

Estimated figures, extracted from the Economist article

Saudi Population in 2002 approx 23million

KSA Population growth rate from 1960-2000 4.1%

Population under 15 yrs in KSA 43.4%

Non citizens as % of total population 27%

Expats as a % of the KSA workforce 55%

UAE Population in 2002 approx 3.3million

UAE Population growth rate from 1960-2000 8.8%

Population under 15 yrs in UAE 26.7%

Non citizens as % of total population 82%

Expats as a % of the UAE workforce 90%

Oman Population in 2002 approx 2.4million

Oman Population growth rate from 1960-2000 3.9%

Population under 15 yrs in Oman 44.5%

Non citizens as % of total population 26%

Expats as a % of the Oman workforce 55%

and subservient workers rather than effective and productive staff. The 'knowledge industries' growing in other parts of the world require staff capable of being empowered and using initiative to create value for their employers. Those employers stuck with a docile workforce will be left behind in low added value parts of the market. In any case it is doubtful if young nationals will be content to act in the docile and subservient way that third world workers have done in the past.

The foreign employers wanted people they could communicate with who already understood the job to be done and who would fit into the organisation - so a fellow national was first choice. The foreign (and national) employer often had a negative stereotyped image of the local candidates so preferred to take the nationalities and groups with a positive reputation for that type of work so Afghans were employed as labourers and Filipinos as technicians etc.

There was little attempt to see beyond the stereotype. And tools such as psychometric instruments were either not used or unreliable versions were applied. Bias is also found in a reluctance of nationals to carry out some jobs. By this we do not just mean those necessary jobs which have arduous conditions often requiring unsocial hours and hard manual work but also those with a stigma because they are not seen as being worthy of a local such as accounting, cash handling and secretarial work. Better understanding has to be created of the need to have nationals carry out most of the range of jobs previously undertaken by expatriates. For example five years ago it was unthinkable to have Saudis working as checkout staff in supermarkets now not uncommon to have these jobs held by Saudis.

Some of the behaviour expected with the wage economy conflicts with the expectations of the society and family. In some of the GCC countries it is expected that the family meet together for the early afternoon meal - this can interfere with some company's regular working hours; in many of the countries it is expected that the father will take children to school and collect them even if this is during work attendance ours; in all of the countries the family are expected to assist a relation who is ill with many of them accompanying the patient to the doctor's or hospital irrespective of whether they were due at work or not.

Most employers have grown used to bringing in already trained expatriate workers and did not think of training existing staff. If a person did not meet the changing job requirements they were dismissed and a new person recruited who met the job requirements. This contributed to the common belief that money spent on training was wasted because a well trained person would be poached by another employer who had saved spending on training their own staff. Again this belief is not unique to Host Country Development situations. Having said that employers were reluctant to spend money on training some of the larger government owned organisations developed policies of sending staff abroad for familiarisation and training just as a reward not as a genuine effort to increase staff skills.

On other occasions where training and development resources were made available the methods and organisation applied were not adapted to local requirements and standards. For example prior knowledge of basic principles was assumed whereas due to the different approaches to education many trainees were not aware of how to apply such fundamental principles and these had to be taught before the trainee could absorb the technical or managerial training.

There have been changes in the use of selection methods among the more forward looking employers. They realise that resources spent in getting the right people into the right job and training them well are a wise investment in the future. Many nationals are now more willing to devote time and energy to acquiring the necessary skills, attitudes and behaviours needed by the type of organisations operating in the region. Most realise that the facilities available to their parents will not be available to them or their children.

There are many who realise that if they work hard and replace an expatriate by doing at least as good a job as the foreigner they will have a secure source of income. The ones that learn fastest will stay ahead of their peers for most of their careers as the slower learners will have to wait to fill 'dead men's shoes' because there will not be so many jobs available. The best have learned to undertake the whole job previously done by expatriates not just the good or easy parts. They undertake substantial jobs not just the ephemeral.

The best also encourage fellow citizens to improve at work and will encourage service providers to employ nationals. They are also be prepared to pay the short term extra costs of employing, training and developing their fellow citizens.

Most expatriates have the skills which are useful to businesses in the region so they should be harnessed to support the development of nationals by transferring those skills to them. They can offer more relevant assistance than trainers and others not used to the ways of the region.

Human nature is such that people will try to protect their own well being, so foreigners will be reluctant to give up jobs which are better paying or more interesting than those available at home just so that a host country national can take over.

If developing Host Country Nationals is made a significant part of the job of all expatriates in technical, supervisory and managerial positions. Their continued employment and reward will be based on transferring skills, attitudes and behaviour. But employers have to give the expatriates the time and resources to spend on the development of nationals.

During this paper I have kept emphasising attitudes and behaviours as well as skills. These are harder to learn and practice but are more important than skills in this rapidly changing world. The willingness and ability to learn is more important than the particular skills which can themselves become outdated.

The effective expatriate can be an excellent role model setting standards and showing how to apply skills, attitudes and behaviour to enable the nationals to develop their careers in a useful and productive way to the benefit of the individual and the society.

The Future of Host Country National Development.

The countries of this region have massive problems to face and overcome in the next twenty years. The demographic changes are substantial and their consequences cannot be avoided. The need to create worthwhile jobs for nationals is overwhelming. The existing skill base is not adequate and the will to work productively has been in short supply until recently. The challenge is enormous. But no nationality or ethnic group has a monopoly on capability and the nationals of the GCC are fully capable of learning and developing the skills attitudes and behaviours needed to help the region to prosper and contribute to world development.

I wish them well.