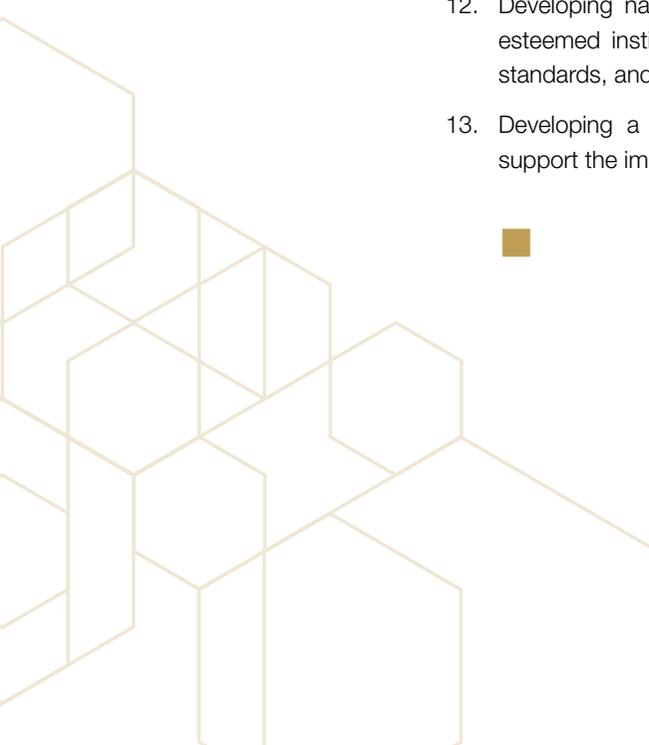
The government's recognition of the importance of research was illustrated with the establishment of the Research Council in 2005. The Council developed the National Research Strategy 2008–2020 which comprised eight research sectors. One of these sectors was education and human resources which emphasised the crucial need for a strategy to bring about substantive changes to achieve excellence in research.

The objective of this strategy is to build research capacities in educational institutions and to reinforce their vital role in contributing to a knowledge-based economy.



The recommendations of the strategy on research and development:

1. Ensuring the consistency of research plans and postgraduate programmes in higher education institutions with the National Research Strategy.
2. Improving the quality and quantity of research at universities to meet international standards.
3. Allocating a special budget for research in higher education institutions.
4. Reinforcing the role of universities and other educational institutions in the research and innovation park project.
5. Establishing scientific incubators in higher education institutions to strengthen ties with manufacturing enterprises through implementing the research results to contribute to human and economic development.
6. Establishing centres of excellence in research on specific scientific areas in higher education institutions to implement research results to promote economic growth in Oman.
7. Developing a national plan to prepare engineers and researchers in technology and science to support innovation and to improve Oman's competitiveness.
8. Supporting student innovation projects through adopting and developing these projects by government and private institutions.
9. Establishing communication networks between higher education institutions and local and international institutions concerned with knowledge production in order to cooperate in research and exchange of information.
10. Promoting public awareness programmes on the importance of research and innovation and their role in educational institutions; and, encouraging cooperation and partnerships with concerned parties in society.
11. Encouraging studies and research in humanities and increasing the number of programmes and students in this discipline in higher education institutions.
12. Developing national capacities in various genres of research by providing scholarships in esteemed institutions, improving postgraduate programmes as per international academic standards, and introducing an incentive policy for researchers.
13. Developing a plan to improve research skills for students at all levels of education to support the implementation of the National Research Strategy in Oman.



■ Strategy Five: Educational Funding

The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Sultan Qaboos University and other units supervising educational institutions currently have their own separate budgets. This system of financing education leads to a duplication of efforts.

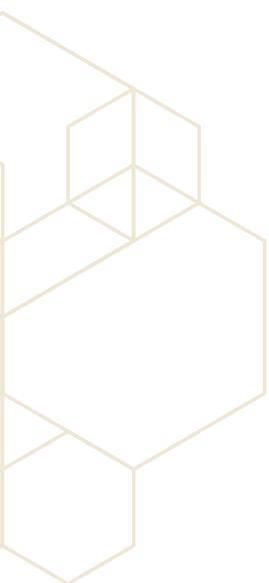
In addition, the current centralised system of providing funds for educational institutions makes them unable to respond promptly to the latest changes, hinders creativity and prevents the optimal exploitation of budget.

The objective of this strategy is to introduce new mechanisms to fund the education sector and to provide it with sustainable resources.



The recommendations of the strategy on educational funding

1. Establishing a funding scheme for education. The Education Council proposes the budget and mechanisms for the financial allocations across educational institutions and organisations.
2. Improving expenditure efficiency by transferring financial and operational jurisdictions to schools and higher education institutions to enable them to manage their financial and operational affairs. Accountability mechanisms will be applied to monitor expenditure.
3. Maintaining balanced funding between school and higher education to ensure achieving the objectives of the Strategy through parallel developments in all levels of education and supporting student achievements and progression across different stages of education.
4. Introducing an outcomes-based funding system for all educational institutions using standard funding regulations.
5. Introducing efficiency based funding in education taking into consideration the cost of students at different levels and types of education and the outcomes-based approach.
6. Introducing a comprehensive plan for funding facilities and infrastructure in educational institutions.
7. Moving gradually towards an outcomes-based funding system for educational institutions using standard funding regulations.
8. Introducing a neutral funding mechanism for students' fees in the accredited and equivalent programmes in both government and private higher education institutions.
9. Developing a plan to gradually reduce the free services and allowances provided for students in government higher education institutions.
10. Introducing a financial aid programme for needy students to ensure equal opportunities in higher education.
11. Providing higher education institutions with funding resources for needy students to enable them to reach the targeted capacity of students.
12. Developing an appropriate mechanism for enhancing the role of the private sector in supporting and expanding education.
13. Encouraging investment in private school education and providing alternative funding resources for private schools.
14. Providing alternative sustainable financing resources for education to ensure on-going funding.





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