



Opinion

Enhancing the IT proficiency of UAE Nationals bolsters Emiratisation process

Written by: Jamil Ezzo, Director General of ICDL GCC Foundation

Emiratisation is an initiative launched by the UAE Government to ensure sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities for UAE Nationals in both the public and private sectors. While the program has been in place for more than a decade and has evident results in public sector, it has been adopted to a lesser degree within the the private sector. In order to further intensify efforts and implement more schemes to get jobs for the country's youths, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, declared 2013 as the 'Year of Emiratisation'¹.

The nationalisation policy has been instrumental in providing employment to a large number of UAE citizens, particularly those working in the government sector. Emiratisation has almost reached its saturation in the public sector, however, and so it is time to explore the private sector more closely. A study found that 60 per cent of Emiratis feel a higher level of job satisfaction working in the private sector². They find greater room for improving professional skills and gaining recognition in a multi-cultural corporate environment. One approach to encouraging more nationals to pursue career paths in the private sector is to empower them with certifications and degrees in technical and occupational education.

¹ <http://www.kippreport.com/fcs/year-of-emiratisation/>

² <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/emiratis-praise-benefits-of-working-in-the-private-sector>

According to a survey by the UAE National Bureau of Statistics, nearly 20,000 Nationals out of 4 million people are employed in the private sector³. Developments such as Dubai's successful bid to host the 2020 World Expo, which is expected to create 220,000 new job vacancies in the country, should be leveraged to address this employment gap. A recent forecast also suggested that Abu Dhabi alone is likely to generate more than 600,000 new jobs over the next decade based on a projected 7 to 9 per cent annual economic growth rate. To cater to these new vacancies, we need to equip Emirati youths with the latest IT skills in particular that are needed to fit into new roles and to perform them efficiently.

Recent changes in technology are redefining the digital divide and dramatically changing job responsibilities in today's workplace. Although technology devices are in the hands of the majority and people are quickly adopting to using smart devices, unfortunately those are not the skills required in today's workplace. Adding more fuel to the fire, the world of job seeking has changed radically. According to a digital literacy survey provided in a 2013 Prince's Trust Report, one in 10 unemployed young people cannot send their CV online, while more than one in six believe they would be in work today if they had better computer skills.

The European Commission Digital Agenda estimated that by 2015, 90% of jobs will need at least basic computer skills. Acquiring such skills is therefore becoming a precondition for workers to become and remain employable, ICDL GCC Foundation is the regional arm of ECDL Foundation, a not-for-profit organization that promotes digital skills across the globe, has been working in collaboration with government authorities to implement various internationally recognized computer certification programs that help UAE Nationals to be skilled, re-skilled and upskilled in line with the changing world of technology..

As the UAE moves towards a knowledge-based economy, future jobs will require people to possess highly specialized, practical and functional industry experience with a focus on ICT. Now is thus the best time to give equal importance between the new age of education and the policy of Emiratisation to address the problem of unemployment among UAE Nationals. This will not only provide youths with a meaningful vocation but will also make them feel proud of their contributions towards the development of the nation and the growth of the company they

³ <http://www.albawaba.com/business/gulf-nationals-employment--538666>

work for. Such a balance would provide strong motivation for UAE Nationals to constantly strive for excellence.

-End-