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HOW THE OMANI PUBLIC SECTOR DEVELOPS LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

The country of Oman has almost all the essential physical infrastructure necessary to make residents' lives easier and to develop the economy further. However according to various World Bank indices the performance of the country is very slow (Forum, 2014). Human beings, and in particular, leaders, may be said to be the most important resources of a country, regardless of other natural resources. This dissertation addresses the subject of the leadership development gap in the Omani public sector, through benchmarking with the Singapore and Dubai public sectors. It also looks into barriers such as organisational structure, working environment and government governance.

Design

This is a qualitative piece of research employing an interpretive case-study design. Eleven deep interviews were conducted with selected senior officials in different hierarchies in the Omani public sector. Their views were analysed to find out the underlying barriers to human development within the Omani public sector in general, and the reasons for the absence of a leadership development program in particular.

Findings

Finding from the research showed that all aspects of leadership development within the Omani public Sector need to be reviewed, especially the selection criteria for leading positions. The existing working environment promotes brain drain, and the government structure is outdated. Addressing these shortcomings and providing a share knowledge environment will pave the way for better leadership development.

Research Limits / Implications

Due to the sensitivity of interviewing very high ranked officials, it was not easy to ask questions about how they have reached such positions, what was the selection criteria, and were they the right fit. The role of national security is critical in choosing candidates for leading positions,

however this could not be discussed in the interviews for confidentiality reasons. It would be ideal to extend this research in future by interviewing His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Sultan of Oman, to understand his point of view for leadership development within the Omani public sector, since he has the ultimate power to appoint in the Omani public sector. This would give a clearer picture of the strategy for leadership development in the Omani public sector.

Practical Implications and Future Research

This dissertation pinpoints some of the shortcomings in Omani leadership development, as identified by a selection of senior Omani public service leaders. However, there are also those who have personally witnessed the unfairness of personnel development in the Omani public sector, and many in the Omani public sector may have been affected by working under the wrong leaders. It would be worth knowing their views as well.

More research is also needed on the absence of suitable measures of government performance, on why many officials stay a long time in the same position, and on the possibility of corruption within the Omani public sector administrative and financial management. All of these issues need to be researched further to discover their relationship to leadership development in Oman.

Originality/ Value

This dissertation is a constructive contribution to the debate about improving the Omani public service delivery, and a foundation for future research in leadership development. This has never been done before in an academically rigorous context, and may be unique in the Middle East. It is also historically important, given the unrest, new expectations, and changing leaderships across the region since the beginning of the 'Arab Spring' in 2011.