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HRM in context: Emiratisation of Etihad Airways*

Since 2007, Etihad Airways embarked on its Emiratisation programme which was aimed at replacing migrant workers with local workers of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). According to Etihad's vice-president of Emiratisation strategy, Ali Al Shamsi, it was not always easy to convince prospective employees to work the odd hours required by the aviation industry. 'As a culture, we weren't really in favour of letting our daughters and sons to work outside of normal hours, especially in the middle of the night,' Al Shamsi said. 'We started to communicate with families, and sometimes we would invite them to the airport to see the work environment, to see our employees wearing the Etihad Abaya, doing their job,' he said.

The programme was able to achieve some of its objectives. On 27 January 2016, the company announced that it had more than 3,000 Emirati employees, 40 per cent of whom had been hired in 2015, including 26 executives and senior managers. The airline planned to employ a further 5,000 Emiratis by 2020. In reaching its long-term goal, the airline marked the graduation of 280 Emiratis from its development programme. More than 400 cadets were also enrolled in the Etihad Airways' cadet pilot programme.

Questions:

1. How does the legal and political context shape the Emiratisation programme in Etihad?
2. What are possible implications of Emiratisation for the Emirati and migrant workers?

* Professor Jawad Syed (Lahore University of Management Sciences) wrote this mini case as a basis for class discussion rather than to serve as an endorsement, source of primary data, or illustration of effective or ineffective management. It has been adapted from: Syed, J. (2017). Context-specific human resource management. In Syed, J., & Kramar, R. (eds.) *Human Resource Management: A global and critical perspective*, pp.3-24. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.